

# Great Dunmow Town Design Statement

by Nick Wates Associates  
on behalf of The Countryside Agency

February 2006



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**Good Practice Advice:  
Great Dunmow Town Design Statement**

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### **Cover photos**

Selection of images indicating the richness of Great Dunmow which needs to be dealt with in the Town Design Statement

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# 1 Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the results of a three-day initiative to support the people of Great Dunmow, Essex, in producing a Town Design Statement (TDS). The exercise involved a visit by community planner Nick Wates to Great Dunmow during which time he looked around the town and its surroundings, spoke with a number of key individuals and attended a meeting of the Great Dunmow Town Design Statement Working Party. A number of planning and other documents have been reviewed and a first draft of this report was circulated for comment to those spoken to during the visit.

## The Brief

- 1.2 The brief set by The Countryside Agency included the following:
- ‘Providing advice to local partners as to the best way to set about producing a Town Design Statement appropriate to their local circumstances. This would include:
  - ‘Harnessing and co-ordinating the enthusiasm for the project that already prevails amongst the Future of Dunmow Working Party, Town Strategy Group, Civic Society and Historical Society into most effective action.
  - Offering advice regarding involving the wider community.’
- 1.3 The brief set by the Countryside Agency originated from a direct approach made by members of the Dunmow Town Strategy Group. They were seeking advice as to how Dunmow’s distinctive character might be retained in the light of existing and possible new developments. They wanted “what it means to be a building in Dunmow” to be encapsulated into a document that developers could see in advance and that planning applications could be judged against. As a result of the advice given, The Town Strategy Group decided that the development of a Town Design Statement would be the best option. The Countryside Agency agreed to provide some consultancy time to support this initiative.

## Report Structure

- 1.4 The report is aimed at all those who are, or may become, involved in managing the Town Design Statement process. Section 2 sets out the main findings and recommendations. Section 3 comprises a commentary on the steps required. Section 4, the Appendices, contains a variety of background information which may be helpful.

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## 2 Main findings and recommendations

### A special place in need of care and attention

- 2.1 Great Dunmow is a very special place due to its history, architecture, townscape and location. It is much loved by its inhabitants. Due to pressure for development resulting from its identification in the Draft East of England Plan as a strategic location for growth there is an urgent need for careful and coordinated planning to ensure that new development enhances the character of Dunmow as a medieval market town in the countryside.

### Town Design Statement a useful next step

- 2.2 A considerable number of planning studies on Great Dunmow have been undertaken already and there is likely to be a need for a Masterplan in the near future to provide a detailed framework for the new development envisaged. Producing a Town Design Statement (TDS) will be a very useful, and perhaps essential, next step. The document should:
- set out what local people consider important about the town's character;
  - provide benchmarks against which to assess development proposals;
  - provide a jumping off point for future planning activity;
  - stimulate other useful planning and community development activity.
- 2.3 The steering group needs to be clear about timescales of the Local Development Scheme and how the TDS will inform, and respond to, the Local Development Documents.
- 2.4 The exercise should cover the entire urban area and as much of the surrounding urban edge as possible since this is where development pressure for new housing is likely. Other tools (eg Concept Statements) could be used as well if new developments are definitely proposed and possible sites allocated.

### Critical issues

Three particularly key issues, on which the success of the TDS initiative depends, would seem to be:

#### *a) Adoption*

- 2.5 Ensuring that the TDS is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will be important to give its recommendations teeth and provide the motivation

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for people to produce it. The steering group will need to determine what the primary purpose of the TDS is and this will help them focus on which policies the TDS is supplementing. Due to being in a transition period between the old and new planning frameworks, the procedure for adoption is unclear and needs clarification. There is likely to be a requirement for a sustainability appraisal and it may be that the consultants working for Uttlesford District Council (UDC) on this can be asked to assist. There will need to be discussions with Go-East. UDC planners need to take the lead on this and be closely involved with the TDS process from the outset to provide ongoing advice and to ensure the document integrates with the Local Development Framework.

***b) Focus***

- 2.6 Producing a TDS is likely to unleash views and passions on issues which cannot easily be dealt with in a TDS but are nevertheless important. To avoid causing frustration and raising false expectations it is important to ensure that mechanisms are in place to creatively channel all issues likely to emerge during the TDS process (see Appendix A). The Working Party might want to consider producing a secondary document, which would not aspire to being adopted as an SPD, to cover such issues.

***c) Integration***

- 2.7 The TDS needs to build on previous planning work and be part of an ongoing and integrated planning process. Otherwise it will be difficult to motivate people to spend the time and effort necessary to produce it. Previous planning documents (like some in Appendix E) need to be made available to those involved with the TDS process and the TDS, once produced, needs to be widely distributed, occasionally updated and kept available for many years to come. It is important to secure agreement from all key stakeholders in advance that the TDS is an important initiative and that the results will be valued and used. Statements of support could perhaps be requested for display during the proposed Open Day.

**Follow good practice steps**

- 2.8 It is recommended that the process set out in The Countryside Agency's guidance on Town Design Statements is followed closely unless good reasons emerge not to do so. Details of this and other relevant good practice guidance are set out below.
- 2.9 Good practice guidance on Town and Village Design Statements includes:
- ‘Town Design Statements; why and how to produce them; good practice advice’, The Countryside Agency (CA 134), March 2003 (see Appendix G)

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- ‘Town Design Statements: an evaluation of pilot projects’ Research Notes, The Countryside Agency (CRN 56), December 2002 (see Appendix H)
  - See also guidance on village design statements on the Countryside Agency website: [www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)
- 2.10 Local design guidance that will be useful includes:
- *Essex Design Guide* ISBN/DOI:1852812532, published by Essex County Council and Essex Planning Officers Association, November 2005 and the draft *Urban Place Supplement* (both available for download or purchase from Essex Design Initiative’s website [www.the-edi.co.uk/](http://www.the-edi.co.uk/) – go to Publications).
  - *Integrating Biodiversity into Development...Realising the Benefits*, guidance for developers and planners in Essex, Southend and Thurrock. Produced by Essex County Council, Essex Wildlife Trust et al. 2005. [www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk](http://www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk)
  - *A Green Infrastructure Plan for the Harlow Area and Developer Guidelines* by Chris Blandford Associates, November 2005. [www.cba.uk.net](http://www.cba.uk.net) Contains best practice guidance for developers and development control planners on how green infrastructure provision can be integrated into new development schemes. They can be used to inform masterplanning and detailed design processes, and also guide the development of green space management plans.
- 2.11 General guidance on community involvement in planning includes:
- The Community Planning Website [www.communityplanning.net](http://www.communityplanning.net)

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## 3 Next steps

- 3.1 The steps necessary are set out in ‘Town Design Statements; why and how to produce them’ (details in para 2.9 above and Appendix G). They are reproduced in bold italic below with commentary added on relevant issues.

