

Neighbourhood Plan meeting

12/05/2022

In attendance: Caroline Rackham, Richard Lewis, Leslie Edwards, Katherine Fitz-Herbert Green, Amy Hardingson, Christine Farleigh, Ken Farleigh

Start of meeting: 19.03

Caroline: Let's start the meeting. Richard can you kick off? Richard has a presentation and is going to explain some of the work he's been doing which is many and varied. Along the way we've had a meeting with Clare Upton Brown and we've been able to discuss things with her. The town centre regeneration has been announced and they are doing consultation work on that in the summer. There will also be a regeneration board, and we should have some kind of voice on that board. So that's the plan at the moment. NFDC are getting a consultant in to do a lot of the consultation.

There's also Bartley park and making that area a conservation area. And also cycle ways and active travel ways which we've been working on.

Richard: *starts powerpoint presentation.* So to introduce myself, my background is as a town planner – that's my qualification, but my main interest is in transport and movement. To give context, town planners are not specialists in everything - we tend to employ specialists in specific areas. So what I set up my company for was hybrid town planning and transport planning with the focus of getting people to be more active. Which is even more vital since lockdown with more people getting into habits of inactivity. On Neighbourhood Planning, this is my first Neighbourhood Plan so I have charged my local rate plus some volunteering days to reflect the learning I've done.

The fundamental I want to convey about a Neighbourhood Plan document that it is a land-use planning document.

Slide 1

A neighbourhood plan has quite a lot of force, more force than I realized before I started looking into it. It gives the local community power to give permission for developments.

It locates viable sites for development. We will pass big sites we find on to the Local Plan. But for little developments this is where Neighbourhood Plans can be really effective. Is it a site that has any constraints? Any planning permission existing? Is it on a flood zone? This is the kind of research we can do to find these sites.

We can put in community aspirations. For instance with Testvale park we could describe what we want to see surrounding the park or what other things we need in and around the park to improve it. Recreation grounds we could say we want more trees and benches etc etc. Well we could take funding from the North Totton development and say we want to spend some money on this.

We can influence designers as well. You can have very high density and still have wonderful places to live. Like the Cotswolds has very high density living and yet people love it, find it desirable and want to visit and live there.

Caroline: Eling has highest density in Totton, and is a desirable area. It's a good point we need to make.

Slide 2

Richard: The boundary of the town of Totton and Eling is the boundary of the Neighbourhood plan. We can't change that to the town centre.

We have to have robust evidence – I've added that. But we want viability. There are many different areas in the town and we need to make sure our suggestions are deliverable.

I've done a review of existing planning documents, which is the bulk of the evidence at the moment, but they will go out of date soon so I will update them as that happens.

Has to contribute towards sustainable development. The national framework is actually pretty good and there's some good stuff coming out soon. We can do our best and use the national framework to state our aims and be in general conformity with the Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans shouldn't be about preventing development – they should be positive documents highlighting areas for development.

Slide 3

I'm drawing a map to show the boundary clearly which I can show you soon. I'll also be showing you the literature review. I've looked at some best practice

Neighbourhood Plans. My aim is to make it accessible, inspiring, plain English, easy to use.

Engagement is the next stage.

Caroline: We've got all sorts of engagement that we've done already which will continue with meetings, outreach, consultation, facebook.

Richard: I need to make sure I have all of it. I should make sure I have everything you've collected so far Caroline because I'm not sure I have.

Caroline: Yes

Richard: And schools would be great

Caroline: Yes we did that pre-pandemic, we need to do so again

Richard: We can do engagement on what I've done so far.

Because the new local plan is being involved and we're going beyond the town centre we should see the Neighbourhood Plan in conjunction with these other documents. When the town centre regeneration comes out that will then be the foundation of our Neighbourhood Plan

Caroline: As long as we and the town council are involved in the process then YES

Richard: The next stage is writing the documents – the policy and supporting documents. The supporting documents do have material weight as well – not as much as the policy itself,

Catherine: I should bring some Neighbourhood Plans with me next time so we can have a look together

Assent

Richard: Proposals map sets the boundaries but also explains in a visual way what we want to achieve. Such as Bartley Park area etc. Then we'll do statutory engagement and go through examination and amendments – and after that we go through the referendum. I expect it will go through easily.

