

Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group II

Wednesday 20th December 2023, 5:45 pm. URC Hall

Minutes

Present:

Roy RAMM (CHAIRMAN), Richard FREEMAN, John MOORE, David ANDREWS, Marry-Ann DUNN, Kevin FELLOWS, Nick ARMON-JONES, Mike MASTER, David COHEN, Roy MITCHELL.

Apologies for Absence:

Hywel JONES, Brian POPE.

Invited to Attend- Part Time:

Richard SILCOCK (Owner of local Store).

Review of Local Store (Linsells)

As in the original FNP, a shop is considered to be an important asset for Felsted and Steering Group want to understand the commercial viability of a village shop and consider the requirements of a new site, if the current shop was no longer viable.

The Chairman welcomed Richard SILCOCK (RS), the proprietor of Linsells who was attending the meeting to explain his current thinking on the future of village shops.

RS explained that Linsell's in the current location was unable to expand, offered no disabled access, and half the size of a modern local convenience store (3,000 sq ft). In the past, independent wholesalers supplied a range of products, but these were now taken over by large "Multiples", which controlled supply and pricing.

The main drawback, which affected footfall, and therefore commercial viability was limited parking and congestion around the junction. The reopening of The SWAN has made parking worse and the likelihood of the reopening/ development of The BOOTE HOUSE will make it worse still.

Therefore, in RS's opinion, trading may only last 10 years in the present format before it becomes unviable. A larger site with parking would be required to keep the business viable.

RS also discussed and commented on the merits of various sites, some of which has been discussed in the original FNP. We noted that a number of the locations have not been promoted by the landowners in the Call for Sites process and others were already well-used.

In summary, two sets of issues impact the viability of the shop, accessibility and the changing nature of the retail market.

The Chairman thanked RS for his contribution and agreed to keep him updated of FNP ideas, and he left the meeting.

The SG accepted that an 'ideal' solution was unlikely to emerge, but given the demography of the parish, the SG concluded that a site in the easterly direction through the village, closer to the density of the population along Braintree Road and the Primary School had considerable advantages.

Based on RS's comments and further work by the SG on the site analysis, it was agreed that efforts would be made to identify suitable and available sites for public consultation in February.

Meanwhile there were planned meetings with other organisations which could affect plans:

- The Bursar of Felsted School,
- Chairman of Memorial Hall Committee.
- Surgery Practice.
- Head Teacher of Felsted Primary School, Watch House Green.

Public Consultation.

The Chairman proposed a Public Consultation (PC) at the end of February 2024.

Two meetings: Friday 22nd Feb, in evening, and Saturday 23rd Feb in morning.

Dates would depend on availability of the Memorial Hall and Guest speakers:

- Abbey Miladinovic, who is a professional Housing Planner and already agreed to act as a consultant in preparing FNP 11.
- A member from Rural Community Council (RCC).

An A4 leaflet will be published, (like original produced by FNP1.) inviting Felsted residents to attend PC. This will be printed and delivered for approx. £1.350. Produce a Large Banner to promote the PC. The event would also be publicised on social media.

The aim of the Public Consultation would be to:-

1. Inform the public of the requirement placed on the parish for 95 new homes by 2041
2. invite public comment on suggest available and sustainable sites, (bearing in mind the existing sites registered with UDC)
3. identify further issues which could be addressed by the revised NP.

FPC has commissioned a Housing Needs Survey cost approx. £2,000. But unlikely to be published in time for PC at end February.

Traffic Survey.

Nick Armon-Jones provided TWO quotes from Traffic Survey companies who would monitor 24/7 for one week vehicle movement in and out of Felsted, speed and vehicle type. Quote range £672 – 1,350 plus VAT.

Richard Freeman believed Essex Highways had a budget, from the local developers and he will ask Essex Highways if it could be used to survey Station Road.

Hartford End Development.

Richard Freeman reported a new development in Hartford End, close to the existing Brewery Development, had been published. The FPC has raised objections, but if the project is finally passed, the house count of 50 would be included in UDC target of 95 homes, therefore reducing the FNP target.

Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 30th January 2024, 5.45pm at UDC Hall

Addendum

At the time of our meeting, we had not had the opportunity to discuss the impact of a government announcement on the Neighbourhood Planning Process.

In the **Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill**, following consultation, the Government issued the revised and updated NPPF on 20th December 2023 and it includes an important change for us:

Paragraph 14. In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply: a) **the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made**; and b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement (see paragraphs 67-68).