### ***STAGE 1: GETTING STARTED***

#### ***A) Obtain background information and discuss with the local authority***

- 3.2 Previous planning documents (like some in Appendix E) need to be comprehensively identified and made widely available to those involved with the TDS process. Putting as much as possible on a website would be helpful and would be a permanent contribution to the future of the town. It is understood that Essex County Council may have undertaken studies in the 1970s and 1980s which may still be useful. It will also be useful to establish a library of completed TDSs and VDSs for inspiration (eg TDS: Maldon, Stratford on Avon, Buckingham. VDS: Writtle).

#### ***B) Identify key parties and form a steering group***

- 3.3 The Great Dunmow TDS Working Party established by the Town Council appears to have got off to a good start. It comprises a range of local interests and contains individuals with a variety of useful skills and experience. The proposal to transform it into a more independent Steering Group at the open day makes good sense and will provide the opportunity to broaden it further. Securing officers from the District and County Councils as members, or ‘advisors’, might help integrate the TDS with other planning activities and secure additional resources. There are many voluntary societies in Great Dunmow which may wish to play specific roles. Thought needs to be given to how the Steering Group is, and is seen to be, accountable and representative of the community. Formal elections are unlikely to be appropriate but it will be important that the Group’s activities are open and transparent and that opportunities are provided for its actions to be questioned and challenged if necessary.

#### ***C) Form secretariat and editorial team***

- 3.4 Coordination will be critical and the working party is fortunate in having a professional planner, Neil Blackshaw, willing to take a leading role in setting up a secretariat. The main skills apparently lacking ‘in-house’ are graphic and website

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design. The District and County Councils may be able to help. An appeal for support in these areas should be made during the launch.

***D) Training session/s to cover, for example, townscape character analysis and website management***

- 3.5 It would be useful to identify training needs as soon as possible, although training activity is probably best left until after the launch open day when more people have become involved. Most training needs can probably be met from within the working party or from the local authorities and rural community council. Early discussion of an IT strategy and establishing protocols is advised. It may also be useful, once the various groups have been established, to arrange visits to others who have been through a TDS or VDS process (e.g. Maldon, Writtle, Stratford).

***E) Workshop to identify main issues, neighbourhood areas (including the town edge) and interest/topic groups***

- 3.6 The town lends itself to analysis by character areas (loosely based on age and type of property), and establishing these provisionally at an early stage would help provide a structure for people to engage with. Theme groups though are also likely to be useful (e.g. on issues like open spaces, transport, the town edge & Great Dunmow in its landscape setting). The decision (working party, 11 Jan) for this to be done by a subgroup of the working party prior to the open day is an alternative way of approaching this which should work well providing there is an opportunity for people to make changes later. The results should be tested at the open day by means of interactive exhibits on the issues, neighbourhood areas and interest/topic groups identified.

***F) Establish project identity, for example title and logo***

- 3.7 It would be worth the working party giving this some thought before the open day. Securing support at that time may well depend on the project being well marketed as something important and interesting as well as the purpose of the exercise being very clear. The open day will itself need to be well marketed to secure a good turnout.

***G) Form neighbourhood area groups and any special topic groups***

- 3.8 See E above (para 3.6). It is envisaged that people will sign up for these at the open day. Some headhunting beforehand and afterwards may also be productive.

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***H) Publicise the project and call for volunteers***

- 3.9 The working party has identified a publicity officer who will hopefully undertake this task. It would be worth coordinating with press officers in the District and County councils and also at the Countryside Agency who may be able to assist (while ensuring that it remains a locally-led initiative). Although local publicity is the priority, the possibility of securing national publicity due to the relationship with Stansted might be worth exploring.

***I) Project launch event***

- 3.10 The proposed Open Day on 15 April 2006 would seem to be a good way to launch the initiative and get more people involved, particularly if the structure mentioned above (para 3.6) is used to encourage people to take up a range of specific responsibilities to suit their own interests and abilities. As already mentioned, there need not be a problem with asking people to sign up to a pre-prepared structure providing there is also an opportunity for them to express any views they wish at the same time. Specific methods for doing this can be found on the Community Planning Website (para 2.11). It would also be worth considering a formal press conference as part of the open day.

***STAGE 2, 3 & 4: GATHERING MATERIAL, PRODUCTION AND USING THE END PRODUCT***

***J – U)*** There will be tremendous scope for involving the wider community during the remainder of the project. Further advice can be provided in due course if required.

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# **4 Appendices**

## **Appendix A: Key Issues**

- 4.1 This appendix contains notes on some of the issues likely to emerge during public consultation on the future of Great Dunmow. Some will not be relevant for the TDS and will need to be dealt with in other forums. It must be stressed that the information contained here is based on conversations held and literature scanned; facts have not been double-checked. It provides a starting point for discussion, not a definitive analysis.

4.2 **Development pressure**

Due to location within the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough growth corridor. 8,000 new houses in Uttlesford proposed in East of England Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy) (2,650 on new sites). Debate about how much should be in or around Great Dunmow. Population of Great Dunmow c 7,000 now; could be 18,000 by 2020. Debate as to whether the Regional Plan identifies Great Dunmow as a strategic growth location will be over by March 2006. Airport expansion perceived as part of the reason for development pressure.

4.3 **North West bypass**

Construction started by developers (Wickford) as part of a planning 106 agreement. Does not have to be completed until 2 years after 651 houses have been built at Woodland Park.

