

**WILTSHIRE COUNCIL**

**EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**3 APRIL 2014**

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**THE ALTONS**  
**VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To consider the contents of, and approve as a material consideration, the Village Design Statement (VDS) for The Altons.

A copy of this VDS is attached at **Appendix 1**.

**Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. Approval of the VDS will contribute towards the outcome for everyone in Wiltshire to live in a high quality environment.

**Background**

3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.

8. This paper considers and assesses the VDS for The Altons which fall within east Wiltshire. The statutory development plan for east Wiltshire is the Kennet Local Plan 2011. This includes saved Local Plan policies and provides the policy context for considering development within the villages in east Wiltshire. This plan will be superseded by the Wiltshire Core Strategy once it is adopted, expected sometime in 2014.

### **Village Design Statement Protocol**

9. The Council's approach towards endorsing VDSs is to approve them as material considerations in the determination of planning applications. The rationale for this is set out in the Council's Village Design Statement Protocol, attached at **Appendix 2**.
10. The Protocol sets out the validation checklist that is used to appraise each VDS to ensure it is fit for purpose and appropriate for the Council to approve as a material 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 Appraisal**

11. The VDS has been appraised against each of these objectives and the results of this assessment are presented in the template at **Appendix 3**.
12. To summarise, this VDS provides a comprehensive description of The Altons and their environs. Throughout the VDS, a detailed description of the local character is provided and design principles are provided throughout the document based on this character.

### **Safeguarding Considerations**

13. There are no known implications at this time.

### **Public Health Implications**

14. There are no public health implications.

### **Environmental Impact of the Recommendation**

15. The VDS provides design guidance to help inform the determination of planning applications in The Altons.

### **Risk Assessment**

16. There are no key risks identified in relation to the decision being considered.

### **Financial Implications**

17. There are no financial implications to the Council at this time.

### **Options Considered**

18. Approval of the VDS by committee gives the document weight in decision making. It will complement existing planning policy and guidance, strengthening the Council's position when advising or negotiating on design and allows local views to be taken into consideration early in the process.

### **Legal Implications**

19. Once a VDS has been approved by Committee, full regard must be had to its content in decision making.

### **Conclusion**

20. It is considered that The Altons VDS complies with the Council's protocol and should be approved as a material consideration to inform decisions on planning applications.

### **Recommendation**

21. It is recommended that the VDS for The Altons be approved as a material consideration for the purposes of development management.

### **ALISTAIR CUNNINGHAM**

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

None

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: The Altons Village Design Statement

Appendix 2: Village Design Statement Protocol

Appendix 3: Village Design Statement Validation Checklist – The Altons