

## 2. KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS

### BACKGROUND

- 2.01 The scenarios are based upon the identification of **key issues and trends** that the Peninsula and its residents currently face and those that they might face in the future.
- 2.02 Preparation of background documents and working papers by the consultant team have aided identification and understanding of the issues. This knowledge has built the scenarios. The full content of these reports is not replicated here, but can be read alongside this document. The full list of outputs (such as these reports) from the consultant team is included in Appendix A.
- 2.03 The **key issues** comprise:
- demographics;
  - housing;
  - the local economy;
  - education; and
  - transport.
- 2.04 The key issues are explored in detail in the Issues Report: Working Paper (produced by DLA & consultant team in May 2005) and the issues are reviewed in summary in the following section:

## DEMOGRAPHICS: THE PROFILE OF THE LOCAL POPULATION

### A population imbalance

- 2.05 The town's population has more people of retirement age and fewer people of working age than the norm, either in the rest of Suffolk or across the UK, though broadly comparable with other seaside towns. This profile could become critical to the vitality and viability of the town if trends continue.
- 2.06 Over the period 1991-2001, the population grew by 6.6%, but there was a reduction by 5.7% of 18-29 year olds and a growth by 7.4% of people aged 45-64.

### An ageing population

- 2.07 The population of Felixstowe is made distinct by its age profile, which is a result of trends occurring at both ends of the age range:
- Birth rates are falling and younger people are leaving the town to seek other opportunities for housing and employment.
  - The older population is growing due to a combination of factors which include the influx of older residents who retire to the area and extended life expectancy with improvements in health care.
- 2.08 The seaside town is a popular place to live among retired households. This gives Felixstowe a higher than average retired population.
- The 2001 census records that the over 65 year old age group accounts for 22.8% of Felixstowe's population, (5,484 people of the town's total population of 24,052).
  - The elderly population is growing – the over 65s group comprised 21.7% of Felixstowe's population in 1991 (4,314 of 19,924).
  - 60 plus year olds make up approximately 28% of the towns population, compared to:
    - 23% in Suffolk
    - 20% nationally.

- In the ten years to 2001 22.8% of all new residents were in the 65+ age group.

2.09 An ageing population places increasing pressures on local doctors, hospitals and care services. It is currently forecast that 85% of population growth in the town between 2003 and 2028 will be in the 60+ age group.

#### **Loss of young generations**

2.10 At the same time, younger generations have to look outside Felixstowe for careers and housing. Felixstowe lacks opportunities for Further and Higher Education, obliging young people to look to Ipswich and beyond to continue their education. In 2001, 51% of people moving away from Felixstowe were aged between 16 and 34. The brightest minds and most able individuals are being lost from the town.

#### **Smaller households**

2.11 The population of Felixstowe is increasing slowly, but household size is falling. So despite slow population growth, there are even more people looking for homes, and Felixstowe has more and more smaller households - single people or couples particularly those that are key workers or first time buyers. This **increase in demand for homes is not matched by the number or type of homes in the town.**

2.12 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister released new household projections in March 2006. These suggested that average household size is likely to fall from 2.34 persons in 2003 to 2.1 persons in 2026. This fall is largely attributed to an increase in one person households brought about by social changes in the way we live. This includes people marrying later in life, having children later in life, increasing levels of divorce and longer life expectancy. Therefore, a stable population would have a greater demand more homes.

2.13 For the Felixstowe Peninsula, should the population be stable, there will be a greater demand for homes from the existing population. Should no new homes be built, people will be forced to move away from the Peninsula in search of homes. The fall could be by as much as 3,650 people, mainly young families and children. This is not good for schools and local services. To stop this fall 1,740 new homes would need to be built.

- 2.14 These figures assume no inward migration to the Peninsula. Currently net migration remains dominated by older age groups. Should there be inward migration to the Peninsula, the demand for homes will be even greater.

## HOUSING

- 2.15 The growth of jobs in Felixstowe, driven by expansion of the Port, is out of balance with the availability of housing.
- 2.16 Up until the completion of the Grange development in the town, housing development had kept pace with the increases in local employment, driven by the expansion of the Port. The Port has continued to expand and to create more jobs, both directly and in the businesses that support its operation. **But few new homes have been built recently.** More of the new jobs are being taken up by people who are not able to find a home in Felixstowe even if they would like one.
- 2.17 The 2001 Census revealed that there was a **daily net inflow to Felixstowe of 2,719 workers.** This comprised an outflow of 3,600 Felixstowe residents to jobs in Ipswich and elsewhere and an inflow of 6,319 non-residents who work in Felixstowe but live elsewhere. The Port is proposing to expand further, perhaps substantially. If or when it does, the existing housing imbalance will get worse. At a time when planning policy is aimed at minimising the need to travel to minimise the use of finite energy resources and the production of greenhouse gases, this pattern may not be sustainable. One answer is to restrict Port development but this has serious consequences for the national economy and is not compatible to the recent permission for reconfiguration of the port. Another is for Felixstowe to expand so that the pattern of homes and work becomes more sustainable.

