

MACKPlan – Current position/Future action

Team leader

One of the first things that needs to be done is to ask the Parish Council to appoint a new Chair of the team, because its terms of reference state:

Membership:

- 1. The Steering Group will consist of three parish councillors, one of whom will be appointed by the Parish Council to chair its meetings, and up to six local residents.*
- 2. There will be a Vice-Chair, who will be appointed by the Steering Group and may be a local resident.*

In practice we took anyone we could get, but the result has been a weighting towards residents of Dunterton and Bradstone. You should therefore either ask the Parish Council to amend the terms of reference to change the number of residents on the team or remove the cap, or you could reduce the representation from the Dunterton/Bradstone area.

Future of MACKPlan

I don't know if the Parish Council will take the opportunity to consider if it wants to go on with a neighbourhood plan or not, but assuming that it does agree to do so, this is what you will need to work on.

Current position

This is a good time to make changes in the MACKPlan team, as it has reached a natural step-change in the nature of its task. Until now, work on MACKPlan has been about establishing the likely scope of the plan, assessing what residents value and getting their initial views on the suitability or otherwise of various potential development sites in the plan area.

Housing development

From now on, the emphasis should change to working with the owners of those sites, with the aim of identifying proposals that reflect as much as possible the priorities identified by residents, conform to the requirements of the NPPF, the JLP and WDBC's housing policies and, where possible, generate local community benefits.

The outcome of those discussions should be a set of proposals that are in conformity with the planning policies set at neighbourhood, borough-wide and national levels. They should reflect as much as possible the views of local residents regarding housing type, use and ownership/tenure. Those

proposals then need to be the subject of a further round of public consultation. This would probably take the form of public meetings/presentations in Milton Abbot and Chillaton.

It will be essential during that process to work constructively with landowners and local residents, if the indicative housing target set by WDBC is to be achieved or if ultimately it is to be demonstrated that there are valid planning grounds for not doing so in full.

MAGPC and Duncan Smith at WDBC have recently approved the draft briefing note I prepared, giving guidance to landowners who may wish to make submissions as referred to above. That briefing note has been circulated to the team but not yet considered at a team meeting. I think that it is an important document as it makes it clear to developers i) that there is no guarantee that they will be successful in obtaining planning permission and ii) that they must demonstrate how they have met the concerns/aspirations of local residents, as far as possible.

You may wish to refine that document but whatever its final form, I believe it is an essential element in starting this process on a basis that is clearly understood by all concerned.

Landscape sensitivity analysis

Work needs to be done to develop the idea of using Cornwall Council's landscape team to carry out Local Landscape Character Assessments; both to identify parts of the plan area [or all of it] that should be given a status that has some real authority when applications for planning permission are considered and to assist in the definition of settlement boundaries.

If Cornwall's team is used, then I suggest that you get them to carry out the whole of the work rather than use volunteers under their guidance, as the value of the conclusions cannot be diminished, if the work is done entirely by professionals. However, there would be cost implications arising from that approach and you would need to balance them against any other expense you wish to incur and the remaining funds available to the Parish Council under the Locality programme.

Other elements of MACKPlan

Vision Statement

Every neighbourhood plan will reflect the individual circumstances of its plan area and the priorities of the people who live there. The detailed report on our residents' survey shows what their particular priorities are. The Plan's Vision Statement attempts to capture them in a simple set of principles. But, for that statement to be implemented, it has to be broken down into various key aims together with their underpinning objectives.

I drafted a Vision Statement, etc. that has been considered by the team and by Duncan at WDBC. It will inevitably change over the course of the remainder of the work on the plan, but it is set out overleaf, as it is crucial that the team starts work as quickly as possible to develop each objective into draft policies.

They can then form the context in which those individual development sites are considered and also cover any other initiatives to be included in the draft plan, after consultation with relevant interested parties.

Vision Statement

Our vision for the MACKPlan area is that by the end of the plan period in 2031 we will have safeguarded our rural environment and economy, whilst facilitating new homes and employment opportunities that meet local needs, have a minimal impact on their surroundings and support thriving sustainable local communities.

