

# Stradbroke

PAST PRESENT and FUTURE

## Village Design Statement



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## Village Design Statement



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Design is a very subjective issue. One person's likes are another's dislikes and trying to put some framework around what is good or bad design can seem very bureaucratic.

This Village Design Statement should be thought of, not in terms of good or bad, but of "what is appropriate to Stradbroke?"

Whether we like it or not, Stradbroke will probably expand over the next twenty years, the settlement boundaries may be extended during that time, there will be more housing, more traffic, more issues. We, the community, can either stand back and let things happen or we can participate and try to influence the change process for the overall benefit of the whole community.

**Village Design Statements are a very positive way of having the community's views adopted as part of the Planning Process.**

# 1. Introduction

## **What is a Village Design Statement ?**

As the name implies, the Village Design Statement (VDS) is concerned specifically with the DESIGN of Stradbroke's physical features and the layout of the village. It gives guidance on how these should be respected in any new development. It is part of the Village Plan and is founded on social, economic and environmental factors considered important by the village community.

## **Why do we need one ?**

Without a Village Design Statement those of us who live in Stradbroke have no influence over the scale or type or design of future development in the village. With it, development will be more in line with ways residents want the village to be changed or protected.

## **What does it do ?**

If it meets the requirements of Mid Suffolk District Council it will be adopted as 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' and will support the Council's Local Plan policies. It will then provide guidance to planners, designers and developers. Note though that this is 'guidance', the District Council can over-rule it - but a Village Design Statement will strengthen the Parish Council's hand during consultations over planning applications and when there is conflict.

## **Who will it benefit ?**

It will mainly benefit those of us who live in Stradbroke, and our families. It will help lead to the types of development the community want, not those which are most profitable for the developer. It will give planners and designers positive guidance on what the community consider acceptable design and so help protect the essential character of Stradbroke.

## **How has it been drawn up ?**

This VDS has been drawn up by the Supporting Stradbroke team, (a sub-group set up by and reporting back to the Parish Council) on the basis of extensive consultation with Stradbroke residents, through:

- Local Villages' Survey
- Housing Survey
- Public exhibitions and meetings
- Distribution and feedback on the draft Village Plan and Village Design Statement

## 2. Stradbroke's Evolution

The village has evolved around the central staggered crossroads. All roads in and out of the village go through the village centre with Church Street being the common link.

On Church Street, the church of All Saints is the focal point of the village and dominates the village centre abutting Church Street and Queen Street, where the village shops have always been located. Wilby Road (from the south) joins Church Street at the junction of New Street, which is the route in from the west. Queen Street, from the north, joins it halfway along and Laxfield Road comes into it from the east.

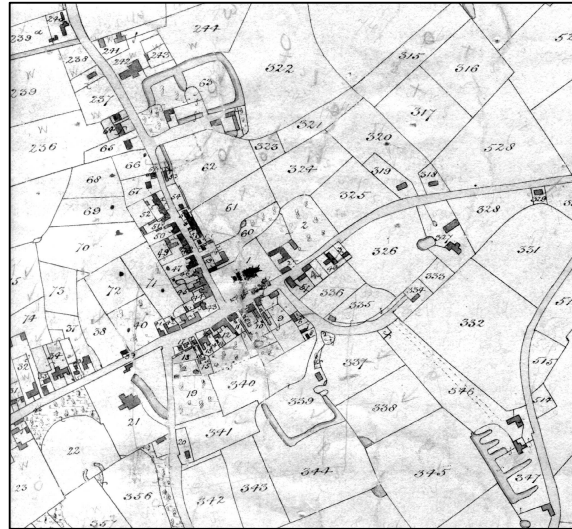
The village has grown out along these roads with a particular distinctiveness, in that Stradbroke of the past, was an "open" village with many landowners. This has resulted in there being more houses and a greater variety of housing than would have occurred in a "closed" village where only one, or possibly two, landowners controlled what was built.

The village thus evolved in an unplanned fashion with houses built fronting onto the four roads. As a result there was only one way to get into the centre and that was along those roads.....they funnelled villagers to and from the centre and still do today. With no "back roads" and short cuts people saw and met each other, as they still do today.

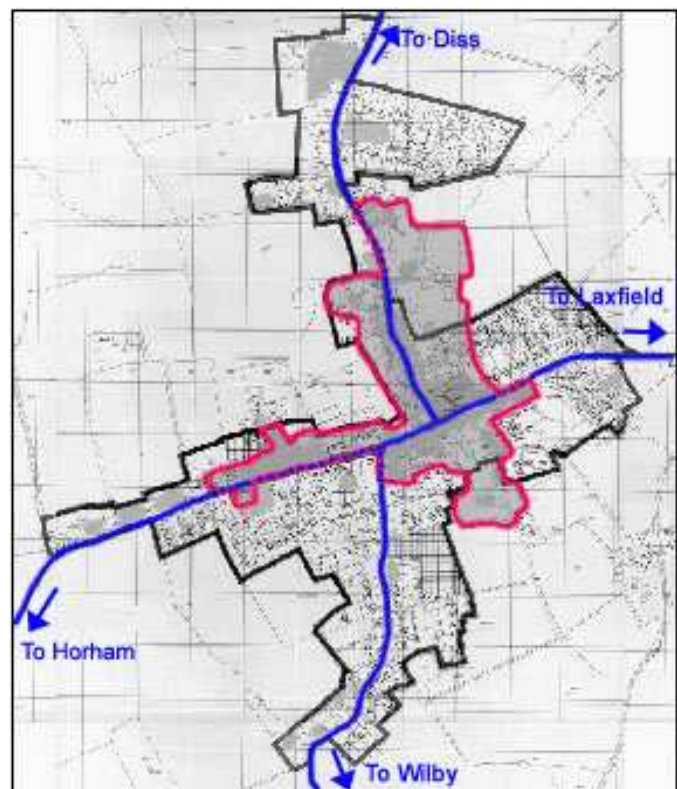
With housing fronting the road and mainly one plot deep, the countryside and farmland was right behind the dwelling and there was, and still is, a feeling of "place" and of being close to the land in more senses than one.

