

Summary of 'Pre-Production' Consultation Events

On-Site Surgery

The first on-site surgery event took place on 15 March 2008 and provided a platform for representatives of land interests at Faversham Creek to talk to Urban Initiatives about the AAP, and how they can get involved in the process as well as objectives and concerns on a one-to-one basis.

A summary of the key issues that were raised by attendees at the surgery are set out below. Some of the comments provided and discussions held were considered commercially sensitive and are not presented in detail. Feedback has been grouped into themes for ease of reading.

The Creek

- Silting is an issue. Something needs to be done about the Creek basin
- Desire to see more boats on the Creek
- Sluices at Stonebridge Pond prevents water from getting into Creek, 10 years ago the creek was dredged (paid for by Medway Ports)

Access

- Swing bridge is not wide enough for large vehicles and is need of repair
- Should be a walkway around the Creek
- Narrowness of Belvedere Road is an issue
- Turning 'right of way' onto Court Street is an issue

Heritage/ Tourism

- Anglo-saxon ship found in area is currently in Greenwich
- Part of Cutty Sark is at Faversham
- Would like gunpowder works to be recognised as being of national importance
- Historic buildings should be kept

Land Use

- Some landowners would be interested in releasing employment land for residential uses or mixed uses (which would be more profitable)
- In the past there have been some inconsistencies between the site designations in the Local Plan and the planning permissions granted for sites around the Creek
- Creek should be restored for maritime uses and tourist/heritage/skills based uses
- Landowners not averse to more residential uses around the Creek
- Town doesn't need more licensed premises/café society

Communication

- Landowners are not part of Consortium - issues with lack of communication with LPA

Other Issues

- Vandalism on Flood Lane
- Drug-use problems
- The Port Authority charge developers but not community benefit uses on their lands
- Fruit farmers keep town going in summer

A second on-site surgery session took place on 15 May for parties who were unable to attend the initial session. As above, a summary of issues is provided.

The Creek

- Should be increased access to the Creek
- Concern that sluicing of the Creek has stopped
- Creek should be kept navigable, concerned that it will continue to silt therefore making it unusable
- Lack of flow in the upper creek, which may have a harmful impact on habitats in this area
- Flooding issues on the south bank near the swing bridge. The drains are the main cause of this rather than the Creek
- Navigation issues should be the greatest priority at the moment. This should potentially be dealt with before the AAP is complete
- There are Council moorings outside the Albion Pub to encourage short stay mooring. These are generally unpopular and more likely to be subject to crime
- The Creek has been designed to have a holding station at the upper Creek. Reintroducing this and encouraging larger craft to sail up to this area would significantly improve the issue with silting
- There is a need for small scale management for the Creek that is cheaper and would be possible for local people to be involved with
- Recreational uses in the Creek, i.e. water activities, are very limited. The nature of the Creek would make promotion of this sort of activity difficult. There is currently no demand for this type of activity in the area, and there are more appropriate locations locally
- Some support for putting a weir in at the swing bridge and filling with water or letting the upper creek silt up
- A light weight movable footbridge, like the one in Paddington Basin would allow sailing barges to pass as well as creating an interesting feature in the area with the potential to attract visitors

Heritage/ Tourism

- There are limited education opportunities in the area with regard to biodiversity and environmental issues. Environmental interest in the area is not enough to justify placing educational facilities in the area such as a visitor centre

Land Use

- Some landowners are interested in releasing land for residential uses, as this would be more profitable, and in some cases they believe this is the only viable option
- Inconsistencies between advice from the Council on the types of land uses that would be given planning permission on sites and what is written in the Local Plan

- Most attendees would be happy to see new residential developments by the Creek but there are concerns over the design quality of new development in the area. New developments they have seen built near the Creek in recent years have been of a poor design quality and have had a negative impact on the character of the area
- Concerned residential encroachment which could have a significant impact on businesses as it may lead to complaints which could either restrict the hours of industry or even force its closure
- There is a sufficient open space in the area
- Allotments in Faversham are one of the strong elements and have long waiting lists
- There is potential to enhance the linkages between the allotments and the Oare Gunpowder Country Park and the Chart Gunpowder Mills
- No specific sports and leisure facility is provided in the area, however the Creekside would not be suitable for this type of development

Other Issues

- There is a need to upgrade pathways
- There is a SSSI located near the proposed lock gates

CreekTeam

The first CreekTeam event took place over two days on 13/14 June 2008. The objectives of the two-day event were to:

- Inaugurate the CreekTeam and introduce team working;
- Get the Team to start thinking generally about the character and quality of the place rather than specific projects – seeing the bigger picture;
- Identify a series of strategic objectives that can be used in later workshops to assess emerging options; and

This event consisted of a series of presentations from Urban Initiatives on the issues to consider for the future of the Creekside and allowed attendees to provide feedback through a Placecheck on the first day and two workshop sessions on the second day.

