

How to develop a vision and objectives

Putting the pieces together



Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	What is a neighbourhood plan vision statement?	3
3	What are neighbourhood plan objectives?	3
4	How should you develop your vision and objectives?	4
5	Conclusion	6



1 Introduction

This resource can be read in conjunction with the [slides](#) which provide additional information on the topic.

Together this note and the presentation aim to explain:

- what is a neighbourhood plan vision statement?
- what are neighbourhood plan objectives?
- how can you start to develop them?
- how should planning policies flow from them?

If you are new to neighbourhood planning you are encouraged to read the [Locality Roadmap](#) which explains the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan. It will provide useful context to this resource which focuses on the 'how'.

2 What is a neighbourhood plan vision statement?

A neighbourhood plan vision is an overarching statement, or series of statements, describing what you want your neighbourhood area to be like at the end of the plan period. Your vision should be concise and locally distinctive and it may cover what you hope the area will look like, what facilities will be needed and what it will be like to live and work there.

A plan's vision is similar to a company mission statement which is a broad statement of intent and a succinct description of the company's core purpose. Slide 3 presents the company mission statement for three well-known companies. The vision for the [London Plan](#) and a neighbourhood area are presented on [slides](#) 5 and 6.

3 What are neighbourhood plan objectives?

You need to identify objectives for your plan that will help to deliver your vision. For each element of your vision there may be one or more objectives. These will need to relate to land-use issues.

The objectives should be broad statements of intent. They should clearly link back to the issues you are seeking to address through your neighbourhood plan.

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 on [slides](#) 16 to 20.



4 How should you develop your vision and objectives?

This section provides some top tips on developing the vision and objectives for your plan:

- **Capture what makes your area special:** Your vision should be locally distinctive and capture what makes your area unique. A good test is to check if you can tell it is your area if the name is removed from the vision statement or the objectives or could it be Anytown? Your vision should set the direction for the changes you would like to see, based upon what your community would like for the future of the area. A strong, positive vision will give people a sense of ownership of your neighbourhood plan and enable you to secure community support.

The views of the wider community and the issues they think the plan should address may not of themselves be sufficient evidence to justify your vision, objectives and policies. As discussed in the 'how to gather and use evidence' resource you will need to substantiate this qualitative data with quantitative data (facts and figures). Your vision should be based on the whole community's views about the issues that are important to them, while grounded in facts and evidence about the area.

The diagram on slide 9 of the [slides](#) provides an overview of the wide range of resources that you can draw from. These should assist you in keeping your vision 'grounded' in the factual. (See [How to gather and use evidence](#)).

- **Use a range of methods to get as many people as possible involved in identifying the issues and themes important to them:** Neighbourhood planning groups have adopted a range of different techniques to seek the views of the whole community, and specific sub-groups of the community. Methods others have found helpful have included:
 - **Blackboards:** [Highgate Neighbourhood Forum](#) used blackboards to engage businesses and shop owners in the neighbourhood area – owners wrote on the blackboard the top 3 issues they would like the plan to address and this was captured in a photograph.
 - **Social media:** [North Hykeham](#) and others used [Stickyworld](#) as a visual community engagement tool; [Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum](#) and others used [Commonplace](#) to collect the views of local residents. [Voxapp](#) is a fast survey method and [Survey Monkey](#) is used by many groups to get input from the community.
 - **LinkedIn:** [Soho Neighbourhood Forum](#) (designated as a business neighbourhood area) use LinkedIn to connect with the businesses in their area.
 - **Postcards from the future:** Bognor Regis asked attendees to write their 'vision for the future' on postcards at their visioning session for a seafront strategy.
 - Holding one or more **visioning days** or **design charrettes** (for example Enquiry by Design events).