The village has continued to evolve as a linear village despite modern infilling and occasional backfilling, and has held on to the distinctive "shape" that it has had for over 1000 years.

**If there is to be further expansion, it is important that Stradbroke's very effective and influential linear form is retained**



Stradbroke village 1840



Stradbroke village 2000.

The shaded area in the centre of the village roughly equates to the 1840 village and today is the Conservation area

**Stradbroke has always been a solid, self contained agricultural village, well placed in the landscape it was working. It may not be as agricultural today but it has remained remarkably true to its past shape and has managed to retain its distinctive pattern that has shaped and continues to shape, its community.**



### 3. Stradbroke Today

Despite its physical expansion over the last 40-50 years, Stradbroke still is a linear village based on a staggered crossroads. The church at its centre, stands tall and is a distinctive feature seen from many miles distant. Most houses still back on to fields and there is a feeling of spaciousness created by views into and out from the village; by trees and tall hedges visible behind houses and by the several open spaces in the village.

Stradbroke has remained a working village, although no longer a purely agricultural village. Today it has many small “one man” businesses but few “employing” businesses and the mix of population is different.

The population consists of many more retired people who have moved into the village along with some who work in the larger towns and in London. This has had the effect of pushing up house prices and pricing local villagers (particularly the local young adults) out of the housing market. However that growth has enabled a measure of support for local shops and pubs and has seen Stradbroke’s “focal point” of the immediate locality become quite significant as small shops and pubs close down in adjacent hamlets and villages.

As a result of this focus, Stradbroke has been a logical place to site leisure amenities and educational facilities. It has a swimming pool, large community centre, library, doctor’s surgery, cricket and football pitches, two bowls clubs, and floodlit tennis courts as well as the primary and secondary schools, together with a substantial computer Learning and Resource Centre.

The village centre at the junction of Queen Street and Church Street is an important focal point for both social contact and shopping. It is a place where villagers old and young congregate. Seating, open space, the village notice board, red telephone box, the village war memorial, all compete for a place on the NE corner of the junction.

The growth and turnover in population means we are no longer a “static” community and we now have more and more people who know fewer and fewer people within the community. More housing does not automatically create growth and support for local activities, shops and small businesses. The rapid growth over recent years, needs time to consolidate and stabilise and put down roots.



Looking from the footpath at Home Farm ( a medieval moated site) into the village Conservation Area. The trees mark another medieval moated site, that of The Priory in Doctors Lane and behind them the tower of All Saints Church at the village centre. **A view that has remained unchanged over the centuries and all within a few hundred yards of the village centre**

#### Today’s Residents ( Village Questionnaire)

*Retired 164 (31 %)  
Employed F/T 151 (28 %)  
Employed P/T 67 (13 %)  
Unemployed 8 (1 %)  
At Home 33 ( 6 %)  
F/t Education 61 (11 %)  
Survey covered the whole Stradbroke area.  
Returns were received from 37% of the households which covered 45% of the population of the Stradbroke district  
Importantly however 89% of those returns (208 in number) were from households within the village settlement boundaries i.e. the area the VDS covers*



#### THE VILLAGE CENTRE

Looking down from the church tower to the junction of Church Street and Queen Street

#### THE VILLAGE CENTRE

From Church Street looking towards the NE corner of the junction with Queen Street



**Stradbroke is still a “working village” and although possessing some fine old houses and an attractive centre, it is not a tourist attraction in the way that some villages are.**

## 3.1 The Village Centre

The recent enhancement of the village centre has in the main been very beneficial particularly the removal of all overhead wires.

Some of the enhancements have not been as successful notably the narrowing of the roadway outside the White Hart. This causes problems with the large number of lorries that pass through the village as any vehicle now parked outside the church entrance creates a single track which blocks traffic at the junction with Queen Street.

The new lighting columns are an improvement and the avoidance of orange sodium lighting is to be supported. What little there is in the village should be replaced with white light of appropriate strength to provide good visibility whilst keeping upward light pollution to a minimum.

The village centre remains attractive with the width of Church Street and the corner of the “T” junction at Queens Street providing a clear “village centre” dominated by All Saints Church.

Having an attractive centre with space for parking and reasonable shops is essential if the village is to have a positive and lifting effect on both visitors and inhabitants alike.

This centre will help Stradbroke to be seen as somewhere to stop rather than somewhere to pass through and can be a big supporting factor when attracting tourists and people to events in the village.

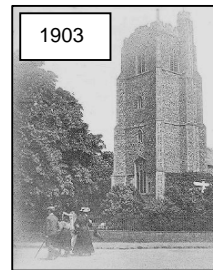
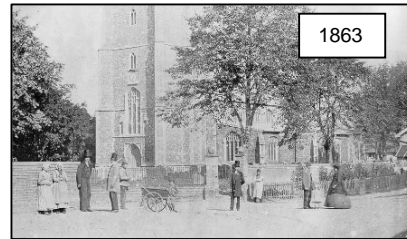
Where planners have the ability to influence the appearance of commercial outlets and commercial signs and displays they should be in proportion and in keeping with their surroundings.

