



Winchester
City Council

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This guide is intended to cover those parts of Winchester District which fall outside the South Downs National Park. Please contact the Council for guidance if part of the area you intend to cover falls within the National Park.

For further information or help please contact;

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What is a Town or Village Design Statement ?

A Design Statement can be prepared for either a town or village a whole parish, or part of an area.

The key objectives are:

- To describe/ define the distinctive character of the town or village
- To set out design guidance

VDSs are prepared by the local community, but are often led by a Town/ Parish Council (where there is one) or a local community group. In many cases, a local design group, forum or Council sub-committee will be set up specifically to prepare the Design Statement.

VDSs focus primarily upon the built environment, ensuring that all scales of development bring the maximum positive benefits to the locality. They aim to improve the quality and design of future development, so that it fits into its setting and makes a positive contribution to the local environment.

An effective VDS is:

- researched and written by local people
- representative of the views of a wide range of local people (by enabling the wider community to be involved in its production)
- about demonstrating how local character and distinctiveness can be protected and enhanced in new development
- applicable to all forms and scales of development, noting that the majority of planning applications relate to householder development (i.e. house extensions or alterations)
- not about preventing development, but managing it effectively
- compatible with the adopted planning policies; i.e. the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the

Winchester District Local Plan (and/or the South Downs Local Plan where relevant) and any neighbourhood plans.

Why produce a design statement?

To help manage (not prevent) development in your village/neighbourhood by setting out what high quality design means for the village/neighbourhood by identifying local character and making recommendations for the design of new development.

To provide guidance for developers, planning officers, local councillors and residents indicating the important matters relating to your village/neighbourhood which will need to be taken into account in any new development proposals.

A design statement can't allocate land for development, which is the job of the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan.

A design statement can be adopted as a supplementary planning document (SPD) and further information on this can be found in National Planning Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making>

National Planning Practice guidance says that SPD should add to the policies already in an adopted local plan and they cannot introduce new planning policies. They are however a material consideration in decision-making. They should not add unnecessarily to the cost of development.



Who should produce a design statement?

The preparation of a design statement should be led by the local community which could be the parish council or other interested party or community group where there is no parish council. Whoever takes the lead on the design statement, it needs to be inclusive and involve the wider local community.

The design statement should involve as many of the community as possible and should seek to reflect the views of all sections of the community. A statement of community involvement and consultation, which will indicate how you have involved your community and how any comments have been taken into account, should be included with the document.

If you are considering producing a design statement please contact the Council for further help and advice on the process and on the general content of the document. The Council is able to assist in the production of the document but it should be written by the local community.

The design statement must be compliant with national and local planning policy and a degree of input by the planning authority throughout the process is necessary in order to ensure that the final form of the design statement is in keeping with the development plan and can therefore be considered suitable for adoption as a 'Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)'. The design statement should also take into account the fact that the Council has declared a Climate Change Emergency with the aim of achieving carbon neutrality where possible.

Once you have prepared your design statement in draft, the Council will undertake a formal public consultation on your behalf, so that it can be adopted as SPD in due course.

The Local Planning Authority are required to follow a process set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 in order to adopt a SPD and will complete this part of the process for you. They will also confirm that your document is in compliance with the Local Plan (Including any Neighbourhood Plan for the area) which contains the 'parent policies'. The Local Plan documents are available to view at www.winchester.gov.uk/planning-policy

Once the design statement is adopted, it is important to keep it up to date to ensure that it remains relevant, in accordance with current adopted planning policies and can continue to be a 'material consideration' in planning decisions. See section 6 for more on this subject.

If you want to know more about the process of adopting a design statement please see the flow diagram attached in Appendix 1.



What should you include in your design statement?

