

Membury PC response to Neighbourhood Plan Independent Examiner's report Considered and approved at Membury Parish Council meeting May 15th 2018

1. This council has reviewed the Independent Examiner's preliminary report on our draft Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan'). We note that the Examiner has commended the production of a well structured document and has recommended that the Plan proceeds to referendum with some modifications. We are very pleased that the Inspector has accepted the majority of policies in the Plan, which reflects the extensive work that has gone into ensuring it is a sound plan based on proper consultation.

2. We have reviewed the modifications he proposes. The majority of the proposed changes relate to the Housing and Population policies. In summary, the Plan supports small scale housing development across the parish over the coming years. While the Examiner accepts the Plan's outline for 10-15 new build properties in the parish, he does not accept the Plan's proposal that these should be dispersed through the parish (not in open countryside but through some of the hamlets). Instead he proposes that new properties should be confined to Membury village: "Therefore, I consider that any new housing development as provided for in the Plan should only be located at Membury village" (Examiner's report para 4.21).

His concerns relate in particular to:

- (a) building in the open countryside;
- (b) potential conflict with the East Devon Local Plan;
- (c) countryside conservation;
- (d) encouraging additional car usage/pressure on services, especially on narrow lanes.

3. The PC proposes to request a meeting or review with the Examiner to resolve this point of disagreement. We want to achieve a reasonable compromise which will take on board some of his concerns, but which also accepts the concerns of our community which emerged through the Plan's thorough and detailed consultation process and which builds on the local knowledge of our parishioners.

In particular, we will put forward to the Examiner that some new permanent residences are acceptable dispersed through the parish and not just in the Village in the following cases:

(1) For conversion of existing buildings; for change of use (e.g. holiday let to residential); for agricultural residences; and for self build projects. These would all have to meet the design criteria set out in the Plan and in planning policy.

(2) The same approach to be taken for Membury village, where infill development will also be supported. The only caveat for new building in the village is to ensure appropriate defences against runoff and flooding, as set out by the Examiner's report.

4. The PC will address the Examiner's concerns by pointing out that:

- (a) any additional building outside the village will be on a tiny scale, restricted by our Plan's overall numbers constraint, excludes speculative development,

- and is also now supported under the Government's new 'Entry Level Exception Sites' policy;
- (b) the EDLP allows for limited development to meet a local need such as affordable housing or employment;
 - (c) conservation will be maintained by the Plan's design (built and historic environment) policy;
 - (d) any incremental demand for services using the roads will be partially offset where there is change of change of use and will always be minimal given the limited scope of our proposals.

The PC believes this approach will meet with the main wishes expressed for our neighbourhood through the Plan's extensive consultation process, as well as complying with the requirements of existing legislation and policy. Without putting additional pressure on existing services, it will allow the parish to flex and grow as a 'rural gig economy' and enable our Neighbourhood Plan to be a constructive tool for a vibrant rural community. We will make this case strongly to the Examiner.