

Date: 17 August 2020
Our ref: 325312
Your ref: Draft Diseworth Village Design Statement



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Dear Sir/Madam

Draft Diseworth Village Design Statement

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 14 August 2020 which was received by Natural England on 14 August 2020.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England welcomes design guidelines that respect, and where possible, enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the surrounding natural and built environment; use natural resources more sustainably; and bring benefits for the local community, for example through green space provision and access to and contact with nature.

The following is offered as general advice which we would expect to have been considered in the preparation of a Town or Village Design Statement:

Landscape

To preserve the wider landscape character of area, the Town or Village Design Statement should recognise and give appropriate consideration to the impact of the design statement on protected landscapes such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), if the town or village is within or adjacent to one.

Landscape Character Assessments (LCA) provide a context for looking at possible changes and for seeking to ensure that the countryside character is protected and enhanced. Local area LCAs and those for protected landscapes (where applicable), should be cross-referenced as they are a useful tool to ensure that the Village Design Statement makes a positive contribution in terms of design, form and location, to the character and functions of the landscape, and avoids any unacceptable impacts. Following the principles of LCA at a local scale helps to capture the significant features, style and patterns of settlement and setting within the landscape and key views in and around the village. National Park and AONB Management Plans can also provide useful information for design statements within or adjoining protected landscapes.

Natural England is revising the suite of 159 National Character Area (NCA) profiles to make environmental evidence and information easily available to a wider audience. NCA profiles are guidance documents which include a description of the key ecosystem services provided in each character area and how these benefit people, wildlife and the economy. They identify potential opportunities for positive environmental change and provide the best available information and evidence as a context for local decision making and action.

The revised and current NCA profiles are available on the [NCA pages](#) of our website for you to refer to. The complete series of revised profiles will be published by April 2014.

Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Design

Green infrastructure is a term used to refer to the living network of green spaces, water and other environmental features in both urban and rural areas. It is often used in an urban context to cover the benefits including space for recreation, access to nature, flood storage and urban cooling to support climate change mitigation, food production, wildlife habitats and health & well-being improvements provided by trees, rights of way, parks, gardens, road verges, allotments, cemeteries, woodlands, rivers and wetlands.

Green infrastructure is also relevant in a rural context, where it might additionally refer to the use of farmland, woodland, wetlands or other natural features to provide services such as flood protection, carbon storage or water purification. Green infrastructure maintains critical ecological links between town and country.

The Design Statement could usefully promote high quality and multifunctional green infrastructure. [Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance](#) provides an introduction to delivering green infrastructure at the micro and neighbourhood scale through features such as street trees, green facades and green roofs, where consistent with the local character. These features can be extremely important in increasing ecological connectivity between green spaces, particularly when footpaths and green corridors are not feasible.

Biodiversity

The Design Statement should have recognised and referenced designated wildlife sites¹ and other biodiversity assets in the immediate area, such as protected species, ecological networks, habitats and green spaces. Design guidelines should respect, and where possible, enhance the town or village's local and neighbouring biodiversity resources. The Town and Country Planning Association has produced a practical and design orientated [Biodiversity by Design](#) guide to achieving high levels of biodiversity in developments, which may be of use. When preparing the Design Statement, your local Wildlife Trust and local environmental record centre should have been consulted, and local and national Biodiversity Action Plans should be referenced where relevant.

Community Engagement

As an organisation, we are committed to involving the community in our work, ensuring that local people and the organisations that support them are consulted at the earliest possible stage. We are keen to see this principle adopted as part of the village design statement formulation process so that local people have a chance to contribute to the development of the statements from the outset.

Yours faithfully

Jacqui Salt
Consultations Team

¹ Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protected Areas, Ramsar, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites