



## Urban Vision Enterprise

Town and Parish Council Planning Service

## Neighbourhood Plans – Top Ten Tips

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# Tips for a Successful Neighbourhood Plan

## 1. Evidence

Include a clear planning rationale for each policy (before or after the policy). Reference should be made to relevant evidence and analysis underpinning the policy.

For example, if a neighbourhood plan claims to meet housing need, the evidence and analysis underpinning that claim must be clear. It is not necessary to include detailed technical documents in the Plan itself, just to refer to them and explain how they support the policy.

## 2. Community and stakeholder engagement

Early community and stakeholder engagement helps to identify key issues for the Neighbourhood Plan to address and makes sure that policies are relevant and well informed. Early engagement is about finding things out.

Later in the process, statutory consultation must be undertaken, to test the policies. This must meet the legal requirements in Regulation 14, in addition to consultation case law.

## 3. Structure and ease of use

Use a clear structure of policy headings and sub-headings and clear and consistent formatting, to make the Plan as logical and user-friendly as possible.

For the policies, themselves, use a consistent system of numbered clauses and sub-clauses, so that it is easy to make reference to different parts of the policy.

## 4. Concise and focused

Avoid unnecessary content or inclusion of detailed evidence documents, which will become out-of-date. The more concise and policy-focused the Plan, the more effective it is likely to be.

Avoid appendices, unless they are absolutely necessary, and have a clear purpose. Less is more.

## 5. Clear and unambiguous policies

Set clear and unambiguous tests or requirements for development to meet. Avoid policies that read as narrative, rather than setting requirements for development.

Policies should relate to the development scheme itself, rather than matters for supporting statements (such as Design and Access Statements) to address.

Avoid setting inconsistent requirements in different policies. For example, it can be confusing if there is an overall design policy, but then different design requirements in other policies.

## 6. Locally specific policies

Avoid drafting policies that repeat existing national or Local Plan policy or just stating that development must meet requirements in existing national or Local Plan policy. Such policies have no effect, as national and local policies already apply. Very vague or generic policies are equally ineffective.

Rather, the Neighbourhood Plan should set more detailed and locally specific requirements. For example, town centre, heritage or natural environment policies can relate to the specific local circumstances and issues.

## 7. Site allocations and LGS designations

Site allocations should be based on clear and relevant criteria, so that it is clear why certain sites have been selected and why others are not suitable for development. Similarly, Local Green Space designations should be based on a clear and robust analysis against NPPF criteria. Background evidence/analysis documents could be prepared to support site allocation or LGS designation policies.

## 8. External documents

Avoid policies that require compliance with external documents. Decision makers and developers are unlikely to have the time or inclination to read detailed external documents and may not pick out the parts that are important to the Neighbourhood Plan group.

Also, any change to external documents are likely to kill the policy, if it depends on them. It is far better to translate the key principles from external documents directly into the policy drafting (so that they become statutory policy).

## 9. Definitions

Avoid including a glossary, as this is likely to become out-of-date quite quickly. Instead, reference could be made to definitions in the National Planning Policy Framework.

## 10. Document control

Careful document control, including identification of subsequent versions, is essential. This is especially important as the Plan progresses through the statutory process, including screening and consultation. Real difficulties can arise if multiple people are editing a document. It can be difficult to integrate differing versions, if they arise.

Shared editing platforms are especially problematic, as there is little consistency, no version control or checks over legal compliance.

There needs to be complete clarity over which versions of the document were used at different stages, for example the Regulation 14 version of the Plan.

Problems can also arise if different people are using different versions of software or different formatting.

It is recommended that one person control the master document, making clear the version number and date and ensuring consistency in formatting.



# About Urban Vision Enterprise

## Specialisms and Services

Urban Vision Enterprise (UVE) is a professional planning consultancy providing services in planning, regeneration, economic development and third sector organisational development. UVE provides a Town and Parish Council Planning Service in England.

UVE has supported well over 200 neighbourhood plans and can provide support at all stages of the process. This includes drafting of effective policies, site allocations and advice on legal compliance at all stages.

UVE specialisms include:

- mediation and complex negotiations;
- neighbourhood planning;
- regeneration and economic development;
- town centres and high street recovery;
- housing growth, site selection and masterplanning;
- heritage-led regeneration and conservation;
- natural environment and blue and green infrastructure;
- urban design, including strategies, policies, guidance and design review;
- community and stakeholder engagement;
- statutory consultation (legal compliance);
- technical reports including housing need, site assessment and heritage studies;
- feasibility and viability studies and project business plans;
- training, continuing professional development (CPD) and education;
- preparing guidance and briefings;
- in person (verbal) and written evidence for Parliamentary committees;
- third sector (not-for-profit) organisational development, including strategy, operations, governance and business development.

Urban Vision Enterprise is ISO 9001 Registered. The practice is an IHBC recognised historic environment service provider (HESPR) and CPD provider.

## Our clients

Current and past clients include government and funding bodies, UK and national professional bodies and membership organisations, local authorities, town and parish councils, neighbourhood forums and third sector (not-for-profit) organisations. These include the Heritage Lottery Fund, Locality, Royal Town Planning Institute, Institute of Historic Building Conservation, and the National Trust.

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