Leslie: Will it? People can be very against change.

Katherine: We need to frame it as protecting and improving.

Caroline: It's worth bearing in mind that we have an election in a year, and referendums are often scheduled at the same time. So we need to think about our timeline with that in mind.

Richard: Good point.

Slide 4

Recipe for success is a strong evidence base, which is updated regularly. There will be new considerations. Covid is changing working patterns. The Economic development strategy interestingly doesn't mention town centres much. Totton is usually only mentioned as Totton and waterside, and not as the town itself. And Totton is not the same as Hythe or Fawley. And this is an opportunity with Neighbourhood plans to distinguish our unique identity. Totton doesn't have a ferry and Hythe doesn't have a train station.

And we want to get ahead in preparation of the central area regeneration meetings

Slide 5

Progress. We've had discussions with Claire Upton Brown. Evidence gathered. Future needs – we need to update evidence, get specialist input and look into additional funding which may be necessary. I can help you bid for it.

Slide 6

Next stage – Engagement event in June, Draft policies in June to August, Six weeks public consultation in September. Finalise plan and submit to Nfdc

Caroline: The NFDC is going to happen in that same window, so I think we should discuss doing things in parallel. I think NFDC are starting to understand how useful we can be.

Richard: We can help as team mates and help with the workload.

Caroline: I think that's been realized and caused a welcome change.

Slide 7

Engagement – we've got plenty of great ideas. We could do letter drop and emails to get consultation via website. Add a themed workshop? We can create something interactive and engaging – people can point out what they want and label things. Pin as negative, neutral or positive with a comment.

Caroline: We've got maps from the town centre event we did. I also got sent some after the event which is brilliant.

Richard: Fab, I can take photos of those and add them to the document.

Slide 8

Opportunities- In the process of preparing the baseline I have started thinking about the opportunities to make sure we have the audit trail and evidence for all opportunities.

Taking forward, lots of little sites that are around. Bus garage, near macdonalds, all sorts of places and I've done little viability checks on them and they are identified in the local plan. It all came out of the strategic housing plan assessment which highlights potential sites for development.

Caroline: part of the regeneration is on housing, but we also need to think about community use and that is something that we could contribute

Richard: We can look at the spread and density of community uses in the town. Density of fast food takeaways near schools has a lot of writing around it and could be something we can include. This is something that the Neighbourhood plan can be quite specific about or specify a purpose for a site. What you want where and what is appropriate. We should aim for a mixture of things in all areas.

Slide 9

It doesn't seem appropriate from viability to influence a larger site via Neighbourhood Plan. We should suggest that to be looked at as part of the Local Plan.

Katherine: Because we're a Neighbourhood Plan we want to avoid big and controversial issues like big housing developments. Leave the local authority to be the bad guy. What we can do is influence the design and influence the impact on the community and the density. It means we have the input into final design and layout.

Caroline: We've got a design strategy set and ready to go to full council and we're at the stage where we can present that to full council. Is it possible for us to look at and tweak that and present it to the full council in 2 weeks?

Katherine: You could agree the ideas in principle, but give it a full chapter in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Caroline: Claire did say we shouldn't include it

Katherine: It can inform

Caroline: Can you have a look at it and give advice on how to move it forward?

Katherine: Maybe not in the next 2 weeks

Caroline: If we don't get it done this cycle we have to wait until after regeneration

Richard: Send it to both of us and one of us can have a look at it. It's establishing principles. It could be a page long.

Katherine: Guiding principles

Caroline: We had a full council meeting at which yet again there were attempts to try to stop the Neighbourhood Plan. They tried to put it in private and confidential but we stopped that. And we used a standing order to protect us. But I think that out of that we have moved forward with Clare Upton Brown and it may well come out again at next full council.

Richard: We are there to help. We are here to help build support for their (NFDC) plans.

