

## **Summary of the AMT report on the questionnaires.**

### **Introduction**

This summary sets out the context of the survey, provides an overview of some of the key findings, and attempts to give an account of the main themes. The report on the results of the survey, following the June 2013 Exhibition, was undertaken by Action for Market Towns and completed in August. It sets out in some detail the results from each of the survey questions in graphic analysis, and also shows the many comments received at the Illustrations workshop or in the consultation period following.

Some 278 questionnaires were returned. Of those, 124 people added their names; few clearly added false names. The overwhelming majority of those who completed the post code reference, came from the Faversham area. With the exception of the questions about business, most people answered most of the questions: the range was between 7 and 272.

79% of those who completed the survey were over 51, and owning their own home. 43% were retired and 38% employed or self-employed full time. 43% lived in couple households; 67% of them had lived in Faversham for more than eleven years. Just over 20% of people completing the survey were under 35, and only 2% under 20 years old. Only 7% had families with young children: i.e. 18 people. 38% had lived in Faversham over 25 years,

Overall, there were a great many comments on the different sites and aspects of the Creek footprint. Some were contradictory, some very detailed, making very similar or identical points, others criticised what was there already, and many held considered views about all or some of the sites and issues. Clearly not everybody knew everything about the Creek in detail, so there was concentrated feedback around a number of issues, and less feedback on others, for example activities on Iron Wharf and the Brents Industrial Estate. There was an overwhelming sense that a majority of respondees would wish for greater connectivity of footpaths, more opportunities for vessels of all types, an opening bridge and navigable basin, together with a variety of small scale activities, industries and leisure facilities in keeping with the area. Social housing and small scale housing development were approved of, as was a high standard of open space, better managed road system and improvements in a greener environment.

## **Section A: Business and employment**

80% of the 262 respondents did not own a business. Of those who did, 90% owned one business. Most of these responded, and 57% of the businesses were outside the creek area. The most popular elements identified as required in the Creek area which would help businesses were faster broadband and more suitable premises. Numbers answering the questions on requirements for businesses were very small. Most respondents were not intending to start a business. Responses to the questions about the need for premises were in single figures.

The only question in this section that generated a high level of response was what sort of business should be encouraged in the Creek area over the next 20 years. The three most popular answers were maritime industry (92%), tourism and leisure (75%) and small scale industrial/artisan workshops (76%). Most of the answers in the 'other' responses fell within these three use categories.

## **Section B: Open Spaces**

Virtually all respondents completed this section. Approximately half of respondents use the open spaces around the Creek more than once per week. Other elements required in public open spaces were, in order of popularity, more footpaths (69%) more public seating (68%) creating wildlife meadows (63%) planting more trees (58%) landscaping of public areas (47%). Some of the areas identified for more public facilities within public open spaces were not existing public open spaces but included Ordnance Wharf and Standard Quay. There was strong support for more public footpaths, with a significant number commenting that these should continue all around the Creek. Trees and landscaping were suggested at the Upper Brents and wildlife meadows at Crab Island.

There was a wide variety of responses to the question about which open spaces respondents wanted to see protected. Several areas which are not existing public open spaces were identified including Ordnance Wharf and Standard Quay. Many respondents wanted to protect the open land at the Upper Brents, Crab Island, Town Quay, Flood Lane and the Stonebridge Allotments. More open spaces were suggested at the BMM Weston car park and at the coach depot and oil depot. Several respondents also referred to Ham Marshes and other farmland to the north along the creek which are not in the area of the Creek Neighbourhood Plan.

Questions on possible environmental measures to protect and enhance the long term environment also had high numbers of respondents.

81% were in favour of lower energy street lights

92% in favour of keeping light pollution to a minimum

86% supported improving the connectivity of rights of way

94% supported improving the usability of rights of way around the Creek

81% favoured improved cycleways

There was also strong support for more public rubbish bins and dog waste bins.

In the free comments section, several respondents commented on the importance of better signage so that people are directed towards the Creek from the town and around the area. Concern was also expressed that areas that attract wildlife should be protected as they provide important natural habitats. The character of the area as a maritime area for traditional crafts and provision of facilities for boat owners and the issue of dredging to remove silt were mentioned frequently.

Several questions related to renewable energy. There was an almost even split for and against individual wind turbines.

81% support for solar panels on existing buildings

A majority were in favour of other reasonable renewable energy projects. Suggestions for renewable energy included tidal generation from the Creek or the Swale, ground source heat pumps and heat exchangers.

