

Neighbourhood Plan meeting

20/09/2021

In Attendance: Caroline Rackham, Amy Hardingson, Christine Farleigh, Ken Farleigh, Emma Cully, Katherine, Chris Compton

Time of meeting start: 19.00

Caroline: We've had lots of meetings recently so it's good to touch base and update everyone. Starting off we had our consultation which went really well and we have lots of ideas from that. Next we had a meeting at the town council planning committee which Christine spoke at for us so thank you Christine. It all boils down to what kind of town we want in the future – a town of arts and culture and accessibility and amenities. That all went nicely, but there was also a discussion about whether we should still have a neighbourhood plan group. As a part of that presentation we had included a request for help. The next step would be getting someone paid to work on the neighbourhood plan. And that is what is holding us up is that we don't have anyone paid to work on the plan who can pull it together into an actual Neighbourhood Plan. We also had a message from Claire Upton Brown that was part of the discussion at the Planning Committee. Since then I've had a meeting with Claire. The gist is that she would prefer for there to not be a neighbourhood plan because there is a lot going on with Totton town centre. I'll load that document up now for us to look at. It's on the town planning agenda/minutes document as well (For September 2021 Planning meeting).

Caroline shares screen

Claire is asking for clarification on these aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan:

- The likely aims and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan *We have discussed this many times and can answer this*
- Whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan will identify or allocate housing development plans *this seems maybe the heart of Claire's concerns. She's after allocated housing for the town centre itself. The New Forest needs to build a certain number of houses. Infill/increasing density is a prime interest of New Forest as part of the Local Plan, Stage 2. It's a good thing that Totton doesn't have anything prescribed*

yet, but if we don't have the Neighbourhood plan then we have no control, no say in what happens.

- *What other policy areas we might address This is covered by our aims which we've been consistent with*
- *Proposed working and decision making and how they may be resourced We have come up with ideas and gone to the town council for feedback and come back and redrafted. With the town centre we're not quite there yet.*
- *Timetable we had a timetable pre covid, so this needs updating*

Caroline: I also want to say that I think that I should step down as chair, because I think it's starting to impede our progress. I think it would be a good idea for a resident to be chair and not a councillor.

Christine: Would a resident have enough knowledge?

Caroline: We have several members who do have knowledge; Catherine, Richard and Katherine all do. But we will also still be supporting each other and working together as a team. What we could do is propose that we can make this a point for our next meeting.

Christine: I think Catherine or Richard would make good options for chair

Caroline: Or the other Katherine

Katherine: I'm happy to be involved, but I don't think I have the right expertise to drive it forward

Caroline: Let's decide on a new chair at the next meeting. I think it's a good time to have a new chair who is a non-councillor.

Katherine: I hope you remain involved Caroline

Caroline: I definitely will. I think this will be good and will allow us to ratify the decision making process. But probably the system of us discussing or deciding and then checking with the town council would work, but we'll discuss that next time.

So next we have the Full Council meeting coming up on the 29th September in the Palm Room of the Totton and Eling Community Centre. It would be good to have people come to support and arrive at 7pm. And we need to do a presentation which I've spoken to Katherine about doing.

Katherine: The only thing I'm not sure on is what we're presenting on that that they've not heard before

Caroline: Really it is the same presentation again, but to the full council rather than just the councillors on the planning committee. We need to go through that again to give the information to all the councillors.

Unfortunately we can't do any visuals which would really help. How do you feel about just speaking Katherine?

Katherine: I think I still need to get clearer on it. I'll read through the documents again and have a think.

Caroline. Great. As well as that meeting we also had a meeting with the Highways major projects team. That was really helpful. It was a really good chat through the work that Richard has done on transport. It started off with the officers not understanding the relationships between Totton and Southampto, and Totton and New Forest, and that was very useful to be able to point out and get recognised. We talked about different ideas about how we might deal with the town centre – reconfiguring to aid the flow of traffic, and having increased density. We also have a number of huge projects happening around us which will increase traffic – Fawley, Dibden Bay, North Totton etc. The A326 is going to have increased strain and so we discussed ideas such as new speed limits which could ironically make the road faster, improving cycling and walking facilities. We also discussed ideas for a level crossing... I did come out of that thinking that it is probably impossible, but you never know. We also discussed better bus routes, which would incentivise bus companies to operate. For instance we could open up Junction road again just to buses. That might create more links. I'm not really convinced that that will be enough for the bus companies as I think they also need money. But that's a summary of everything we discussed.

Christine: Won't some of these ideas hold the traffic up even more?

Caroline: Yes they will. And that's something to think about whether we want to focus on car access in the town, or if we want to prioritise pedestrian and cycle access. Because at the moment we effectively have a dual carriageway through the town, but we could change that to make pavements wider and give pedestrians more right of way. There's also what Romsey has done with their market square. That's not a roundabout anymore and the road goes through but not around.

Christine: What about the boat? Can some people get the boat to work?

Caroline: Again, that's a private enterprise and, because they are already looking to cut from the budget, subsidising the boats wasn't discussed.

