

Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan Support

Writing Policies

Developing the policies

The neighbourhood plan preparation process includes a number of different stages. These include:

- drafting a vision and objectives for the plan;
- identifying potential options to help address the plan's objectives; and
- drafting policies and preparing a proposals map for inclusion in the plan.

Throughout this process consultation needs to be undertaken with the local community and key stakeholders, as this will help to develop robust policies and reduce the number of amendments to the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan once it has been drafted.

The options addressing the plan's objectives which have the most local community and key stakeholder support will provide the basis for drafting policies for the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan. However there may be justification for why this is not possible, for example, the site for proposed housing development will not be available during the plan period.

Policies can take a number of different forms. They can include:

- **actions** which might be things that the local community would like to see happen;
- **criteria for development** such as design and infrastructure which would guide development proposals for which planning permission needs to be applied for;
- **protection and enhancement of land** which could be, for example, the protection of open spaces, or the landscape character of an area; and
- **the allocation of development sites** which might include the type and scale of development.

It is recommended that policies outline the key components of development, or use of land, that the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan will support. Policies should be written positively and consideration needs to be given to the fact that any criteria within a policy will be used to decide whether a proposal is likely to be acceptable or not.

When writing the policies it is recommended that the following information is checked to ensure the policies are robust, and cover an appropriate range of issues:

- The vision and objectives of the plan;
- The National Planning Policy Framework (see https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf for a copy)
- The saved strategic policies of the Chichester Local Plan (1999) relevant to Loxwood; and
- The strategic policies relevant to Loxwood of the latest version of the Chichester Local Plan currently being prepared.

Chichester District Council, under their duty to support neighbourhood groups in preparing neighbourhood plans, should be able to provide the strategic policies of the adopted and emerging Local Plan which are considered to be relevant to Loxwood.

The policies that are included in neighbourhood plans are like local plan policies but at the Parish level. They therefore need to be based upon the information gathered about the Parish (the evidence base) and community engagement. Policies also need to be achievable. Site related policies could therefore be drafted in negotiation with relevant landowners or developers where this is possible to ensure they are achievable

The recently examined Upper Eden Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy relating to housing for older people which sets out the amount of development and specific criteria. The policy wording is provided below:

UENDP3 - Housing for Older People

Within Kirkby Stephen and the Local Service Centres housing developments of four units or more should address the local need for older persons' housing. This can occur through the provision of bungalows or other suitable housing types restricted to occupancy for those local households where one person is over the state retirement age. This form of housing can also be considered a form of intermediate affordable housing (subject to the restrictions set out in 11.3) and can count towards the provision of affordable housing to be secured by a s106 planning obligation required under policy CS10. In order to ensure that some 'regular' affordable housing is delivered on larger sites, for sites of 14 units or more, at least 2 units must be regular affordable housing (as defined by the Eden Housing SPD). Where the viability of the proposal permits and in accordance with NPPF 173, the Council may seek affordable housing in addition to housing for older people.

Elsewhere, a single plot proposal for a household in which at least one person is over the state retirement age (or requires specialist housing by virtue of personal incapacity or impairment) will be supported where it:

- a) meets the needs of an identified local person; or*
- b) releases an unsuitable dwelling into the market or, for transfer to a family member; and*
- c) does not have an unacceptable impact on the visual or landscape amenity of the area.*

The new dwelling will be subject to a S106 Legal Agreement ensuring that it remains available for local households where one member is over the state retirement age or an affordable dwelling for local people in perpetuity.

Testing the draft policies

Once drafted, testing your draft policies can be a useful exercise. Draft policies could be sent to Chichester District Council officers who have extensive experience of determining planning applications in accordance with local policies, to see whether they think they would be effective or if they could be improved. Also think about a recent planning application for new development within Loxwood and consider which draft policies would be applicable and if they would be successful in steering the development to meet the local community needs.

Presentation of the policies

Policies will set out the key details of what you want to happen in your area. They may be short or long but should ideally not extend to more than a page. Policies can be supported by supporting text which would explain the purpose or approach to the policy in more detail and provide justification for its inclusion in the plan.

Once the plan is adopted it will be considered by developers and other key stakeholders as it will form part of the statutory development plan. It is therefore recommended that policies are presented visually in a way that highlights them to the reader. This approach will also assist with consulting the local community on the draft plan and avoids similar presentation throughout the document making the document dense and hard to read.

Developing a plan proposals map and individual site maps alongside the policies can help to illustrate what the policy is seeking to achieve and will assist with community engagement.

Thame Town Council has presented its recently examined neighbourhood plan in the following format:

- Each plan objective is set out in a green box
- Explanatory text is provided for each objective.
- Each objective is supported by a number of policies. These policies are highlighted in green.
- The policies are supported by text that explains how and why the policy required must be met.

An example of one of the policies included in their plan is shown on page 4. The full version of the plan which has been approved by the examiner but awaiting a referendum is currently available at: <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans/thame-neighbourhood-pl>

Objective: Connect new housing into Thame and the wider area with good pedestrian, cycle and bus connections

This objective addresses a number of different issues:

- reducing reliance on the car by making walking and cycling convenient, and locating bus stops near new development
- supporting the town centre shops (see Chapter 8) by creating strong connections to it
- integrating new housing with the town (also reflected in the objectives for 'Housing').

GA1: New development to provide good pedestrian and cycle connections to the town centre and other local destinations

Proposals for the development of allocated residential sites should deliver good pedestrian and cycle connections as part of a comprehensive approach to movement that aims to encourage walking and cycling and reduce reliance on vehicles.

Employment sites and windfall housing sites must provide good pedestrian and cycle connections to the town centre and other local destinations.

9.1 Policy H1 sets out the allocated sites that will deliver a total of 775 new homes in Thame by 2027. Section 3 provides specific guidance for each of the allocated sites, including requirements for new pedestrian and cycle connections and improvements to existing connections.

9.2 Policy WS11 sets additional specific requirements for connections for the allocated employment site.

9.3 Good pedestrian and cycle connections are:

- short and direct
- designed as pleasant places to be
- overlooked by adjacent building fronts.