4.4 **Quality of new housing development**

Concerns about quality and lack of neighbourhood character of existing and on-going new developments: the need for a sense of arrival and a sense of place, provision of local neighbourhood facilities, dispersed provision of social housing throughout developments, control of building heights and densities. Perception by some members of the community that the planning process has not served the community well in some recent developments (although it needs to be recognized that the policy framework for these dates back to the 1970's).

4.5 **Chelmer Valley**

Concern about the need to protect, extend and enhance this amenity.

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#### **4.6 Provision of adequate infrastructure**

A study entitled 2020 Vision was completed in 2001 by the Dunmow Town Strategy Group which examined the infrastructure implications of the town achieving growth to 18,000 persons. Consultations with service providers were undertaken which revealed that all services are stretched, some critically so, and indicating that if new development is proposed, the existing social and physical infrastructure is unlikely to cope without substantial up-front investment. Water supplies are already stretched, there are water shortages in some areas; much of central Dunmow lies within a flood plain; health services are already stretched to excess capacity; so are schools. Public transport provision is poor, with already stretched resources being focused in the north of the District. There are relatively few buses and no rail link, so virtually all travel is by private vehicles.

#### **4.7 High cost of housing**

Impact of new A120, opened in 2004, making it difficult for local first time buyers and encouraging Dunmow to become a dormitory town for road commuters to London.

#### **4.8 Humanising the town centre**

East-West Bypass to Braintree completed recently. Being extended to Colchester. North-South bypass shown as priority in Regional Transport Strategy but no programme for work. Construction started on north-west bypass. Once completed there is an opportunity to improve public realm in town centre with pedestrianisation or shared space, making the town centre more pedestrian friendly.

#### **4.9 Maintaining quality**

Uttlesford was described as the best place to live in England for quality of life, (Sunday Times - Homes Supplement - September 23, 2001).

Challenges in preserving what is significant about Great Dunmow in the context of further development. English Heritage's statement to the East of England Draft Plan Examination In Public comments as follows:

Para 18: 'These are rural districts and the historic environment is thus a strong determinant of their identity and character. The settlements have retained a strong relationship with the landscape and the historic town centres are the dominant focus, providing a sense of place and high quality urban environments. They have

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developed organically and incrementally and between the post-medieval period and the Second World War, like many parts of East Anglia further from London, change was very gradual with local materials and building techniques maintaining their dominance. Today, evidence of this process is strongly discernible and they still possess distinctiveness in their layout and buildings.'

Para 19: 'The Urban Practitioners report considers the potential impact of a major urban extension to Great Dunmow as identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy. It highlights the historic interest and qualities of the settlement, which has much in common with the villages and small towns of Suffolk where similar circumstances – medieval prosperity based on the wool trade – led to a prolonged period of growth.'

Para 20: 'The study emphasizes the fragility of small historic settlements to sudden and large scale development. Significant expansion runs the risk of swamping historic character, changing the relationship with the landscape and putting pressure on unique qualities. Increased demand for car parking and other facilities will tend to put the historic core under pressure for redevelopment or off-centre retailing may threaten the vitality and identity of the high street as the main focus of the town.'

Para 21: 'The study also draws attention to the impact of significant recent expansion on the west side of Great Dunmow. It concludes that the town is at a critical moment 'retaining its character as an historic market town, but facing considerable challenges in assimilating recent development....a detailed study of Great Dunmow is needed, analyzing its historic character and capacity for growth, before decisions on future expansion are made'.

#### 4.10 **Public space**

Amount and quality of linked open spaces within the urban area is a special feature of Great Dunmow which needs to be identified and used as a precedent for future developments. Consideration needs to be given to protecting and enhancing the Chelmer valley as a linear 'green lung', preserving and enhancing linkages with the Flitch Way linear park. Part of this may include considering options for the longer term future of the David Cock Bequest Land.

#### 4.11 **Potential housing sites**

Potential housing sites identified in previous studies around the edge of the town. Impact on existing settlement of concern. Need to ensure that where development occurs, it is well planned and enhances the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas (of Dunmow) as a whole. Masterplanning by Uttlesford District Council with full community engagement is seen as a pre-

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requisite to secure high quality, appropriate developments. Careful thought needs to be given to the role of the TDS on this issue. If the TDS is to become an Adopted SPD recommendations cannot be site specific.

#### **4.12 New library proposal**

Behind High Street. £400,000 allocated.

#### **4.13 Existing Design Guidance**

Essex Design Guide. Is it useful and effective? Need further and detailed guidance on making people aware of local traditions in terms of detailing and traditional materials to boost the quality of new build, so it integrates happily and enhances the town. The TDS can cover this.

#### **4.14 Need for proactive planning**

There is a perception by some members of the community that local views are being ignored on planning issues and that the relevant authorities need to engage more in pro-active forward planning, engaging fully with the community at the outset and right the way through the planning (new LDF) process. In particular such an integrated approach is seen to be needed in relation to the planning of County Council facilities (although it needs to be understood that development taking place now has its origins in decisions taken in the past).

#### **4.15 Need for jobs**

Cannot rely just on the airport, particularly as most airport workers are encouraged to use public transport which is not available from Great Dunmow. Need to create jobs within the town. Support from authorities needed for this. Site for new business park identified.

#### **4.16 Great Dunmow as local centre**

Dunmow is the ‘centre’ for a large village hinterland, extending from Takeley in the west, through to Felsted in the east; south as far as Leaden Roding and north as far as Lindsell. Settlements in the area have limited services and facilities. The District Council has commissioned a retail study and employment study which could be relevant to the TDS.

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## Appendix B: Working party membership

4.17 The Great Dunmow Town Design Statement Working Party currently includes representatives of:

- Great Dunmow Town Council
- Dunmow Chamber of Trade
- Dunmow Historical Society
- Dunmow Society
- Dunmow Town Strategy Group
- Rural Community Council Essex
- Uttlesford District Council (members)

## Appendix C: Potential resources

Notes on resources available for producing a TDS.

4.18 **Great Dunmow Town Council**

£500 allocated to TDS plus use of facilities (Foakes Hall for meetings).

