

Summary of North Felixstowe Citizens Panel – Workshop 1

Held on:

26th February 2024

Present

Name	Inits.	Company	Inits.
Jeni Watts	JW	East Suffolk Council	ESC
Paul Wood	PW	East Suffolk Council	ESC
Tom Shopland	TS	LDA Design	LDA
David Bell	DB	LDA Design	LDA
Seb Burchell	SB	LDA Design	LDA
Citizens Panel	CP		

Introduction to the citizen's panel:

On Monday the 26th of February, LDA Design and East Suffolk Council hosted the first workshop of the North Felixstowe Citizens Panel. Across a series of five workshops the North Felixstowe Citizens Panel, made up of 20 representatives of the community, will weave a series of recommendations and suggestions into the masterplanning process. These suggestions and recommendations will be responded to after each session, beginning from the second session.

Each workshop will have a theme that has been chosen based upon the development topics that are intrinsically linked with the scheme. The themes are flexible and may slightly change dependent on the conversations by the citizen's panel during the workshops.

The first workshop's theme was titled 'a common starting point'. By 'a common starting point', this means providing the citizens panel and facilitators with the key pieces of information that have preceded the first workshop.

Overview of presentations:

After an introduction to the process from the lead facilitator, Paul Wood, Head of Economic Development and Regeneration from East Suffolk Council, delivered a presentation explaining the council's recent involvement in the project. He explained the policy context, the site being allocated for development in the adopted [East Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal Local Plan](#) (policy SCLP 12.3) the relationship with the other landowners on the site, the context behind the leisure-led masterplan and the connections with the provision of a new leisure centre. Paul finished his presentation by showing the panel the council's timeline and programme for the masterplan, with the intention of submitting an [outline planning application](#) at the end of 2024.

David Bell, Associate Town Planner from LDA Design, then spoke with the group about LDA's work on the project to date. He gave a brief overview about the history of LDA Design, the company's landscape and people-led design ethos and the stakeholder workshop approach the consultants have undertaken on the project.

David finished his speech by explaining what an outline planning application and what a [reserved matters application](#) was. He also explained that a [design code](#) - a mechanism that controls certain aspects of the development beyond the outline planning application - would need to be submitted with the application. David explained that there were a number of stakeholders involved in the process of securing planning permission on the site, including the local authority, landowners, statutory consultees and the community. Finally, David suggested a potential outcome from the Citizens Panels workshop would be their ability to shape the development of a design code for the North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood.

Activity 1:

The Citizens Panel were then asked to break out into groups and to have some self-reflections on what they heard and learnt. Tasked with synthesising these learnings into two questions they would like to share with the wider room, the breakout groups asked the following questions - answers included:

1. Question - Was there a method of calculating the existing demand on existing services and how do you work it out?

Paul Wood - Yes there is a method of calculating existing demand, this is undertaken by the various organisations relevant to the service provision e.g. Suffolk County Council Highways undertake assessments on road capacity relating to new developments. A phasing strategy will be developed for the scheme to ensure the demand on services does not become too great - 1500 homes will not be built at once, and it is likely to span 10 to 20 years.

Citizen Panel discussion: There was an appreciation amongst the group that new homes are needed and that they would offer an opportunity for new families to locate in the area.

Answer from Education department at Suffolk County Council (SCC) and NHS Suffolk and North East Essex - How does the services/boards such as education work out the existing demand on existing services? And any information on how they calculate the predicted demand on services post development?

Education answer:

To programme new school places SCC consider the following;

- School site size
- NHS/Birthrate data
- School census data
- Housing developments and their build out rates
- Distances to /from schools
- Admissions data
- PANS (Each School has a planned admission number, which says how many children they take into Year Reception each year, usually 30/60 or 90)
- School capacity (How many rooms and for what purpose they are used as this will impact the number of pupils a school can take)
- Parental preferences
- In/out of catchment

In order to forecast the number of places needed SCC need to look at the number of places that exist in a local area and then subtract the demand for places. To calculate the places that exist every school has a net capacity which is calculated using guidance from the Department for Education. This calculates how many pupils a school can take in total, for example 420 primary school places. A 420 Primary School would have a planned admission number of 60 pupils per year. This is how many children they take into the Reception Year each September. We can then look at the number of pupils who have taken up a place at each school and what surplus capacity we have.

The demand for places will be driven by births in the area and new housing growth. As we rely on birth data

We also know what housing is likely to come through approved planning applications, pending planning applications and Local Plan sites. This allows us to look much further into the future. Although the accuracy of this data lessens the further into the future we look. Depending on the number of houses and the number of bedrooms per home that is being built we have a formula for calculating pupil yields from new developments.

