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5 DESIGN

5.1 Objectives to be Satisfied

The Design Section aims to satisfy the following objectives:

- To enhance the built environment of our villages.
- To retain Uffington's and Baulking's identities as individual villages, each with a strong heritage.

A recent White Paper, 'Fixing our broken housing market', states that local and neighbourhood plans...are expected to set out clear design expectations following consultation with local communities using visual design codes.¹ This has been amplified in the revised NPPF published in July 2018.

The Vale Design Guide 2015 together with LPP1 policies CP37 and CP40 has helped the SG towards fulfilling this national ambition.² The Design Guide encourages the use of skilled design professionals to ensure high quality solutions. Proposed local NP design policies focus on features within the villages but lean strongly on several of the principles within the Guide as a source of evidence. The text of the Guide including its appendices has also provided relevant evidence. For example, Appendix E.2 (Zone 4, 'Chalk villages along the spring line') contains descriptions of the local building character, providing evidence supporting the design policies below.

Another important source of evidence is Reference Document E, J. Cooper's study of the character of houses in Uffington. She analyses, building by building, the architectural features of many of the older houses in Uffington. She concludes that with the importation of new building materials, a significant proportion of the building within Uffington over the past 90 years 'has been undistinguished architecturally, with little reference to local character'. Just two examples taken from this work are: the use of concrete blocks at White Horse and the yellow bricks at Craven Common. The bricks used in the new village hall are also at odds with the local character. A small number of houses in Baulking parish, for example the houses to the west of the entrance to Baulking Grange Farm, suffer from the same design weakness. With so much of the character of the village relying on a palette of local materials, these imported materials still look out of place. J. Cooper's report provides strong evidence to support Policy D2.

In promoting their sites in the present day, developers have tended to refer to the diversity in existing design styles and quality in Uffington to argue, in effect, that their standardised design will blend readily into the village. This practice leads inevitably to a dilution of the design coherence across the village.

Note: All Design policies refer to both Uffington and Baulking.

¹ 'Fixing our broken housing market', February 2017, Section A65.

² The Design Guide is available at the Vale web site: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk>. The Guide has the status of a Supplementary Planning Document and as such will be a material consideration in determining planning applications; it carries considerable weight in decision making.

Policy D1 – ~~Use of the Design Guide~~ Overall Design Quality

~~All development proposals shall~~ All new development will be of high quality design reflecting local identity and will accord with the principles in the Vale Design Guide 2015 and the local design policies D2 to D6 below. Where proposals for permitted development are brought forward, applicants will be strongly encouraged to have regard to the Guide and local design policies.

Residents carrying out permitted development will be strongly encouraged to have regard to the Guide and local design policies

5.2 Local Building Design

5.1.15.2.1 Scale of New Building

The need for a constraint on the form and massing of new building and on ridge heights has been emphasised in a number of recent local planning decisions;³ see Policy D2.

The location, scale and height of some recent new building in Uffington have impeded some established public views of St Mary's Church and other important historic features of the parish. Recent development has also led to an increased proportion of larger houses in Uffington, while opportunities have not been taken to vary the placement of houses within their plots to reflect the tradition in the village. These developments, particularly those close to St Mary's Church and the primary school within the Uffington Conservation Area, have led to an unfortunate loss of character.

This evidence is one of the determinants of Policies H1, H2A and D2A which stress the need for sympathetic siting, scale and massing in the future.

Although there are occasional historic landmark buildings, traditional houses within the villages are small/medium in size, of a simple design, with good proportions to the elevations and typically 5.5 to 8 metres in height to the ridge. As with most traditional buildings in the Vale, they adopt a consistent form, with rectangular floor plans and pitched roofs (see Vale Design Guide 5.1.5).

5.1.25.2.2 House Design

Among the older dwellings there are a number of traditional shapes which are seen in Uffington and Baulking. Two forms are common:

- Thatched cottages built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have a steep roof pitch and ridge height typically 7.5m, with 1.5 or 2 storeys.