Caroline: Moving back to opportunities

Richard: Civic court and Eling Wharf are the main larger areas. We can look at landscaping improvements & travel linkages.

Slide 8

Existing strategic sites we want to influence - the masterplans for North Totton

Caroline: I hope we can feed into the structured plan. We did see it at one point but have heard nothing for years

Richard: It is in the local plan. But we have to ask if it will be adhered to?

Caroline: I guess that's what's happened with Aldi on the industrial estate. I'm sure it was passed as outline.

Richard: I'm not surprised that they've proposed it there because we have the Starbucks there.

Katherine: But when the football club moved there that parcel of land was supposed to be public land to offset the housing that went into the old football ground.

Slide 9

Deliver walking network improvements which we can wrap up neatly with evidence and policy. We can make it part of the central area regeneration. There's a piece of work to be done on being more specific about what we want on this route and show NFDC what we want, what will work.

Another opportunity is to make Rumbridge street one way with wider pavements

Caroline: They tried that once but you need to go a long way around is the trouble.

Richard: It is almost one way there. It's an interesting spot

Caroline: It's a faff around there

Richard: Tide Mill is another opportunity, such as historically appropriate paving to set it up as a lovely heritage area. Public realm can be improved

Caroline: Hiding the containers would make a huge difference. Planting near the anchor would make a huge difference to hide them and improve it for residents.

Richard: And as part of the regeneration the river should be cleaned up.

Caroline: that has started thankfully

Richard: They did all that on the Olympic park. It was quite incredible.

And Bartley Park – we want to connect the two parts of Bartley Park to improve access and improve the riverside between Rushington and railway line. The issue is crossing the railway.

Caroline: actually we could cross the river rather than the railway which may make more sense

Looking at maps to see

Slide 10

There's a dutch idyll which is being promoted is to enable cycling for children – for the whole family. I dread cycling to Totton and I would not advocate for children doing so. We have a right to be safe as we travel. There are a lot of arguments about bikes but it is one way of integrating exercise into your daily routine. In the 1920s an 8 year old could travel 8 miles by themselves safely. By 1970s that figure had halved. These days it is the front gate of the garden. We absolutely have to do this.

Caroline: My son was allowed out into the street on his own to play with friends. And now is out at all hours and is confident to travel independently. My mum and dad grew up here. My Dad used to walk the entire length of the Bartley river to go fishing. There's no way that we would do that now.

Richard: It's only to our detriment. The average person is not a driver for 28 years of their life. We build things around the assumption that everyone drives. But that is not true.

Caroline: It is a very different way of life because of the extra time and building that into your day.

Richard: But if you had to give up your car. How would you get around? You would probably start by walking

Caroline: And you'd have to cut down how much you do in a day

Richard: Even the slowest cyclist goes 3x faster than someone walking and it gives you door to door access.

Caroline: And all this connects, because you wouldn't get me going through the centre of Totton on a bike, but if it was safe I would!

Stories about cycling reluctance and cycling joy, learning to cycle

Caroline: Maybe we should look on a map and look at the areas which need improvement.

Richard: We shouldn't go to people with a blank sheet of paper, we should start them with ideas and ask for improvements and alternatives

Caroline: I also need to find out where we're at with LC Whip

Richard: I think it's in draft

Caroline: I don't even know how much from what we suggested is in the draft

Richard: What we could do is get some schemes together and lobby for them and access the pot of funding which is there.

Christine: Do they not do funding at schools? I see them around

Richard: Some of them have lost funding

Caroline: Part of it is due to the academy system. Schools that are Hampshire get funding from them to get someone in to teach

Richard: It's not a bad business for someone to do. There are lots of people that want to learn.

20mph on Water Lane, which is slow anyway due to speed bumps

Slide 11

Award winning green spaces for everyone. Testwood Rec is pretty much just a field

Caroline: It will get some jubilee planting of trees and a new grass cutting regime to make part of it meadow

Richard: A cycle path running through it?

Leslie: There's an existing one but it's very narrow.

Katherine: We need to widen those.

Richard: It makes it safer for everyone using them.

Leslie: It is dark and creepy.

