

Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review Group,
Wednesday 23rd July 2025, 5:45pm URC Hall

DRAFT Minutes (Meeting 19)

Present:

Roy RAMM (RR) Chairman, Richard FREEMAN (RF), Nick ARMON-JONES (NAJ), Brian POPE, (BP), David COHEN (DC), Mary-Ann DUNN (MD), Kevin FARROW (KF), Mike MASTER (MM), John MOORE (JM).

3. Apologies for Absence:

Hywel JONES (HJ), David ANDREWS (DA).

2. Declaration of Interest:

None

3. Minutes of Last Meeting (Meeting 18):

Approved.

4. Matters Arising, not on Agenda:

None.

5. Consultation Outcome:

A copy of the note summarising the comments and results from the Consultation Events held at URC on 11/12 th July 2025 is attached to these Minutes.

RR reported that the note regarding the Consultation Events has been published on the Felsted PC website and sent to the planning agents for both the proposed development sites at the Water Tower and Bloor Homes site at Bannister and Watch House Greens. The note gave the result of the numerical count of votes and summarised the attendees' views.

Apart from the obvious and expected desire for "no more developments in Felsted", there was no decisive outcome favouring one site over the other. There was also some constructive feedback both for and against each site.

RR reported that the overwhelming majority of the attendees had been engaged, asked pertinent questions and expressed their gratitude to the Review Group for the work put into the Events.

Only one resident was unpleasantly angry, aggressive and confrontational to RR. He stated that two members of the RG had said the decision on the allocation of sites '*had already been taken*' and the Event was misleading the parish. RR had refuted the accusations that were made and explained the NP process and the purpose of the Event. The resident was repeatedly asked to identify who he alleged had made the comments but declined to do so before leaving.

It was disappointing that many attendees were not aware of the initial NP which was "made" in 2020 and resulted in the Bury Farm development (and will lead to the new doctors' surgery) and Sunnybrook 1 development (and has resulted in the carpark at the Primary School).

The inconclusive outcome of the Events, with no clear support for either of the sites, has left the RG with no clear guidance from residents other than “*we are against further development in Felsted*”. (Note: the RG share that sentiment but has an obligation to meet the parish’s housing allocation with the best outcome for the community.)

There was a detailed discussion on the merits of each of the proposed sites, summarised as follows:

Water Tower Site: includes the required mix of houses, including 6 Social houses to be owned by the parish. The fundamental concern of the RG had always been the poor access to the site - Stebbing Road, both north and west of the site was unsuitable for the inevitable increased traffic and there were doubts whether Garnetts Lane could cope either, especially with construction traffic. RF made the point that the suitability of the access is primarily an issue for Essex Highways to assess and decide upon.

RF went on to say that he had recently written to the Strategic Development Manager at Essex Highways (as the Statutory Consultee on highways matters in Planning Applications) to clarify aspects of his pre-application report prepared for the landowner’s agent and shared with us, including seeking his professional opinion of the suitability and appropriateness of the use of Garnetts Lane as the only route of access. A reply is awaited.

Following extensive discussion, it was agreed that the RG should contact the agent for the landowner and explain that, for the RG to support this site, we considered that a new and improved access point needed to be established.

Bloor Homes: the RG had not selected this site from outset because the original site access point was unsuitable, and development would breach policies (NP and LP) intended to prevent coalescence (i.e: merging two hamlets together.) Additionally, the plan proposed more homes (circa 100) than the parish is required to provide (our residual number of homes is circa 70) and would result in unnecessary over-development.

Bloor’s latest plan indicated a new, improved access but there was no offer of social housing or any other community benefit and the concern regarding coalescence remained.

After extensive discussion, it was agreed that the RG should contact the agent for the developer and explain that we could not consider justifying support for this plan unless there was a reduction in the number of houses, an offer of community benefit and the proposed layout was amended to mitigate the coalescence.

Sunnybrook II: There had been a general acceptance of further development of this site which includes provision of a site for a future Village Shop / Post Office.

Given the inconclusive outcome of the consultation events, the further site assessment work and the requirement for an SEA (conducted by AECOM), it was now unlikely that the revised NP could move to the Regulation 14 (publication and public consultation) stage until Q4 2025. This was because the SEA would take circa 2/3 months from commissioning (unlikely before mid-August) and the results considered and incorporated into the review.

The RG would also seek advice (from UDC), as to if it was possible to obtain advice from AECOM on whether the environmental impact of both sites (Water Tower and Bloor) was possible or whether it would be necessary for the RG to allocate a site for the required number of houses prior to the SEA commencing.

In the meantime, the RG noted that both developers were well advanced with their plans and were likely to make Planning Applications prior to the completion of the review of the NP.

6. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):

As noted in point 5 above, UDC require an SEA of the whole area before the NP can make further progress. There was now an indication that they will fund the assessment, subject to approval at a forthcoming UDC Cabinet meeting. A Scoping Report has been prepared, so when financing is provided, we will be able to appoint a suitable consultancy organisation (almost certainly AECOM), but their final report is unlikely to be completed within 2/3 months.

RR said that he would work with UDC to try to ensure the potential environmental impact of both proposed developments was considered.

7. Revised Text:

RR reported that UDC Planning Officials had now prepared 3 papers towards the draft Review, with more to follow. He requested RG members read them for possible amendment and final agreement at the next meeting. In preparation for the meeting, he also suggested members should refresh their understanding of the NP process and referenced a document on the Locality website.

8. Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer (BP) reported that, after the costs of the Consultation Event, the RG had funds of approximately £700.

9. Any Other Business:

RR reported that he had a recent meeting with the new Surgery Practice Manager at the Bury Farm site with the Mulberry Homes. RR has been informed that construction will commence soon (4/5 weeks).

Meeting closed at 1910

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

6th August 2025 at 5:45pm at the URC Hall.