The following sections set out a summary of the outcomes and feedback from the two days.

The Placecheck

Following a presentation explaining the role of the CreekTeam and the purpose of the AAP, the group were divided into three and walked around the Creekside to carry out a 'Placecheck' using a pro-forma checklist.

The feedback was as follows:

How can we make this a more special place?

- The history and cultural heritage of the area should be better communicated. This should be suitable for a range of people from the community
- Historic buildings have been hidden by new developments. Instead they should be celebrated and brought to the foreground
- From an ecological standpoint, it is imperative that the Creek and town are made permeable to wildlife. To achieve this large areas of land hubs must be established. (Hubs: Stonebridge Pools/Allotments/The Creek/etc)
- Green corridors branching from hubs – wildflower roadside verges; soft car parking; enhancements in trees; bird and bat boxes
- Distinct skylines include the sails of barges, views down the Creek, the church steeple
- Streets with special character include Abbey Street and Guildhall
- Important local buildings include Ordnance Wharf, and river channel and bridges
- Needs to be better publicity of local heritage
- Former gas works building (by Co-Op) could be made into a museum/art gallery/ café/ wine bar
- The brewery side of the Creek is an eye sore and so is the Frank and Whittome site
- Improve footpaths along whole Creek
- Define Faversham as a centre of excellence with the traditional craft skills
- More active uses in the Creek
- More development relating to the Creek. More development like Standard Quay
- Extend moorings
- Improve sign posts to Creek
- Improve lighting along Creek
- Increase boat moorings/ pontoons in the main Creek area. Boat owners will be able to moor safely
- Lock gates required to create basin
- Encourage/ Guide developers and landowners to the most acceptable uses for land and buildings
- Works of art could be put at the top of the Creek
- Tidy up green spaces
- There should be a mix of scales of buildings

How can we make this a greener place?

- Green spaces should be enhanced and better used

- Corridors should be provided to the countryside
- The area should be more nature friendly
- In depth study to assess the impact of restructuring the Creek on the Ramsar site
- In depth extended Phase I to assess the quality of the environment
- Identify the green network
- Suggest management and planting scheme
- Allotments should be more accessible
- Front Brents – soften with indigenous plants
- Old buildings should be checked for bats and birds
- Enhance selected trees
- Area is rich in diverse plants and animal life including European designation wetland birds and rare invertebrates
- To maintain living environment it must be plentiful in fauna/ hunt food for predatory animals
- More diverse flora – aquatic enhancements
- Habitat management plan needed
- Corridors should be placed through town
- Planting scheme may be needed but there is a preference for natural colonisation
- Try to get business residents already on the Creek to “green-up” grounds
- Crab Island should be enhanced.
- Trees and flower beds need to be put back into the town centre and more seats are needed for old people to sit on
- Enhance open spaces
- Improve or create new green corridors along the Creek
- Preserve area that already attract wildlife
- Trees, shrubs and hedges could be planted in Front Brents, at Standard Quay, and Abbey Street
- Town Quay should be improved
- Important features to improve and enhance are the marshy edges near the Albion PH, the Front Brents and fields beyond Faversham Reach and other houses
- Top of the Creek should be enhanced and made more of

How can the streets and other public spaces be made safe for people on foot?

- Better lighting
- Better maintenance
- Better overlooking
- Downward pointing lighting for minimal disturbance to bats. No floodlighting

- Underpasses or bridges should be permeable to wildlife
- Green bridges
- Must be a balance between safety and wildlife
- Better maintenance strategy

How can public spaces be improved?

- More seating
- Spaces are currently underused, this should be improved
- More litterbins
- Seating away from bank and not in wilder parts
- Provision of recycling bins as well as normal dog/litter bins
- Set cycle routes away from banks
- Colour coded walking routes that are extended in to the countryside
- Increase access to Stonebridge pond
- Existing public spaces should be improved before new areas are created

How can we make the place more welcoming and easier for peoples to find their way around?

- Provision of maps in public places
- Unobtrusive signage with things of interest for children
- Guided walks – easy walks from the station
- Creekside walks
- Communicating to visitors with more signposts – outside the station/ by the brewery/ in the town centre
- Green areas along the Creek need more lighting and seats, litter bins and dog bins
- More uses catering for visitors – cafes/ bars/ restaurants/ hotel
- Unique public features that lead people to the Creek

How can the place be more adaptable to change in the future?

- More mix uses. Boats, residential and others that encourage people to spend money, such as retail, cafes and a hotel
- Green up grounds of light industrial developments on the Creekside
- Must be permeable to allow wildlife to migrate to larger hubs in the countryside
- Protecting crafts and traditional industry

- Attract more boats
- A viable plan for the area should be formed with the agreement of parties concerned

How can better use be made of resources?

