



9. Infrastructure

Introduction

- 9.1 The Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Neighbourhood Plan encourages the delivery of infrastructure and essential services provided in a way which benefits the local community, whilst maintaining the AONB landscape characteristics that makes the parish unique.
- 9.2 Community engagement has highlighted the shortage of essential services throughout the parish, including water management, internet connectivity, mobile data coverage, and community energy and allotment gardens.

Overall Policy Aims

- To ensure that existing and new residents are adequately provided with the necessary improvements to infrastructure
- To create social connections between all demographics across the parish
- To ensure residents have their needs met throughout all stages of their lives
- To ensure facilities are sensitively designed in the context of the beautiful landscape
- To ensure that services and facilities are future proofed to meet the borough's target of being carbon neutral by 2030
- To attract businesses to the parish that require high connectivity
- To encourage and enable home working
- To enable telemedicine

Draft Policy IN5.1

Provision of Enhanced Broadband and Mobile Data

- a) Planning applications for new developments should deliver adequate mobile data coverage for new residents' businesses. Access to Ultra-Fast Broadband of 100mb/s, which is above the OFCOM target level should also be delivered.
- b) Preference should be given to technologies that have little or no visual impact on the landscape, such as subterranean fibreoptic cabling.
- c) Where necessary, applications for the installations of poles or masts to support superfast broadband and mobile data coverage will be approved where the siting and character of the structure:
 - is of the minimum physical dimensions necessary to fulfil its function
 - is located to minimise visual impact
 - does not require the removal of mature trees
 - does not interfere with any other radio or microwave networks in the area
 - provides access for multiple properties, where practicable, to reduce the number of installations required

Policy Supporting Text

- 9.3 At community engagement events, the public have repeatedly conveyed that there is patchy mobile data coverage in the parish and very poor internet connectivity outside the centre of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst. In the Business and Employment Survey, 35% cited poor internet speeds and reliability, limiting growth; 100% complained of patchy coverage in the parish; and 40% cited poor mobile phone limiting their business growth.
- 9.4 The Design Forum¹ identified the need and opportunity to enhance connectivity across the parish that is fit for the future. Enhanced connectivity would benefit individuals and businesses alike, allowing more people to work from home and fostering a culture that seeks the development of live/work units, which may include more isolated farmsteads, for example.

¹ <http://cranbrookandsissinghurstndp.co.uk/evidence/>

Draft Policy IN5.2

Provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points

- a) **Vehicle charging points, accessible from the car parking facilities, should be included in new development applications.**
- b) **Developers will be encouraged to support installation of charging points in Parish public car parking spaces.**
- c) **Applications for charging points by new and existing businesses will be encouraged**
- d) **Applications for re-charging points for dedicated public transport will be supported, where they can demonstrate that they are designed in ways sensitive to the town and landscape settings.**

Policy Supporting Text

- 9.5 In the Business and Employment Survey, 25% of businesses surveyed cited lack of public transport as growth limiting. Community engagement showed a need for greater public transport to allow residents to access services which lie outside the parish.
- 9.6 Applications that support environmentally friendly public transport and electric vehicle charging points would help alleviate this, while also making electric cars a more attractive option.
- 9.7 Encouraging use of electric cars will help improve the carbon footprint of the parish as it moves towards the government target of no petrol and diesel car sales after 2030, and the borough's target of carbon neutrality by 2030.
- 9.8 This policy is in line with TWBC draft Local Plan policy STR6.²

² https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/343718/Consultation-Draft-Local-Plan.pdf

Draft Policy IN5.3

Low and Zero Carbon Energy Production

Proposals for individual and community-scale renewable energy projects (including, but not limited to: solar panels, local biomass facilities and anaerobic digesters, ground and air source heat pumps, hydro-electricity) either as stand-alone proposals or within the design of new developments will be supported subject to the following criteria:

- a) The siting and scale of the proposed development is appropriate to its setting within the wider landscape
- b) The proposed development does not adversely impact on the amenities and environment of residents
- c) The proposed development does not have an unacceptable impact on any feature of natural or biodiversity importance

Policy Supporting Text

9.9 In July 2019, TWBC resolved to become carbon neutral in its operations by 2030. This policy aims to support this ambition through the encouragement of small scale low and zero carbon energy production where appropriate.