This is particularly so within the Conservation Area and within the setting of listed buildings which form commercial premises.

There are many good examples of such premises that fit with their surroundings and enhance the area e.g. Bates and Co, The Post Office, the Art Gallery, the Butcher's shop, the Bakery and the public houses among others.

### VILLAGE PLAN CRITERIA

Shops are important as they ensure that people visit the village centre. This provides the opportunity for casual meetings, for feeling part of the village community, and combating feelings of isolation



**The corner of Church Street and Queen Street.** The centre of the village has always been the main meeting place and the village shops are clustered around this area



**The Post Office** – a modern effective business in a listed building, in the heart of the Conservation Area

**The village centre is at the heart of the Conservation Area and is the focal point of the village. Every effort should be made to retain and enhance its appearance as well as it's commercial presence and accessibility.**

## 3.2 The Conservation Area

### The Conservation Area

Stradbroke has a rich central core of historic buildings. That core makes up the Conservation Area, widely regarded as one of the village's greatest assets. It forms, in essence, the layout of medieval Stradbroke.

Any change in the general structure of this core should be resisted. Whilst in-fill development is generally acceptable in planning terms, the Conservation Area represents a difficult challenge when attempting to squeeze new dwellings into relatively narrow sites.

Infill developments in the Conservation Area, particularly the village centre, will invariably create a degree of conflict as new dwellings require car access and parking, turning and garaging facilities. An historical setting, where small plots sit well with each other and were not built with cars in mind, can be irreparably damaged by inappropriate development.

Any infill development considered for the Conservation Area should respect the overall village setting and should:

- Avoid cramming by having a site of sufficient size to accommodate the needs of a modern dwelling with adequate garden space.
- Avoid tandem development on small tight sites, which can lead to loss of privacy, of light and shadow and passing and repassing of vehicular traffic. Where possible, such sites should have their own access and garages that unobtrusively fit into their setting so that the car does not dominate the setting
- Complement adjacent buildings, many of which will be listed
- Be of high quality in both design and materials and enhance the Conservation Area

**Stradbroke's shops** are mainly listed buildings along Church Street and Queen Street. Some are inaccessible to people in wheelchairs and there is support for moves to make them more accessible. Where possible, such modifications should be sensitive to the historic nature of the properties.

Interspersed among the shops are dwellings, also mostly listed buildings. Nearly all the buildings on the west side of Queen Street open directly onto the pavement. This gives a personal feel to the streets yet the feeling of spaciousness is maintained by most of the buildings on the east side being set back from the road and with gardens in front. Such gardens should be protected and not reduced in size to allow for road widening or laybys or to become additional off-road parking.

### Open Day Exhibition Survey:

*Visitors were asked to agree / disagree with 10 frequently made comments regarding the village's future direction.*

*The value and protection of the Conservation Area recorded the highest score of all with 9.5 out of 10 overall*



The White Hart stable block once on the "Buildings at Risk" Register being converted into a dwelling

### Open Day Exhibition Survey:

*"Listed buildings and their settings particularly in the Conservation Area are important to Stradbroke and should not be split up to provide building plots"*

*Support for this statement recorded the second highest score of all with 8.9 out of 10 overall*



A new building within the Conservation Area seen from the churchyard, through two of the village's oldest buildings. It replaced a semi derelict garage and fronts onto Queen Street. The use of modern, bright orange concrete roof tiles mars an otherwise reasonable solution for the site.

**The Conservation Area, reflecting as it does the medieval core of the village is of prime importance to Stradbroke. The community's desire is to retain it, undamaged, for future generations.**



### 3.3 . The Community Centre & Recreation Area

Stradbroke acts as a hub for the surrounding area and as a result has been a logical place to site leisure amenities and educational facilities.

As well as the primary and secondary schools, together with a substantial computer Learning and Resource Centre, Stradbroke has a swimming pool, library, large community centre and sports club, doctor's surgery, cricket and football pitches, two bowls clubs, and floodlit tennis courts.

Over the past 10-15 years, driven by strong action groups and community support, much has been done to develop and upgrade the area off the Wilby Road that is today's community recreational area.

Looking ahead there will inevitably be further, often conflicting, demands upon the existing recreational space available. By working together, looking ahead and planning layout and usage that will accommodate all requirements in the most appropriate way, the various sports and leisure groups could contribute to the future development of this expanding and essential community facility.

Resident's long-term wishes include:

- Cricket /football pavilion next to the pitches
- A fitness centre / gymnasium
- Cycle Track
- Skateboard area
- Athletics area
- Childrens football / cricket pitches
- Netball / Basketball
- All weather training pitch / 5-a-side area

All this indicates a need for an expansion of the present area and planning the development of the community recreational area facilities as a whole.

The Community Centre building (Stradbroke Sports and Community Centre) occupies a prime site at the entrance to the recreational area. Development of this building and adjacent sports club should include visual enhancement to ensure that it provides an attractive and welcoming frontage to this key site.

By working together, District Planners and users / owners of the site, could move forward the shorter term aspects such as visual enhancements within the framework of a longer term development plan.

