

MEMBURY PARISH COUNCIL

Neighbourhood Plan Report - 2017 APM

Since last year we have completed the formal Draft Plan which was the same as that presented publicly - but incorporating your responses, tidied, grammar corrected and all the typographical errors we noticed removed. That alone requires some intense proof-reading and changes then affect the page numbers and so on! Life is never simple. However, thanks to all those who have contributed. That Plan, version 4.03 dated October 2016 is on the parish web site [www.membury.org.uk] under Parish Council/Neighbourhood Plan

That Plan has been sent to each of the statutory consultees, nearly 100 of them, for a six week examination period. We received detailed feedback from Blackdown Hills AONB and East Devon District Council (EDDC). As a Steering Group we considered each of the points raised and decided which of them could and should be accommodated in our plan without altering the overall aims and intentions as indicated by yourselves. These have now all been incorporated. There is nothing contentious in the changes we have accepted - they are items such as having a Contents page at the front of the document or using the word "conserve" rather than "retain" to be consistent with AONB published documentation and defining what we mean by "local families" in our Community Land Trust policy.

There were other areas where we were not prepared to change - such as removing our New Build policy and deleting the Light Pollution policy because as written it means all new conservatories need roof light screening to prevent glare spreading skywards (exactly what people asked for). I will shortly be able to release the Plan [it will be version 4.04 dated March 2017] to be added to the parish web site for all to see. When this happens I will advise everyone through the Mercury.

The big challenge of course is the fact that we want some very low level new house build contrary to the Local Plan. EDDC decided that they should exercise their legal right and submit the Plan for consideration of need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and/or a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).

Surprise, surprise, one of them (Natural England) decided that an SEA should be undertaken to determine the environmental impact of new houses on the AONB. This was a real set-back. However, everyone agreed that we did not need an HRA. In discussions with EDDC it became apparent that should we decide to remove HP1 - *Meeting new build within an evolving parish* - then the necessity of preparing an SEA would probably be reconsidered. That would save considerable time and cost - and effort! After some discussion, the Steering Group decided that to remove HP1 was NOT in the interests of the parish and, further, that having an SEA would strengthen and enhance our Plan.

We have successfully sought further government grants to cover the cost of preparing and performing the SEA. Three possible companies were identified and asked to quote for the work. We have selected ClearLead Ltd. based at Cadhay House, in Ottery St. Mary (their closeness being one of the reasons they were chosen) who have performed this work for other Neighbourhood Plan groups.

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The first milestone is for them to prepare a Scoping Document [in other words, define how they will do the job and what criteria will be used against which to assess our plan policies and their impact]. This will be completed immediately after Easter and, once we have accepted it, then we have to submit the scoping document to EDDC , Environmental Agency, Natural England and Historic England for their approval. They are all entitled to six weeks to study this and respond. Then the Assessment work can begin, which should take less than three months.

We must then consider any recommended changes from this work and modify (or not) our Plan. Then final Plan must be re-submitted for formal review by all those statutory bodies again! And so on and so on!!

Alex Tasker

Chair, Steering Group