4.19 **Essex County Council**

Considerable resources and expertise in planning department: Archaeology, Historic Buildings Conservation, Urban Design, Landscape and Tree specialists. Liaison needed to access it. Contact: David Andrews, Acting Manager for Historic Buildings, email: [dave.andrews@essexcc.gov.uk](mailto:dave.andrews@essexcc.gov.uk)

4.20 **Rural Community Council**

Offered to help with opinion survey, house to house and public consultation process. Contact: Chris Hobbs, Email: [Chris.hobbs@essexrcc.org.uk](mailto:Chris.hobbs@essexrcc.org.uk)

4.21 **Uttlesford District Council**

Already offering advice to assist in ensuring that the TDS can be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Point of contact: Sarah Nicholas, email: [snicholas@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:snicholas@uttlesford.gov.uk) Can undertake printing at cost through reprographic department. Is employing consultants to undertake sustainability appraisals who might be able to assist. Listed buildings officer (Barbara Bosworth) may be able to help (but is overstretched). Landscape character assessment being undertaken at present for whole of Uttlesford by Chris Blandford Associates, East Sussex (Dominic Watkins 01825 891071; [www.cba.uk.net](http://www.cba.uk.net)). Fund exists (ODPM planning delivery grant) for parish plans and VDSs but excludes town councils.

4.22 **English Heritage**

May be able to assist with exhibition material at the Open Day or other events.

Point of contact: Katharine Fletcher, Regional Planner, Email:

[Katharine.Fletcher@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:Katharine.Fletcher@english-heritage.org.uk)

## Appendix D: Visit schedule and interviews

Schedule for visit by Nick Wates to Great Dunmow, 11 & 12 January 2006		
Date and Time	People spoken with	Venues and places visited
<b>Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>		
12.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owen Wilson, Town Clerk</li> <li>• Cllr David Beedle, Town Mayor and Chair, Great Dunmow Town Design Statement Working Party</li> <li>• Pat Crosby, Countryside Advisor – Growth Areas Team Countryside Agency</li> </ul>	Town Council Offices Foakes House 47 Stortford Road Great Dunmow CM6 1DG Guided tour of town by David Beedle including Woodlands Park (including Housing Association houses), Dunmow Primary School, High Stile, The Downs, HRS and the Sports Centre, Bowers Bridge, Church End, Recreation Ground, The Broadway, Braintree Road, Chelmsford Road industrial estates, Ongar Road, Lukins Mead, High Street, Doctors Pond and Talberds Ley.
13.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pat Crosby, Countryside Advisor – Growth Areas Team Countryside Agency</li> </ul>	Saracens Head Hotel High Street Great Dunmow 01371 873901
14.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Nicholas, Senior Planning Officer, Uttlesford District Council</li> <li>• Pat Crosby</li> </ul>	District Council Offices, High Street/ New Street (behind war Memorial) 01799 510490
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Centre staff</li> <li>• Pat Crosby</li> </ul>	Community Information Centre, District Council Offices, High Street
15.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local walkers and shopkeepers</li> </ul>	Great Dunmow Town Trail: High Street, Church End, River Chelmer
17.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr John Murphy, District councillor</li> </ul>	Saracens Head Hotel
18.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Trudi Hughes, Town councillor</li> </ul>	Downs Room, Foakes Hall
19.00	Neil Blackshaw	Downs Room, Foakes Hall
19.30	TDS Working Party	Downs Room, Foakes Hall

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	<p>meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr D R Beedle (Chairman)</li> <li>• Cllr Davey</li> <li>• Mr Chris Hobbs (RCCE)</li> <li>• Mr Neil Blackshaw (Dunmow Town Strategy Group)</li> <li>• Mr M Foster (Dunmow Society)</li> <li>• Cllr Clive Smith</li> <li>• Cllr Trudi Hughes</li> <li>• Reverend Peter Street</li> <li>• Pat Crosby</li> </ul>	
21.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr D R Beedle (Chairman)</li> <li>• Reverend Peter Street</li> <li>• Cllr Clive Smith</li> <li>• Cllr Trudi Hughes</li> <li>• Pat Crosby</li> </ul>	Saracens Head Hotel
<b>Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>		
9.30	Cllr Mike Perry, Chairman, Chamber of Trade and Commerce	Lipson Photography, High Street, Dunmow
11.00	Driveabout	The Gardens of Easton Lodge, Church End, Felsted, railway trail, Woodlands Park, Tescos
14.00		Depart

#### **Additional interviews by telephone or email:**

- Sally King, The Countryside Agency (Cheltenham office)
- David Green, Deputy Town Clerk, Dunmow Town Council
- Martin Wakelin, Landscape Division, Essex County Council

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## **Appendix E: Sources**

Documents and websites reviewed in the course of this study, in approximate date order. Please note that not all have been examined in detail.

**Land Holdings**, Great Dunmow Town Council, undated.

**Great Dunmow, Town Appraisal**, Essex County Council, 1969

**Great Dunmow Feasibility Study**, Uttlesford District Council, 1987  
(identification of possible housing sites)

**Great Dunmow Local Plan**, Draft for Consultation, Uttlesford District Council, 1987.

**Great Dunmow, Historic Town Project, Assessment Report**, Essex County Council (Planning), April 1999

**Dunmow Chelmer Meadows**, Terri Tarpey for Great Dunmow Town Council, 1999 (and accompanying management plan)

**Dunmow & District Directory and Town Guide 2004-2005**, Dunmow Chamber of Commerce, 2004

**Uttlesford Local Plan**, Adopted 20 January 2005, ISBN 0 905993 91 8

**The Historic Settlement Character of the Stansted/M11 sub-region**

A submission by English Heritage to the examination in Public of the draft East of England Plan, Final Report, October 2005

**East of England Draft Plan Examination in Public; Statement by English Heritage, 2005**

**Great Dunmow Town Centre Study**, Brendan Johnston, Transport Planner for Essex County Council, 2005

**Statutory Planning**, Rural Community Council Essex, 2005 (extract on VDS § only)

**Entry Form 2005 Calor Essex Village of the Year/Best Kept Village Competition Form**

**Visitor Guide to Uttlesford 2005**

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**Leaflets: Great Dunmow; Ancient Flitch Town; Great Dunmow Museum; Town Trail; The Dunmow Flitch; The Great Dunmow Maltings**

**Great Dunmow Town Statement Working Party, Minutes 30/11/05 and 11/1/06**

<http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/>

<http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/landscape/pp/index.asp>

<http://www.the-edi.co.uk/>

## **Appendix F: Nick Wates biographical note**

Nick Wates is a leading authority on community involvement in planning and architecture. As an independent writer and practitioner he has participated in, and chronicled its development for over 25 years. His most recent book is 'The Community Planning Handbook' (Earthscan, 2000, with a web version at [www.communityplanning.net](http://www.communityplanning.net)). Previous books include 'Community Architecture' (Penguin, 1987, with Charles Knevitt) and 'Action Planning' (POWIA, 1996). All three have been widely translated.

