

Neighbourhood Plan

Paddock Wood is a small town with a rich and varied history, set in a high quality natural environment. The following policies relate to protecting areas of green open space, the connected network of green paths and cycle ways around the town and matters relating to biodiversity and local green gaps that deliver a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits for local people. This chapter also includes a policy on allotments.

Policy Objectives

- A. To protect and enhance the biodiversity and natural beauty of Paddock Wood.**
- B. To protect and enhance the countryside setting of the main residential area of Paddock Wood.**
- C. To ensure that developments do not increase the risk of flooding without suitable evidence based mitigation of that risk.**
- D. To reduce Paddock Wood's impact on climate change and prepare the community and environment for its impacts.**

Introduction

The residents of Paddock Wood are strongly opposed to the loss of existing green space. The Neighbourhood Plan provides the opportunity to create new areas of open space and identify areas as green lungs (supported by opportunities for Local Green Space Designation - see pages ** and ** of the plan) within the urban area for the benefit of the whole community. Green open space makes a vital contribution to the overall character and setting of the town.

Paddock Wood is situated in an area which in the recent past contained a number of ancient woodlands (see eighteenth century map above). The few remaining patches, including the Local Nature Reserve at Foalhurst Wood owned by the town (which adjoins the neighbouring Brick Kiln Wood) and the Spinney between the existing and proposed Green Lane developments.



The Local Plan contains several policies on Biodiversity, Green Infrastructure and Leisure/Recreation which includes open space. For the purposes of this section in the Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan, open space relates to any area of green-field land within the Plan boundary in current or future public ownership and/or land accessed by the public for informal use, land that provides visual amenity and land that provides Green infrastructure functions such as flood storage/attenuation and biodiversity.

Local residents are proud and protective of those features that give the Paddock Wood a sense of place and of identity which stem from its character and setting. The Neighbourhood Plan Vision seeks to maintain Paddock Wood's defining assets as an historic railway town including: the essentially rural setting; a range of heritage assets; the green, open aspects of all approaches to the town; the important landscape setting of the town within a transition zone between the upland area of the High Weald to the south and the flatter more open river valley of the Medway and Teise of the Low Weald landscape to the north; woodland embedded within the parish; well-established street trees; open green spaces and orchards; and green and wildlife corridors.

Paddock Wood residents value the town's setting in a high quality natural environment and the plan seeks to protect this for future generations.

The plan seeks to protect areas of green open space, implement a network of green paths and cycle ways around the town, and enhance biodiversity and green gaps that deliver a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits for local people.

Open space makes a vital contribution to the overall character and setting of the town. Paddock Wood is sited in an area which in the recent past contained a number of ancient woodlands. The few remaining patches include the council owned Local Nature Reserve at Foalhurst Wood (which adjoins the neighbouring Brick Kiln Wood) and the Spinney between the existing and proposed Green Lane developments.

Space for allotments has been identified as a significant issue for residents and feedback has confirmed that all existing allotment space needs to be retained and new sites for potential allotments have been identified by the community. Space for food and flower growing is important and provides essential open space for those living in urban areas. Local residents are proud and protective of those features that give the Paddock Wood a sense of place and of an identity which stem from its character and setting.

The Neighbourhood Plan Vision seeks to maintain Paddock Wood's defining assets as an historic railway town including: the essentially rural setting; a range of heritage assets; the green, open aspects of all approaches to the town; the character of the High Weald above the town and the River Medway downstream; woodland embedded within the parish; well-established street trees; open green spaces and orchards; and green and wildlife corridors.

POLICY OBJECTIVE A.

To protect and enhance the natural beauty and biodiversity of Paddock Wood

Core Policy Statement:

- We will ensure biodiversity, landscape, recreational and ecological gain whilst minimising the environmental impact of new development.

Our reasons for Policy G1

The Neighbourhood Plan recognises the need to conserve and enhance areas of importance for biodiversity and nature conservation and the valuable contribution these make to the natural heritage. Paddock Wood has a number of valued natural areas, habitats and species which need to be protected and enhanced. These areas are of significant community benefit for local residents who value the contribution they make to the town.

