



Cranbrook & Sissinghurst

Neighbourhood Plan

Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council

Design Checklist

2020 to 2038

In support of the Neighbourhood Plan
Submission Version July 2022



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DESIGN CHECKLIST

Associated with Chapter 4 of the Submission Version of the Neighbourhood Plan – Heritage & Design

Although this checklist is based on High Weald AONB Design Guide, it is acknowledged that approximately a third of the parish does not lie within the AONB. However, this design checklist list covers the whole parish.

Step 1 Response to the Setting

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Step One

DG1 Response to the Site and Landscape Setting

- New development must be good enough to be seen and not screened from view. Development should not dominate or subsume with important heritage assets remaining legible in the landscape.
- Landscape-led design is key and should encompass and protect the characteristics of the High Weald and its setting: the medieval field patterns, Heritage assets, Conservation Areas, Listed buildings, non-designated assets including topography, watercourses, woodland (and ancient) and hedgerow, access, routes, and adjacent street patterns and building grain.
- New housing development schemes should be influenced by a detailed understanding of the character and function of the landscape of the site and the surrounding area, and the contribution that features make to natural beauty and natural capital.
- The High Weald AONB is a nationally treasured landscape afforded the highest status, exemplifying the very best of distinctive and beautiful places and is worthy of the very best of distinctive and beautiful architecture.
- To promote the highest quality of innovative design and to avoid generic estate developments that do not take account of local distinctiveness.
- There should be early engagement with the local community and local stakeholders to gather local knowledge about the special and distinctive features of the Parish. Enquiry by design workshops should be utilised.
- Local evidence to shape development with consideration of social deprivation issues in Cranbrook and wider affordability issues in the Parish to inform future development.
- Coalescence is to be avoided (between Cranbrook and Hartley, Cranbrook and Wilsley, Cranbrook and Sissinghurst).
- To protect and enhance the historic Conservation Areas of Cranbrook, Wilsley and Sissinghurst.
- To maintain and enhance the townscape setting of Cranbrook town centre, its roofscape, landmark buildings and views.
- To maintain and enhance the surrounding setting of Sissinghurst village centre, its roofscape, landmark buildings and views.
- To prioritise and optimise the use of previously developed land (brownfield sites) for new housing development, in areas which are well related to existing services, which will enhance and improve these areas.
- The Crane Valley is significant to the historic setting of Cranbrook, and it also contributes to recreation and local views. Its proximity to the Conservation Area further strengthens the sense of rurality and tranquillity.
- Dispersed farmsteads surrounded by agricultural land, are one of the oldest characteristic features of the High Weald AONB and its setting. Their conservation and enhancement are fundamental to the objectives of sustainable development SEE POLICY DH1.12



Historic roofscapes should be conserved and enhanced.



Landscape-led design is key and should encompass and protect the characteristics of the High Weald and its setting.



Development should maintain and enhance the townscape setting of Cranbrook town centre, its roofscape, landmark buildings and views.



Development should maintain and enhance the surrounding setting of Cranbrook village centre and its views.

DG2 Connecting to the site

- Settlements in the High Weald are highly permeable. New developments should incorporate access routes, cycle paths and footpaths that people can use and travel through rather than a separate estate that they travel 'into' with cul-de-sacs and dead-ends. This also encourages integration between existing and new residents.
- Visual connectivity should be provided and maintained: including open views to the countryside and the existing settlements beyond, views within and without the settlement centres, and views of landmark buildings.
- Opportunities to create views and vistas by good alignment of buildings to draw the eye in will be required.
- The High Weald is characterised by soft landscaping, grass verges, lush hedgerows and full green canopies breaking up the built form.
- The conservation and enhancement of local biodiversity is a priority.
- Green infrastructure should be consistent with the local landscape character.
- Native-species planting to the boundaries to provide a soft edge to the countryside.
- Uncharacteristic boundary treatments such as active frontages to houses and close-boarded fences to rear garden boundaries should be avoided.



New developments should incorporate access routes, cycle paths and footpaths that people can travel through.



The conservation and enhancement of local biodiversity is a priority.

Step Two

DG3 Layout and Structuring the Site

- Green, blue, and grey infrastructure should be planned for both mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
- Maximise carbon storage through the protection of soils and the retention and provision of native species-rich grassland and trees.
- Provide sustainable drainage.
- Minimum artificial surfacing.
- Incorporate recycling facilities for waste and other resources.

