

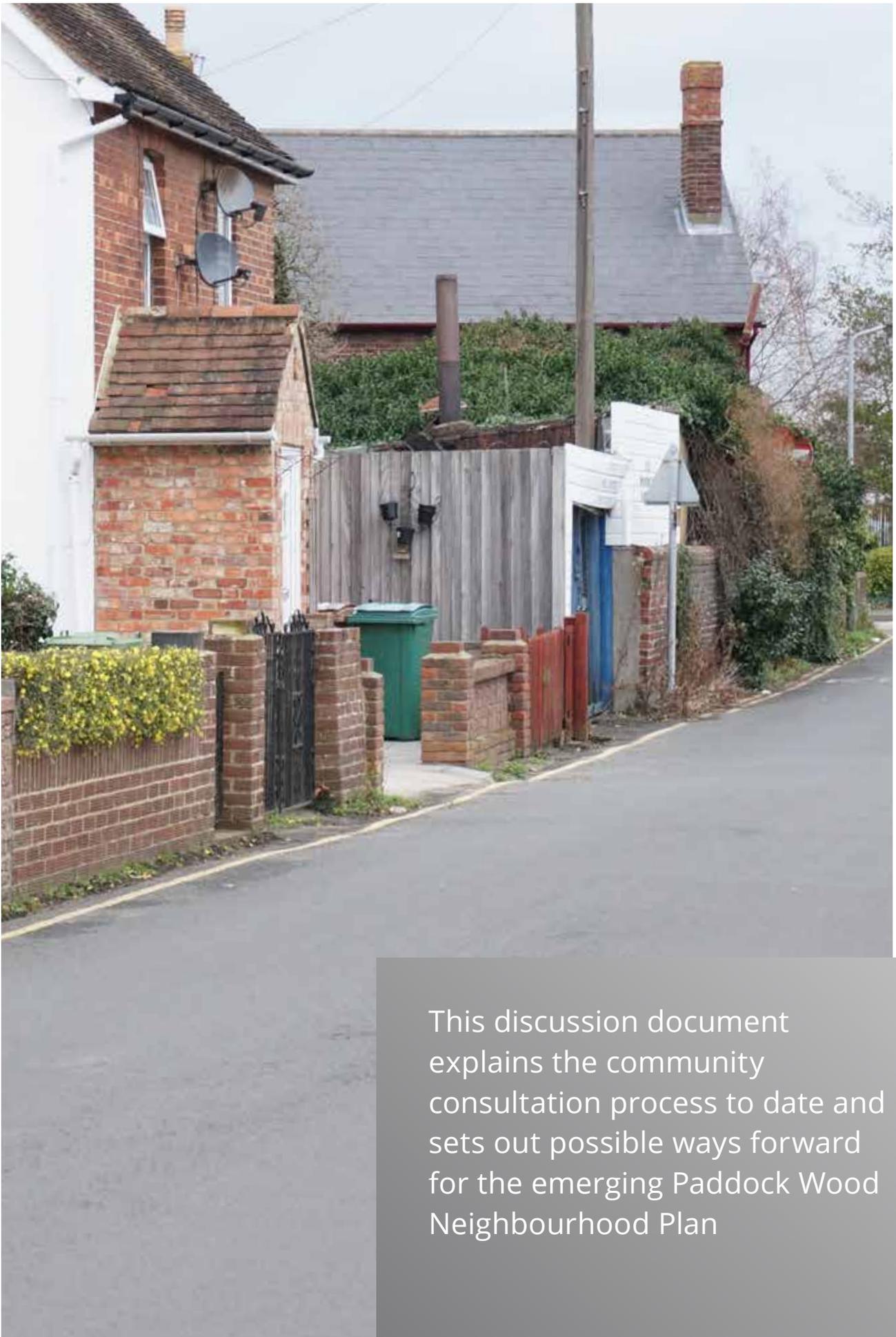
Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan

Future Policy Mix

Discussion Document
July 2016







This discussion document explains the community consultation process to date and sets out possible ways forward for the emerging Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan



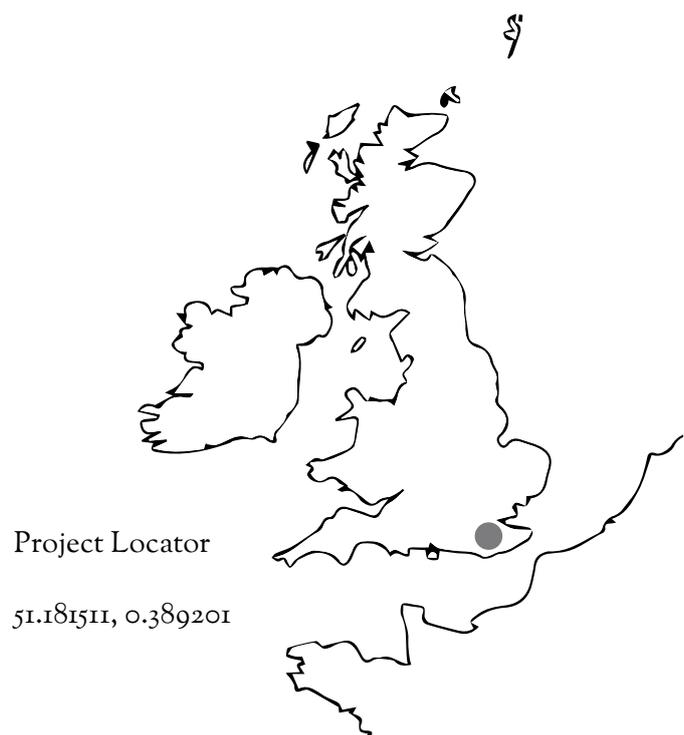
Feria Urbanism is a planning and design studio that specialises in urban design, urban planning, neighbourhood strategies, public participation and community engagement. Established in 2007, we have been involved in a diverse range of planning and design projects across the UK.

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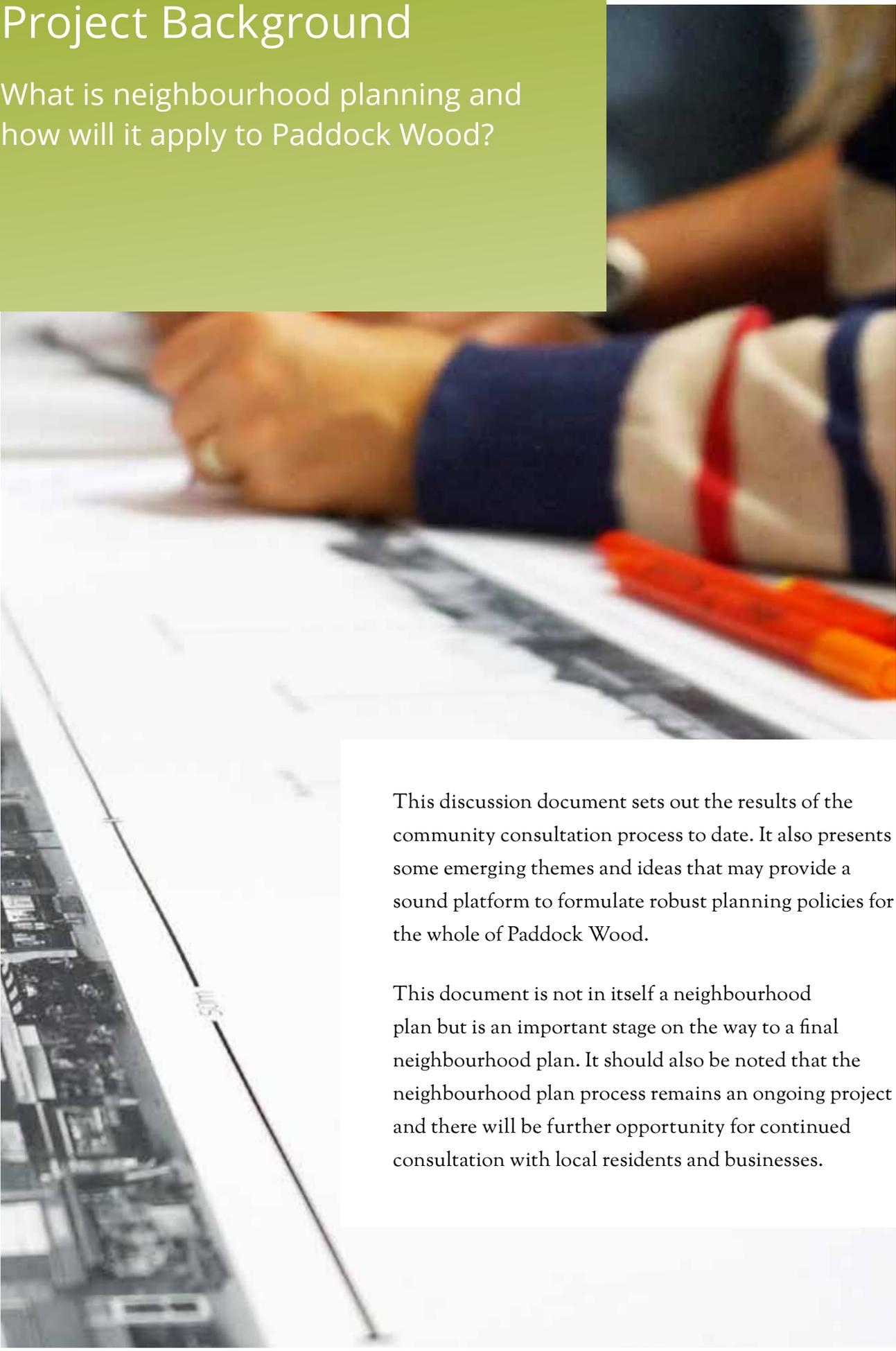