### Affordable Housing

- 2.18 **There is a shortage of affordable housing for local first time buyers and lower wage households in the town.** The general upward movement of house prices nationally and regionally has been compounded in Felixstowe by the increase in the number of jobs compared with the number of homes, and the growth of smaller households. England as a whole has witnessed a decline in the average household size and this is expected to continue to fall. The average number of people living in a household in England and Wales was 2.36 in 2001, down from 2.51 in 1991 (based upon Census information <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>).
- 2.19 Demand for homes is outstripping supply across the country, but is acute in the Felixstowe Peninsula. This is likely to get worse in Felixstowe as the Port expands.

The local economy does not benefit if these people spend their wages elsewhere rather than support shops and services in the town and villages.

- 2.20 Young couples and young families have to move away even though they may not wish to. This is creating a town with an older population, of which a reducing proportion is in work.
- 2.21 The lack of tertiary education in the town means that **the town cannot retain students post-18**, but the lack of affordable housing and good jobs means that it is increasingly difficult to attract graduates back.
- 2.22 A lack of affordable housing puts essential services – particularly education, health, care services and social services – under pressure because **key staff find it difficult to be able to afford to live in the town**. Similarly Felixstowe as a resort is dependent on relatively **low paid and seasonal jobs**, done by people who are being **priced out of the local market**. A revival of the resort is made more difficult if local homes are not affordable to its workers.

## LOCAL ECONOMY

### Dependence on the Port for employment

- 2.23 The Port is the largest container Port in the UK and the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in Europe. It dominates the town's economy and use of land, but does not connect with the wider town physically, socially or economically as strongly as it could.
- The Port employs over 2,700 people.
  - A further 9,850 work in Port related businesses.
  - This is 45% of the total workforce in the Felixstowe area.
  - The Port has plans to employ a further 200.
  - It is estimated that the South Reconfiguration scheme would create a further 620 direct jobs in Felixstowe and 860 in indirect and induced jobs across the Haven Gateway.
- 2.24 **The number of Port jobs has outstripped the number of available homes in the town** and more and more Port workers travel into Felixstowe everyday from elsewhere in the region. Unemployment in Felixstowe appears to be at historically low levels.
- 2.25 We cannot be certain that the Port's success and importance will continue indefinitely, though there are no signs of any change on the horizon. This is a very dynamic business operation controlled by global markets and technological change. It is not good for the economy of a town to be so reliant on one activity.
- 2.26 "Felixstowe the Resort" makes a very useful comparison. It grew rapidly from the 1890's to reach its heyday in the interwar and post war period but then went into sharp decline. At its height, "Felixstowe the Resort" was by far the largest employer in the town. Now it is not so.
- 2.27 Felixstowe may need to diversify its economy to offer new opportunities. To do this it may need a different and distinct employment development away from the Port.
- 2.28 The main contribution that the Port makes to the economy of the town is through household income and local expenditure. An increasing proportion of these

households are located outside of the town so their household expenditure is lost to the town's economy.

- 2.29 Non Port-related businesses find it difficult to find premises in Felixstowe and have located elsewhere. There is a shortage of small light industrial and warehouse units but an over supply of large warehouses and dated office space.
- 2.30 Data indicates an entrepreneurial spirit in the town. The total number of businesses increased by 9.7% per annum between 1998 and 2002 equating to 32 businesses per year. But VAT deregistration rates suggest a higher than average level of business failures and a low survival rate. Some of the failures can be accounted for as "lifestyle" businesses with an unsustainable business footing. Others will fail because they cannot find accommodation to enable them to grow.
- 2.31 10,633 Felixstowe residents are in employment, with a total number of jobs in the town of 13,451. In 2001, **48% of all persons working in Felixstowe commuted in from elsewhere.**

## EDUCATION

### Felixstowe - A Place to Learn?

2.32 School rolls are falling because there are fewer children. The average household is getting both older and smaller. From age 16, young people are taking up educational opportunities elsewhere, especially in Ipswich. This is shown in County Council figures.

- There was capacity for 2,387 children in permanent accommodation at Felixstowe's infant, junior and combined primary schools this year.
- There were just 2,252 children (May 2005) to fill the spaces.
- There were 235 "surplus" spaces.
- By 2010 County Council forecasts suggest just 1,970 pupils in primary schools in Felixstowe with, potentially, 417 "surplus" places, the equivalent of more than one combined primary school standing empty.