Key aims:

1. To protect the beauty and tranquillity of our rural environment.

Objective 1.1: To have established clear policies governing development on the edge of and outside existing settlements that reflect both local concerns and local needs.

Objective 1.2: Where appropriate, to put in place effective measures to protect the local landscape.

2. To support and further develop the local economy of the area.

Objective 2.1: To ensure that every opportunity is taken to enhance existing internet and mobile phone services to support local businesses and residents.

Objective 2.2: To ensure that the development needs of local businesses, both home-based and in bespoke premises are supported, provided the environmental impact of such development is acceptable.

Objective 2.3: To encourage the maintenance and development of local agri-businesses, given the contribution they make to the appearance and the economy of the plan area.

3. To create opportunities for the development of new homes on suitable sites, that meet clearly defined local needs and aspirations.

Objective 3.1: To establish an agreed status for land where development of a specific type is supported by local residents and would meet identified local demand.

4. To ensure that new development takes adequate account of its surroundings and contributes to the viability of local communities wherever possible.

Objective 4.1: To have practical design guidelines that ensure that new development reflects existing design features to an acceptable degree.

Objective 4.2: To create a practical accord with the developers of any new housing site to maximise the opportunity for community benefit associated with such development.

5. To facilitate the sustainability of local communities.

Objective 5.1: To require all new development to meet defined standards of renewable energy use and energy conservation.

Objective 5.2: To encourage the development of community owned renewable energy projects on a scale appropriate to their surroundings.

Objective 5.3: To support sustainable local communities through i) the encouragement of a diverse population and ii) facilitating the provision of new community facilities.

Rules, regulations and advice

You must bear in mind that although a neighbourhood plan reflects individual circumstances, it must demonstrate clearly that it is properly located within national and local planning policies and that it has paid due regard to any particular requirements of the plan process.

This is done by including a 'basic conditions statement' with the plan. Fortunately, there is some good guidance on how to do this. It can be found at:

https://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/storage/resources/documents/How_to_write_a_basic_conditions_statement.pdf

I would strongly urge you to read that guidance carefully, before you proceed any further with the preparation of MACKPlan. It demonstrates very well some of the complexities of the plan process. The MACKPlan team needs to be confident that it can tackle things like this, before initiating any work with the owners of potential development sites. Otherwise, you may encourage landowners to incur expenditure on putting forward proposals and then be unable to complete the plan.

Issues that are not development related

All neighbourhood plan residents' surveys identify issues that are important but are not development related. Because the plan is only concerned with development related issues, there's a need to go through the survey report, pick out those items and add them as an appendix to the plan, indicating how the team has responded and to which agencies the various matters have been referred, if that's relevant.

Some of those issues, such as improving road safety, may be suitable for consideration as a community benefit associated with the development of a particular site. Therefore, you should identify those as soon as possible so that you can include them in any dialogue with developers and also relevant agencies such as Highways in this example.

Evidence base

One important principle to bear in mind throughout the work of the team is that any conclusion, judgement, specific proposal or policy must be supported by hard evidence. That data is kept in the evidence base, which should be under regular review until the final version of the plan is complete. At the moment it has a lot of data from the 2011 census, but it needs to be reviewed and updated with a significant amount of information from the residents' survey analysis and relevant elements of the JLP.

One of things you will need to demonstrate is that you have carried out the consultation exercises you say you have and I have photographs of various public notices displayed in the plan area that I can send to whoever eventually needs them.

Funding

MAGPC [not MACKPlan] can still claim several thousands towards future plan costs. Unless the rules have changed recently, the problem is that an application for grant aid can only be made for expenditure anticipated within a six month time-frame. So, if you contract with a third party and then

experience a delay in responding to work done, you risk further *committed* expenditure falling outside the grant 'window'. You can apply for an extension of time, but it all does get a bit complicated. This issue could arise if you decide to employ a consultant to advise you on how to carry out the work or use Cornwall Council to do the landscape assessment.

