



Village Design Statements

1. What are Village Design Statements?

Village Design Statements were introduced by the Countryside Commission in 1996 to promote good design in rural areas. They are intended to provide local guidance for development proposals and to influence the way that the planning system works so that new development is designed and located in a way that reflects local characteristics valued by the community. The Village Design Statement cannot establish the principle of development - that is the role of the existing Local Plan and the emerging North York Moors Local Development Framework. The Village Design Statement is a management tool, ensuring that new development fits into the village and makes a positive contribution to it.

This note is intended to provide further guidance to community groups thinking about preparing a Village Design Statement and to outline the roles and responsibilities of the community or steering group and the National Park Authority.

2. Planning Framework

If the Village Design Statement is to have weight in making decisions on individual planning applications it must be adopted by the Authority as a Supplementary Planning Document and become part of the Local Development Framework. There are specific requirements for public consultation and Sustainability Appraisal of the statement for the document to be formally adopted in this way. Once adopted the guidelines and recommendations in the Village Design Statement will be applied by the Authority's development control officers in negotiation with applicants and for this reason it must be easy to use, clear in its guidance and comply with development plan policies. It will also provide a clear framework for the Parish and other individuals and organisations to comment on proposals for new development and provide guidance to residents thinking about altering or extending buildings in the village.

National and regional planning policy is translated into local planning policies through the 'saved' North York Moors Local Plan and, under the new planning system, the emerging North York Moors Local Development Framework. The Local Development Framework will be made up of a series of documents relating to the use and development of land. The most important document is the Core Strategy and Development Policies document. Any recommendations or guidelines in Village Design Statements must be in accordance with existing and emerging planning policies.

To be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, the Village Design Statement must expand or provide detail in relation to an existing policy or land allocation - it cannot be used to make new planning policies or allocate new areas of land for development. Until the new Core Strategy and Development Policies document is adopted Village Design Statements will be expanding upon the policies in the North York Moors 'saved' Local Plan, in particular the following policies:

Policy GP3 - General Development Policy
Policy BE6 - Design of New Development
Policy BE12 - Important Undeveloped Space

There may be other policies that could be included eg Conservation Areas, and Listed Buildings where relevant, landscaping and trees. When the Core Strategy and Development Policies document is adopted this note will be reviewed to refer to the relevant new policies.

3. Content of Village Design Statement

The presentation and style must be led by the community but with the overall aim of making the final document succinct, informative and easy to use. Any guidelines or recommendations must be clearly set out and differentiated from the descriptive text and cross referenced to the relevant Local Plan policies. The use of photographs, illustrations and maps will help to convey what comprises local distinctiveness and identity.

The Countryside Commission guidance published in 1996 (now Natural England) recommends that Village Design Statements should include:

- An introduction - including the local planning context into which the Village Design Statement will fit
- The village context - geographical and historic background, short description of current situation and any special considerations affecting the village eg tourism
- The landscape setting - including the relationship with the village edges and surrounding countryside and any landscape features.
- Settlement pattern and character
- Buildings and spaces - including boundary features
- Highways and traffic

No two Village Design Statements will be the same but it is important to clearly define those elements which contribute to the special character and appearance of the village.

4. Community Involvement

Early community involvement in the preparation of Local Development Framework Documents is central to the new planning system. In order to encourage this 'front loading' the Village Design Steering Group will be responsible for involving the local community in its preparation in accordance with the Authority's Statement of Community Involvement. The group will need to produce a Statement of Consultation to show and record how the wider community has been consulted in the preparation of the draft Village Design Statement and how local representations have been taken into account. This should also show how stakeholders have been consulted, a summary of any comments received and how these have been taken into account in the drafting of the Design Statement. A template for the Statement of Consultation will be provided by the Authority.

5. Process

Any Supplementary Planning Document which is to become part of the Local Development Framework must be included in the Authority's Local Development Scheme which sets out a timetable for the production of all Local Development Framework documents. The Local Development Scheme is revised through the Annual Monitoring Report in December and any new Village Design Statements will be incorporated into the Local Development Scheme at that time.