2.33 The same can be seen in the two secondary schools;

- 2004/5 a joint capacity for 2,114 students.
- Only 1,854 attending (September 2005).
- 260 "surplus" spaces.
- By 2010 the estimated forecasts are for just 1,744 spaces.

2.34 **This could make schools unviable and unsustainable.** Sustainable schools are an important indicator of the health of the town itself. Projections for 2010 (just five years away) suggest that schools may have to be rationalised. These projections are based on known children already in the LEA system in Felixstowe.

2.35 But without young people what will happen to Felixstowe Peninsula in the future?

2.36 There is not enough in the Peninsula to keep ambitious, achieving young people in the town:

- There are few options for higher or further education in the town and surrounding area

- It has a narrow employment base

2.37 :The recently approved Suffolk University College in Ipswich is an opportunity for Felixstowe to seek a specialist higher education unit in the town.

2.38 Good schools and further education are important; a significant proportion of Peninsula residents have no qualifications (for example: 30% of people of working age in Felixstowe's South Ward).

## TRANSPORT

### Fragile dependency on the A14 and increasing congestion

2.39 The Peninsula is dependant on a few transport links that connect to the wider region. A lack of alternative routes and high levels of commuting means the A14 is becoming increasingly congested;

- Cars and lorries are entirely dependant on the **A14** but this is commonly congested due to the high levels of freight traffic moving between the Port of Felixstowe and the Midlands. Major traffic congestion occurs every time an incident blocks the A14, particularly east of and including the Orwell Bridge because no alternative routes exist.
- The **railway** link is an asset but patronage is low, despite increasing congestion on the A14. Continued passenger services are increasingly under pressure to create capacity for more freight on the railway.
- A **bus** service operating between Felixstowe and Ipswich is popular but its capacity is minor in comparison to car traffic, and it has no priority when congestion is at its highest.

2.40 **Longer distance commuting is rising adding to congestion** in the morning and evening peak. This traffic creates pollution, particularly on the Dock Spur Road and in the Trimley villages and Walton. Commuting adds to the impact when there are problems on the A14.

2.41 More people commute into Felixstowe than commute for work in other places.

- In 2001 48% of all persons working in Felixstowe commuted in. There was a daily net inflow of 2,719 workers.
  - 3,600 of Felixstowe residents went elsewhere,
  - 6,319 non residents came in.
- Just over half (52%) of people working in Felixstowe also live in the town.
- 34% of workers who live in Felixstowe work outside.

2.42 Economic and employment diversification in the town could provide more job opportunities *within* the town and reduce the need for workers to travel *out* of town.

2.43 Census data from 1991 & 2001 shows no substantial change in commuting rates *into* Felixstowe, (+0.4 percent per year). But for persons living in Felixstowe and commuting out, there has been a 24% increase (+2.4% per year).

#### **Missed opportunity of European links?**

2.44 Freight links to continental Europe have boosted the Port's image internationally, but there are missed opportunities for the Peninsula to benefit from this.

- The loss of the passenger ferry reduced interaction between the Port and town,
- Connections to such passenger ferry services from Harwich are poor; limited to an infrequent leisure boat link in the summer months or a long road or rail journey.

## LEISURE AND TOURISM

- 2.45 The broad topic of leisure in Felixstowe covers provision for the existing population (such as sport and recreation), as well as that included within tourism. Felixstowe benefits from a range of facilities and amenities within the leisure sphere which serve both residents and visitors, to varying degrees.
- 2.46 Leisure and tourism is interwoven with Felixstowe's evolution. It has shaped the physical layout and characteristics of the town and has helped create a town identity. Its importance has been recognized by the client team who subsequently requested more detailed consideration of the issue.

### National tourism trends

- 2.47 National trends for domestic tourism in the UK have not been encouraging for decades, with visitor numbers to UK tourist destinations, especially coastal towns falling in the face of more exotic and increasingly affordable foreign holiday destinations. Of European countries, only Germany takes more holidays abroad per person than the British.
- 2.48 Nationally, trends in the tourism sector are reported annually by the English Tourist Board 'Visit Britain' in their *Visitor Attraction Trends* publication. The main finding for England as a whole between 2003 and 2004 was an increase of 1% in visitor numbers with the greatest increases experienced at country parks and museums/art galleries and the greatest decreases at gardens. The overall increase nationally was driven by an increase among attractions in urban locations, but countered by a **slight decline in numbers at coastal locations**.
- 2.49 This trend, which is concerning for coastal towns such as Felixstowe, was experienced in the East of England more starkly than in any other region, with an increase of 5% in visitor numbers in urban areas and a decrease of 2% in coastal locations. Another ongoing trend was the shift of visitors away from smaller attractions in favour of their larger counterparts. Again this is particularly concerning for the smaller, more traditional tourist destinations such as Felixstowe, which do not offer the major attractions seemingly sought by the average, modern tourist.

