

Town and Village Design Statements in North Dorset as Supplementary Planning Documents

Screening Determination

(as required by European Directive 2001/42/EC and The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)

1. Context

- 1.1 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 place an obligation on the Council to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on land use and spatial plans. Part of this process included a screening exercise to determine the need for a SEA to be undertaken, by assessing if the proposed plan is likely to have any significant environmental effects. This screening process stage is particularly relevant where the plans being proposed can be considered to be small scale. Town and village design statements as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) can be considered to be small scale land use plans.

2. Town and village design statements in North Dorset as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

- 2.1 The purpose of a town and village design statement as a SPD is to complement policies adopted within the North Dorset District Wide Local Plan and 'saved' as part of the Local Development Framework. Town and village design statements do not allocate land or contain policies that should be subject to independent examinations. Instead they are an analysis of any areas character and local distinctiveness that provides additional practical guidance and support to those involved in the decision making process. The policies that town and village design statement guidelines are most likely to be relevant to are listed in Appendix B.

3. The Screening Process

- 3.1 The regulations provide a set criteria for determining the likely significant effects on the environment of land use and spatial plans. These criteria are derived from Annex 2 of SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) and are set out in Schedule 1 of the regulations. Using the criteria as a framework the requirement for a need to carry out an SEA on all intended town and village design statements in North Dorset as SPDs has been determined. The criteria are listed in the following tables and the Councils assessment noted alongside.

The characteristics of town and village design statements in North Dorset as SPDs

Criteria	Assessment
(a) The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	Town and village design statements are supplementary and complementary to the adopted policies contained in the North Dorset District Wide Local Plan. They do not determine the location, nature, size and operations of projects or other activities to any significant degree.
(b) The degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	Town and village design statements provide additional practical guidance to policies that have already been scrutinised and consulted upon through the plan making process. The content and scope of town and village design statements will be managed through the associated planning guidance note.
(c) The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development	Town and village design statements seek to ensure the highest standard of design and to recognise the unique natural and built characteristics of a settlement. From previous appraisals ¹ the conclusion has been that town and village design statements are the most sustainable option.
(d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan	Town and village design statements as supplementary planning documents are primarily concerned with enabling local communities to improve their natural and built environment and there are no expected environmental problems.
(e) The relevance of the plan for the implementation of [European] Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	There are no direct linkages with the implementation of legislation on the environment.

¹ Child Okeford Village Design Statement – Sustainability Appraisal Report (November 2007) <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=148002&filetype=pdf> and Sturminster Newton Town Design Statement – Sustainability Appraisal (November 2007) <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media.jsp?mediaid=148031&filetype=pdf>

Characteristics of town and village design statements in North Dorset as supplementary planning documents effects and the area likely to be affected	
Criteria	Assessment
(a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects	<p>Town and village design statements are a material consideration in the decision making process. They are to be used by residents and or their agents/architects when preparing planning applications and by planning officers in determining applications.</p> <p>Town and village design statements are unlikely to have any adverse effects as they are intended to make incremental but cumulative improvements to a settlement.</p> <p>As part of the LDF all supplementary planning documents are subject to annual review and their relevance and effectiveness is monitored. Also as part of the LDF system they can be amended if required.</p>
(b) The cumulative nature of the Effects	The likely cumulative nature of the effects from town and village design statements is the improvement in quality terms of the built and natural environment.
(c) The transboundary nature of the Effects	There are no transboundary effects of town and village design statements due to the scope of their purpose.
(d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	There are no significant or likely risks to human health or the environment from town and village design statements.
(e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	Town and village design statements are not time constrained. Their spatial extent will vary depending on the size of the town or village but any effects will be incremental and cumulative in nature.
(f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: i. Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ii. Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or iii. Intensive land-use.	Town and village design statements help to reinforce national and local planning policies in settlements under pressure from development. Town and village design statements often include areas of special natural characteristics and elements of cultural heritage. Through identifying such features they make a positive impact by providing detail.
(g) The effects on areas or landscapes, which have a recognised national, [European] Community or international protection status.	Town and village design statements cover specific settlements or parishes and are supplementary to adopted planning policy. The practical guidance they contain helps to raise awareness and focus attention on safeguarding and enhancing areas or landscapes that have a recognised national, community or international protected status. They provide additional guidance on enhancing areas by acknowledging local distinctiveness.

4. Statement of Reasons for Determination

4.1 In accordance with Part 2(9) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the Council considers that all intended town and village design statements in North Dorset adopted as SPDs are unlikely to have a significant environmental effect and accordingly will not require a SEA.

4.2 On 13 October 2010 this statement in draft form was sent to the three statutory bodies specified in the regulations. The responses received were as follows:

English Heritage: Agree with our interpretation that the SPDs are unlikely to have any significant environmental effect and therefore a SEA is not required.

Environment Agency: Have no objection to our position that Town and Village Design Statements are unlikely to have a significant environmental effect and accordingly do not require a SEA.

Natural England: Agree with our assessment that North Dorset's Town and Village Design Statements are unlikely to have a significant environmental effect.

4.3 Therefore it is considered that as a result of the assessment undertaken by the Council, along with the responses received from the statutory bodies, SEA are not required for Town and Village Design Statements in North Dorset if they have been prepared in accordance with the guidance.

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