

Minutes of the Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting: Tuesday, 1 April 2014

Present

Nigel Kay, Faversham Town Councillor (FTC) – Chairman

David Simmons, Mayor, Faversham Town Council

John Coulter, Faversham Town Councillor

Trevor Payne, Faversham Town Councillor

Cllr Mike Cosgrove, Swale Borough Council

Cllr Mike Henderson, Swale Borough Council

Andrew Osborne, Faversham Creek Consortium Management Group member

Anne Salmon, Faversham Creek Consortium Management Group member

Sue Akhurst, Faversham Creek Trust

Janice Hennessey, Faversham Creek Management Company

Janet Turner, Faversham Society

In attendance

Jackie Westlake, Faversham Town Council Clerk – Secretary

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 There were two apologies for absence: Brenda Chester and Natalie Earl.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising.

2.1 The minutes were agreed.

2.2 On matters arising, members agreed:

- to incorporate the sentence “to be Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant”, which would cover the issue about access
- to send an email to Jackie Westlake (JW) setting out declarations of interest

3. Draft Neighbourhood Plan

3.1 Cllr Kay (NK) gave a brief overview, making the following points:

(i) The Town Council hoped and expected that residents of Faversham responding to the consultation would do so in an understanding of the importance of protecting the Town’s heritage before it is too late.

(ii) The Town Council hoped that all those involved in providing information about the process would be able to give the full picture of the external development pressures on Faversham and other Neighbourhood Plan areas. It would not be helpful to have a selective approach to information sharing.

(iii) It was vital that everyone understood the framework within which the Town Council was working. This included the following matters:

- the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Neighbourhood Plans, which were one of the only ways a community could influence Planning Policy. They must be in overall conformity with the NPPF and they have to pass deliverability and sustainability tests
- If a valid Neighbourhood Plan was not agreed the NPPF applied and took precedence
- the £1 million gap in funding for the Business Case
- proposals for some housing were necessary to avoid excessive housing. There was no grand conspiracy to have lots of houses. Instead, the Town Council was trying to prevent that happening
- much of the existing housing development around the Creek was refused by Swale Council and then approved on appeal to the Planning Inspectorate
- the deterioration of the Creek and the end of commercial usage over the past 40 years. This had created a dilemma for the Town that the Town Council was trying to resolve with the Neighbourhood Plan
- The recent Planning decision on Standard Quay supported the Town Council concerns
- Current advice from planners was that, without a Neighbourhood Plan, it would not be a case of where the housing will be on the Creek - it would be everywhere
- The number of objections to a planning application was not a material consideration, only the substance of the objection

3.2 NK went on to say that, partly as a result of the time scale to get 5 Councillors to sign up to a rescission motion, and partly because of Councillors' concerns about the reasons for seeking Town Council agreement to the change of site uses on the former Oil Depot and the former Coach Depot, no motion has been put forward to the Town Clerk for the next meeting of the Town Council.

3.3 Andrew Osborne (AO) made a proposal on options B outlined for Ordnance Wharf (8.3), Swan Quay (8.6), The Oil Depot (8.7) and the Coach Depot (8.8), which was to delete them from the Plan as, with the exception of 8.3B (Ordnance Wharf), they were contrary to the decisions of the Town Council taken on 28 October 2013, and no credible evidence had been produced to support an industrial site for Ordnance Wharf. Although the proposals were made in boat building terms, in planning terms it would mean light and general industry and warehousing. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Cosgrove (MC). The latter two could cause traffic problems for Abbey Street. In addition, option B for the Oil Depot would exclude a creek side footpath, which was a longstanding policy of the Town Council and was supported by a majority of the public.

3.4 AO added that, as the options were contrary to the decisions made by the Town Council, they could not, therefore, be considered until May,

setting the timetable back even further. It would be open to anyone to put forward options during the consultation phase. He believed that the draft, without options B as above, gave the best chance of resulting in the Creek being developed in the way people wanted: an opening bridge and operational sluices, a footpath to give access to the Creek, and the development of derelict sites with buildings of high architectural standard of appropriate scale and material with moorings along the frontage.

3.5 Sue Akhurst (SA) said the £1m did not relate to the sites outside the inner basin but was money required for the bridge and dredging the inner basin. MC said the Business Case was a well-constructed theoretical study, but hadn't factored in the cost of purchasing or renting the land. If the Town Council did not press ahead, the pressures for desirable planning locations would become even more intense. The Town Council was only a statutory consultee, and the Neighbourhood Plan would give it greater accountability and status in planning decisions.

