

**Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review Group,
Wednesday 21st May 2025, 5:45pm URC Hall
Minutes (Meeting 16)**

Present:

Roy RAMM (RR) Chairman, Richard FREEMAN (RF), Nick ARMON-JONES, (NAJ), Brian POPE, (BP), David COHEN (DC), Mike MASTER (MM), David ANDREWS (DA), John Moore (JM), Roy MITCHELL (RM), Hywel JONES (HJ).

1. Apologies for Absence:

Mary-Ann DUNN (MD), Kevin FARROW (KF)

2. Declaration of Interest:

DC reported that he has contact with employees of Bloor Homes through his work. The Chairman advised that he did not consider this would be classed as D of I, as DC has contact with builders and contractors when performing his duties as part of his employment.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting:

BP suggested that some of the points noted in the minutes were too technical (eg: “screening out”) and required simpler explanations to make them easier for a layperson to understand. Chairman agreed that BP should submit his proposed revisions prior to publication of the minutes.

4. Matters arising, (not on agenda):

None.

5. Site Selection:

RR reported that Uttlesford DC (UDC) remained insistent that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), would be necessary for the Review of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP). This requirement would delay the RG’s progress to having a new ‘made plan’ and weaken the parish’s opposition to any unwanted developments. (NB: this was described in full at the last meeting 15, para 5).

The Group noted that it was ironic that neither of the two proposed development sites (set out in 6 below), that were the subject of recent public consultations, were required to have an SEA.

6. Recent Developers Consultations:

RR reported that Public Consultations for proposed Housing Developments had recently been held as follows:

Site 1: Springfields Planning and Developments (Springfields)– 70 new houses behind Garnetts Lane and the Old Water Tower. *This was one of the sites submitted in the 2015 SHLAA by UDC that the RG was in the process of assessing and supporting but delayed by the insistence of UDC in requiring a SEA.*

Site 2: Bloor Homes- 100 new houses behind Rayne Road on the border of Watch House and Bannister Greens. *This was also one of the sites submitted in the 2015 SHLAA that the RG had assessed but originally rejected for development because of very restricted access, coalescence and over development in this area.*

Site 1: RR reported that following the Public Consultation on 23rd April 2025 by Springfields, residents had written to him and approx. 40 from Garnetts Lane attended the Parish Council meeting on 7th May to express their displeasure at the proposals. (It was noted that their comments indicated that they had not: followed the FNPRG progress reported on the Felsted PC website; read the regular reports in Focus magazine or attended the March 2024 Walk-in.)

Site 2: RR reported that Bloor Homes held a Public Consultation on 8th May 2025. Significantly, the access to the site had been improved by the acquisition of an existing property and having been moved further along Rayne Road. The site was therefore materially different from the site presented to the 2015 SHLAA and at the 'Drop-In' held in March 2024. Understandably, nearby residents were voicing strong objections to the new proposals.

There was a comprehensive discussion of the situation and the options now available to the RG and the following was decided:

- The RG agreed that the extension to Sunnybrook Farm development (Sunnybrook 2), to establish circa 17 new small houses and a possible site for a new Village Shop / Post Office, should remain a preferred site.
- The Group acknowledged that there was a strong possibility that both the Water Tower and Bloor Homes sites may go straight to the Planning Inspectorate (PI) before the RG could produce a Reg 14 plan for consultation with Felsted residents.
- It was agreed that the RG would not proceed to Reg 14 consultation without the benefit of the SEA because to do so would increase the risk of challenges to the legitimacy of the new NP through non-compliance with relevant regulations.
- Several members of the RG reiterated their concerns about the safety and practicality of the proposed access to the Water Tower site, notwithstanding the fact that ECC Highways had indicated to Springfields that it would be acceptable.
- It was agreed that representatives of the RG should seek a second meeting with the agents for Bloor Homes to better understand their new proposals and explore what, if any, benefits they may yield for Felsted.
- The RG agreed to circulate a leaflet summarising the situation and options open to residents of Felsted prior to holding a further consultation with them at the end of June 2025. It was agreed to invite the TWO developers to provide displays but not attend in person. Also, because the Hedgehog Solar Farm was topical, to allow a display so that residents could evaluate the total impact of that proposed development on the Parish.

RR took the opportunity to share with the RG the substance of an exchange of e mails he had recently with BP regarding the timing of a communication with the agent for one of the proposed developments noted above. BP's concerns were that the communication should have been delayed until after the RG had met and arrived at

the decisions noted immediately above. RR explained that there had to be regular contact with would be developers to understand their plans and to try to secure benefits for the community (eg social housing) and emphasised that his intention was not to favour one developer over another.

BP recommended that, whichever developments were ultimately supported by the RG, any S106 agreements should require the developers to deliver the community benefits (eg social housing, sites for a relocated shop etc) at an agreed (ideally early) stage in the development as had been, for example, the case at Chelmer Village in the past. RR agreed that this was a good idea.

7. Revised Text:

RR reported that UDC had not provided the revised text, as promised, although they had agreed to reduce the contents; he had chased on the 19th May and sent a follow up e mail requesting an update on progress.

8. Treasurers Report:

BP reported that RR had sent him a statement from the printers, but no supporting invoice had been produced, RR agreed to request a copy. (Since supplied)

BP updated the RG on the timeline for submission of the end of year report to Groundworks regarding the Grant to fund the Group's expenditure.

9. Any Other Business:

NAJ reported that 4,500 brochures were posted to the local community promoting Hedgehog Solar Farm, but only 28 replies had been received which indicates the continuing apathy of residents to be involved in matters affecting Felsted.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 18th June 2025 TBC

Meeting ended at 1930.