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Project Background

What is neighbourhood planning and how will it apply to Paddock Wood?



This discussion document sets out the results of the community consultation process to date. It also presents some emerging themes and ideas that may provide a sound platform to formulate robust planning policies for the whole of Paddock Wood.

This document is not in itself a neighbourhood plan but is an important stage on the way to a final neighbourhood plan. It should also be noted that the neighbourhood plan process remains an ongoing project and there will be further opportunity for continued consultation with local residents and businesses.

What is a neighbourhood plan?

Neighbourhood planning is a community-led process introduced by Government to encourage local people to shape and influence development within the places where they live and work. They are produced by community forum groups or parish or town councils.

Neighbourhood plans are policy-based community-led plans which correspond to the Local Plan. In this case, the Local Plan is prepared by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Neighbourhood plans can influence site selection or allocate new housing sites directly. They can contain design policies for allocated sites or for general development. They can also protect or identify new community facilities and identify green spaces to be protected from future development proposals.

The Government introduced the opportunity for local communities to prepare neighbourhood plans through amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Localism Act 2011 and through new regulations Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, which sets out the requirements for Neighbourhood Plans.

In Paddock Wood, the preparation of the neighbourhood plan is being led by the neighbourhood development plan committee of Paddock Wood Town Council.

Project time line so far

In the summer of 2015, Paddock Wood Town Council sought independent professional assistance to help manage the process of developing a finished neighbourhood plan for the parish. Following a formal procurement process, Paddock Wood Town Council appointed a consultant team to assist them with this work.

The town council is still responsible for the drafting of the neighbourhood plan and for leading on community engagement and consultation but will use technical support from the consultant team on urban design, landscape and planning policy advice.

The consultant team appointed to work alongside the parish council is Feria Urbanism, a design and planning practice based in Bournemouth. The consultant team has good experience working with local community groups across the country, helping them develop neighbourhood plans. The team has also worked on some high profile public realm improvement schemes, education and training events and urban planning projects.

The community consultation process so far

The process so far has comprised initial site visits by the consultant team in July 2015. These site visits were followed by several key events designed to engage the community:

December PLACE Training Workshop

In December 2015, afternoon site visits and an evening workshop were held. The workshop was held on 12th December 2015 in the Wesley Centre in Paddock Wood.

The purpose of this training event was to provide an insight into the way the design of the built environment needs to be considered as part of the neighbourhood plan process and how the professional disciplines of planning, landscape, architecture, conservation and engineering should work together. The PLACE acronym is derived from these five professions.

The background to this PLACE assessment process was the conclusions of the “Farrell Review”, a national review of architecture and the built environment, independently run by a panel of built environment experts. The Farrell Review asks for an increased focus on the civic value of well-designed public spaces, streets and amenities and the character and needs of existing communities, instead of a narrow focus on architecture.

This increased focus requires greater collaboration between the planning, landscape, architecture, conservation and engineering professions. The Farrell Review concludes that only when all five professions work together effectively can place-shaping truly happen.

This PLACE assessment has helped to provide the neighbourhood plan process with a greater understanding of the five key aspects to successful place-making and how this can positively influence the emerging Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan.

March Visioning Event

On 17th March 2016, an evening visioning event was held in Paddock Wood. This event examined some of the issues in more detail and allowed representatives of the town council and the planning team from FERIA Urbanism to hear the opinions of a wide variety of local interest groups.

The event was task-based and participants were required to come prepared to share their views about what makes the town of Paddock Wood a special place to live, work and visit. More details on the results of this event can be found in a separate report and this too was used to inform the design forum event that followed.

April Two-Day Design Forum

The third key event was a two-day design forum held on 27th and 28th April 2016. This was a design-led exercise that examined how change can be accommodated, designed and planned in Paddock Wood town. The forum consisted of a series of workshop sessions that became progressively more detailed over the two days. The aim was to develop a draft concept plan for the town by the end of the second day. This two-day event was intensive, highly interactive and collaborative.

