

# Village Design Statements Parish/Community Plans and Neighbourhood Plans

Sevenoaks District Council has reviewed its local planning policies through preparation of the Core Strategy, which was adopted in February 2011, the ADMP in 2015 and the new Local Plan 2015-2035 (currently in preparation). You should consider if your concerns and aspirations for the future of your area are already being addressed by the ADMP policies.

If you are happy with the ADMP and emerging Local Plan policies, you may decide that there is no need to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan

But if you feel that the policies do not really address what you would like to happen in your community, as you would like more development than is suggested or would like things to happen more quickly, then you could consider preparing a Neighbourhood Plan

Different issues need different planning responses. The aim of Parish/Town Councils should be to use the most appropriate tool to achieve the desired results.

**Neighbourhood Plans are not the only way to influence how a community develops.**

Other options include:

- Village Design Statements
- Parish Plans/Community Plans

## Village Design Statements (VDS)

These are a form of planning guidance to inform the design of new development. Their aim is to encourage developers and householders to design new buildings or extensions (and other elements such as fences and outbuildings) so that they are in keeping with existing local character. The VDS should not be used to detail what type of development should take place in a village or to seek to protect local services/facilities.

### Why choose to do a VDS?

The VDS can contribute to retaining a sense of place by identifying, describing and analysing local distinctiveness and character and drawing guidance directly from this character.

### What is the status of VDS?

If the VDS is adopted as a Supplementary Planning, it can be used by planning officers in determining planning applications for the village. Whilst the VDS is prepared by the local community, planning officers will need to assess how they interpret into the existing planning policies. They must be robust enough for them into active use in decisions on applications.

## A Parish Plan

This is a statement of how a local community sees itself developing in the future. It sets out the needs and aspirations of the Parish based on the views and opinions of the people that actually live there. For the purposes of this summary a Parish and community Plan are seen as the same option.

The aim of a Parish Plan is to identify what actions the community would like to take, which would be the best group to take these forward and when they could realistically be achieved. This could be anything from ensuring building projects fit in with local character to supporting alternatives to private car use to improving the state of local parks. Parish Plans are evolving documents as it will be updated as and when actions are completed and people's needs and aspirations develop.

**A Parish Plan is not just about things that people dislike and want to change in the community, it is an opportunity for the community to say what they want to stay the same, protect or improve in their area.**

### **Why choose to do a Parish Plan?**

Parish Plans can be much broader than VDS or neighbourhood plans, covering more than just planning issues. Working through the preparation of a Parish Plan bring benefit the community. It can:

- Bring the community closer together with a common goal
- Improve communications between the Parish Council and local people
- Address concerns about issues i.e. as transport, housing, environment, education etc.
- Seek residents' views about a particular project and support funding applications
- Provide an action plan to guide the actions taken to help them meet local needs.
- Support funding applications as it requires the community to be involved and consulted

### **What is the status of a Parish Plan?**

If the Plan is adopted as a Supplementary Planning it can be used by planning officers in determining planning applications for the Parish. Whilst the Plan is led by the local community, planning officers will need to assess how any proposals fit in with the existing planning policies. Generally there should be discussions with the planning officers and any other agencies that have been identified in a proposal in the plan to agree that what is being proposed is feasible and can be delivered. However, this doesn't mean that the plan cannot include aspirations for future actions which are not possible at present.

### **Neighbourhood Plans (NP)**

These are about enabling development, not stopping it. 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
- Promote more development than is set out in the ADMP and emerging Local Plan
- Include policies, for example regarding design standards that 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 ADMP and emerging Local Plan

#### **A Neighbourhood Plan cannot...**

- Conflict with the strategic policies in the ADMP and emerging Local Plan
- Be used to prevent development that is in the ADMP and emerging Local Plan

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

A Neighbourhood Plan could include:

- The development of housing, including affordable housing and bringing vacant or derelict housing back into use
- Provision for businesses to set up or expand their premises
- Issues around roads, cycling, walking and access for disabled people
- The development of schools, places of worship, health, leisure and entertainment facilities, community and youth centres and village halls.
- The restriction of certain types of development and change of use
- The design of buildings
- Protection and creation of open space, nature reserves, allotments, sports pitches, play areas, parks and gardens, and the planting of trees
- Protection of important buildings and historic assets
- Promotion of renewable energy projects, such as solar energy and wind turbines.

**Why choose to do a Neighbourhood Plan?**

A formally adopted Neighbourhood Plan carries more weight in the decision making process than VDS and Parish Plans.

**Quick look comparison**

	<b>Parish Plans/ Community Plans</b>	<b>Neighbourhood Plans</b>	<b>VDS</b>
<b>Aims</b>	To take a “holistic” approach. To set out a vision for how the community wants to develop in the future and to identify the actions needed to achieve it. .	To enable development. To decide where and what type of development should happen in the neighbourhood. To promote more development than is set out in the ADMP and emerging Local Plan	To encourage developers and householders to design new development so that they are in keeping with existing local character
<b>Scope</b>	They can include everything that is relevant to the people who live and work in the community, including socio-economic and environmental issues. It can cover more than just planning issues	It must be primarily about the use and development of land and buildings	Should be about the design of new development. It should not be used to detail what type of development should take place in a village or to seek to protect local services/facilities
<b>Status</b>	If the Plan is adopted as an SPD it can be used by planning officers in determining planning applications for the Parish	A formally adopted Neighbourhood Plan carries more weight in the decision making process than VDS and Parish Plans	If the VDS is adopted as an SPD can be used by planning officers in determining planning applications for the village