Introduction

This Village Design Statement has been researched and prepared by the residents of Barking and Darmshden to describe the visual character and qualities of the two villages within their landscape setting.

The Statement has been guided by a local design team in close liaison with Mid Suffolk District Council. It draws together local knowledge, views and ideas about the villages of Barking and Darmshden as they are now and how any future development should contribute in a positive way to the unique character that has built up over centuries of growth.

Change can occur in many ways, not only by large scale commercial or housing developments, but also by small incremental changes to features such as garden fences and walls, doors, windows, roofs and even by the choice of trees and shrubs planted in gardens and hedges. An ill thought out decision could change the appearance of a house, a view or an open space forever or until future change takes place.

This Statement is therefore relevant to:
- every householder and property owner in the Parish
- the Local Planning Authority and its officers
- the providers of local services and facilities
- developers, builders, architects, engineers and designers
- the Parish Council and other local community groups.

How does the Design Statement work?

The Barking-cum-Darmshden Village Design Statement has been adopted by the District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. It will be a material consideration when dealing with planning applications.

A statutory process already exists for the Parish Council to be consulted on planning applications. The Parish Council, in conjunction with the Village Design Group, will have regard to the terms of the design statement and will comment on the design aspects of applications accordingly.

The Statement also contains recommendations that are aimed at all those small-scale changes that could have a significant impact on the appearance of the villages but do not, in themselves, need planning permission. They are included in order to present a complete picture of the Parish and everyone involved in village life is asked to think about them before making any decisions about changing the appearance of their property.

The village sign on Barking Tye

The photographs of Barking and Darmshden which appear throughout this document have been chosen to illustrate positive examples of design in terms of scale and proportions, colour, texture, materials, planting and so on.

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Historical background

Shaping of the present settlement perhaps began with the establishment of a Roman Road, the route of which can still be detected along the northerly end of Barking Tye. Scattered settlements, developed during Saxon times, bearing the names ‘Berica’s People’ and ‘Dermodesaduna’ gave rise to present day names. Establishment of the two churches would no doubt have provided community and identity that continues up to the present day.

Norman times

The Domesday Book recorded Barking with 60 inhabitants (adult males) and St. Mary’s Church with 83 acres of free land. Barking Manor belonged to the Abbot of St. Etheldreda and extensive productive woodlands including Boney (Bonny) Wood were mentioned. Under the Normans, Barking Manor was vested in the Bishopric of Ely (subsequently providing sustenance or income for the Church until 1611). Two of the manorial farms were also required to provide victuals to the religious order at Ely.

It seems that Barking was largely spared the ravages of ‘Black Death’ due to the quarantine still remembered in the name ‘Chainhouse’ at Needham Market one and a half miles away.

The Reformation

During the reformation, the Church was relieved of Barking Manor. In 1611, the manor was sold by the Crown to Francis Needham. It subsequently passed into the hands of Francis Theobald, the Rev Joseph Gascoigne, John Crowley and then the Earl of Ashburnham (1756). The ambitions of Sir Francis Needham appear to have lain with the weaving settlement in the corner of the parish where he established a market, based on the Barking Fair and to which of course he gave his name. Needham Market, being on a line of communication, saw increased development, leaving Barking and Darnsden in the wings.

The Victorian parish

The Local Government Act 1888 created the civil parish of Barking cum Darnsden. This act and subsequent local government legislation established the framework for public health and utilities. This manifested itself in Barking and incidentally in villages throughout the county by the construction of local authority housing, a ‘Board’ school (closed in 1952, to become a much used village hall), piped water, electricity and in 1981, mains drainage. The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 saw the first active public control of development.

The Tye

In years gone by, Barking Tye was a relatively large common. Over the years, parts of the Tye became absorbed into surrounding properties. This kind of pressure on unregulated areas led to many commons being completely absorbed, in some cases the name became the only legacy. Fortunately for Barking, approximately 30 acres of fine open space still remain and are set to be preserved as a lasting amenity within the settlement. Barking Tye would have derived its identity as an unenclosed poor quality grazing area of the Manor of Barking. The need for grazing diminished and the value of open spaces was increasingly recognised. The Tye was registered as common under the Commons Registration Act of 1965 and in 1969 byelaws were passed to regulate its management and use. The six remaining commoners’ rights are recorded and recognised but are no longer exercised.

From about 1909, East Suffolk County Council promoted tenant farming and purchased three ‘County farms’ within the Parish namely Top, Middle and Lower Farms, two of which still remain as tenanted working farms.

Access

It seems likely that access to the villages between Roman times and the improvement of the present road from the Gipping Valley was at best difficult, perhaps leaving Barking and Darnsden rather isolated with employment mainly local and agricultural. The railway came to Needham Market in 1846 and later Barking was included on a Squirrel’s bus route, however until the onset of World War II, with the strategic need for improved
access to Wattisham Airfield, the road remained unmetalled.

Perhaps the change in use of the road and the motor car have given rise to the greatest single change in village life throughout its long history.

Two distinct characters

Although Barking-cum-Darmsden remains a united Parish, the two settlements retain their individuality and special characteristics. Despite the significant differences and no direct linking road, there is empathy, mutual concern and not infrequent social contact.

Barking now has around 150 dwellings and a population of some 410, Darmsden 26 and 50 respectively. (There has of course been change compared with the Domesday record but growth has been largely within the confines of Needham Market and the peripheral Lion Barn Industrial Estate. Barking and Darmsden preserve their rural character.

Perhaps in line with other Suffolk villages, a substantial proportion of the inhabitants of both Barking and Darmsden today travel to work outside the parish boundary and although there are many retired inhabitants, this seems to arise from a desire to stay when employment ceases rather than the villages being seen as attractive retreats.

In general, transport does not seem to be a particular problem. Many people have access to one or more cars although, in some instances, residents’ particular circumstances and the paucity of public transport dictates that they move away from the rural environment.

Protecting the countryside

Of particular present day significance is the fact that Barking Tye has been registered under the Countryside Premium Scheme thus continuing the preservation and improvement of the open space that is indivisible from Barking.

The wartime Wattisham Airfield is now an important Army Helicopter Base. Apart from the obvious benefit of providing much needed local employment, the fact that the principal access route runs through the length of Barking perhaps singly give rise to the most detrimental feature of village life, namely the effect of traffic on almost every part of the village. Newly introduced speed limits have seen some improvement but are often disregarded. Efforts to procure a footway through the Barking settlement have not yet come to fruition. In consequence, rather than walls, many residents use their cars when moving around the village.

Community spirit

Despite the linear nature of Barking, there is a strong sense of identity and community, and a positive wish not only to preserve those features of the settlement which are thought worthwhile but also to embrace beneficial change.

“Although Barking-cum-Darmsden remains a united Parish, the two settlements retain their individuality and special characteristics.”
Landscape character and the natural environment

The Parish is characterised by three gently rolling ridges with two shallow valleys between them. Narrow watercourses take rainwater to the River Gipping to the north east. In the main, the soil type is heavy boulder clay over deep chalk with alluvial sands and gravels lying on the valley floor of the Gipping. The heavy soils lend themselves to arable farming particularly wheat, barley, sugar beet and oil seed rape.

Gentle landscape

The gently rolling arable landscapes to the north and west of Darmsetd and to the south of Barking Tye are large and open with few natural features. The rest of the Parish contains small or medium scale fields that are enclosed by well-maintained mature hedgerows andcopies. The ancient woodlands running along the middle ridge dominate the countryside and provide a rich and varied patchwork of natural landscape features. Most of the Parish is designated as a Special Landscape Area.

Linear settlement

Both villages are linear in character and tend to follow the two outer ridges so the back edges of the settlements can be seen from many parts of the Parish. The panoramic views of the open countryside from those properties are valued by their occupiers.

Open spaces within the village edge, mainly comprising garden land, punctuate the built-up edge and help to reinforce the rural character and feeling of harmony between buildings and their setting.

Other than the occasional traditional farmstead in the open countryside the main settlement of Barking follows both sides of the B1078. Only where the Tye opens out does the development restrict itself to one side of the road.

