



2. Vision & Objectives

- 2.1. The Vision Statement and Objectives are the touchstone for all future development. They represent the views of those who live and work in the parish, as captured during extensive public consultation. Applicants should reflect the objectives within their proposals to contribute to the realisation of the Vision for Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish.

Neighbourhood Plan Vision Statement

- 2.2. This is the vision statement for the neighbourhood plan:

In fifteen years' time, Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish will be a vibrant, attractive, and sustainable place to live, work and visit. It will have protected and enhanced its distinctive rural Wealden character and richness of its landscape, its settlements, and its built environment. High quality well-designed and well-connected new developments which are sympathetic to the distinctive local heritage, will provide new homes for local workers and new residents. Greater social and environmental sustainability will have been achieved through improvements to technological infrastructure, active travel routes, community facilities and public realm spaces, as well as enhancements to ecological connectivity for the benefit of people and wildlife. These, in turn, will have brought increased opportunities to boost the local economy through a range of new businesses in a variety of sectors including new green and technological economies, to serve the needs of both residents and visitors.

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

2.3. Public consultation process so far has raised a series of concerns expressed by residents and businesses; and features and characteristics of importance and want to preserve. These have informed eight key objectives:

- The eight objectives are of equal importance
- Planning policies have been written to meet these objectives
- Objectives will be useful for monitoring going forward

Summary of objectives

- Preserve distinctive character and heritage of built environment through high quality design
- Preserve the historic landscape character and the natural environment, green spaces, and biodiversity for the health of people and wildlife
- Provide a mix of housing and employment space which meet local need
- Create lasting energy-efficient buildings for future generations
- Prioritise and promote active travel routes
- Community health, education, and leisure provision
- Tourism
- Enable community participation in the design process of new strategic developments.

Design & Heritage

2.4. New development must preserve, reflect and respect:

- Conservation Areas in Cranbrook, Sissinghurst and Wilsley Green
- Distinctive street form, building densities, layout, and public realm space of original settlements
- Traditional street hierarchy, pedestrian routeways and twittens
- Variety in typology of historic building forms and roofscapes
- Distinctive green wedges connecting settlement centres with wider landscape and 'green' feel of settlements including an abundance of trees, hedges, grasslands, gardens, allotments, roadside nature reserves and wildlife-friendly verges, ponds, streams, and accessible open green spaces
- Dispersed farmsteads pattern, historic layout and AONB setting
- Notable local buildings, gardens, and parklands
- Use of local natural materials and colour palette (for Kent peg tiles, bricks, and wooden weatherboard)
- Distinctive historic AONB landscape features (landform, water, woods, fields, hedges, routeways).

- 2.5. To respond to the beauty and history of the existing built and landscape environments, new developments should be of high architectural quality, design and landscaping as set out in the High Weald AONB Design Guide (2019).

Landscape & the Natural Environment

- 2.6. The plan recognises the importance of the parish's rich natural ecology, historic landscape, and access to green space for the benefit of people and wildlife. The vital role the environment plays in increasing our resilience to first climate change, and now a health crisis, is conveyed through several policies and projects for the parish which aim to:

- Protect and enhance the distinctive historic landscape character
- Preserve the distinctive hierarchical Wealden settlement pattern of historic market town, village and hamlets embedded within rural setting of High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Preserve the parish's natural resources to increase future resilience and opportunity in green economies
- Promote community access to green space, whilst protecting sensitive sites
- Ensure new development makes a positive contribution to ecological diversity and connectivity within and beyond the sites
- Protect and enhance valued green spaces, significant views, and priority habitats
- Realise an extension of the Crane Valley Nature Reserve with public access
- Protect and enhance greening within the settlements' boundaries

Mix of Housing & Employment Space

2.7. To promote social and economic sustainability, development should be balanced to allow for mix of land uses and tenures to provide spaces for both residential and commercial activity which reflects local need, builds on current strengths, and enables future opportunities. Current strengths include education, independent retail, tourism, entrepreneurial businesses, health and leisure, and agricultural diversification. Future opportunities identified include skills and training, technology, rural- and green-based businesses.

2.8. Policies which aim to support this include:

- Maintain the vibrancy of town and village centres
- Make efficient use of land through prioritising previously developed land and appropriate densities
- Seek imaginative solutions to provide a mix of land uses which respond to local need for housing and employment space
- Housing in sustainable locations which is affordable to local workers and young people
- Smaller homes in sustainable locations for down-sizing older adults
- Rural Exception Sites for rural-based workers
- Employment space for start-ups and expansion of existing businesses
- Sufficient flexible space in new houses to enable home working
- High Speed Broadband for all households and businesses.

Buildings for the Future

2.9. To respond to the climate emergency, developments should employ building construction methods and designs that reduce energy demand, maximise natural resource use, and embrace innovative construction solutions:

- Build to carbon neutral standard
- Maximise natural resource use through selection of materials, design, layout and orientation
- Maximise opportunities for low and zero carbon energy production
- Minimise energy consumption
- Make efficient use of water
- Avoid light, air, water, and noise pollution
- Electric vehicle charging
- Innovative construction solutions
- New models of home ownership
- Provide land for home-grown food production.

Active Travel Routes

2.10. To create access and movement networks that bring lasting benefits to the local community and promote health and well-being, increase safety, reduce air and noise pollution and protect the environment. In response to high levels of car dependence, increasingly busy and dangerous roads, especially on A229 and A262, new developments should:

- Enable the creation of a cycleway between Sissinghurst, Cranbrook and Bedgebury Forest
- Create a hierarchy of safe access for all: starting with emergency and service vehicle, then pedestrian and other active travel modes, followed by public transport and finally other motor traffic
- Maintain and enhance accessible off-road connectivity within the development and beyond to access neighbourhood services and the wider countryside
- Provide a range of convenient, sustainable, and safe travel options.

Community Provision

2.11. To ensure that existing and future residents can enjoy a high standard of living and community cohesion, the appropriate levels of delivery of community health, education, arts, leisure, sports, community facilities and public realm space will need to be provided:

- A new medical centre for Cranbrook
- A new community centre for Cranbrook
- Improvements to public realm space in Cranbrook
- A new village hall for Sissinghurst
- Support improvements to schools and opportunities for adult skills and training.

Tourism

2.12. Tourism is a significant driver for the local economy as the parish contains several destination attractions including the world-renowned Sissinghurst Castle and Garden and the popular Bedgebury Forest. A number of beautiful historic buildings also draw in visitors from far and wide, most notably St.Dunstan's Church ("The Cathedral of the Weald"), the Union Mill (the oldest working smock mill in the country) and Cranbrook Museum.

2.13. Nestled in the wider landscape setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty criss-crossed with many Public Rights of Way including the High Weald Landscape Trail, the parish is a very pretty place to visit and enjoy the countryside.

2.14. Through policies and projects, the plan will support the development of tourism through proposals to:

- Provide more visitor accommodation
- Provide more tourism-related, health and leisure-based businesses
- Improve green and blue infrastructure along the Crane Valley and the Hop Pickers Line
- The creation of a cycleway between the destinations of Sissinghurst Castle and Bedgebury Forest.

Community Involvement

2.15. The community has a vital role to play in the design of new developments. This is especially important on the larger strategic sites, where the principles of good place-making and master planning should be adopted. To enable local aspirations to be met, communities should be involved throughout the design evolution process through co-design, design workshops and other participatory techniques.