9.10 Vision 2034³, published by the AONB partnership, sets out policy aspirations for the High Weald AONB for the next 20 years, aiming for a landscape embracing a low-carbon future with green technologies underpinning a strong rural economy and thriving communities. The parish recognises its responsibility to the landscape and environment, whilst supporting development that meets the needs of residents.

³ <https://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan/vision-2034.html>

Draft Policy IN5.4

Sustainable Drainage

- a) **Developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems to reduce the run-off of surface water. The systems should effectively mitigate any adverse effects from surface water run-off and flooding on people, property and the ecological value of the local environment.**
- b) **Development proposals in the upper Crane Valley should demonstrate effective water management measures, which include an assessment of the impact of the development on known pinch points for flooding in Cranbrook town centre and provide a water management plan for mitigation.**
- c) **Development proposals should demonstrate that they include a broad range of mitigation measures to manage the risk of flooding within their boundary and elsewhere in the parish, including, but not limited to:**
 - **Permeable driveways and parking areas**
 - **Water harvesting and storage features**
 - **Green roofs**
 - **Soakaways**
 - **Swales**
 - **Planting of trees and hedges**
- d) **Attenuation Basins should be designed in keeping with the surrounding environment and planted with the intention of improving water quality and biodiversity**

Policy Supporting Text

9.11 The parish recognises its responsibility to the landscape and environment and meeting the guidelines from the High Weald AONB⁴, whilst supporting development that meets the needs of the residents. Given that the settlements are mostly located along the course of the Crane Valley, management of, and the effects on, this key aspect of the landscape are crucial to the parish. Applications that meet both requirements are preferred.

9.12 Sustainable drainage is essential to alleviate the impact of new development on the environment, preventing the occurrence of flooding. As witnessed across the UK, the effects of flooding can be devastating and measures should be taken to ensure problems do not arise in the parish. Such measures can be attractively designed and add character to a new development.

⁴ High Weald AONB geology and water objectives: <http://www.highweald.org/look-after/439-management-plan-objectives/1490-objectives-for-geology-and-water.html>

Draft Policy IN5.5

Allotment Gardens

- a) **Development proposals on strategic sites should include the sufficient provision of allotment gardens. The amount of land made available should be at least proportionate to that provided during historic large-scale new developments in the parish.**
- b) **Allotments should be enclosed by native hedgerows to enhance biodiversity but avoid overshadowing trees.**
- c) **To ensure productivity the selection of sites for allotments should demonstrate provision of good soil quality, water supply and consideration of orientation to maximise sunlight.**
- d) **Sites should allow space to include areas of wildflower meadows and verges, and bee hives.**
- e) **Allotments gardens to be managed by the Parish Council to enable demand across the parish to be met and S106 agreements sought to finance this.**

Policy Supporting Text

9.13 The coronavirus crisis saw increase in interest and activity levels of home food production, and chicken keeping. Local farm shops reported at least doubling of sales of vegetable seeds and compost during the Spring of 2020.

9.14 Recent outline planning permissions passed in Cranbrook (including the Brick Kiln Farm site) have not addressed this, with no provision made. Whereas the Oatfield/Wheatfield and Frythe estate developments in 1950/60s provided allotment gardens, which provide:

- Health and wellbeing benefits,
- Community cohesion
- Economic resilience post-COVID – Brexit & food security
- Climate crisis – locally produced food, less carbon emissions from imports
- Net gain for biodiversity – increase in species variety
- Increase in pollinator numbers through the B-line project⁵

⁵ <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-south-of-england/>