In Darmsetd, houses straggle along the private road leading to the tiny Church. Beyond that, houses, cottages and farms become very sporadic. The linear nature of Barking makes it difficult to regard any particular point as its centre. To some the magnificent Church of St. Mary and the nearby Rectory and Hall are the logical focal points. To others the charming Village Hall and Fox Public House provide a focus, and to those living around the Tye, the 30 acres of open space is seen as pivotal.

A sense of cohesion

It could be argued that the B1078 provides the physical link between the village centres but there is much more to link the village than the main road. The very wide grass verges, the high proportion of hedges and trees, the muted colours of rendering, the red brick and clay tiles of the older houses, the wide gardens

and long views out into the open countryside beyond, all contribute towards a feeling of harmony, completeness, rurality and local distinctiveness.

Barking has developed slowly over many centuries and still contains many buildings of particular architectural and historic merit.

For example, Fairfax House, The Old School and most of the old farms date from the 1500's or before. Darmsetd is also blessed with a rich heritage of vernacular buildings including Darmsetd and Tarston Halls and Priestly Cottage.

Barking in particular has seen a number of modern houses and bungalows built along the B1078. These tend to be larger in scale than the more vernacular buildings and incorporate a wider range of building styles and materials that are considered alien to Barking's character.
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Recommendations

1. Every proposal that requires planning permission must be considered in the light of the Special Landscape Character designation that applies to most of the Parish. The aim must be to ensure that the essential rolling character of the landscape is retained and not harmed by any development and, if possible, is enhanced for future generations. It is essential to protect the character of the Tye from intrusive development.

2. New developments must be designed to respect inward and outward views of the village and must give high priority to landscape design, incorporating wherever possible the use of native species of trees and other planting. The sensitive treatment of rear boundaries is of particular importance to ensure that existing and new development sits well in its landscape setting.

3. The amenity and landscape value of spaces between houses is important and should be retained in the design of any new developments.

4. Individual landowners should be encouraged to respect the character of the landscape and to add value to that character in their choice of native species, traditional wooden gates, brick and flint walls, etc.

5. Wildlife is increasingly dependent upon a decreasing habitat. Landowners should be encouraged to add to the diversity of habitat within their properties and to liaise with neighbours to develop larger areas for wildlife. Particular emphasis should be placed on protecting existing habitats and species, and creating new habitats such as ponds, grassland and woodland connected by mature hedges and ditches.

6. Overhead cables, with their associated pylons and poles, are considered to be one of the most intrusive and damaging features in the built up area and wider countryside. The Service Providers must be encouraged to remove and put underground such apparatus as soon as possible in order to improve the landscape character of the Parish.

7. New developments and works by the main service providers should respect the rural character of the villages and every attempt must be made to lay underground cables to new developments.

8. The visual effect of 'creeping urbanism' in the countryside caused by features such as intrusive street lighting, road signage, concrete kerbs, characterless housing design, non-native tree planting is damaging to the appearance of the villages and should be avoided.
The built environment

As with many Suffolk villages, Barking and Darmsden have evolved in a mainly linear fashion over the last six centuries and consequently incorporate a variety of styles which, on the whole, blend comfortably together.

The area around the Forge and Battisford Road is the exception to the linear design, being a cluster of houses, old and new, which notwithstanding their very diversity, creates an integrated whole.

**Older houses**

Prior to the 20th century many properties were good-sized farms and built with vernacular Suffolk materials, being predominantly timber-framed construction with lath and plaster rendering or clay lump, either left in woodfloat finish or limewashed.

Where brick was used, these were usually locally-made, soft red/orange colour and uniform in texture (or occasionally Suffolk whites).

Roofs were steeply pitched (possibly originally thatched) and were covered with either plain or pan tiles, usually red in colour and handmade locally. A small number of dormers were often incorporated. There were a few slate roofs.

Traditionally, roof spans were rarely greater than 6 metres: this being determined by the supply of suitable timber – setting the trend for smaller-scale elements rather than large, bulky buildings.

Windows were of small proportion, some with small panes and thin glazing bars, and some with leaded lights.

Other features include painted windows made up of narrow modules. When these are used in rendered properties a drip-board is used above the windows. In brick properties, the window arch is either splayed or cambered.