Street layout

- To be linked to topography, existing field patterns and routes and it should not be of a generic estate character and car dependent.
- To promote healthy places, designing for pedestrian and accessible use should be promoted throughout the town to help create a welcoming and safe environment.
- The informal and rural character of footpaths and cycleways are in keeping with their surroundings. The Sissinghurst to Bedgebury cycle route and pathway is to be promoted as is the link through the Brick Kiln Farm/Corn Hall site to the Co-op supermarket.
- Modern or generic approaches to highways design are harmful in the High Weald AONB. Roundabouts are uncharacteristic as are overly wavy streets.
- A clear street hierarchy to be deployed and not a homogenous approach.
- Front curtilages in Cranbrook and Sissinghurst are typically enclosed by small hedgerows, low walls, picket fences (not always painted white) and railings. New development should follow this local characteristic.
- Twittens (alleyways) should be used as accessible pathways promoting connectivity and access to gardens and parking courts.
- Public open spaces should reinforce the local landscape character and sense of place and also enhance wildlife and habitats.
- Wildflower meadows, community orchards and allotments, green spaces to promote local arts and crafts and local food products should be included as multi-functional green spaces.

Parking layout

- Well-designed parking solutions could include parallel non-continuous on-street parking, single-width on-plot parking to the sides of buildings, small-scale parking courtyards with twitten-style lane access and open timber-framed car barns within courtyards.



Front curtilages of new development should incorporate soft landscape planting, fence details and be strong and secure.



Public open spaces should reinforce the local landscape character and sense of place and enhance wildlife and habitats.



Twittens (alleyways) should be used as accessible pathways promoting connectivity and access to gardens and parking courts.



Community orchards and allotments should be incorporated as multi-functional green spaces.

DG4 Using Buildings to Define Streets and Spaces

- Buildings in the Parish should be positioned to create a strong and positive frontage aligned with historic routeways, solar orientation and topography, and sometimes arranged to form the edges of courtyards accessed off the street, referencing historic farmsteads in the area.
- New buildings should be positioned to define and reinforce the local historic settlement pattern.
- Frontages should be permeable with twittens and pathways leading from the street through to parking courts and other development and to footpaths and the countryside beyond.



Buildings with a strong and positive frontage.



Buildings with a strong and positive frontage.



Permeable frontages with twittens and pathways leading from the street through to parking courts and other development.



New buildings positioned to define and reinforce the local historic settlement pattern.

DG5 The Right Built Form

- The strengths and distinctive characteristics of the historic settlements urban cores provide valuable information about the local vernacular architecture, the use of materials and detailing, and can help establishing the character and place-making of new development. It is essential that a rigorous analysis of local grain, texture and pattern take place to underpin future design and to avoid generic homogeneity.

Scale, Form and Massing

The Conservation Areas of Cranbrook, Sissinghurst and Wilsley have a very rich architectural heritage with a high concentration of (318) listed buildings, designated and non-designated buildings and heritage assets.

- Cranbrook has a densely built urban core and historically follows a cranked linear row development, in addition its rural setting provides an important part of its character.
- It follows a hierarchical core grouping with the larger cloth halls and merchants' houses surrounded by terraced cottages in small groups or rows, moving out to clusters of smaller scale detached cottages. There are notably few villas, or semi-detached (Victorian or later) house types in the Conservation Areas.
- Roofscapes in Cranbrook are typically 2 or 3 storeys and are distinctive with hipped or half-hipped roofs, dormers, end gables, tall chimney stacks and cat slide roofs being typical forms. Varying roof orientation, eaves height and angle can add variation, although care should be taken to avoid a 'catalogue selection box' approach.
- Roof pitches in clay tiled roofs are usually between 47.5 – 50 degrees angles. Higher pitched roofs occasionally have rooms in the roof. Flat roofs are rarely seen in the local built environment.
- To create living and working environments that complement the rich heritage. Living above shop premises in the town centre is an efficient use of residential living space and also brings benefits such as vibrancy, mix of people, social interaction, and security to the town centre through passive surveillance.
- Repetitious use of similar type, style in mass, scale and form stamped over a site is to be avoided. Contemporary architecture, well executed, can create innovative interpretations of vernacular buildings, tying them in to the High Weald sense of place by referencing local patterns of development and building forms. This should not be pastiche architecture but the result of rigorous analysis by architects to find interesting and innovative ways of interpreting the local vernacular. Reference to local crafts and skills should be made to aid the design.
- Apartments and Flats above Garages are incongruous forms in High Weald and are being used increasingly for the provision of affordable housing and parking. They need careful design.
- The dispersed farmstead form should be utilised to address further opportunities of design and the TWBC's Farmstead Assessment Guidance SPD should be referenced.



Living and working environments should complement the rich heritage.



Roofscares in Cranbrook are typically 2 or 3 storeys and are distinctive with hipped or half-hipped roofs, dormers, end gables.



Variation in building style, mass, scale, and form creates visual interest.



Living above shop premises in the town centre is an efficient use of residential living space.

