

1. INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

- 1.1 Design is the most common policy amongst all the NPs that cover the 8 million people who currently live in areas whose development is founded on NPs. The key is the embedding of design within policies (NPPF Para.'s 56-68, esp. Para 58) such as:
- [i] views of the village – in and out - & village setting;
 - [ii] the management of drainage & water, flora & fauna.
 - [iii] mixed use accommodation and tenure
 - [iv] the adoption & maintenance of green and open spaces
- 1.2 It is advantageous for external agencies (e.g. Environment Agency, English Heritage, CPRE, etc.) to receive written support for NP objectives. Recognising that NPs are pro-growth, it is vital in our case for 'new developments' to ensure the people's quality of life, community coherence and character of place be sustained. As such, the establishment of a DESIGN STATEMENT (as opposed to Design Code – which has a certain inflexibility) is built into policy as also a CHARACTER ASSESSMENT. The NP should clearly express that development should evolve gradually over a period of time.
- 1.3 The gradual evolution should conform to a Master Plan which will need to be worked on in co-operation with our Planning Authority (DDC) in order to effectively implement the NPs objectives and policies. Please note – the task is not over when the NP is completed, there will be implementation issues and the necessary monitoring which has further implications not yet discussed.
- 1.4 The devolution of responsibilities is both positive and negative. It would seem to be the best of worst cases to ensure the NP clearly identifies [i] areas to preserve especially beyond the conservation areas where needful and, [ii] areas for change. Change will occur, goal-posts will be moved and the tension between central government, local planning authority targets as a result and local wishes will (almost) always be the case.

2. FOR CONSIDERATION

- 2.1 To engage with Landowners in a Call For Sites in May/June to inform where areas (1.4.ii) may be identified knowing that DDC will be doing this later in the year.
- 2.2 Where Conservation Management Appraisal Plan may cover specific areas, there is both the need to focus on where this may not cover, where a need is felt and also where areas are covered but are important and where there would be an impact if the Planning Authority were to reverse or delete such areas.
- 2.3 Plan to avoid or at least customise any policies so there is a local feel. For example, it may be worthwhile for Ash Society to scout areas/buildings issues of historic interest not otherwise covered for it to inform the NP. As such I shall be contacting the DDC Principal Heritage Officer, for any assistance she may be able to provide in this connection and report back from such a meeting.
- 2.4 I was most impressed by Hawkhurst's Design Guidelines which I have adapted below which, along with specific housing objectives tied to the 'vision', provide the parameters with which new developments can be considered when a NP is being implemented – although I believe these guidelines need to be reviewed by our evidence base and what we may agree at PC level - and that implementation should incorporate these into policy.
- 2.5 For future reference a consideration for community engagement might be to hold exhibitions / events over a w/end with set pieces repeated at different times in order to maximise the opportunity for folk to attend, especially the demographic we would most engage with – at least this was the experience of some very other successful events. September is a National Heritage Day and this, if tied in with heritage matters, could be such an occasion (a treasure hunt for young children could induce some younger families to join).

- 2.6 Some other design issues to emerge – no large scale developments; the encouragement of local developers/builders, variety of styles and innovations; include details like storage and cycles links to village that can reduce traffic; use of local / recycled materials where possible; innovations in singular dwellings and vernacular; where developments are 20+ = exceptional and need to identify how linked to village and how quality of setting improves for the whole.
- 2.7 Increasingly standards are coming down from central government (e.g. space standards) that may need to be met; that DDC in its Local Plan Review are likely to identify new areas for development to confirm to a 5 year plan. The Ash NDP needs to identify areas of change where the damage would be minimised OR at least present detailed guidelines of what we want to see which I include below for discussion, amendment and general consideration.

3. DESIGN GUIDELINES ADAPTED FROM HAWKHURST NP

LAYOUT – New developments should incorporate access routes and footpaths within the layout that reflect the (historic) character of Ash.

INTEGRATION – New buildings should be well integrated into the site and become part of a unified and interrelated composition, both with other buildings on site and with existing buildings adjacent to the site.

LOCALITY – New buildings are to be based on local needs, use local construction materials and reflect local building traditions. Materials to be obtained from local sustainable sources, for example timber cladding. Small- size clay tiles are preferred to concrete.

