

Neighbourhood Plan meeting minutes for 5th Jan 2021

In attendance: Caroline Rackham, Amy Hardingson, Emma Cully, Katherine, Christine Farleigh, Richard Lewis

Meeting started at 7pm

The meeting started off with an introduction of Richard Lewis and his interests in a potential new cycle route for North Totton and surrounding areas.

3 things to talk about tonight: cycling ideas, town centre document, and nfdc and neighbourhood plans

NFDC and neighbourhood plans

Caroline has had discussions with Claire Upton Brown.

We have just a few documents to put together and then we've done all we can do. We're looking at using funding from some of the developments happening on our edges, and to look at redevelopment. It's about having some level of control over what happens.

We need a document that NFDC and developers are held to. We might not necessarily need a neighbourhood plan.

Does that make sense

Katherine: Yes – need to make sure we are parallel with Local Plan, especially for North Totton development

Caroline: Yes and same for town centre

Caroline: District council can be held to account within the bounds of whatever document we come up with

Richard: Get more money for the neighbourhood plan. My suggestion is we put forward the funding for a neighbourhood plan. The full grant to develop a neighbourhood plan can be useful – we can use the funding in various different ways which could be useful. Supplementary planning documents, a design brief, outline master plan etc. Sets out the desires of people living in Totton, and shows how developments can meet those. The neighbourhood plan succinctly says all of this.

Caroline: We've had a grant for what we've done so far. We still have some money left, most of it has been spent on the SNUG designs. Much of what we have left to do is to spend on professional writing up.

The next thing is to look at the town vision.

So that's where we're at with NFDC.

Unfortunately, we won't be having any support by Totton Town Council anymore due to staff changes. So we really need the support by NFDC.

Cycle access ideas by Richard

Richard shares his screen.

Richard lives locally and is a town planner by qualification and wants to get involved. This is to share some ideas on improving the local area.

Passionate about climate change and finding solutions.

Richard goes over his career history which included working on some major projects in London, and established his own consultancy in 2018. Has had major success in winning grants for climate change projects.

Passion for cycling spills over into infrastructure, working on climate change, improving health, improving safety. As soon as there has been investment and there's a nice way to walk or cycle to work they will try it.

Idea for a new walking/cycle way from north west Totton to Winsor. Oleander Drive to Tatchbury Lane. It would be a little lane going through the woodland to enable walking, cycling, and potentially if wide enough would even be able to be a bridleway too.

Would serve local people, create good connections, and enable more people to commute by walking or cycling as opposed to driving.

The cost of this route would be about £100,000. Might be possible to get that cost down a little depending on the width of the track, but if we're going to do it it is worth doing well. Cost includes excavation, fencing, and the path surface.

At the moment this is a public footpath, but surface isn't consistent and it's difficult to get along in parts. Has the potential to be a really nice walkway/cycleway.

Maintenance – would require sweeping seasonally.

Would be possible to get government funding for Local Cycling and Walking infrastructure plan. This would look at existing networks and potential demand. Would give us something to present to HCC when they are looking at potential projects.

Salisbury road would also be another key place. It's a key route into the town centre. Busy road, but no safe place to cycle. Could be a quality route which would provide value.

You could also use parts of other routes (section going past Testwood School and up by Ewell road). Wouldn't necessarily have to go down whole road.

Salisbury road opportunity could also be a key one to allocate funding from Totton North as it's connected to that route.

About 4-6% of people cycle in Totton. There's even more walking. So any project should go hand in hand with walking. And bus stops should have places for people to store bikes to help that all go together as well and widen potential uptake.

Caroline: thanks for that Richard, this will all go together with other bits of the plan we've been working on already.

Richard: Having an integrated plan will make a big difference to help us tackle the issues we care about.

Katherine: Neighbourhood plan gives you more teeth, it's a strong document

Richard: It's a chance for you to show people your ambition from the grassroots up. If you give people a little bit of a parameter, something to work within then they will start coming up with comments.

Caroline: Lovely, that's definitely food for thought.

Town Centre

Caroline shares her screen

This is a document that pulls together all the things we have discussed before to do with the Town Centre.

The vision from the very start has included improving the aesthetics of the town centre and encourage better access.

3 levels which have come out of our previous discussions:

1. Superficial improvements – new fencing, new planters, street furniture
2. Structural and infrastructure – better access for pedestrians and cycling, road closures for pedestrians
3. Reconfiguration of town centre – what Snug looked at. Moving the centre of the town to be the park.

Let's discuss the road closure idea – which is for Library Road

Christine – living on Testwood road, would have a huge impact. One of the thoughts I had is where will the buses turn around? At the moment they wait by the police stations, and then go down Beaumont road and turn right to come back into the route.