- 2.50 Further details on these tourism and leisure trends and statistics can be found in the accompanying report 'WorkingPaper2 Economic and social baseline' (SQW, Jan 2006).
- 2.51 Whilst it is difficult for Felixstowe or indeed any other UK seaside resort buck these trends, we recommend that Felixstowe pursues a strategy of promoting its strengths as a traditional British resort, set in a fine Edwardian built environment, and an impressive setting of the AONBs.

#### **The current tourism offer**

- 2.52 Felixstowe is marketed as a peaceful seaside resort. The town itself is an interesting mix of Victorian and Edwardian architecture and modern buildings providing a mix of shops, restaurants, galleries and historic interest. The seafront provides traditional arcades and funfair plus the award winning seafront gardens and shingle beaches.
- 2.53 Felixstowe is considered to be a major focus for tourism in the district with its blue flag beaches, amusements and other attractions. It is suggested that there is now an increasing shortage of accommodation within the town, which further reduces visitor numbers, and the Council encourages the development of additional tourist accommodation. There is little incentive for existing accommodation owners to invest as numbers decline.
- 2.54 Visits appear to be restricted to short stay up to week long breaks with visitors coming from the UK. Anecdotal evidence suggests that local hotels and B&Bs reach capacity at certain points in the summer months which can be reinforced by conference demand overflowing from Ipswich.
- 2.55 The seafront provides an existing array of tourist related facilities in the form of arcades and fun fairs. These uses are 'stretched' along the seafront which has created issues of access and use particularly in out of season months. It may be that the tourist offer should be focused upon a core area allowing greater connections with the town centre.

#### **Felixstowe and tourism: character and identity**

- 2.56 Leisure and tourism are central features of the character of the Felixstowe Peninsula. As explored in the Issues Report, Felixstowe town predominantly developed as an

Edwardian seaside town and this character as a destination seaside resort has prevailed.

- 2.57 Although the role of leisure and tourism is not as strong a component of the economy as it was, this is still an important sector of business in the area. But beyond providing employment opportunities (which are limited to mainly low pay seasonal jobs) and the declining investment of domestic UK tourism, the most important role of leisure and tourism on the Felixstowe Peninsula is reinforcement of *identity*.
- 2.58 The issue of identity should not be underestimated. Although Felixstowe the seaside resort is a shadow of its former self, this heritage permeates the very essence of the town – tourism and leisure was the original *raison d'être* for the town. Whilst the Port of Felixstowe largely defines the contemporary image of Felixstowe from a regional, national and international perspective, the local perspective is still largely defined by the identity and image of a friendly traditional English seaside resort.

#### **The future of leisure and tourism on the Felixstowe Peninsula**

- 2.59 Tourism will remain important to the town and there is much to be done to improve the current offer, but tourism will not regain the strength to lead the regeneration of the town. There is only a small market for long stay holidays in the UK, which places the emphasis back on the potential for growth in the town as a day resort for a regional catchment market, and specialist holidays (see fig.17).
- 2.60 Given the declining state of domestic tourism there may be greater merit in concentrating on the quality of life for the citizens of the town and the range of services and facilities available for them and this will in turn create a place more attractive to visitors.

#### **A tourism strategy for Felixstowe**

- 2.61 Felixstowe has no distinct up to date tourism strategy. Aspiration objectives are included within the Economic Development Strategy and other strategy documents and Felixstowe does benefit from a Resort Regeneration Plan but there is a lack of investment to act.
- 2.62 For Felixstowe to maximise its potential as a seaside tourist resort a distinct and up-to-date tourism strategy should be developed. This could be developed in a partnership between the Felixstowe Town Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council

and key local stakeholders such as the Tourist Information Centre and requires key landowners and current leisure managers to be involved and 'signed up'.

- 2.63 Central to any tourism strategy should be a fresh marketing campaign which can 'sell' Felixstowe Peninsula, by highlighting assets and delivering the message to the desired audience.
- 2.64 The marketing should consider its target market – which group or groups of people does it want to appeal to and attract to Felixstowe. Currently the target market appears to be a combination of the 'grey pound' – senior citizens on short breaks and day trips from the UK, and 'kiss me quick' British seaside daytrips – appealing to the low end local and regional market especially on weekends and bank holidays.
- 2.65 The emphasis on 'low end' of market tourism typified by the decaying pier and amusements on the 'fish & chip' stretch of central-southern seafront undersells Felixstowe and fails to yield sufficient margins for new investment. While a place for these popular attractions should be maintained, Felixstowe is a town born out of a high quality Edwardian seaside resort and the proud civic heritage and rich landscape setting remains from this period to be utilised today.
- 2.66 Marketing initiatives which Felixstowe Peninsula could consider include the following;

***Felixstowe Peninsula – seafront, town and countryside***

- 2.67 Currently Felixstowe's tourism pitch is based primarily on the leisure seafront and promenade. Whilst the seafront is the central attraction of any coastal resort there is untapped potential away from the seafront. The marketing of Felixstowe Peninsula can be based upon three armatures – Seafront, Town and Country;
- Seafront:
    - o The leisure seafront extends along the length of the peninsula, providing a linked set of attractions as defined below in 'Seafront Nodes'.
    - o An additional waterside attraction which could be developed is the spectacle of the Port. This currently provides an informal visitor attraction at Landguard Fort which could be built upon with provision of formal facilities including walks, viewing points, interpretation and real time information, parking and eateries.