- Redevelopment of old buildings may harm bat habitats
- Reuse hard surfacing in car parks to surface cycle track/walkway
- Use silt to build Kingfisher bank
- Reuse logs from tree work around the town to create log piles/hibernacula loggeries
- Re-use silt as a building material
- Re-use vacant buildings
- Creek is an important asset – there should be more development facing and making use of the Creek
- More finance from borough and county
- Councils should be available for the schemes mentioned
- If there is no infrastructure developers and landowners will not be encouraged

What should be done to make the most of public transport?

- Improve access for elderly/ disabled people
- Reduce carbon foot bridge
- Improve services to Creekside and other strategic points i.e. train and bus stations, supermarket
- Encourage people to leave cars
- Healthy green gym scheme
- Cycle track throughout town and Creek
- Improve connections to the town
- Additional transport should be provided
- Bus tour of the Creek and surrounding area
- Boat trips on the Creek
- Water tow from the Creek at Standard Quay

Additional Comments

- Need to do a more thorough evaluation of Faversham to establish ecological value of the built environment
- Must link town to country networks
- Stop gang mowing
- Permanently flood area from the top basin and Town Quay to Iron Wharf
- There is no official public walkway near new housing

- No distinctive Faversham style
- Use local materials for new development
- More variety of uses/ more light industry.

To begin the second day of the Town Team was invited to summarise the outcomes of the Placecheck under three headings.

What Works?

- The Creek – The focus on the historic environment and the waterway and the sense of place, scale and cultural identity
- Existing unique skills, particularly boating facilities at Standard Quay and it's particular crafts and Iron Wharf providing essential dockside services
- Iron Wharf and Standard Quay are important culturally and historically
- Town Quay – free mooring for visiting boats. However this facility is underused, unpublicised and underdeveloped
- The iconic structures – Oyster Bay warehouse, sheds and barns constructed from the ruins of Faversham Abbey
- The unique skills
- The gunpowder works and the hogs fennel
- Areas untouched for centuries preserving historic characteristics that need to be celebrated
- Stonebridge Pond – asset to the town

What doesn't work?

- The footpaths pull away from the historic environment
- New development does not show any sense of continuity
- Piecemeal issue of development surrounding the Creek – particular problems with the oil development
- Losing views of historic Creekside buildings due to scale of new development
- Green spaces need improvements and enhancing
- Relationship between Town and Creek, particularly for pedestrians
- Footpaths along Creek
- Oil depot and bus depot
- Junction of Abbey Street/ Court Street – traffic problem restricting motor access to the Creek area. However this is one of the only town centre locations where one can see part of the Creek
- Sluicing and maintenance of the Creek
- Oil depot – incompatible uses
- Crab island – poorly used
- Poor access to the town from the Creek

- Heavy traffic on North Lane
- Relationship between Creek and Flood Lane
- Pedestrian access to the Creek by the Shepherd Neame development

How to improve the area?

- Make better use of green spaces
- Improve walkways
- Improve biodiversity
- Make the cultural heritage more prominent. Use educational tools to communicate the special features of the area
- Need to improve footpaths all along the Creek to create safer access and extend them all along the waters edge
- Potential redevelopment of the oil depot site should not have an adverse impact on Standard Quay. Preferably future development would look at expanding, enhancing and complementing Standard Quay, providing more employment and apprenticeship skills
- Avoid sanitisation, Whitstableisation and Disneylandisation
- Using historic buildings and bringing them back into the foreground on the Creekside
- Ensuring new development uses are compatible with neighbours
- Improve experience of the Creek through better communication and interpretation of historic and cultural identity
- Improve and enhance green spaces
- Introduction of Town and Creekside Walks
- Improve visitor attractions
- Former gas purifier house is an opportunity
- The Frank and Whittome site is an opportunity

Workshop 1: Making Faversham Creek successful (a quality place)

Following a presentation by Urban Initiatives on what makes places successful, the Town Team identified the qualities that Faversham Creek will need to be more successful.

