

Neighbourhood Plan meeting 22/05/2023

Attending: Caroline Rackham, Susan Compton, Chris Compton, Susan Cutler, Lin Francis, Matt Kangarani, Katherine Fitz-Herbert Green, Carole Rogers, Jenna Phillips, Amy Hardingson, John Penfield

Meeting start: 19.03,

Caroline: Two things on the agenda today. So first let's talk about the cabinet paper

Cabinet paper is projected

<https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/documents/s25199/Totton%20Engagement%20Report.pdf>

Caroline: So what happened was that NFDC have got a regeneration pot for 5 different towns, and we are one of them. They've already done a vision for Totton and the Waterside. So this consultation is a consultant that NFDC got in to see what people thought would be useful in Totton, and this is just about the town centre. They did get a lot of people 840 or so in total. It includes the precinct, commercial road, Testvale park and they discussed Eling at one point but they decided not to include Eling in this remit.

So, the results of all of this – is about how the roads cut through Totton. That's one of the main suggestions to do something about. We've looked at all sorts of ideas before. Our conclusion in the past has varied over the years. We've discussed the dual carriageway, and incentivizing people to go around. How to turn the precinct around to help pedestrian access and funnel cars in a better.

4.6 The first prospective was that all efforts must be made to keep the cars moving within the town. The roads should be running free to minimise vehicle congestion. There were a number of ideas about how to keep cars moving and reduce the perceived congestion some more radical than others. The second prospective was to redistribute road space for non car travel. This would include reconfiguring road space to improve connectivity and encourage walking and cycling in line with national policy.

Susan Compton: There's been all sorts of issues lately with traffic in the centre

Caroline: A lot of people said they liked the park in the centre, and were keen to make the park the heart of the town centre

Theme 3 There is a need to upgrade the Civic Campus to perhaps include better access to outdoor space and area to play for children.

Susan: There's such a need for mums and children to have a space to hang out and chat

Caroline: We've discussed this before, and perhaps we could look into licencing for a van in lieu of getting a café for this area and to encourage that

Chris: If we had a container for tables and chairs for whoever has the permit to sell coffees and teas

Susan: The mums ask me if the community centre do coffees and teas all the time, and then have to go up to costa

Caroline: People were frustrated with the precinct. It doesn't belong to a local authority which makes it very difficult to do anything about it.

Katherine: Is it in single ownership?

Caroline: Yes, but they don't really do very much. But they do have a new management company recently. And it will hinge around what happens in terms of flats etc

Susan: It's a shame the precinct isn't more interested in getting involved with the community

Matt: In practical terms even if we do aesthetic changes in a few places with flowers we still have the precinct there out of our control. We can tinker around the edges, but if we want to make substantial change the precinct is the thing. Everything costs money and everything has a price,

Susan Cutler: We had a meeting several years ago that was very promising but the interest went flat

Caroline: It may be done piecemeal. That's why the Nat West has been empty so long as they are squabbling about what can be done

John: What happens if there is a change in what people want to use? We've got a lot of the same types of shops. Does this create an environment where they feel they have to spend money to get people in and they lose interest?

Lin: We've discussed in the past Youngsters taking the shops and having a space for sharing mini businesses and their creations and gives them an outlet.

Caroline: Start ups is what we're talking about. And in the consultation it does discuss a market and if that is the way to go

Katherine: At the end of the day the precinct is a landowner and they want a return on their investment

Caroline: We could persuade NFDC to set the standard by creating more smaller units to stimulate that

Carole: But every single town says that their high streets are dying

Katherine: we can't influence that

Carole: I would not come to Totton for shopping. We've got to be honest about how differently people shop. How can we bring the high street back? But that's not where we're at anymore. People no longer shop that way

Caroline: We can stimulate things in different ways

Carole: It's maybe a lack of imagination. Salisbury used to be great at independent shops that drew people in. We don't benefit from the New Forest - we have no New Forest themed shops

Susan Compton: Lyndhurst takes all of that

Caroline: There is a keen sense of community in Totton

Susan Compton: There's a lot of people keen to come along, but not so many organisers. Struggling to get volunteers for our events, we need volunteers for road closures.

Katherine: You want to get that majority and find where people already are - advertising on and using facebook where 22,000 people follow as that will be their first port of call

Caroline: So density footprint is really key. We have this designation in the local plan which says we can either have community or commercial, but we need residential to stimulate us. We need people to be living close to the centre

Susan: Halifax will be flats

Caroline: We do need to change that designation so that developers can see from a glance the opportunity here.