- Open space, including gardens, allotments, recreational space, open fields, woodlands and pathways are important to us all.
- Natural and semi natural open space is highly valued by local residents not just for its recreational value but also for its landscape character, quiet enjoyment and biodiversity.
- As currently the only sites afforded protection are Foal Hurst Wood Local Nature Reserve and those areas and individual trees covered by TPOs, to support and add weight to the national and local policies by designating sites as Local Green Space to safeguard them and protect them from inappropriate development.
- Existing areas of nature conservation need to be retained and protected from any negative impacts likely to arise from development by the following measures:
 - through protecting designated sites, species, ancient hedgerows, grasslands and woodlands; by preserving ecological networks and the migration and transit of flora and fauna
 - protecting ancient trees or trees of arboricultural value
 - promoting the mitigation, preservation, restoration and recreation of wildlife habitats, and the protection and recovery of priority species
 - providing a net gain in flora and fauna
 - adopting best practice in Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs).

Policy G1 - This Plan expects the Town Council and other landowners to take actions when managing existing landscapes to protect and enhance biodiversity and wildlife.

Such actions should include:

- a) supporting the application of the law to protected local species of animal and plant (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Protection of Badgers 1992 etc); including dormice, bats, reptiles and amphibians
- b) Maintain our existing areas of protected natural heritage, including:
 - Foal Hurst Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
 - Areas of ancient woodland
 - Areas protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)
 - Areas protected by Hedgerows Regulations 1997
- c) managing existing habitats more effectively (for example by reducing mowings to produce flower rich hay areas, cutting hedges and street plants in dormancy not at peak flowering/fruited time, and pruning trees, hedges and street plantings as species appropriate to the plant by applying arboricultural and horticultural knowledge).¹
- d) linking with schools and colleges to encourage use of natural habitats for learning opportunities.
- e) taking on apprentices/interns/work experience students with the PWTC estates team from local colleges teaching arboricultural, horticultural and other relevant skills.
- f) ensuring development proposals demonstrate how they will provide a net gain in biodiversity and wildlife on the site, over and above the existing biodiversity and wildlife situation. Where this is impractical due to the nature of the site, proposals will be expected to demonstrate how there will be a net gain across the neighbourhood plan area.
- g) granting of planning permissions that favour schemes that can demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity and wildlife.
- h) identifying and safeguarding wildlife corridors. Priority habitats will be recognised and protected from development proposals that would result in their loss or harm to their character, setting, accessibility, appearance, quality, or amenity value. If necessary, rerouting of corridors or off-site compensation can be considered.

POLICY OBJECTIVE B

To protect and enhance the countryside setting of the main residential area of Paddock Wood

Core Policy Statement:

- We will ensure that the setting of the town remains of a largely rural nature.

Our reasons for Policies G2 - G7

Good planning and design require an integration of the landscape features with the built form. While a local green network of landscape infrastructure has been identified across the neighbourhood area to be protected and enhanced, there is also a desire to see the wider countryside protected against development. This will not only continue to provide the town with its rural character and identity but will also provide recreational opportunities for residents and support biodiversity.

Development proposals should not have a detrimental impact on, and would enhance, areas identified as having major or substantial landscape value or sensitivity. Proposals should also not have an adverse impact on the landscape setting of Paddock Wood and should maintain the distinctive views of the surrounding countryside from public vantage points within, and adjacent to, the built-up area.

We recognise that well planned new developments can provide an increased variety of habitat types over monocultural agricultural fields. Street trees and other public plantings, gardens with trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants with associated compost heaps, ponds etc. can all benefit to wildlife.

However, the removal and alteration of some habitats (unimproved grassland, old orchards etc) will have a detrimental effect and the proximity of more people and their pets to natural areas invariably leads to damage and disturbance.

The town contains some residential areas of low density with large mature gardens. In order to preserve these areas from inappropriate back garden development, this policy seeks to control further infill to prevent over development. Back garden development is considered to be 'development of landlocked sites' behind existing buildings (usually houses), such as rear gardens and private open space, usually within predominantly residential areas. Such sites often have no street frontages.

Gardens provide other functions that are considered important, including the infiltration of water into the ground reducing the amount of surface waste run off produced.

To maintain the rural feel, all new development proposals should include a green infrastructure strategy, which designates sufficient space within the site to meet ecological requirements, such as retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SUDS implementation plan.

Space should also be designated for informal recreation and children's play as part of the development's green infrastructure strategy. Landscape ecology management plans should be provided for each development with sufficient resources for implementation, monitoring and review.

POLICY G2 - Countryside Protection

All proposals for new development in the countryside beyond the extended settlement boundary of Paddock Wood will be assessed in terms of the potential impact of the development upon the visual setting and landscape features of the site and its surroundings, the potential impact upon the biodiversity of the area and other relevant planning considerations, such as the impact of traffic and noise. Proposals which fail to demonstrate these impacts can be satisfactorily addressed will not be supported.

