

DECISION TAKER: Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan – Councillor Jackie Porter

REPORT TITLE: UPHAM VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT (2025)

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WARD(S): UPPER MEON VALLEY

PURPOSE

This report seeks the adoption of the Upham Village Design Statement (VDS) as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Village Design Statements are produced by local communities and provide guidance for the design of new developments within the local area. In order for these documents to carry as much weight as possible in planning decision-making process they need to be adopted by the City Council as SPD's.

A draft version of the Upham VDS was published for public consultation between 11 November and 23 December 2024. It is important to note that only a small part of the Parish of Upham lies within Winchester District, the majority of the settlement (82%) is located within the South Downs National Park, consequently, this report seeks adoption of the Upham VDS only insofar as it will apply within the Winchester District Local Plan area. Officers from Winchester City Council have been working closely with Officers from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) on the development and subsequent adoption of this VDS. The SDNPA are also separately seeking permission from their Planning Committee on the 13 March 2025 to adopt this VDS as an SPD.

The original Upham VDS was adopted in 1999 and this document would be revoked following the adoption of this VDS (2025).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Upham Village Design Statement (2025) as set out in Appendix 2 of this report, be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

2. That the 1999 Upham Village Design Statement be revoked as SPD following the adoption of the 2025 version.
3. That the Strategic Planning Manager is granted delegated authority to make minor factual corrections and editing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan, to finalise the revised Upham Village Design Statement, prior to publication on the Council website.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

- 1.1 Village Design Statements outline the local community's aspirations for good quality and locally responsive design within their areas. The draft Upham VDS supports the outcome of "Healthy Communities" and "Listening and Learning" and it will help to create sustainable neighbourhoods with strong community.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 Work on the document has been led by officers in the South Downs National Park, as the bulk of the parish lies within the Park. However, it is necessary for Winchester's Strategic Planning Team to oversee regulatory and consultation matters and this is covered using existing staff resources.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The statutory procedures for the production, consultation on and adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document ("SPD") are set out in Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country (Local Plan) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ("2012 Planning Regulations").
- 3.2 A SPD builds upon policies in the Local Plan to provide more detailed advice and guidance which is taken into consideration when planning decisions are made without introducing new policies or changing adopted policies. A SPD is a material planning consideration in decision making.
- 3.3 A formal public consultation as set out in the Regulations must be undertaken prior to adoption by the council as SPD. Accordingly, the statutory consultation took place between 11 November 2024 and 23 December 2024. The original VDS was adopted in 1999, and it will be necessary as part of the adoption process of the revised VDS to revoke the 1999 version under Regulation 15 of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ("2012 Planning Regulations").
- 3.4 As only a small part of the Parish of Upham lies within Winchester District, the majority of the settlement (90%) is located within the South Downs National Park, consequently, this report seeks adoption of the Upham VDS only insofar as it will apply within the Winchester District Local Plan area. Officers from Winchester City Council have been working closely with Officers from the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) on the development and subsequent adoption of this VDS. The SDNPA are also seeking permission from their Planning Committee on the 13 March 2025 to adopt this VDS as an SPD.

4 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 4.1 The Upham Village Design Statement has been prepared by members of the local community, with assistance from Officers from the two local planning

authorities. As well as informal engagement in the preparation of the VDS, there have been two rounds of public consultation, one in May-July 2024 and the formal consultation under the 2012 Planning Regulations on a revised draft, in November – December 2024.