Residents who attended shared their ideas and thoughts; either based on their own personal experiences of living or working in Paddock Wood or on behalf of a community group or other organisation. The town council appreciated that attendance throughout the two days was a big commitment so any residents that could not attend for all two days, were free to attend for just part of the time (e.g. one day, just one morning, an afternoon etc).

On the first evening, the venue was open to the public, in exhibition format, to allow them to see “work in progress” and the Feria Urbanism team were on-hand throughout to explain the outputs from that day’s workshops.

The second and final evening comprised a presentation that allowed all local residents to see the results of the three-day design event. The Feria Urbanism team made a presentation explaining the process and the results of the previous 48 hours.

This was a chance for those local residents and businesses that were unable to take part in the daytime sessions to see the results, hear from the town council and the planning team and to ask questions about the emerging draft concept plan. More information about the design forum can be found in the extensive slideshow report, an edited and revised version of the final slideshow as used on the final evening of the forum.

July Update Meeting

On 13th July 2016, an update meeting was held in the main hall of Paddock Wood primary school. This provided a summary of all the work undertaken to date and was attended by 165 people. A video of the presentation has been placed online alongside other material from earlier in the process.

Postcard Feedback

The neighbourhood plan steering group organised the printing of a postcard format feedback form. This has been a useful way to gather further thoughts and ideas from the local community. The steering group ran a stall at the Paddock Wood Carnival on 9th July 2016 and over the course of the day, 29 postcards were completed. A further 26 postcards were completed at the 13th July 2016 update meeting.

The postcard comments were generally very supportive of the process so far and tended to confirm the ideas that had emerged at the earlier consultation events.



The visioning results provided useful baseline data for the next phases.

How is neighbourhood planning likely to be applied in Paddock Wood?

Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood (para. 183 of the National Planning Policy Framework). Therefore, each stage of the Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan process to date has sought to extend the amount of common ground between local residents and businesses, narrowing down various options through a transparent and open process. This process is set to continue in subsequent work phases.

At all stages, the neighbourhood planning process will allow room for dissent and minority views but the overall aim of the process has been to build a broad-based consensus. This is why the town council have been keen to engage the community in Paddock Wood through a process of hands-on design exercises that will help to translate the shared vision (as described above) into a “spatial framework” for the parish, that in turn can be supported by policy text and associated diagrams. This will be important for the next phases and the role the neighbourhood plan can adopt. At this stage, three key roles are expected of the neighbourhood plan for Paddock Wood:

1) A Town-Wide Coordinating Plan

Neighbourhood plans allow communities to have a say on where new homes, shops, offices and workplaces should be built. In Paddock Wood, the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local Plan is already providing a clear lead on housing numbers, land use mix and site

locations through its site allocations documents. However, as a strategic document, what the local plan is not necessarily doing is providing an overall vision for the town or showing how the different projects and policies coordinate and link together. Therefore, an emerging option at this stage is for the Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan to take on the role of “master plan” for the town, providing an overall vision and spatial plan.

