

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 23rd November 2020 – 24th January 2021

1.0 Council and other meetings

Over the last two months, I have attended a range of virtual meetings and briefings via Microsoft Works and Zoom.

In terms of Cornwall Council, these have included Full Council (2) and an associated briefing; Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (2) and associated briefings (3); Cornish National Minority Working Group, associated briefings (2) and meetings with Office of National Statistics about the upcoming 2021 census and the publicity for the “write-in” option for Cornish nationality (2); BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) steering group; incinerator liaison group; Group Leaders; Local China Clay Area members; and planning training sessions (2).

In addition, I have attended the Covid-19 Local Outbreak Engagement Board (3); briefings about the response to the Covid-19 pandemic (4); and the lockdown support group for the China Clay Area (2).

I have also been at two meetings of St Enoder Parish Council and one meeting of the South and East Cornwall Community-Led Local Development Local Action Group.

2.0 Grant funding for a toilet in Indian Queens Recreation Ground

The Parish Council has been working up a project to provide a public toilet for users of the Indian Queens Recreation Ground.

It is proposed that a small extension will be built to the changing rooms, which will include a toilet cubicle (that will be fully accessible and meet all regulations for use by disabled people). Two existing toilet cubicles and washbasins, located within the changing rooms, will be refurbished and linked to new extension. All three cubicles will be permanently open during daylight hours.

I am really pleased to be able to announce that I have just secured a grant of £10,000 for the project from the National Lottery’s Award for All funding programme.

Once this has been done, the Parish Council will be looking to provide a similar facility in the playing field in Summercourt.

3.0 Planning applications

The Parish Council and I continue to deal with a range of planning applications. Updates on a couple of specific applications are shown below.

3.1 Indian Queens Industrial Estate (PA19/05975 & PA20/09460)

I previously reported that the application (PA19/05975) for a new access into an industrial unit (no. 2) at the Indian Queens Estate from Moorland Road, and the provision of 15 parking spaces, was rejected at a meeting of the Central Sub-Area Planning Committee on 2nd November.

The owners of Unit 2 also submitted a planning application (PA20/09460) for four houses on the industrial estate. The application was not policy compliant as the Indian Queens Industrial Estate is identified as a principal employment area in the St Enoder Neighbourhood Plan, which states that "proposals for housing within the principal employment areas for the Parish ... will not be supported."

The applicants were informed that the application would not be supported, and they have withdrawn it.

3.2 Derelict pig farm at Higher Fraddon (PA20/08679 and PA20/09375)

I am able to give an update on the two applications submitted for the derelict pig farm site in Higher Fraddon.

I can confirm that planning officers have informed the applicants that their outline application for 16 holiday units (PA20/09375) on the site is not policy compliant and will be refused.

As previously reported, the other application is for the conversion of some of the farm buildings into five dwellings (PA20/08679). It is not a planning application in the traditional sense as it relates to something brought in by the UK Government called "Q Class" developments. This allows buildings on farm holdings to be converted into dwellings as long as they are structurally sound. For such applications, the "merit" of such schemes is not considered, as the focus is simply on whether the buildings can be converted. The maximum number of units allowed on such applications is five.

The applicant's right to create five dwellings on the site was confirmed in December.

The applicants have also been speaking to Cornwall Council about whether a development of seven-eight new dwellings on the site would be acceptable – in place of the five consented Q-class conversions and the possible conversion of a couple of other buildings on the site.

They did supply an initial mock-up of how the development might look, but they sought to include a significant amount of agricultural land (to the west) into the development area. Cornwall Council has advised that this increase in the footprint of any development is unacceptable and it should be restricted to the site of the extant buildings.

The Council has also advised that the applicant should do a formal pre-application consultation before putting in any applications.

4.0 Unsafe building at derelict pig farm at Higher Fraddon

In addition to discussions about the planning future of the derelict pig farm, I have been contacted by residents about the unsafe nature of the buildings on the site. I have passed this information through to the owners of the complex, though residents are unhappy at the limited extent of safety works being undertaken on the site.

5.0 Proposed Government changes to permitted development rights

Over the last month, I have also been encouraging people to object to the Government's latest consultation on changes to planning system, which is titled "Supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure." The consultation ends on 28th January.

It proposes allowing commercial and industrial premises to be changed into housing without the need for planning permission. In particular, it would create a new "permitted development right" that would allow "shops, offices, light industrial, restaurants, gyms, medical facilities and nurseries" to change to residential use with little or no regulation.

The consultation document states that the proposed new "right" would apply "everywhere ... not just on the high street or in town centres." Unbelievably, it also states that there would be "no size limit on the buildings" that could benefit from the right.