### **Section C: Young people**

The responses to question on the importance of the Creek to young people indicated the Creek was very important to young people.

The majority indicated that they would not use a children's play park if provided. There was substantial support for improved footpaths (72%) and traffic-free cycleways around the creek (62%), measures to slow traffic (50%) and better access to current open space (42%)

Issues raised in response to this section included more general comments about transport/traffic around the Creek as there was no separate section asking questions about transportation. Signage to the Creek area and around it was mentioned as needing improvement. It was also suggested that there should be a footpath around the Creek suitable for buggies.

Suggested locations for slowing the traffic in areas around or approaching the Creek included South Road running into North Lane, Conduit Street and Quay Lane, Belvedere Road and most commonly Abbey Street, with a few respondents also mentioning the Upper Brents. Controlled crossings to help people to cross the roads more easily were suggested in North Lane from the bridge side to reach Partridge Lane, at the junction of Quay Lane with Court Street, across Bridge Road/Church Road to Bramble Hill Road near the Creek bridge and across Church Road, and the Brents from Faversham Grill to the nursery in the Brents schoolroom.

This section of questions gave a further opportunity for comment on footpaths. Many respondents supported the provision of footpaths all around the Creek, with a few specifically mentioning the disputed section at footpath ZF5. There should be unimpeded access from Standard Quay to the Purifier and public access along Provender Walk should be allowed. Traffic-free cycleways were also suggested along the Saxon Shore Way (mostly beyond the CNP area) and there were several respondents who also wanted this facility along both sides of the waterway around the Creek in the town.

Many people considered that the Creek should be used to provide facilities for young people. 88% supported craft skills and apprenticeships, 87% sailing and canoeing,

84% sea cadets and maritime activities and 74% access to open spaces and the countryside. 41% supported more pubs, cafes and clubs for socialising.

The most popularly suggested location for sailing and canoeing included the Creek basin and near Town Quay and Swan Quay, but a smaller number suggested Standard Quay or Iron Wharf.

Most of the respondents to the question on sea cadets identified their present use of the TS Hazard and suggested a location near the Creek bridge. A few suggested that there should also be maritime activities in the basin with a possible building to service this at Ordnance Wharf or on the BMM Weston car park.

The question of location of craft skills and apprenticeships provoked a wide range of responses. Many respondents identified the Purifier building which is owned by the Creek Trust. Other respondents suggested Standard Quay and Ordnance Wharf. A smaller number mentioned Iron Wharf and Alan Staley's boatbuilding works. A few commented that these activities should happen all around the Creek.

The question of socialising in pubs and cafes also produced a wide variety of answers. Many respondents commented that there were already a large number of pubs, cafes and restaurants in the town which was not far away. Other suggestions included at Standard Quay, the disused building on the West Street side of Morrison's or at the coach depot.

Responses to the question on access to open spaces reinforced the desire to achieve footpaths around the whole of the Creek area especially leading out from the Front Brents onto Ham Marshes and from Standard Quay via Iron Wharf to the sea wall.

## **Section D: Housing**

90% of the respondents had not experienced any problems finding suitable accommodation with the Creek area.

The Local Plan policy as set out in the Strategic Housing Land Appraisal indicated that there should be up to 100 houses within the Creek Neighbourhood Plan area.

The answers in response included: 31% for fewer than 10 houses; 10-20 at 12%; 21-30 at 11%; 31-50 at 9%; 51-70 at 7%; 71-100 at 12%; more than 100 at 7%; and no strong opinion at 12%.

Among responders for fewer than 10 houses, concern was raised that any new housing would be too expensive for local people. There were a lot of other places around the town for housing development not in the NP area. There were too many new houses around the creek already. There should be no more new housing. The area would turn into a dormitory with the occupiers commuting out of town. Abbey Street could not sustain any more traffic. All areas of the waterfront should be used for maritime industry or public amenity. The area was prone to flooding and was not suitable for housing.

10-20 responders wanted new housing to be minimised. If there was any, it should be further away from the creek. Any new housing was likely to be too expensive. The housing shown on the drawings at the exhibition was too dense and there was no

parking shown. The creek would become a middle class enclave. It would be preferable to have maritime industry. There were not enough jobs available in the town and too many houses.