Using a consultant

In the very early stages of the development of MACKPlan, we used a consultant to advise us on the work involved and to provide some specific elements of support such as a draft Consultation and Engagement Plan. [Our latest version is on the MACKPlan website and that will also need to be updated as necessary.]

You could consider employing a consultant again, to advise you on how to proceed further. However, I don't think you would be able to find someone who would actually create all the draft policies and development proposals you will need and then write all the documents concerned, but they could be a useful check that you are on the right lines. Even if you could buy such a service, the cost would greatly exceed the likely amount of grant remaining to be claimed by MAGPC.

Don't re-invent the wheel

MACKPlan isn't the first neighbourhood plan and there are lots of examples out there. Also, I have found that Cornwall Council is a very useful source of advice. I think that, because they are a unitary authority, they have attached considerable importance to neighbourhood planning and have allocated resources to advise and support that process. All this information is on the internet together with lots of 'how to' information from Government bodies and other organisations. There's little point in my referring you to those I have previously used, because you need to be looking at current examples as guidance changes over time.

That said, Duncan recently sent me a copy of the Newton and Noss Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst it does have features that are not relevant to the MACKPlan area, it's clear that their residents' survey was very similar and therefore the range of issues and the way they have responded to them provides some very useful information. I also like the way they have put their plan document together, particularly their combination of extracts from their residents' survey with specific plan proposals.

Their Plan can be found at:

https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=newton+and+noss+neighbourhood+plan&rlz=1C1CHWL_enGB679GB679&oq=Newton+and+noss+&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0l5.6195j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

Relevant documents

They are in two categories; those created by the team, which should be on the MACKPlan website and those the team uses for information and guidance, which are all on the internet. I cannot stress enough how important it is for you to use the latest guidance, otherwise you may do a lot of work, consult residents on your proposals and then find that the external examiner considers the plan to be defective. Googling 'Neighbourhood plan guidance' not only throws up loads of advice, but the second item on my search results was the news that a key guidance document issued by the Government some years ago has now been withdrawn completely.

As far as MACKPlan documents are concerned, the draft briefing note for owners of potential development sites and the draft vision statement need to be uploaded to the website, once the team has reviewed them and decided on final versions of these documents. The current versions of these documents have already been circulated to team members.

Contact information

Although it was not strictly necessary, I sent the residents' questionnaire to all the statutory and non-statutory consultees who will need to be contacted at a later stage in the development of the plan. I did so not only to let them see the likely scope of the plan, but also to check out the email addresses I had.

I have a spreadsheet that lists all those concerned and their status and shows if Mailchimp was able to deliver my email and what alternative means I used, if that were necessary. I can send that spreadsheet to whoever becomes responsible for consultative activities, but they will need to check that the list reflects current guidance and is up to date.

I also have a list of those residents who prefer to receive information by post, together with their addresses, which I can supply on request.

I have a single Mailchimp account that has separate lists of subscribers to the MACKPlan and the Chillaton e-newsletters. You will need to create your own Mailchimp account and I can then export the MACKPlan subscribers list to you.

Graphics

I created the MACKPlan logo and associated graphics using Coreldraw, but have then exported various jpegs of things like the letterhead at the top of this report. That can be copied and used immediately by anyone needing to correspond on the team's behalf. I can send copies of all jpegs and pdfs of the graphics to whoever needs them, but unless you have Coreldraw X5 or later, you won't be able to alter them. I also produced the designs for the banners used to advertise various events, which may come in useful, should you need any more.

Software

The MACKPlan website is a Concrete 5 site and can easily be updated. Mailchimp and SurveyMonkey software is also very well-known and easy to use.

The only area where there might be a problem is if you want to produce more documents to the standard of the questionnaire and the survey report. These were done using Coreldraw and are not exportable as Word documents although they can be made into PDFs.

After 50 years of public service, this is the last local government report I shall write. I hope you find it useful and wish the team every success in the future.

Howard Asbridge
August 22nd 2018