

Revision of the Ampfield Village Design Statement

Background

Ampfield Parish Council adopted the current Ampfield Village Design Statement (VDS) in January 2003. In April 2003 it was also adopted by Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) as supplementary planning guidance for the parish of Ampfield, in conjunction with the then borough local plan.

In recent years, it has become apparent that the weight being given by the local planning authority to the recommendations expressed in the original VDS was in decline. Ampfield Parish Council believes there are a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, the principle of supplementary planning guidance has changed. Today, once it has been adopted, a VDS is given the legal identity of a Supplementary Planning Document. In addition, it may be argued that the views and guidance expressed in the original VDS are now almost 15 years old and, to some extent, they have been overtaken by events. For instance, within the parish there have been a number of developments that were not envisaged at the time of the original VDS. Finally, and most recently, TVBC has adopted a new borough local plan.

This combination of events has persuaded Ampfield Parish Council that it should now commission and work with the parishioners of Ampfield to produce a new Village Design Statement that will reflect fully the consensus view within the parish today.

What is a VDS and what are its objectives?

A VDS is a statement that identifies and describes the characteristics of a parish and its setting within the local countryside, from the perspective of the local community. It draws on the history, the geography and the balance, nature and form of the settlement patterns to record the distinctive and unique character of the parish.

It shows how the local character can be identified from the landscape setting of the parish, the shape of the settlements within the landscape and the nature of nature of the built environment within the parish. It provides design principles based on the distinctive local characteristics and sets out guidelines that ensure this distinctive character is retained and enhanced by future development within the parish.

Once adopted by the local planning authority it becomes a Supplementary Planning Document. It works in partnership with the local planning policies as set out in the local plan and offers planning guidance that reflects the consensus view of the local community. In other words, it retains a legal status in matters relating to development and must be taken into consideration by the planning authorities.

Current Position

Ampfield Parish Council's decision to revise and rewrite the VDS was broadcast to all the parishioners in the annual parish magazine and discussed at the Parish Assembly. Volunteers were requested to form a VDS Steering/Working Group. Currently, there are 15 members of this group; three from the parish council and 12 who responded to the request.

Throughout this period, the Steering/Working Group and Ampfield Parish Council have received comprehensive help, support and advice from Test Valley Borough Council. Much valued advice has also been sought and generously provided by the leader of the original VDS team.

To date, the group has had two meetings where the prime objectives have been to establish what needs to be done together with a process and timetable of procedures to ensure it is done. The minutes of these meetings are shown below. The Group has drawn up Terms of Reference and a Statement of Community Involvement, both of which are also shown below.

What happens next

As the process continues, more volunteer participants will be sought, particularly for the critically important survey of local parish characteristics and landscape setting. To this end, the members of the working group will be actively recruiting residents from their local neighbourhoods to help, and all volunteers are welcome. Once the survey has been completed, a questionnaire will be sent to each household in the parish seeking its views on a wide range of topics.

It is important to stress the greater the response to the survey, and indeed the greater the number of participants in the VDS project generally, the greater will be its significance when apply for adoption by TVBC, the local planning authority.

As soon as the survey has been completed and the results of the questionnaire analysed, a preliminary draft of the new VDS will be prepared, this will include a draft of the proposed planning guidance notes. At this stage, the Steering/Working Group will begin a programme of public consultation with parishioners that will include public exhibitions in the Ampfield village hall.

The information and results of the consultation will then be incorporated in a second draft of the VDS, which will be sent to TVBC for consideration. During this period, TVBC will review the draft VDS against the contents of the Local Plan and the Government's National Planning Policy Framework to ensure compatibility.

Any observations made by TVBC will be discussed. A final draft will be submitted to Ampfield parish Council for its formal approval. Once approved, it will be delivered to TVBC for a period of statutory consultation. When complete, TVBC will be requested to adopt the VDS as a Supplementary Planning Document..