Local Distinctiveness Guidelines
Consultation Summary Report 2013

Introduction

Local Distinctiveness Guidelines are being produced to improve the understanding of local distinctiveness within the county, providing 'on the ground' guidance for communities, planners, developers, businesses, and landowners, to help build local distinctiveness into development and land management decisions.

The draft guidelines were sent to 214 individuals, organisations and parishes by email. They were also accessible from the County Council's website. 24 responses were received, an 11% response rate. Within the consultation 4 points were put forward for consideration, several respondents answered these directly, while others addressed a proportion of these within their general comments.

The following is a summary of the responses received. The overwhelming response to the Guidelines was positive, with some suggestions for improvement or alteration. The comments received have been considered and appropriate changes are being made to the Guidelines. We are extremely grateful to those who took the time to respond.

Summary of responses to the consultation

Are the sheets fit for purpose? Do they fulfil the aims laid out in the introduction?

- Several organisations stated that they welcomed and supported this work.
- The guidelines provide an easy snapshot of the local distinctiveness of the five broad areas identified.
- A number of organisations described the guidelines as fascinating, informative and well designed, promoting an important topic.
- The documents were also considered to be too general as each one covers a large area; they do not include enough detail for use at a very local level.
- There is the potential to highlight issues that threaten the area.
- The guidelines were considered by some to be too prescriptive for rural areas that were already well protected.

Could the layout / format be improved? Is it easy to read?

- There was praise for some excellent documents which look really good and identify ancient woodland as requiring protection.
- If the sheets are produced at A4 the format was too cramped and the text too small.
- The layout and presentation was considered by others to be good and clear (designed for A3), and very concise.
- In some areas the contrast between the text and diagrams makes the text difficult to read.
- Some concern over the palette section which could seem to be a pic'n'mix.
- Reordering of the listed descriptions were suggested.
- More information on the captions.
- Include links to further information.
- The layout is good, the photos and drawings bring it alive and the content informative.
- There is a lot of content, could it be reduced.
- Each sheet should stand alone so the inclusion of an introduction on each sheet was suggested.

- An email address for further information could be useful.
- The identification of key characteristics was welcomed.
- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) section is technically excellent but perhaps too small a scale to be useful – maybe explain what HLC is and provide links to further information.

How would you use them and in what circumstances?

- Would be used in conjunction with planning applications and for information for councils undertaking neighbourhood plans.
- Should be very useful in supporting decision makers to look at the local details when making decisions.
- Useful to help raise the issue of local distinctiveness.

Also included within the responses were suggestions for changes:

- Several parish plans / village statements were attached to the responses for information.
- Various additional information was suggested – historic and ecological designations, management issues such as managing ancient woodland, more mention of ancient / veteran trees outside woodland, ecosystem services, retention of green space between villages.
- Additional photographs were suggested.
- The details within a couple of diagrams were considered to be inaccurate, corrections were sent.
- Small changes to the text.
- Suggested inclusion of key principles to protect and enhance the local distinctiveness of rural communities.

Appendix 1

West Sussex County Council is grateful for all the responses that were received.

Responses were received from:

Ardingly Parish Council
Billingshurst Parish Council
Bognor Regis Town Council
Bosham Parish Council
Burgess Hill Town Council
Chichester City Council
Chichester Harbour Conservancy
Donnington Parish Council
Earnley Parish Council
Economic Development Team, WSCC
English Heritage
Environment and Heritage Team, WSCC
Forest Neighbourhood Council
High Weald AONB
Kingston Parish Council
Lavant Parish Council
Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group
Natural England
North Mundham Parish Council
Slaugham Parish Council
Storrington and Sullington Parish Council
West Hoathly Parish Council
Woodland Trust – Regional
Woodland Trust - National