



Rowlands Castle Neighbourhood Plan

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Report from RCNP Steering Group Chairman for Full Council Meeting to be held on Monday 5th February 2018

Since the last report in December, we have held 2 Steering Group meetings and the next one will take place on Monday 12th February. Meetings for the next 3 months are also timetabled.

I have three issues to report on:

1. NPSG progress and revised Neighbourhood Plan Vision – following the workshop on 5th December and SG meeting on 16th January.
2. Suggested revisions to the NPSG ToR following the creation of another vacancy on the SG.
3. Recommended actions following the recent meetings held by EHDC.

1. **NPSG progress and revised NP Vision:** in December, I reported on the NPSG's draft Vision. Following the workshop on 5th December and the last SG meeting, the agreed Vision is now:

“To conserve and enhance the Parish of Rowlands Castle as an attractive community, whilst maintaining its separate identity, character and distinctiveness.”

A full copy of the ‘final agreed’ workshop report, indicating also the objectives set, is attached. Since the workshop, a Gantt Chart programme of work to date and work still to be done, was prepared for the last meeting of the SG (January) and this was largely agreed. The implication is that the next few months will be extremely busy – but see 2. And 3. below. A copy of the Gantt Charts will be available to inspect – for information and any comment - at the PC meeting and in the Parish Office.

2. **Suggested revisions to the NPSG ToR:** since the ToR was approved in October, we have failed to fill the Treasurer role (although we do have one expression of interest in possibly filling this role later in the year?) and we have had another recent (Parish Councillor) resignation from the SG. With work now starting to ‘ramp up’, it is essential that we have a full complement of active SG members. We do have some very keen WG members who might be willing to take a more active role, including on the SG and I would like to invite them onto this Group to fill at least one of the permanent positions – possibly in the first instance to fill the vacated PC role?

I propose that the ToR relating to this should be altered by insertion of the words in brackets, as follows:

‘The NPSG shall consist of up to ten members, residents of Rowlands Castle Parish, including (up to) three Rowlands Castle Parish Councillors. The original members of the NPSG volunteered and were selected at an aforementioned public meeting, as was the NPSG’s Chairman. New, (replacement) members may be proposed by RCPC and/or NPSG and will be appointed by the NPSG.’

- 3. Response to EHDC following their ‘workshops’ on 17th and 18th January.** EHDC held a series of workshops (on 16 /17 and 18th January). Bill Wilson produced an excellent summary of the meeting and EHDC have since circulated the slides used. The essence of their message was that, with a ‘new’ government requirement for 5 yearly reviews of local plans (LPs), they now needed to update Parts 1 and 2, as well as their proposed Part 3 Their advice was that Neighbourhood Planning processes, which were at an early stage of development – such as ours - should suspend work!

My personal view and recommendation is that we should ignore this advice and press on, with as much speed as possible, to complete our Plan as scheduled, i.e. by mid-2019.

As the EHDC LP will have increasingly reduced weight following its ‘expiry’ in May 2019, and because it will probably be late 2020 before their revised LP is in place, there could be a hiatus over this intervening 18 months when a “planning free-for-all” could occur – similar perhaps to what has happened before? Irrespective of whether a LP is in place, I understand (from Bill Wilson’s summary of government advice) that NPs can be ‘brought forward’ before an up-to-date LP is in place and that the qualifying body and the LPA should ‘discuss and aim to agree’ the relationship between policies in the emerging NP and LP and the adopted development plan – with appropriate regard to national policy and guidance. Bill’s advice also goes on to summarise that “the local planning authority should take a proactive and positive approach, working collaboratively with (us) particularly to share evidence and seeking to resolve any issues to ensure the draft neighbourhood plan has the greatest chance of success at independent examination!

Also, it seems likely that both Havant and SDNPA will have LPs in place well before our NP and that EHDC policies will need to be reflected in these - and vice versa.

If we were to delay or suspend work, the current momentum would be lost and we could leave Rowlands Castle susceptible to speculative planning applications which could not be strongly defended, and which could be grossly detrimental to the vision for the Parish – see above. In my personal capacity as Chairman of the SG (personal, as my views had not yet been put to the PC or the SG) I wrote to EHDC on 25th January expressing my concerns that EHDC could not meet us sooner than week beginning 2nd April, as an alternative to their requested date of 20th February and about my concerns that, given this unacceptable delay for a meeting, it did not bode well for them giving us the support that may be needed. At the time of writing this report I have not yet had a reply to that letter.

I would be grateful for your views and support to this approach

David Holt
Chairman
Rowlands Castle Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
29th January 2018