There is the potential for us to be a modern market town. Compared to Romsey or other towns with lots of historic buildings who are restricted - which isn't an issue for us.

People want a town centre with a greater range of independent shops. All we can do with that is to produce the facility for that

Lin: I remember when we used to have an outside market on a Wednesday.

Susan: The car boot sale is popular, but you're weather dependent

Caroline: I will talk to the chap who organises the market in Hythe to see what the options are

Chris: Where would you put the market?

Caroline: Either on the car park or on Library road

Chris: If it was a more substantial market more people would come. So we would need to keep the car parks available for people to park on. Maybe even the green in front of the council offices

Caroline: we do that for the lantern parade

Chris: It's a large piece of land all-in-all if you use all of that space

Carole: Hythe and Romsey utilise some tiny spaces

Chris: Who would organise it?

Caroline: We need to look into it, and first steps is to speak with Hythe and see how they do it

Lin: If we're talking about walking and cycling - we may need a car park for people coming from further afield, but we could make it easy for local people

Chris: Markets live and die by if people will travel to go to them

Lin: It is better to get things on a stall than it is to go to the supermarket, it can be cheaper and better for people

Caroline: It's about having the advanced schedule of events and activities so people know what is on.

The big thing that was a shock with the transport element consultation with Hampshire highways was for them to realise we are not a suburb of Southampton. There's a lot of advocacy we can do there

Connected & Permeable Words that emerged during the engagement phase to describe Totton town centre included disconnected, fragmented, and disjointed. People said they often visited one bit of the town centre at a time, with few linked trips. For example, the Precinct and Rumbridge Street were seen as separate, disconnected entities, isolated from each other, and not part of one joinedup town centre. The main causes of this fragmentation are the A336/A36 Commercial Road and the railway level-crossing, which people perceive as "hard barriers" to their journey. However, while this is a genuine issue, the severance is more psychological. The walking distance is short between the north and south of the town even if it feels much longer. This is an area that will need to be explored further supported by further technical work

Carole: If we ever come into Totton on a Friday it's gridlocked

Lin: Sometimes it's nice to have a nice walk. I walk from Hounslow and it's lovely.

Chris: We have some beautiful walks. But the issue is walking around the centre.

Caroline: Infrastructure needs to be looked at. So then we come to the quick wins

I struggle with this one saying we need more community events because we have so many

Amy: I think that's the gap between what goes on in Totton and what people know what goes on. We need to close that gap first – there's so much that people don't know about which *is* going on.

Chris: Investigating the ownership of various paths which is all over the place. It's difficult to navigate and boards would be useful

Carole: It's more about showing routes

Caroline: We did a sculpture and walking trail around Eastleigh which worked really well. We could do some lovely trails around Totton.

Chris: If we had a regular town newsletter we could have one path or trail each time to chip away at it over time. I have a lot of paths recorded from covid and I could provide maps of several and we could build it up – a map-over time

Caroline: That would be really good to do

Chris: There's a lot of support for it

Carole: People don't know this is here

Caroline: The national park already do a walking festival and they have said they are keen to get Totton involved

Susan: We could raise the profile of cafes and things along the way. Sue's moo's etc and incorporate vouchers

Caroline: Play on the way trails would be great

Susan: We get plenty of parents who are new to area and don't know Hanger Farm. Also more people where English is not first language.

Caroline: We have been told that this whole plan with the park and centre could take 20 years so we can continue working on this and these ideas into the future. It all informs Local Plans.

Lin: We need some sort of identity which is not 'out of Southampton', or gateway to forest which is just for us

Susan: We are growing and we are going to grow more

Carole: Development has been so piecemeal. Some people in Calmore don't think they have anything to do with Totton – still individual villages in some way.

Caroline: We need to draw things together with street furniture and all sorts of things we can do to help alongside infrastructure

Katherine: Does NFDC have CIL

Caroline: Yes and that's part of our budget. We need to be on top of getting what we can for Totton. There is a budget for a Totton Regeneration officer and I think there's just a recruitment issue in the way at the moment.

How does everyone feel about what's come from this report?

Katherine: It's important to have the profile. It's a good start and just how to take it to the next level.

Susan: It does reflect what people said who took part.

Katherine: it's about that next step. We need someone in place who can take it forward and be responsible

Caroline: The neighbourhood plan and town council are both named in here. We should both be part of that

Katherine: Any timescales?

