

Report of the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to the meeting of St Erth Parish Council - 10 May 2016

Now that the hardest part of the work has been done, the draft NP policy document is virtually complete and very nearly ready for publication.

All Councillors and members of the Steering Group will receive copies very soon and we will need to meet to agree that the document is ready for the next round of consultation, which will take place in a few weeks' time.

NP process: It may appear that the NP team has had little to show for itself since Christmas but regular, focussed meetings of all five Objective Groups over the winter has ensured the work required has been very thorough.

Almost every sentence has been pored over to ensure it is concise and accurate, free from ambiguity and jargon and without loopholes which could be open to conflicting interpretations.

This has been time-consuming work but very important to ensure the community's views are reflected in readable and legally acceptable policies which will stand up well to scrutiny and against challenge.

We have questioned our professional advisers relentlessly to make sure the community's thoughts, *not* the county's are reflected and although the St Erth NP must be in overall compliance with Cornwall Council's Local Plan, we have stuck to our guns and insisted on what we believe are the matters most important to St Erth.

Naturally, we are aiming for our NP to be approved by the Examiner without any amendments and for our policies to be upheld by Planning Inspectors.

Having read many NPs, I note that Examiners have been very constructive in their, mainly minor, criticisms and they support NPs positively. They have rarely, if ever, dismissed plans out of hand. It's in no-one's interests to have a document rejected that has been worked on so hard for so long.

Timetable: The success of the NP team and the work undertaken so far has relied heavily on our community volunteers. Inevitably there have been personal and professional commitments that have interrupted work, not to mention unexpected changes in professional personnel; as a result the project timetable has slipped.

Having said that, the Steering Group has agreed that it is more important to produce a high quality document which is a little behind schedule rather than produce a version hastily that has unnecessary weaknesses.

Pete and I are working on a revised timetable that will take into account the periods of statutory consultation and consideration by others over which we have no control; and on dates for further consultation, leading to the examination and the Referendum.

Consultation and inspection: The draft document is not written in tablets of stone - each stage will improve and refine the document. Its eventual approval and adoption will depend on the democratic process of consultation with the community, and the constructive criticism of professional advisers and the Examiner.

Our consultations need to include opinions from all parts of our community, not just residents and so we are planning separate consultation events for businesses, professional partners, like the Environment Agency and Sustrans, and representatives from neighbouring councils, as well as those for the parish community.

As ever, the Neighbourhood Team welcome comments, suggestions and feedback from councillors - anything that will help improve the document and accurately reflect the community's views.

Maps and illustrations: Ted and I are finalising the maps, and a collection of good quality photos will also be required to illustrate the document. I have made a rough design layout to provide the designers and printers with the NP house style that's easy to read.

Budget: You will see elsewhere in the agenda that our NP budget is healthy. The availability of the next round of grant funding has recently been announced and another successful application will ensure that we can complete the process at minimum cost to local taxpayers.

Referendum: To ensure a good turnout for the Referendum we will pencil in a date for spring or summer 2017. People are happier to vote when it's light outside and when the weather is more likely to be pleasant - a gloomy November day would guarantee a poor turnout!

In closing, I would like to place on record my thanks to all those involved in producing the NP Policy Document - both to Councillors and to community

representatives: in particular, to Mrs Claire Casey who has worked tirelessly in drafting and re-drafting the policies.

Thank you All!

Mick Hanley

Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group