

Statement for FFTP 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2019 Public Meeting, from Nina Stimson, Liberal Democrat candidate for the General Election on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019

We are firmly supportive and hope "Fossetts for the People" comes to fruition as you outline. In conjunction with Cllr Carole Mulroney, leader of the Liberal Democrats on Southend Council (and on behalf of myself and the Rochford & Southend East candidate), I've put together some points on our local and national policy on housing, as well as our position on Fossetts Farm, as follows.

**Southend Liberal Democrats want to see as much additional social housing as we can get in Southend.**

Our local manifesto in 2019 said:

- We will press for truly affordable, accessible social housing: holding developers to account, ensuring the Better Queensway development provides more social housing and for the appropriate regulation of the private rental market
- We will promote the use of compulsory purchase powers to buy appropriate land for social housing and empty and derelict properties for conversions. We will seek a review of land allocated for employment but not taken up and seek its re-designation for housing where suitable.
- We would implement our plans through the new Southend Local Plan and joint approach with surrounding districts currently being drawn up.

**For Fossetts Farm**, currently owned by Homes England after purchase from the NHS, we supported the Council Motion (17 January 2019) to explore all avenues for building social housing for rent at the former NHS land at Fossetts Farm and investigate potential funding options and calculating the potential benefit, both financial and social to Southend's residents.

As you are no doubt aware, there is a Conservative motion to the Cabinet next week which "supports the development of affordable housing on the Fossetts site, seeks guarantees from Homes England that plans for affordable homes at the site are due to come forward, and offers to to develop affordable homes on the site on behalf of Homes England if they are facing delays". Although much of that is positive, we believe it fails dismally to recognise the difference between social and affordable housing. Therefore, Liberal Democrats on the Council will emphasise that point and push for social housing to gain the prominence it deserves.

**Our local approach is in line with LibDems' national housing policy** which recognises that the housing crisis is now an emergency. Key plans include

- Directly build homes to fill the gap left by the market, to reach the LibDems' ambitious house-building target of 300,000 homes a year – almost double the current level
- Set up a government commissioning programme to build homes for sale and rent.
- Set up a new government-backed British Housing & Infrastructure Development Bank with a remit including providing long-term capital for major new settlements and helping attract finance for major house building projects.
- End the Voluntary Right to Buy pilots that sell off Housing Association homes and the associated high value asset levy.
- Lift the borrowing cap on local authorities and increase the borrowing capacity of Housing Associations so they can build council and social housing.
- Scrap exemptions on smaller housing development schemes from the obligation to provide affordable homes, and strengthen local government's hand to prevent large developers reneging on commitments.
- Require Local Plans to take into account at least 15 years of future housing need – focusing on long-term development and community needs.
- Enable local authorities to:
  - Levy up to 200% Council Tax on second homes and 'buy to leave empty' investments from overseas.
  - Enforce house-building on unwanted public sector land.
  - Penalise excessive land-banking when builders with planning permission have failed to build after 3 years.
  - End the Right to Buy if they choose.