

Membury Parish Council

Neighbourhood Plan Report

The Neighbourhood Plan project was announced at the 2014 Annual Parish Meeting, with an explanation of what it would cover and a request for volunteers to join the Steering Group. Grants were successfully applied for which, to-date, have covered all our costs. It is not anticipated that the parish will have to provide any funds towards the costs of this Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans are, once accepted by all concerned [parishioners - through a referendum, District Council and Government inspector], a statutory instrument and can cover all aspects of planning within the parish. It would require an act of parliament to remove them, potentially of interest with a general election coming up.

We established our Steering Group - Sam Dare, Bryan Drew, Jason Hawkes, Heather Pearse, John Watkins, Nick Yool and Beryl Griffin as our secretary (who somehow made sense of our animated discussions!), with myself as Chairman. In the autumn, Bryan had to resign and was replaced by Mark Burrough. Recently Beryl has been unable to continue but, I know, almost misses our meetings - almost!

From the start we decided that all our work should be made public and would be published on the parish web site: www.membury.org.uk, with regular updates appearing in the Membury Mercury. There was also a report at every Parish Council meeting. So, every effort has been made to be open and available for comment and suggestion.

There have been public events where we have identified our thinking and our interpretation of what we understood you all to be requesting: a Questionnaire sent to every household: consultation with some 100+ stakeholders covering every body from adjacent Councils to Coal Board, and Police to Ramblers.

The original target I set was to complete this exercise by the end of 2014 - a gross misjudgement but one missed, not by lack of application but by an underestimate of the paperwork, machinations and detail involved. We prepared our first and second draft plans, had those analysed by both East Devon Planning Dept. and our consultant only to realise that much more had to be done. We have not made life easy for ourselves because we decided early on, unlike some of the other parishes in our coterie, that we wanted it to reflect specific Membury Parish needs and not be a "general" plan.

We are now working through our third Draft Plan. We have set out our Vision for the parish, the Aims and Objectives of the Plan, completed Natural Environment, Built and Historic Environment and are now in the process of developing our Housing and Population section. To date, I think we are on page 23 of detailed work. We still need to cover Farming, Flooding and Transport/Communications - but by comparison they will be simple. As part of our plan we enlisted the help of our Tree Warden and have entwined his strategy into the Natural Environment section.

To date we have had the opportunity to use the draft Housing section to guide our (Parish Council) thoughts in judging two recent planning applications.

The intention is to complete our third draft and then present that to you at a public meeting or exhibition. At that stage you will all be able to comment, suggest and critique what we have done. Those responses, where possible, will be incorporated into our final submission to EDDC. Should they need to see any changes that we can agree to then they will form the final plan which will be sent to the government inspector. Any changes he requests must be addressed and then that version will be submitted back to you all for a public referendum to approve it. If the majority of you do so, then the Plan will be made i.e. FINISHED!

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