In order to be clear about the local character and features of your area you will need to provide an assessment of the particular character and design elements found in the area covered by the design statement (usually the village / neighbourhood and its setting). The following are examples of things an effective design statement could include;

A description of the distinctive character of the village and the surrounding countryside which could include;

- Information about the history of the village/neighbourhood and how it has evolved,
- How the village/neighbourhood is today, in terms of its built and natural environment?
- Are there any unique development pressures?
- What are the existing buildings like? Are there any distinctive buildings?
- What is the character of the surrounding countryside?
- Are there any special landscape features or open spaces?
- What are the connections to the countryside, public rights of way, green lanes etc?
- Are there any special designations eg: Conservation Areas, listed buildings, ancient monuments, nature designations such as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and, public open spaces etc. that can be shown on a map

You will need to explain what is considered to be important and why it should be protected if that is what you are suggesting.

Details of important features in your area as;

- The pattern of development, is there a historic centre and new development on the outskirts?
- What is the character of the streets, are they lit, do they have pavements?
- Where are the open spaces, are there any open spaces?
- What is the relationship between buildings and spaces?
- What are the height, scale and density of the existing development?

- Are there particular elements of design which are positive or important?
- What materials are used which add to the character and local distinctiveness?
- What are the means of enclosure, hedges, walls, fences or is it open plan?
- Are there any important views? If there are then make sure that you show them on a plan and with photos.

Try not to generalise character. Refer to specific character areas within your village / neighbourhood and show the extent of the character area on a map

Again make sure you explain what is important to be protected and why. What is valued and why? Make these answers specific to your community and add in anything else which you consider to be important.

Planning/Design Guidance

A design statement will generally contain a section of planning related guidance, which describes the appearance and layout of proposals that the local community will prefer to best reflect the local distinctiveness, as well as features that should be avoided.

This is the section that contains the guidelines that will be used by developers and referred to by the Local Planning Authority when looking at planning applications in the area. To be of use in the planning decision making process, the guidelines should focus on elements that can be controlled by the planning process, such as design, massing, appearance, materials, siting on plots, boundary treatments etc. Other detailed factors such as the control of traffic speeds, whilst of interest to the local community fall outside of planning control and would not be appropriate for a design statement.

Try not to be too prescriptive; for example don't specify only pitched roof buildings or single storey dwellings will be acceptable. Planning policies should generally permit development unless it can be shown to be harmful or damaging.

Try to avoid using subjective references. For example "generous front gardens" could be interpreted very differently and so is not really helpful advice.

You don't need to repeat the policies of the Local Plan in your design statement but you should cross reference your design guidance to the relevant 'parent policy' in the Local Plan. Local Plan policies will always be used in determining planning applications as will any other supplementary planning documents (SPD) such as the Council's "High Quality Places" SPD, which provides general design guidance so you do not need to repeat this

You can see what SPD's are adopted at www.winchester.gov.uk/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents-spds

Preparation of your VDS

What to do:

1. Arrange a launch event (e.g. exhibition, drop-in event, public meeting, workshop or or digital event or social media publicity) to explain what a VDS is and to ensure buy-in and support from the wider community.
2. Establish a Steering Group to prepare the VDS – it is important to have at least one representative from the Town or Parish Council on the Steering Group, but they do not have to lead the process.
3. Ensure you maintain contact with Winchester Council's Strategic Planning Team. The team will provide you with professional planning advice,

review the draft work as it progresses and undertake the statutory procedures etc.

4. Start preparing your VDS – it is best to split specific tasks and/ or individual VDS chapters amongst Steering Group members (and others if applicable). A walking tour of the settlement (open to the community) helps to gather evidence/ information about the character and distinctive elements of the area. This might be run as an event or series of events.
5. Public involvement is critical to the preparation of the VDS. All meetings should be openly advertised to encourage people to contribute. There are a variety of ways you can involve people in the process, for example:
 - Notices/ articles in local or parish newsletters
 - Parish Council meetings
 - Local events/activities
 - Open and informal discussion sessions
 - Workshops
 - Continuous local engagement on the VDS during preparation

Remember to keep a note of how you have involved people throughout the whole process, as this will form part of your evidence base.