- Town centre:
  - o The Edwardian seaside town is an attraction in its own right, particularly the town centre. The Edwardian civic design and architecture provides an excellent environment for the visitor and potential improvements to the Bent Hill connection between the town centre and seafront could improve the accessibility for visitors.
- Countryside
  - o The Felixstowe Peninsula has an abundant landscape asset surrounding its urban area, with an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty located adjacent to the town. These areas of beautiful countryside could provide an additional tourism asset especially for walking and cycling breaks.

2.68 A good precedent for Felixstowe is the recent marketing campaign for Eastbourne. The Eastbourne 'Coast and Country' campaign seeks to illustrate attractions in addition to the town's seafront such as the town and the surrounding countryside, a similar 'three armed' approach to which Felixstowe could explore. Details can be found at; <http://www.visiteastbourne.co.uk>.

#### ***Felixstowe - a Classic Resort***

- 2.69 Felixstowe has such a high quality heritage and civic environment that it could seek to market itself as a 'Classic Resort' and seek to attract the higher end of the tourism market by providing excellent services such as cuisine and shopping set in its striking Edwardian environment. Southwold and Aldeburgh are two examples of successful resorts of this ilk.
- 2.70 The concept of the 'Classic Resort' has recently been developed by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) as part of wider a strategy 'A New Vision for Northwest Coastal Resorts'. The title of 'Classic Resort' is intended to be a hallmark which could be granted to resorts which offer exceptional standards of service quality and environmental excellence.
- 2.71 The Classic Resort concept advised by the NWDA has recently been pursued in the revitalisation of the St Anne's seaside resort near Blackpool. This regeneration programme, led by public realm improvements has been a resounding success, even leading to a regeneration award for 2005 from BURA (British Urban Regeneration Association). St Anne's provides a precedent for Felixstowe if it chooses to pursue

the Classic Resort route. Further details can be found at;

[www.fylde.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/business/regeneration/st-annes/](http://www.fylde.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/business/regeneration/st-annes/)

### **Key components of leisure and tourism on the Felixstowe Peninsula**

2.72 Additional considerations for the future of leisure and tourism in Felixstowe include;

#### **'Environmental' improvements to the town**

2.73 ;A sketchbook of proposals, in the form of a presentation "poster" (plan EED001/10), depicts ideas for environmental improvements relating to Felixstowe town centre. This is contained within Appendix C. The proposals/suggestions range from modest changes to the streetscape, which could be implemented relatively easily and quickly, to more daring long-term interventions, which have the potential to transform Felixstowe's regional, if not national status as a tourist destination. All the proposals are primarily designed to improve the amenity of the town for local residents and workers. However, if some of the more ambitious ideas are championed and realised, the commercial benefits to the town, and therefore local people as well as visitors, could be huge.

2.74 A sequence of public realm enhancements, from Felixstowe Station to Bent Hill and the seafront are suggested. The improvements could include:

#### **Felixstowe Station and Sir John Mills Place**

2.75 The railway station's current relationship to the town centre is unsatisfactory. Its role as Felixstowe's "front door" is tentative if not apologetic and it fails to deliver visitors into the heart of the town.

2.76 The pretty period station building deserves a much more attractive setting. Hence we propose an upgrade for the forecourt, which we suggest should be named after one of Felixstowe's famous and hitherto uncelebrated sons, namely the late actor, Sir John Mills. Further details can be found in appendix C.

#### **Hamilton Road – streetscape improvements including in-line parking**

2.77 We propose a co-ordinated improvement scheme for the whole of Hamilton Road from, (and including), the roundabout junction with Beatrice Avenue, to Bent Hill and

the seafront. The improvements would reconfigure existing road and footpath widths to maximise convenience and comfort for pedestrians whilst maintaining existing access arrangements for vehicles. Street furniture, including signage, traffic barriers and lighting, would be rationalised to minimise street clutter and contribute to a consistent, safe and legible public realm. A new high quality surface treatment and a rhythmic layout of trees of one species between pairs of kerb-side parking bays, would reinforce the clarity of the street's identity and add to its pleasant, hospitable character.