- Distinctive Faversham style and sense of place
- An area with a coherent story
- Vibrant place in terms of people and wildlife
- Place with good connectivity between the Creek and the town and the network of green spaces
- Sense of ownership
- Saturday and Sunday afternoon – the times when people would want to visit the Creek

- Place that is active all year round
- Design champion
- Public space that is not overly sanitised
- Mix of uses
- Enhancement of the four distinct character areas in the Creekside area
- Enhanced biodiversity
- Improved connections to the town, countryside and local communities
- Definition of the study area needs clarification. Will it go up to Preston Street? Will Mill Ponds be included? Will it improve connections to Bysing Wood
- Improve connections up to the Gunpowder Mills
- Improve the navigability of the Creek
- Improve walkways and cycleways
- Emphasise and maximise the benefits of the local heritage
- Introduction of more diverse employment opportunities, while preserving the traditional skills and crafts in the area
- Provision of more tourist, leisure and recreational facilities in the area
- Enhancement of green spaces
- Maximise the leisure uses of the Creek

It was agreed (based on the above) that the key issues affecting Faversham Creek were as follows:

- Connectivity (physical and uses)
- Uses and activities
- Water (navigation etc.)
- Habitats
- Heritage and culture (leisure/ recreation/ tourism)
- Community

Workshop 2: Measures of success

Members of the team discussed the above themes, as follows:

Water and Habitats

- The water relates to the heritage of the town
- Concerns over the navigability of the Creek
- Retain tidal creek
- The bridge needs to be fully managed and move to allow more sluicing and access to the basin

- Concerns over flooding
- Houses should be built with a step up to the front door to reduce damage
- Consideration should be given you how you build in the flood area. E.g. ground floor used for uses other than residential
- There should be more leisure events connected to the water and more activity on the Creek (e.g. barge race)
- Explore the possibility of SUDs in filling the basin for sluicing
- Allotments and Stonebridge Ponds should be made more accessible and the potential for people to walk through them should be explored
- Car parks should be green
- No flora in the water area
- Green grid should be developed
- Increase permeability to the wider area
- Improve connections with green spaces in the area
- Crab Island should be enhanced and the information boards should be updated
- Potential tourism link with biodiversity should be looked at (e.g. bird watching)
- Improve walks and access and viewing points
- Local food production should be exploited and linked with restaurants and hotels
- Increases public access to Stonebridge ponds would disturb wildlife. However it was argued that wildlife is a lot more resilient
- There was concern over security issues, particularly relating to the potential for public access to allotments

Heritage and Culture and Communities

- A unique Faversham style should be developed, with design cues interpreted in a modern way
- Buildings should be brought back into use
- There should be more communication of heritage and celebrating the cultural identity. This could be achieved through the provision of a visitor centre
- Public realm improvements were discussed. There is potential for the provision of public art and improved pedestrian and cycle routes
- Frank and Whittome site has the potential for redevelopment
- traditional uses should be preserved and enhanced

Connectivity and Uses and activities

- Creek is in need of improved connections to the town, to the countryside, to communities and to key transport infrastructure

- Consideration of how people move and why and how improvements to connectivity can be measured to judge the success of the AAP
- How easy is it to get to the Creek?
 - The routes leading to the Creek have poor legibility. It is not sign posted and there are no visible Creekside landmarks from the town for people to identify its location
 - The roads leading to the Creek largely suffer a poor public realm and do not attract visitors to walk along them and naturally find their way to the Creek
 - There are no identifiable “attractors” naturally filtering people to the Creek area
 - The routes leading to the Creek also offer poor access for people with disabilities and mothers with pushchairs due to narrow paths, uneven paving, the lack of drop curbs. Furthermore there is a lack of safe crossing points on the roads leading to the Creek from the town and Davington Hill
 - “Fracture” points were identified as junctions which prevent or discourage access to the Creek. The main point is the junction of Abbey Street and Court Street, which should be fixed to encourage pedestrians to use this route to access the Creek
- How easy is it to travel along the Creek?
 - There are no continuous footpaths along the water edge and the existing paths move the pedestrian away from the water at several points
 - Several “fracture” points were identified where the path prevents waterside access. This is a problem on both sides of the Creek
- hierarchy of roads in the area needs to be more clearly defined. Currently the character changes from link to link, there is a need to provide a more seamless route to the Creek which at no point discourages pedestrians from travelling further
- needs to be more signage in the town and from the station to the Creek. More subtle features, such as a tide clock, could be used to promote awareness of the Creek and act as a type of viewing points
- Views to the Creek are currently limited, however the existing ones should be enhanced and promoted, such as the viewing point from Davington Hill
- How easy is it for barges to access the Creek?
 - Activity in the Creek should be promoted and improved
 - Access to the basin should be achieved
- Traditional uses should be preserved and enhanced. The potential for skills to be passed on through educational facilities should be exploited through uses on the Creek. However, a buffer should be put in place between these uses and residential development
- Water-borne uses should be promoted in the Creek
- Uses such as Creek Creative should be encouraged. This is a mixed use development with niche units providing spaces for a range of activities

- Potential for the land surrounding the Creek should be maximised and increasing employment should be promoted
- Lack of facilities in the area for young people (particularly the 12-16 age group). New facilities could be located by the Creek. Potentially the former roller hockey hall could be transformed into a sports and leisure facility (links to the traditional uses) such as an ice rink