

Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note 8

Writing planning policies

April 2013 - Revised August 2015



This guidance note seeks to explain the process of developing your Neighbourhood Development Plan further after completing your vision and objectives for your plan. This includes guidance on writing your plan policies and producing a policies map.

This document is copyright of Herefordshire Council, please contact the Neighbourhood Planning team if you wish to reuse it in whole or part.

Developing the plan further

Once the vision and objectives have been drafted and approved by the local community, together with potential options to help address the objectives in your Neighbourhood Development Plan, it would be appropriate to consider the detailed content to include within your draft Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The content will include policies, policies maps and maybe an action or 'implementation' plan for the area.

The options that have the most support from your community will provide the basis to begin preparing your policies. It may be that you have to choose another option due to reasons beyond your control, for example: a piece of land that would have been ideal for development of a community centre is unavailable as the landowner is unwilling to use the land for that purpose.

Develop the policies

Government guidance is clear that the intention of Neighbourhood Development Plans should be to set out policies on the development and use of land in your Neighbourhood Area. All policies within your Neighbourhood Development Plan must be credible, justifiable and achievable.

In this respect your Neighbourhood Development Plan is similar to the Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy, but is written for and applied at your parish level.

Policies set out the key details of what you want to happen in your area. They may be quite short (a few sentences) or quite long (but generally no longer than one page). You may find it useful to include a more detailed explanation in the 'supporting text' for each policy. This can help to justify each policy and to put the details on what it is that your Neighbourhood Development Plan is really trying to achieve.

To give you an idea of what policies look like it may be useful to take a look at some of the Neighbourhood Development Plans that are in operation in other parts of England.

Types of policies

There are different ways of writing policies, but it is recommended that the policies set down the key components of development, or use of land, that your Neighbourhood Development Plan will support. Any criteria within a policy will be used to decide whether a proposal is likely to be acceptable or not. Some policies may be 'actions' - things that the community want to happen, such as the development of housing or community facilities. Other policies might be a set of 'criteria' - describing what development should look like, and the issues development will need to take into account if it's to be granted planning permission.

The policies within your Neighbourhood Development Plan may take one of the following forms:

- To support the allocation of specific sites for housing in line with the provisions of Policy RA2 of the Local Plan - Core Strategy, as well as particular types and scales of development within your Neighbourhood Area. For example: residential or employment. (It should be noted that you may wish to provide more in depth detail as to the design required on the allocation site and who it is most likely to be targeted at, for example; housing may be targeted at first time buyers or the elderly, this will alter the type of housing required).
- To set out specific requirements for a piece of land or for one of your allocation sites. For example: access, landscaping or play areas.
- To specify sites or locations within your Neighbourhood Area to be enhanced as environmental assets, landscape character or protected from development. For example: open space, nature reserves, historic assets or locally important features.
- To identify ways to protect certain community buildings or prevent changes of use on certain pieces of land or buildings. For example: local pubs or shops.

Writing planning policies

- More generic policies which cover a multitude of topics and which will apply to any future development within your Neighbourhood Area. These could cover, for example, local design, height of buildings, local drainage schemes or the use of renewable energy schemes. *(Please note that as you are writing these policies you should also be aware of the Permitted Development rights for houses, as they may allow certain types of extensions or development to occur without needing planning permission and thereby not always conforming to all of the policies within your Neighbourhood Development Plan, for example: design or sizing. The most up to date regulations can be found on the planning portal website).*

The draft policies that are included within your plan should be based upon the information gathered during previous stages of evidence gathering and community engagement.

You will need to ensure that your policies are achievable, for example: site related policies have been drawn up in negotiation with the relevant landowners or site promoters.

Checking your policies

As you are writing each of your policies it is worth checking them against the agreed vision and objectives of your Neighbourhood Development Plan to ensure they will help to achieve the aspirations of your plan and do not create any conflicts with any other policies. It is also a good opportunity to check that nothing important is missing in terms of addressing the vision and all of the objectives in your plan.

It is essential at this stage to ensure that your draft policies are in general conformity with the strategy of the Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy. If in doubt or if you need assistance please ask a member of the Neighbourhood Planning team who will assist you with the emerging policies of the Herefordshire Local Plan - Core Strategy.

Site policies maps

Site allocations and site specific policies within your Neighbourhood Development Plan should be accompanied by a map(s), in order to show the proposed site locations and boundaries, this map is called a 'site policies map'. The

policies map could also include those areas that are to receive protection from development, as identified within the policies of your Neighbourhood Development Plan, for example: open space.

If your Neighbourhood Development Plan only has a single site allocated or specified then your policies map may be able to show, in broad terms, more details of the site, for example: what parts of the site should be used for different uses, such as open space.

Developing the policies map alongside the policies will help to illustrate to the community what the policy is seeking to achieve, providing a visual aid to assist residents' and other consultees in forming their opinions of a particular proposal.

In addition, Guidance Note 17 Using Ordnance Survey based mapping may be able to provide some assistance to producing an Ordnance Survey map which could be used as a draft policies map.

Please note that the final policies map for your Neighbourhood Development Plan will be prepared electronically free of charge by the Neighbourhood Planning team.

Writing planning policies

Neighbourhood Planning guidance notes available:

Deciding to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan

1. Which is the right tool for your parish
2. What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan
3. Getting started
4. A guide to procedures
5. Funding

Plan Production

6. Developing a Vision and Objectives
7. Generating options
8. Writing planning policies
9. Environmental Assessment
10. Evidence base and information requirements
11. Implementation and Monitoring
12. Best practice community engagement techniques
13. Statutory consultees
14. Writing a consultation statement
15. Planning and other legislation
16. Web enabling your plan
17. Using OS based mapping
18. Glossary of planning terms

Topics

19. Sustainable Water Management in Herefordshire
20. Guide to settlement boundaries
21. Guide to site assessment and choosing allocation sites
22. Meeting your housing requirements
23. Conservation issues
24. Recreational areas
25. Renewable energy
26. Transport issues
27. Community Infrastructure Levy

Additional Guidance

28. Setting up a steering group
29. Creating a questionnaire
30. Community facilities
31. Conformity with the Local Plan (Core Strategy)
32. Examinations of Neighbourhood Development Plans
33. Guide to Neighbourhood Development Plan Referendums
34. Tourism
35. Basic Conditions
36. Your plan - Contributing to sustainable development