A developer might say they are building 300 homes over 6 years at a rate of 50 houses a year. We then calculate how many pupils will arise per year, so we can calculate which year the additional school places are needed.

We review the forecasts annually, taking into account actual build out rates (for example the developer may have slowed to 30 houses a year) and birth rates (for example currently there is a dip in birth rates). The forecast data is then used to amend the programme to ensure that places are being delivered when needed.

When considering our programme we try ensure we time new school places so that we don't have a surplus that could compromise an existing school or that we don't have a deficit meaning pupils don't have a school place.

NHS answer:

As health commissioners, we work with the local authorities, developers and providers to assess if development is likely to impact on health care facilities and services in the area.

We work to understand the pace (build out over years) of development plans and so population growth or change over time. It is important to note that new housing may provide for existing residents within an area (e.g. for young people leaving home as well as new people to the area) and this balance affects the net growth. We work to identify likely needs of new residents according to housing type (i.e. younger residents, family homes or specific accommodation for older residents). This can be a dynamic process over time as the detail of dwellings are confirmed through the planning process.

This is conducted alongside assessments of the current estate – its size (capacity for service provision, administration and education) and condition – to deliver services to the current and forecast new residents. We assess whether buildings may be suitable for adaptation or if new facilities are required.

The nature of new facilities and services within an area will depend on the scale and needs as well as the 'critical mass' of population required for a specific service to be delivered safely, efficiently, and effectively in a specific geography. This will be different for primary care, mental health, community and secondary care services and for each of the diagnostic, urgent and emergency or planned care services, which they provide.

We work with the local authorities and developers to apply an algorithm based on number of dwellings proposed and the anticipated residents, along with the calculation relating to health care facilities available in the area to determine developer contributions to new facilities.

The nature and pace of change to facilities and services will also depend on business and statutory planning processes as well as access to wider capital and revenue funding.

In addition to considering the physical assets and capital investments required to expand or deliver new services, assessments of staffing needs are also vital. This is usually completed by workforce planners in partnership with providers.

2. Question - Who is responsible for paying for new services such as the provision of education and its staff?

Paul Wood – developers will provide a contribution to infrastructure works and there a range of organisations that are responsible for funding capital works such as new schools.. The staffing of public services e.g. schools are funded through general taxation.

David Bell - Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy's also are another mechanism secure payments from developers towards physical and social infrastructure required to service the development. Again, a comprehensive phasing strategy is very important when it comes to these methods of delivering infrastructure. The phasing of development is important to ensure 'cash flow' and ensure the right infrastructure is in place early and monies are recovered in line with the delivery of homes.

Citizen Panel discussion: The panel highlighted the importance of phasing within the process, particularly the need to provide infrastructure before homes would be built.

3. Question - What do terms like leisure-led and placemaking opportunities mean?

Paul Wood - The term leisure-led derives from the council's provision of a new leisure centre within the neighbourhood. The term leisure-led also extends to activities, uses and lifestyle choices beyond the leisure centre.

Citizen Panel discussion: The group began to identify the varying needs of the wider community, particularly relating to leisure. Members expressed that the leisure centre and other leisure uses would be used by people beyond Felixstowe and for generations to come.

4. Question - What impact can the panel actually have at influencing the development?

Facilitator - This is something we will understand more as a group as the Citizen Panel process evolves. The Citizens Panel is something that is far more thorough than the standard engagement process and is not a tick-box exercise. We will take a list of recommendations that will be fed into the masterplanning process from the Citizens Panel and these will be responded to throughout the workshoping process.

For the future workshop themes such as active transport routes or building density, we will examine the different fixed and non-fixed elements, allowing us to be explicit about the aspects of influence for the citizen's panel's recommendations.

Citizen Panel discussion: The panel discussed their potential influence as a group. They understood that the development is likely to go ahead but were enthusiastic about their opportunity to shape the masterplanning process.

5. Question - Are certain uses of land worth more to the landowners than others?

David Bell - Yes certain uses are worth more than others. The local plan allocation sets out the land uses that are required to be accommodated within the North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood. The policy requires that a masterplan is developed to inform the distribution of these uses. development phasing will be another important component of the outline planning application to ensure the right mix of uses are brought forward at each stage of the development.

6. Question - What does Felixstowe get out of the development?

Paul Wood - A range of facilities including a new leisure centre, two primary schools, and a range of new housing including affordable units.. There is a wider economic regeneration opportunity with the creation of a new and successful neighbourhood.

