

PC 470/24

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2024

REVISED ASHURST AND COLBURY VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT CONSULTATION DRAFT

Report by: David Illsley, Policy & Conservation Manager

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement was prepared between 2011-2013 by a steering group comprising local residents and parish councillors. The Village Design Statement was formally adopted by the National Park Authority as a supplementary planning document in June 2013 following a period of public consultation.
- 1.2 In the decade since the adoption of the Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement there have been significant changes in both national and local policy and design guidance. For example, the new National Park Local Plan was adopted in 2019 and the revised National Park Design Guide was adopted in January 2022. Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council is keen to update their Village Design Statement to ensure it is still afforded weight in planning decision-making. This requires the revised document to be subject to public consultation, the consideration of comments received, and a formal decision of the full Authority. This report sets out the first steps in this process.

2. The need to update the Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement

- 2.1 Following the adoption of the new National Park Local Plan in August 2019, an assessment was made of the weight that could be afforded to all adopted supplementary planning documents. Report AM 585/19 was considered at the full Authority meeting in October 2019 and set out more detail. In essence the weight afforded to supplementary planning documents by the decision-maker (whether that is Authority officers for delegated planning decisions, our Planning Committee or the Planning Inspectorate) is proportionate to the degree of consistency between the supplementary guidance and the adopted development plan policies for the area.
- 2.2 In terms of the adopted Village Design Statements, the report concluded,

“Given the continued emphasis on reinforcing local distinctiveness and good design within the new Local Plan (2019), there continues to be a strategic policy hook for the production of local design guidelines. It is therefore recommended that the seven adopted Village Design Statements in the National Park [including Ashurst and Colbury] continue to be given weight as material planning considerations. It is recognised that across the seven adopted VDSs there may be aspects that may require updating to reflect the new Local Plan policies; and the weight given to the adopted VDSs by the decision-maker will be proportionate to the consistency with the policies in the new Local Plan (2019).”
- 2.3 Any updates to the Village Design Statements in the National Park must therefore be consistent with the policies in the adopted development plan they are supplementing; and they cannot introduce new planning policies. It is also clear that local design

guidance can continue to have a role in planning decision-making. Section 12 (paragraphs 131 – 134) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) states,

“Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics...Design guides can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site-specific scale, and to carry weight in decision-making should be produced either as part of a plan or as supplementary planning documents.”

- 2.4 The Authority’s revised Design Guide was formally adopted as a supplementary planning document in January 2022. It provides comprehensive design guidance and was adopted following engagement with local architects, town and parish councils, statutory consultees and other interested parties. The Design Guide applies across the National Park and having this up-to-date guidance in place reduces the need for local communities to revise their own design guidance. Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council has confirmed they still wish to proceed with updating their Village Design Statement; and for it to be taken forward as a supplementary planning document by the Authority.

3. The revised draft Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement (Annex 1)

- 3.1 The revised draft Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement is consciously a succinct document, aimed primarily at assisting local residents, prospective residents and property owners when considering the design of new development within the parish. The paragraph 1.3 of the introduction states, *“Identifying what makes Ashurst and Colbury special and distinctive supports the concept that changes to individual buildings, groups of buildings or the village as a whole, should be based on an understanding of the past and present character of the village. This would enable new development to make a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness of the parish.”*
- 3.2 The main updates to the content of the revised document presented at Annex 1 compared to the existing Village Design Statement (2013) are as follows:
- Chapter 1 – Introduction includes additional wording on the how the updated Statement complements the National Park Local Plan (2019) and the revised National Park Design Guide (2022). This provides an appropriate cross-reference to the strategic policies the revised Design Statement is supplementing. A summary is also given of how the community have been notified of the updated guidance.
 - Chapter 2 – History includes reference to Ashurst & Colbury being one of the ‘defined villages’ within the planning policy framework for the National Park.
 - Chapter 2 - History has been updated to include additional detail on population change over time. The important dates timeline has been updated to include recent events, such as the celebration of the Queens Platinum Jubilee and King Charles’ Coronation, and the village being awarded runner up in Best Outdoor Space category in the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Village of the Year competition (2022).
 - Chapter 3 – Important Historic Buildings has been expanded to comprehensively cover the nationally designated listed buildings and the identified locally listed buildings (non-designated heritage assets) within the parish. The section now includes an excerpt from Historic England’s searchable map, pinpointing the 5 nationally Listed Buildings in the parish. Another map has been annotated with the locations of the locally listed buildings and other historic buildings of note in the parish. Brief descriptions and photographs of each building have been provided, which is supported and helps make the document more informative.

