

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 23rd February – 23rd March 2021

1.0 Council and other meetings

Over the last month, I have attended a number of virtual meetings and briefings via Microsoft Works and Zoom.

In terms of Cornwall Council, these have included Full Council; a briefing in advance of this coming week's Full Council; Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee and an associated briefing; the Cornish National Minority Working Group and two meetings about the 2021 census and the publicity for the "write-in" option for Cornish nationality; monthly meeting of elected members within the China Clay Area; the first meeting of the core group for a new Race Equality Forum for Cornwall; and a members' briefing session.

I have also had a number of meetings about the road safety schemes which are being brought forward in St Enoder Parish.

In addition, I have been at meetings of St Enoder Parish Council, South & East Cornwall Community-Led Local Development Local Action Group, and the lockdown support group for the China Clay Area.

2.0 Planning matters

The Parish Council and I continue to deal with a range of planning applications. Updates of note are as follows:

2.1 Fifty properties at St Columb Road (PA20/02929)

Last month, I reported that Cornwall Council had refused planning permission for the construction of 50 new properties at St Columb Road, on land immediately to the rear of the development opposite the Doctors' Surgery, and that the applicant had appealed the decision to the Bristol-based Planning Inspectorate.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I have prepared a detailed representation for the appeal, which stretches to more than 5,000 words. It sets out a wide range of evidence as to why the development should not be allowed to proceed. The submission also included a large number of letters of objection from local residents.

2.2 Six extra gypsy / traveller pitches at Little Meadows, Toldish (PA20/03553)

In August, Cornwall Council refused planning permission for six additional gypsy / traveller pitches at Little Meadows, Toldish. There is already a planning consent for six units at the site, which have yet to be fully constructed.

As anticipated, the applicant has appealed the decision to the Bristol-based Planning Inspectorate. When the timetable for the appeal is published, I will produce a detailed representation on behalf of the Parish Council and local objectors.

2.3 Solar Farm between St Columb Road and Whitecross

A firm called Statkraft UK is working up a proposal for a solar farm on land at Tresithney, just to the north-west of St Columb Road. Information about the proposal can be found on the on Statkraft's website as below:

<https://www.statkraft.co.uk/about-statkraft-uk/where-we-operate/Locations/white-cross-solar-energy-farm>

The website states that the proposal "is in the early stages of development," but also notes that the company anticipates submitting an application in June of this years.

The website includes a map which shows the fields around Tresithney, where solar panels are proposed. Some of these fields abut the edge of St Columb Road and the northern half of Barton Lane towards Whitecross. It also shows an "area of search" through which they would need to lay electric cables towards the power station on the St Dennis road. The area of search includes the built-up areas of Indian Queens, St Columb Road and the northern part of Fraddon; and concerns have already been raised about the disturbance that such cable laying might cause.

The information is very limited at the present time and I have been in contact with a representative of the company to find out more. The website states that "from 29th March, a full online consultation space will be available, where you can view further project details including access maps, layout diagrams, photographs, videos and more."

I am also monitoring feedback from the local community, so that this can inform what representations I make back to the applicants and Cornwall Council.

2.4 Indian Queens Industrial Estate

Last year, there was an application (PA19/05975) which sought a new access into an industrial unit at the Indian Queens Estate from Moorland Road for the provision of 15 parking spaces. It was strongly opposed by local residents. Planning officers recommended that it should be approved, so I referred it to a meeting of the Central Sub-Area Planning Committee on 2nd November. Members of the Planning Committee voted unanimously to reject the application.

The owners of Unit 2 had also created a largish area of hardstanding, which planners were told would be turned back to grass if their initial application for the parking area was successful. But by the time of the November meeting, they had already submitted a planning application (PA20/09460) for four houses in this area. This application was withdrawn by the applicants when they were told it would be refused by the local authority.

I am very disappointed that the owner has submitted another application (PA21/01683) for this area. This time, it is for four commercial units with a B8 use (ie. storage and distribution). It again includes a new access onto Moorland Road and I will, once again, do my utmost to represent the views of local residents.

4.0 Highway improvements

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

The legal paperwork for the transfer of part of the field to the west of Indian Queens School, from Cornwall Council to St Enoher Parish Council, has been prepared by unitary authority and passed to the Parish Council's solicitor.

As soon as the transfer is completed, the Parish Council will be able to begin the construction of the proposed new footway between the Harvenna Heights estate and Indian Queens School. At the end of February, the Parish Council's handyman cleared some vegetation (in advance of the bird nesting season) so that the Parish Council will be in a position to proceed with the works quite soon.

4.2 Proposed zebra crossings on Chapel Road and St Francis Road, Indian Queens

There is a live consultation about the two proposed zebra crossings and associated measures on Chapel Road and St Francis Road. The full consultation can be viewed on Cornwall Council's website at:

<https://www.engagespace.co.uk/cornwall/>

The consultation ends on 31st March.

4.3 Proposed works on A3058 through Summercourt

The design of the proposed improvements along the A3058 are nearing completion and I have been assured that the consultation on the proposals will commence in May.

The potential location for the permanent vehicle activated sign (VAS) in St Austell Street has been agreed, and following a series of accidents on Beacon Road, I am continuing to feed the views / perspectives of local residents to the design team.

4.4 Summercourt School

The first indicative layout of improvement works outside the school have been forwarded to me. The works will include the extension of the 30mph further to the east, new markings on the highway, and permanent vehicle activated signs which will be calibrated to show a 20mph limit immediately outside the School during the times that children arrive at and leave the school. I anticipate that the consultation will also take place in May.

I will update parish councillors further at the meeting.

5.0 “Towards a Strategy for the China Clay Area”

Following the production of this document, a meeting has been secured with the key officers from the Economic Growth and Development directorate. It is an opportunity to get senior staff from the unitary authority to take the needs of Clay Country parishes seriously.

6.0 Full Council

At the meeting on 23rd February, councillors agreed a 4.99% increase in council. This included the government’s suggested 3.0% uplift to go towards meeting the rising costs of adult social care. Such was the pressure on the council’s finances, especially with the added burden from the pandemic, that none of the opposition groups on the council felt able to move an alternative to that proposed by the Liberal Democrat / Independent administration.

7.0 2021 census

Over the last few weeks, I have been involved with promoting the 2021 census and, in particular, the right of people to describe their identity as Cornish.

8.0 Inquires

In addition, I have had queries on a host of subjects from local residents, and I have done my best to assist.

Please note:

I will not be doing a report for the next (April) meeting of the Parish Council, as that falls within the election period, when I will be standing for re-election to the unitary authority.