**The Community Centre and the entrance to the Recreational Area**

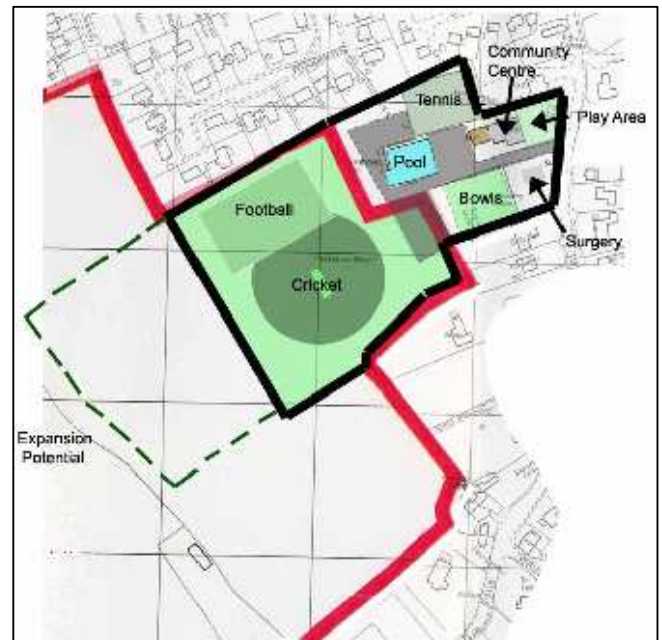


The buildings themselves and the entrance to the recreational facilities present a dull and uninspiring frontage to a key site

#### **The Recreational Area site overall.**

*(The red line marks the settlement boundary)*

The Recreational Area has expansion potential (land availability permitting) and a long term overall plan for the whole site could be of significant benefit. Any continued expansion of housing development within the village and area generally will necessitate an expansion of leisure, sport and community activities.



**Stradbroke is a local hub and the community recreation area has the potential to become a far greater and more active asset if it has an overall plan for its short term and long term future.**



### 3.4. Village Entrances and Edges

The first impression one gets of the village is when coming in at one of the four access points. From the north on the road from Diss, south on the road from Wilby, east on the road from Laxfield and the west on the road from Horham.

**Near the north entrance**, where the Diss Road meets Queen Street is the Primary School. The school building itself is one of Stradbroke's landmarks and dates from 1862 when traffic was not the problem it is today. Situated at the narrowest part of the Diss Road, with no alternative route for traffic, the school entrance is very busy and potentially dangerous at school drop off and collection times. Many children are bussed in and dropped off outside the school and with the volume of other "school run" cars and pedestrians and heavy lorry traffic there is a real need for some alternative to the current poor access and sight lines.

**A major benefit to the community would be an access road and car park at the rear of the school if land were to become available.**

**From the south**, just before the settlement boundaries a bleak grey spiked security fence surrounds the dreary and unwelcoming sight of the former station yard.

**From the west** the flat open expanse of land contrasts with the tree line and low roof lines of New Street whilst **from the east** as the road from Laxfield comes into the village down a gentle slope, the recent housing at Drapers Hill is a fairly obvious development and immediately noticeable. With bright walls and orange roof tiles, it advertises its existence and shows little respect for the old village houses at the entrance to the development.

**Developments at the village edges** should maintain the sense of village merging into farmland rather than abrupt border lines of 2 storey / tall roofline dwellings. They should be of small scale, in cottage style, with natural hedges fronting the road. Any larger buildings should be set further back and well screened from the road.

If a development is on land previously outside the settlement boundary, there should be a substantial landscaping border of at least 5 metres between the boundary of the new development and any existing sites / dwelling(s) that were on the old settlement boundary line. As part of any planning approval for such developments that border space should have a significant landscaping requirement (trees and hedgerows) as part of the planning approval and that planting should be protected by TPO's.



**The Primary School.**

Situated at a narrow "S" bend on the Diss Road, and with a narrow footpath on one side only, improved access and parking would greatly improve safety.



The planting of trees or shrubs to soften or screen intrusive artefacts could greatly enhance village appearance.



In the summer months, existing trees partially screen this new development at the eastern entrance to the village.

**The entrances to and the edges of, Stradbroke's settlement boundary do more than just delineate and define the location of the village, they place the village in and connect it to, the rural landscape in which it sits. It is vitally important that this connection is enhanced, not broken by ill judged and poorly located development.**



## 4. Possible Future Expansion

In any future expansion, the general linear shape of the village should be maintained. The narrow waist enhances the closeness of Stradbroke to the land and its past dependency on farming. It also protects residents' favourite views into the village and of the dominant church tower. (see map on facing page )

The number of houses built in Stradbroke recently, coupled with the numbers envisaged by two current applications, will allow the village to expand in a measured way, albeit with a lack of affordable housing.

The current Local Plan review for the plan period 2006-2016 has already indicated that Mid Suffolk can source all its housing needs for that period from the A14 corridor and other major development sites within the district. The need to extend the settlement boundaries, other than under the exceptions policy for affordable housing, would therefore seem minimal. However Mid Suffolk District Council have indicated a willingness to consider some limited expansion in CS3 settlements which are named villages (of which Stradbroke is one) that have defined facilities.

There may therefore be opportunities at some stage to extend the settlement boundary. However, as part of any long term plan to see Stradbroke develop, there needs to be periodic discussion within the community and with owners of land at appropriate sites abutting the settlement boundaries, to establish what benefits could accrue to the community in support of any applications relating to land outside the boundaries.