Born in 1951, he gained a First in Architecture, Planning, Building and Environmental Studies and a Diploma in Development Planning from University College London.

Nick has facilitated numerous community engagement events in the UK and overseas and directed local regeneration initiatives, including the Hastings Urban Conservation Project in the early nineties. Recent projects have included engaging stakeholders in producing Area Development Frameworks for the southern and eastern edges of Cambridge, managing consultation on a Development Brief for Peterborough Station Quarter and producing draft good practice guidance on Town Design Statements for The Countryside Agency. Further details on [www.nickwates.co.uk](http://www.nickwates.co.uk)

**Appendix G:**  
**Countryside Agency**  
**Good Practice Advice**



# Town Design Statements

**Why and how to produce them**

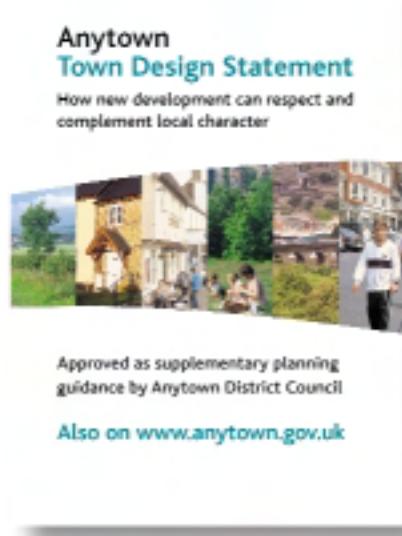
**Good practice advice**



**Working for people and places in rural England**

# Town Design Statements

## What is a Town Design Statement?



It is a published document that gives a detailed guide to the character of a town. It sets out the specific nature of the buildings and landscape which make the town distinctive, with recommendations on how to encourage new development that enhances and complements what already exists. A Town Design Statement is similar in concept to a Village Design Statement (see further information) but the scale and complexity of towns means that a carefully co-ordinated approach is required in its production.

### The key features of a Town Design Statement are:

- the involvement of the community in its production, in partnership with experts in a range of disciplines;
- its adoption as 'supplementary planning guidance'. This ensures that it will have real influence on new development.

## Why produce a Town Design Statement?

### The main aims of a Town Design Statement are to:

- improve new development by providing guidance to landowners, developers and architects before they prepare proposals;
- reduce unsympathetic development by making it easier for planning authorities to seek improvements in planning applications and reject those which are not in sympathy with what local people want.

### Other positive benefits may include:

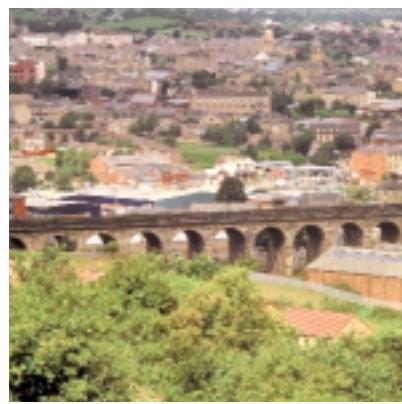
- raising awareness of local design and environmental issues;
- creating partnerships between different groups in the community;
- acting as a catalyst for new initiatives which may be started as a result;
- speeding up the development process.

## How does a Town Design Statement relate to other plans and initiatives?

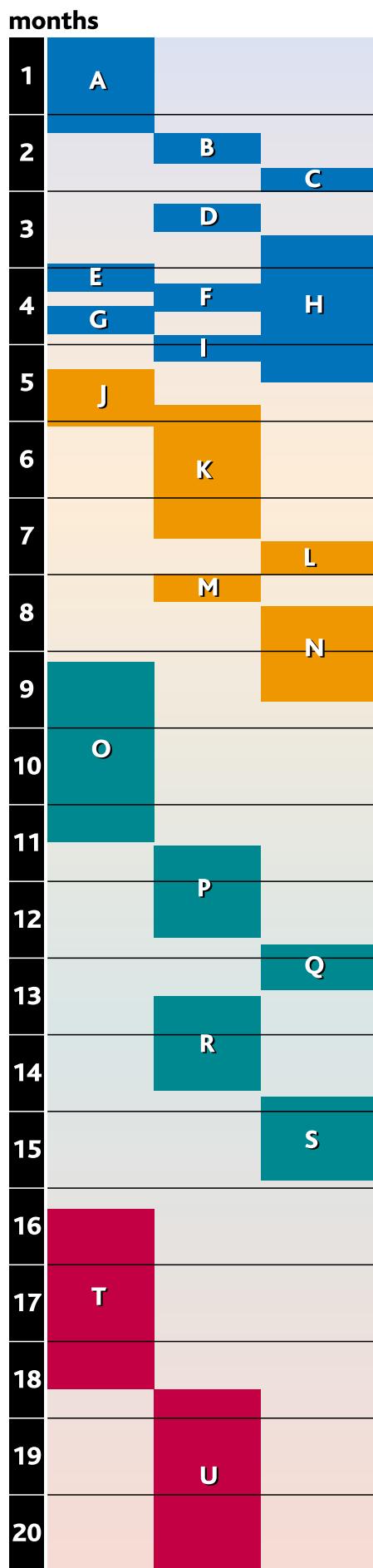
A Town Design Statement can be produced in isolation or as part of a wider community planning exercise. For instance, it can be a valuable component of a local community strategy. The need for one might be identified during a Market Towns Healthcheck (see further information) or community appraisal.



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## Process

Producing a Town Design Statement needs careful planning and management. The process shown here is one possibility, but it should be used as a guide not a blueprint.

