

Deconstructed planning policies

Putting the pieces together



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1 Introduction

This resource should be read in conjunction with [How to write planning policies](#) and the [associated slides](#) as these explain how you should develop, structure and word your policies.

It is designed to complement those other resources. This resource encompasses a:

- deconstructed existing neighbourhood plan criteria based policy from the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan
- deconstructed fictitious annotated site specific policy that allocates land for housing

This should help you to understand how policies should be developed including the link between [vision, objectives and policies](#), the importance of basing your policies on a [robust evidence base](#) and the importance of clarity in wording.

2 Deconstructed criteria based policy

This section will explain how Cuckfield Parish Council developed a policy in the [Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan](#) to protect and enhance the countryside. It will:

- explain the relationship between the policy and the neighbourhood plan's vision and objectives
- discuss the policy structure and wording

The Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan has a number of sections:

- Section 1: About Cuckfield today describes the parish and its history. This section also sets out facts about the parish under a number of topics including the environment.
- Section 2: The Vision for Cuckfield looks ahead to the next 20 years and evolved from consultation with the public [[link to how to develop vision and objectives resource](#)].
- Section 3: Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan strategy: This gives an overview of the ambitions for the neighbourhood plan, based on a review of evidence; consultation with the local community; and a review of the planning strategy for the wider area.
- Section 4: Contains the neighbourhood plan policies. Again these are grouped by topic. Each topic is introduced by a series of objectives that are linked to the vision. The policies are drafted to support the overall vision, deliver the relevant objectives and therefore address the key issues.

2.1 For the environmental topic

Section 1 of the Cuckfield neighbourhood plan includes a section on the environment. This sets out the characteristics of the landscape and reminds the reader of the plan that Cuckfield is located in a nationally important landscape. It also sets out information about the heritage of the parish and introduces one of the important themes running through the neighbourhood plan that



“...without careful planning, the distinctive character and sensitive landscape and ecology are under threat from significant and inappropriately located or designed development”. This part of the neighbourhood plan also draws attention to one of the key issues raised in the plan; the concern amongst residents that development could lead to Cuckfield and nearby Haywards Heath coalescing. This sets the context for the planning policies that follow, including the policy on ‘protecting and enhancing the countryside’.

2.2 The Vision for Cuckfield

Our vision is for Cuckfield to continue to thrive, meeting the changing needs of the community whilst preserving the distinctive character, landscape, and setting of the village that has evolved over nine centuries of history.

It is clear that the vision for the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan draws on the issues summarised in section 1. There is specific reference to the character, landscape and setting of the village which the plan will seek to preserve and protect from development. The vision is locally distinctive and is forward looking (e.g. it acknowledges change) while remaining rooted in an awareness of the history of the village and how it has evolved.

2.3 Objectives:

In order to deliver the vision and address the issues, the neighbourhood plan introduces a series of objectives. For the environment theme these are as follows:

1. To preserve and enhance the distinctive heritage of the area.
2. To protect important open spaces within the village.
3. To ensure development is well designed and reflects the heritage and distinctive character of Cuckfield.
4. To protect and enhance the high quality and sensitive landscape within the Parish and the setting of the village.
5. To maintain the distinctive views and visual connectivity with the surrounding countryside from public places within the built up area.
6. To protect the identity of Cuckfield and prevent any further coalescence of Cuckfield with Haywards Heath.
7. To protect and enhance biodiversity.

2.4 Section 4 of the Cuckfield neighbourhood plan – environment

Section 4 of the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan contains five policies that address the environment. This section references, reflects and builds on an earlier body of evidence including the Village Design Statement, Conservation Area Appraisals and the Landscape



Character Area Assessment. The evidence base is summarised in the supporting text to the policies and provides clarity to the decision maker and reader on where the policies will apply.

The policy on 'protecting and enhancing the environment' (Policy CNP5) is intended to implement objectives 4 and 5.

2.5 Policy CNP 5 - Protect and Enhance the Countryside

The introductory text supporting policy CNP5 reminds the reader of the strategy underpinning the plan, which is to focus development within a defined built up area boundary and to restrict development in the countryside. The introductory statement makes a direct link between objective 4 which is to protect and enhance sensitive landscapes and policy CNP5 that sets out how this will be achieved.

Below is an annotated copy of policy CNP 5 in the made Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan. It includes the modifications recommended by the [independent examiner](#) and accepted by the local planning authority.

The modifications that the independent examiner recommended to policy CNP5 were to ensure that the wording of the policy:

- is clear and unambiguous
- reflects those aspects of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty that have the highest protection, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The policy was subsequently modified in line with the independent examiner's recommendations and the revised text is illustrated in red font below.

The policy is a 'criteria based' policy which means that it includes a series of requirements that a development proposal should meet. It is an 'inclusive' criterion based policy. This means that for a development to be acceptable it must meet all of the criteria in the policy; the use of the word 'and' at the end of each of the criteria achieves this. The examiner states that the "policy offers a degree of flexibility in that it is a criteria based policy".