20-30 responders' comments included that new housing was likely to become second homes and not meet local housing need. The creek area should not be turned over to housing. Flats on Ordnance Wharf and the oil depot would have a very negative impact. There should be no housing in the basin. There was a need for some affordable housing. Some housing could be built on the BMM Weston site and Fentiman's Yard. Large -scale housing development would cause noise and light pollution.

31-50 responders' comments include that the area should be for affordable housing for local people. The existing houses created a lot of dead space around the Creek. Exclusive developments (those people cannot walk through) provided no benefit for local people. There could be some growth but it would cause a significant impact on traffic.

51-70 responders' comments included that any more than 70 units would not be compatible with the area being a leisure and tourism destination. It would also cause problems with provision of health and education services. Too much housing would spoil the character of the area. The Creek seemed to be packed with houses but there was scope for some well-designed affordable property. Much above 50 units would be too intensive for the land available.

Comments from the 71-100 responders included that some housing must be included in the Plan but what was shown in the drawings at the exhibition indicated a creek dominated by housing. There was a high housing need in Faversham. Housing should not inhibit access to the Creek for all residents of the town and visitors but there should be employment opportunities especially maritime. The Brents Industrial Estate could be redeveloped for housing as it was poorly located and not well-suited for business. There could be limited housing at Swan Quay and the oil depot and on the top part of BMM Weston and possibly part of Frank and Whittome site.

Comments from the more than 100 units respondents acknowledged the rising population and that there was a large local housing need. Development around the Creek could benefit society in the future, but there should also be businesses to generate employment.

Some respondents stating that they had no strong opinion commented that the Creek Neighbourhood Plan was not the place to solve the town's housing shortage as waterfront housing was too expensive. There were areas that were not already developed that they would not like to see developed. Housing did not need to be beside the Creek where it might get flooded. Waterside housing had to be raised to avoid flooding and was, therefore, often too tall. The waterside housing that had been built had taken up former employment sites.

The questions on the potential importance of new housing were covered by a high number of respondents. There was an even split between respondents who thought that new housing would or would not enable young people to live around the creek. 61% agreed that new housing would support local businesses, community groups or facilities. There was a roughly even split on whether new housing was acceptable to

help to pay for new infrastructure such as streetscape and the bridge while 55% supported the view that new housing would help to meet housing need.

The questions about the impact of new housing on the environment and character of the area also attracted a high number of respondents.

88% considered that more housing would harm the landscape and views

89% considered that new housing would harm the character of the Creek

76% considered that there would be increased parking problems

79% considered that there would be increased traffic problems

57% were concerned a lot by increased light pollution

General concerns raised in this section included that residents could complain and close down any business uses in the area such as maritime uses. Four-storey flats and holiday lets would not provide any social housing for local youngsters. New housing would destroy the whole essence and beauty of the Creek. Housing would result in the loss of the heritage of the Creek and its cultural identity. The area could be dominated by expensive housing. There were other priorities such as sustainable employment. Further housing should not impinge on the use of the Creek for maritime employment. There would be additional traffic in Abbey Street, West Street and Flood Lane. If there was more housing, it would dominate the Creek. There should be no housing around the basin except possibly at BMM Weston. Some might be acceptable at Swan Quay or the oil depot. Developers would be making short-term gains but causing long-term damage to the Creek. Once this was done, there was no going back. Creekside housing would only benefit the landowners and speculators. There would not be an opportunity to develop maritime industry. The Creekside had too many houses. The Creek belonged to the boat people.

The question on what sort of new housing attracted a high number of respondents.

57% favoured small family houses

41% Starter homes (1 bedroom)

41% small homes for older people

32% homes with designated office or workshop space (live/work units)

Other responses included that the Creek should not be used for any further housing. Housing could be built elsewhere in Faversham. Homes around the Creek should be small and away from the creek frontage. Everywhere that was already built up seemed to be crammed in. The area floods and was not suitable for building on. The only housing should be on Fentiman's Yard.

All of the questions on tenure and the location of new housing relative to existing elicited high levels of response.

67% were in favour of providing affordable homes for sale

66% were in favour of homes for sale on the open market

53% supported provision of affordable rented homes

56% favoured new housing next to existing housing

53% said that new housing should be on former commercial sites

63% said that new housing should be achieved by the conversion of redundant or derelict buildings

71% said that housing should be on small sites of fewer than 10 houses

74% opposed larger sites with more than 10 houses

The questions on factors to take into account when designing/building new housing also attracted a high number of responses.