- 2.78 Felixstowe's Edwardian shop fronts are one the town's great architectural assets. Visitors' perceptions of the town centre's quality depend greatly upon the visual integrity of the high street and the degree of charm the shop fronts provide. This character is sensitive to intervention and therefore the graphic interpretation of shop front design, including colour, lettering style etc, needs to be handled with great care. An incentive scheme to improve fronts that fail to contribute positively to the aesthetic harmony of the street elevation should be considered, and we recommend that a single source professional design advisor is "on call" to guide future change.

### **The Triangle**

- 2.79 The Triangle is the town's (as opposed to the resort's) principal civic space. It conveniently lies midway along Hamilton Road and currently accommodates a public convenience, which we understand must be reinstated in any new layout.
- 2.80 Our sketch design, included in Appendix C, shows a shared surface treatment which permits existing vehicular access to continue. The public conveniences are rebuilt and integrated with a new cafeteria building and associated sitting-out space.

### **Trinity Square**

- 2.81 We suggest that the setting for Trinity Church could be vastly improved. The church and its neighbouring buildings have great character and the creation of Trinity Square would celebrate their presence, thereby enriching Hamilton Road. Trinity Square would transform a mere road junction into a public space of quality and create a welcome incident on the "formal route" from the railway station to the seafront.

### Connection to the Seafront, Felixstowe Winter Garden

- 2.82 Upon arrival at Bent Hill, visitors are presently offered a choice of two routes to the seafront. The first is via Bent Hill itself, a steep, winding street which pedestrians share with vehicles. The second is a footpath with a very discreet entrance leading into one of Felixstowe's heritage seafront gardens. Again the route is steep, though at least sheltered and traffic free. Proposals to improve Bent Hill have advanced during the drafting of the Local Strategy document. These proposals, led by Faber Maunsell have recently been subject to public consultation, where the proposed changes advise a number of measures to deter vehicular traffic from using the route including;
- Creation of a 'shared surface' on Bent Hill to improve pedestrian access.
  - Speed humps at the entrance to Bent Hill from Hamilton Road.
  - Provision of an alternative vehicular route along Convalescent Hill.
- 2.83 The Bent Hill scheme should be implemented, an example of public realm improvements which could have wide social, environmental and economic benefits.
- 2.84 Our suggestions for a new **Winter Garden** as illustrated in Appendix C offer an alternative approach which is both bold and radical. The feasibility of the proposal has to be determined but we believe it has the potential to raise Felixstowe's profile as a coastal visitor destination to one of national significance. It would of course, require reconsideration should the Faber Maunsell proposals be realised.
- 2.85 The proposal would take convenient advantage of the level difference between Hamilton Gardens and the Undercliff Road West seafront. For visitors arriving from Hamilton Road, the existing ramped footpath into the pleasure gardens would be replaced by an elevated, level, (or gently sloping), weather-protected corridor leading to an open terrace offering outstanding panoramic views out to sea and over Felixstowe's colourful seafront. An adjoining lift would provide immediate access to beach level. Midway along the corridor an access would be provided directly into the Winter garden. Within the Winter garden this could lead to escalators taking visitors to the lower level and/or deliver them to an upper level walkway.
- 2.86 The building, (possibly an iconic architectural structure which in itself might become a great visitor attraction), could offer many amenities and opportunities. The character of these would need to be determined by the Council and associated sponsors but

successful precedents like the Eden Project at St Austell in Cornwall, the new Sheffield Winter garden, and two recently completed winter gardens at Canary Wharf, illustrate the scientific and educational, as well as the commercial potential. It would provide an effective means of connecting the town centre with the beach, an all-season amenity for local people, and additionally draw the adjoining Spa Pavilion back into Felixstowe's cultural, recreational and commercial fold.

*The Evening Economy: What can be done to improve the evening economy?*

- 2.87 Improved physical links between the town centre and seafront (public realm improvements on Bent Hill and Convalescent Hill) should enhance connections between evening activities in the two areas, which in turn should help to establish a wider active environment in the evening focused, potentially, around the eastern end of Hamilton Road and the seafront.
- 2.88 Focused regeneration activities as described in scenario 2 should provide additional accommodation on brownfield sites for new restaurants, cafes and bars which can help to create additional activity.

*Visitor attractions:*

*How and where should major investment in visitor attractions be accommodated?*

- 2.89 Visitor attractions proposed in the growth scenarios have central locations within the existing central seafront strip, for instance the proposed Winter Garden next to the Spa Pavilion (see drawing EED001/10, appendix C). Any new attractions should be located in proximity to the central seafront, close to the town centre connection, so to concentrate the activities in the core, and thus avoid over stretching the provision.