### ■ Getting started

- A** Obtain background information and discuss with the local authority.
- B** Identify key parties and form steering group.
- C** Form secretariat and editorial team.
- D** Training session/s to cover, for example, townscape character analysis and website management.
- E** Workshop to identify main issues, neighbourhood areas (including the town edge) and interest/topic groups.
- F** Establish project identity, for example title and logo.
- G** Form neighbourhood area groups and any special topic groups.
- H** Publicise the project and call for volunteers.
- I** Project launch event.

### ■ Gathering material

- J** Townscape character analysis training for volunteers.
- K** Undertake townscape character analysis in each neighbourhood.
- L** Local area exhibitions and workshops.
- M** Town exhibition and workshop.
- N** Review and revise area character assessments.

### ■ Production

- O** Prepare draft Town Design Statement.
- P** Consult on draft Town Design Statement.
- Q** Revise Town Design Statement.
- R** Secure formal approval as supplementary planning guidance.
- S** Revise and print.

### ■ Using the end product

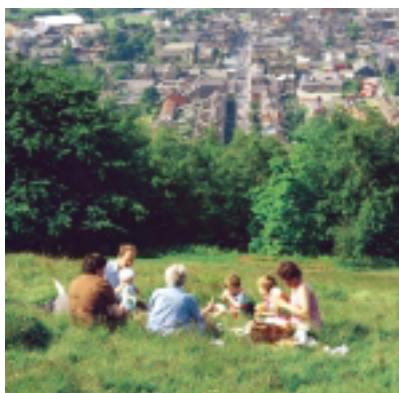
- T** Publicise. Make widely available in print and on a website.
- U** Update and reprint Town Design Statement as necessary. Maintain website with updates.



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© The Countryside Agency – Photo: Dave Burton



© The Countryside Agency – Photo: Simon Warner

## Organisational arrangements

### Steering Group

The Steering Group should be a partnership of all key interest groups and agencies including representatives from town, district and county councils, voluntary organisations and the private sector. Monthly meetings are recommended. It is essential that the Steering Group keeps focused on design and character issues and leaves controversial policy issues to other initiatives (eg local plan review).

### Secretariat

A strong secretariat is needed to drive and co-ordinate the process and give day to day direction. It should include people with expertise in project management, character assessment and community involvement. Where key skills are unavailable on a voluntary basis, it is recommended that they are provided ‘in kind’ by agencies or that funds are available to buy them in.

### Area and topic groups

Area groups based on townscape character, not administrative boundaries, are likely to be most effective for townscape character analysis. But townwide special topic and interest groups may also be useful (eg. on transport).

### Editorial team

The editorial team should include expertise in writing, editing, graphics and websites.

## Suggested Organisational arrangements

### Steering Group

Key interests including town, district and county councils, voluntary organisations and the private sector. Meet monthly.

### Secretariat

Expertise in project management, character assessment and community involvement. Day to day direction

### Area and topic groups

### Editorial team

Expertise in writing, editing, graphics and websites.

## Product

### Sample content

The list below shows the possible content of a Town Design Statement. However, this is just a suggestion. Your Statement should be tailored to the particular character and needs of your town.

- 1 What makes Anytown special?** A selection of quotes, facts and images.
- 2 Main issues** Summary of the main problems and opportunities affecting design issues in the town: economic, social, environmental.
- 3 Neighbourhood areas** Overview of different parts of the town and how they relate to each other. Map.
- 4 Townscape analysis - area by area** Distinctive features, main issues and recommendations for each neighbourhood area. (See sample format in the box below.)
- 5 Conclusions** Overall distinctive features, issues and recommendations for the town as a whole.
- 6 About this Design Statement** Who produced it and how. Who it is for and how to use it. When it will be revised.

### Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is advice which adds to, or refines, the local authority development plan (or the new local development documents). To make it easier for your Statement, or part of it, to be adopted as SPG by the local authority, you should:

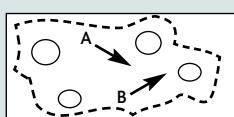
- ensure that planning officers are involved early on in the process;
- ensure the recommendations are consistent with local plan/local development document policies;
- cross reference recommendations in the Statement to relevant policies in the local plan/local development document.

## Tips

- The Town Design Statement will normally be a printed report which can also be placed on a website. But do not be afraid to experiment with other possibilities.
- Developing a clear Statement structure early on will help keep people focused. It can always change later.
- Making the Statement visual - using photos, drawings, sketches, diagrams - will help make it accessible. And include people in some photos - it's the community that makes the place what it is!
- Use Village Design Statements as inspiration but remember that a Town Design Statement will almost invariably be more complex.
- Getting people to take photos of their area and putting captions to them is one of the best ways of generating enthusiasm.

### Townscape character analysis format

**Area name** and short summary description



**Area map** with key features and photo locations marked



**Context**

Location in town diagram

**Distinctive features** Bullet points covering building design styles, spatial layouts, building materials, landscape setting and special features.

**Main issues** Bullet points covering the problems and opportunities in the area as seen from a variety of perspectives.

**Recommendations** General design principles for upgrading or for new development.



**Distinctive features and issues illustrated** (caption for each illustration)



**Materials and detailing** (caption for each photo or sketch).

The diagram (left) shows a possible format for collecting and presenting townscape character analysis and recommendations. Something similar should be completed for each neighbourhood area. Any quantity of material can be collected but editing it down to fit on one or two sheets will make it more useful for the end product and will help to keep the project focused

## Further information

### Publications

#### **Town Design Statements**

Research Note (CRN 56).

Town Design Statements: an evaluation of pilot projects. Countryside Agency, 2002.

#### **Market Towns**

Market towns toolkit (CA 27). Countryside Agency, 2000.

#### **Parish Plans**

Parish Plans: guidance for parish and town councils - interim guidance, 2002 (available from the Agency website - see below).

#### **Design**

Design of rural workplace buildings (CA 36).

Countryside Agency, 2000.

#### **Landscape Character Assessment**

Landscape Character Assessment - Guidance for England and Scotland (CAX 84) Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002.