**Larger buildings**

There are a few substantial houses of note within Barking. The Old Rectory is an imposing brick, late Georgian residence (built 1810) set well off the B1078 behind the Church.

The Church dates from Saxon times with later additions. Just below the Church stands Barking Hall that originated in 1600. The now mainly single storey building that was once the coach house of the original Hall is used as a residential nursing home.

There are a number of semi-detached 19th century brick built cottages that have been converted into single dwellings. Many houses have had at least one addition, some single storey, some two storey.

A typical feature is a small porch over the front door.

**Darmsden**

The settlement of Darmsden has its own particular character as most of the houses are pre 19th century. They are of vernacular timber-framed construction with rendered elevations of cream or pink.

The roofs are steeply pitched, suggesting they may once have been thatched, although now most have red or brown clay pan tiles. Many houses have outbuildings of both vernacular and modern designs although asbestos has only been used in some farm outbuildings. Here attention to careful preservation is probably more appropriate than development.

**Barking developments**

In Barking there has been considerable in-filling between the widely spaced older properties since the beginning of the 20th century.

These include both single and two storey properties,
mostly of simple design. These are usually of red brick with red or brown concrete tiles. Some partial timber cladding and/or partial rendering has been used.

The pitch of the roofs and use of dormer windows help to maintain the Suffolk rural character. Many houses have brick built garages, often double, as well as additions and outbuildings such as sheds, workshops and conservatories. Care needs to be taken in the future to ensure that vernacular features such as dormers, other windows and chimneys are correctly designed in detail and scale.

Colour plays an important part in the character of Barking. In general, colours used on walls are dominated by cream and pink. Bargeboards are white, black or green, and are simply yet boldly detailed. Earlier windows are usually painted white. Recent windows are often stained dark brown, although this is not a vernacular finish. Garage doors are either stained wood or painted in white or muted colours such as dark red, blue or green.

As barns and stables cease to have agricultural uses some have been carefully converted to domestic dwellings using extensive black stained timber cladding on brick bases.

Nearly all houses in the village have chimneys that give the buildings good proportion, though many chimneys are too small in comparison to older ones.

"Barking has developed slowly over many centuries and still contains many buildings of particular architectural and historic merit."

Vernacular windows are also well proportioned, while more modern windows often lack good proportion and detail.

A small deviation from the linear settlement pattern is the small local authority housing estate in Fox Meadow. These are small two storey houses built using plain Fletton bricks, each house having a small flat-roofed, single storey extension. The entrance to Fox Meadow is dominated by a poorly designed, brick built electricity sub-station.

Recommendations

9. It is important to ensure that future development will be of high quality, imaginative and sympathetic design that will preserve and renew Barking's traditional character. Well-designed buildings on any in-fill plots should be encouraged.

10. Designers should try to harmonise their plans with the traditional buildings in the Parish especially with the range of building materials, techniques and designs now available.

11. Designs which seek to achieve energy or resource conservation will be considered favourably provided that other design issues set out in this statement have not been compromised.

12. The use of muted, rather than bright, colours would be more appropriate for any painted rendering or woodwork.

13. The low profile, simple design of the village houses should be a primary consideration. No house should be un-neighbourly to or over-dominate those adjoining.
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Recommendations (continued)

14. Future development should not make uncharacteristic incursions into existing agricultural land. An urban-style estate would be totally damaging to the rural character of the village.

15. The relationships between buildings are as important as the design of the buildings themselves. Skilful use of spaces between buildings can help any new development be better assimilated. In general, the spaces between buildings should be generous, to maintain the traditional form and character of Barking and Darmsden.

16. It is strongly recommended that designers give careful consideration to the “Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas”, where detailed guidance on design is graphically illustrated and explained.

17. Existing buildings should be maintained as far as is practicable using original or sympathetic materials.

“Nearly all houses in the village have chimneys that give the buildings good proportion, as do the well-proportioned windows when viewed in relation to the scale and dimensions of each property.”

Harvest House

Darmsden church

Roof-lines modern...