This would mean, for example, that even large buildings on strategic industrial estates could become housing without the need for a traditional planning consent. In particular, the changes would completely undermine the employment land and commercial property policies in the St Enoder Neighbourhood Plan.

6.0 Traffic / parking issues

6.1 Parking issues at Kingsley Village

Since Christmas, I have continued to make presentations about the ongoing parking issues on the B3275 near Penhale. I have visited the location on a number of occasions and I have been feeding information back to planning, enforcement and traffic officers at the Council, as well as the local Police. This has even included the registration details of parked vehicles.

I have also continued to lobby the owners of the complex (CPG) about this, while staff from the unitary authority are continuing to request information from the businesses at the complex. This has not been readily forthcoming.

I am unhappy with the lack of progress and I have escalated the issue by making further representations to senior planning officers. As a consequence of this, another meeting has been arranged for 2nd February.

6.2 Seaview Terrace and Ridgewell Terrace, Fraddon

I have been contacted by residents at both Seaview Terrace, on the road to St Stephen, and Ridgewell Terrace, Fraddon, about recent accidents near their homes. In both areas, there have been numerous incidents in recent years and I am working up a full list of all the accidents / incidents to lobby Cornwall Council.

I am however able to report that Cornwall Council's safety engineer is pulling together a list of thirty or so locations (with safety problems) for investigation through a "Local Safety Scheme," and it has already been confirmed that Seaview Terrace will definitely be among the 30!

7.0 Highway improvements

7.1 Proposed new footway between Harvenna Heights estate and Indian Queens School

The transfer of part of the field to the west of Indian Queens School, from Cornwall Council to St Ender Parish Council, is nearing completion. The legal paperwork is being prepared and the unitary authority has finalised its report to sanction the grant of funding to construct the proposed new footway between the Harvenna Heights estate and Indian Queens School. I am hopeful that the Parish Council will be in a position to construct the new path in early Spring, when the weather is drier.

7.2 Proposed zebra crossing on Chapel Road, Indian Queens

As previously reported, I have been lobbying Cornwall Council schemes for crossings in Indian Queens, on routes to and from the Primary School. The works were promised when the size of the school was increased a few years back.

I can confirm that a proposal for a zebra crossing on Chapel Road has been worked up, near to the top of the Drang. It was presented to me at a meeting with highway officers on 22nd January. The scheme also includes some speed cushions on Chapel Road, and I hope that a formal consultation can be held in the very near future.

I am continuing to push for a crossing on St Francis Road, near the main entrance into the Recreation Ground. The highway officers have come across a number of "design" problems in this area, including the width of the road and services in the pavement / road. A follow-up meeting is planned for 2nd February.

7.3 Proposed works in Summercourt

Two highway improvement schemes for Summercourt are still being worked up, though progress has been delayed by lack of capacity within the authority and the inability of staff to make site visits. As previously reported, the two schemes are (i) enhanced safety measures outside Summercourt School, and (ii)

pedestrian crossways linked to the traffic lights at Summercourt and two permanent vehicle activated signs on the A3058.

8.0 Small play areas or open spaces

In St Enoder Parish, there are a number of small play areas or open spaces, which are still the responsibility of Cornwall Council, though the areas have not been maintained as well as local people might like to see. The Parish Council is in the process of formally requesting that it takes ownership of these areas, which are as follows:

Kingsley Court, Fraddon (2) (small play area / small open space)
Lindsay Fields, Fraddon (open area with tree planting)
Penhale Gardens, Fraddon (small play area)
St James View, Fraddon (small play area / open grassed area)
Hanover Parc, Indian Queens (small play area)
Clodan Mews, St Columb Road (garden area)

9.0 Covid-19

The ongoing health emergency continues to make life very difficult for people. As a Cornwall Councillor, I attend fortnightly meetings of the Cornwall Local Engagement Board where we are briefed about how public bodies are working to deal with Covid-19, as well as a lockdown support group for the China Clay Area comprising representatives of a number of bodies and charities. The Parish Council continues to be a contact for Volunteer Cornwall.

10.0 "Remembering the war dead of St Enoder Parish"

When I am not working on my council duties, I have been trying to do some research into the fallen servicemen from our area, who lost their lives in the Second World War. This year, I will be remembering these servicemen (as well as those from the First World War featured in the 2018 book) on the anniversary of their deaths on the "Remembering the war dead of St Enoder Parish" facebook page.

11.0 Inquiries

While this report has been a summary of many of my recent activities, I have helped a wide range of people with localised issues.