Figure 1 – Typical Thatched Roof Cottage

- A simple nineteenth-century slate-roofed cottage shape, normally without hipped ends and with a ridge height typically 5.5 – 6m, and normally with 2 storeys.

³ See for example comments on planning applications P16/V0265/FUL (2016) and P17/V1366/FUL (2017). Both are for the same site.

Figure 2 – Typical Slate Roofed Cottages

There are of course a number of examples of more modern designs of housing. Roof heights are generally in keeping with adjacent properties; roofing materials are usually slate or tile, and construction, textures and colour palette generally unfussy.

Figure 3 – Modern Uffington House

- An individual, modern hipped and slate-roofed house designed to be sympathetic to local vernacular with wood cladding and limited to 1.5 storeys and a maximum 7m roof height.

These ridge heights and the prevalent angle of pitch are important indicators for new development. The examples above have unfussy facades, with no more than a simple porch. Designs reflecting (but not imitating) these traditional shapes (and others) are likely to be successful. However, weight will be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area, while respecting local context and scale.

Materials used for building in the Plan area are detailed within the VWHDC Design Guide. Chalk block, sarsen stone and orange (Berkshire) brick (almost always in Flemish bond) with timber framing are the norm for older dwellings, with weather-boarding an occasional feature. Roofs are thatch, slate or red/orange clay tiles. Designs reflecting these materials, brickwork, textures and colours will help to enhance and place a new building in context. (Note that chalkstone itself will usually not be practical in a new building; a whitewashed rendered surface or alternative stonework reflecting the village context may be used.)

In summary, the following design styles are to be avoided:

- Standardised designs typical of the urban environment with no concessions to this locality.
- A crude pastiche of older styles, often overly complicated and including 'bolt-on' elements that are out of place.
- The use of materials and colour palette which are a poor imitation of those found in the historic parts of the villages.

5.25.3 **New building outside, or on the edge of, the settlements**

Section 6 of the Vale's Design Guide focusses on good design of buildings located in large grounds and in small groups of buildings such as hamlets and farm buildings. In these locations landscape is the dominant feature. In the Plan area, this section of the Guide will be particularly relevant, not only for stand-alone dwellings and farm-yard clusters but also around the edges of settlements. Here development is more sporadic, there is significant space between houses and open landscape is the main backdrop for dwellings. There are five Design Guide principles which are particularly relevant to the parishes in these situations:

~~DG76: landscape character and setting~~

DG77: landscape

DG78: clusters or grouping

DG79: scale, form and massing

DG80: facades and elevations

DG81: boundary treatments

Policy D2 – Building Scale and Design

D2A: New buildings or extensions will be permitted where they are proportionate to their plot sizes, where they do not dominate neighbouring buildings, close important gaps or impede local views. At the edge of the settlements, the sporadic nature of development will be respected-maintained and the form and massing of any new building scaled accordingly. DG77-81 are relevant here and will be followed.

~~**D2B:** Strong justification will be needed for development of large dominant houses within the villages and for buildings which are over-large within their plots so that the historic low density of large houses in the villages will not be significantly increased.~~

~~**D2BC:** The following provides a summary of design features of individual dwellings to be addressed within this policy. Normally i~~n a conventional design the following will be expected:

1. A simple floor plan and pitched roof (following the Vale Design Guide 2015 principles DG52 and DG57).
2. Ridge heights not exceeding that of buildings in the immediate vicinity.
3. Facades, windows etc. following principles DG58 to 61.
4. Materials and colour palette will follow the Vale Design Guide Section E zone 4 and Community Led Plan Section 5 Housing and Design.
- ~~5.4. At the edge of settlements and for stand-alone developments landscape is the dominant feature. DG77-81 are relevant here and will be followed.~~

Alternatively, wWeight will be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area, while respecting local context and scale.