Richard: You can get low level light which just illuminate the path. Bat friendly lights

More interpretation boards to teach people about environment in Bartley. And to transform Testvale into an exemplar Urban Park which feels welcoming and safe. Connection between buildings and public space

Caroline: And the flavour of the park. We could have public art there too to suit the urban environment.

Slide 12

Economic opportunities to strengthen town centre. Improve public realm, knit together the various 'quarters'. And more permissive attitude to 'living above the shop'

Slide 13

Supporting the creation of new businesses. Using old shipping containers to create very cheap space. You could be definitive about the type of business that would be in there. Create the urban and appealing style. One of the things about the New Forest is that the population is older than average and we have the issue that young people leave. We can use old industrial buildings and convert into flats which are very fashionable. They do it in London all the time we can see examples. Attracting and attaining young people. This is what would set Totton apart from the rest of the Forest.

Leslie: What about scooters, where do they fit in?

Caroline: There was a bill in the Queen's speech that they have to go on the roads because they are too fast.

Richard: E-bikes are far better because they are more active.

End of presentation

Shall I show you some maps for 5 minutes?

Assent

Richard shows map of Totton and Eling

Richard: What I need are the ordnance survey licence numbers from Town Council.

Map shows green areas. And map shows central areas

Caroline: I see that Eling wharf has found its way into the centre.

Richard: I've cleverly called it the central area, and it makes sense to include it

Caroline: I don't agree. I think there are barriers and they are two very separate areas with separate needs and wants.

Richard: We could have an overall with separate focus areas.

Another layer with active travel network

Caroline: Wow that's so useful.

Richard: The active travel plan prioritises Salisbury road and I think we should go along with that. It should be the first scheme, but we can say it needs to tie

in with this existing network. It's all quite joined up really and makes sense, and we can suggest improvements. Minimal changes to water Lane.

Leslie: The road surface is terrible

Richard: Ah but that's maintenance and that comes from another pot of money

Caroline: One more map & then Bartley park

Richard shows zoomed in map of Totton Centre, with circles for major development opportunities, + network of active travel.

Richard: Asda and Lidl areas can be improved. Precinct and park, Eling wharf

Caroline: Can you send that to the team so that we can look at it for 2 weeks time?

Richard: Yes absolutely

Caroline: Wow Richard that is some fantastic work which gives us some fantastic grounding. What's the next step?

Richard: I need to tidy up the report. The presentation can go as it is. The drawings I will make some small improvements to. You and me can work together on that.

Caroline: Thank you very much Richard! We've got full council, and we can look at presenting there.

Can I just very quickly show everyone the map of Bartley Park so you know where we're at with that.

Caroline shows map

Caroline: So what I've done is highlight the park area and talked to town officers. The Garage is part of it at the moment and that has maintenance implications so we need to change that. The reason I've taken it to right to the other side is because there are things about jetskis and pollution which links in to us. The area up to the dual carriageway all has bits of different nature conservation status. Bartley park has friends of Bartley who are working on it already. So it's this bit up the top which is actually quite a big area, which has no status. It would also be fantastic if we could create a nice area for walking. It would be helpful for wildlife for it to have a status and protect it though even if we can't get people onto it. And then this bit over here feeds into the

National Park, so how landowners behave around here has all sorts of implications.

Richard: That's a beautiful map – we need that in the N.plan. We can designate in the N.plan which could be a good idea. It's lost its EU designation presumably?

Caroline: Yes that's right

Richard: What did you mean about we don't need to go under the railway.

Caroline: You can cross the river in a few places to get over crossing the railway.

Richard: Getting along the whole red area you'd need to cross the railway

Caroline: There is already a bridge there.

Indepth discussion about where bridges and pathways are currently.

Caroline: Part of the issue is the railway splitting

Let's leave it there for today.

Meeting end 20.52

Action Points

- Katherine to bring along Neighbourhood Plan examples
- Caroline, Richard & Katherine to work on presentation to full council

Timeline

Engagement event in June, Draft policies in June to August, Six weeks public consultation in September. Finalise plan and submit to Nfdc