6. Once evidence/ information has been gathered and collated, the next stage is for you to start writing sections of your VDS. The VDS must be written by local people. WCC officers will support you by checking draft work as it progresses and provide professional advice, for example on the type of content that is suitable and to ensure that the document is in line with planning policies. It is anticipated that several draft versions of the VDS will be checked by officers, before a final draft version is ready to publish for formal consultation. You may also wish to

carry out your own local informal consultation(s) before you prepare a final draft version.

7. When putting the document together, you need to consider who will be reading the end product i.e. it needs to appeal to both professionals and local householders etc. You therefore need to ensure it is simple to follow and easy to read. Illustrations and/or photographs, and maps must be included. These will help to identify and highlight the key features, issues, sensitive and important views etc.

Note: The Council can provide assistance with mapping.

Adopting your design statement.

The Council will be responsible for adopting your design statement once it has confirmed that it is acceptable to do so. Please see Appendix 1 which sets out the adoption process. Once adopted, your design statement will be available on the Council's web site and will be a material consideration in determining planning applications alongside the Local Plan. This means that it is one of the factors that will be taken into account when planning applications are determined, along with the Local Plan, government policy and the impact of development.

Updating your design statement.

Once adopted your design statement will need to be kept up to date and, in particular, take into account any significant changes in planning policy in the Local Plan. It may be possible to deal with such updates by way of a revision to the original document rather than requiring a new document to be produced, depending on the extent of the changes being proposed. It is highly recommended that you contact the council for advice in advance of making any changes to existing design guidance.

Any changes to the adopted document, particularly its design guidance, will need to be subject to public participation before they are adopted. The Council will then carry out the adoption process as before.