TRADITION – Styles and materials that relate to those found in the more historic parts of the parish will be encouraged. Well- maintained hedges will be more suited to Ash's green setting than fences.

AMENITY – Green spaces of appropriate scale and quality within new developments will be encouraged. All new houses to have private amenity space and/or gardens, at the front, back or side of the property, as appropriate.

EVOLUTION – Ash should evolve gradually and not experience rapid large- scale development. All development proposals are required to demonstrate how they will contribute to this positive evolution.

DOMESTIC – Scale of new dwelling to be of a small or domestic scale suitable for a village environment. This is especially true within the existing built areas. There may be scope for larger properties, set in larger plots, located towards the edges of the built areas of the village but these need to be demonstrated as appropriate through good design.

DISCRETION – Car parking is to be discreet, with a proper provision of off road parking as appropriate. On-road parking needs to be accommodated carefully to ensure that footways are not blocked or narrowed.

EXTENSION – House extensions are to be sympathetic with the style of the host house and use similar materials and fenestration. Modern style extensions to traditional houses will be resisted.

DENSITY – The density of new development should be in character with the local surrounding area, respect the rural nature of the parish and be designed to give an impression of spaciousness with opportunity for green landscape between buildings.

CONSTRUCTION – The build quality of new developments, and the materials selected as part of the construction process, should ensure a high standard of appearance over time. Construction techniques and materials should prevent a rapid deterioration that can lead to buildings with an unsightly or neglected appearance. Building maintenance should be cost-effective and easy to administer.

SECURITY – All developments and improvements should be designed to ensure that safety and security are built in. Designs should ensure people feel safe during hours of darkness through unobtrusive path lighting and active frontages (i.e. doors and windows facing onto the street) and safe, permeable routes where appropriate.

LIGHTING – Consideration should be given for the need for lighting, and where it is deemed essential, efforts should be made to seek to minimise its impact in the landscape through choice of light source and control of light spillage. Lighting should only be installed in areas of need, such as alongside pedestrian routes in and around the built areas of the parish. Areas adjacent to open countryside should be left unlit to avoid light pollution.

SUSTAINABILITY – New development should seek for ecological enhancement to the immediate area, such as provision for birds and bats to be incorporated into new buildings. New residential development should include provision for working log burners through the inclusion of a working chimney to encourage recycling with the economic potential that could be accomplished locally.

RESOURCE EFFICIENCY – Measures to help conserve water and energy in new buildings will be encouraged. The reuse and recycling of building materials will be encouraged, as will the use of locally sourced timber in construction.

4. SOME MATERIAL OBJECTIVES FOR ASH ADAPTATION

4.1 Site Selection Criteria

- 1) Priority will be given to previously developed and underdeveloped land over greenfield development.
- 2) The development of small-scale infill sites suitable for 1 – 5 dwellings within the existing built area and within walking distance of shops and amenities will be supported.
- 3) Any greenfield housing sites should be contiguous with the edge of the existing developed parts of the parish and provide for sites of approx. 5 – 10 dwellings.

4.2 Future Housing Mix

- 1) A range of tenures and sizes appropriate to Ash will need to be delivered as part of all new housing developments to meet local needs.
- 2) Four bed houses and larger are already well catered for in the village. Therefore, the proportion sought by the plan is for approximately 52% one bed units, approx 33% two bed units and approx 15% three bed units. These figures are to be reviewed annually.

4.3 Modern Living

- 1) New housing developments will comprise a variety of types, designs and details to create homes fit for modern living and will adhere to the following space standards: One bedroom home min 50m² gross; Interior areas (2 people) 2 bedroom home min 65m² ; interior areas 3 people min 80m² 3 bedrooms; min 85m² interior areas (5 people).
- 2) Bungalows will be encouraged, giving easier access for the disabled and elderly and releasing family homes.

4.4 Design Quality

- 1) The design, form and detail of new developments should be principally informed by the traditional form, layout, character and style of the parish's vernacular architecture. This will be applicable to both new build homes and other buildings and to alterations to existing properties.
- 2) Careful innovation in design or thoughtful modern or contemporary architecture is not precluded by this policy and such designs are encouraged.

Jeffrey Loffman – 23rd March 2017