David Bell - LDA Design wanted to get involved in this particular project is because we were really impressed and believe that ESC has clear quality outcomes and is truly committed to being community led.

Citizen Panel discussion: Members of the panel agreed that there was a wider regeneration opportunity available if a successful neighbourhood was to be created.

7. Question - Is there an opportunity to have less housing than the allocated amount?

Paul Wood – It's required in the local plan / allocation, and the document is reviewed regularly. The council's planning department can provide a better answer. I suggest that they attend one of the sessions to provide transparency of how that number has been reached. The concern around the capacity of highways and infrastructure has also been raised and I think it would make sense if someone from the SCC Highways team also presented to the panel to explain how road capacity is assessed.

Citizen Panel discussion: The panel were enthusiastic to hear more about the local plan allocation process from the council's planning department.

Questions answered by the planning team at the council:

How does the council calculate the number of homes required per site in the local plan?

Felixstowe lies within the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area. The housing need across the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area was calculated using the National Planning Policy Framework's standard method. This involved using the published household projections and applying an uplift based upon house prices compared to earnings.

This calculation determined that 9,756 dwellings new dwellings were required across the plan period (2018-2036) based on a housing need of 542 dwellings per year. The Local Plan provides a strategy for meeting its housing need including the proportion of housing expected in its settlements and direct allocations like the North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood.

How do they choose the allocated sites?

Felixstowe, given its size, services and employment opportunities is deemed to be a major centre and is thus expected to provide a greater proportion of the Local Plan growth than smaller settlements. Felixstowe is the largest town in the plan area and has significant opportunities for future economic growth supported by the Port of Felixstowe, associated industries and tourism. Felixstowe is well served in respect of services and facilities minimising the need to travel to access employment opportunities and essential services and facilities.

A planning permission (reference DC/15/1128/OUT) was granted by appeal within the area now called North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood prior to the allocation being established. The Local Plan allocation provided an opportunity to both complement this development and create a community. All allocations are informed by the Council's sustainability appraisal and the site was a preferred option in the first draft of the Local Plan.

Providing a large Strategic site, as opposed to identifying lots of smaller sites has advantages. A large cohesive site means it can more readily provide important infrastructure such as schools, open space and allows for the new consolidated leisure centre.

How does the Council calculate the number of homes allocated per site in the local plan?

During the drafting of the Local Plan the space requirements of key infrastructure such as open space and the new leisure centre were considered, and an appropriate dwelling number put forward that helps meet local need and is reflective of the settlement it is located in.

The number of dwellings now allocated cannot be lowered as it is part of the adopted Local Plan. If a lower number of homes had been allocated in the Local Plan then these homes would need to be delivered elsewhere and often in less sustainable locations.

8. Question - What mix of homes will be provided?

Paul Wood - The intention is to provide a range of housing types including family and affordable homes. We are at a relatively early stage of the process so we are not at that level of detail (to outline the specific mix of homes) yet, but we are very confident that there will be a significant amount of affordable homes.

9. Question - How can long-term sustainability of infrastructure (such as drainage) be guaranteed and planned so all areas of the site don't flood?

David Bell - A well-designed phasing strategy would be provided to ensure infrastructure is planned properly. One of the benefits of looking at the site at the masterplan scale means we are able to plan things like drainage holistically.

Paul Wood - We can also look at getting someone from ESC's planning team and Suffolk CC to come and give insight and answers and attend future meetings. – explain costs and responsibility.

Citizen Panel discussion: The panel were enthusiastic to hear more about how highways and drainage infrastructure would be planned from the relevant bodies and association.

Question answered by SLR Consulting – Drainage consultants for the North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood:

Who is responsible for delivering the infrastructure (drainage)?

Once the drainage has been approved through the planning process it is usually the developer's responsibility to deliver the proposed infrastructure. The developer will pay upfront to build the drainage with the costs associated with the delivery recouped through the selling of the properties. All of the drainage measures proposed within each development plot will be delivered in this way.

For the North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood, certain development plots are likely to be reliant on larger areas of ponds and wetlands (Strategic drainage infrastructure) that are setback from a given development plot. In these cases, the landowners or a strategic delivery company acting on their behalf will be responsible for the delivery of the strategic infrastructure, which is likely to serve multiple development plots. The construction of this infrastructure will take place either before or at the same time as the initial phases of development to ensure that the infrastructure is in place early enough to serve the intended development areas.

The Flood and Water Management team at Suffolk County Council, in their role as Lead Local Flood Authority, is responsible for reviewing and approving the design for both the strategic and plot level drainage on the site.

