

The Village Design Statement Explained

Part 14: Landscaping

This, the fourteenth of a monthly series of articles, is aimed at explaining how residents can apply the Village Design Statement (VDS) principles when considering material changes to their properties. If you are thinking about altering your property it is always best to consult with a constructional professional such as a Chartered Architect or Chartered Surveyor as they will know their way around the complex regulations surrounding construction projects whether permitted development rights or the full planning process is used. In addition, for those within the Conservation Area and/or with a Listed Building, it is important to consult with the Council's Conservation Officer before the commencement of the project.



Typical Hedgerow

Even if such a professional is employed, the appropriate instructions will need to be issued and therefore an understanding of the VDS is important. Remember, it is not just the size of the property that affects the value but also the design, plan detail and appearance together with its 'kerb appeal'.

Maintaining a high level of visual amenity in the Village generally is very important in assisting 'kerb appeal'. The lead can be taken from the Area Settlement Characteristics in Part 1 of the Maldon District Council approved VDS document. Wherever possible apply soft landscaping to front gardens rather than hard paving and maintain garden landscaping to retain colour, shape and form as an integral part of the street scene.



Berberis



There is a very large palette of local materials and indigenous species that can be used in the rural environment of Woodham Walter. The use of hard, non-porous materials for drives etc. over 5m² currently require planning permission and as previously discussed are to be avoided. Ballast, pebbles and permeable setts/pavers/gravel mix make a surface that is crunchy when walked upon and are a good security measure; soft earth allows clear reproduction of footprints and are deterrents to criminals. If a gravel retention system is used and the surface is compacted enough for wheelchair and baby buggy users it prevents overspill of material onto the carriageway which becomes a Highways issue. A combination of these elements are a productive way of landscaping the front of properties whilst providing a pleasant visual appearance to the passerby.

Low height planting to front gardens maintains the open rural feel and character of the Village and avoids providing cover for trespass and unauthorised entry. Spiky plants and shrubs such as berberis and pyracantha (firethorn), when planted near to the building and windows, provide a further criminal deterrent whilst having colour shape and texture. The planting of indigenous trees and hedgerow species such as blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel, dogwood, holly, field maple and beech interspersed with oak, ash, hornbeam, rowan and birch are to be encouraged as are roses, hypericum, hebe, senecio, berberis and many others. These will support the area's character and the overall appearance of the Village by enhancing the natural and historic environment.



Holly

The VDS document can be found on the Parish website or purchased from the Clerk.

Residents' enquiries arising from the VDS should in the first instance be directed to the Clerk.

Website: www.essexinfo.net/woodhamwalter-pc