From this could come benefits to all parties, providing for example :

- Community support for limited areas of land outside the settlement boundaries to be released for general housing development in a structured manner.
- Small pockets of land (not necessarily contiguous with any land released for general housing development) being obtained by the community for affordable housing (under local control) (eg the Primary School)
- Allowing new access to key areas of the village (eg the Primary School)
- Facilitating the release of land at the recreation ground to develop extended sports facilities; eg skateboard park, cycle track, cricket / soccer pavilion.

**Whatever development may take place it is important that access from new development is always onto the existing through roads and that "link" or "rat run " roads are not permitted.**



Like them or dislike them, these light industrial units are a good attempt to fit something into the landscape. They in turn sit reasonably well with the older buildings on the north side of New Street



A missed opportunity? - Just because a building is small doesn't mean it shouldn't be given some reasonable design elements and decent landscaping



Small blocks of modern housing have often tended toward a standard suburban style as above. What would enhance the settlement more, are styles that reflect and enhance a village setting.

**Looking at the long term and working together to bring about any change that is necessary, will help ensure that today's community evolves in a measured manner and hands on a well balanced and enriched environment to future generations**



## 4.1 Stradbroke's Needs for it's Future

The vision is to maintain Stradbroke as an active working village. This does not mean that style and design will be ignored.

Stradbroke's major characteristics of spaciousness and its respect for it's medieval roots must be maintained and wherever possible, enhanced.

Most residents, particularly over 60's, would prefer that no more houses were built in Stradbroke, whereas almost two thirds of the few young adults who answered the question want more houses to be built. These would need to be affordable homes to enable them to remain living in the village.

The type of housing that is required by the community is therefore smaller varied dwellings, particularly :

- **Affordable dwellings** e.g. 1/2 bed starter homes (rent or part ownership) and some 2/3 bed family homes
- **Single storey** Warden assisted / sheltered housing of 1/2 bed homes suitable for the elderly and/or infirm and preferably close to the village centre

If there is to be more housing, most residents want it to be small pockets (less than 10 houses), rather than large sites of 30 /40 houses so that the sense of a village is maintained rather than the urbanisation of the village.

Pockets of development should maintain the linear form of Stradbroke and avoid filling out the "narrow waisted" village centre.

Large "Executive" style houses are not required but the mix of housing should include a high proportion of single storey or 1 ½ storey dwellings that respect the surrounding properties.

### Survey Data

More housing in the village is not wanted by the majority of the over 25 age group (66% of that group think no more housing should be built in the village)

The 16-24 age group only has a minority support for that statement (Only 34% don't want more housing)

### Housing Questionnaire

Of 475 answers 402 (85%) indicated they would definitely or probably stay in Stradbroke.

Of those saying they would "definitely" stay almost all (225 or 91%) would wish to remain in their existing houses while 1 may move to a larger house, 4 to a similar size house and 12 to a smaller house. (5 no answers)

Of those saying they would "probably" stay, 125 (or 80%) would wish to remain in their existing houses.

### Survey Data

There was strong support for more housing to be built for rent ( 83% overall support with 90% support from the 16-24 age group)

For houses split into flats there was strong support from the 16-24 age group (68%)

### Survey Data

The mix of any new housing should be:

- starter homes (94% overall support )
- economy homes (92% overall support )
- smaller or sheltered housing for elderly people (72% overall support but 87% of over 25 age group))

There was little support for luxury housing (16% overall support and only 10% support of the over 25 age group)

**Stradbroke needs to remain an active working village and it needs a balanced and mutually supportive community. In a deprived rural area that means addressing our young villagers' affordable housing needs, and our older residents' housing and social needs. The long term good of the whole community would be best served by addressing those groups' needs as a priority.**

## 4.2 Building Form, Design and Detail

The spacious feel of Stradbroke should be maintained by ensuring that even small developments are adequately spaced, particularly where garaging and parking can easily dominate the frontage. Higher density housing, particularly on in-fill sites, should avoid over development and cramming of the site, with particular care taken that the end result fits appropriately with neighbouring properties.

New developments should be considered in the light of any long term plans / needs of the village. This should ensure that potential future village improvements would still be viable, i.e. that present applications do not create future blockages.

All applications should be considered for any potential betterment of the site in terms of footpaths, drainage, access and landscaping.

The style and setting of existing lower density, (often single story, dwellings) on sites adjacent to or near to developments of larger in-fill sites or brownfield sites should be taken into account in the design and layout of the new site. Good design should be able to ensure that the overall balance of the general area is maintained and that new and old sites sit easily alongside one another and complement each other.

Building materials should be traditional wherever possible and mirror those used within the village / locality, e.g

- Red brick (rather than modern yellows or similar)
- Cement render above brick plinth
- Black or light painted weatherboarding
- Dark roof tiling (rather than bright orange)
- Appropriately sized porches at front
- Dormer windows of appropriate scale (rather than flat roof windows)
- Round black rainwater goods (rather than square white)
- Smaller windows of appropriate scale, particularly on front elevations (rather than large picture windows )
- Garaging that picks up the same or similar styling cues as the house it serves
- Steeper roof pitch than in suburban designs reflecting the steeper pitch of thatched roof
- Exposed external chimney stacks

Extensions should both respect the existing building and those on adjacent sites. Extensions should not dominate and materials should (in most cases) match the existing building as far as possible eg roof tiles. Windows sizes and styles should be the same or as similar as possible particularly on frontages.

Flat roof extensions should be avoided and roof pitches should match or complement those existing. Windows and doors, both in number and size should be in proportion to the existing wherever possible.

Garages, vehicular access and turning areas should not dominate frontages with garaging being placed to the side or rear where possible, to protect the street scene.