2) Design Guidance & Policy

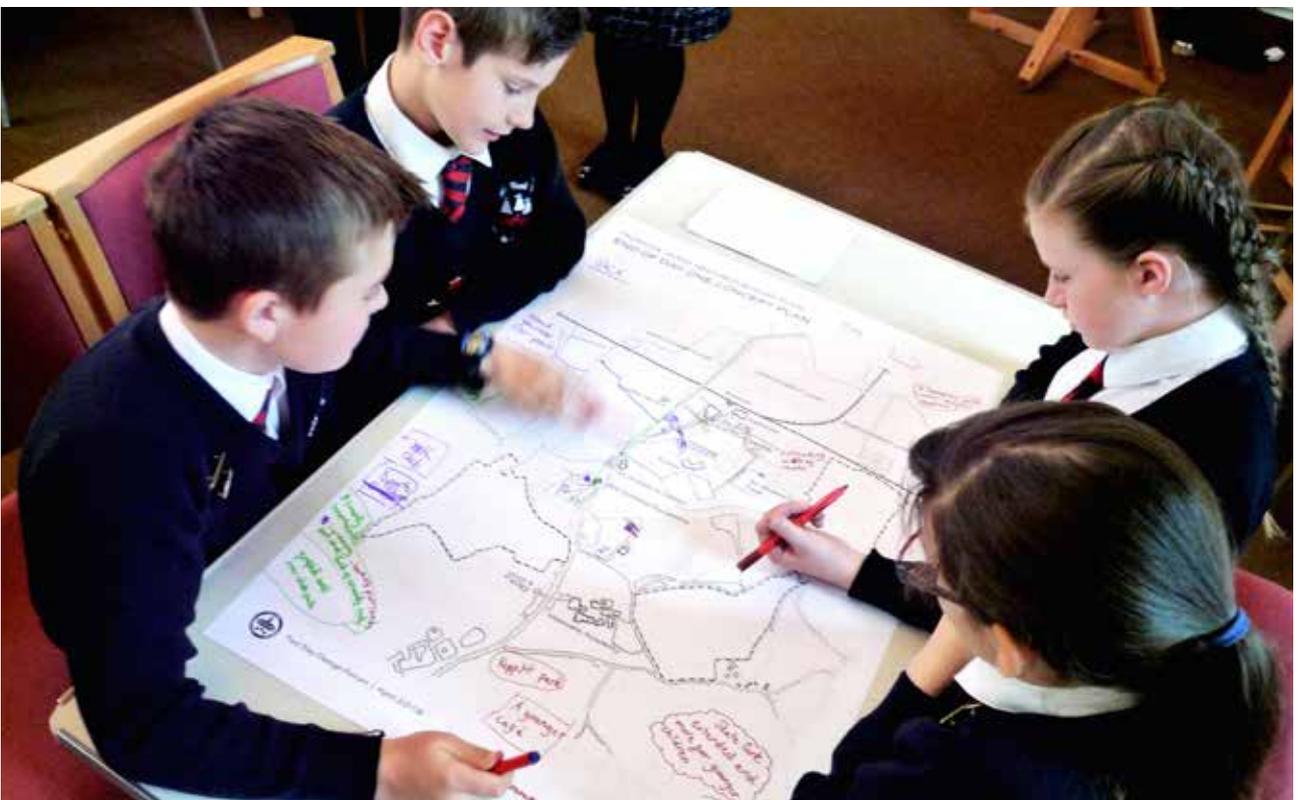
Neighbourhood plans can influence the designs of new homes, other buildings and the linking spaces in between. They can also express a view on streets, public space, leisure and community facilities and environmental issues. In Paddock Wood, we expect this neighbourhood planning power to be used to establish well-supported design and development briefs for key sites, including the town centre regeneration area and local community centre sites.

3) Protection of Existing Assets

Neighbourhood plans can also be used to protect existing facilities and services, green spaces and historic buildings. As part of an coordinating role of the neighbourhood plan, the services, community and heritage assets of the town, together with the essential green infrastructure, can be mapped and then protected through well-written policy text. The protection of existing facilities and services across the town can therefore become a focus of the neighbourhood plan.



Working in small groups, participants at the design forum looked at particular issues. In this image, green connecting routes throughout the town are being mapped.



The design forum produced a “concept plan” for the whole town and this was tested on the morning of the second day. This concept could become the basis for a town-wide coordinating plan that could well be a main focus of the neighbourhood plan.

Future Policy Mix

What makes a great town?



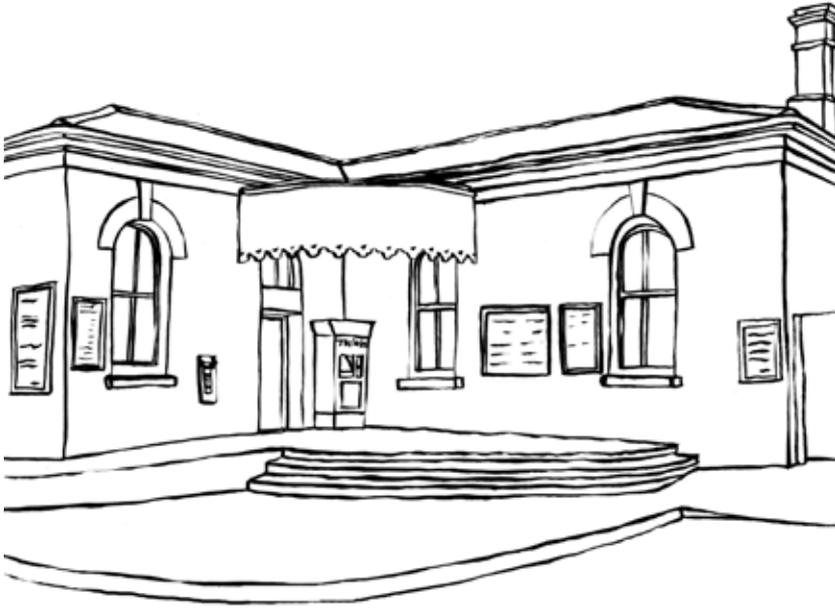
The town already exhibits some of the best qualities and characteristics of small-town life including a range of useful shops and services, a strong sense of community, good connections to the wider region (especially through a regular and usually reliable train service) and access to some wonderful countryside.