Hints and Tips

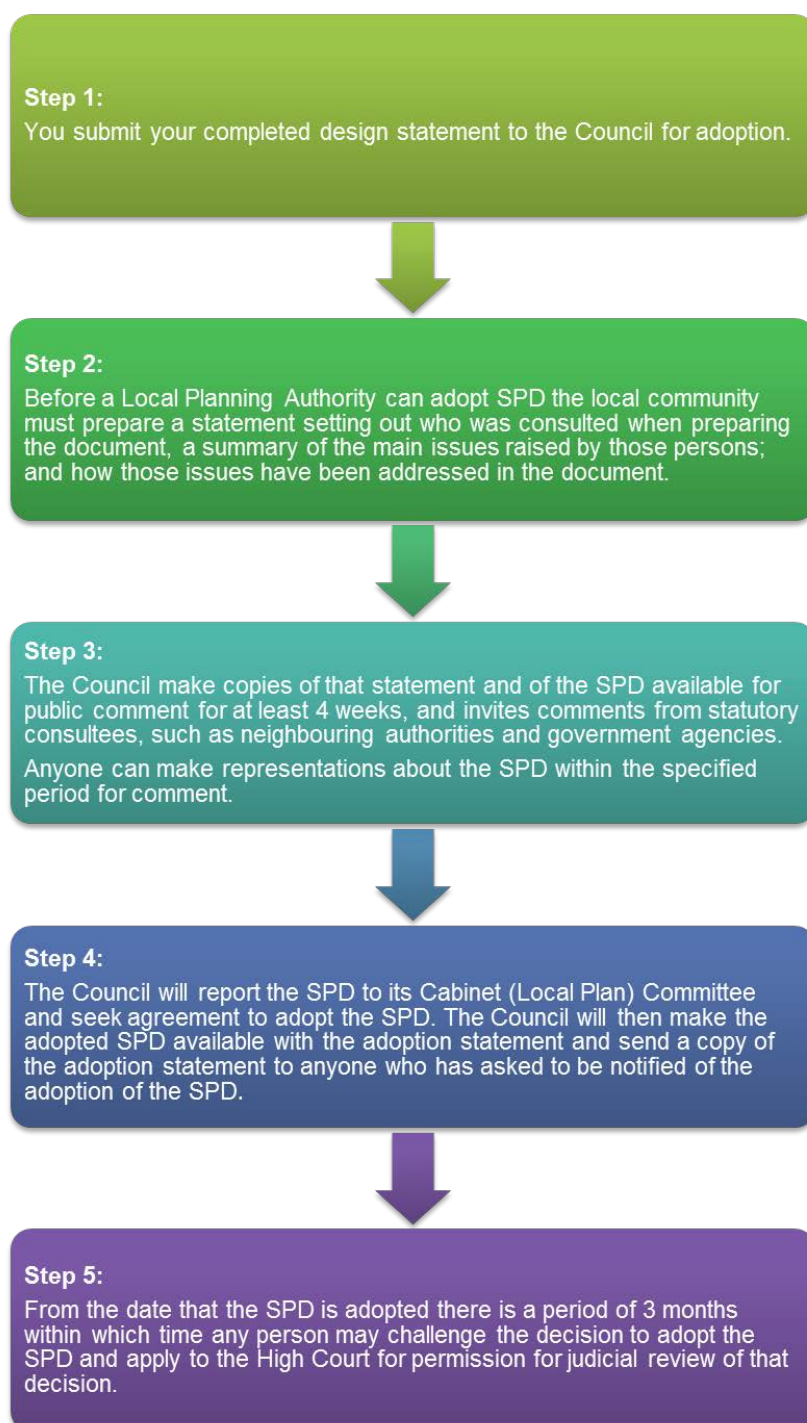
- Involve the local community from the outset by carrying out consultations with all sections of the local community.
- Try to address any points made through the consultation process and show the outcomes in an appendix to the design statement.
- A picture paints a thousand words! The design statement can be a visual document illustrating features such as areas of different character, green links, open space, key views, historic buildings etc. on a series of maps or diagrams. Use photos to show important features or illustrate good examples of design.
- When using a map please make sure you include a key for any annotations used.
- Don't forget to get permission to use photos, maps or illustrations from their owners.
- Are all the planning guidelines necessary? Check that your concerns are not already covered in the local plan or other SPD such as the High Quality Spaces SPD. Do not repeat these, only add important local detail if required.
- Cross refer any planning guidelines to relevant policies in the local plan (or neighbourhood plan).

Appendix 1. The adoption process.

The process for adopting VDS/NDS is set out in Part 5 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/767/pdfs/ukxi_20120767_en.pdf

The adoption process starts when you submit your draft design statement to the Council for adoption. At this stage the document should have already been checked by the Council to ensure that it is in compliance with national guidance and the development plan.



Appendix 2: Village Design Statement Checklist

Each VDS is unique to its own place and issues. There is therefore no specific format that you have to follow and you may decide to focus just on certain issues. However, the following checklist provides the general approach that VDSs have tended to follow:

Introduction

- Definition of a VDS, including its aims and objectives
- The local planning context for the VDS

The context of the settlement

- A very brief description of geographical and historic background to the settlement
- A very brief description of the place as it is today, including an overview of facilities, businesses and future prospects
- Any special considerations that affect development pressures in the village, such as tourism or mineral extraction, etc

The character of the landscape setting

- The visual character of the surrounding countryside
- The relationship between the surrounding countryside and the settlement edges/ fringes
- The relationship between the settlement and any special landscape features, such as ancient monuments, woodlands or nature reserves
- Buildings within the landscape/ rural hinterland, e.g. farm buildings

Settlement pattern character

- Overall pattern of settlement, distinct zones and layouts
- Character of streets and routes
- Character and pattern of open spaces and connections with the wider countryside
- The relationship between buildings and spaces

Buildings and spaces

- The character of distinct areas of building types
- The height, scale and density of buildings
- The mixture of sizes, styles and types of buildings
- Distinctive features, materials or building details

Highways and traffic

- Characteristics of local roads and streets
- Footpaths, cycleways and parking
- Street furniture, utilities and services

