

Village Design Statements, Parish Plans and Neighbourhood Plans

Which is the right one to choose to achieve your community's aspirations for the future?

Local Plan Policy Stratford-on-Avon District Council is currently preparing its Core Strategy. You should consider whether your concerns and aspirations for the future of your area are already being addressed by the Local Plan and the emerging Core Strategy.

If you are happy with the Local Plan and the emerging Core Strategy, you may decide that there is no need to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. If you feel that the policies do not fully address what you would like to happen in your community, as you would like more development than is suggested, or your community would like things to happen more quickly, then you could consider preparing a neighbourhood plan.

Different issues may use different planning responses. Therefore, it is important that you consider the type of planning tools to use to address your community's needs and aspirations.

Neighbourhood Plans are not the only way for a community to influence how its local area develops.

There are other planning options which include:

- Village Design Statements (VDS)
- Parish Plans

The table below provide a summary of the differences between the options

	VDS	Parish Plans	Neighbourhood Plans
Aims	To encourage developers and householders to design new development so that it is in keeping with local character.	To take a 'holistic' approach. It sets out a vision for how the community wants to develop in the future and to identify the actions required to achieve it.	To enable development. To decide where and what type of development should happen in the local area. To promote more development than is set out in the Core Strategy.
Scope	It should be about the design of new development and not be used to detail what type of development should take place in a village or to seek to protect local services/amenities.	They can include everything that is relevant to the community, including social, economic and environmental issues. It can include more than planning related issues.	It is primarily about the use and development of land and buildings.
Status	If the VDS is adopted as an SPD, it can be used by officers in the determination of planning applications.	If the Parish Plan is adopted as a material consideration, it can be used by officers in the determination of planning applications.	A formally adopted neighbourhood plan carries more weight in the decision making process than parish plans and VDS. It becomes a development plan document, forming part of the development plan.

Village Design Statements (VDS)

These documents are a form of planning guidance to inform the design of new development. They are intended to encourage developers and house builders to design new buildings or extensions, outbuildings and boundary treatment, such as walls and fences, to reflect the existing local character of the area.

Why choose to prepare a Village Design Statement?

A Village Design Statement (VDS) is a document describing the qualities and characteristics that your local community values in its village and surroundings. It sets out clear and simple guidance for the **design** of all development in the village. You cannot use a VDS to stop new development, but you can use it to influence developers and Stratford-on-Avon District Council, and to ensure that new buildings respect and reflect local character.

What is the status of a Village Design Statement?

If the VDS is adopted by the District Council as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), it can be used by officers in the determination of planning applications. The VDS is prepared by the local community, using robust consultation techniques.

Adopted Village Design Statements are listed on the Stratford-on-Avon District Council website:

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning/planning-2993.cfm>

Parish Plans

These are statements of how the community sees itself developing over the few years. It reflects the views of all sections of the community and identifies local problems and opportunities.

The aim of the Parish Plan is to identify what actions are required to achieve its future vision for the area, which group will assist with the implementation and the timeframe for realistically achieving the identified actions in its action plan. It could include any actions, ranging from addressing a lack of playground facilities to establishing a car share schemes. Parish Plans should include the monitoring of the action plan to ensure that the plan remains a 'live document'.

A Parish Plan can help to manage change in a community and also to protect and improve their area.

Stratford District Council is keen to promote Parish Plans and at present there are 40 Parish Plans, which have been adopted as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

They are available to view on the Stratford District Council's website:

<http://www.stratford.gov.uk/planning/planning-700.cfm>

Why choose to prepare a Parish Plan?

Parish Plans are 'holistic' and comprehensive in their scope and cover more than just planning issues. Due to its holistic nature the Parish Plan has the potential to influence a wide range of organisations and their policies and plans. This influencing role is particularly important and it is where a Parish Plan comes into its own, by identifying areas which may attract potential funding. The Parish Plan can be the focal point for an effective and positive role for your community in helping to guide proposals, manage change and address local needs through the formal planning process.

There are numerous benefits that can be gained by undertaking to a Parish Plan, some of which include:

- Building a greater sense of community spirit by working towards a common goal;
- Improves communication between the Parish Council and local people;
- Production of an action plan which identifies local problems and provides local solutions for them;
- Helps establish better partnership working with key service providers; Supports funding application as it is based on consultation with the community.

What is the status of a Parish Plan?

If the Plan is adopted by Stratford District Council as a material consideration, it may be used by officers in the determination of planning applications. Whilst the Parish Plan is produced by the local community, it will be assessed by a Planning Policy Officer to determine whether it fits into existing national and local planning policies. It is recommended that discussions about any Parish Plan proposals are held with Planning Policy Officers and key stakeholders to establish whether any proposals are feasible and may be delivered. However, aspirations for future actions which may not be presently feasible should not be precluded.

Neighbourhood Plans

These are intended to **enable development in local communities. The plans are not to be used to block development.** It is important that there is a clear understanding of what neighbourhood planning is able to achieve.

A Neighbourhood Plan can ...

- Decide where and what type of development should happen in the neighbourhood area.
- Promote more development than is set out in the Core Strategy
- Include policies, for example regarding design standards which take precedence over existing policies in the Local Plan for the neighbourhood – provided the NP policies do not conflict with the strategic policies in the Core Strategy.
- Comply with national planning policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and EU Laws.

A Neighbourhood Plan cannot ...

- Conflict with the strategic policies in the Core Strategy.
- Be used to prevent development that is in the Core Strategy.

The Plan must comply with the above and it must be primarily about the use and development of land.

A Neighbourhood Plan could include:

- The housing development, including affordable homes and bringing vacant and derelict housing back into use.
- Provision for business to set up or expand their premises.
- Issues around roads, cycling, walking and disabled access.
- The development of schools, places of worship, health, leisure and entertainment facilities, community and youth centres and village halls.
- The design of buildings.

- Protection and creation of open space, nature reserves, allotments, sports pitches, play areas, parks and garden and tree planting.
- Protection of important buildings and historic assets.
- Promotion of renewable energy projects.

What is the status of a Neighbourhood Plan?

A formally adopted Neighbourhood Plan carries more weight in the decision making process than Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. Once it is adopted, following a successful examination and referendum, it will become a 'Development Plan Document' (DPD). There is a legal requirement to take it into consideration when determining planning applications. Consequently, it must be taken very seriously.

Local Housing Needs Studies. These studies provide vital information when seeking planning permission for affordable housing through the *Housing' exceptions' sites'* (Policy CTY.5) in the Local Plan Review. This policy allows for the provision of affordable housing for local people on sites where planning permission would not normally be permitted unless there were very exceptional/ special circumstances. Housing provided in this way allows for control over its future occupancy. Examples of these studies and more details on what they are and how they can be undertaken is available on the District Council's website at <http://www.stratford.gov.uk/community/community-1876.cfm>