87% supported that housing should be designed to be appropriate to the Creekside character

75% agreed that housing should have a low environmental impact

63% considered that new housing should be low cost to run

71% considered that housing with gardens was very important or quite important

77% considered that off street parking was very important or quite important.

Other comments regarding the location and design of housing included comments that there were too many questions about housing. It was important that housing should not be more than two storeys high as there are enough tall buildings around the Creek. There should be no holiday lets. A new bridge would improve the overall visual effect and impact of the Creek. Any new housing should be in keeping with the surroundings and should not be too large. Residents should be made aware of any new or existing rights of way to avoid the recent disagreements over these. People should be encouraged to use public transport: there were good train and bus services and this would help to reduce the need for large parking areas. Decisions on whether there should be housing should not be made on a financial basis. If there was no interest in new housing, much more progress would have been made in the direction of redeveloping a working creek. Housing like the existing houses on the Front Brents or the ones next to the coach depot might be acceptable. Maritime heritage should have priority over housing. Housing should not be designed with retail or workshops underneath as such uses were likely to fail and blight the appearance of the area. The model of New Creek Road with wooden, eclectic housing was preferable to the corporate homogeneity of Faversham Reach or Waterside Close. Housing should be in keeping with the area; individual looking houses and not blocks of flats. Most of the questions were angled as if there is no alternative to housing development around the creek.

It would be better to develop the Brents Industrial Estate for housing: the industrial buildings were poorly maintained and outdated and the access was very poor. Why build shops away from the main shopping area. Shops and cafes paid low wages. There could be a wider range of businesses to benefit the economy of the town. There should be housing only on the upper part of the BMM Weston site. More housing would lead to more people complaining about any industrial uses.

Houseboats could provide for some of the dwellings and were attractive to tourists. There should be a mix of housing and local trades, all sympathetically designed and in keeping with the area.

### **Section E: The bridge and sluices**

Almost all respondents answered the questions concerning the bridge and the sluice gates.

97% supported the statement that the Creek bridge should be an opening bridge to let vessels into the basin.

95% considered that an opening bridge would improve the attraction of the town to tourists and residents.

98% supported the provision of working gates and sluices to maintain the Creek channel for navigation.

97% considered that the gates and sluices should work to allow vessels into the basin.

95% supported the proposition that this would improve the attraction of the town to tourists and visitors.

### **Section F: Best/Worst, hopes/fears**

Most comments in the section on the three best things about the Creek related to its maritime character and the presence of large boats or barges, of boats coming and going, the presence of wildlife and open space around the Creek right into the town centre for walking, that the Creek was a unique asset or had a unique character and that the area had a wildness and beauty.

Most common themes for answers in the three worst things about the Creek were that the bridge and sluices were not working, that the Creek had silted up, with lots of mud, there was no public access all around the Creek and the existing footpaths did not join up, and the Creek area appeared neglected and forsaken.

The most common responses to a main hope for the future of the Creek were on the themes of bringing back more maritime use in the form of workshops to repair vessels, moorings for traditional vessels to create a maritime character, better access around the Creek on footpaths, better access up the Creek by water and use of it for leisure for all sorts of vessels.

The most common responses to a worst fear for the Creek were that the Creek area would be surrounded by housing and that there would be overdevelopment. This would result in harm to the unique character of the area. Provision of shops and cafes would make the area like any other tourist town. The Creek would just become like everywhere else and lose its distinctiveness. Access to the Creek would be more restricted. This could happen whether the Plan was adopted and this was what the Plan included, or if it failed and the developments were granted on appeal. A minority view was that no agreement would be reached and nothing would happen, leaving the Creek to silt up and die.

## **Conclusion**

The survey responses have provided many useful ideas and thoughtful comments with a wide spectrum of views. Many replies were appreciative of this opportunity. The recurring themes expressed were: much improved Creekside footpaths, moorings, strong maritime character, opportunities for employment and businesses, preservation of historic sites, development of bridge and basin with more boats, and acceptance of some housing providing it is on a small scale and in keeping with Faversham's design and character.

There were a number of individual requests such as better signage, a public slipway, the preservation of habitat and wild areas together with better public access including the Stonebridge allotments, that usefully added to the general themes described.

Clearly these results will be scrutinised by the Vanguard Committee, The Town Council and many residents in detail. It will form part of the evidence base for the production of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

22 August 2013