

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Faversham Town Council

Thursday 4th March 2021, 7pm on Zoom

Present:

Mayor of Faversham, Cllr A Reynolds	Cllr J Saunders	Cllr J Irwin
Deputy Mayor, Cllr T Martin	Cllr A Hook	Cllr K Barker
Cllr E Thomas	Cllr C Williams	Cllr H Perkin

In Attendance:

A Begent (Deputy Town Clerk)

348.	Election of Chairman Cllr K Barker proposed himself, seconded by Cllr A Reynolds and on being put to the meeting it was agreed unanimously that Cllr Baker should Chair the meeting.
349.	Apologies for Absence Apologies were received from Cllrs B J Martin and C Jackson.
350.	Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests Cllr H Perkin (DNPI) – SBC Deputy Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing Cllr J Saunders (DNPI) – SBC Cabinet Member for Environment
351.	Agenda Since the Agenda for the meeting had been published, Swale Borough Council had extended the Consultation Period for Regulation 19 from 23 rd March to 30 th April. It was proposed by Cllr K Barker, seconded by Cllr T Martin and on being put to the meeting it was agreed that this meeting should discuss themes around the local plan, rather than the Town Councils formal response. A further meeting was planned on 23 rd March, which the Chief Executive of SBC and officers would attend to answer questions. The feedback from this meeting would feed into the formal response.
352.	Housing Allocations The housing allocation is decided by Central Government, it is up to the Borough to allocate. In Swale we are constricted by the landscape, high grade agricultural land and marshland. The Planning Inspector in 2018 stated that continual development around Sittingbourne and the A2 corridor was unsustainable and future development should go to the

	<p>eastern end of the borough.</p> <p>As well as housing numbers, consideration should also be given to the proportion of affordable houses being built in Faversham. This need was highlighted by Housing Needs Assessment which estimated 1900 housing units are required for affordable purchase or affordable rent in Faversham. The types of housing also needs considering, including provision of units for singles, couples, families and the elderly who wish to downsize. Sufficient affordable housing should be allocated in the Local Plan. National policy relies on the market to provide housing, rather than investing in social housing to tackle housing needs. Housing provision is driven by economic factors not local need.</p>
<p>353.</p>	<p>Local Plan Considerations</p> <p>Mains drainage- some properties in Faversham, notably to the south of the A2 are not on mains drainage, it is desirable that where development takes place these existing properties are linked to mains drainage being put in for the new developments.</p> <p>Environmental standards – there are some good policies in the plan for example photovoltaic panels and charging points for cars. It was noted that a Local Council is restricted in its policy making by the viability of the development, so good initiatives may be lost if a development becomes unviable.</p> <p>Strategic green corridors – The TC is trying to improve environmental standards in the town. Two of the strategic green corridors link with the LCWIP that the TC is producing and will help with provision for cycling and walking to to the east of the town. It is positive that the plan reduces reliance on private cars and encourages walking, cycling and sustainable transport.</p> <p>Biodiversity – It is encouraging to see 20% net gain in biodiversity, this raises standards above national guidance.</p> <p>Education – It is positive that there is provision for two schools in the plan. It was noted that there was no early years provision. Whilst not a statutory requirement, SBC through its Health and Wellbeing Plan had considered the Marmot Review which looks at the importance of early years provision and the consequences for long term health.</p> <p>Healthcare Provision – The LP specifies that the health provision was set out after consultation with Kent and Medway’s CCG, which says there is no need for additional healthcare provision, but that developers maybe asked</p>

	<p>to contribute to the expansion of existing facilities within the town, Should the existing practices be consulted, along with volunteer health providers and social prescription services.</p> <p>Countryside Gaps – Important to separate town and villages. Policy DM2 considers the setting of Oare and Ospringe and Goodnestone but other settlements around Faversham are of equal importance, for example Selling, Boughton and Dunkirk.</p> <p>Open Spaces, Sports and Recreation – DM17 sets a guideline figure per 1000 population for sports provision, but it doesn't breakdown the forecasted population for the town. It is questionable whether sports provision on some proposed developments is adequate.</p> <p>Cumulative Effect of Development – The 1100 houses in Tenyham will impact on Faversham and in particular Ospringe AQMA.</p> <p>Brenley Corner – Highways England need to be pressed for improvements at Brenley Corner, without it is questionable if the plan is sustainable.</p> <p>Character of Borough – The Plans state that “most of the borough is rural in character”, this is true in terms of KM² but not in proportion of populations, with many residents residing in towns. Not all development in Swale should be considered as rural, towns need good design for town life and the challenges that are specific to towns.</p> <p>Build out – Can SBC influence the speed that developments are built to minimise the impact on existing residents.</p> <p>General – It was considered that some language used in all policy areas could be stronger, e.g. from encourage to insist and with specified targets and definitions.</p> <p>Summary - there are some positives in the plan (active travel, net gain of biodiversity, countryside gaps) as well as areas that will need further considering/questioning (engagement with CCG regarding healthcare provision, communitive impact of settlements, transportation and sport/leisure provision).</p>
<p>354.</p>	<p>Local Green Spaces</p> <p>SBC has undertaken a Local Green Spaces Call for sites and selected sites are included in the plan. One of the sites being considered (LGS/078) is a site that has been submitted in the housing call for sites for</p>

