NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FOR MEDBOURNE

What have we done so far?

The Parish Council considered undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan several years ago. The increase in the level of developer interest in the Parish through 2014 led to a community questionnaire in December 2014 to test the appetite for undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan amongst the community. Early in 2015 the Parish Council took the decision to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish was formally designated as a Neighbourhood Plan area in April 2015. The designated area is as shown on the map.

An Advisory Committee has been established involving residents and Parish Councillors:

- Bernadette Lee (Chair)
- David Nance (Secretary)
- Tim Gidley-Wright (Parish Councillor)
- Lynne Easton (Parish Councillor)
- Trevor Pemberton (Committee Member)
- Martin Delaney (Committee Member)
- Meriel Godfrey (Committee Member)
- Bill Barrie (Committee Member)
- Caroline Jack (Committee Member)
- Paul Griffiths (Committee Member)

Funding was secured to help meet the cost of the delivery of the Plan and a consultation event took place in June 2016. A very successful community questionnaire has recently been completed by over 40% of the adult population and further consultation has taken place with young people in the parish.

‘Theme Groups’ have been considering the detail of the Neighbourhood Plan since their launch in the autumn last year and the display boards today reflect the outputs from these groups, plus other evidence gathered from the consultation and other sources.

Have a look through the emerging policies and let us know what you think!

This is your last chance to comment before the Plan is drafted, but there will be other opportunities to make comment before it is finalised.

What do we still have to do?

Following this consultation event, the draft Plan will be put together taking into account the comments made and other evidence and will be considered by the Parish Council.

Once approved by the Parish Council it will be submitted for what is known as pre-submission consultation where local and statutory consultees will have the opportunity to comment on the draft Plan.

Once any further amendments have been made and approved by the Parish Council, the Plan will be submitted to Harborough District Council at which point it will carry statutory weight in planning terms and be considered when planning applications in the Parish are determined.

The District Council will consult on the document before submitting it for an Independent Examination and ultimately a referendum within the Parish.

This document contains planning policies (written in red) and also describes Community Actions (written in blue). These are not planning policies and will not be subject to Examination but are issues for the Parish to take forward in support of the Plan.

There is a range of information we welcome your comments on. Please read the material and give us your thoughts about whether you agree with the proposals and if not why not! This includes your views on potential sites for the homes needed to deliver the required number of new dwellings in the Parish up to 2031; important open spaces and environmental protection, community facilities and transport related issues.

Please give some thought to this as it will help us to finalise our understanding of the most important aspects of life in the Parish. This is your opportunity to shape development in the Parish over the next 14 years!
Draft Vision

Our plan for Medbourne is that it continues to be an attractive, thriving and sustainable place for people to live and work, while keeping its character as a beautiful rural village of historic significance. We will protect the open spaces and heritage assets of our parish. Housing developments will be in accordance with local need, and design will be sympathetic to the character of the village and will have minimal environmental impact. Existing and new small businesses will be supported and local employment encouraged. Community amenities will be preserved and recreational activities promoted to enhance the well-being of Medbourne residents.

Do you support this vision statement? Would you make any changes?

Housing

The Parish is required to contribute to the supply of new housing across Harborough District irrespective of whether it prepares a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan can shape the type, size and location of new housing in the Parish – executive houses, family houses or starter homes. It can specify expensive or affordable homes, specialist housing for older people or people with support needs. It can also influence housing design and protect locally important buildings from inappropriate development.

In the draft Local Plan, Medbourne is classified as a ‘Selected Rural Village’ along with 15 others. Development will be primarily in the form of small-scale developments to help address economic, social or community objectives.

The Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to determine where this small-scale new development will take place. There are 16 locations in the village where land owners have expressed a desire to have residential development and where the proposed development is greater than that covered by the Windfall Policy of up to three dwellings. These locations are shown on the map alongside. Around 39 new homes are required to meet the Parish’s housing requirement up to 2031. You are invited to comment about where you think small-scale new development is best located within the parish.

Countryside

The parish is predominately rural in nature with the built-up area of Medbourne surrounded by open and attractive countryside.

In planning terms, land outside a defined Limits to Development, including any small groups of buildings or small settlements, is treated as countryside. This includes any small groups of buildings or small settlements that may be found there.

It is national and local planning policy that development in the countryside should be carefully controlled.