- 4.2 The Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plans and the Ward Members for Upper Meon Valley were notified of the first consultation, which was led by SDNPA as the majority of the settlement is located within the SDNP.
- 4.3 For the formal public consultation in November-December 2024, the City Council followed the procedure as required by the 2012 Planning Regulations and the council's own principles and guidance as set out in the Winchester City Council Statement of Community Involvement. The draft VDS and the accompanying draft Statement of Consultation were made available on the websites of both planning authorities, as well as hard copies being made available in particular locations. The Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plans and the Ward Members for Upper Meon Valley were specifically notified. Statutory consultees and other interested parties on the strategic planning database were also specifically notified. Additional publicity was also carried out by the City Council.
- 4.4 Full details of the consultation(s) undertaken and a summary of the resulting feedback and actions taken is contained within the updated Upham Village Design Statement Consultation Statement, attached as Appendix 1 of this report.
- 4.5 Consideration of any issues raised and recommendations on how these should be responded to is set out in this report, including any changes proposed to the draft Upham Village Design Statement as a result of this.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 VDS's are aimed at encouraging developments to respond positively to the design and appearance of local areas. They therefore impact on the quality of life, health and wellbeing of the local community as well as improving the quality of the built and natural environment all of which contribute to the aim of sustainable development as a whole.
- 5.2 The VDS has a section on Habitats and Biodiversity which highlights the unique local wildlife and habitat characteristics of the area. Appendix 4 of the VDS (see Appendix 2 of this report) considers biodiversity in detail, including identifying habitats, SINCS, Priority Habitats and Ecological Network Mapping. Although it is not the mechanism for making improvements, the VDS highlights characteristics that should be taken account of in respect to the local landscape (including trees, hedgerows and open spaces) habitats and species.

6 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

6.1 None

7 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure	N/A	N/A
Exposure to challenge Regulations require public consultation by the Local Planning Authority prior to adoption of a SPD for a minimum of four weeks. This should encourage public participation and comments and reduce the chance of challenge.	Public consultation was carried for a period of 6 weeks, in excess of the 4 weeks required by the Regulations	An up to date adopted VDS will be a Supplementary Planning Document that will carry greater weight in planning decisions including appeals.
Innovation	N/A	N/A
Reputation Risk to reputation if planning decisions are perceived not to reflect the VDS	Ensure VDS is given appropriate consideration in planning decision making and is sufficiently up to date.	Ensure VDS sets out realistic expectation for planning decisions and communicate these to the local community.
Achievement of outcome Once adopted the VDS will be used in planning decisions and encourage developments to respond positively to the design and appearance of local areas. This will achieve the outcome of improving the quality of the built and natural environment.	Ensure that the VDS is adopted in line with the 2012 Regulations and that comments received on consultation are assessed and incorporated where appropriate, into the amended draft where appropriate.	An up to date adopted VDS will be a Supplementary Planning Document that will carry greater weight in planning decisions including appeals and will improve the quality of the built and natural environment.
Property	N/A	N/A
Community Support Risk that planning decisions are seen as not taking sufficient account of the views of the local community.	The VDS allows for the views of the local community to be reflected in a document which addresses how the design of new development should respond positively to its location when	Ensure that the VDS contains appropriate and realistic guidance that will be taken into account in planning decisions improving the quality of the local built and natural environment.

	applications for development are being decided.	
Timescales Risk that the existing VDS is outdated and does not reflect current planning policy.	Prepare and adopt a new up to date VDS.	Adopting an up-to-date VDS will support policies in the current adopted local plan and decision making on development proposals. The weight that should be given to the VDS in decision-making will be reduced when the new Local Plan 2020-2040 is adopted.
Project capacity There is adequate capacity within the Strategic Planning Team to progress the Upham Parish VDS.	Maintain sufficient staff capacity	Adopt an up-to-date VDS and keep its contents under review, to be effective and align with new policies.

8 OTHER KEY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

9.1 Introduction.

9.2 Across the Winchester district there are many parishes/communities with adopted village/neighbourhood or local design statements, many of which were adopted some time ago. A number of communities have updated their design statements, and this is welcomed. The council has produced guidance on the preparation and review of local design statements, which is available on the WCC website. The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) also has a number of village design statements and authority-wide design guidance documents.

9.3 Good design is considered a key aspect of sustainable development and the importance of setting policies to achieve high quality and inclusive design for all development is emphasised in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This principle is carried forward into policies within Winchester's new Local Plan 2040. Having an up-to-date VDS will provide detailed local guidance for the assessment and determination of applications for new development whilst reflecting both national and adopted local planning policies.

