

Template: structuring your neighbourhood plan

Putting the pieces together



A clearly structured neighbourhood plan will make it easier for all to read, follow and understand.

There is no set structure for your neighbourhood plan and groups have taken different approaches. [Tatenhill Parish Council](#) was commended for producing a “...very clear and easy to navigate document”. The independent examiner of the [Thame Neighbourhood Plan](#) noted that the “...layout of the Plan is logical and user-friendly. Its overall design, content and inclusion of plans and photographs creates a plan which is interesting and easy to read”.

You may wish to use this template as a guide to help you to produce a plan that is well-structured and in a format ready for examination. This resource complements [How to structure your neighbourhood plan](#) that explains in further detail:

- why the structure of your neighbourhood plan is important
- what should (and should not) be included in your neighbourhood plan
- how to structure your neighbourhood plan

You may wish to structure your plan around the following chapters and include the following information in each of these:

Cover

- Title: (Name of neighbourhood area) Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Plan period
- Name of qualifying body. Either:
 - (Name) Parish Council
 - (Name) Town Council
 - (Name) Neighbourhood Forum
- Version of the plan (e.g. pre-submission, submission, referendum) and date
- Images, for example, photograph(s) of the area to make the plan engaging and attractive

Foreword (1 side)

- An early opportunity to briefly “tell the story” by outlining the background to the area, the reasons for preparing the neighbourhood plan and to summarise what it contains
- Opportunity to thank people for their involvement in the plan
- Could be ‘signed’ by the chair of the parish council, or neighbourhood forum

Contents page

- List the chapters and sections of your plan in the order in which they appear and include page numbers
- This provides the reader with an idea of the content and will allow them to read the sections and chapters of particular relevance and interest to them



Introduction

- Explanation of what a neighbourhood plan is and the status it has in the planning system
- Why you have decided to prepare a neighbourhood plan and a brief overview of the issues you are seeking to address
- An Ordnance Survey map that clearly shows the extent of the designated neighbourhood area to which the plan relates
- Details of your local planning authority and the date your neighbourhood area was designated
- The plan period and why this has been chosen
- The stage the plan has reached in the neighbourhood plan process and the purpose of the particular document e.g. is it the pre-submission draft plan that you are publicising and consulting on prior to submission to the local planning authority or the final version being submitted to the local planning authority for independent examination?

The neighbourhood area

- A brief, factual description of the neighbourhood area and its characteristics
- Focus on the key points and land-use issues you are seeking to address in the neighbourhood plan e.g. population, housing, employment, community facilities and heritage
- Additional information can be included in the appendices with a cross reference in the text
- You need to quote the source and date of the information you present in this section (the detail might be listed in an appendix)

Key issues

- Summarise the issues that you are seeking to address in the plan. These should be grouped into the locally relevant themes and informed by your [evidence review](#)
- It is not just current issues that need to be addressed in a neighbourhood plan, but any issues likely to emerge over the plan period
- You should focus on aspects that can be addressed in a neighbourhood plan i.e. only matters that relate to the development and use of land and proposals that would require planning permission. If there are additional non-planning issues then these must be very clearly separated out and you may wish to consider listing them in an appendix

Vision and objectives

- A clear but concise vision of what you want the neighbourhood area to look like at the end of the plan period
- List the objectives for the plan that will deliver the vision. The objectives should be broad statements of intent and should link back to the issues you are seeking to address
- The [vision and objectives](#) provide the framework to develop policies – each policy should relate to a particular objective or objectives



Planning policies

Your neighbourhood plan's policies will normally be grouped by topics that are relevant to your issues e.g. housing, employment, retail, open space and leisure.

Each policy should include:

- an introduction to the topic and its relationship to the plan's visions and objectives
- the policy intention (what the policy is seeking to achieve)
- the policy statement itself
- supporting statement i.e. reason for the policy and the evidence that supports the policy. You should summarise the evidence succinctly and if appropriate provide links to further information or direct the reader to an evidence summary. This approach was adopted by Sunninghill and Ascot and Sunningdale Parish Councils when preparing the [Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale](#) Neighbourhood Plan and was praised by the independent examiner.

Appendices

Additional information that would be unhelpful to the flow of the main text and/or might create repetition can be included as appendices. To keep the document concise, consider using electronic links to relevant sources where possible. The relevant appendix should be cross-referenced from the text.

Appendices/hyperlinks might include:

- further detailed information that has been summarised in the main text
- relevant strategic policies in the adopted Local Plan
- the full references for material used as evidence (which can save repetition and overuse of footnotes in the text)
- glossary explaining acronyms and technical terms included in the plan (if not included at the front of the plan)
- methodology used to gather particular pieces of evidence e.g. site assessment criteria if the plan is allocating sites for development
- technical background information e.g. landscape or historic character assessments (hyperlinks are often possible)
- source details for the diagrams, photographs and images used to illustrate points made in the text and to make the plan more engaging and interesting to read



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