Integrating Parking into the Design

Well-designed car-parking is a critical part of good design, and a challenge in the design process. There are a range of parking solutions that work well in the Parish, and some that are not appropriate. The quality of the streets and lanes in the area are harmed when parked cars are allowed to dominate, but that doesn't mean they cannot be part of the street scene. Properly integrated on-street parking is convenient, slows traffic, and helps avoid nuisance parking. Charging points for electric vehicles should also be provided that are available and convenient for residents to use.

To be effective, car-parking needs to be:

- Adequate – as a rural area, car dependency in Cranbrook and Sissinghurst is high, particularly in more remote areas less served by public transport. Provision should also be made for commercial vehicles of land-based workers.
- Conveniently located – as near to front doors as possible, or in pleasant small courtyards, to encourage use and avoid 'anti-social' parking in public areas. Visitor parking should be properly distributed around the site.

Parking Solutions

- On-street parking arranged parallel to the street edge can be acceptable, and typical of the existing situation in many High Weald settlements but should be broken up to allow crossing of the street, including by those with disabilities.
- On-plot parking – If this is to be used, it should usually be to the sides of buildings. Parking in between buildings, set well back behind the building line, softens the impact of parking when looking along the street.
- Double drive-ways serving adjacent dwellings should be avoided since they introduce wide expanses of hardstanding into the street scene. Instead, plots/driveways should be separated by hedges to help green the street. A proliferation of small, single detached garage buildings are untypical and should be avoided.
- Stretches of end-on, front-of-plot parking should be avoided as it clutters the street scene with both cars and hardstanding and loses the closely defined street enclosure. Forecourt parking in front of terraces is not typical of the character of the Parish and will not be suitable. A wider fronted terrace building module allows some on-street parallel parking instead.
- Flats over Garages (FOGs) can be useful design tools to provide shared access through the undercroft to small parking courts beyond, allowing for more continuous street frontage. A single FOG at the back of a parking court can be a rather soulless prospect, and should be avoided, though a group of them can be used to create a mews-style courtyard.
- Parking courtyards can be effective to serve terraces or mews, but must be small-scale, usually serving no more than five dwellings, and well overlooked. Where possible, these areas should be defined by buildings bordering the

space, arranged to animate the courtyard, or bounded by appropriate planting, rather than enclosed by bleak runs of close-board fences to back gardens.

- Car barns within courtyards can be well used and offer protection from the elements, and can reference courtyard typologies in the Parish, which often feature open-fronted timber framed cattle sheds.
- Courtyards should be accessed from the principal street via 'twitten' style lanes between buildings. Courtyards open to the street should be avoided. There should not be excessive distance between parking courts and the front doors of the properties they serve; they should be accessible by a clear and convenient route.



Flats over garages can be useful design tools to provide shared access through the undercroft to small parking courts beyond.



On-plot parking should usually be to the sides of buildings, behind the building line, to soften the impact of parking when looking along the street.



On-street parking arranged parallel to the street edge should be broken up to allow crossing of the street.

Step Three

DG7 Building Appearance and Local Details

The use of local materials and details is a key factor in creating housing developments that are distinctive and genuinely 'of the place'. Many of the proposed materials in new developments are factory made and artificial and are contributing to a dilution of local distinctiveness that is harmful to the High Weald.

- New developments should use small clay tiles with natural camber which give characteristic undulations of roofs and elevations. Bricks, wall and roof tiles are often replaced, with concrete substitutes and are unsuitable as they do not weather or have the hue of locally manufactured materials.
- The High Weald Colour Study provides advice on what colours can be used in new development to help integration into the landscape successfully.
- Slate roof tiles (historically later) should be used sparingly.
- Full height brick buildings are not common in the High Weald.
- Design detailing to elements such as eaves, porches, and brick lintels should reflect the local vernacular. Porches are usually simple canopies either with flat or open gables, brick arch over lintels -not a flat soldier course.
- Elevations comprising a brick ground floor with a first floor clad in weatherboarding or tiles are common. To reflect local patterns, the cladding should extend around the entire first floor rather than being applied the front elevation only.
- Timber frames and weatherboarded cladding are ubiquitous in the High Weald and should be referenced by new development. Timber weatherboarding is highly characteristic in the Parish and is often painted white. Black weatherboarding (tarred) is also seen. High quality timber weather boarding (an often be left natural and oiled) or the use of fibre cement boarding can be used as part of a contemporary architecture approach. but UPVC boarding is not acceptable.
- Small pane wooden-framed casement windows of various sizes are common, with bays and dormers being a distinctive feature in Medieval buildings as well as those built in the Arts & Craft style. Larger-paned sash wooden-framed windows are evident in Georgian, Victorian, some Edwardian buildings, where brick arched lintels are also a typical feature.
- The use of UPVC windows and Velux type rooflights is to be discouraged in any development or alteration works within the Conservation Areas. Where used, attention should be paid to typical local vernacular detailing to achieve a satisfactory appearance.
- Contemporary barn and other agricultural building conversions include both double-height wooden-framed windows to replace the original barn doors and small single-pane wooden-framed windows.
- Painted wooden doors are common and vary in style to include tongue-and-grooved, panelled and glazed panel sections, some with fan lights. Door furniture is typically cast iron or brass.