The consultation work in early 2016 has provided a great deal of knowledge and background. The key questions now are what can the neighbourhood plan do to protect and enhance existing features? What new additions need to be proposed to ensure the parish's continued success into the future? And how can all this work be coordinated into an overall vision to guide the future of the town? Set out here are eight draft policies themes that could become key elements of the coordinating plan for Paddock Wood. Each are categorised as one or more of the following three policy types:

- *Protection...* preventing the loss of an existing town asset.
- *Enhancement...* making an existing town asset better.
- *Proposal...* something new to be identified and developed.

Where appropriate, a site-specific location is suggested although some of the ideas will apply town wide. It should be noted that these ideas should be read in conjunction with the design forum final slideshow as this sets out further plan ideas for consideration.





1. Make the station a welcome focus for the town

Paddock Wood train station marks the entrance point for many visitors, with the surrounding area forming people's first impressions of the town. Therefore, this key space provides the perfect opportunity to better define the town and deliver an uplifting welcome to both visitors and residents. The creation of a more defined civic square here should be considered as a distinct project in its own right. As the town grows, a stronger and clearer sense of civic identity needs to be defined and, with its origins as a railway town, the station in Paddock Wood is a good location to do this.

As seen in cities such as Amsterdam and Edinburgh, having an identifiable "brand" can invoke pride in an area and in its material form, a brand can become a strong landmark.

Consideration should therefore be given for a new artwork project to be incorporated into any future station enhancement project.

With regards to access, the adjacent long-stay commuter parking should be well-balanced with short-stay parking provision for local shoppers, visitors and workers. This will allow local residents to have ample access to the town, without static commuter parking dominating the immediate area. Consideration for decked parking is recommended.

As further investment is put into Paddock Wood town centre, there should be sustainable growth for parking around the station, with the area immediately north giving priority to employment, parking and business infrastructure.

Policy Type: Protection, Enhancement & Proposal

Location: In and around Paddock Wood station



2. Make a more pedestrian friendly town centre

Safe and effective pedestrian access is vital in achieving a successful town centre. Allowing people to take pleasure in walking, rather than it being an unpleasant and dangerous experience, will increase footfall within the town and keep it alive. This key policy within the neighbourhood plan will achieve many objectives — greater health and fitness levels within the population, better social and environmental sustainability and the long term economic vitality of the town.

With this in mind, three key routes in Paddock Wood have been identified as requiring particular attention. Firstly, a safe pedestrian link from Commercial Road to the health centre should be introduced, with better crossing facilities over the Maidstone Road.

Similarly, a safe route that connects St Andrew's Church and the location of the new Community Centre at Memorial Field is needed (see policy theme 5). Finally, a safe pedestrian link across Badsell Road to Foal Hurst Wood is required.

Meanwhile, improved maintenance to all footpaths will enhance the pedestrian environment and encourage more people to walk, more often. The area in and around Commercial Road and the town centre needs to be made far more pedestrian friendly.

These measures will give residents ease of access, improve the individual's experience of Paddock Wood and contribute to a wider promotion of sustainability in the town.

Policy Type: Proposal & Enhancement

Location: Paddock Wood town centre



3. Develop a diverse mix of housing types, styles and sizes across the parish

The neighbourhood plan needs to engage further with the local plan process and with the planning application process to ascertain the level of influence it can have upon the three peripheral allocation sites at Church Farm, Mascalls Court Road and Mascalls Farm. At this stage, it remains unclear just how much or how little influence the neighbourhood plan will have over these three sites.

In order to develop a strong sense of community within these new residential areas, some housing should be prioritised for locals who live and work in the area. Included within this should be affordable housing in a range of typologies, such as bungalows and 1-2-3 bedroom maisonettes, as well as family homes.

High quality, innovative design with ample storage space will provide residents with long-lasting, efficient homes. New designs should learn from the best bits of existing “classic” areas of Paddock Wood while all residential developments should have a sustainable approach to design, both environmentally and socially (e.g. adapting to new fuel sources and changing family dynamics). Housing proposals will need to include “off-plot” measures such as implementing direct cycle routes and footpaths to places of importance in the town, with green links to playing fields and community centres.

Above all, the three main housing allocations need to contribute positively towards an overall master plan for Paddock Wood as expressed by the neighbourhood plan.

