

### Appendix 3 - Residential Design and Layout

3.1 As well as securing an adequate supply of housing of a mix of sizes, types and tenures to meet needs in the District, to ensure the quality of life of Three Rivers' residents and communities it is essential that all housing, including residential extensions are of high quality and that there is suitable accommodation to meet a range of needs.

3.2 Achieving this requires new development to be designed in accordance with the objectives and full range of policies of the new Local Plan, as well as specific design principles for new homes set out in the following preferred policy.

#### Residential Design and Layout

- 1) All applications for residential development, including new dwellings, replacement dwellings, and extensions or alterations to existing dwellings should satisfy the preferred Design Criteria as set out in Appendix X to ensure that development does not lead to a gradual deterioration in the quality of the built environment, and that landscaping, the need for privacy and amenity space and the creation of identity in housing layouts are taken into account.

#### **New Residential Development**

- 2) All new development should be designed and built to a high quality for the duration of its lifetime and should comply with the National Design Guide. This includes C3 and C4 Use Class developments, conversions and changes of use where planning permission is required.
- 3) New residential development should make the most efficient use of land, which may include conversion or change of use of existing buildings, new development and taking opportunities to use airspace above existing buildings where this would be consistent with policies of the Local Plan and would not compromise the quality of the environment and existing residential areas.
- 4) The Council will protect the character and residential amenity of existing areas of housing from forms of backland, infill or other forms of new residential development which are inappropriate for the area.
- 5) Development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not result in harm to the character or amenities of an area including through:
  - a) Tandem development;
  - b) Servicing by an awkward access drive which cannot easily be used by service vehicles;

- c) Unsafe or unsuitable access arrangements;
  - d) The generation of excessive levels of traffic;
  - e) Loss of residential amenity; or
  - f) Layouts detrimental to the particular character of an area in terms of plot size, plot depth, building footprint, plot frontage width, frontage building line, height, gaps between buildings and streetscape features (e.g. hedges, walls, grass verges etc.).
- 6) The individual and cumulative effect of applications for development on the character of an area will be taken into account and piecemeal development will be resisted in favour of comprehensive proposals that properly address design requirements.
- 7) Major development will be required to provide a masterplan and should follow the principles of design and master-planning in accordance with the National Design Guide and National Model Design Codes.

#### **Tall Buildings**

- 8) The Council will support proposals for tall buildings (buildings 4 storeys or above or any building substantially taller than its neighbours) where:
- a) The location is sustainable and suitable for high density development;
  - b) The height is proportionate to the proposed location and size of site;
  - c) They will not have a negative impact on the general amenity of surrounding businesses and spaces;
  - d) They reinforce or add positively to the surrounding scale and urban form of the area;
  - e) Consideration is given to how the building will affect important views to and from key areas of the District;
  - f) The building is of an exemplary architectural design and residential quality, maximising energy efficiency prioritising the use of sustainable materials and construction methods;
  - g) They provide appropriate levels of usable amenity space for future occupants;
  - h) They include sufficient parking for cars and cycles, in accordance with the Council's parking standards.

### **Subdivision of Dwellings**

- 9) Subject to other development plan policies, proposals for the conversion of single dwellings into two or more units will generally be acceptable where:
- a) The building is suitable for conversion by reason of its size, shape and number of rooms. Normally, only dwellings with three or more bedrooms will be considered suitable for conversion;
  - b) The dwellings created are completely self-contained, with separate front doors either giving direct access to the dwelling, or a secure communal lobby or stairwell which itself has a secure entrance;
  - c) Adequate car parking, services and amenity space can be provided for each new unit in compliance with the Council's standards;
  - d) The character of the area and the residential amenity of immediate neighbours are protected; and
  - e) If conversion of semi-detached dwellings is proposed, generally this takes place in pairs in order that privacy and the amenities of the occupants of the adjoining dwelling are maintained.