Farriers Close, a large new housing development that both infills and backfills, sits uncomfortably alongside one of the older village houses. A row of tall rooftops shows behind the cluttered frontage of three dwellings that are overdone in size, scale and complexity



Further along at the corner of Wilby Rd and Church Street, a 60's designed house on a prime site, sits conspicuously out of place against the backdrop of the Listed buildings on Church Street. Built on the site of the former Vicarage that stood here from 1824, such a prominent site deserved better treatment. The bare frontage is now being planted up which will soften the look. Large and inappropriate road signs for a village again dominate but the area is also an example of how setting houses back from the road gives the sense of spaciousness



The Fire Station is modern and obviously has to have a certain functionality but it fits in.

**Stradbroke remains a village and any new development, even for a single dwelling, should contribute to a village, not an urban setting.**

## 4.2 Building Form, Design and Detail (cont.)

Whilst each new building or extension will have its own character, the detailing should take into account local characteristics and materials.

- **On the wider front**, design should emulate good “Suffolk” village architecture rather than off the shelf suburban designs.
- **On the local front**, design should respect the adjacent buildings and be seen as part of that immediate vicinity
- **On the detail front**, emphasis should be placed on architectural features that raise the design above the “easiest and cheapest for the builder”

High density build doesn't have to equal low quality design. Whilst the car is a necessary part of rural living; garages, car space and access need not dominate and dictate layouts.. Pedestrian walkways and open areas provide more human interaction.



Single storey compact dwellings on a small site can still provide an attractive layout.



Good landscaping and even small detailing that breaks up large brick areas, can raise the sense of wellbeing for residents.



These modern dwellings take styling cues from local vernacular architecture but adapt them to a good modern effect without creating a weak pastiche.

The porch areas are large by today's standards but they work effectively in combination with windows that are relatively small for standard modern housing but are very well proportioned for the design of these houses. The steep roof lines, good pedestrian access and paling fencing providing open but separate amenity space, make for a well balanced development.



The current development at Brundle's Meadow in New Street is a good example of what can be achieved in terms of good design and good quality build detail.

The designs incorporate modern materials and techniques but each dwelling has its own identity within an overall concept which respects adjacent buildings and enhances the area.



Outbuildings such as a detached garage can be designed to create effective use of space for storage in addition to it's primary function. Here is a good example of a garage and integral store that is more than the usual plain box . Good design should apply to all aspects of a development.



Simple dormer windows can enhance the roof area when considered as part of the overall design and built to an appropriate scale. Dormer windows are preferable to flat roof lights.

In the same way, detailing around windows can be an inexpensive but effective way of putting a little character into a building,



A gable end does not need to be a blank wall. When the features incorporated into the wall, such as these windows, are of the right proportions and detailed sympathetically they can enhance the whole design.

Equally, a chimney need not be hidden behind the wall. Properly proportioned and of appropriate design it can break up an otherwise blank space.

**Any new development, even a single dwelling, can enhance it's value by far more than the relatively small extra cost of good design – and the community is enhanced too.**



## 4.3 Landscaping and Screening

All applications should be considered for any potential betterment of the site in terms of footpaths, drainage, access and landscaping.

Wherever possible, larger developments should be screened from the road by hedges and trees planted in buffer strips. Where development will not be started for some time, early planting of screening could be part of the planning approval.

Landscaping and screening should be a key part of any application and screening should consist, substantially, of native species. Conifers and like plants although fast growing should not be used.

Plants and trees used in screening should be part of planning approval and subject to some form of protection in order to ensure that the original planning conditions cannot then be circumvented by removing the screening at a later date.

Materials used for driveways and access points should be appropriate to the type of dwelling and its setting and should ensure that footpath crossings and roadway access are unaffected by loose material(s).

Tree protection orders should be more widespread. Stradbroke is fortunate in having many mature trees and these should not be sacrificed as a matter of expediency when sites are developed. Wherever possible the retention of such trees should be insisted upon.

Particular attention should be given to landscaping at the rear of any development, particularly those that back onto the settlement boundaries. Modern fencing should be avoided and schemes for landscaping with hedging (native species) should always be included. Ditches, streams and ponds make an important contribution to the village environment as both a site for wildlife and as the means to avoid flooding.

Ditches should not be filled or covered over and if, of necessity they are piped, pipes of a substantial size should be used with means of access to eliminate any blockages.

Where infill sites are developed, any previously filled ditches should be reopened and cleared. Particular attention should be paid to ground water flows when new sites are developed with strict controls put in place to avoid problems on that, or adjacent sites.



Cedar Close, a better example of a small group of executive type houses in a small area.

Set back from the road, the existing tree lines make for a well established look to a relatively new site



Trees, hedges and ponds make a very important contribution to the village setting



Ditches need proper maintenance. Their potential to help or hinder flooding needs to be better understood and managed

**Stradbroke is a rural village, set in the countryside and containing much of the green of the countryside within its boundaries. Protecting these existing “green” assets and adding to them by appropriate planting and landscaping of new development(s) will ensure Stradbroke remains in balance with nature.**

## 4.4 Artefacts and Street Furniture

**The removal of overhead wiring** in the village centre has been widely welcomed and every effort should be made to ensure that any new development takes underground feeds for services and where possible remaining overhead wires are removed.

**The need to manage traffic and parking** can often result in a deluge of road markings, bays, signs and controls. Despite some traffic management issues within the village, the lack of those heavy handed solutions is to be applauded. At dropped kerbs, used by mothers with pushchairs or by people in wheelchairs, the use of a single white line to prevent drivers parking is the type of simple road marking that is effective yet unobtrusive.

