

TITLE	Adoption of Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 26 March 2015
WARD	Arborfield
DIRECTOR	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment
LEAD MEMBER	John Kaiser, Executive Member for Planning and Highways

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To deliver high quality design development in Arborfield and Newland Parish that complements the existing built and natural environments.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is recommended to adopt the Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement as a Supplementary Planning Document.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement (VDS) has been prepared by Arborfield and Newland Parish Council to enhance the quality of development in the parish and with a view to preserving the rural qualities of Arborfield and Newland Parish.

There are currently 11 Village Design Statements that have been adopted by Wokingham Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).

The draft Arborfield and Newland VDS and associated documents underwent public consultation between 11 November 2014 and 23 December 2014. The consultation statement sets out the responses to the representations made and suggests a number of changes and clarifications are made to the VDS before it is adopted as a SPD.

Background

The adopted Core Strategy (CS) provides the broad spatial vision for the Borough to 2026 and the policies designed to achieve this. The Wokingham Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in 2012 and amplifies planning policies in the Core Strategy, explaining how they will be interpreted and applied to common topics and forms of development across the Borough. The Borough Design Guide SPD emphasises the importance of good design and aims to ensure development proposals respond positively to the local context, maintaining or enhancing the street scene and local character. Eleven Village Design Statements have been adopted by the Council as SPDs and are referred to as appendices to the Borough Design Guide SPD. Therefore they are used for development management purposes.

The Arborfield and Newland VDS will, if adopted as SPD, sit alongside the Borough Design Guide SPD to guide development in Arborfield and Newland Parish.

Village/Parish Design Statements

Village Design Statements (VDS) are used as a practical tool to help influence decisions on design and development. VDS provide a clear statement of the character of a particular village or town against which planning applications may be assessed.

National Planning Policy Framework

The importance of high quality design and local distinctiveness are recognised as in the Core Planning Principles in the National Planning Policy Framework (bullets 4 and 5):

- *Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.*
- *Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it.*

The Council recognises both the amount of community involvement and effort in producing these documents and the value they add as a material consideration in determining planning applications.

Analysis of Issues

The strong emphasis on the importance of design in new development in the NPPF is supported by Core Strategy policy CP3 General principles for Development which seeks new development to 'contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings)'. The writing of 11 Village/Parish Design Statements also reveals the extent to which residents of the Borough wish to enhance and preserve their surroundings through coherent, consistent and appropriate design.

The adoption of the Arborfield and Newland VDS would allow it to have a role in planning decisions and would help support design policies that already exist. The guide would also provide a useful reference to those involved in Planning or wishing to submit an application to the Council. This would enhance certainty and transparency of expectations to developers and as a result is likely to secure the best planning outcome.

The draft SPD and Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment) Screening Opinion Consultation Document underwent public consultation

between 11 November 2014 and 23 December 2014. A statutory notice, attached at Appendix A, was available on the Council's web site and sent to everyone on the Council's planning database. In addition, a poster was sent to the parish to post in community buildings and parish noticeboards. The documents were also available for the public to view at the Council offices in Shute End. The following is a summary, in no particular order, of the main issues raised. The full summary is set out in the Statement of Community Involvement.

1. VDS Boundary Map. A respondent pointed out that the VDS boundary on the map was misaligned. A new map was created and replaced the existing map.
2. Flexibility. One of the respondents provided several comments regarding lack of flexibility in some of the design guidelines. These comments were discussed with the Parish and many of the suggested changes were subsequently made.
3. Sustainable Development. Two respondents thought that the Sustainable Development guidelines could be improved. These were discussed with the Parish and this section was then modified.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	Nil	Nil

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross-Council Implications

If adopted, the VDS will become a material consideration in determining planning applications for the parish of Arborfield and Newland.

List of Background Papers

Arborfield & Newland Village Design Statement
Statement of Consultation

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Date 13 March 2015	Version No. 2

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