Policy Type: Proposal & Enhancement

Location: Specific Locations & Town Wide



4. Strengthen the connections to the wider countryside

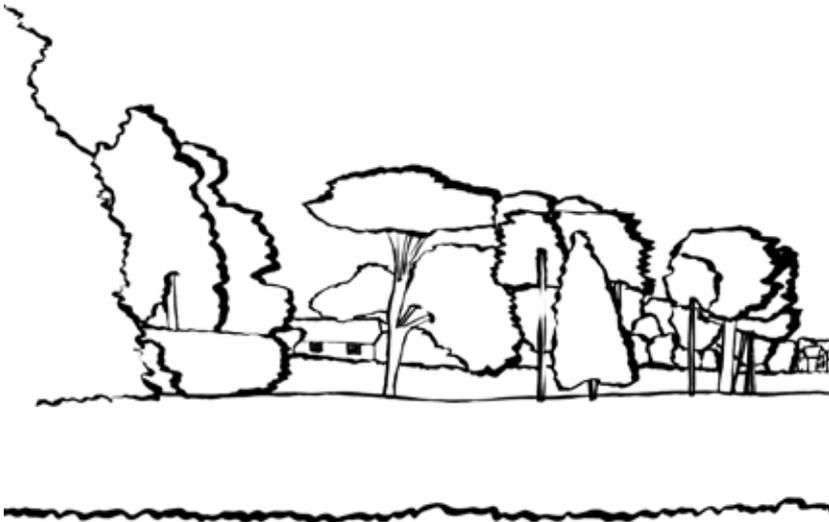
Continuing the efforts to increase sustainable access in Paddock Wood, provision should also be made for “active travel” modes (i.e. cycling and walking) to the wider area beyond the existing town boundary. An increase in such travel modes will help connect the town with its countryside hinterland.

This shift in transport focus requires safe cycling routes to be implemented throughout the town and around its edges. For instance, connections should be made between green spaces and safe dog walking areas, between play areas and the main residential areas. Hazardous road crossings should be addressed and improved with both pedestrians and cyclists in mind.

To allow greater access by bicycle and by foot, cycle routes and footpaths should radiate out of the town, towards popular locations such as the Elm Tree Pub, the Hop Farm, and west along Badsell Road. Connecting to these radiating routes, a series of “circular” connections will need to be integrated, plugging into the layouts of the new housing allocation sites. This will allow movement around the edges and avoid the need for travel into the centre of Paddock Wood and back out again, simply adding to traffic levels. Routes to accommodate sustainable travel modes around the edge will be particularly important for access to the Mascalls Academy (the town’s secondary school). These policy theme will give Paddock Wood a cohesive access strategy between town and country.

Policy Type: Proposal & Enhancement

Location: Specific Locations & Town Wide



5. Secure the site for a new community hall; set a clear design brief for the building

With an increasing population and the resulting need for a greater amount of social and community space, a new community centre for Paddock Wood has been deemed essential by the neighbourhood plan process. The neighbourhood plan needs to contain a policy that secures the right site and defines a design brief for the new building.

This new building will need to cater for a wide range of interest groups interests. The design forum explored the likely scope for the design, including the provision of seating capacity for approx. 300 people, a stage, catering facilities and a café bar. Alongside this, facilities for para-health services such as health visitors, social services and an information hub could also be provided. Educational, business, social

and sporting use should all be encouraged and suitable facilities such as meeting rooms and lecture rooms should therefore be included. The feedback from youth groups has suggested a wide range of ideas and projects that could be based at the new hall, including drone aerodrome and a climbing wall! The favoured site for the new community centre is Memorial Field, a recreational ground to the south of Paddock Wood. It is favoured due to its ease of access from the main street network and the availability of land. The proposed new building should sit along the eastern edge of the site, overlooking the playing fields and Maidstone Road. The new community centre should act as a landmark building while also integrating with the landscape surroundings.

Policy Type: Enhancement & Proposal with a dedicated project delivery team in place

Location: Memorial Field, Maidstone Road



6. Establish an on-going community use for the Wesley Centre

The Wesley Centre is a well-loved community building and its accessible location within the town centre has made it a popular venue and destination for events and functions.

Although the need for a brand new larger, multifunctional building has now been established (see policy theme 5) the majority view through the consultation so far is that the Wesley Centre will still need to be maintained as a community building to complement and enhance the offer in the town. Such is the anticipated housing growth, that two community buildings will be required not just one new venue. Dedicated community uses have been suggested for the Wesley Centre, including a small-screen digital cinema or a heritage interpretation centre.

