

20. If you live in the St.Helens part of Billinge only, should the access road to the Billinge Hill Landfill Site, above Crookhurst, be:

- a) left as it is at present
- b) reduced to single lane vehicle access
- c) reduced to being a footpath only
- d) removed entirely.

21. Please use the box below to add any comment you might have on future building development in Billinge and how the character of the village might be considered in all future planning proposals, or attach another sheet of paper if you wish.

Name (optional) .....

Date .....

# A Village Design Statement for Billinge

## Introduction

Billinge was founded around 550 AD by an Angle tribe, the Varini, whose leading clan, the Billingas, gave the village and its first ruling family their names. Billinge retained its Anglo Saxon name and culture throughout the subsequent invasion and settlement by the Norsemen, 700 - 800. Around 1290, the Manor of Billinge divided into four. The ancient manor houses of Billinge, Birchley, Bispham and Winstanley are still standing. Billinge remained a comparatively isolated community for centuries, until the coal boom and the rise of Wigan and St Helens as industrial centres during the Industrial Revolution.

Stone was mined in Billinge as far back as the 11th century. The manor houses, churches, schools, farm buildings, pubs and houses were all built from locally quarried stone. Until quite recently, the Main Street looked like this.



After the auction of the Winstanley Estate to meet death duties in 1951, Billinge Council allowed new housing estates to be built and many old stone buildings were abandoned, condemned or demolished. The character of the village is continuing to be eroded by new development, especially along main arterial roadways. St.Mary's School and the Council Office sites are recent examples. The extent of public concern about this issue was recently illustrated when 600 villagers wrote to oppose the re-development of the site of the George and Dragon. Consequently, Billinge History/Heritage Society, on behalf of the village, is going to prepare a Village Design Statement for Billinge, involving residents and St.Helens and Wigan Councils, to help protect the character of the village and improve the quality and appropriateness of future new development.

The Countryside Agency originally devised Village Design Statements (VDS) as a method for improving the quality of new buildings and developments and to ensure they took into account the character of the area in which they occur. Since their inception in 1996, they have proved to be of much greater value. VDS provide a framework for local people to collectively determine how their community should develop and grow and how such developments can be in keeping with the local surroundings. Village Design Statements are researched, developed, written and edited by local people within the guidelines laid down by the Countryside Agency. The VDS describes the character of a village and gives guidelines for the conservation of that character. It records what local people value about their home environment when future planning applications are being considered.

A Village Design Statement sets out clear and simple guidance for the design of all development in a village, based on its character. It is an advisory document produced by the village community, not by the planning authority. It will not stop change from happening, but it can help affect how any new building fits into the village. VDS are intended to influence the operation of the statutory planning system, so that new development is in harmony with its setting and makes a positive contribution to the immediate environment.

A Village Design Statement is unlike any other planning document. It gives planning advice directly applicable to the statutory planning system and is entirely community-based.

## How to get involved

The first step in developing the VDS is to circulate a questionnaire to all Billinge residents and record the results. Please complete the attached questionnaire carefully and return it to either: Billinge Library, Main Street, Billinge, or The Holts Arms Hotel, Crank Road, Billinge, or post it to BH/HS, 29 Tracks Lane, Billinge WN5 7BL. The questionnaire can also be downloaded from [www.billinge-history.co.uk/vdsq](http://www.billinge-history.co.uk/vdsq) and completed, printed and returned to one of the addresses above or emailed as an attachment to [vdsq@billinge-history.com](mailto:vdsq@billinge-history.com)

A draft VDS will then be presented for discussion and comment at an open public meeting. The final version will then be compiled and presented to the two relevant Municipal Authorities so that it can be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document for Billinge.

Please use this opportunity to have a direct input into the way any future building development in Billinge is conducted.

John Boardman – Chairperson, Billinge History/Heritage Society

# Questionnaire

Please underline or write in the appropriate answer to the following questions.

1. In which Council area of Billinge do you live? Wigan  St.Helens
2. What is your postcode?
3. What features do you think are the most important in defining Billinge's character (underline those you consider most important and add any that are missing)?
  - Traditional materials (e.g. local stone, local brick, local stone tiles, Welsh slate)
  - Boundary detailing (e.g. stone walls, hedges, fences, railings)
  - Building size and type (commercial buildings, detached houses, terraces, number of storeys)
  - Location of buildings in relation to the street
  - Areas of landscaping, trees and natural features (ponds, streams etc.)
  - Detailing of buildings (e.g. windows and doors, chimneys, porches etc.)
  - Street furniture surfacing (railings, bollards, street lamps, telephone boxes, York stone slabs, cobbles and setts etc.)
  - Signage (both on buildings and freestanding)
  - Key views within, into and out of the village
  - Landform, hills or slopes
4. Should the character of Billinge be taken into consideration when the planning departments of St.Helens and Wigan Councils are considering development proposals?  
Yes  No
5. Should the character of Billinge be taken into consideration for all future development proposals?
  - a) along the arterial roadways (Birchley Road, Rainford Road, Main Street, Newton Road, Wigan Road, UpHolland Road, Crank Road)
  - b) for the entire Billinge area (including the existing and any new housing estates)
  - c) for none of the Billinge area.
6. Do you think there are any buildings/sites that should be subject to appropriate re-development in order to improve the character of the village? Please indicate which and the reasons why below.

16. From what material should new buildings be constructed:

stone  bricks  a mixture of the two

Should the roofs be made from:

Welsh slate  local stone slates  plain clay tiles

17. Should the trees along the arterial roadways (Birchley Road, Rainford Road, Main Street, Newton Road, Wigan Road, UpHolland Road, Crank Road) be retained?

Yes  No

18. Where possible, should trees be used to landscape existing developments such as the example below?



Yes  No

19. Are there any areas in the village that would benefit from new tree planting/landscaping?

Yes  No

If 'yes', please indicate where and state your reasons below

13. Do the following examples of shopfront advertising reflect the character of Billinge?



Yes

No



Yes

No



Yes

No



Yes

No

14. Should there be a height restriction on new developments in Billinge?

Yes

No

15. If you answered 'yes' to (14), should that restriction be:

1 storey  2 storeys  3 storeys  4 storeys  other (state number)

7. Do the following buildings fit with your idea of the character of Billinge? Add comments alongside if you wish.



Yes

No



Yes

No



Yes

No



Yes

No



Yes

No



Yes  No



Yes  No



Yes  No



Yes  No

8. Should the remaining open spaces along the arterial roadways (Birchley Road, Rainford Road, Main Street, Newton Road, Wigan Road, UpHolland Road, Crank Road) be retained?

Yes  No

Please give your reasons below

9. Do you consider the area of open space below to be important to the character of Billinge?

 Yes  No

If 'yes', should it be retained as open space?

Yes  No

Please explain why below

10. Are there any other areas of open space/landscaping that should also be protected?

Yes  No

If 'yes', please indicate where and the reasons below

11. Should street furnishings (litter boxes, lampposts, telephone boxes, bus shelters, benches, notice-boards, pavement and road finishes etc. reflect the character of Billinge?

Yes  No

Please explain why below

12. Should advertising on shopfronts reflect the character of Billinge?

Yes  No