

**Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review Group,
Wednesday 16th April 2025, 5:45pm URC Hall
Minutes (Meeting 15)**

Present:

Roy RAMM (RR) Chairman, Richard FREEMAN (RF), Nick ARMON-JONES, NAJ), Brian POPE, (BP), David COHEN (DC), Roy MITCHELL (RM), Marry-Ann DUNN (MD), Kevin FARROW (KF), Mike MASTER (MM), David ANDREWS (DA).

1. Apologies for Absence:

John MOORE (JM), Hywel JONES (HJ).

2. Declaration of Interest:

None

3. Minutes of Last Meeting (Meeting 14):

None

4. Matters Arising, not on Agenda:

RR reported that the March meeting was cancelled due to the problems arising from funding the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which was not available until June at the earliest. John Evans (Local District Councillor) had reported (to the Parish Council) that there was no certainty that funds would be made available by central government, which could delay us further.

5. Site Selection:

Utlesford District Council (UDC) have prepared a Scoping Study for the SEA. RR explained that UDC had advised that the new Neighbourhood Plan (FNP) would require a SEA because the plans for development may have an impact on the whole parish. Therefore, our original date of end May 2025 for a formal presentation of the FNP to Felsted residents (known as Reg 14) may be delayed for several months.

The Group further noted that, the requirement for a SEA would not apply to developers brining planning applications forward for similar or even larger developments, which could then receive consent from the Planning Inspectorate before we are able to move to Reg 14, undermining many months of the Group's work.

6. Public Consultations:

RR reported that the planning consultants representing the owners of two large sites, the Water Tower site in Garnetts Lane and the Bloor Homes site at Watchhouse Green, were in the process of holding open consultation days to display their plans prior to making formal Planning Applications.

7. Designated Green Spaces:

RR reported that at a recent meeting with UDC, the Planning Officials suggested that a FULL Designated Green Space (DGS) report was unnecessary since most of the spaces listed were in Felsted PC ownership and were not therefore vulnerable.

Considering the additional volume of work required and the delay that might entail, it was suggested that a DGS report could be presented separately rather than be included in the revised FNP. A discussion followed about the possible impact of local government reorganisation on the parish's ability to bring forward this (and similar) local plans. The uncertainty was unhelpful.

BP agreed to note the suggestion of revising the report, deleting PC owned spaces, but would investigate the position of Footpaths.

8. Revised Text:

RR reported that UDC Planning Officials had now advised that the revised FNP did not require as much background information and history and many of the points would be covered by the New Uttlesford DC NP. They said that the submitted draft contained measures that were covered in the Local Plan and were therefore unnecessary.

RF said that while we understood and welcomed the advice on duplication, we were very concerned about coalescence and, notwithstanding UDC's general advice, RF and RR had said that a policy on coalescence would be included. UDC confirmed it was 'our plan' and we could include whatever we want. It was agreed that a 'Coalescence Policy' should be included in our Plan.

RR reported that UDC proposed we only detail the new proposed sites to cover our housing allocation. This will make it less complicated to accept and consequently UDC were now hoping to allow us to enter Regulation 14 by end of May.

RR said that the SEA report would still have to be completed, but UDC suggested we could now prepare a Reg 14 Consultation without an SEA. UDC said there was some risk associated with this and it could make it easier for developers to challenge a made plan. RR reported that our professional advisors agreed that there was risk and one considered that the risk was perhaps higher than UDC described and needed to be very carefully considered.

9. UDC Support:

We were still receiving support from Demetria MacDonald and Racheal Hogger in preparing the revised text.

10. Reg 14 Consultation:

RR reported that advanced payments had been made to cover printing and addressed envelopes in preparation for a resident's presentation in the future. But in view of the latest news from UDC we should meet again soon to prepare a presentation to residents in any event. RR also reported that we would be able to use the services of The Focus delivery team to circulate detailed letters to announce the Resident's Meeting.

11. Treasurer's Report:

BP asked RR to let him have the invoices from the printers so he could raise a cheque, he also asked if a further payment was due to the consultant and RR agreed to check. It was noted that a further grant application would need to be made to cover the cost of any SEA that may be required in due course.

12. Any Other Business:

NAJ asked if Felsted PC had been successful in trying to reduce our housing allocation in view of the impact of the proposed large Solar Farm project. RF reported that an attempt had been made but was refused because the project was subject to a totally different planning process as National Infrastructure Project (NIP) enforced by Central Government and was not relevant to new Housing.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

No date fixed, yet, because it will depend on the progress in advancing to Reg 14 consultation with residents.