

What is a Village Design Statement?

A Village Design Statement has the following main objectives:

- To describe the distinctive character of the village and the surrounding countryside
- To demonstrate how this local character can be protected and enhanced in new developments
- To be adopted by the planning authority to supplement their Local Plan policies
- To influence future policies when the planning authority is updating the Local Plan

Culworth Village

Current Design Statement - South Northants Council

Culworth is a linear village in the far west of the District amidst attractive upland agricultural country. Half of the village is set on a prominent ridge, the other half (High Street) falling steeply down to the west. Culworth at one time had its own market and fair, being at the crossroads of two ancient cattle and sheep drove roads, The Welsh Road and Banbury Lane. At the top of High Street is the true -centre of the village, a triangular registered village green surrounded by a number of old buildings including the 17th century former Manor House and the remains of the original market cross. Close by the green is the Grade 11* parish church of St Mary, of 13th and 14th century origins but with extensive alterations in the 19th century. Although situated in a prominent position, St Mary's tower lacks the height of many Northamptonshire churches which often makes them such a dominant feature in the landscape. South of the church are fine views of open countryside across ~ Orchard Ground, a public open space. On the north side of the church is the ringwork of a small early medieval castle known as Berry Close Hill, and nearby is the Victorian Gothic Old Rectory in a setting of fine trees.

East of the church area the ground is fairly level along the ridge, and there is a strong sense of enclosure derived from buildings or high garden walls sited close to the street edge. Prominent amongst the latter are the listed ironstone walls and gateways to Culworth House, a large 18th century building set in attractive gardens and now a nursing home for the elderly.

The village itself contains an interesting mixture of different styles and periods of building, and the changing levels and road alignments create attractive groupings of old buildings, especially around the central green.

Buildings are mainly in a light coloured limestone and ironstone, with a number of houses featuring the distinctive “banded” pattern incorporating both types

of stone. There is also a sprinkling of older red brick buildings in the village, and at the far eastern end, some modern housing in buff and red-brown brick which, being detached from the historic core, does not impinge too much on its character.

Planning Background

Most of Culworth is encompassed by the Conservation Area which was originally designated in 1978 and updated in 1987. There are a large variety of listed buildings in the village. Apart from those already mentioned there is D'Anvers House, a large early 18th century building set back from the High Street, and opposite, Westhill House, an early 17th century residence with the remains of a large walled garden at the rear with stone on its outer face and a lining of old red brickwork. Behind the village green stands the original D'Anvers Free School of 1795, now incorporated into the Old School House. Culworth is designated as a Restricted Infill Village in accordance with policies set down in the Local Plan. Residential policies in the Plan make provision for appropriate small scale development within the village confines. Culworth is located within the Aynho, Cherwell Valley and Eydon Special Landscape Area relevant to Local Plan policies.

Future Development

Infill development within the Conservation Area should be constructed in matching limestone or ironstone with Welsh blue-grey slate or dark brown tile roofing. Where such development abuts older red brick buildings a matching red brick may be considered as an alternative to stone, taking account of authentic detailing and traditional bonding patterns.

New infill development along High Street and Queen Street should be abutting the street edge.

If set back, buildings should be accompanied by high walls or hedge planting at the street boundary to maintain visual links between existing buildings and reinforce the sense of enclosure.

The form and treatment of new buildings at the west (High Street) end of the village must be closely tailored to its older neighbours.

Outside the Conservation Area individual infill developments should have materials relating to the surrounding properties.

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THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUCTION WITH THE COUNCIL'S GENERAL PLANNIING GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ENTITLED 'RESIDENTIAL DESIGN IN THE COUNTRYSIDE'.