To improve the functionality of the Wesley Centre the external spaces need to be adapted. Providing an interesting, safe and contained outdoor space is a key project, such as a sensory garden, toddler play space or a simple planted area for tranquil outdoor enjoyment.

As one of the older buildings in the relatively new settlement of Paddock Wood, the Wesley Centre provides a rare example of architectural heritage and there is a desire to see this older building maintained and enhanced. The original chapel building includes a stained glass window, many decorative features and doorways and these features should be retained. Demolition and rebuild of the site is therefore not particularly favoured.

Policy Type: Protection & Proposal with a dedicated project delivery team in place

Location: Wesley Centre, Commercial Road



7. Ensure existing renewal and investment schemes integrate effectively

The Goldings residential neighbourhood is located in the southern part of Paddock Wood. This low density residential area consists of many three-storey apartment blocks built in the 1950s and set in some open landscaped areas.

These post-war buildings were only ever intended as a short term housing project and therefore the overall design and construction standards fall short of what is expected today. The Goldings area is already identified for renewal and investment. Refurbishment and new buildings in this area will need to be of high quality design and must provide modern living spaces.

A particular concern of existing residents is the maintenance and enhancement of the current areas of green space that sit between the apartment blocks. These areas provide a “breathing space” and can allow for outdoor play and social events. To encourage more positive use of these outdoor spaces boundary treatments need to be strengthened to better define them.

The neighbourhood plan has the ability to provide an overall guiding framework for residential renewal projects of this sort into which design detail can be added. It is important to existing residents that this work is integrated into a wider master plan for the whole of Paddock Wood.

Policy Type: Protection, Enhancement & Proposal

Location: The Goldings neighbourhood



8. Make a beautiful town centre fit for the future

Paddock Wood already has a thriving town centre that is well-used by local residents and visitors from surrounding villages and settlements. There is a good mix of local and national businesses, including Waitrose and the popular local department store, Barsley's.

There is also a large chunk of under-utilised land immediately to the west of Commercial Road and this provides an ideal opportunity to grow the town centre. This town centre expansion will be vital if the range of shops and services is to keep pace with the expected growth in the number of residents.

Paddock Wood currently lacks a focal civic space in the form of a traditional town square. Ensuring such a space is an integral part of this regeneration project will help encourage

“dwell time” and boost the social and economic vitality of the centre. This square can provide the space for markets, events and local festivals.

The neighbourhood plan process has already started to sketch out design ideas and capture a series of development principles for this regeneration project. It is also acknowledged that this land has an allocation for mixed use development in the Tunbridge Wells Neighbourhood Plan. The expected role of the neighbourhood plan for this particular policy theme therefore is to provide a degree of neighbourhood level design guidance, public realm advice and ensure coordination of this project with the new housing allocations, all within a wider master plan for Paddock Wood.

Policy Type: Protection, Enhancement & Proposal with a dedicated project delivery team in place

Location: Paddock Wood town centre

Next Steps

This report has set out a series of ideas based on community consultation and engagement to date. This report is not in itself a neighbourhood plan but is an important stage on the way to a final neighbourhood plan.

The neighbourhood plan process remains an ongoing project and Paddock Wood Town Council is keen to hear the views of local residents and businesses on the ideas, concepts and draft policies contained in this report and the supporting work. The following three action points are presented here for consideration by the neighbourhood plan steering group.

1. Review and prioritise the policy ideas

This report contains eight big policy themes, specifically prepared in response to the consultation results so far. The design forum event in April 2016 generated a series of draft policy headings and these are reflected in this report. There now needs to be a process of sifting and prioritising both sets of suggestions to ensure those that matter most to the community get the necessary attention to develop them as more rounded policy statements that are specific and deliverable.

The establishment of specific task groups to undertake research to support each policy priority (or to draw up more detailed schemes and ideas) may be required. Identifying those

priorities that need the most attention will be important. The three categories of “Protection, Enhancement and Proposal” as used in this document should help focus this work as a good balance of all three is required if the plan is to conform with the neighbourhood planning regulations, and with national and local planning policy.

2. Further engagement with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council planning team

A concern and anxiety for many of those that have participated in the consultation process so far is housing development — its location, its scale, its design quality and issues of affordability. Having a clearer understanding of how the neighbourhood plan and the local plan can work together on housing issues (including site allocations, design details and housing densities etc.) is something that needs to be established prior to the next phase of work.

3. Continued community engagement

The outcomes of the process so far have been based on a series of successful community consultation events. More such events are required to ensure the plan continues to be responsive to local needs. The parish council and its steering group will continue to communicate emerging ideas as well as seek feedback and listen to alternative suggestions.





