

Village Design Statements Guidance Note

December 2016

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS (VDS)

THE PRODUCTION OF VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS (AND TOWN DESIGN STATEMENTS) AND THE PROCEDURE FOR THEIR ADOPTION AS A SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT BY TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

1 Purpose

1.1 The VDS should primarily set out what high quality design means for the village. It should provide a record of local distinctiveness, by describing the qualities and character of the village and make recommendations for design guidance. In this way it will set the context for the design of new development, of whatever scale. The intention should be to manage change and how it is carried out, so that it is in harmony with its setting and where possible enhances the local environment. The VDS should describe character of the village as a whole in terms of:

- countryside and landscape setting;
- form of the settlement; and
- details of buildings and spaces.

1.2 A VDS is not however about whether or where future development should take place, this being the role of the Borough Local Plan. It should rather address aspects such as details of the design and materials.

2 Village Design Statement Content

2.1 In order to identify local distinctiveness and recommend design guidance, the VDS should concentrate upon providing a well-structured assessment of the character and design elements of the village and its setting. You should therefore ensure that the VDS satisfactorily addresses the following tests;

- Does it record and describe the unique character, design and local distinctiveness of the village's built and natural environment?
- Do the guidelines for development refer to (and are aided by) any description of village history and character?
- Will it assist in achieving a higher standard of design and informing the decisions of developers?

- Does it provide design recommendations, under the following broad topics?
 - Village setting & landscape, including views;
 - Settlement pattern;
 - Open & other spaces;
 - Building form eg. height, shape etc.;
 - Materials and fenestration & chimney details;
 - Streets & street furniture;
 - Trees, hedges & other landscape features;
 - Boundary features eg. walls, fences, etc.

- Does it include an explanation of exactly what is intended by the design recommendations and how they should be achieved in practice?

- Does it relate to the village as a whole including the immediate surroundings which are important in contributing to aspects of its setting? (The extent of any coverage beyond this, e.g. the whole parish, is for individual VDS determination).

- Are complementary links made to (and guidelines accord with) existing planning policies and guidance adopted by the Council e.g. Borough Local Plan and Conservation Area documents? A Conservation Area document is likely however to only cover part of the village, whilst the VDS should include the whole.

- Is it compatible with the Borough Local Plan?

- Does it avoid the use of phrases such as “must be”, “must not”, “no more” “no development” etc? Alternatives include, “wherever possible”, “should” etc.

3 Village Design Statement Format & Illustrative Material

- 3.1 This in general, is for your own determination, although A4 portrait format would be the most suitable for ease of use. The ‘standard’ should similarly be a local decision. A glossy colour document may be produced, but black and white is equally suitable. The descriptive content and resulting design guidelines are the key element in giving the VDS value. Copies of completed VDS undertaken elsewhere are available from the Council, as general examples of content and presentation. All adopted VDS’s are available on the Council's website.

- 3.2 The inclusion of photographs and sketches to illustrate the description of character and the design guidelines is desirable. The Council shares the copyright of aerial photographs taken from directly overhead at a approximate scale of 1:20,000. These should therefore be available for inclusion if desired, subject to the necessary copyright warning being attached.
- 3.3 An Ordnance Survey (OS) map of the village, and also the parish as a whole if desired, would be useful in expressing any geographically based features or design recommendations. The Council can provide maps to support the VDS preparation process. The Council's licence does not however allow for maps to be provided for the inclusion in a VDS document. The incorporation of a map will require a specific licence for the VDS document to be obtained from OS, with the fee dependent upon the map size and the number of copies to be printed. A form is available from OS for this purpose.

4 Community Involvement

- 4.1 A central part of the VDS process is to give opportunities for as many of the local community as possible to contribute, and it should reflect the views of the village as a whole. The preparation procedure should enable wide community involvement and build towards a document which reflects local consensus. This is crucial in terms of its adoption as an SPD, since the weight accorded to the VDS will be increased if it has been the subject of public consultation and participation.
- 4.2 In considering the VDS for adoption as an SPD the following brief information should be available to support its submission:
- How the VDS Co-ordinating Group formed.
 - The extent and type of publicity for the project.
 - The extent and opportunities for community participation and involvement during the various project stages.
 - The extent of further local consultation and the availability of a draft VDS in the village for public comments.
 - The extent of liaison and consultation with Borough Council planning officers during its preparation.
 - That the final draft of the VDS has the formal support and endorsement of the Parish Council.

5 Preparation Process

- 5.1 Preparations should be in line with the national guidance on VDS “Village Design-Making Character... in New Development¹”, which is available on the Council’s website.
- 5.2 Whilst the VDS should be led by the local community, you are strongly encouraged to ensure that the Council are informed of progress and given the opportunity to provide comments.
- 5.3 A degree of Council input is necessary in order to ensure that the final form of the VDS is in keeping with established local and national planning policy and can therefore be considered suitable for adoption as an SPD by the Council as Local Planning Authority. It is emphasised however that the ownership of the VDS remains with the local community and should reflect their views.
- 5.4 The Council will provide the following levels of support;
 1. Officers will be available to provide guidance and advice, and will attend workshops or open days as an observer, when possible.
 2. Copies of the VDS at first, second and final draft stages may be forwarded to the Borough Council, in order that any potential difficulties can be addressed at an early stage by giving comments and advice on the specific planning content and wording of development guidelines. Following internal consultation the Borough Council will make best endeavours to aim to respond within four weeks.
 3. Financial assistance is also available via the Test Valley Community Planning Grant:
 - £1,000 for parishes with a population over 5,000
 - £750 for parishes with a population over 1,000 but under 5,000
 - £500 for parishes with a population under 1,000.

For further details see

<http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/resident/planningandbuildingcontrol/planningpolicy/neighbourhood-planning/community-planning-grant-scheme/>

¹ Parts 1 and 2 (CCP501), 1996, Countryside Commission (now Natural England)

- 5.5 An application for funding can be submitted at any time during the VDS preparation process for costs that are still to be met. It will be for parishes to determine how they wish to apply any funding that is available and additional spending above the grant level is for the parish to determine and finance. The programme for producing a VDS should be agreed between the Council and the parish.
- 5.6 Costs may be dependent upon the number of copies to be printed, although this is difficult to estimate the requirement in general terms and this in part is for the parish to determine. This can be a matter for consideration with the Borough Council once a VDS is to be considered for adoption.

6 Adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document

- 6.1 The adoption of the VDS by the Council as an SPD will be considered where it is in a form which would contribute to a higher quality of development and is in compliance with local and national planning policy. This will enable weight to be given to the VDS in the consideration of planning applications in terms of village design issues and maintaining local character; as it will be treated as a material consideration and part of the Council's planning policies.
- 6.2 The VDS will be first considered by Council's Cabinet for adoption as SPD before being recommended to the next Council meeting for consideration for formal adoption.
- 6.3 An officer will prepare a report which assesses the VDS in this context with a recommendation. Should it be adopted then it will form part of the Borough Council's planning policy for the village/parish.

7 Review of existing VDS

- 7.1 Once adopted, a VDS should be in a form which allows it to be appropriate for planning purposes for many years. In the long term should changed circumstances lead to a potential review being considered, then this can be an issue for discussion between the Parish Council and the Council.
- 7.2 If a review is required for an element of the VDS, these should be highlighted using the existing document so that the changes can be easily identified by consultees and the Council, but the opportunity should be allowed for representations to be made on the VDS as a whole.

8 Further Information

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