

Wiltshire Council

Southern Area Planning Committee

14 February 2013

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the contents of, and approve as material planning considerations, the following Village Design Statements (VDSs):
 - Durrington
 - Winterslow
 - Swallowcliffe

A copy of each of these VDSs is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Background

2. In 1996 the Countryside Commission (now Natural England) launched the 'Design in the Countryside' initiative, and produced advisory packs to help villages understand the concept, process and method of producing a VDS.
3. VDSs are prepared by local communities. They offer a framework for engaging local people in constructive debate about defining the special character of their village, as a basis for ensuring that new development in their area fits its surroundings and is in keeping with that character. The VDS can help everyone involved in a development to understand local views and perceptions at the outset of the design process.
4. This helps new buildings to be designed in a way that is more likely to gain local support, rather than generate opposition. VDSs provide a tool to help manage long-term change, not prevent it.
5. A VDS contains a descriptive analysis of the relationship between landscape, settlement patterns and buildings. From the survey analysis, the VDS identifies principles to be applied to new developments such as the design of buildings and the spaces between them. The document should benefit local people, developers, new occupants and planners.

6. The Localism Act has provided a renewed impetus to community-led planning and documents such as VDSs play an important part in helping to deliver the Government's Localism agenda.
7. This paper considers and assesses three VDS, all of which fall within southern Wiltshire. The statutory development plan for south Wiltshire is the South Wiltshire Core Strategy which was adopted in February 2012. This includes saved Local Plan policies and provides the policy context for considering development within the villages in south Wiltshire.

Village Design Statement Protocol

8. The Council's approach towards endorsing VDSs is to approve them as material planning considerations in the consideration of planning applications. The rationale for this is set out in the Council's Village Design Statement Protocol attached at **Appendix 2**.
9. The Protocol also sets out the validation checklist that will be used to appraise each VDS to ensure it is fit for purpose and appropriate for the Council to approve as a material planning consideration. This checklist is based on the Countryside Commission's (now Natural England) advisory guidance referred to above and is set out in brief below:

Does the VDS:

- describe the distinctive character of the village and the surrounding countryside;
- show how character can be identified at three levels:
 - the landscape setting of the village,
 - the shape of the settlement,
 - the nature of the buildings themselves;
- draw up design principles based on the distinctive local character.

Has the process of developing the Village Design Guidance met the following objectives:

- worked in partnership with the local planning authority in the context of existing local planning policy and to influence future policies;
- been developed, researched, written and edited by local people? Is it representative of the views of the village as a whole? Has the process involved a wide section of the village community in its production?

Summary of Appraisals

10. Each VDS has been appraised against each of these objectives and the detailed results of each VDS assessment are presented in the templates at **Appendix 3**.

11. To summarise, whilst each of these VDSs is presented in a different way, with some providing more detail than others, all provide a comprehensive description of the village in question and its environs, and identifies its key characteristics. All three of the VDSs present clear guidance to developers as to what should be respected and acknowledged by new buildings in order to help preserve the local scene. Good use of pictorial evidence has been used in all. Therefore, all three of the VDSs appraised are considered to be fit for purpose.
12. The Village Design Statements that are being considered all represent a point in time and so it is inevitable that there are some references in the VDSs that are now superseded. These references are set out in more detail in the attached templates, but relate to historic references to Salisbury District Council and references to the VDS being adopted as SPG/SPD, as at the time of preparation this had been the approach of the former District Councils in Wiltshire.
13. To address these anomalies, it is proposed to add an addendum at the beginning of each VDS in the interest of expediency, rather than having to amend each VDS individually.
14. The proposed addendum reads as follows:

This VDS was produced at a point in time. Therefore, there may be references in it that are now superseded. This includes references to the former Salisbury District Council and the Salisbury District Local Plan. The Salisbury District Local Plan has been superseded by the South Wiltshire Core Strategy, albeit a number of Local Plan policies are saved in the Core Strategy. Similarly, there may be references to policies in the South Wiltshire Core Strategy that at the time of writing were still emerging. However, the VDS is still considered to be compliant with local policy on design matters. Finally, any references to the VDSs being adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance or as a Supplementary Planning Document are also now superseded, as all VDSs are now approved as material planning considerations by the Council instead.

The VDS has been subject to a recent review by officers and considered up-to-date and relevant, and has subsequently been approved at the Southern Area Planning Committee on 14 February 2013 as a material planning consideration.

Legal Implications

15. No implications other than as already explained in this report. Once a Village Design Guidance has been approved by Committee, full regard must be had to its content in decision making.

Conclusions

16. Subject to the addition of the proposed addendum, it is considered that all the VDSs considered under this report are fit for purpose and should be approved as material planning considerations.

Recommendations

17. It is recommended that, subject to the addition of the proposed addendum, the Village Design Statement for:

- (i) **Durrington**
- (ii) **Winterslow**
- (iii) **Swallowcliffe**

be approved as a material planning consideration for the purposes of development management.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Village Design Statements for:
Durrington
Winterslow
Swallowcliffe

Appendix 2: Village Design Statement Protocol

Appendix 3: Village Design Statement Validation Checklists for:
Durrington
Winterslow
Swallowcliffe