

## HOW WE DID IT...

# Guide aims to safeguard forest district's quality

**PROJECT** Landscape supplementary planning document for the Forest of Dean.

**BACKGROUND** The document sets out key principles on the area's highly distinctive landscape for anyone interested in development, planning or design.

**WHO IS BEHIND IT?** Forest of Dean District Council and LDA Design.

**PROJECT AIMS** The document will be taken into account by the council when assessing planning decisions, applications and appeals to ensure that environmental and landscape issues receive due consideration.

**SKILLS INVOLVED** Environmental planning, design, landscape, public consultation and communication.

The Forest of Dean is an area famous for its beauty and dramatic scenery. Its sections of the Wye Valley and the Malvern Hills are protected as areas of outstanding natural beauty.

A popular tourist destination, it has inspired many authors, among them JRR Tolkien, JK Rowling and Dennis Potter. However, it is much more than a tourist magnet. The area is a functioning landscape providing homes, jobs and facilities for local people. Just like anywhere else, it faces demands for development.

Forest of Dean District Council adopted a landscape supplementary planning document (SPD) in March, reflecting its commitment to protect the area. But it also aims to ensure that designs submitted by developers are high in quality, enhancing and working with the area's character.

The council wanted to remind everyone who is interested in planning, design and development of the importance of the landscape when judging applications. It wants to ensure improved standards of planning and design in the landscape.

"We wanted to make landscape count in policy and development control decisions," says council forward plans manager Nigel Gibbons. "We were after an additional edge. This makes landscape considerations much more explicit."

LDA Design worked closely with council planning and development control officers on the document. Widespread consultation and joint



Forest of Dean: landscape now protected from unsuitable development

working helped both parties identify how landscape issues are dealt with and "design the SPD around their very specific requirements", says LDA Design principal Ian Hunter.

"It is wonderful to see the SPD adopted and work with a client that recognises the importance of the landscape and the opportunities that well-planned, well-designed development can have," he adds.

"All too often one is sacrificed, which leads to development that is inappropriate for its location or contributes little to amenity, landscape or the environment. It would blight this historic and living landscape to alter it beyond recognition or fail to develop it to meet the needs of those who live, visit and work here."



**"It would blight this landscape to alter it beyond recognition or fail to develop it to meet local needs"**

At 77 pages, the adopted SPD is comprehensive. But it contains simple and straightforward guidance on landscape-related planning issues. It presents the policy background and details of the process through which landscape character issues should be considered in planning and design.

This includes guidance on how to carry out landscape surveys and appraisals, how to consider the effects of development, how to consult effectively with the public and how to present landscape concepts and design proposals.

It also provides advice on submitting applications and presents a checklist to help ascertain whether all the required landscape submission requirements have been met. All of this is conveyed in clear English, a facet favourably remarked on by those in the district, says Gibbons.

LDA Design completed a landscape character assessment before beginning the SPD. This confirmed the wealth and diversity of landscapes in the district, their intrinsic identity and their sense of place.

"It is important that the characteristics that define these landscapes are protected and enhanced in the future," says Hunter. "Together the landscape character assessment and SPD provide a powerful tool in helping to achieve this." ■

Huw Morris

## THE THINGS I



**STUART R.**  
Executive Director  
of planning  
Richard Eli

## What skills did you have you graduated?

While at Bristol Polytechnic University of the West of England I did the philosophy module from enjoying the challenge helped me to think logically.

## What attracted you to planning?

As a child I was always fascinated by maps. At school I had a hobby of joining a firm of cartographers later became fascinated by how they work.

## What did you learn in your first job?

My first job was with Nath Lichfield and Partners (NLP) a converted brewery in Nottingham. Extended lunches in the bar were followed by sessions in the corridor.

## What skills have you had over your career?

I think I learned most of my skills through practice. Those that stand out most are learning the difference between delegation and discipline, time management and cultivating the art of active listening.

## What or who have been the most influential in your career?

Michael Burrows at NLP taught me to take on as much responsibility as I could. Alan Tate at Healey taught me how to think in terms of business.

## What is your career high point?

Among the best include helping Regent Street evolve to meet the needs of the 21st century to transform the redundant power station into Tate Modern.

## What have you learned from work that has influenced you?

Playing team sports has helped put together people with different skills and personalities and to get the best out of them.

## What further skills do you obtain or develop?

I would like to learn Italian, more time doing Pilates, and golf handicap and trim sail.

## How important is it to keep abreast of development allied professions?

I am constantly amazed by how notice planners take of business economics and development business community.