- a visioning day is an opportunity for the wider community to meet and discuss the issues in the area and to formulate the vision and objectives. It is an approach adopted by many neighbourhood planning groups and is explained in this [video](#) by East Shoreditch Forum.
- a charrette is a more formal approach. The process brings together key people to collaborate on a vision for a new or revived community. The Prince's Foundation facilitates workshops using an [Enquiry by Design process](#) (which is a form of a charrette). This process is explained further in this [video](#).
- **Maps, pictures and diagrams** can all be used to help you develop your vision. You can ask people to draw or capture in photographs the things they like in the neighbourhood area and those they would like to change. These can be particularly useful in areas where a significant proportion of the population do not speak English as a first language. You may also wish to map the important facilities and services that are currently in the area. This map can then be annotated to show the changes you would like to see. For example the areas of open space you would like to retain or cycling and walking routes you would like to improve. [Old Market Quarter](#) Neighbourhood Forum in Bristol adopted an Enquiry by Design process with the Princes Foundation to map their area and [Thame](#) and [Broughton Astley](#) used a map to illustrate their vision. This was recognised by the examiner of Broughton Astley Neighbourhood Plan as being an '[innovative approach](#)'.
- **Identify objectives from the issues and themes:** Once you have collected information, evidence and the views of the community you should be able to identify the main and recurring issues. These can then be sorted into the common local themes, for example, a prosperous economy, enhance the local environment and a mixed and balanced community. These themes can then provide the basis for realistic objectives for your neighbourhood plan that policies can be built around. This is illustrated on slide 17 of the [slides](#).

It is important to remember that there can be cross-linkages between the objectives and policies, for example, a policy may address more than one objective. Similarly, at the end of the process you may have an objective but no related policies and if this occurs you may wish to consider if the objective is still important or whether it can be deleted. It may be the case that the objective cannot be achieved through the land-use planning system; it may be more appropriate for a wider regeneration strategy for example.

- **'Sense check' the emerging vision and objectives:** Once you have drafted your vision and objectives you should re-consult with the wider community to check that you have accurately captured their views and that the vision and objectives reflect their hopes and aspirations for their neighbourhood plan. Others have used a variety of different methods to do this:
 - use of a questionnaire (advice on preparing a questionnaire and issues to be aware of is provided in [How to gather and use evidence](#))
 - use of coloured dots – write up the vision and objectives and ask people to place a coloured dot on each objective (red – do not support, amber – neutral, and



green to support). You can then address the 'red' dots, note the 'green dots, and amend your vision and objectives to ensure greater consensus.

- use of boards displaying your draft vision and objectives that you can use to stimulate conversation and discussion

It is important to ensure that your vision and objectives reflect the views of the wider community as these will form the basis for your plan proposals. Getting community 'buy in' and support at this stage is essential and will stand you in good stead for the ultimate public test at the referendum where a majority 'yes' vote is required.

- **Write up the results of the community engagement process used to develop your vision and objectives.** This information can form part of the [consultation statement](#).

Any evidence that you have collected to help you set your vision and objectives may also provide important supporting evidence for your policy approach. For example, it can explain how and why you have prioritised the issues that your plan is tackling. The independent examiner may take this into consideration when recommending whether the plan should proceed to referendum (see the [examiner's report](#) on the Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan).

- **Review your objectives as you progress your plan:** You should always keep your vision and objectives in mind as you develop your plan; they should act as a marker. The policies should clearly flow from the issues and themes that you have identified in the vision and objectives. This will help you to [structure your plan](#) and remain focused.

As you develop your plan new issues may come to light or you may decide to change your priorities. This could be as a result of significant comments received during community consultation or you may find that there is insufficient evidence to justify a particular policy approach. Your objectives (and even the vision) are not set in stone and could require review and amendments to reflect these changes.

5 Conclusion

Your neighbourhood plan's vision should be locally distinctive and capture what makes your area unique. The vision is key to the development of your neighbourhood plan because the objectives and policies should stem from the vision. There should be a clear thread running from the vision to the policies in your plan.

The right vision will give people a sense of ownership of your neighbourhood plan and help you to secure community buy in to the changes you would like to see over the plan period.



Contact:

Planning Aid England
Royal Town Planning Institute
41 Botolph Lane
London EC3R 8DL
Tel. 020 3206 1880
E-mail: info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

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

Registered Charity Number: 262865
Scottish Registered Charity Number: SC 037841