This policy is directly related to the overall strategy for the neighbourhood plan which is to focus well designed development to meet identified needs within the built up area of Cuckfield. The policy also reflects a strategic policy in the adopted development plan. The built up area boundary is shown on Map 2 within the neighbourhood plan.

Policy CNP 5 - Protect and Enhance the Countryside

Outside of the Built up Area Boundary, priority will be given to protecting and enhancing the countryside from inappropriate development. A proposal for development will only be permitted where:

- a) It is allocated for development in Policy CNP 6(a) and (b) or would be in accordance with Policies CNP 10, CNP 14 and CNP 17 in the Neighbourhood Plan or other relevant planning policies applying to the area, and
- b) It would not have a detrimental impact on, and would enhance, areas **identified in the Cuckfield Landscape Character Assessment (summarised in Table 1)** as having major or substantial landscape value or sensitivity, and
- c) It would not have an adverse impact on the landscape setting of Cuckfield and
- d) It would maintain the distinctive views of the surrounding countryside from public vantage points within, and adjacent to, the built up area, in particular those defined on Map 5, and
- e) Within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty it would conserve and enhance **landscape and scenic beauty** and would have regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

The policy is clearly identified and referenced. It is the 5th policy in the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan hence the prefix CNP 5.

The policy is positively worded – enhancements to the countryside will also be sought in addition to its protection.

The policies in the plan will be considered in the round. However, this policy recognises that other policies in the plan take precedence in certain situations. Without this cross referencing there would be conflicts between one policy in the plan and others.

The independent examiner recommended a modification (text in red) to make it clearer to users of the plan which parts of Cuckfield have ‘substantial landscape value’ or are sensitive. The examiner also recommended using the supporting text to explain where the policy would apply and to direct readers to the evidence supporting the policy. In this case a Landscape Character Assessment summarised

The policy makes it clear to the user of the plan what the particular features are important and where the policy will apply. Additional information is included in the supporting text of the neighbourhood plan on pages 31 and 32.

This policy does not offer blanket protection to all areas. It targets those that have the highest national protection.

Examiner recommended a modification to the text to include this phrase in order to reflect the wording in the

3 Deconstructed site specific policy

Below is a fictitious annotated site specific policy that allocates land for housing. It offers advice on how to structure a site specific policy and the information you need to include.

A site specific policy is a policy that is applied to a particular area of land and allocates land for a particular type of development, in this case housing.

It is important to remember the following:

- if you are seeking to allocate land for housing you should plan positively and not impose a cap on the amount of housing to be provided, for example by setting a 'maximum' number of housing units. The number of houses you are seeking to deliver should be represented as a 'minimum' or 'at least'.
- you should identify the sites that you are allocating for housing on a map. The map should be clear and leave no doubt about what land is included and what is omitted.
- it should be informed by a proportionate robust evidence base that identifies [housing need](#) and informed your choice of [sites to allocate for development](#). It is advised that you discuss these processes with your local planning authority as it may have information to assist (see [How to engage with your local planning authority](#)).
- your neighbourhood plan must specify the period for which it is to have effect. You therefore need to ensure that the sites you allocate for housing are [developable](#) during this period.
- speak to the landowner (see [How to work with landowners and developers](#)) to understand whether the land is available, whether there are any constraints to its development and ideally to secure their support for your proposals

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For further information please visit rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid

Registered Charity Number: 262865

Scottish Registered Charity Number: SC 037841



Policy is clearly numbered and titled – prefix H1 as this is the first Policy in the Housing Chapter

The policy does not seek to impose a maximum figure or ‘cap’ for housing as this would conflict with national planning policy. This is because it would not allow for any new residential development above the maximum figure no matter how sustainable the proposal was. Planning applications for development above the minimum figure will be assessed against the policies in the neighbourhood plan, Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The housing allocations will be annotated on a proposals map and can be identified by their site reference.

H1: Housing Allocations:

The neighbourhood plan allocates land for a minimum of 250 new dwellings on the following sites:

Site reference	Location	Anticipated number of dwellings	Site specific policy
Site A	Land east of Church Street	48	H1.1
Site B	Land to the rear of London Road	37	H1.2
Site F	St Patrick’s primary school	97	H1.3
Site G	Land south of Maryland Way	68	H1.4

Planning permission will be granted on the above sites provided the development meets the requirements set out in this Plan and the Local Plan.

Each site allocation is supported by a site specific policy. This will set out any specific criteria that will be applied when considering development proposals for the site.

Site specific policies are clearly and logically numbered. Prefix H1 is retained so that those using the plan can clearly see that the site specific policies have a relationship to the main housing allocation policy.

Site references are logical and will have remained the same throughout the development of the plan. In this example there is a break in the alphabet because as a result of the site assessment process sites C, D and E were deemed unsuitable.

Clear description of the location of the site allocation.

Policy recognises that the neighbourhood plan forms part of the statutory development plan for the area along with the Local Plan. Policies are not considered in isolation but in the round. Other policies may take precedence in certain situations.

The number of dwellings that are anticipated to be delivered on each site. These figures will be based on an assessment of the capacity of the site, discussions with landowners; and consideration of constraints. For further information see ‘How to work with landowners and the development industry.’