#### **Publications are available from:**

Countryside Agency Publications, PO Box 125,  
Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7EP

### Websites

#### **Countryside Agency – General**

[www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

#### **Countryside Agency – Market Towns**

[www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns)

#### **Countryside Agency – Parish Plans**

[www.countryside.gov.uk/vitalvillages](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/vitalvillages)

#### **Countryside Agency – Village Design Statement**

[www.countryside.gov.uk/villagedesign](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/villagedesign)

#### **Landscape Character Assessment –**

#### **Countryside Character Network**

An on-line discussion forum at [www.ccnetwork.org.uk](http://www.ccnetwork.org.uk)

#### **Community Planning**

[www.communityplanning.net](http://www.communityplanning.net)

### Organisations

#### **The Countryside Agency**

Planning & Sustainable Development,  
John Dower House  
Crescent Place, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 3RA  
Tel 01242 521381  
Fax 01242 584270  
Email [psd@countryside.gov.uk](mailto:psd@countryside.gov.uk)  
[www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

#### **Action for Market Towns**

A national network for local action.  
PO Box 299, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1UU  
Tel: 0845 644 6202  
Fax: 01284 761816  
Email: [info@towns.org.uk](mailto:info@towns.org.uk)  
[www.towns.org.uk](http://www.towns.org.uk)

#### **Planning Aid**

Free, independent and professional planning advice to groups and individuals unable to afford to employ a planning consultant.  
The Royal Town Planning Institute,  
Planning Aid Manager  
Unit 319, The Custard Factory,  
Gibb Street, Birmingham B9 4AA  
Tel: 0121 766 5282  
Fax: 0121 693 1201  
Email: [planaidcoord@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:planaidcoord@rtpi.org.uk)  
[www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-advice/pa-help](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-advice/pa-help)

#### **Funderfinder**

Develops and distributes software to help individuals and not-for-profit organisations in the UK to identify charitable trusts that may provide funding.  
65 Raglan Road, Leeds, LS2 9DZ  
Tel: 0113 243 3008  
Fax: 0113 243 2966  
Email: [info@funderfinder.org.uk](mailto:info@funderfinder.org.uk)  
[www.funderfinder.org.uk](http://www.funderfinder.org.uk)

## Countryside Agency pilot Town Design Statement contacts

### Maldon

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Tel 01621 857050

### Selby

Steve Shaw-Wright,  
Civic Centre, Portholme Rd,  
Selby, North Yorks Y08 4SB  
Tel 01757 705101

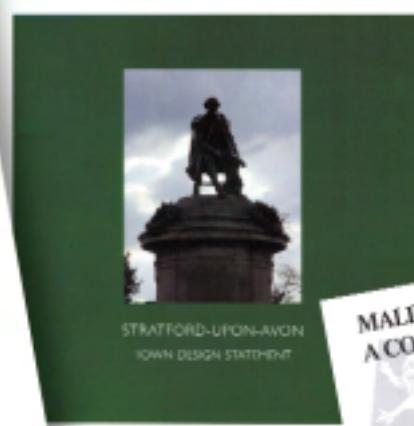
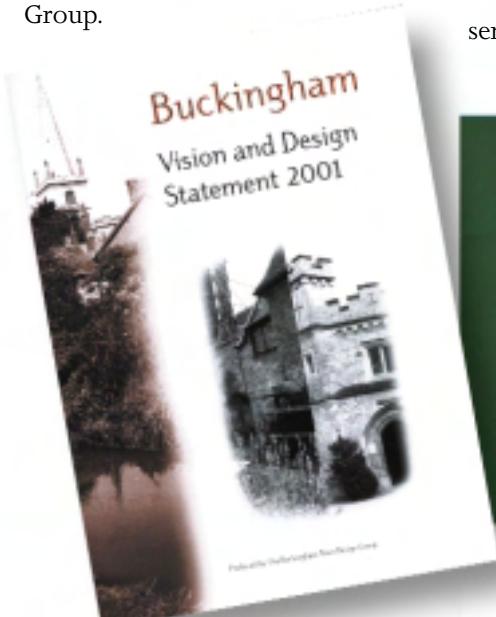
### Stratford-upon-Avon

Maggie Lewis, 9 Heron Lane,  
Stratford-upon-Avon,  
Warwickshire CV37 9EG  
Tel 01789 292878

Our Statement has proved enormously valuable for improving planning applications - it's another tool in the armoury of those who want to see better design.

### Carolyn Cumming

Buckingham Town Design Statement Steering Group.



## Feedback

This advice has been prepared after detailed evaluation of three pilot Town Design Statements produced for Maldon in Essex, Selby in North Yorkshire and Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire. If you have any comments or feedback on using this advice, we would like to hear from you. Please send them to the Planning and Sustainable Development Branch at the Countryside Agency (address shown opposite).

The Countryside Agency would like to thank all those involved in the pilot projects for their help and assistance.

This Good Practice Advice was produced by Nick Wates for The Countryside Agency.  
© The Countryside Agency, July 2002.

It makes people stop and take stock of where the town is going and how it could be better - you focus on it and think about it.

### Margaret Day

Maldon Town Design Statement Steering Group.

The Countryside Agency  
Good Practice Advice  
July 2002



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CA 134

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March 2003 6k

# Research notes

**Issue:** CRN 56  
**Date:** December 2002

## Appendix H: Countryside Agency Research Note

# Town Design Statements: an evaluation of pilot projects

**A carefully coordinated process is required to adapt the village design concept for larger settlements.**

### Summary

The Countryside Agency has enabled three towns to produce pilot Town Design Statements (TDS) to test the feasibility of adapting the Village Design Statement (VDS) concept to larger settlements. The three towns were Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, Selby in North Yorkshire and Maldon in Essex.

Research by Nick Wates for the Countryside Agency evaluated the pilot projects and developed good practice advice (the advice has been published separately by the Countryside Agency).

The main conclusion is that the VDS concept will adapt to larger settlements using a carefully coordinated process to manage the greater number of interests and issues involved.

### Main findings

#### Adaptability

The Village Design Statement concept will adapt to larger settlements but significant changes are required to the process due to the scale and complexity of towns in comparison with villages. Village services tend to be used mainly by people who live there, whereas towns are often subject to the conflicts of interest caused by the diverse needs of many groups from within the town and elsewhere. In addition, there are likely to be more areas with very different characteristics, making the task of producing a statement more challenging.

The main changes to the process needed are:

- division of the town into distinctive neighbourhoods so that people can focus on what they know best;
- great care at the outset to ensure that the steering group is representative of the various interest groups;
- careful management of the overall process to coordinate the area-based work as well as looking at the town as a whole.