...and ancient

Priestley Cottage
18. The preservation, or if appropriate, reinstatement, of any thatched property should be encouraged. Any extension to an existing roof should be in a matching type of tile or slate.

19. Brickwork should be retained as far as possible in its natural state; over-painting should be avoided and any re-pointing should be carried out with an appropriate profile, texture and mortar.

20. Any replacement of original windows should match those existing, be made of wood and be of a size in correct proportion to the facade. New wood windows should be painted or stained using an appropriate 'architectural' stain which replicates the same finish. Careful consideration should be given to the aspect, size and number of any roof lights or dormers.

21. Extensions should be subservient and respect the proportions of the original property, particularly their size, siting and outline. A pitched or gabled roof is always preferable to a flat roof and more in keeping with the rural character of the village. Garages should not obscure or over-dominate any existing adjacent building. Endeavours should be made to blend in development wherever possible.

22. Over development of in-fill plots or existing garden areas by new building should be avoided in order to protect the special landscape quality and characteristics of the area.

23. External facing and roofing materials should be of a high quality and respect the vernacular type of materials that prevail within the village. In this respect the use of red clay tiles (plain or pan tile) with good quality appropriately coloured bricks (predominately red) are recommended. The use of rendering to the walls with an appropriate coloured finish is also in keeping. In all cases the use of black coloured concrete tiles which are not traditional to this area of Suffolk is to be avoided.

24. The layout of any new dwellings should seek to avoid dominance by highway infrastructure.

25. The value of good landscaping cannot be underestimated. Anyone applying for planning consent is encouraged to consider the setting for the proposal (eg Special Landscape Area, Listed Building or Visually Important Open Space) and how a sensitive landscaping scheme could enhance the design. Applications that demonstrate the inclusion of appropriate boundary treatments and use of native species in planting schemes will be supported. The outer boundaries of the site are particularly important in this respect and close-boarded fences or non-native planting which gives an urban/suburban appearance to the area will be resisted, especially on the edge of the villages.

The Village Design team suggests that full landscaping schemes should be submitted with all applications.

26. The character of the listed buildings and their settings in the villages should be protected particularly from insensitive new development, in accordance with the policies of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan.
The economy

The prosperity of Barking's surviving rural community continues to be based on agriculture. However its close links to the A14 and A140 (to Norwich) and the railway stations at the towns of Needham Market, Stowmarket and Ipswich mean that villagers can easily reach employment opportunities that these centres afford.

The village is also part of a localised bus route and within operating distance of nearby taxi ranks:

Local businesses

In addition to farms, the village also sustains a number of small businesses including a public house, garage (incorporating a petrol filling station, car sales and MOT bay) a building contractor and a working forge.

On the edge of the Parish and close to the town of Needham Market is situated an industrial estate which continues to expand with a diverse range of business types and sizes.

Some residents in the two villages enjoy the benefits of working from home thus alleviating the need to drive excessive distances each day.

Maintaining prosperity

The prosperity of the village depends upon encouraging the continued process of economic growth, development and employment opportunities whilst seeking to ensure that interests of amenity, road safety and the environment are protected.

A balance therefore needs to be struck, particularly in relation to the continued expansion and development of the industrial estate, which is prominent in short and long distance views, affects the landscape setting and character of the villages of Barking and Darmsden and forms one of the main entrances to Needham Market.

Its appearance at the moment however detracts in a number of ways:

- some plots are over-developed
- insufficient space exists for landscaping on some plots
- the majority of landscaping undertaken is either poorly managed, has failed or is insubstantial in relation to the development
- little native or perimeter landscaping exists
- bright colours have been used as edging on buildings or associated fencing
- standard of design varies with some developments having interesting form, but has not been enhanced due to other factors such as those listed above
- the presence of high 'barrack-style' perimeter security fencing.

Small scale enterprises will be welcomed within the village where it does not detract from the rural appearance and character of its surroundings.

Larger scale business (of a general nature) would be more appropriately located on the Lion Barn industrial estate.

27. Small scale enterprises (of a light industrial nature) will be welcomed within the village where they do not detract from the rural appearance and character of their surroundings. Larger scale businesses (of a general nature) would be more appropriately located on the Lion Barn industrial estate.