The commercial agreements between individual developers and the landowners selling the plot will take into consideration the cost involved in delivering both the strategic drainage infrastructure and the plot-level drainage.

How is it sustainably planned/delivered to ensure homes within and on the edge of the site don't flood?

Initial works being undertaken include a review of the flood risk both within the development and within the surrounding areas. This review considers both the current risk of flooding and potential changes in flood risk that might occur as a result of climate change over the next 100 years.

The review considers the potential for flooding from:

- the Debden Estuary,
- small watercourses and channels flowing through and past the site,
- surface water runoff during and following heavy rainfall,
- surcharge or failure of sewers and mains water systems,
- groundwater flooding
- failure of infrastructure such as local flood defences and reservoirs.

In any areas where flooding is considered to be likely development will be avoided. This primarily relates to areas close to the small channels running through the site and the lower-lying land to the north. In these areas, the development will be limited to activities that enhance ecology or amenity. Any implemented drainage will consider the site's flood risk and surrounding areas to prevent offsite flooding.

10. Question - Where are the people going to work?

Paul Wood - This is another concern that we're aware of. We're unable to specify where people will work however there might be potential to provide some commercial opportunities if there is a demand. Important to note that Felixstowe is not a self-contained labour market i.e. a large proportion of Felixstowe residents work outside of the town and equally a significant number of people working in the town live outside its boundaries. Freeport East and the growing visitor economy will provide significant new employment opportunities in the medium-term.

Citizen Panel discussion: The group recognised that working styles have changed, and that people of different ages having differently working styles, for instance remote working.

Question answered by the planning team at the council:

What work has been to done to explore where people are going to work who might live in the neighbourhood?

The Local Plan recognises Felixstowe as a major centre, with the Port of Felixstowe and associated uses in particular providing a significant amount of employment opportunities. As highlighted in the Local Plan, there is a high volume of commuting into the town for work. Providing this strong connection between new dwellings and employment opportunities was an important consideration in allocating the North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood. The Garden Neighbourhood has good access to the Port of Felixstowe and other employment opportunities such as those related to tourism.

According to the latest Travel to Work data, of people who commute to work in East Suffolk (excluding those working from home or off-shore) some 41% travel less than 5km suggesting almost half of the commuters have their work and home relatively close together. Part of the policy requirement is a good network of cycling and pedestrians' routes across the site and to adjoining areas which will provide better opportunity for short, sustainable commuter journeys. This policy is supported by the Cycling and Walking Strategy (2022). Furthermore, the Infrastructure Funding Statement (a document that details how contributions has and will be spent) aims to provide improved infrastructure across this area which will improve commuting options.

11. Question - What kind of uses can be part of the masterplan while the neighbourhood is being built.

David Bell - Beyond the uses already mentioned there is a potential to develop some meanwhile uses (uses that are developed while the masterplan is being built) for instance a community farm. This will be explored with the Citizen Panel in another session.

Citizen Panel discussion: Members of the group suggested there was an opportunity to create a destination on the site for people to visit, whilst protecting and enhancing key assets such as the grove woodland.

Requests for further information throughout the upcoming process:

- Drainage consultant: to discuss flood management provisioning for Gulpher Road
- Planning team: what are the calculations for assuming we need these houses?
- Transport, Highways: what is being done in regard to road changes?
- Phasing: what is being delivered in what time frames? What does next 10 years look like?
- Building density: what do different density of buildings feel like?

Activity 2:

After a comfort break the lead facilitator asked the group to take part in a future visioning activity. They asked the group to close their eyes and imagine they were walking out of their front door. The facilitator then asked them to imagine what they would like to see. After the group opened their eyes they were asked to get into small groups of 3 or 4 and share what they had imagined to one another.

The facilitator asked the panel to share what they had enjoyed hearing from each other. There were a variety of answers demonstrating the varying priorities and preferences within the panel.

Answers included:

- Green spaces with play areas that were being used by children.
- Open spaces would be looked out on where people would feel safe.
- Roman Way and Weston Avenue noted as local places people liked the design of
- Wide enough roads where cars could easily fit on both sides.
- Narrower streets with lay-bys integrated for parking.
- Places to stay the same.
- Preserved landscape and community spirit.
- A place that reflects the identity of the town.
- Sheltered places for bins, services and utilities.
- The feeling of quiet with areas for playing and green space
- A sense of collective stewardship amongst residents.

Closing remarks

The lead facilitator thanked the group for participating, outlined the planned themes of the future sessions and set some optional homework for the panel to walk around the site and think about how it made them feel and their hopes for the future of the place, which could be set out in a letter or drawing and shared with their community.