Caroline – the taxi rank could be that place if it was wide enough

Emma – Do you know where the Asda bus stop is? The T1 and T2 could turn around there.

Caroline – if we could sort the buses out, what are the other issues

Emma – you'd lose two car parks

Caroline – this map doesn't make what we've discussed clear. We're actually very keen to keep those car parks

Richard- those car parks are actually very hard to access at the moment

Caroline – they have fast turnover though

Richard – the benefit here is to join up the two halves of the town centre

Caroline – Taxi rank is another problem to solve but they could go by Dominos potentially.

Talking about the Snug plan for the town centre in more depth. Snug are keen on the idea of offices next to the train station, and it might be worth us getting that defined for the local plan. Building height needs to be discussed because snug has suggested 4 stories.

The park and rearrangement is the other major thing they present

Katherine: It's good how the park is brought down to the park. Dual fronted precinct would work well. The park as a central corridor/ link between the civic and the precinct

Caroline: And would work really well for outdoor events. Lantern procession etc. It would improve how the community could use the space.

Richard: Might be worth incorporating Junction Road as well, as it has potential. Rumbridge street seems to be a creative hub, or has the potential. If Junction road was a market street this would open this up. Consolidating the town centre much more. But this might not be popular to suggest moving current shopkeepers.

Caroline: we didn't ask Snug to consider rumbridge street because it's so far off and cut off by the level crossing

Katherine: It's a great hub for independent businesses

Caroline: Is there a way of encouraging this?

Amy: We could make some superficial changes to street furniture that could encourage people to see the potential of this area

Richard: guerrilla urbanism is what we need. We need to see what works. Having ideas that we could move around. Spending a bit of money on experimental ideas that can be moved around.

Caroline: That's sort of where we've gotten to with the roundabout. It's faintly ridiculous that we have to close the whole town centre to have any event in the centre of the town. What would make a huge difference would be to change the layout slightly

Richard: Yes and it can be levelled up as you see what works. Do we need all this traffic going through Totton town centre? Make it a bus way during certain times of day. Make it so you can still drive in to the town centre but not through it. Although that would probably be very unpopular.

Caroline: Yes, most of Totton has to come through the town centre to get anywhere. But it is a really interesting idea.

Richard: Traffic should be in main roads, not on residential streets

Caroline: But unfortunately we have a main road that goes through the centre of Totton.

The other thing to talk about is building height, which is causing controversy.

Up to 5 storeys is financially viable, or above 8 is financially viable. We've come to the conclusion that 8 is too high. But 4 or 5 storeys gives us more options.

We currently have some 3 storeys, and others which are high 2 storeys. Some of the flats at the back of the park are currently 4 storeys.

Richard: Makes sense to increase the density. Would help to save the independent shops. It's what you expect in a town. You don't want a 5 storey opposite 2, but you can step it up and it could really work.

Katherine: my only other concern is it is very much 2 storeys around there, so it's how you achieve the mixed development with moving some of the civic (police, fire etc)

Caroline: they have said they are open to moving, but we do have 20 landowners in this space so that does make it difficult.

Richard: If you could put the car parking underground you would free up more space. That's how the dutch do it. The car parks are underneath the public squares etc.

Caroline: That's been put forward at Fawley actually.

Part of the issue for all of this is that at the moment this is all designated as civic in the local plan, and we want to change the designation to mixed civic/residential/retail. So having NFDC involved will help us to change this designation, and part of the reason that nothing has changed is because of the current designation.

Richard: You can promote pieces of land that you want something done with.

Caroline: We are getting there. They are keener on Totton than they have ever been.

Katherine: and when you have all these things incorporated you are more likely to get public support as well.

Richard: Your timing is perfect with the local plan to get this changed.

Caroline: Yes it's gaining headway.

A few minutes missed here.

Talking about Bid Teams

Caroline to get someone to talk to us.

Encouraging outdoor public space events

Richard: more opportunities for guerrilla experimenting. We could look at using car free day and doing a massive street party. You create a massive public space

Caroline: That's an interesting idea to use car free day

Richard: That's in September, or there's cycling day in June

Caroline: doing temporary things can help get permanent things in

Richard: And don't listen to Facebook, listen to the facts. People will object but they won't say how wonderful

Caroline: and play areas – we need a play area in the town centre. Perhaps something that is also sculpture.

Amy – Yes definitely, would have big benefits

Richard – and play areas for adults too. Tables for chess or display areas for artwork and activities and fun and joy and excitement. We have to make our town centres vibrant and exciting and an experience. Well, if we don't

build experiences into the town centre they won't come. Totton shouldn't just be a conduit for cars, it should be a place for people.

Caroline: Let's call it a day for tonight. Really brilliant discussion. It would be great to see all these things realised.

Meeting ended 8.30pm