

Neighbourhood Plan exhibition, June 2014

Questionnaire responses:

A big thank you to everyone who came to the exhibition about our Neighbourhood Plan, which was held in the Village Hall in June. This was our first opportunity to gather the views of people in the Parish about what we want Membury to be in the coming years.

This is now being followed up by the questionnaires that you should all have received in the post. We would love to hear from everybody, including our younger residents, and extra copies of the questionnaire are available in the Post Office and online to help everyone have their say.

We had 121 adults and 32 children visitors during the exhibition and received nearly 40 questionnaire responses. There were also almost 60 cards filled in. Although not all of the comments were strictly to do with Planning issues, they have given us a lot to think about and try to act on, as well as highlighting some other Parish issues that can be addressed in a different forum.

The short questionnaire asked only 2 questions: 'What 3 issues do we feel need to be addressed in our Neighbourhood Plan?', and, 'What 3 things do we value most about living in Membury?'.

Questionnaire responses are as follows. There is a lot of crossover, as many people wrote comments that qualify their responses, and some of the more common threads are detailed below

Issues that we feel need to be addressed in the plan:

Road maintenance	18 responses
Flooding	11
Affordable housing	14
Retention of local amenities	10
Broadband and mobile issues	7
Population viability	4
Youth amenities	5
Sustainable development	3
Sustainable energy	3
Planning restrictions	3
Maintain the AONB	2
Adapt to social/ technical change	2
Pub	2
Cut back hedgerows for road safety	2
Amend housing policy	2
Keep the school	1
Need for public transport	1
Keep the shop	1
Increase localised economy	1
Maintain rural heritage	1
Water issues	1
Farming issues	1
Sports facilities	1

Many of the comments on affordable housing (which we do need to properly define) were to do with helping keep youth in the parish; ensuring that local people come first; providing sheltered accommodation or encouraging younger families to the area in order to keep local services viable. Similarly, the issue of population viability is also about attracting younger families into the area. Several people mentioned the possibility of converting un-used agricultural buildings to housing, or using the field behind the shop, or hiding new housing in natural contours. New housing should be sympathetic in character, sustainable and not add to infrastructure (flooding) pressures. It could be self-build, perhaps, and also needs to include the whole parish, not just the village. There were calls for no more 2nd homes (and calls to tax those already here)

Road maintenance is an obvious issue and several people seemed to be in favour of having more local control of this, including volunteer parties (including farmers) to help fix potholes. There are obvious legal implications of this, though. There were also suggestions that we bring back the 'lengthsmen'.

Retention of existing amenities resonated strongly with people, with many of the comments on housing, floods, roads, communications and local economy being based around maintaining and increasing the viability of what we already have.

Local economy comments included having better broadband and a mobile mast as a necessary evil (with health effects taken into consideration) to help people work locally, improve the roads and have more ability to sell local/ home made produce to each other.

Overall, several comments suggest that Membury should not stand still, but move forward while retaining its unique character, accept some change carefully and work to ensure that we don't lose what we have and keep a healthy age-range mix.

What we value about Membury now:

Community spirit/ involvement	21 responses
Rural location/ AONB	16
Peace and quiet	12
Local amenities	11
Local organisations	7
Shop	7
School	7
Community age mix	4
Church	4
Local character/ uniqueness	3
Air quality	1
Access to rail network	1
Sustainable living	1
Local economy	1
Low Crime rate	1

Again, no real surprises here. Lots of crossover and choices that are hard to pigeonhole into the above list. For instance, if you add the comments about local

amenities together (both the general and specific) there are 25 comments, which puts that aspect of what people value above all others.

Again, the Neighbourhood Planning Team all wish to extend their thanks to everyone who came to the exhibition and helped give us a good kick-start for our plan.

Jason Hawkes