POLICY G3 - Rural Approaches

The green and rural feel to the approaches to Paddock Wood in particular from the south and west will be safeguarded and enhanced.

The tree line and hedgerow of these approaches should be maintained, supported and enhanced where possible to ensure that the potential for built up areas is minimised and the visual impact of new development is ameliorated.

Development proposals that would lead to the join up of the built up areas of Paddock Wood and Five Oak Green will be resisted.

POLICY G4 - Local Green Space Designations

- a) The green spaces shown on the Plan Map (page xx) and listed in the annex shall be designated as Local Green Spaces, and where appropriate be protected by appropriate fencing, gates and stiles.
- b) Planning applications for development that may cause undue significant harm to such designated Local Green Spaces will be refused.
- c) New development proposals that detract from the visual, historic, recreational, landscape or ecological value of designated Local Green Spaces will not be supported.
- d) Green Spaces designated as having a “High” ranking for wildlife shall be considered Local Wildlife Sites ie. they are areas that hold important, distinctive and/or threatened species or habitats. Such sites should be protected by the implementation of suitable ‘buffer zones’ to minimise the impacts of any nearby developments.
- e) Bye-laws shall be implemented to cover existing and any future Local Nature Reserves.
- f) Existing and future allotment provision will be designated as Assets of Community Value (ACV).

Policy Justification

The areas identified on the map shall be protected through Local Green Space designation. New development will only be allowed within designated Local Green Spaces where very special circumstances, such as an essential utility structure such as drainage pipes or sewer tunnels, can be demonstrated in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

All existing, and all future allotments, will be designated as Assets of Community Value (ACV). These are essential for the local residents of Paddock Wood who do not have access to their own garden space.

Local Wildlife Sites provide refuges for wildlife and show local character and distinctiveness to complement nationally designated sites of wildlife importance. There should be a presumption against development of, or near, these sites, which will harm or put at risk their effectiveness as a wildlife habitat. Any development impacting on any of these sites must include mitigation measures that ensure that the sites effectively maintain their function.

Local Green Space Designations (it should be noted that whilst some of these sites are already protected by existing designations - allotments, ancient woodland etc. - the Neighbourhood Plan wishes to additionally designate them as LGS in case other designations fall or are amended in the future.

The Numbered sites (see map)

- 1 – Whetstead Woods
- 2 – Green space behind Fuggles Close
- 3 – Foalhurst Wood Local Nature Reserve, including Orchard Meadow, Wildflower Meadow and Entrance Carpark
- 4 – Green space at Newton Gardens
- 5 – Green space/rest area on Cogate Road/Yeoman Gardens
- 6 – Green space on Tutsham Way
- 7 – Green space on Cobbs Close
- 8 – Green space on Yeoman Gardens
- 9 – Green space on Ringden Avenue
- 10 – Memorial Playing Field
- 11 – Green space either side of railway bridge
- 12 – Green space/rest area on Mount Pleasant/Maidstone Road
- 13 – Green space/rest area on Commercial Road
- 14 – Green space/rest area behind Wesley Centre
- 15 – Green space on Forest Road
- 16 – Green space on Ashcroft Road
- 17 – Putlands Field
- 18 – Mascalls School playing field

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- 19 – Green space at The Cedars
 - 20 – Green space on Old Kent Road
 - 21 – Allotments on St Andrews Road
 - 22 – Old church yard on Church Road
 - 23 – St Andrews Playing Field
 - 24 – Green space at The Granary
 - 25 – Natural woodland behind Warrington Road/Heather Bank
 - 26 – Green space with ponds on Church Road/Green Lane
 - 27 – Church Road Cemetery, including old orchard south east of cemetery
 - 28 – Green Lane Recreation Ground
 - 29 – Natural wooded path behind Green Lane
 - 30 – Green space on Linnet Avenue
 - 31 – Green Space on left of southern entrance to Green Lane
 - 32 – Green Space on right of southern entrance to Green Lane
 - 33 – Allotments north of Badsell Road
 - 34 – Allotments south of Badsell Road
 - 35 – Green Space south of The Goldings
 - 36 – Green Space hedgerow, shrubs and trees that link sites 25 and 28
 - 37 – Ancient woodland, ponds and meadow to the south east of Mascalls School bounded by Mascalls Court Road and Chantler's Hill (including Public Footpath)
 - 38 – Field, used for horse pasture/grazing, owned by PWTC south of Badsell Road.
 - 39 – Green Space with Mascalls Farm Development
 - 40 – Green Space with Mascalls Grange Development
 - 41 – Green Space with Church Farm Development
 - 42 – the linear route of the historic railway line as afforded protection against future development by TWBC (see refs. In the Heritage section of the Neighbourhood plan).
- (NB. Grateful if Feria could delineate and insert on map)

POLICY G5 - New Developments

All new developments should enhance the setting of the town and minimise impacts on the green infrastructure.

