



Guidance Note for Village Design Statements: Additional guidance from Natural England, the Wildlife Trust and Historic England

Natural Environment - Advice from Natural England

Landscape

Landscape Character Assessments (LCA) provide a context for looking at possible changes and for seeking to ensure that the countryside character is protected and enhanced. Local area LCAs¹ and those for protected landscapes (where applicable), should be cross-referenced as they are a useful tool to ensure that the Village Design Statement makes a positive contribution in terms of design, form and location, to the character and functions of the landscape, and avoids any unacceptable impacts. Following the principles of LCA at a local scale helps to capture the significant features, style and patterns of settlement and setting within the landscape and key views in and around the village.

Natural England's suite of 159 National Character Area (NCA) profiles² are guidance documents which include a description of the key ecosystem services provided in each character area and how these benefit people, wildlife and the economy. They identify potential opportunities for positive environmental change and provide the best available information and evidence as a context for local decision making and action.

Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Design

Green infrastructure is a term used to refer to the living network of green spaces, water and other environmental features in both urban and rural areas. It is often used in an urban context to cover the benefits including space for recreation, access to nature, flood storage and urban cooling to support climate change mitigation, food production, wildlife habitats and health & well-being improvements provided by trees, rights of way, parks, gardens, road verges, allotments, cemeteries, woodlands, rivers and wetlands.

Green infrastructure is also relevant in a rural context, where it might additionally refer to the use of farmland, woodland, wetlands or other natural features to provide services such as flood protection, carbon storage or water purification. Green infrastructure maintains critical ecological links between town and country.

The VDS could usefully promote high quality and multifunctional green infrastructure. Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance³ provides an introduction to delivering green infrastructure at the micro and neighbourhood scale through features such as street trees, green facades and green roofs, where consistent with the local character. These features

¹ Daventry Landscape Study – Part A Landscape Character Appraisal available from:
<https://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/living/planning-policy/part-2-local-plan/evidence-base/?p=3>

² National Character Area profiles available from:
<https://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/living/planning-policy/part-2-local-plan/evidence-base/?p=3>

³ Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance available from:
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35033>



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can be extremely important in increasing ecological connectivity between green spaces, particularly when footpaths and green corridors are not feasible.

Biodiversity

The VDS should reference designated wildlife sites and other biodiversity assets in the immediate area, such as protected species, ecological networks, habitats and green spaces. Design guidelines should respect, and where possible, enhance the town or village's local and neighbouring biodiversity resources. The Town and Country Planning Association has produced a practical and design orientated Biodiversity by Design guide⁴ to achieving high levels of biodiversity in developments, which may be of use. When preparing the VDS, the local Wildlife Trust and local environmental record centre⁵ should be consulted, and local and national Biodiversity Action Plans should be referenced where relevant.

Community Engagement

As an organisation, Natural England is committed to involving the community in its work, ensuring that local people and the organisations that support them are consulted at the earliest possible stage. The organisation is keen to see this principle adopted as part of the village design statement formulation process so that local people have a chance to contribute to the development of the statements from the outset.

Natural Environment - Advice from The Wildlife Trust

The Wildlife Trust has issued the following general guidance on biodiversity issues in VDSs:

- Consider providing details of existing natural assets, including Local Wildlife Sites and Pocket Parks.
- Refer to the relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, particularly Section 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- Refer to the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document for Daventry District 2017⁶. This provides guidance to developers on how biodiversity can be incorporated into the planning process.

⁴ TCPA Biodiversity By Design guide available from:
<http://urbed.coop/sites/default/files/Biodiversity%2520by%2520design.pdf>

⁵ Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre: <http://northantsbrc.org.uk/>

⁶ Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document for Daventry District available from:
<https://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/living/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents-and-guidance/>



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- The latest version of the Northamptonshire County Biodiversity Action Plan provides details about target delivery⁷.
- Consider green infrastructure network provision delivery and adaptations to climate change.
- Consider Natural England's ANGST guidelines (in respect of Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards)
- Consider participating in the Northamptonshire Nature Conservation Churchyard Scheme⁸.
- Retention, in situ, of both standing and fallen deadwood can be of real benefit to a wide variety of different species of wildlife, especially birds and invertebrates.
- Given the current on-going health issues in respect of the native Ash tree, consider choosing other different local native broadleaf tree species.
- Whilst the planting of native species is welcomed and supported, an acceptable alternative may include some non-native species that benefit wildlife (source of pollen, nectar, nuts, berries and seeds).
- Guidelines for open spaces and woodlands should extend beyond retention of valued features to include enhancement, extension, linkages and appropriate/sympathetic management.

⁷ Northamptonshire County Biodiversity Action Plan 2015-2020 available from:
<https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/archaeology-biodiversity-and-landscape/documents/PDF%20Documents/Northamptonshire%20BAP%202015-2020.pdf>

⁸ Northamptonshire Nature Conservation Churchyard Scheme available from:
<https://www.wildlifebcn.org/wildlife/wider-countryside/churchyards>



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Historic Environment - Advice from Historic England

If the area covered by the Village Design Statement contains designated heritage assets any guidelines should safeguard these assets.

Groups may find it useful to speak to staff at the Historic Environment Record⁹ who should be able to provide advice of designated heritage assets and locally important buildings, archaeological remains and landscapes. Some Historic Environment records may also be available online via the Heritage Gateway¹⁰. It may also be useful to involve local voluntary groups such as the local Civic Society, local history groups, building preservation trusts etc. in the production of your VDS.

Historic England has produced additional guidance¹¹ on how heritage can best be incorporated into a VDS. This signposts a number of other documents which your community might find useful in helping to identify what it is about your area which makes it distinctive and how you might go about ensuring that the character of the area is retained¹².

If you have any questions regarding the advice contained in this document please contact the Local Strategy Team on 01327 302559 or via email: planningpolicy@daventrydc.gov.uk

⁹ Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record:

<https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/archives-and-heritage/northamptonshire-archives/research-and-history/Pages/historic-environment-record.aspx>

¹⁰ Heritage Gateway: <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

¹¹ Historic England guidance on community led plans available from:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/improve-your-neighbourhood/community-led-plans/>