*Arts and Culture*

- 2.90 In addition to a potential Tourism Strategy Felixstowe Town Council could work with Suffolk Coastal District Council to develop a distinct Arts and Culture Strategy.
- 2.91 Key locations for arts activities to focus on could include;
- Gainsborough Road, Felixstowe Town Centre, is an area which is beginning to be known as the 'arts quarter'.
  - The Martello Tower on South Seafront could provide a venue for an arts centre with gallery space, café etc. Richard Griffiths Architects have developed designs

for such a use in the Alan Baxter report of October 2005 for 'Felixstowe Martello Tower P'.

- The town hall could act as a key building for provide a focus for 'creative industries'.

### **Seafront nodes**

- 2.92 Perhaps Felixstowe's greatest leisure asset is the continuous seafront which stretches from Landguard Fort in the south to Felixstowe Ferry in the north. The seafront comprises a wide mix of uses and attractions at various points (or nodes) along its long length. The length of the seafront is a weakness at present, because of the inclination to continue to spread investment thinly but evenly along the whole seafront and to continue to seek to protect all of it from changes to other, non-resort uses. What nodes currently exist are stretched apart and over time, some have become stronger than others, One solution would be that seafront activities could be contracted and concentrated in the most accessible area, close to Hamilton Road. However, to do this would result in the loss of important tourist attractions, and of bustle along the whole seafront, and the diversity that each section contributes.
- 2.93 It is therefore proposed to focus on a series of nodes as a string of assets which can be used to establish a leisure and marketing strategy for the seafront. By defining each part of the seafront, and understanding the types of use which congregate at certain points then future development, redevelopment and regeneration activities can be guided.
- 2.94 Whilst planning policy and decisions should focus on the retention and reinforcement of the tourist and leisure land uses of the nodes, in between planning controls could be relaxed permitting other land uses previously resisted such as conversion to residential use.
- 2.95 For a seafront nodes policy to be effective in focusing key development decisions on strategic nodes it would be necessary for the local authority to monitor the impact of such a policy.
- 2.96 From north east to south west these seafront nodes would include;

- ***Felixstowe Ferry;***
  - o The small community located at the mouth of the River Deben is renowned for its sailing activities and this culture creates a special atmosphere which attracts visitors interested sailing, or simply observing.
  - o The special character of this place should be preserved with only respectful small scale development permitted.
  - o The sailing activities could be more widely promoted as a unique leisure asset for the Felixstowe Peninsula.
  
- ***Spa Pavilion***
  - o The Spa Pavilion marks the north eastern end of the core leisure beach. The Spa provides a venue for theatre, music and arts productions. Adjacent to the spa are a number of Victorian leisure gardens, which whilst pleasant are not as valuable as the leisure gardens further south.
  - o As such the leisure gardens provide a potential source of land which could be considered for innovative developments such as a Winter Garden attraction - as detailed later in this report, on plan EED001-10 and in Appendix C: Public Realm Proposals. This is key location - one bookend of the leisure beach, which could be further enhanced.
  
- ***Bent Hill***
  - o Bent Hill is the key link between the town centre and the seafront – connecting the south of Hamilton Road to the promenade. This link is currently dominated by vehicular traffic but has the potential to improve pedestrian and cyclist access with the proposed public realm improvements as outlined in the ‘Priority Tasks’ in section 8 and on plan EED001-10.
  
- ***The South Central seafront: “candyfloss and amusements”***
  - o The ‘Fish and Chip’ stretch of Felixstowe seafront is a local term for the stretch of seafront which includes the Pier & Leisure Centre, Sea Road, the Open Market, South Seafront and Suffolk Sands. These facilities provide a sequence of leisure attractions which primarily target the lower

end of the tourist market, but are nevertheless popular with the local market and day-trip visitor sector.

- ***The Pier and Leisure Centre***

- The council owned leisure centre provides a popular year round leisure attraction.
- The pier is in a state of disrepair, with only the street front amusement arcade publicly accessible. Considerable investment is required to upgrade the pier and provide a quality attraction at the heart of the leisure beach seafront.

- ***Sea Road***

- Sea road is the street which runs parallel to the seafront and promenade, predominantly a “Regency” terrace of town houses, many of which have been converted into short stay holiday accommodation and guest houses.
- The guest houses require investment to bring them up to modern short break standards, particularly to provide en-suite bathroom facilities.
- A number of amusement arcades occupy frontage plots on Sea Road, creating a ‘kiss-me-quick’ seafront ambience to this leisure strip.
- The public realm of Sea Road could be radically upgraded with the creation of a wide civic space which blends seamlessly into the seafront promenade. To enable this, the vehicular carriageway of the road would have to be closed, and re-routed, which would be possible given the ‘grid iron’ street structure of streets between Sea Road and Langer Road, thus providing many alternative vehicular routes. The benefit of this would be the creation of a grand civic promenade avenue, which would provide an additional visitor attraction and may provide the impetus for the guest house proprietors to upgrade their accommodation as necessary. This scheme would link into the wider regeneration strategy proposed for South Felixstowe in Scenario 2.