This Plan expects all new developments to protect and enhance existing biodiversity and features of high nature conservation or landscape value, including ancient and veteran trees, species-rich hedgerows, ponds and existing areas of woodland. New developments should ensure connectivity between wildlife areas and green spaces.

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To enable the rural feel to be maintained all new development masterplans should include a green infrastructure strategy, which designates sufficient space within the site to meet obligations linked to ecological requirements, such as retention of mature hedgerows and trees and the creation of wetland habitats, linked to a SuDS implementation plan. Space be designated for informal recreation and children's play as part of the developments green infrastructure strategy. Landscape ecology management plans should be provided for each development with sufficient resources provided to implement, monitor and review the plans.

New developments will include or contribute to the provision of recreational open space in line with all standards set by Kent County Council, and new accessible green space should at least meet or exceed Kent Council's standards for green and play spaces and allotments.

New housing and employment developments will be expected to establish publicly accessible links from development sites to the wider footpath network wherever possible.

It should be ensured that extra areas of green space are created within new developments and opportunities taken to create linkages between sites and address gaps in existing networks by the creation of new rights of way.

All new development proposals should protect and enhance biodiversity by positive actions including:

- a) Protecting designated sites, protected species and ancient or species-rich hedgerows, grasslands and woodlands;
- b) Protecting ancient woodland, ancient/veteran trees and trees of arboricultural value, including adoption of root protection areas commensurate with the size and species of tree. Preserving ecological networks and the movements of flora and fauna;
- c) protecting and promoting the mitigation, preservation, restoration and re-creation of wildlife habitats, and the protection and recovery of priority species;
- d) including bird and bat boxes to be integral to all new buildings;
- e) Using native plants in landscaping schemes;
- f) Planting a minimum of three trees to replace any tree removed;
- g) Adding green roofs to buildings;
- h) Plant wherever possible climbing plants, which can provide shelter and foraging opportunities for wildlife, on all buildings
- i) Creating new habitats especially woodlands, wetlands, unimproved grasslands and wild-flower meadows.
- j) Providing with all fencing holes of a minimum of 13cm x 13cm to allow for the free movement of hedgehogs and amphibians;
- k) Installing tunnels and/or kerbs wherever they may impact on amphibian migration routes; where it not adversely impact upon wildlife, in particular bat roosts or their foraging habitats;

- l) Providing new planting that enhances and supports existing new bats 'commuting routes'.

POLICY G6 - Proposed Garden Developments

The development of residential gardens will be resisted in the following circumstances:

- a) The remaining garden fails to provide useable private space.
- b) The remaining garden size fails to reflect the size and shape of gardens in the immediate area.
- c) Existing trees, shrubs and hedges should be maintained as these add to the biodiversity of an area.
- d) Where a garden is rich in biodiversity an assessment will be required to assess its value, additionally if there are protected species on or adjacent to the site an ecological survey will be required.

POLICY G7 - Mitigation of Light Pollution

- a) In any new development, light pollution shall be minimised by use of the lowest light levels compatible with safety, fittings that emit no upward light, low reflectance ground surfaces and use of spill over lighting where possible.
- b) This policy will be particularly important on development sites near open countryside and woodland.
- c) Lamp columns and other street furniture related to lighting shall be designed to respond in an appropriate manner to the heritage and design context of Paddock Wood.

Policy Justification

Layouts and designs should ensure efficiency of energy and the avoidance of light pollution. Lighting designs and lighting fixtures should limit light pollution and conserve and enhance dark night skies, in accordance with the recognised "Dark Skies Initiatives".

POLICY OBJECTIVE C.

To ensure developments do not increase the risk of flooding without suitable evidence based mitigation of that risk.

Core Policy Statement:

- We will ensure that the flooding risk to Paddock Wood is minimised.

Our reasons for Policies G8

Much of the locality that may be developed (and some areas of the existing built area) is at a risk of flooding. It is important to minimise the risk and put in place mitigation strategies to contain flooding events when they do occur.