3.6 Janet Turner (JT) said she was not convinced by either the Business Case or some of the alternatives offered. It was important to maintain the heritage of the town without turning the clock back. The way forward in today's economy meant developing the service economy and hi-tech industries. She represented the Faversham Society which, she felt, had a role to build a town that respected its past and built for its future. The Neighbourhood Plan, in the end, had to be deliverable.

3.7 There were two amendments to the proposal put forward: removing 8.3B from the proposal (Trevor Payne (TP), seconded by Anne Salmon (AS)); and taking each proposal in turn (Cllr Henderson (MH), seconded by SA). On the latter amendment, the vote was 6 to 5 in favour. Therefore, the original proposal fell, and the first amendment was not pursued.

8.3 Ordnance Wharf

3.8 AO repeated his proposal (see paragraph 3.3) solely for 8.3B. It was seconded by MC. In discussion, some members pointed out there were strong local feelings supporting option B and it would be sensible to let residents have a view. It met the requirements of the Town Council resolution. It was argued that option B would not be viable as those supporting the proposal did not own the land, although it was pointed out that it was for the Town Council to decide planning policy for the site, not the current landowner. On being put to the vote, members voted 9 to 3 in favour of retaining option B.

8.6B Swan Quay

3.9 AO repeated his proposal (see paragraph 3.3) solely for 8.6B. It was seconded by AS. Some members felt it was important to have alternatives as part of the consultation giving residents an opportunity to decide on a different approach to the site. It was noted that it didn't meet the criteria of the Town Council's previous resolutions. MH said that one of the objections had been about the size and scale of new development. This

appeared to be taken account of in option A. On being put to the vote, members voted 6 to 2 in favour of the proposal (to remove option B). There were 3 abstentions.

8.7B Oil Depot

3.10 AO repeated his proposal (see paragraph 3.3) solely for 8.7B. It was seconded by TP. SA made the point that it was removing choice from the consultation, and it would be better to wait for a month to give the Town Council the opportunity to agree alternatives. Members noted that option B did not include a walkway, therefore restricting public access in contravention of the Streetscape Strategy. On being put to the vote, members voted 10 to 1 in favour of the proposal (to remove option B).

8.8B Coach Depot

3.11 AO repeated his proposal (see paragraph 3.3) solely for 8.8B. It was seconded by AS. On being put to the vote, members voted 9 to 2 in favour of the proposal (to remove option B).

General amendments

3.12 NK sought members' views on the other textual amendments. AO proposed to accept the amendments en bloc with the exception of the reference to piling (paragraph 4.19 of the draft Plan). MC seconded the proposal. Members considered the issue of piling, and it was agreed that current building regulations and construction industry rules and covering legislation should be sufficient protection for any work done around the Creek. The vote was unanimous. SA asked that minor amendments be taken into consideration. Although the vote had been passed to accept the draft Plan as it stood, NK agreed that any minor amendments she wished to make should be passed to JW who was revising the draft for the Town Council meeting on 7 April.

Chapter 6: Aspirations

3.13 Members noted the new paragraphs prepared by Natalie Earl, to replace chapter 6. MH asked for some changes to be made to the text to reflect a more rigorous wording around the importance of having a Neighbourhood Plan and the dangers for Faversham if a Plan wasn't agreed. Members agreed that a paragraph, using NK's opening remarks, prepared by JW, should be included in chapter 2 as suggested in the draft that had been circulated.

ACTIONS

JW to prepare a paragraph

JW to revise the text of the Plan for onward transmission to the Town Council (to be circulated to the Steering Group at the same time)

4. Communications and Engagement

4.1 AS presented an update. Key issues to be resolved were:

- Producing materials to display and publish the Plan
- What to put on the website
- What questions to ask in the consultation
- Booking the leaflet drop with Royal Mail

4.15 The consultation period, if the current timetable was adhered to, would begin on 19 May. Members noted the timetable and agreed that any documentation that needed to be signed off would be circulated by email by JW.

5. Budget

5.1 NK noted that there was an outstanding payment to the consultant, and the Town Council had agreed that any underspend could be transferred to the new financial year.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 JW introduced a survey prepared by a student from Queen Elizabeth Grammar School. The survey had been undertaken at Sheldwich Primary School: there had been 25 responses to the survey about the Creek, and 68% of those responding lived in Faversham. The survey asked about development plan options, their impact on friends and families, and whether enough had been done to communicate the various options to local residents and visitors.

6.2 Members noted the survey, and asked for their thanks to be passed on to the student.

ACTION: JW to write a letter of thanks on behalf of the Steering Group

6.3 The date of the next meeting was agreed: Tuesday, 29 April at 7pm.