28. Redundant agricultural buildings in a sound condition provide scope to locate businesses within the village. Conversion to sympathetic business uses, which do not adversely affect visual amenity, will be supported. Working from home should be encouraged as it is a sustainable form of employment opportunity.

THE ECONOMY

Recommendations

...and the Barking Fox
29. Harmful visual effects caused by open storage, lorry parking, inappropriate security fencing and signage should be strongly resisted whilst expansion of existing businesses should be encouraged, unless adverse effects are likely to result.

30. All commercial developments should harmonise with the character and setting of their environment and should take account of the following criteria:

- High standards of design and layout should be achieved using materials which are in keeping with the area and which avoid the use of stark bright colours (both in use of external facing materials and all associate signs, street furniture and fencing).
- Over-development and over-intensive forms of development that are detrimental to road safety, visual amenity and residential amenity will be unacceptable.
- Sufficient space should be provided for landscaping which will soften the impact of the development, such landscaping to take the form of perimeter planting (trees and hedge/shrub under-planting) of between 3-5 metres wide.
- Sufficient on-site HGV and car parking/turning/loading/unloading space should be provided to avoid such activities taking place on the industrial estate roads.
- The introduction of high, imposing 'barrack-style' perimeter security fencing should be avoided while rear or 'hidden' compounds will be encouraged.
- Release of land for industrial estate use within the Parish should seek to soften its impact on the landscape quality and character of the village with the promotion of further adequate perimeter planting of a strategic nature.
The B1078 is the main road that serves Barking. It is finished in tarmac, with no raised footways for the majority of its length. It carries two-way traffic and has an average width of seven metres. It is restricted to a 30 mph speed limit through the village.

Traffic flow varies from moderate to heavy during morning and evening peak periods and light to moderate at other times. Two minor roads branch off the B1078: (i) to the village of Batsford and (ii) to the village of Willisham.

**Highways**

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### HIGHWAYS Recommendations

31. Continued recognition of the 30 mph speed limit should be maintained including the use of discreet and sympathetic signs within the village urging motorists to drive with more care.

32. Discreet traffic calming measures and highway signage to maintain high standards of road safety will be encouraged. However, such measures should be unobtrusive and avoid solutions that result in a clumsy and artificial narrowing of the carriageway or the application of inappropriate and brightly coloured top dressings to the road surface.

33. Further measures such as the existing discreet 30 mph signs painted on the carriageway would be considered suitable for traffic calming. Full consultation with and approval by the Parish Council should be sought and obtained by the County Highway Authority in consultation with the District Council before any scheme is implemented.

34. Where new footpaths are required to service new dwellings with frontages on to the B1078, provision should be made for continuing footways designed in a manner that reflects the rural setting.

35. All new vehicular accesses on to the B1078 should meet County Highway Authority requirements in terms of visibility splays and provision of on-site turning areas, so as to avoid the practice of vehicles reversing out on to the highway. The design of accesses will require careful treatment to avoid harmful visual effects. Hard and soft landscaping should be used to reduce these impacts.

36. Any new vehicular accesses should be sympathetic in surface treatment to their surroundings – in particular those onto the Tye – to avoid black top tarmac or plain concrete surfaces which are considered inappropriate to the rural setting and to include rolled pea-shingle, grasscrete or appropriately coloured paviors.

37. The construction of a continuous footway along the B1078, particularly between The Forge and Parsons Lane, has been supported as part of the Village Appraisal process. The precise location, route and surface treatment of any such footway to be the subject of full Parish consultation and approval prior to any scheme being implemented.

38. Street lighting should be of an appropriate style; the position, amount and intensity of such lighting to be agreed with the Parish Council in order to ensure that inappropriate 'urban' levels of lighting and 'light pollution' are avoided in order to protect visual amenities of the village and residential amenity.

39. Private security lighting installed on properties bordering public roads within the village should also be within appropriate constraints of intensity, positioning and amount to protect the visual amenities stated above.

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"A balance needs to be struck between necessary infrastructure improvements and pedestrian safety, whilst retaining the informality of the character of the village."