

## Developing a vision and objectives

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. A community wishing to develop a neighbourhood plan will first need a clear idea of what it is they want to achieve, and how they are going to achieve their goals.
- 1.2. Before proceeding down the road of policy writing and evidence gathering there will be a need for community consultation to ensure that you develop a shared vision for the neighbourhood area. This is essential – a neighbourhood plan needs to go through referendum and a ‘yes’ vote is unlikely if local people disagree about what, how and why a vision is being proposed.

### 2. What is a ‘vision’?

- 2.1. A vision is your optimal mid to long-term goal describing what you want your neighbourhood to look like at the end of the plan period. It is often written in the future tense as a statement of what ‘will be’.
- 2.2. For example, the vision in the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP, made 2017) is as follows:

*The Plan will make it possible for people to live the whole of their lives in the parish if they so wish.*

*The rural character and setting of the parish will remain with the minimum of intrusion on the existing surrounding green and agricultural space.*

- 2.3. In setting the vision for the plan, consideration should be given to the likely social, environmental and physical trends affecting the area over the plan period. The vision should be aspirational as well as grounded in evidence and data – quantitative (facts and figures about the area) as well as qualitative (community views about what is important).
- 2.4. A vision might focus on a village or area’s ‘unique selling point’, eg. why is the area a distinctive, desirable place to live? What untapped potential is there for buildings and land that could be revitalised?

### 3. How to develop the vision?

- 3.1. You may already have a vision in an existing community led plan or parish plan, that you could use as a starting point for the vision for your neighbourhood plan.
- 3.2. Alternatively, you could carry out a community exercise or a series of consultations with your community to develop a vision, for example:
  - Undertake an exercise involving members of the community to create a list of existing local characteristics, amenities etc. that people like and also what they want to see more of. eg. a love it / hate it exercise.
  - Draft a set of statements based on these characteristics, eg. "our parish will be a sustainable local community", and undertake a second public consultation exercise to prioritise them so that you can see what people value most and what is most important. Since these statements will be based on the love it/hate it exercise, they will form the basis of the vision. Each statement can be reworded if necessary, but the basic idea is for the community to develop an idea of what the

area will be like / look like in 10-20 years' time and to decide for themselves what is important.

- Draft a refined vision based on the result and consult local people on it again. Take (and act on) feedback so that the result accurately reflects people's views and aspirations.

3.3. These three stages could form one exercise or event.

3.4. Your objectives and policies will emerge from the vision and should link back to it. The policies are the 'how' to achieve the 'what' of the vision. If they do not all point back to the vision, either the vision needs refining (which is fine if the resultant vision is shared by everyone), or the policy is not quite right.

3.5. Whilst it might be helpful to look at the vision statements contained within made neighbourhood plans, a vision statement should be distinct and relevant to the neighbourhood area. Being distinctive will help you work out what the policies you need in the neighbourhood plan to deliver your vision. Try not to have a vision that could apply anywhere.

#### **4. Objectives**

4.1. Objectives set out what you want to achieve in order to help make the vision a reality.

4.2. There is usually more than one objective to address each element of your vision; these are the broad statements of intent that link back to the elements of your vision and outline the steps you will take to realise it.

4.3. Overarching objectives will be worded to address the area's strengths (what you want to continue or see more of) and weaknesses (what you want the neighbourhood plan to address).

4.4. Every policy you go on to write should relate back to at least an objective, which in turn helps realise your vision. This link from vision to objectives and policies has been described as a 'golden thread' running through a plan, which especially for more complex plans, can be a great help to readers to understand its justification. But don't forget that a neighbourhood plan is about land-use policies only.

4.5. Keep objectives clear and concise so that it is easy to see how the resultant policy was reached. For example, the Stratfield Mortimer NDP sets out an objective for housing mix and density:

*To provide the mix of types of homes and tenure that make it possible for people to live the whole of their lives in the parish if they so wish with a focus on the provision of both starter homes and down-sizing homes as indicated in the consultation responses.*

*To have a pattern of housing on new residential sites that maintains the essential nature of the village and the immediate surrounding area.*

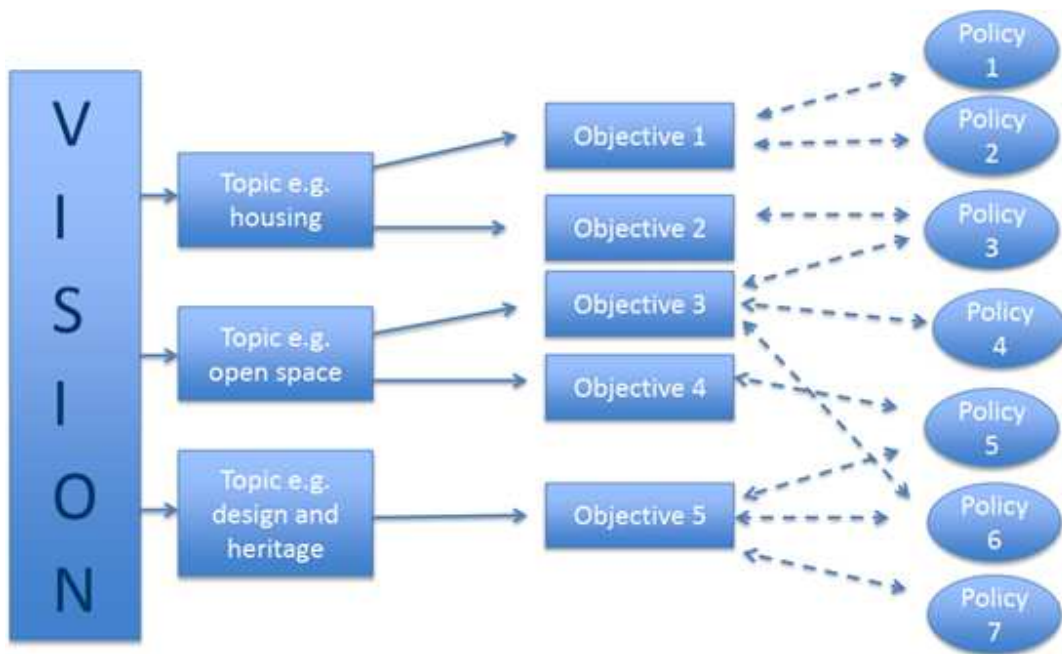
#### **5. Community involvement**

5.1. Community involvement from the outset is of paramount importance in forming the plan's vision and objectives. Use as many methods as possible of contacting local stakeholders whose input will be vital:

- Written surveys / questionnaires
  - Social media, maps, pictures, visual aids
  - Door knocking
  - Public meetings
  - Stalls at local events
  - Incentivise people to take part.
- 5.2. Consult with the local community on your draft to ensure that you have accurately captured their views, heard their voice, and reflected their aspirations as far as possible.
- 5.3. Localities have produced guidance on how to consult with the local community: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/how-to-consult-with-your-community/>, as well on how to write and conduct social surveys: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/write-conduct-social-surveys-gather-data-neighbourhood-plan/>.

**6. How should the vision and objectives influence policies within the neighbourhood plan?**

- 6.1. Your vision and objectives will provide the framework to develop your plan policies and proposals. Each policy should relate to a particular objective or objectives. This relationship is illustrated below:



Source: Planning Aid England, Royal Town Planning Institute

- 6.2. You will need to identify the emerging topics, eg. retail, housing, open space, and separate these into land use and non-land use:
- Identify land use issues that can be addressed through a neighbourhood plan.
  - Proposals and projects can form part of a separate document or an appendix.