Caroline: The next cabinet meeting should reveal that a little bit, which is June 7th

Lin: We just don't want them to take Totton out of our hands. They've got their identity. We're searching for ours.

Caroline: It's great that we are named in here and will be consulted and this document reflects so much of what we've discussed here for years.

That's all good then.

The other thing to go through is the brief for the consultant.

What this is all about, is the very last council meeting we had we got an initial budget for £5000, and there's possibility to get extra at the next meeting. But we were keen to get on and be able to get a tender sorted. Because of the amounts involved we are going out to tender.

Carole: Have we defined what the fee might be?

Katherine: There is guidance online

Carole: the brief needs to be clear so that the fee is clear

Draft brief is projected

We're at a good spot. We've done research which we can fit into our plan. We're there with the vision.

Carole: Do you have to tender through the council?

Susan Cutler: I think because the council are funding it I think that would make sense to use our tendering process. It's a stringent process and gives an audit trail and transparency to get the governance right.

Susan Compton: What timescales are we looking at

Caroline: Possibly a tie-in with the general election

Lin: General election might come faster than we think

Carole: We need to define those dates

Katherine: There's a lot of work with the funding available. So we have to be clear with the programme that this is phase one with more funding becoming available.

John: It can also be chicken and egg, because from P&R we need to have a look at how much it's going to be total

Caroline: It's going to be £12000 in total

Matt: Claire Upton Brown thought that the Neighbour plan is not as much a priority as the regeneration plan. Have things changed now?

Caroline: We've always needed both. Claire thought that the NP would stop the regeneration. But we link both together and it's stronger. We always needed both to give Totton a strong voice

Matt: We approve the NP by putting it forward to people. What is the NFDC position now?

Caroline: Lymington are doing one, Hythe has done one

Katherine: the main benefit is in planning applications which gives us an extra say in that detail. We still get housing imposed on us, but we get an extra say because developers need to marry up both, planners need to make sure that developments will marry up both. And it's more money for the community.

Carole: We can look at what has already been successful

Caroline: Hythe's inspired us with Bartley park conservation area, and we can take on those great ideas – ones that work for Totton.

Carole: the trouble is the national park status meant that Totton got everything thrown at it

Susan: I'm from London and we saw so much in-filling. And around here people are very naïve and don't stand up for themselves. We need to engage people far more.

Matt: I've felt in the past that everything was driven by the council. But the office didn't drive much. But we need officers more involved to follow up. Councillors are very busy with their meetings but don't have the time to chase things up.

Caroline: I see it differently because officers are doing the operations. And now we are looking at new things and visions for the town.

Lin: We had years of pushing up against it.

Caroline: Happily we are in a different position now.

Susan Compton: I know that someone has been appointed to work on the website

Susan Cutler: We do need to work much closer with the community on communications. The new IT and Comms has been in position for a month and we're taking it from there.

Caroline: to pull all this together – do we have any other comments? Shall we see what happens on Wednesday with the funding?

Carole: What are the supporting docs?

Caroline: Background documents, NFDC local plan, Richard's reports and presentations, the NP website

Katherine: I had included an appendix on the original document I sent over which would tie in with what we're talking about

Change in projection to see Katherine's work

Katherine: Potential draft structure to help candidates to see what we're looking for. Taking examples out of previous Neighbourhood Plans to see what we like. Making sure our vision is clear and relates back to the legislation, get maps in there, consultation and engagement. A bit about the history and development. What is the purpose of this Neighbourhood Plan? Green spaces, high quality development... just to try and give it some direction. And a glossary of references.

Caroline: That's fantastic, I can send that on to everybody.

Wonderful. So all we need is to sort the budget and programme.

Is there anything else we want to bring up this evening?

Susan: updates to website?

Amy: Yes, I'll keep things updated

Susan Cutler: We looked into getting funding for the next stages, but then unfortunately they stopped the scheme before we could apply

Jenna: I've signed up to a newsletter to get notifications, but haven't heard anything yet.

Caroline: Another point – one of the reasons why Claire was against the NP is the national framework which is being reviewed

Katherine: This is the nationwide document that covers all planning policy and at one point they were considering discontinuing NP but they have now decided they will keep them.

Lin: Will this change with a change in government?

Katherine: Quite possibly

Caroline: Not top priority probably

Carole: We've had a history of announcements but nothing delivered lately

End of Meeting: 20.25