

Report to Milton Abbot Parish Council 29th July 2014

Neighbourhood Development Plan

Appendix A

Background

At its meeting on 2nd July, the Parish Council decided to:

1. Contact Stuart Todd, the consultant used by Lifton Parish Council, to see if we could retain his services to support the production of a Neighbourhood Development Plan [NDP] for the parish.
2. Inform WDBC of our intention to develop a NDP and seek advice on the initial stages of the process.
3. Hold a special meeting to consider the outcome of the above action and take this issue forward.

Progress since the last meeting

The Parish Clerk has held discussions with Locality [the agency responsible for allocating government grant aid for NDPs], Michelle Luscombe, Strategic Planning Officer WDBC and Stuart Todd, Planning Consultant.

The outcome is as follows:

Grant Aid: Although funds are still available, they can only be used to support activities that take place before the end of December 2014. There are currently no plans to have a further round of grant aid in 2015, although that has to be considered as a possibility.

This means that there is currently no prospect of obtaining grant aid of the same order as Lifton Parish Council, as the money could not be spent in time. It would be impossible to use external funds to pay for support from the consultant during the whole of the NDP process.

Consultant input: Stuart Todd is prepared to support the Parish Council with its NDP, but it is clear that as more Parish Councils start the same process, there are increasing demands on his time.

WDBC Strategic Planning: Michelle Luscombe has confirmed WDBC's readiness to support the Parish Council in developing an NDP and has briefed the Parish Clerk on the application process.

Suggested way forward

The following issues need to be considered by the Parish Council before applications can be made for grant aid and for the designation of the NDP area.

Designated area of the NDP: When the Parish Council looked at initiating a NDP last September, it deferred consideration of the inclusion of Kelly Parish in its NDP area. Kelly Parish Meeting will meet on 23rd July and decide whether it would like to have its area included in our NDP. If that is the case, then given the small population of Kelly Parish, it is unlikely to generate any significant requirement for additional housing that might put pressure on development sites elsewhere in the NDP area. Experience of recent issues such as wind turbine developments has shown the value of co-operation

across parish boundaries. Given these circumstances, it is recommended that the area of the NDP include Kelly Parish, as shown on the map in Annexe 1.

When applying to WDBC for the designation of a NDP area, a statement is required explaining why the proposed area is appropriate. It is recommended that the following statement is made to WDBC:

The proposed NDP area is appropriate because:

- 1. It covers the whole of the combined areas of Milton Abbot Grouped Parish Council and Kelly Parish.*
- 2. It avoids the area of Kelly Parish being left isolated among neighbouring parishes that are developing Neighbourhood Plans.*
- 3. It does not impinge on any other area that is, or is likely to be, included in another Neighbourhood Plan.*

Consultant input: It is clear that if the Parish Council sets an over-ambitious timetable for 2014 and applies for a substantial grant, the likelihood is that the NDP Steering Group would under-achieve and any unspent money would have to be returned to Locality. If uncompleted work included any contractual commitments, then if that work then took place in 2015 the Parish Council would be liable to meet the cost, unless a new tranche of grant aid had become available.

It therefore seems sensible to agree on a process that does provide external support at the beginning, when it is most needed, and allows the Steering Group to develop from there at its own pace. The Group would also gain sufficient experience to judge whether or not external support was required in excess of that to be provided by WDBC staff. If that proved to be the case, then it would be open to the Parish Council to fund that from its own resources or make a second grant application, if that was then possible.

Stuart Todd has suggested that he could be most usefully employed in attending the first meeting of the Steering Group and providing a briefing/training session. Stuart would subsequently prepare and discuss with the Steering Group a project plan for the whole of the NDP process. He would also draft a Consultation and Engagement Plan, which would include identifying and providing key stakeholder contact details.

At our last meeting, we envisaged that Stuart would attend this meeting. As the scale of his input will necessarily be much less than originally anticipated, it was felt more appropriate for him to submit a written fee proposal, given that he is based in Taunton. This is attached. [Annexe 2]

This external input should leave the Group with a clear understanding of its role, a framework within which to plan activities and monitor progress and a comprehensive contact list with which to engage third parties who should have an interest in the NDP.

It is considered that this work could be completed by the end of December, but the speed of the consultant's input is dependent on the successful establishment of the Steering Group and on its work rate. However, the potential exposure of the Parish Council to having to use its own resources to fund the completion of this phase is remote and would be unlikely to be more than £250 plus associated admin costs.