The policy requires land outside the defined Limits to Development to be treated as open countryside, where development will be carefully controlled in line with local and national strategic planning policies.

Affordable Housing

The need to provide affordable housing is an important element of this Neighbourhood Plan. It primarily supports low cost starter homes, along with a small number of shared ownership properties.

The policy requires 40% of all new housing developments of more than 10 units to be high quality affordable housing.

The affordable housing should be provided as an integral part of the development and be of a similar style to the other housing on the site. It should also be developed as individual units scattered throughout the development and achieve Lifetime Homes Standards in order to meet the needs of an ageing population.

Should a ‘local connection’ condition be written into the policy to enable local people to have an opportunity to secure the accommodation above people from elsewhere in the District?

Windfall sites

Windfall, or infill, sites are small-scale sites which come forward unexpectedly. These sites often comprise redundant or vacant buildings including barns, or a gap between existing properties in a built-up street scene. This Neighbourhood Plan defines windfall sites as developments of three units or less in one location.

Such sites have made a small but regular contribution towards the housing supply in the Parish for a considerable time. There is evidence that they will continue to make a small contribution to housing provision in the Parish.

The policy supports windfall development which:

- is wholly within the Limits to Development;
- respects the shape and form of Medbourne;
- retains existing important natural boundaries such as gardens, trees, hedges and streams;
- provides for safe vehicular and pedestrian access;
- does not reduce garden space to an extent where it adversely impacts on the character of the area, or the amenity of neighbours.
Design

Almost the entire village is now designated as a conservation area, with many original structures dating back to the 16th century and further. The beauty of the built environment of the village is largely attributed to this sense of history and to its eclectic mix of design and architecture, with snapshots of Medieval, Jacobean, Neo-Gothic and Victorian design, all creating a vernacular to the village that is as catholic as it is beautiful.

As the village is already made up of a good deal of ironstone, red brick, brick or limestone and render, there is no one theme that is prevalent in the village. Therefore, this design statement does not aim to promote or prohibit one particular style of design. Moreover, we are aiming through the design policy to reduce the negative visual impact of any new development, particularly within the conservation area of the village, and also if sitting in close proximity to open countryside or other properties.

The policy requires development to meet the following design requirements:

- Development should enhance and reinforce the local character and sense of place of the specific location within the village. The size, density and proportions of new development must not have a negative impact on the local beauty of the countryside, without mitigation.
- Particular care must be taken to reflect the character and historic importance of the many listed and ancient buildings within the village. The views from and to, the curtilage and the context of these listed and ancient buildings must be carefully considered in order that any new development does not have an adverse effect.
- New development should embrace ‘green technologies’ wherever possible or appropriate.
- Designs within a development should not be replicated throughout. Developments should reflect the diversity of the village character.
- Open gables do not need to represent with equilibrium, as existing village houses, the use of odd windows, barge boards and decorative gable boards should be encouraged to draw the eye and add character.
- Plots should be enclosed by native hedging wherever possible, if not brick or ironstone walls of rural character.
- Densities of build must be sympathetic to the village. No gated areas and integration of new built areas must be sensitively linked into the village.
- Environmental needs should be embraced by development. They should be of sustainable design and construction to meet high standards of energy and water efficiency and include the use of renewable and low carbon energy technology.
- Developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems with maintenance regimes to minimise vulnerability to flooding and climate change.

Is anything missing from the list above?

Housing Mix

A wide range of evidence has been considered to establish the types of housing required in the Parish to 2031. This has been supplemented by community consultation on residents’ preferences.

- 53.8% of the current housing is detached, this compares to 48.4% for HDC.
- 19.1% of properties are one or two bedroomed, compared to 28.3% for HDC.
- There are currently 17.1% of properties in Medbourne with five or more bedrooms, this compares to 8.5% for HDC.
- Over 62% of all households in the Parish have two or more spare bedrooms.

The policy requires new housing development to provide a mixture of housing types specifically to meet the identified local needs in Medbourne. Support will be given to the construction of two and three bedroomed family houses and two bedroomed accommodation to meet the needs of older people. 4+ bedroomed dwellings may be included in the mix but will be expected to comprise a minority.

Community Facilities

Support for existing

Community facilities and amenities provide important infrastructure for the residents of Medbourne, supporting and enhancing the quality of daily life and contributing to the vitality of the village.