- 9.4 In 2015, the council adopted the High-Quality Places Supplementary Planning Document that provides more general guidance on how the high level design principles set out in policy CP13 in the adopted Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) should be applied. Village Design Statements (VDS) however are particularly useful in that they identify at a more granular level the characteristics of the area to which they relate and provide local guidelines which are intended to inform and encourage new development to respond to these local characteristics in a positive way. To afford VDSs as much weight as possible in the planning decision making process it is necessary for such community-led design documents to be adopted as SPD to complement policies within local plans. This includes any updated version that may be necessary to reflect current local plan policies.
- 9.5 Policy DM15 (Local Distinctiveness) in the adopted Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) sets out how proposals should have regard to any adopted Design Statements, such as Village Design Statements.
- 9.6 The 2012 Planning Regulations, set out the process for the preparation and adoption of SPDs. The Regulations set out procedures for public consultation and also that the authority(ies) must prepare a report setting out the issues raised by the consultation and any recommended response to these issues.
- 9.7 Further information on the public consultation is set out below. Details of the representations made, issues raised and recommended responses are contained within Appendix 1 of this report.
- 9.8 The timing of the preparation of the revised VDS for Upham means it needs to be in compliance with the existing adopted local plans of both Winchester District (Local Plan Part 1, 2013 and Part 2, 2017) and the adopted South Downs National Park (2019) rather than the emerging local plans that are currently in progress by both local planning authorities. Please see paragraph 10.4 for further details on the future status of this document.

Background

Legal and Geographical Coverage

- 9.9 Upham Parish Council commenced a review of its VDS in 2020 and were keen to reflect the changing policy background from when the VDS was adopted in 1999, in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework and adopted Local Plans in both Winchester District and South Downs National Park.
- 9.10 As referred to in paragraph 3.4, the vast majority of Upham Parish (some 90%) is within the South Downs National Park and planning responsibilities are split between the two authorities accordingly. The proposed revised VDS does not cover the whole of the Parish, but focuses on the areas around Upham Village and Lower Upham settlements as shown in Appendix 5 of the VDS (see Appendix 2 of this report). Only the areas to the south of the B2177

Winchester Road that are outside of the SDNP will therefore fall within the area of WCC's planning responsibility. Given the spatial balance - although WCC has been involved in the preparation of the VDS - the SDNPA has, in this particular instance, taken the lead in working with the Steering Group and organising the SDNPA public consultation in May 2024 and the Local Plan Regulations 2012 public consultation in November 2024.

- 9.11 When it comes to adopting the document, both planning authorities will have to adopt the VDS individually, for the purposes of planning within their respective authorities. This report recommends adoption of the Upham VDS (2025) as SDP to the Winchester Local Plan, to be considered at the Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan Decision Day on 20th March. The SDNPA intends to adopt the VDS as SPD to the South Downs Local Plan on 13th March 2025.

Preparation of, and consultation on, the document

- 9.12 The Upham Village Design Statement has been prepared following a detailed process of research gathering, drafting and comprehensive engagement with the local community. Officers from the SDNPA and the City Council have been involved in its preparation and provided advice to the Steering Group on the content of the VDS and on involving the local community.
- 9.13 Following the initial research, drafting and community engagement and advice from the SDNPA, a public consultation was undertaken by the SDNPA in May-June 2024 on the first draft of the proposed VDS.
- 9.14 A total of 10 responses were received to that consultation and the draft VDS was further revised following advice from the SDNPA and input from WCC's Historic Environment Team. Upham Parish Council subsequently submitted a further draft to SDNPA and WCC in October 2024.
- 9.15 The public consultation on the draft Upham VDS under the 2012 Local Plan Regulations, was carried out between 11 November and 23 December 2024. Details of the public consultation are shown within the Upham Village Design Statement Consultation Statement which is attached as Appendix 1 of this report. Summaries of the representations are shown in Table 2 of the Upham Village Design Statement Consultation Statement.
- 9.16 Table 2 of the Upham Village Design Statement Consultation Statement includes a summary of the comments received, recommended responses and any resulting proposed changes to the draft VDS.
- 9.17 The key issues raised were:
- General comments on the guide which were generally positive.
 - Some detailed comments on the grammar used in design guidelines 4.10 and 4.14.