Constitution of the NDP Steering Group: Before an application can be made for the designation of the NDP area, the constitution of the Steering Group has to be established. WDBC have provided a template for this purpose and a model constitution based on this and previous applications by other parish councils is attached [Annexe 3]

Involving local residents: The NDP process will fail unless there is active participation from some local residents on the Steering Group and sufficient awareness and support from a majority of the rest. We are all aware of the difficulty of attracting volunteers for community activities, but it is also true that increasing pressure to develop rural areas is of concern to many residents. The challenge is to convince people that they can influence the outcome and that it will make a difference.

To this end, we will need to hold a public meeting to explain the purpose of the NDP, invite residents to join the Steering Group and to sign up for email or postal contact. Regular follow up briefings via email, Facebook and other media will also be needed.

NDP Website: The Parish Council does not have its own website but relies on two village sites. The Chillaton site has an associated email network, the Milton Abbot site does not. There will be a need for an NDP area-wide site than can be accessed directly and also via the existing village sites.

The functionality of the Chillaton site is suited to the requirements of an NDP site. The Chillaton resident who developed that site is prepared to create a new one, by exporting the functionality and layout of the Chillaton site, at a cost of £150. There would be an annual subscription charge for the relevant software and use of a new domain name, totalling approximately £50. The Parish Council would have to fund that from 2015, as it would be an annual charge for the life of the site and therefore not grant-aided. An associated Facebook page and Twitter account would also be established. Once the NDP process is complete, the Parish Council would have the option of closing the site and avoiding on-going costs.

Grant application: At the moment, an application from the Parish Council for work expected to be completed by 31st December 2014 would include:

Stuart Todd Associates	£1,000
Website development costs	£150
Initial software subscriptions/domain name etc	£50
Hire of Milton Abbot Village Hall	£30
Hire of Marystowe Church Hall	£30
Publicity material/Logo	£300
Printing/stationary/etc	£50
TOTAL	£1,610

These figures, apart from quotes for consultant time and website development, are guesstimates and it is recommended that the Parish Clerk be authorised to refine these costs as necessary before submitting an application for grant aid.

Timetable: If the Parish Council agrees to the above proposals, then the following timetable would be implemented:

23 rd July	Kelly Parish Meeting considers asking Milton Abbot PC to include their parish in the area of the Neighbourhood Plan.
29 th July	Special meeting of Milton Abbot PC to formally decide whether or not to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan and on what basis.
31 st July	WDBC informed of the outcome and, if a Plan is to be produced, asked to approve the designated area [which may or may not include Kelly Parish] and the terms of reference of the Steering Group.
1 st August	Application made to Locality for grant aid.
During August	Advance publicity for a public meeting in September.
2 nd week of August	WDBC gives six week's notice of proposed area of Plan.
September	Public meeting to gain support and allow potential Steering Group members to be identified.
7 th October	WDBC Resources Committee approves Plan area. [1 st available meeting].
October	Briefing/Training for Steering Group.
November	Consideration of project plan by Steering Group.
December	Consultation and Engagement Plan agreed.
2015	Further action as determined by the Steering Group and the NDP process.

Summary of recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Application be made to WDBC for the designation of the area of the NDP, as shown on the map in Annexe 1 and which includes that of Kelly Parish. That application to include the statement as to the appropriateness of the Plan area as set out in the above report and the Constitution of the Steering Group as set out in Annexe 3 to this report.
2. Application be made to Locality for grant aid in the sum of £1,610, the Parish Clerk being authorised to refine the costs involved as appropriate.
3. Subject to the approval of grant aid, Stuart Todd Associates be appointed to provide support to the Steering Group on the basis set out in Annexe 2.
4. The Parish Clerk be authorised to publicise and make arrangements for a public meeting in September to promote the idea of the NDP and to invite residents to join the Steering Group.
5. Following the public meeting, a Steering Group be established, constituted as proposed in Annexe 3.
6. Once grant funding has been obtained, a NDP website with a similar functionality to the Chillaton village website be developed by Chris Beighton at a cost of £150, plus estimated annual running costs of £50.
7. The timetable for the initial stages of the NDP process set out above, be approved.

Howard Asbridge
Parish Councillor and Acting Parish Clerk

22nd July 2014