

ST MABYN AT THE CROSSROADS

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LOCAL PLAN

A vision for the 21st century



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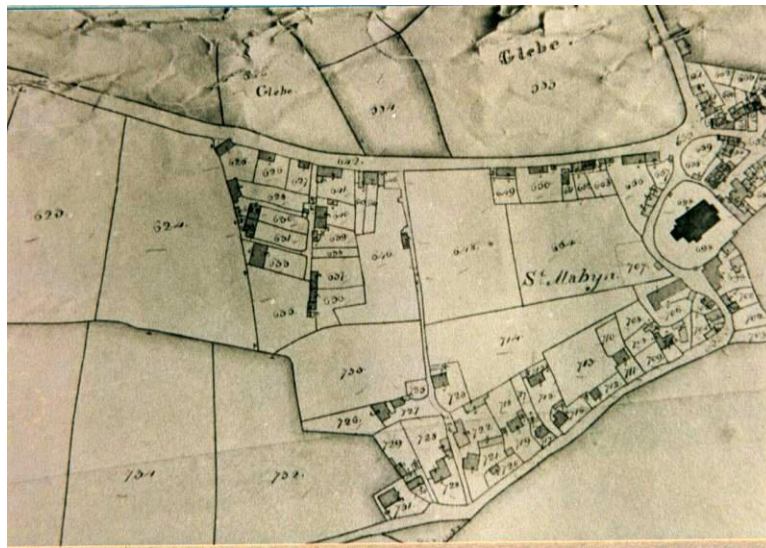
Introduction - How did we get here?

People have lived at St Mabyn since at least the 5th century. There was a priest in charge of the church in the 13th century.

In 1801, 80% of people in Britain lived in rural areas like St Mabyn. By 1901, 80% lived in towns and cities.

The village has naturally seen many changes – but some of the most dramatic developments have all happened within the most recent 30 years.

In 1801 the population was recorded as being 475. It was at its peak – 870 people – in 1841. [The 1841 census](#) describes a working rural community, comprising people of all ages and social backgrounds.



Many of the families named in this 178-year-old document are buried in the churchyard and the direct descendants of several of them still live in the parish today.

The census describes dozens of diverse occupations, including farmers, agricultural labourers, blacksmiths, servants, carpenters, shoemakers, a surgeon and one “pauper.”

By 1881, the total population was 560, with most living in the village centre, particularly Watergate Lane and Kelly Park.

Property ownership followed a pattern which today we would recognise only from televised costume drama: apart from the church, the main land owners were Viscount Falmouth, Sir William Molesworth and the heirs of Sir John Tremayne. Everyone else was a tenant.

The decline of a handful of large country houses in the period 1945-55,¹ and the mechanisation of agriculture², significantly reduced employment opportunities. Remarkably, the village still had 14 shops (including a TV repair shop) two petrol stations and an abattoir until the 1970s. For part of the post-war period, St Mabyn even had its own bookmaker.

The population of St Mabyn reached its lowest 20th century number in 1951, when the census recorded only 488 people, reflecting the shift of employment away from the village as the number of small farms decreased.

In 1971 the population was still only 510, and by the late 1970s, the village school was on the point of closing, with only 21 pupils.

Once a week, the St Mabyn village hall doubled up as the Port Isaac doctor's surgery, with the "waiting room" separated from the "consultation" section by only a temporary curtain. Modern facilities were later built at St Kew Highway.

The 1980s however ushered in a period of dynamic change. [A notoriously relaxed approach to planning](#)³ saw dozens of new homes built in a very short period, expanding the boundaries of the village. At the same time, the [1980 Housing Act](#) resulted in the wholesale transfer of local authority-owned social housing to individual private ownership.

By 2001, the population was exactly the same as it had been 90 years earlier – but the number of dwellings in the parish had increased dramatically, and had spread far beyond the immediate centre of the village.

By 2011 the population had risen to 646, and in 2017 was estimated at around 716. But this increase in population, driven largely by the increase

in the development of private houses for sale, had happened against a background of diminishing employment opportunities and infrastructure.

The new developments since 1980 attracted private home-buyers who were at or close to retirement age. Those developments did little or nothing to meet local needs, except for a handful of self-builders.

The most obvious consequence of these socio-economic changes was [a significant increase in the age of the population.](#)⁴ Nevertheless, St Mabyn is now approaching its “peak population” similar to the year 1841 - albeit for very different reasons. This poses new questions about what the community needs in the 21st century, and whether it can ever once again be sustainable.

By 2017, more than a quarter of the whole population of St Mabyn was over 65. More than 11% were aged over 70 and more than one person in 20 was aged over 80. By comparison, only 29% were aged 20-50. Barely 23% were under 18, including babies and infants.

