



# 02

## Preparing the detailed content of your plan

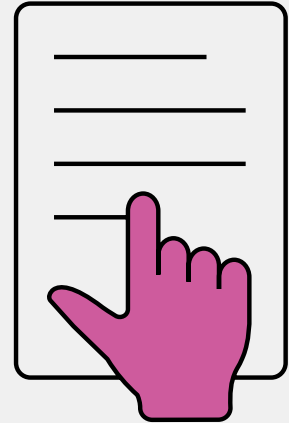
# Preparing the detailed content of your plan

By now, you should have:

- ✓ Considered how to meet your community's vision and objectives (looked at options).
- ✓ Asked the Council for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening opinions.

Once you have established a vision, a set of objectives and looked at the ways in which you can meet these (the options), you can start thinking about the detailed content of your Neighbourhood Plan (the policies).

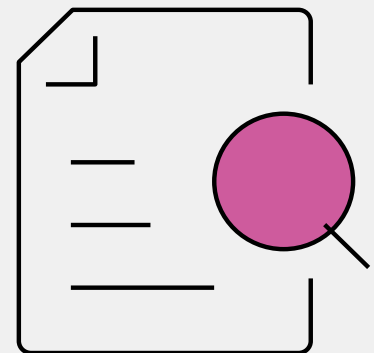
The planning policies within your Neighbourhood Plan will be used to determine planning applications in your area. They may be quite short (a few sentences) or quite long (but generally no longer than one page). The content of policies should be based on the evidence you have collected and the community engagement you have undertaken along the way.



## What types of policies are there?

Typically, Neighbourhood Plans contain three types of planning policy:

- **General policies** which apply universally to development across the whole area (e.g. design, landscape impact, renewable energy schemes).
- **Criteria based policies** which identify what criteria development must meet (e.g. standards of affordable housing).
- **Site specific policies** which apply to a specific area of land or a site (e.g. they might allocate a site for a specific development or seek to protect a site).



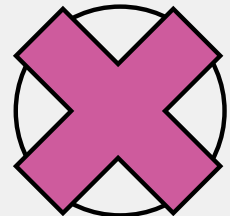
## What can a policy do?



Policies can be used to:

- Allocate land for housing, employment and community development.
- Set specific requirements for land and allocated sites (e.g. access, landscaping and play areas).
- Specify sites and locations to be enhanced or protected (e.g. open spaces, historic assets and other locally important features).
- Protect certain community buildings or prevent changes of use on certain pieces of land (e.g. local pubs).
- Set requirements for future development providing there is no conflict with permitted development rights (e.g. design, height of building, local drainage schemes and use of renewable energy schemes).

## What can't a policy do?



Policies cannot:

- Remove Permitted Development rights.
- Extend or alter a Conservation Area or list buildings.
- Cover minerals, waste or 'nationally important' decisions.
- Duplicate, ignore or change the purpose of existing local or national policies.

# What should you consider when writing a policy?

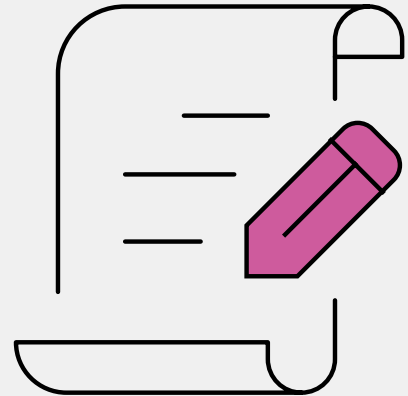
All policies within your Neighbourhood Plan must be clearly written and unambiguous. It must be obvious how a decision maker should react to a development proposal. When writing policies, you should ask:

- Are the things you are seeking to do reasonable?
- Can the things you are seeking to do be controlled by planners when a planning decision is made?
- Is the policy deliverable?
- Are the instructions clear? Do they state simply, but clearly, what needs to be achieved and how, what is acceptable and what is not? If you think something is difficult to understand or likely to be misinterpreted, it probably will be.
- Is there evidence to support the need for this policy? What is the local value?
- Is there a mandate for imposing it (generally from your community)?
- Is the policy positively expressed? Does it state when permission will be granted, rather than when it won't?
- Does it conform with the Local Plan (Wiltshire Core Strategy)?

For each policy, there should be support text which includes a policy justification (stating why the policy is needed), policy intention (what the policy wants to achieve) and then the policy wording.

As you are writing each policy it is worth checking that it meets the agreed vision and objectives of your Neighbourhood Plan and does not conflict with any other policy in the plan. It is also a good idea to consider whether anything important is missing from your vision or objectives. If anything is missing, go back and review the vision and objectives.

Remember, your Neighbourhood Plan must positively encourage the types of development the community wishes to see, not focus negatively on preventing change.



## Other top tips

It is a good idea to use a clear number system for policies so they can be referenced in planning decisions. You might simply list them as policy 1, 2, 3 etc. but you could also separate policies by subject, for example, housing policies might be H1, H2, H3 etc. If using subsections and criteria within policies, we recommend using numbering or letters (not bullet points). This is so they can be easily referenced in any future planning application consultation comments or decisions.

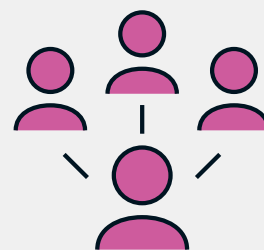
If you refer to sites, village boundary or designated features (e.g. listed buildings, conservation areas and public rights of way), make sure you include a suitably scaled map in your plan that clearly shows what you are referring to.

Make sure policy wording stands out from the policy justification and policy intension. For example, put the policy wording in a text box, bold text or in a different size, colour or style of font so it stands out from the rest of the text.

If you want impartial and qualified advice on your Neighbourhood Plan, you can 'Health check' your policies with a Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Scheme Service (NPIERS).

Any projects and actions identified by the community also need to be listed and prioritised in your Neighbourhood Plan. These do not form part of the formal planning policy but are nonetheless important and valuable. So that these can be updated more frequently through a simpler and non-statutory process we suggest that these are included as a separate document.

## Testing the draft policies with your community



Once the town or parish council is happy with the draft Neighbourhood Plan it must undergo a formal consultation process. This is known as the Pre-submission (Regulation 14) Stage. At this stage, you must ensure that:

- This is the preferred approach of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- The plan has been screened for SEA and HRA.

More information on this stage is in our guidance note **Pre-submission consultation**.



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