POLICY G8

Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)

- a) Any proposal for new development shall require an FRA and shall be subject to the sequential test specified in the NPPF paragraphs 99-104, and in the case of 'more vulnerable' developments (including residential) the exception test. No development shall be permitted against the advice of the Environment Agency.
- b) Development proposals should not increase the flood risk on adjacent areas of the town or up or down stream.
- c) All development proposals should adequately address potential flood risk resulting from rising sea levels, groundwater and rainwater run-off.
- d) Development proposals including roads and paths must increase flood resilience throughout and around the town and surrounding communities. The use of permeable surfacing material for parking areas, hard-standing areas and paths will be required.
- e) Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) should be incorporated into all new development and into any public realm improvements. All SUDS should use appropriate plantings that benefit wildlife and avoid invasive non-natives.
- f) Flood attenuation ponds and new areas of recreational green space required as part of new developments will be expected to be designed to encourage nature conservation and biodiversity.
- g) It is recognised that measures to reduce flood risks can also benefit wildlife and such opportunities should be creatively used to support wildlife conservation wherever possible.

POLICY OBJECTIVE D.

To reduce Paddock Wood's impact on climate change and prepare the community and environment for its impacts.

Core Policy Statement:

We will ensure that Paddock Wood strives to develop in a resource sustainable manner.

Our reasons for Policies G9 - G12

The community expressed strong support for action to address climate change and were positive about finding ways to achieve sustainable development locally. For these reasons, sustainability considerations thread through the Plan and underpin all its policies.

To play its part in moving towards a low carbon future in a changing climate, the community strongly backs improvements to energy efficiency.

We encourage moves towards a low-carbon economy which includes local food production, high standards of energy conservation and the use of renewable energy through:

- a) the application of higher energy standards in new residential and commercial developments
- b) encouraging the use of land within the parish to support food production that meets the needs of local people and markets.

These policies aim to contribute to sustainable development by:

- a) reducing Paddock Wood's contribution to climate change
- b) adapting to the impacts of climate change
- c) protecting and improving Paddock Wood's water and air quality

Footpaths and other routes that reduce car use help to increase the communities overall sustainability.

POLICY G9 - Energy Efficiency

With the exception of the conversion of listed buildings, development proposals will be expected to have a minimum energy efficiency standard equivalent to Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

Proposals for individual and community scale energy from hydro- electricity, solar photovoltaic panels, local biomass facilities, anaerobic digestions and wood fuel products will be supported subject to the following criteria:

- the siting and scale of the proposed development is appropriate to its setting and position in the wider landscape; and
- the proposed development does not create an unacceptable impact on the amenities of local residents; and

- the proposed development does not have an unacceptable impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance.

POLICY G10 - New developments should incorporate design features that promote sustainability.

To help achieve both the sustainability goals of the Neighbourhood Plan and the wider objectives of local, national, and international planning policy (such as the Climate Act 2008) all proposed developments in Paddock Wood should include:

- a) High levels of energy conservation in the construction and use of new buildings.
- b) Integration of rainwater capture and grey water recycling technologies in new buildings.
- c) The use of local building materials
- d) The reuse of rainwater and minimisation of the amount of impermeable ground cover.
- e) The use of sustainable on-site energy sources, where applicable – solar, wind, ground-source heat pumps, biomass etc.
- f) The use of local forms of power to minimise power loss through the national grid.
- g) The promotion of low CO₂ transport options through the design of new buildings.
- h) Electric vehicle charging points in each dwelling or commercial premise.
- i) Space for storage of recycling bins and boxes.
- j) Flexible spaces that support working from home.
- k) Accessibility for those with disabilities and restricted mobility.
- l) Secure cycle storage.

Relevant Strategic Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

NPPF 10: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

POLICY G11

Foot paths and other routes

Policy objective - Footpaths should be maintained, linked and extended, and where possible bridleways and cycle paths should be designated.

To enable a greater appreciation of the local landscape features and interaction with the countryside, the existing network of footpaths should be maintained, upgraded, linked and extended and where possible new bridleways and cycle paths should be designated.

New housing and employment developments will be expected to establish publicly accessible links from sites to the wider footpath network wherever possible.

The existing paths that criss-cross the parish are enjoyed by local residents and visitors alike. Paddock Wood should aim to join Deal and Elham as Kent communities with 'Walkers are Welcome' status.

Footpaths, and bridleways and cycle paths, provide sustainable ways for travelling around the town and out into the countryside. They provide recreation and exercise for residents, wildlife routes and green corridors.

The Plan aims to provide opportunities to integrate any new developments with the existing rights of way network and enhance existing provision by creating new links wherever possible, particularly where there is potential to improve links to the recreational route network, and to make better use of the former Hoppers railway line as a green route.

POLICY G12 - Natural burial

The Neighbourhood Plan would welcome proposals for the provision of a suitably sited Woodland/Green Burial Site within the parish.