Of those who responded to the survey, the largest single cohort (32.3%) described themselves as retired.

The story of St Mabyn is a story which is common to many parts of rural Britain, particularly Cornwall. Age has become the single most important determinant of who we are.

Many people can now expect to live 20-30 years after retirement. While this is to be welcomed, there can also be unpleasant consequences – such as poor health, and isolation.



The St Maby Community Shop – owned and managed by the local community – opened 1st October 2018. Might it be a pointer to a new direction for the 21st century?

We are now at a crossroads. If we carry on as we have done for the past 30 years, the average age of the population will continue to increase. Economic activity will continue to decline as young people are forced to move away. St Maby will become a gated-community of the very frail. This document is an attempt to point in a different direction.

1. *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, Peter Mandler, 1997
2. [*Agriculture in Post War Britain*](#), University of Reading
3. *Audrey Lees*, Department of the Environment, 1993
4. *Office of National Statistics*

Environment, landscape, wildlife, heritage and culture

St Mabyn is a rural parish, comprising a village and a number of outlying settlements, notably Longstone.

The land surrounding these settlements is among the highest quality and most versatile agricultural land in the country. The Allen Valley, to the north west, contains a number of nature conservation sites.

The wooded avenue of Rectory Drive is protected by a Tree Preservation Order. Several other individual trees in the parish are similarly protected. The rivers Allen and Camel and their wooded valleys are particularly rich in wildlife, including otters and other protected species.

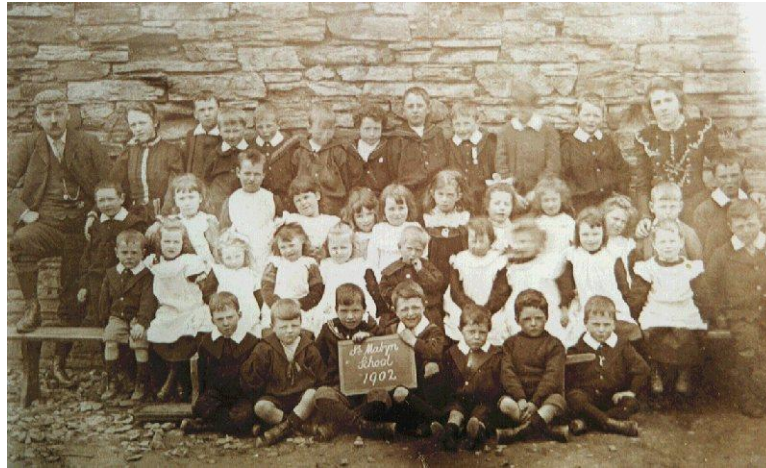
The Iron Age hillfort at Kelly Rounds [is on the English Heritage “at risk” register.](#)

St Mabyn’s parish church is Grade 1 listed. [There are more than 30 other “listed” sites in the parish, including headstones, ancient Celtic crosses or posts, bridges and some relatively modern buildings.](#)

The parish has a number of significant historic features, such as old pumps and troughs.



The village school dates from 1845. It was built on land which had been part of Trevisquite Manor and was gifted to the community by Viscount Falmouth in 1846.



The centre of the village includes the playing field, one of only nine King George V playing fields in Cornwall and a Field In Trust, affording it enhanced protected status. [The St Mabyn playing field has enjoyed this status since June 1938.](#) Although the St Mabyn playing field is owned by the parish council, it is a charity and the parish councillors are the trustees.

Another significant “green space” is known as “The Green” and is part of the St Mabyn school playing field, next to the church. The Green is owned by the Diocese of Truro.

The St Mabyn Peace Memorial Hall (known as the village hall) is also a charity, administered by trustees comprised of its main user-groups, including the snooker club. The building was gifted to the local community in the early 1920s as a tribute to local men killed in the First World War.

The North Cornwall district council planning policy for St Mabyn, adopted in 1999, described the area to the south east (south of the village, towards Pencarrow) as An Open Area Of Local Significance, which should be “protected” by what was then called Planning Policy ENV2.

That 1999 NCDC document described land to the south of the school (next to the community shop, currently earmarked for limited car parking) as being for “education” - and protected from residential development. The word “education” was not defined and might, for example, include employment and/or training.

Responses to the St Mabyn Neighbourhood Plan Survey found that more than half of all respondents (52.9%) felt “very strongly” that community open/green spaces should be preserved (page 7 of survey responses.)



About three quarters “strongly agreed” it was important to protect the natural beauty and character of the landscape. A similar number “strongly agreed” that it was important to protect and enhance existing wildlife and their habitats.

Community facilities and infrastructure

The lack of infrastructure is an obstacle to sustainable development. In particular, St Mabyn has no mains sewerage.