- **Open Market**
  - o The open market on Sea Road is major visitor attraction when it is open on Sundays and Bank Holidays.
  - o The visitor numbers create a vast volume of vehicular traffic, much of which is accommodated in the Ordnance car park or on the sea front.
- **South Seafront**
  - o The South Seafront is large open site at the southern extent of the developed town fabric. A Martello Tower is located in the centre of the site, which if renovated could provide a visitor attraction such as an arts centre and gallery.
  - o For further detail on the South Seafront site and its potential future redevelopment see Scenario 2 and section 8 - Priority Tasks'.
- **Suffolk Sands**
  - o Seafront caravan park which provides low cost holiday breaks, though an increasing number of the caravans are used solely as second homes.

#### ***The Landguard Peninsula***

- o **Landguard Nature Reserve** is a small scale coastal nature reserve, with large adjacent surface car park. Coastal promenade routes continues around and through the nature reserve, providing access to Landguard Fort
- o **Landguard Fort.** These historic fortifications located on the head of the Landguard Peninsula originate from the reign of Henry VIII and now provide an English Heritage visitor attraction.
- o North of the fort on the east bank of the River Orwell is a small public car park which has become popular as **ferry viewing area**, an informal, but nevertheless very popular visitor attraction.
- o The proposed expansion of the Port of Felixstowe, if successful, will extend as far as the fort.

### Sport & Recreation

- 2.97 The importance of the provision of sport and recreation cannot be underestimated. As a nation, our increasingly sedentary working and social lives have led to pressure for us all to adopt healthier and more active lifestyles. Healthier lifestyles can have far reaching, and well documented, positive socio-economic impacts. Health can raise an individual's well-being as well as encouraging social contact and cohesion. Subsequent knock on effects for health and social services and the UK economy are clear.
- 2.98 The Peninsula benefits from existing heavily used sports provision at the Leisure Centre on the seafront, Brackenbury Sports Centre, the golf club, and sailing as well as number of local sports groups and the imminent skate park. However, we are aware that there is demand for further sport and recreation provision by existing residents, which could also provide a valuable tourist resource. Increased and improved sporting facilities can also help to attract, and retain, younger residents which the town needs.
- 2.99 We are aware of historic lobbying for a sports stadium. Recent examples of stadia throughout the UK have been constructed using money primarily from private sources and are generally reliant on a sports team taking up long term residence with revenue from ticket sales funding up-keep and maintenance. It is unlikely that Felixstowe currently has the population base to develop and retain a sports stadium, especially with existing provision in Ipswich. Nevertheless, the requirements of sporting facilities throughout the Peninsula require continual assessment by SCDC along with the Felixstowe and District Council for Sport and Recreation, with an identified and agreed strategy for improvements and additional requirements. This may include the long term development of sports stadia and/or sports facilities should the population of Felixstowe grow.
- 2.100 There is a need to raise the profile of sports in general. This in turn should attract direct investment from relevant funding sources. Sport England should be approached to provide expert advice and guidance. Nevertheless, sports remains under funded on a national level and, increasingly, improvements to existing facilities and the provision of new facilities are funded through 'planning obligations' which can be attached to planning permissions for development. New residential development

can provide vital revenue to at least part fund schemes by way of these planning obligations. The greater the level of growth embraced by Felixstowe, the greater the potential for sport and recreation aspirations to be realised.

2.101 In the short to mid term Felixstowe should build on its existing strengths.

*Golf and Sailing*

2.102 Golf and sailing facilities provide an existing valuable amenity for the Peninsula's existing population and tourists. Improvements to their facilities and enhancement of their reputation would no doubt raise patronage. Both the sailing and golf course are set in attractive landscapes which is of immense value. Greater appreciation is required of the opportunities presented by these activities in increasing tourism to the wider benefit of the town and Peninsula.

*Pedestrian/Cycle Routes*

2.103 Improvements should be made to the seafront to allow for continuous pedestrian and cycle links along the length of the seafront. Improved access to the AONB should also be provided, as well as along the Orwell and Deben estuaries. These resources are unique to the Peninsula, should be opened up for the residents of Felixstowe and in turn, marketed by SCDC as a resource for increased tourism.

*High Quality Urban Design*

2.104 Any long term development of new residential areas should adopt best practice in urban design. As urban designers, as well as town planners, we are acutely aware of the need to design places which are less dominated by motor vehicles and encourage pedestrians and cyclists by providing safe and attractive routes, and jobs and facilities that can be reached without the use of the car. This can create a healthier place and, in turn, a healthier population. They must also be distinctive and evolve regional traditions of layout, built form and detailed design.