- Consideration of detailed wording regarding swifts in design guideline 1.13, including requirements for the installation of swift bricks.
- Sussex Police seeking reference to secured by design guidance and contribution to Community Infrastructure Levy; and
- Southern Water seeking detailed guidance on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, flow routes and drainage features and limits on the amount of water consumption in new developments.

9.18 As a result of the issues raised, some small changes are proposed to the VDS:

- Grammar used in design guidelines in paragraphs 4.10 and 4.11.
- Design guideline in paragraph 1.13 has been amended to encourage the use of wildlife boxes or bricks for locally occurring species, and
- Additional text has been added in the Biodiversity and Habitats section to refer to bird species with specific reference to swifts and a link to the [RSPB SwiftTracker website](#).

9.19 It is not considered appropriate or necessary for the VDS to refer to issues relating to the security of design nor in respect of water supply and usage. These matters are already covered in the adopted local plans insofar as they relate to planning matters and would apply generally across the plan areas.

9.20 In addition to the above, the SDNPA and Winchester City Council also made comments to inform the final version of the VDS. These were focused on:

- Improvements to the areas illustrated in the map.
- Clarification about whether “Upham” refers to the parish, settlement, village, or conservation area.
- Amendments to assist with the understanding and the flow of the document.
- Removal of design guidelines in relation to external lighting given that these are already covered in Policy SD8 and the [South Downs Dark Skies Technical Advice Note](#), and
- Other minor amendments to the design guidelines for clarity, and appropriate use of language, given the status and weight of SPDs.

9.21 The recommended changes to the VDS are a result of discussions between Upham Parish Council, SDNPA and WCC on responses received to the public consultation and the issues arising.

9.22 The final proposed Upham Village Design Statement, incorporating any recommended changes since the public consultation is attached at Appendix 2 of this report.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.23 The updated Upham VDS accords with the relevant policies of the Winchester City Council's adopted Local Plan Parts 1 and 2 and WCC's adopted High Quality Places SPD. The VDS is considered to reflect the policy principles of the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework and responds to changes which have taken place within the parish since the original VDS was adopted in 1999.
- 9.24 It is therefore recommended that the Upham Village Design Statement at Appendix 2 be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 9.25 Consequently, it is further recommended that the 1999 Upham Village Design Statement be revoked as SPD following the adoption of the 2025 version.

10 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 10.1 The city council encourages the production of Village Design Statements by local communities, to improve the quality of development in local area and public involvement in the planning process. In order to carry as much weight as possible in the assessment and determination of planning applications, such Statements need to be adopted by the city council as SPDs.
- 10.2 An alternative approach to formal adoption as SPD would be for the council to informally adopt or endorse the VDS. However, an informally adopted document would carry less weight in decision making, as the formal adoption processes – including the public consultation - required of SPD would not have been followed and this approach is therefore not considered appropriate for Village Design Statements.
- 10.3 In light of the anticipated changes regarding the phasing out of SPDs and their replacement with Supplementary Plans as a result of the implementation of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA), the city council could decide to not adopt the VDS as an SPD at this time, but this would negate the work that the local community had undertaken in producing the VDS.
- 10.4 The recommendation in this report is therefore to adopt the VDS as an SPD at this time. However, once the new Local Plan 2040 is adopted and once the LURA legislation is implemented, the city council would need to review the status and weight that could be given to such SPDs. Whilst there is uncertainty around the detailed implementation and timing of the LURA changes, the VDS would still remain a 'material planning consideration' for a continuing period of time.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: -

Previous Cabinet/Committee Reports or Cabinet Member Decisions: -

None

Other Background Documents: -

[Adopted Upham Village Design Statement 1999](#)

[Village and Neighbourhood Design Statements – Consultation Draft Upham VDS and Appendices 2024](#)

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Upham Village Design Statement (2025) – Statement of Consultation; including Schedule of Representations on Draft

Appendix 2: Upham Village Design Statement (2025) – main report and appendices