ST MARYCHURCH AND DISTRICT

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DRAFT PLAN for
ST.MARYCHURCH, BABBACOMBE, PLAINMOOR and MAIDENCOOMBE
District Community Partnership
24th September 2012

1) **PROTECT GREEN OPEN SPACES and COASTLINE** from Walls Hill to Maidencoombe to include Babbacombe Downs, Maidencombe, Tessier Gardens, Cary Park, and Haytor, and need to increase maintenance of areas, including pathways, for public use and safety ensuring they are fit for purpose.

2) **PROTECTION of BABBACOMBE DOWNS and COASTAL PATHS to MAIDENCOMBE** (**see appendix 1**) Babbacombe Downs should be protected from future development/building by Covenant.

3) **PROTECT PLAINMOOR SWIMMING POOL and PLAY PARK** and have area around developed for community use.

4) **PROTECT and identify public rights of way** around area and increase maintenance for public use and safety.

5) **DEVELOPMENT of properties for senior residents**. Because the area has a large number of senior residents there is a need to have properties to develop to cater for those who can manage on their own (i.e. warden controlled) and also develop properties that cater for those who can't (i.e. dementia sufferers) Nursing/Care homes and re-furbish existing ones.

6) **REDEVELOP existing suitable properties for housing.**

7) **DEVELOPMENT of Sladner Park Maidencombe**.

8) **Existing Public Conveniences re-opened**, re-furbished and maintained to remain open all year. (eg Cary Park area and Babbacombe Downs)

9) **Retention of bus routes from Plainmoor, St. Marychurch to Torbay Hospital all day**.

10) **Re-furbishment of shopping and retail areas** and standardization of street furniture and street signs.

Appendix 1

MAIDENCOMBE: SUBMISSION FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2013

1 **INTRODUCTION**: Situated at the northernmost part of Torbay, Maidencombe consists of approximately 408 acres of predominantly agricultural land. This constitutes just over 2.5% of the area of Torbay. Much of the area remains in a natural state and is particularly valued by visitors and walkers along the coastal path. The entire coastal strip has been designated a Countryside Zone and Coastal Preservation Area and an Area of Great Landscape Value. Within the conservation area of the combe are five Grade II listed buildings and six buildings of significant architectural importance. Maidencombe can be categorised into four areas: The dwellings lining both sides of the A379; the inland branch roads of Ridge Road, Claddon Lane, Longpark Hill, Gabwell Hill and Stoke Road; the Sladnor estate including Sladnor Park Road and, the village itself, nestling in the combe and bounded by three steep and winding lanes: Steep Hill, Rock House Lane and Brim Hill.

2 **BRIEF HISTORY**: The Domesday survey of 1086 recorded Medenecombe as a tiny manor with a population of about twenty. In the 18th century, Maidencombe consisted of five farmhouses and a handful of thatched cottages. Home Farm survives to this day as Maidencombe Farm. The earliest extant building is the Grade II listed Court House, parts of it dating back to the 14th century. The survival of these early buildings gives the undoubted historic feel to the village as it stands today.

3 **CHARACTERISTICS**: Maidencombe has a particularly rich biodiversity which depends on the survival of its extensive farmland environment and the practices employed in its permanent pasture management and upkeep of hedgerows, hedgerow trees, cider orchard and flower-rich meadows.

The field systems of Maidencombe have survived since medieval times and boundary walls are in evidence today. A natural order prevails with houses cut into the hills of the combe, blending unobtrusively with the environment. The steep access lanes into the combe serve to emphasise the remoteness of the area. Despite relatively recent additions to the combe of a car park, public house and mid-to-late 20th century infill, the village still manages to project a countryside feel. Set amidst the outstanding natural beauty of a dramatic coastline, Maidencombe is the largely unheralded jewel in Torbay's crown of natural beauty spots.

3 **FRAGILE NATURE**: No less an authority than Hal Bishop, Senior Archaeology and Historic Environment Officer for Torbay Council, has voiced his concerns over destroying the fine balance that exists in the combe with any further development. The presence within the boundaries of Maidencombe of extremely rare UK species, such as the *Cirl bunting* and *Lesser Horseshoe* bat demonstrates the current, albeit delicate, well-being of the environment.

The chief threat to Maidencombe is the continual pressure to change farming practices or even to develop farmland (10% decrease in the area of farmland in Torbay since 1995), which, if allowed in Maidencombe, could dilute attempts to nurture a dynamic and successful Geopark and set in motion the further urbanization of Torbay to the detriment of tourist numbers to the area.

5 **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**: Covered in items 6and 7. The community has already embarked upon a series of projects to improve the combe, notably
• the restoration of the historic cider orchard
• assisting the Torbay Coast and Coustryside Trust to improve amenities
• proposals to restore the Linhay structure sited adjacent to the barn in Rock House Lane, which could serve as a small heritage centre and display information about the area. Hal Bishop has indicated that the project has considerable merit and would endorse any grant applications. Together these initiatives will also support Torbay's policies for promoting tourism and sustaining economic growth in the future.

6 **TOURISM**: In the summer months, Maidencombe plays host to tourists from Torbay and those staying in the locality. The Thatched Tavern pub and beach cafe provide visitors with food and drink and the Orestone Manor Hotel provides accommodation for tourists and visitors alike. The sheltered cove can be reached by winding steps and has an attractive cascade fed by watercourses gravitating down the combe. A steady flow of hikers and ramblers filter through the combe all the year round via the network of cliff paths and permissive routes across fields.

7 **TRUST/GEOPARK**: The Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust has emphasised the importance of Maidencombe as a vital component of the Bay's global Geopark status to attract visitors and residents alike to the area. To this end, a proposed cycleway would facilitate pollution-free access.

8 **PARTICULAR AREAS FOR PROTECTION**: Of the four main areas of Maidencombe as outlined in item 1. Sladnor Park is already earmarked for development by Richmond Villages. Although plans have yet to be carried out, the purchasers have to address a host of environmental and ecological queries. After the launch of the Neighbourhood Plan, applications for new build along the A379 and the supporting inland network would have to be judged individually on their merits and viability. However, the combe and the village itself present a very different scenario. Any further development within the combe would need massive new infrastructure improvements (e.g. mains sewage), as indicated by Torbay Council at recent open Neighbourhood Planning meetings. Achievable perhaps, but at the brutal cost of destroying the fragile balance of the combe as warned by Hal Bishop.

9 **CONCLUSIONS**: Maidencombe is a very special and unique place. Once land is given up for development, it is lost forever. All the indications are that preservation is more important and of far greater significance than development for present and future generations. Potentially, with the projected change of use of Suite Dreams Hotel to ten flats, the three houses at Maidencombe Farm and the major development pending at Sladnor Park, saturation levels of development within the combe have already been reached. Any additional development might well be detrimental to the equilibrium of the area.

Jim Campbell
On behalf of
Maidencombe Residents Association