



Guidance Note for Village Design Statements

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What is a village design statement?

Preparing a village design statement or VDS is one way that a Parish Council can influence new development at a settlement in order to protect its distinctive character. Subject to the VDS being fit for purpose it will be adopted by the District Council as a supplementary planning document (SPD), which means that it has the status of guidance and will be a ‘material consideration’ when considering planning applications. It can also be used by residents when considering changes to their properties, extensions, boundary treatments etc. regardless of whether planning permission is required.

A VDS will typically describe the qualities and characteristics of a village that are valued by the local community and can cover a range of issues concerned with visual character such as building styles, materials, boundary treatments, open spaces and views. The VDS should support sustainable development and be regarded as a positive document that can influence the character and visual appearance of development so that it respects its setting.

What cannot be covered by a village design statement?

A VDS does not form part of the development plan for the District and it cannot:

- Allocate land for development
- State what type of development should take place
- Designate Local Green Spaces
- Protect local services/amenities

If the community is interested in any of the issues listed above, a neighbourhood plan may be more appropriate. However, they are much more resource intensive and take longer to prepare, get adopted (‘made’) by the District Council and once adopted, they form part of the Development Plan. If you are interested please contact a member of the Local Strategy Team on 01327 302559 or via email: planningpolicy@daventrydc.gov.uk

How does a Parish Council prepare a village design statement?

VDSs are relatively straightforward to prepare, they are usually led by a Parish Council and require a core group of volunteers. It is important that the VDS reflects local community views, the characteristics and features they value most and contains guidelines that will protect and enhance them.

The following table presents a step by step guide to producing a VDS and some of the stages are discussed in more detail in the following section:

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Step 1	Suggested actions
Parish Council agrees to prepare a VDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the District Council for advice • Form a working group of interested residents
Step 2	Suggested actions
Identify issues for the VDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify specific issues for your village(s) • Raise awareness of the VDS through exhibitions, posters, parish website, social media etc. • Gather views on the issues identified via consultation with the local community e.g. through a questionnaire, workshop etc
Step 3	Suggested actions
Undertake survey work and develop guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use maps to record important views, open spaces, trees, conservation area, historic buildings, hedgerows, walls etc. • Take photos of these features to illustrate the VDS • Develop guidelines based around themes e.g. settlement/buildings, wider landscape/views, open spaces/trees and roads/streets • Undertake consultation with community through exhibitions (suggested time period of 4-6 weeks) • Share the draft VDS with the District Council • Amend VDS in accordance with Council's comments
Step 4	Suggested actions Actions
Formal consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit final draft VDS to the Council • Strategy Group authorises consultation • Minimum 6 week consultation with residents and other interested parties
Step 5	Suggested actions
Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy Group reviews consultation responses and any proposed actions • Final VDS is adopted by Full Council

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What would a typical village design statement contain?

It is important that the VDS is clear and easy to use. There aren't formal standardised requirements, however, the following list sets out what typically can be included:

- Start off by setting out the purpose of the VDS, its status and how it will be used
- Set the context, which will include where the village is located, its size, form, setting and proximity to other villages and towns.
- A section could then describe the village's historical background, growth and key buildings.; What does it look like today, has it undergone significant expansion or change, has it retained its traditional core and street patterns, are there any local facilities, clubs or organisations and what is the social composition of its residents?

If there are strong local characteristics such as particular building styles, materials or boundary treatments and notable open spaces and trees these can be briefly described here. Some VDSs set out what the community values about the village. Unlike a neighbourhood plan the VDS does not form part of the development plan and will therefore set guidelines rather than policies.

- Divide the VDS into sections, for example, wider landscape/views, settlement/buildings, open spaces/trees and roads/streets. Each section will have an introduction to explain the issue and a set of guidelines. Keep the guidelines concise and avoid duplication.
- Illustrate with photos and maps.
- Make sure the VDS is consistent with national policy (the National Planning Policy Framework) and the development plan, which comprises the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and the adopted Settlements and Countryside Part 2 Local Plan.

No need to reinvent the wheel

Parishes will need to undertake their own research and identify through consultation what is important to their village and residents but it is worth looking at some of the recently adopted VDSs in the District to see how they have approached it and structured their documents. Other parish councils will be able to share experience and offer advice.

The most recent ones are The Bringtons and Nobottle, Boughton, Yelvertoft, Arthingworth, Byfield, Ravensthorpe and Great Oxendon. All of these can be found on the Council's website via the following link:

<https://www.daventrydc.gov.uk/living/planning-policy/village-design-statements/>

Natural England and Historic England are non-department public bodies whose duty it is to conserve, enhance and manage the natural and historic environments. They issue general advice to groups producing VDSs. The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and



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Northamptonshire also issues general advice on local biodiversity and green infrastructure issues. The Council has produced a separate guidance document which incorporates advice from all three bodies.

Formal consultation

The group will send a final draft version of the VDS to the Council. This will need to be approved by Strategy Group for consultation which the Council will organise. This will involve inviting comments from statutory consultees e.g. Anglian Water/Severn Trent Water, Natural England, Historic England, Wildlife Trust, ward councillors and adjoining parish councils. The group may be able to suggest other interested local organisations or landowners to be consulted.

Consultation will take place for six weeks and comments will be sent directly to the Council, however, the parish council/group can make the VDS available on their website at the same time.

Adoption of the village design statement

The Council will consider the responses made to the consultation. A report will be considered by Strategy Group which sets out the responses and any recommended changes to the document. If approved by Strategy Group the same report goes to Full Council where the VDS is formally considered for adoption. During this time the group will need to make the suggested changes, in liaison with officers of the District Council,

How will the District Council assist in the preparation of a village design statement?

The Council's Local Strategy Team will provide support to the group at various stages of the VDS's preparation.

The District Council can supply basic maps for survey work which can be used to mark on features such as important open spaces, boundaries and views. The maps within the VDS should be of a good standard so they can effectively illustrate what the VDS is seeking to achieve. The Council's GIS Officer can provide information about Parish Online, a mapping system which is available to parish councils to produce maps using Ordnance Survey and Council data, to which features identified in the survey work can be added. The annual charge for the mapping service is based on the population of the parish. Further information can be found via the following link:

<http://www.getmapping.com/products/gis-services/parish-online>

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