

Neighbourhood Plan

Report of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG)

1. Attached are four documents for submission to Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC). The first two are the Plan and the Survey and Evaluation Data that supports it. The third is the Basic Conditions Statement and the final one is the Communications Statement: these are both required by the Regulations which specify the Neighbourhood Plan process. CWaC will then undertake a six-week consultation and following this the Plan will be submitted for assessment by an independent Planning Examiner. Changes suggested by the Examiner will normally be expected to be accepted by the Parish Council (PC) and the revised Plan will then be put to voters in the Plan area at a referendum.
2. The NPSG, which has produced the Plan, is not scheduling any further meetings, but it will respond, if necessary, to any comments made by the PC, CWaC or the Examiner.
3. Production of the Plan has been spread over four years, probably one year longer than it should have been. There are three main reasons for the long-drawn out process. First, the selection of Tarvin as a possible location for a traveller site seemed to take over much of the discussion during 2016 and certainly energised the public who attended NPSG meetings. Secondly, the publication of the draft Local Plan (Part 2), at a time when the NPSG was considering land-use issues, took up a lot of time, particularly over the implications of the proposed settlement boundary for Tarvin village. The third reason was the unavoidable need to employ a consultant in 2017 to ensure that policies were framed in language that was appropriate, given that the final document would have a legal status. Of course, there were other more minor issues along the way e.g. disagreements, changes to the membership of the NPSG, but these were to be expected and managed.
4. The need to employ a consultant demonstrated to the NPSG that probably the Neighbourhood Plan process is a flawed one. The Plan is meant to be produced by local residents, whether the PC or a group like the NPSG which was a mixed group, made up of residents working with a couple of Parish Councillors. However, the legal status of a "made" Neighbourhood Plan meant that policies had to be able to stand close scrutiny, even perhaps in a Court. In an earlier era, something like the Plan which is presented this evening might have been produced by local residents working with their local planners but there are no longer enough planners to resource this approach. Having said that, the planner who was assigned to help Tarvin could not have been more helpful and encouraging at every stage of the process. The NPSG appreciated her help and her expertise.
5. The NPSG asks the PC to submit the Plan and supporting documents unamended.