There are two broad phases to the process. The first phase relates to the research, survey and drafting of the Village Design Statement. This is the responsibility of the Steering Group. The second phase relates to guiding the document through the statutory adoption procedures. This will be the Authority's responsibility working in conjunction/co operation with the Village Design Steering Group. An initial suggestion of the process and roles is given in the attached table and this can be used as the basis of an agreement between the Steering Group and the Authority for any Village Design Statement.

A requirement under the planning system is that policies and plans must be subject to Sustainability Appraisal and this has to be built into the process. The Authority can assist with this work to ensure that the Village Design Statement is compatible with sustainability principles.

6. Adoption

Once adopted, the document becomes a Supplementary Planning Document and part of the North York Moors Local Development Framework. The Authority must monitor whether the policies in the document are working effectively through its Annual Monitoring Report. This is usually done through monitoring indicators related specifically to what the document is trying to achieve which will be discussed with the Steering Group. Where the recommendations and guidelines in the document are not achieving the intended outcomes there may be a need to review it at some point in the future.

7. Further Reading

Parish Plans and the Planning System - Guidance for Local Planning Authorities, The Countryside Agency (March 2003), no longer in print but available on www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk.

Parish Plans - Guidance for Parish and Town Councils, The Countryside Agency (July 2004) available on www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk.

Village Design: Making Local Character Count in New Development, The Countryside Agency (1996) available on www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk.

Village Design Statements - Suggested Roles and Responsibilities

Stage	Role of Village Design Group	Role of National Park Authority
Prior to Commencement		
	Decision to prepare Village Design Statement and have it adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.	Include in Local Development Scheme when next revised (usually through the Annual Monitoring Report done in December).
	Formation of Village Design Steering Group to prepare document.	Officer to provide guidance, advice and point of contact with the Authority.
	Provide venue, agendas and minutes and a Chairperson for each meeting.	Officer contact to attend Steering Group meetings wherever possible to provide assistance and guidance where required.
	Develop Village Design Statement proposal - scope, contents and timescale for document and discuss with the Authority.	Provide feedback on Village Design Statement Proposal to enable agreement on the way forward and provide additional guidance from other sources where necessary eg Countryside Commission documents.
Pre Production		
	Evidence gathering - establish what information about the village is available and what the gaps are and how additional information will be gathered.	Make Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report available (a Scoping Report covering all Village Design Statements has already been produced and consulted on and therefore a separate consultation on the Scoping Report will not normally be required for individual Village Design Statements).
	Decide methods for consultation - take account of the North York Moors Statement of Community Involvement.	Assist with consultation events wherever possible including help with equipment eg display boards.
	Undertake surveys and consultation and collate results.	Advise which bodies should be consulted to comply with Statement of Community Involvement.
Production		
	Prepare draft Village Design Statement.	Assist with planning background section showing how document relates to the Development Plan policies. Undertake screening to establish whether Assessment under the Habitats Directive is required. Liaise to ensure sustainability objectives are considered in preparing the draft.
	Prepare Statement of Consultation outlining: who has been consulted in the preparation of the Village Design Statement; how they have been consulted; the main issues raised; how those issues have been addressed in the document.	Prepare Sustainability Appraisal Report and appropriate Assessment report if necessary, copy to Steering Group.

Stage	Role of Village Design Group	Role of National Park Authority
Consultation		
		Publish draft Village Design Statement, Statement of consultation, Statement of SPD Matters and Sustainability Appraisal Report and Appropriate Assessment Report/Screening Assessment for formal consultation for 6 weeks.
	Discuss and agree changes to draft Village Design Statement to address comments received during consultation	Consider representations received and suggest changes to document and/or Sustainability Appraisal - discuss with Steering Group.
Adoption		
		Prepare Adoption Statement and Sustainability Statement report to Planning Committee seeking approval to adopt as Supplementary Planning Document.
	Launch and distribution	
Monitoring and Review		
		Agree monitoring indicators with Steering Group and monitor performance of Village Design Statement through Annual Monitoring Report. Assess need for review with Parish Council where monitoring indicates the Supplementary Planning Document is not achieving intended outcomes.

This Planning Advice Note can be made available in large print, audio and can be translated. Please contact the Planning Policy team on 01439 770657, email policy@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk or call in at The Old Vicarage, Bondgate, Helmsley, YO62 5BP if you require copies in another format.