Some of these facilities and amenities offer local employment opportunities whilst others provide a focal point for social interaction and support important services; thereby reducing the need to travel, which is particularly important for those who do not have access to a car.

The loss and threatened closure of facilities and services is, however, a common dilemma for rural communities. The viability of many rural services is likely to be challenged further in future as a consequence of squeezed local authority budgets and more car owning residents commuting to work, driving to retail centres and accessing leisure facilities and other amenities further afield.

Medbourne village currently has a reasonably good range of facilities which include the church, the village hall, shop & post office, a pub/restaurant, a café, B&B establishments, children’s playground, bowling green and sports club with tennis courts and playing fields. Medbourne residents highly value these facilities and the Neighbourhood Plan includes policies that aim to retain, protect and enhance these important community assets.

The policy aims to resist any change of use or loss of a community facility unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the facility is no longer financially viable or considered necessary or of value to the community or a suitable replacement can be provided within the Parish. The loss of community facilities will only be supported where this enhances community amenity or accessibility.

Important community facilities addressed by this policy include those currently existing as identified in the narrative of the Neighbourhood Plan and new facilities arising during the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan.
New and enhanced community facilities

Community consultation has highlighted a broad consensus that the type and capacity of community facilities and services should evolve in an appropriate manner to serve population growth and changing demographics resulting from new housing development.

The policy states that improvements to the amenity, diversity and sustainability of community facilities will be supported where they conform to the policies contained within this Neighbourhood Plan.

To reinforce and complement these objectives, the Parish Council will identify locally important facilities and seek to designate them as “Assets of Community Value”.

When any of these important local facilities are put up for sale, The Parish Council will have up to 6 months to put together a business plan to bid for ownership of the asset.

Medbourne has excellent recreation activity facilities which include the Children’s Playground, the Bowling Green, the Sports Club and playing fields which are owned by the Parish Council and Charitable Trusts on behalf of, and for the benefit of, Medbourne residents. To maintain this status, an objective of the Neighbourhood Plan is to ensure that residents of the Parish are adequately represented in all the organisations that manage and control use of these recreation activity facilities.

The Parish Council will work with clubs and community groups to provide a framework and the support that will keep groups, clubs, societies, facilities and amenities managed from within the Parish so they remain sustainable, vibrant and inclusive whilst focused on serving the Medbourne Community.

Employment

Medbourne is a rural parish some distance from major employment centres and employment opportunities within the Parish itself are limited. Many Medbourne residents commute to work.

The effect of limited local employment opportunity combined with high property values impacts particularly on young people who often move away from the area. Where there are buildings dedicated to business use in the Parish it is recommended that they be protected against loss to other uses by restricting the premature demolition or conversion of existing commercial premises (B class uses) for non-commercial purposes.

The policy resists the loss of commercial premises or land (Use Class B) that provides employment or future potential employment opportunities. This will only be supported if it is clearly demonstrated that there is little prospect of the existing building or land being used for employment purposes.

New employment initiatives

New employment initiatives in the right location can help to boost and diversify the local economy and provide more local employment opportunities. Any new employment initiatives should be sensitive to the character of the Parish and only be acceptable if they avoid harmful impacts such as increased traffic, parking, residential amenity, the preservation of historic/heritage assets and the local environment.

The policy supports new employment where it:

a) Is sited in existing buildings or on previously developed land;

b) Is of a size and scale not adversely affecting the character, infrastructure and environment;

c) Doesn’t involve the loss of residential homes;

d) Doesn’t increase noise levels or light pollution or introduce pollution to disturb residential property;

e) Doesn’t generate severe levels of traffic;

f) Has appropriate provision for off-road parking;

g) Contributes to the character and vitality of the local economy;

h) Is well integrated/complements existing business

Farm Diversification

To help maintain the rural economy and protect the open countryside from inappropriate development, the Plan supports the sustainable growth and expansion of business and enterprise through the development and where appropriate conversion of existing farm buildings in the countryside.