### **Internal Space Standards**

- 10) All residential development should meet or exceed the Technical Housing Standards as set out by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Appropriate consideration should also be given to:
- a) Providing sufficient space for the general and specific storage needs of residents (including those with disabilities);
  - b) Floor layouts which provide for practical usable space and a good standard of amenity; and
  - c) The provision of rooms which are designed to function comfortably and efficiently for their intended purpose.

### **Amenity Standards**

- 11) All development should meet the standards for the quantity and quality of amenity space as set out in Appendix X, unless a different approach is robustly justified (for example town centre development and development in close proximity to public open space).

### **Reasoned Justification**

3.3 To deliver the step-change in housing required to meet needs in the area the preferred policy confirms that new development should make the most efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the environment and residential areas in line with the NPPF requirement that policies optimise use of land and seek a significant uplift in density in city and town centres and areas well served by public transport unless there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate.

3.4 While there is a need to increase the density of development generally and encourage innovation in the delivery of new housing, it is also essential that new housing provided is of high quality and that the quality of the environment and existing residential areas is maintained or enhanced. The NPPF also acknowledges at paragraph 128(d) that development should take into account the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), and at paragraph 72 that there may be a case for policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area.

3.5 Pressure for development including on garden land or for infill development can erode the particular character of an area or impact on the residential amenity of both existing and new occupants if not managed. However, taking a different approach to the established character of an area will not necessarily be harmful in all cases where it is informed by careful consideration for important elements of local character and the quality of the area.

3.6 In particular, proposals for tandem development (one or more dwellings directly behind one another on the same plot and sharing the same access) or backland development (one or more dwellings provided to the rear of existing buildings with no street frontage and generally accessed by a long driveway) need to be carefully considered as these can often be inappropriate.

3.7 The subdivision of existing dwellings can also contribute a source of new housing supply and these types of applications can be a satisfactory way of raising densities in low density areas close to local transport nodes and local services. Whether or not subdivision is acceptable will depend on the characteristics of the building and area, and the standard of accommodation that can be created.

### **Internal Space Standards**

3.8 Delivering high quality housing requires careful consideration for the provision of usable internal space, as well as providing access to a suitable quantity and quality of external amenity space to support quality of life for residents.

3.9 To provide for a suitable standard of accommodation, the Government has published nationally described space standards (NDSS) which set out optional requirements for the floor area of new dwellings depending on the level of occupancy, as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home such as bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling heights.

3.10 The NPPF sets out that Local Plans may make use of these NDSS where the need for an internal space standard can be justified. Monitoring information shows that 193 dwellings (25%) permitted in Three Rivers between April 2015 and March 2019 were smaller than the NDSS. This is a significant proportion and suggests that there is a clear need to apply the NDSS to new housing development in Three Rivers.

3.11 As such, requiring new development to generally accord with NDSS would provide for improvement to the quality of housing being delivered and resulting benefits for the general health and wellbeing of the community and a more flexible and adaptable housing stock better able to meet the needs of residents.

### Tall Buildings

3.12 A tall building is defined as being 4 storeys or above or any building substantially taller than its neighbours.

3.13 In considering proposals for the erection of tall buildings, the following criteria will be taken into account:

- The character of the area;
- The relationship between an individual site and adjoining land and buildings;
- The context within which the proposal will sit;
- The design of the building; and
- The impact on long range views.

3.14 When considering tall buildings, an assessment of the appropriateness of the location will be made. Consideration will be given to whether the proposal will enhance the character of the area. The inter-relationship with existing buildings will also be an important factor in the assessment of the appropriateness of the location and proposal. Designs which are inappropriate in their context, or which fail to make good use of the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area will be refused.

### Amenity Space Standards

3.15 Similarly, ensuring that residents have access to a suitable quantity and quality of private or semi-private amenity space is important to provide for a good quality of life and the standards at Appendix X should be applied with consideration for the shape and utility of space provided to ensure that spaces offer good amenity.