

Malborough & its Neighbourhood Plan: Community Brief No. 1 - the first of many!

Government is placing emphasis on planning at the local level because it believes that local people know best what local needs are and how they can be met. Since April 2012, local communities have been able to produce Neighbourhood Plans for their local area, putting in place planning policies for the future development and growth of the neighbourhood.

Make no mistake about it, development IS going to happen and Malborough will need to both develop and grow over the coming years.

So we can sit back and do nothing with respect to the development of the village and its environs or we can be more pro-active and have a Plan!

South Hams District Council has a strategic planning policy for the area. We cannot conflict with this plan or prevent development included within it **but we can decide where and what type of development should happen and/or include policies that take precedence over those in the SHDC's plan.** These could include policies that set out the design of new buildings, protect open spaces, encourage more local employment opportunities, provide clear must have criteria for

transport, parking and access etc. To do all this we need to have a Neighbourhood Plan. If we do it right and follow 'due-process' then our Neighbourhood **HAS to be considered**, as a statutory document, in determining the outcome of any planning application.

But a neighbourhood plan is not just about more housing, **we have to have a vision for what we want Malborough to look like and be in 20 years' time.** There is no point having new housing if there are no employment opportunities for locals or nothing to attract them back to, or keep them in, the village. Then we will want to preserve the environment, our open spaces and our heritage.

As articles in the last two Messengers have indicated the Parish Council has agreed that we must be pro-active and prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. But this is not the Council sitting in isolation in the Annexe writing a bureaucratic document which will sit on the shelf and get dusty until the next Government must do! **It has to be yours/our plan that delivers what we want for Malborough for the next 10, 15 or even twenty years!** It has to be developed and owned by the Community.

We have just shown that, if we all pull together, we can deliver amazing things - the Jubilee celebrations were great and well supported, the Village Hall and its user Clubs and Organisations thrive and we have delivered >£100,000 of play equipment over the last three years plus brought funding in for the cricket pavilion too! The school grows and we have delivered local housing for local people. **So what next?** What do we want Malborough to look like in the future? What facilities, opportunities and developments do we prioritise? The status quo, however much we love the village and do not want to change it, is not an option. Development will happen but we **CAN** influence the where, how and what and protect what is most dear to us whilst ensuring we have a vibrant and prosperous village for the future.

We will aim to meet monthly, all the meetings will be open to the public and we will make the whole process as transparent as possible - yes really! At the end of the day any plan that we ALL come up with has to be voted through in a Parish Referendum (funded by Central Government not through our local Precept) so if we don't get this right and get everyone on-board then we will have wasted a lot of time, energy and enthusiasm if there is a 'NO' vote. Not to mention we will lose the opportunity to decide our future!

Writing this we are very conscious that apathy is the easiest option. **But this is YOUR plan, YOUR opportunity.** However little you may want to add or input, PLEASE get involved. Inevitably there will be a lot of 'process', it is a government initiative after all, but we will endeavour to minimise the paper work and concentrate on the outcomes of what we are trying to achieve...with your help.

More information will be found on various websites (including <http://www.malboroughvillage.org.uk>) but for those of you that do not have easy access to the internet we will use the Messenger as the key method of rolling out the information, plus the Parish Notice boards and also public meetings - again funded centrally. We might also try and get a **Facebook** group up and running.

So where are we now? Well the initial Steering Committee - the Parish Council - have met and formally applied to SHDC to designate the whole Parish of Malborough as the area to be covered by our plan. It seemed nonsensical to develop a plan for only part of the Parish and we also thought that by restricting the area to the Parish itself (rather than linking in with other parishes and towns) we would be able to progress faster and ensure everyone in Malborough knows about and owns (even if not everyone agrees) the initiatives.

We think it is unlikely any plan will get to the referendum stage before 2015 so our project plan works back from this. We have had an early stab at the Issues we believe might face the Parish and have also come up with a 'Vision Statement' for Malborough. Now none of this is radical, earth shattering or even very imaginative - it is a pragmatic listing of the major things that a Plan will need to address.

Interested? Or sounds like yet another bureaucratic exercise by the pen-pushers?

We really need your help!

If everyone just sits back and lets things happen then we have only ourselves to blame when we are less than impressed by the outcomes. We need a little of your time plus a lot of your ideas and aspirations. For those that have the enthusiasm we would also welcome your inputs into the Steering Group as we develop the plan over the next 18 months or so.

There will be questionnaires (short ones, not pages long!) coming out and we implore you to take 5 mins to complete and return them - or just email, write or ring us with your ideas and/or concerns.

To get involved contact anyone of your Parish Councillors or Debbie and we can take it from there.

The Vision is: *In twenty years' time Malborough will be a vibrant, growing and prosperous community. It will have a balanced demographic of young people, working families and the elderly and retired. More than 90% of the housing stock will remain as permanent homes and these will be affordable, and accessible, to the local community (with reference to the average local wage). Local employment opportunities and services will be encouraged whilst the rural character of the village and its surroundings will be protected. Malborough will continue to provide and develop diverse leisure and recreational activities to ensure a happy, healthy and diverse community.*

Issues we might need to consider include:

- Ensuring there is suitable and affordable housing stock for all those wishing to live in Malborough. This to include the building of new affordable housing within the Parish (affordable¹ to include a mix of social rented, part owned and outright purchase), with the housing to come on stream, in small pockets of development, over the life of the plan. To encourage the development of employment opportunities - perhaps through facilitating the development of redundant and derelict buildings into low impact/light industrial units
- To ensure broadband and the IM&T and communications infrastructure of the village is fit for purpose for both residential and commercial users
- To ensure that the rest of the village's infrastructure develops to accommodate a growing population (eg: education, water & sewerage)
- To improve public transport links with emphasis on working commuters
- To extend the village hall and identify new development leisure/recreation projects
- To consider the extension of the cycle path to connect with the national network
- To determine what green/open spaces/land/buildings we wish to protect in perpetuity
- To permit agricultural development for agricultural use (by using the full planning process)
- To seek to restrict the re-development of existing 1-2 bedroom housing stock into larger homes to facilitate progression up the housing ladder for local residents and to work to protect local residency clauses
- To set out our thoughts/way forward for green issues (do we want to encourage wind turbines or insist any new build is built to the highest efficiency standards for example?)
- To protect the existing economic uses of buildings used by the general public (eg; shop, pubs and post office)
- Protect the local vernacular - setting out policies that insist on good quality design that integrate with, and respond to, local surroundings, the landscape and existing buildings.

So what do you think? What have we missed? What is wrong? What is good/right? **How do we make this whole process more real to you...what does it mean to you as a resident of Malborough?** Let us have your comments.

Contact any of us using the Council numbers on the back of the Messenger and thanks for your time in reading this.

Lastly we are delighted to have Phil Baker working with us from SHDC's strategic planning team; he will be our link into the Council, help us with the process and provide a source of planning expertise, welcome Phil.

Debbie,

July 2013 for Malborough Parish Council

• ¹ Affordable for the people of Malborough with reference to the average local wage