The policy supports the re-use, conversion and adaptation of existing agricultural and commercial buildings for small businesses, recreation, or tourism purposes subject to the following:

a) The proposed use is appropriate to the location and will not have an adverse impact on the heritage and environmental assets of the Parish

b) The proposed use will not increase noise levels or light pollution or disturb nearby residential property

c) The building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without substantial reconstruction

d) The conversion/adaptation works respect the local character of the surroundings

e) The local road system is capable of accommodating the traffic generated and adequate parking can be accommodated within the site
Tourism

Tourism includes facilities and services designed to encourage people to come to Medbourne. The development of new tourism and leisure facilities will help to promote Medbourne and increase footfall to the facilities, strengthening the business community and the village itself.

The policy supports the enhancement of local tourism and the visitor economy providing such developments:
- a) Are of character and scale appropriate to the Parish and do not have a detrimental effect on the character of residential settlements and countryside.
- b) Do not adversely impact utility infrastructure, particularly local road networks, water supply and sewerage;
- c) Benefits the local community, through for instance, provision of local employment opportunities and improvements to local service provision; and
- d) Where feasible, the development involves the re-use of existing buildings or is part of farm diversification.

Home Working

In rural areas such as Medbourne with limited employment opportunities, the benefit of supporting home based businesses is that it helps to promote employment activity whilst reducing the dependency on car journeys to employment locations outside the Parish.

The questionnaire responses highlighted support for homeworkers, sole traders and small businesses.

Would the community like to see a policy supporting the development of small scale free standing buildings, extensions to dwellings or the conversion of outbuildings for homeworking use (with conditions to restrict adverse impacts), or a Community action to pursue the delivery of improved community based support to sole traders, homeworkers, small businesses and start-up enterprises within the Parish, including:

- workshop units for trades, artisans, etc.;
- an enterprise centre/small office facilities/incubator services, or
- networking opportunities/events/collaboration/ mutual support.

Would you prefer a Policy, Community Action or both?

Communication infrastructure

Medbourne is fortunate for a rural village in having relatively good high speed broadband provision through the BT Openreach network and Gigaclear. Although both networks are still bedding in, 66% of questionnaire respondents rated their broadband service as good or very good in contrast to mobile telecommunications coverage where 70% rated the service poor or very poor. The Neighbourhood Plan will support improved mobile telecommunications coverage and ensure that all new properties have access to superfast broadband.

The policy requires all new homes and businesses to have a connection capable of supplying broadband operation at speeds of 30 megabytes per second (as at the date of publication) or higher to reflect minimum speeds that may be recommended through the lifetime of the Plan. The preference will be for this to be implemented by underground cable. Where above-ground infrastructure is proposed, this must be designed and located to integrate into the built environment.

Transport, roads and parking

Medbourne is bisected by the B664 road which passes through the Parish via the village centre and is designated as part of the county’s “Main Lorry Route Network”. LCC’s Lorry Restrictions Policy sets no vehicle weight limit on any roads within the Parish. As a rural area, farm tractors, trailers and other agricultural machinery also use the roads through the village.

Community consultation has highlighted the following concerns relating to transport, roads and parking:

- Large vehicles on roads unsuitable for such traffic.
- Insufficient off road parking in the village.
- Vehicles speeding through the village.

The policy seeks to ensure that the cumulative impact from development on traffic flows on the local highway network, including the roads within and leading to the village centre, will not be severe, unless appropriate mitigation measures are undertaken.

The Neighbourhood Plan will promote, encourage and support sustainable modes of transport through the maintenance, upgrading and, where appropriate, creation of new footpaths and cycle-ways that extend and enhance the existing networks.

The construction, visual appearance and signage for traffic calming, roads, footpaths and cycle-ways will be supported where they are appropriate and sensitive to the character of the village.
**Community Action**

To reinforce and complement the policy objectives, the Neighbourhood Plan proposes a community action to develop a coherent and creative action plan addressing transport, traffic and parking issues throughout the Parish.

Medbourne Parish Council will develop a coherent and creative action plan to address traffic and parking issues that have been identified including:

a) Exploring with LCC an objective to include Medbourne in their Lorry Restrictions Policy of blanket vehicle weight restriction of 7.5 tonnes except on the designated “Main Lorry Route Network” and as required locally for access;

b) Addressing the problem of damage to verges, kerbs and pedestrian pavements by vehicles driving off the road at pinch points;

c) Improving car parking provision for the village residents and visitors; and

d) Devising appropriate traffic calming measures for the village that are compatible with Neighbourhood Plan policies.