- Chapter 4 - Community Facilities and the Local Economy recommendations have been revised to focus more specifically on local design considerations and this is supported. Previous references to the retention of local services and the use of developer contributions towards open space provision have been removed as they are planning matters outside the scope of local design guidelines.
- Chapter 5 – Nature Reserves and Natural Habitats has been updated to include maps of the Fletchwood Meadows SSSI and also the trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders in the parish. The recommendations that follow have been amended to more specifically focus on local design considerations (rather than planning policy matters that are outside the scope of a Village Design Statement).
- Chapter 6 – Built Environment now includes updated photographs to reflect the prevailing character in different parts of the parish. The section on solar panels and heat pumps has been expanded, reflecting how the use of this technology has increased since the original Village Design Statement was adopted in 2013.
- Chapter 6 – Built Environment recommendations have been expanded to cover additional areas that are important to the local community. These include a recommendation relating to glazing and external lighting, as well as a cross-reference to the National Park Design Guide (2022).
- Chapter 7 - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure recommendations have been revised to include consideration of EV charging facilities for new developments. This again reflects how the provision of EV charging has evolved since the adoption of the original Village Design Statement in 2013.
- The current Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement (2013) includes an annex listing the relevant planning policies in the New Forest National Park Core Strategy & Development Management Policies DPD (2010). During discussions with the Parish Council it was agreed that this was not necessary, as the adopted development plan for the National Park is referenced elsewhere in the Statement.

4. Consultation on the revised draft Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement

- 4.1 Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council has confirmed they wish their revised draft Village Design Statement to be taken forward by the Authority for adoption as a supplementary planning document. National planning regulations therefore require a period of public consultation of at least 4 weeks on the draft supplementary planning document. Locally, the Authority is committed to a 6-week period of consultation on draft documents.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the public consultation on the revised Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement commences in late October 2024, running for a 6-week period to December 2024. A range of statutory and other local consultees will be directly notified of the consultation and invited to submit their representations during the 6-week period.
- 4.3 All the representations received will be reviewed by Authority officers (liaising with the Parish Council) and changes made to the Village Design Statement. A 'consultation statement' will be prepared summarising the main issues raised during the consultation; and how those issues have been addressed in the final document. The document design, layout and formatting will all be finalised at this stage. The formal adoption of the Village Design Statement will be a decision for the full Authority meeting, with the meeting in January 2025 identified as a date for consideration of the final document.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Ashurst & Colbury is the second of the seven parish councils with adopted village design statements in the National Park to confirm they wish to formally update their design guidance following the adoption of the National Park Local Plan in August 2019 and the National Park Design Guide in 2022. Our own assessment of the weight to be afforded to supplementary planning documents (including village design statements) undertaken in 2019 highlights the benefits of updating local parish-led design guidance.
- 5.2 Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council has considered the Authority's updated Design Guide document (2022) and feels there is still a role their updated Village Design Statement can play. The Parish Council has worked with the Authority's planning policy and building design & conservation officers on the revisions. Officers are content that the updates to the Village Design Statement do not conflict with the Authority's own policies and guidance and therefore it can proceed to public consultation. Members are therefore asked to approve the document for the purposes of a 6-week public consultation.

Recommendation:

Members:

- (i) approve the revised draft Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement (Annex 1) for a statutory period of public consultation; and
- (ii) note that the final version of the Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement will be considered at a full Authority meeting for formal adoption in due course.

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Papers:

PC 470/24 – cover paper

Annex 1 – Revised draft Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement

Equality Impact Assessment:

The revised draft Ashurst & Colbury Village Design Statement will be subject to a statutory period of public consultation. This will include a range of stakeholders, including different representative bodies.