The North Cornwall District Council planning policy for St Mabyn, adopted in 1999, drew attention to the lack of mains sewerage, suggesting that until St Mabyn was connected to the St Kew Highway system there could be little new development.

That NCDC document described the lack of mains sewerage as a “constraint.”

New health and highways infrastructure are also needed before the population could be substantially increased.

HEALTH

With nearly 200 residents over the age of 60, the St Mabyn plan could aspire to include basic healthcare facilities within the village. It is too early to talk about precisely where, but it might be that land close to the village shop, village hall or snooker room could be made available. It might be that part of the hall or snooker room could be converted for suitable use.

A small Community Health Hub could provide the base for a district nurse. A GP and/or dentist might visit once a week. The Hub might also administer a medicines’ dispensary and provide services like “memory clinics,” improving the NHS service for residents approaching the end of their lives.

The local plan should not ignore the increasing needs for healthcare and should start to prepare a separate business case, possibly in conjunction with Kernow Healthcare CIC, and exploring funding.

HIGHWAYS

The road network in and around St Mabyn has changed little in 200 years, but the volume of traffic has increased beyond anything that could ever

have been imagined. The construction of new roads has followed new housing developments.

The survey found clear evidence of a speeding problem through the village with calls for a reduced speed limit. Speeding traffic on the B3266 at Longstone is a particular concern, where reduced visibility at the junction contributes to frequent accidents.

There were also calls for action to address the problem of cars parked in the road particularly close to the pub, church and school. The provision of a car park on land close to the community shop appears to be an urgent priority.

More than half of the survey respondents wanted a Neighbourhood Development Plan that would help provide more frequent bus services. Only 8.9% thought existing public transport provision was adequate.

OTHER SERVICES

Until 1943, many rural villages (but not St Mabyn) provided their own volunteer fire service.



The community fire stations at Wadebridge and Bodmin today are usually able to reach St Mabyn within 10-15 minutes and there does not appear to

be any reason to include this emergency service within this plan. Crime in St Mabyn is very low. There is no reason to include police services within this plan.

DEATH

Unless there is some unforeseen epidemic, the St Mabyn parish cemetery has sufficient space for burials for the next 30 years, which is considered sufficient for the purposes of this plan.

Education and employment

Fewer than one third (29.3%) of the survey respondents had children in education. Of those who did, 7.1% were at pre-school and 44.6% at primary school, with 21.4% at secondary school and 8.9% at college.

St Mabyn primary school is part of the Saints Way Church of England Multi Academy Trust and currently has 52 pupils on roll. [The latest Ofsted report says it is a good school.](#)

Without change to the social and economic infrastructure, the village will inevitably decline. This means the community must open itself up to the need to provide employment for those of working – and child-bearing - age.

EMPLOYMENT

Historically, employment in St Mabyn was largely connected to agriculture and working on the land. The “product” ultimately was food.

Today, many of those who work in St Mabyn do so from home, and are self-employed. The “creative” sector is particularly well represented. Many others now commute to work elsewhere and rely on their private car.

The 2011 Census found 41.8% of St Mabyn residents were “employed” with 23.5% self-employed. Nearly a quarter (23.6%) said they ran a business within the parish, with 72.5% operating from home.

Workshops

Should the plan seek to provide workshop areas? Are there enough potters and artists to make use of such facilities? Could such a workshop include space for book-keeping and accountancy services for the relatively large number of self-employed residents? A significant number of those who responded to the survey (43.9%) said rural workshops would help their businesses, or encourage them to start one. More than a quarter (25.6%) wanted either private or shared office space. Nearly 15% wanted retail space.

Food

By 1914, 60% of Britain's requirement for food had to be imported from abroad. The agricultural revolution which followed the second world war imposed "economies of scale" which put local producers under even greater pressure. But the modern-day uncertainties related to Brexit could stimulate interest in a return to local food production - with St Mabyn ideally placed to exploit this need.



St Mabyn once had several farms which specialised in dairy. Locally produced milk is now processed at Davidstow and then transported around the world, on behalf of a Canadian-based multi-national company.

A small-scale milk pasteurisation facility, either located at the farm or on a site close to the community shop, would not be expensive to set up and could create a niche product, not just for local consumption but also for sale to a wider market.

St Mabyn is also well placed to grow crops for food, creating work for growers, pickers, washers and packers. This produce could be sold at or close to the community shop.



By providing space for employment, the plan might encourage a St Mabyn bakery.



St Mabyn once had a small abattoir and butchery. The regulatory and hygiene requirements of the 21st century might make this a revival too far, but the size of the population suggests it might be sustainable.

The Haywood Cider Farm is a good example of what can be done. Might St Mabyn host a micro or nano brewery?