The other update is that the meeting with Julian at the precinct was cancelled and hasn't been rearranged which is a shame. I know that Neville deals with him quite often so maybe he can pin him down.

The other meeting I had was with Claire. That was an update reinforcing again that the Fire, Ambulance and Police are looking to move and we could see a clearing away that allows things to happen in the town centre. I do think we should have a good go at thinking about where housing could go. Perhaps we can discuss that now. Does anyone have any ideas as to where we can put developments of 10 houses or more?

Christine: If we went up higher in the precinct would we get 10 houses or more?

Caroline: Yes, I think that would certainly be the case if we had at least 3 storeys.

Katherine: NFDC should have a schema when they are doing their plans where they look at where housing could go. Perhaps we can tap into that and use that to identify sites.

Caroline: Yes they are available, but also 20 years old. And also as developers haven't done it yet there must be something at the moment that isn't too appealing otherwise they would have done it.

Katherine: it should be continuously updated. Perhaps I can look into that?

Caroline: Yes please do. The implication I got was that it's out of date.

Christine: What's happening to the house near Dominoes? Is that up for development?

Caroline: Yes, that site and the one next to it. Planning for a hostel I think. That was a good 3 years ago that was, so they may be about to run out of the permission. I'm not sure what the delay is. Good point though because that is a good site.

Ken: Where are the ambulance and fire station going to move to?

Caroline: They want better access to the major roads. And more of them have moved towards Southampton to help with that.

Katherine: They look for accessible areas

Caroline: Originally in Totton North they had an industrial site near the motorway which would be a good site for them.

I guess immediately around the park we have the civic and the community centre, so Chris would you like to comment? There was an idea of having two storeys to have more space and to have a café as part of the community centre as well – one overlooking the park.

Chris: We turn away more people who want to book because we are restricted by the space available. We are starting to think of using the men's shed building when it's not being used as the men's shed to have more space for bookings. We could definitely use more space.

Caroline: And we could do a little housing as part of that perhaps? Another big issue that's linked is parking. We've discussed ideas before about making car parks multi storey.

Chris: I feel strongly that we should develop more housing without parking and go towards public transport.

Caroline: I agree in theory that that would be great, but the issue and the reality is that the public transport isn't good enough. It should be possible, but as it stands at the moment it is probably just too difficult. We should also bear in mind that people get older and need to have places to go when they can't live in apartments anymore. In Southampton they've had to deal with families being stuck in apartments without the necessary amenities.

Amy: This makes me think of my friend who lives in Switzerland. They do a lot of apartment living over there, but it is designed well for families and all stages of life. They have really cleverly designed space, and little play areas tucked next to each building. And everyone uses public transport. Now, it's an integrated and well planned system that they have. And I wonder if we can recognise that we want something like that, how do we get there?

Caroline: It's a chicken and egg situation

Katherine: We're talking about the space next to dominoes – that was for 8 apartments and without any parking. It has been accepted in the past.

Ken: I was surprised with how much parking is going to be on the Testwood Club site. 17 parking spaces.

Caroline: I think those are mostly 2 bedroom, and I think there's a stipulation of 1 and a half spaces for every 2 bedrooms. That's the rule

outside of the town centre it seems. What we also don't want to do is like the Old Cinema site is that people already can't park in that area, and now we have more spaces being taken away. And this pushes it more and more into other roads. An integrated public transport plan, that's what we need. Let's go halfway and say that we want some parking. So what would we do with that parking?

Katherine: We need developers to stipulate a lower parking standard. Fewer spaces per bedrooms to try and support that aim towards public transport.

Caroline: And that should be included in the developments?

Katherine: Yes

Chris: In the centre of totton I think we have no choice but to go for multistorey car parks because there is no more space.

Christine: Everyone just parks on the grass verges at the moment

Chris: It's terrible for people with pushchairs

Caroline: And wheelchairs

Christine: And blind people as well

Ken: and worse at night

Caroline: Yes that's a good point. We need a compromise. I will try and put something together to put out to everyone.

For our next meeting we have two points – a new chair for the Neighbourhood Plan group, and a call for ideas for sites for housing.

Christine: Having listened to the meeting from last time – what happens if they say no? Do we have no say?

Caroline: New Forest and highways are both keen on consultation and this needs to be done together. Claire is also very interested in the work we have done, and so are highways. If Neighbourhood plan does go out the window there are still stakeholders who are interested in what groups like this have to say. What we have done is so valuable to them. Claire is supportive on the idea of a plan, but just not that much on the Neighbourhood plan. Does that help?

Christine: It just seems that New Forest has always used Totton as a dumping ground

Caroline: Highways and planning at New Forest do recognise the strategic importance of Totton. If they don't sort it out we'll have a horrible bottleneck.

Thank you for everyone for your time today. And maybe see some of you on 29th. But the input we've already had with New Forest and Highways has been so valuable. Please don't think our work hasn't been worth it because there's more and more evidence that we are.

Meeting end 20.04