**Street lighting** should be of the type and style that provides adequate illumination where needed but avoids the upward “glow” effect. White downlighting should be stipulated for any development and any remaining orange (sodium) lamps should be replaced by white light.

**Street clutter.** Over the past years there has been a marked increase in the number of signs, fly-posters, different types and styles of waste bins, notice boards, display boards, surfaces, pathways, kerbs, and lighting columns. All of these, on their own, are often insignificant but taken as a whole they can convey a very different, cluttered and uncaring feel to an area.

Any one of them can be used to justify the existence of others and at the top of that justification chain are the “official” signs – road and public signs placed by District and County Councils.

The use of large modern signs, particularly road signs, are out of place in a village setting and should be replaced with something more appropriate and of more modest size.

The smaller finger signs are of poor design and do not reflect Stradbroke's status, particularly in the Conservation Area. Excellent alternatives are now available such as the type in use at Horham.

Good quality and well designed signage should be used at the village entrances to set the scene for a community proud of its village.

As we endeavour to create the right setting within the village there must be better consultation and discussion about what is appropriate.



Large roads signs should be replaced by smaller versions more suited to a village Conservation Area



Even the smaller signs could be of a better design. Again, this is in the Conservation Area and replaced an older style finger sign, of the type that is now being reintroduced (as in Horham)



**Horham village signpost.**

Typical of similar signposts now appearing in many other villages as good designs of the past are reworked for today's villages



The two District Council signs situated on either side of the entrance to the Community Centre and Recreation area could have been of a design that better suited a village setting

**The cumulative effect of many minor, and in themselves insignificant, “street artefacts” can have a disproportionate effect on the village scene and can be the difference between a sense of a loved and well cared for setting or one that has been left to its own devices to take whatever is stuck on to it.**

## 5. Managing Village Design

The future evolution of Stradbroke rests ultimately with the Planning Department of Mid Suffolk District Council and the Planning Application process - although it is the community that has to live with the results of that planning.

The ability to look at the bigger (and long term) picture when considering land usage and allocation for development could have advantages for all parties.

A more detailed understanding of land ownership in and around the village is required if the community is to obtain some benefit from future expansion.

The current process would benefit from better discussions and early constructive dialogue with the community which would make the stages of presenting plans for consultation (eg Local Plan Reviews) far more meaningful.

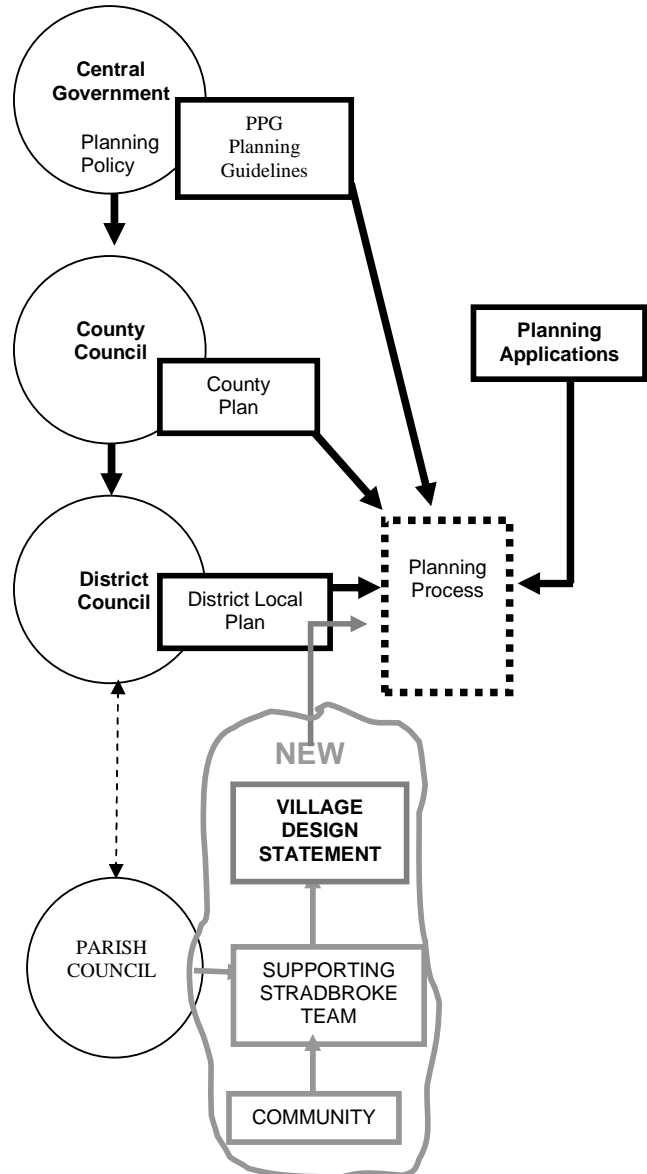
Village Design Statements can be a valuable contribution to that debate as can a strong community involvement through Parish Councils and local groups such as the “Supporting Stradbroke” Team.

The Planning Application process has always been Applicant > Planning Authority, whilst the community affected by any application, has always been relatively uninvolved until after the application has been made.

That application has often followed many discussions between the planning officers and applicant. As a result, the decision has in effect already been made. In most cases applications are reasonably non-contentious and attract little opposition. However there are occasions when the community view needs to be included during the initial discussions and well before applications are submitted. Early constructive dialogue before the event rather than acrimonious protests after the event is better for all.