St Mabyn has a number of small-scale, free-range poultry enthusiasts capable of producing niche products.

Land supply

The concept of “planning” is an attempt to balance the interests of landowners with those of the wider community. Without planning, there would just be a market-led free-for-all – to the detriment of the majority.

But at the same time, planning without available land is pointless.

Survey responses indicated very little enthusiasm for building at the edge of or outside of existing settlements, which would involve breaking into open countryside. However, defining the boundaries of any settlement is likely to be controversial.

What is the “development boundary” of a village? Traditionally, the boundary was broadly defined as the 30 mph speed limit. But in St Mabyn, that “rule” was broken in the 1980s to the extent that the 30 mph speed limit had to be moved.

In the 1980s, the 30 mph speed limit was rejected by landowners and property developers who saw it as an obstacle to easy profits. If the plan now seeks to rely on the current 30 mph speed limit, are we determined to defend it?

A reliance on the 30 mph speed limit would also focus initially on the western side of the village, where there are two roads (Wadebridge Road and Station Road).

The eastern side of the village has only one road (Longstone Road) and is therefore problematic. The 30mph speed limit on the Longstone Road is to the east of the Bodmin lane junction, but there is little or no scope for “ribbon” development along the existing highway.

There are no roads to the south of the village, and so a reliance on the 30mph speed limit to define the village boundary would exclude the fields between the village hall and the Pencarrow estate.

There is only one road to the north of the village (St Tudy) and a large planning application in this area was approved only recently. Further

development between Station Road and St Tudy Road would again require the 30 mph speed limit to be moved.

The overwhelming majority (68.8%) of survey respondents wanted only small-scale proposals for in-filling within existing settlements.

The next step in the progress of the housing element of this plan could be to draw lines on the map, identifying clearly the development boundary and any acceptable “infill” sites (there might not be any “infill” at all.)

The drawing of a development boundary will be hugely controversial. Landowners will probably resist it. But a reliance on the existing 30 mph speed limit is at least rational. The plan should look exclusively at the geography and mapping issues and draw only straight lines, ignoring existing field boundaries.

The local plan is simply a guide to how local people wish to interpret national laws and policies. Current landownership should not be considered at all. Neither should a developer’s wish to make profits be considered in our local plan.

The St Mabyn plan is about St Mabyn’s needs, and nothing else. There is a brief discussion about “local need” at the end of this document.

Housing

Inevitably, the main focus of any St Mabyn neighbourhood development plan will be on housing.

Survey returns showed considerable support for protecting and enhancing community facilities, and the natural beauty of the landscape. The survey also tells us that any new development should be to meet local needs, within the existing settlement. There does not appear to be any local demand for new developments which would be built simply to serve the private open market.

This means the plan will have to be clear about what the local needs are, and how they could be met. Inevitably, the plan will have to embrace a number of contemporary controversies, such as:

- * What is a “local” need? How should we define a “local” person?
- * What controls on development can result from a local plan? For example, should the plan seek to prohibit new development which is aimed at providing second homes or holiday homes?
- * Can the parish council seek to impose a punitive precept on existing second homes?
- * The “Right To Buy” revolution of the 1980s enriched some individuals but removed from reach any prospect of “affordable” housing for many others. Should our plan seek to prohibit any further residential development unless it is for rent, and controlled either by a local authority or housing association?

The choice before St Mabyn is stark. Does the community want to be “sustainable” - and what does “sustainable” actually mean?

LOCAL NEEDS

The definition of a “local person” is always controversial. Some parishes define a local person as someone born in their village, regardless of whether or not that person has ever lived there for any length of time.

Others define a “local person” as one who has a close family connection to either that parish, or a neighbouring parish - but then fail to define a “close” family connection (parent? brother/sister/ second-cousin?) or who has lived in that parish or a neighbouring parish for at least five years.

The definition of “need” can be more straightforward. Unless a person has put their name on the Homechoice Register, is there any reason for considering them to be in “need?”

With almost no local authority or social housing in St Mabyn as a result of Right To Buy, there is clearly a need for this type of housing if the community is ever to return to “sustainability.” There does not appear to be any “need” at all for any further private open-market development. The need is for housing which should be available to local people who cannot compete for a home on the open market. New development which meets local needs therefore needs to be limited to tenure which is available in perpetuity.

SUGGESTED WORKING GROUPS (seven or eight):

1. Environment, landscape, wildlife, heritage and culture
2. Community facilities and infrastructure
3. Connectivity, traffic and transport
4. Health and other social facilities
5. Education and employment
6. Land supply
7. Housing
 - (a) a St Mabyn definition of “affordable” housing
 - (b) a St Mabyn definition of “local needs”