	<p>the NHP, the Town Council may wish to make a recommendation.</p> <p>The NHP SG will also have a LGS call for sites, for considering any sites that have been omitted for example Crab Island (LGS/072).</p> <p>It was noted that Perry Court (and other developments) had been designed with several small green spaces rather than one larger area. It was questioned how well smaller green areas served the community, and whether larger areas with more facilities were better. Larger areas may also be desirable for maintenance.</p> <p>The NHP Residents Survey had highlighted provision for 11-18 year olds was inadequate. The Local Plan should provide space, which doesn't need to be green. The area provided should not be marginalised but central.</p>
355.	<p>Development to West of Faversham</p> <p>The cumulative effect of development was raised again, the impact of 1100 additional houses in Teynham will impact on Faversham. It is therefore preferable that any development is on the east of the town and not the west.</p> <p>In the transport element of plan, there are suggestions on how transport could be managed. Suggestion of suburban roads being opened up to take traffic, does the TC wish to investigate.</p>
356.	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan and the Relationship with Local Plan</p> <p>It was noted with disappointment that the Town Council had not received a definite housing figure for Faversham. 3,500 houses being considered on three sites to the east of the town, but these sites are split over several parishes. The NHP needs a definitive number for the parish of Faversham. The NHP will be useful to add detail to the LP, specifically on sites and design in the parish.</p>
357.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Cllr K Barker announced that Policy and Finance Committee will set a date for a further Extraordinary Meeting to discuss the Town Council's formal response.</p>

ANNEX

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Mr Nigel Kay: In the Current Local Plan, Bearing Fruits, 17% of Swale Housing Allocation is allocated to Faversham. At the time of the allocation this was fair as Faversham was not in the Thame Corridor, so did not receive the investment in infrastructure that Sheppey and Sittingbourne did. It is apparent that the new administration at SBC is trying to cancel allocations to Sheppey and Sittingbourne in Bearing Fruits and push the housing allocations to Faversham, which would destroy the character of the town forever. A figure of 8000 houses (including Windfall sites) has been leaked. The CPRE agree that the leaked figure is potentially accurate. This is not necessary as Faversham Swale Councillors hold the balance of power at SBC on the Swale Local Plan. Will those members put their allegiance to Rainbow Alliance aside and will they and the Town Council fight for Faversham to ensure the town only has its fair share of Swale's housing allocation and stop our wonderful historic town and grade one agricultural land being destroyed?

Cllr K Barker: The allocations were agreed in the Autumn of 2020, when Strategy C was chosen, allocating more housing to the east of the borough, as it was considered it had previously been allocated to the west. 8000 houses and the windfall, includes delivery of the remaining houses in Bearing Fruits. There are the two strategic sites to the east of Faversham which will accommodate a further 3500 houses. 2000 houses in the emerging plan are windfall and Faversham can be protected from these through the Neighbourhood Plan. I think it is untrue that the Faversham Swale Borough Councillors hold the balance of power, they are a fraction of the Council and collectively they cannot outweigh the majority of the Council.

Cllr J Irwin: I will respond on the question of windfall as Chair of Faversham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The LP leaves the NHP to identify sites for 200 additional houses. The NHP has undertaken a call for sites, we will then identify where any additional development beyond the current LP allocation should take place in Faversham, once we have identified these sites, we will make it clear Faversham has no further sites for development. The plan will identify sites for the 200 houses and also areas that cannot be developed. The NHP will protect the town from future windfall.

Cllr T Martin: The Planning Inspector considering Bearing Fruits noted that the allocation was unbalanced and more housing should be allocated to the east of the borough, which is why the review was started immediately. We must also remember that Districts are set housing numbers by Central Government. It should also be noted that some of the 3,500 allocation are beyond the boundary of the town and in neighbouring parishes.

Cllr A Hook: The UK Government imposes the number of houses that Districts must build. Several Kent MP's signed a letter calling on the Government to change the number they were imposing and it is deeply disappointing that the Faversham MP did not add their signature and that the reasons have not been explained. The previous Borough Council approved Perry Court against the wishes of the population of Faversham. Lets now do the best for Faversham.

Mr C Oswald-Jones: Has the Town Council made a representation concerning the missing Regulation 18

Cllr J Irwin: The day after Bearing Fruits was adopted, Regulation 18 happened.

Cllr J Saunders: In Spring 2018 SBC did undertake a formal Regulation 18 consultation. There were 46 questions, notification letters were sent out to 2000 individuals and organisations, 238 parties responded, making over 3000 separate representations. In addition 406 quick questionnaires were returned and additional 30 questionnaires tailored to local school students were received. The response rate for greater then for any other LP consultation within the Borough, there was significant opposition to further development around the Sittingbourne area whilst there was support for development to the eastern end of the borough.

Mr H Goodwin: Swale Borough Council has a poor record on Planning Enforcement, I am concerned that the plan is not specific enough on policy to control development. For example in the Creek NHP, builds were restricted to two storey, but this has not stopped new builds from having large roofs spaces that from completion provide an additional floor. There is a lot of good in this plan, but without enforcement it will not achieve what we want it to.

Cllr J Irwin: I agree the lack of enforcement at SBC is poor, the number of retrospective planning applications we see at Planning Committee where no action has been taken is a disgrace. An adopted NHP will add the detail to the LP, there will be site specific guidance and polices for different areas.

Mr H Goodwin: Can the NHP influence sites that relate to Faversham but are outside the Parish Boundary. Do we need to push Swale to make some polices tighter so they can be enforced in parishes that don't have a NHP.

Cllr T Martin: Notes concern over enforcement, which we share. Also share concerns over areas adjacent to the town, and we should asks that the polices within the NHP are added to the final planning documents for developments in the area around.