Village Design Statements will only go some way toward involving communities. At worst they can be welcomed by the Planning Authority, but ignored or sidelined by different “interpretations” of the words of the Local Plan or government guidelines.

At best they could provide a real means of involving local communities in decisions that affect their environment and eliminate much of the friction and cynicism that accompanies the planning debate.



**There is benefit for all in having an awareness of the community's needs and wishes, a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue at an early stage in the planning process and an understanding that the community's views are valid considerations, as it is the community that has to live with the results of planning decisions.**



## 6. Summary of Main Recommendations

1. Stradbroke is a rural community and any new housing development should respect its setting so that it blends in with surrounding buildings and the landscape.
2. The linear form of the "narrow waisted" village should be retained.
3. Any new development and/or large extensions should take into account the visual and amenity impact on neighbouring properties.
4. The sense of space within the village must not be lost; there is no place for a "crowded in" feel if we are to retain the atmosphere of the village as it stands.
5. Listed buildings and their settings particularly in the Conservation Area ought not be split up to provide building plots.
6. Tandem developments on narrow sites in the Conservation Area and using a single existing vehicular access should be discouraged.
7. Any applications relating to buildings and land use adjacent to or on the opposite side of the road to the Conservation Area should be scrutinised with care. The objective should be to ensure that development does not have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area.
8. In-filling often eliminates gaps between existing dwellings. Where such gaps provide views through to surrounding fields and add to the open feel of the village, the value of the view should be taken into account when considering applications that would eliminate them.
9. Current open spaces should be designated and maintained and new developments should incorporate appropriate open spaces within them.
10. When considering extensions to the Settlement Boundary to provide development land only those parcels of land that will complement or enhance Stradbroke should be considered. Where whole parcels of land will lead to inappropriate development, only those parts of the parcel that complement or enhance, should be considered.
11. Whatever development may take place it is important that access from new development is always onto the existing through roads and that "link" or "rat run" roads are not permitted.
12. Tandem developments ought to be discouraged. They can create a less relaxed and more stressful community.
13. The rural character of the village is pointed up by many large trees which enhance the feeling of spaciousness and tranquillity. These specific trees need to be mapped and protected and Tree Preservation Orders extended.
14. Appropriate hedgerows and woodland areas should also be protected.
15. Sympathetic landscaping including foliage barriers should be used to help new developments blend into the village setting.
16. Appropriate landscaping and screening (using native species) should be required to be submitted with any planning application and not added in as an afterthought.
17. Good design should be encouraged at all times. Even a small single dwelling should be seen to have been designed to fit into its local position and its village environment.
18. The pressure to build at higher densities should not be used as an excuse to force fit "little boxes" into inappropriate sites. Use should be made of factors that PPG3 (Annex C) allows to be ignored in the calculation of net density to help maintain Stradbroke's spacious feel.
19. Developments at the village edges should maintain the sense of village merging into farmland rather than abrupt border lines of 2 storey / tall roofline dwellings. They should preferably be of single storey types at the entrance point, with any 1 ½ or 2 storey buildings set further back and well screened at the rear.
20. If a development is on land previously outside the settlement boundary, there should be a substantial landscaping border of at least 5 metres between the boundary of the new development and any existing sites / dwelling(s) that were on the old settlement boundary line. As part of any planning approval for such developments that border space should have a significant landscaping requirement (trees and hedgerows) as part of the planning approval and that planting should be protected by TPO's.
21. Overhead wires and cables ought not to be permitted with any new development and existing overhead wires and cables should be taken underground wherever practical in any development of a site.
22. Street lighting must suit the village atmosphere in its intensity and colour.
23. New development that requires new street lighting should stipulate that lighting should be white light, appropriately shaded, to avoid a "glow" effect when seen from a distance.
24. Within the village boundaries, modern bland road signs suited to towns and main roads should be discouraged.
25. Road signage within the village should be simple and in keeping with the village setting (eg Horham village road sign).
26. Signage for public buildings and facilities (eg the recreation area off Wilby Road) should be appropriate for the setting and in keeping with other signage in the village.
27. Each new dwelling will invariably generate more car journeys. A car is a necessity in a rural community but any new development should ensure that the needs of the car do not dominate the design.
28. Parking and garaging should be provided, in such a way that the village setting is maintained not a suburban one, where garages dominate the frontages.
29. Traffic management should not be accomplished with yellow lines, parking bays, parking signs.
30. More development will generate more traffic problems but any attempted solution should recognise that Stradbroke is still a rural village not a town and traffic management measures should reflect that.

# **Stradbroke Parish Council: 2003**

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- **Suffolk ACRE**
- **The people of Stradbroke**
- **Stradbroke Village Project Team**
  - Chairman**  
Martin Wake
  - VDS Editor**  
Mike Readman (*Parish Councillor*)
  - Members**  
Stuart Gemmill (*Chairman Parish Council*)  
Ann Grunbaum  
Ann Kerr (*Vice Chairman, Parish Council*)  
Alec Wright (*Parish Councillor*)
- **“Supporting Stradbroke” Steering Group**

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Stradbroke Parish Council (*back cover*)
- **Photographs**  
AMRpartners (*all photographs other than those attributed*)  
Stradbroke Local History Group (*p3 centre, p4 top 2*)  
Stradbroke Millenium Committee (*Cover*)
- **Extracts from “Patterns for Suffolk Buildings”**  
Suffolk Building Preservation Trust in association with  
Suffolk Preservation Society  
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top and bottom photographs Mark Fiennes  
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