**An important element is division of the town into areas based on distinctive character so that people focus on what they know best.**

# The Countryside Agency research notes

**Town Design Statements should be independent initiatives but integrated with other community planning activity.**

**Good management and coordination is needed and a wide range of expertise.**

## Relationship to other initiatives

- A TDS should be carried out as an independent exercise, with a clear but limited focus, to avoid conflict with other initiatives.
- TDS projects should be integrated with other community planning initiatives to avoid duplication of effort or confusion. A TDS can provide a useful component of a local plan, a Community Strategy or the new proposed Local Development Documents.
- The need for a TDS may well be identified by a Market Towns Healthcheck, a community appraisal or other initiatives looking at broader issues.
- A TDS will probably be carried out by larger settlements than those covered by a Parish Plan where the design component may be provided by a Village Design Statement.
- The adoption of a TDS as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is very important, and needs to be considered from the outset.

## Organisation

Producing a Town Design Statement is a complex task requiring good management and coordination from start to finish:

- A range of expertise is required at various stages and projects are unlikely to succeed if the right skills are not available at the right time. Skills required include: project management; facilitating community involvement; partnership working; publicity; townscape character analysis; architecture; planning; writing; editing; graphic design and website management.
- The process needs to be managed by a group which has the confidence of the town's people and also contains, or has access to, the skills noted above. This will normally require a partnership Steering Group comprising public, private and voluntary sectors, and a Secretariat provided by one of the partners or an independent local consultant.
- The full support of local authority planning officers is necessary, from the outset, to avoid wasted effort and help in securing SPG status.
- Dividing a town into neighbourhood areas will make townscape character analysis easier, allowing local people to relate to what they know and care about most. The division should relate to topography, land use or history rather than administrative or political boundaries. The town edge, as the likely focus of new development, should be included in the study.
- All areas of the town should be equally represented to avoid patchy coverage in the TDS.
- There may be some groups in the town that are based on interests or topics, rather than geographical area, (for example, a horticultural society or sports club that represents the whole town, or a group focusing on local transport issues) and these need to be integrated into the process. The design statement should bring together the different areas and interest groups to form a coherent statement for the town as a whole.

**The process needs to be sharply focused on producing the end product; a Design Statement.**

**Key steps are:**

**1 Getting started**

**2 Gathering material**

**3 Production**

**4 Using the end product**

**Guidance is needed on the structure and content of the end product.**

**Key elements of the process will need funding**

## **Process**

- The process must sharply focus on achieving the end product, to prevent frustration and to avoid being side-tracked by issues which should be part of other initiatives (eg. the local plan review).
- Four key stages can be identified: Getting started; Gathering material; Production; and Using the end product.
- A range of approaches are required to involve people effectively. These can include: well facilitated workshops; interactive exhibitions; character and photo surveying; participatory editing; websites; ideas competitions.
- Young people have much to contribute, and targeted special methods can encourage them to participate (eg. competition for a project logo).
- The production of draft statements at an early stage helps focus people's attention on the main objective and what is needed to achieve it.

## **Product**

- Almost all those involved in the pilot projects expressed the need for guidance on the nature of the end product, in particular the requirements of supplementary planning guidance.
- The final product can be in a printed report format or other formats including web-based reports. Websites have the advantage of being easier to update.
- To avoid massively long reports, information needs to be carefully structured and edited to provide transparent links from the analysis to the recommendations. The more information that can be conveyed with graphics and images the better.

## **Funding**

Key elements of the process will need funding. The amount of money required will depend on what expertise and facilities are provided 'in kind' by partner organisations and volunteers, with funds needed to buy in any remaining skills and expertise not available locally. Some funding will be required right from the start of the project to avoid volunteers being out of pocket.

Key elements likely to require finance include:

- photography and production of publicity and exhibition materials;
- design and printing of the Statement and website construction.

The pilot TDS were helped by Countryside Agency grants because they were experimental projects, but they were also successful in attracting additional funding from various sources, including the local authorities. Information on sources of funding is available in the TDS Good Practice Advice.

# The Countryside Agency research notes

**Training is needed on the 'why' and 'how' to produce a TDS, and on character assessment methods.**

## Training and support

The extent to which towns will need training and support will depend on the skills and expertise available locally. This may vary greatly from town to town and also within different areas of a town, with the possibility that disadvantaged areas may need more support than affluent areas.

Key training needs are likely to be:

- for the steering group on why and how to produce a TDS and on involvement methods;
- for all those undertaking townscape character analysis on how to do it;
- for those involved in production on information technology and participatory editing.

Information about the process in other towns, and the Design Statements they have produced, will be particularly useful. Visits to others will also be helpful. Contacts for the pilot TDS are available in the TDS Good Practice Advice.

The Countryside Agency's market towns website and market town learning network are two promotional opportunities ([www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns)).

## Conclusions

Town Design Statements are a very exciting initiative which could have a huge impact on improving the quality of our towns and on the ability of people in towns to improve their own surroundings. A great deal has yet to be learnt on how best to do it but a good start has been made. The Good Practice Advice will help other towns to produce their own Town Design Statement.

## References

Town Design Statements: why and how to produce them, good practice advice (CA 134) to be produced by the Countryside Agency early in 2003.

Market towns toolkit (CA 27)  
Countryside Agency - available from the Agency website.

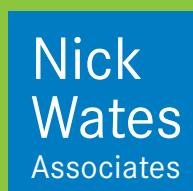
Parish Plan: guidance for parish and town councils - interim guidance, 2002 - available from the Agency website.

Landscape Character Assessment - Guidance for England and Scotland (CAX 84).  
Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002. (Available at [www.countryside.gov.uk/cci/guidance](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/cci/guidance). See also the Countryside Character website at [www.ccnetwork.org.uk](http://www.ccnetwork.org.uk))

Making sense of place: Landscape Character assessment - Summary guidance for England and Scotland (CAX 94). Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002.

Further information on Countryside Agency work in market towns and villages is available from:  
[www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/market-towns)  
[www.countryside.gov.uk/vitalvillages](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/vitalvillages)

**Countryside Agency Research Notes can also be viewed on our website:**  
**[www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)**



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