- New buildings are to use local construction materials and reflect local building traditions and crafts with materials obtained from local sustainable sources to aid the local economy.
- Detailed attention should be paid to rear of buildings for example with the incorporation of distinctive cat-slide roofs, instead of plain rear elevations. Wall cladding and windows should be of the same quality as the front of properties.



Elevations comprising a first floor clad in weather- boarding or tiles are common.



Small pane wooden-framed casement windows of various sizes are common.



Painted wooden doors are common and vary in style to include tongue-and-grooved, panelled, and glazed panel sections, some with fan lights.



Timber frames and weatherboarded cladding are ubiquitous in the High Weald and should be referenced by new development.

DG8 Sustainable Building Design

To build environmentally-friendly homes:

- Sustainable design principles should be incorporated to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to reduce ecological footprint.
- Minimise the need for energy and water consumption. Support water efficiency including rainwater harvesting and recycling.
- Sunlight and energy efficiency should be considered as an integral part of the layout through passive solar design and natural ventilation systems. High Weald AONB supports small scale Passivhaus development that would ensure that housing will meet future energy-efficient targets.
- The emphasis must be to build environmentally friendly homes now that do not need retrofitting in the near future (at a current estimated cost of approx. £20,000 per house).
- To utilise sustainable construction methods and minimise waste.
- Use sustainable and renewable natural materials such as clay tiles, bricks and timber in preference to concrete and plastic based products.
- To use materials from renewable resources such as locally harvested timber to support the sustainable management of woodland and reduce transport costs.
- The promotion of new sustainable features like community allotments and gardens. During the Covid-19 lockdown allotments have become an important place of mental wellbeing and the physical activity of gardening.
- Measures should be taken to address increasing air pollution due to increase in car use in the Parish. TWBC has noted that the development and rural nature of settlements will mean increased vehicle use which ultimately will lead to a deterioration of air quality in Cranbrook and Hawkhurst and cumulatively across the borough.



Sustainable design principles incorporated to contribute to climate change mitigation.



Use sustainable and renewable natural materials such as clay tiles, bricks, and timber.



Use of materials from renewable sources including timber, which is locally sourced, where possible.

DG9 Ancillary and Storage

- Cycle stores, waste and recycling bin, log, water recycling stores must be well designed, unobtrusive, and integrated in order to avoid visual street clutter especially as the use of recycling containers increases. Preferably these should be constructed using locally sourced timber and or other materials.



Bin stores should be constructed using locally sourced timber and or other materials.



Stores must be unobtrusive and integrated.

DG10 Detailing the Street

- The materials palette should be simple and help avoid suburbanisation of the locality.
- Limited use of grey asphalt surfacing for vehicular access roads is recommended. Parking areas should be surfaced with permeable materials such as gravel (paving). Footpaths should be in materials such as brick, self-bind hoggin or resin bound gravel.
- Kerbs should be avoided; demarcation should be minimal.
- The High Weald promotes Dark Skies and recommends measures to minimise light pollution, glare from windows and to reduce energy use.
- Design of colour temperature of bulbs – appropriate yellow/warm not blue/cold.



Footpaths should be surfaced in materials such as brick, self-bind hoggin or resin bound gravel.



Warm bulb colour temperatures.



The materials palette should be simple and help avoid suburbanisation of the locality.



Limited curbs with minimal demarcation.

DG11 Reinforcing Local Planting Character and Habitats

- The protection of Ancient Woodland needs to be enhanced with buffer zones increased to 50m. Similar protections to ancient and veteran trees, woodland habitats, hedgerows, and grasslands need to be enforced as they are under increasing threat from housing development.
- Local wildlife and their habitats to be retained and protected; and to strengthen and improve wildlife corridors and green spaces.
- Ubiquitous monocultural 'estate' planting should be avoided. Reference to the detailed planting guide for the High Weald is recommended.
- Locally appropriate planting schemes should be adopted in public realms and boundaries to dwellings.
- Front garden hedges created from hornbeam, beech and hazel to maintain a locally distinctive, semi-rural character.
- High Weald native flowers – bluebells, wood anemones etc are an integral part of the local area's ecosystems and should be included in planting schemes.
- All plantings to be locally-sourced disease free.



A locally appropriate planting scheme in the boundary of a dwelling.



Front garden hedges maintain a locally distinct, semi-rural character.



Protection of local wildlife and their habitats such as roadside verges.



High Weald native species should be included in planting schemes.