

Appendix 4 - Local Distinctiveness and Place Shaping

4.1 It is important that all new development, including extensions and alterations to existing buildings and spaces, is designed to respect the existing character of the District and create great places for the community.

4.2 The relationship between buildings, spaces and landscape as well as detailed design and materials are all relevant factors. Good design positively influences how people move around settlements, how people interact and how places make people feel.

4.3 The Council places a high value on the importance of good design in the built environment and making places better for people. The quality of development and the ability to create well-designed places is central to how the area will function in future and the quality of the environment.

Local Distinctiveness and Place Shaping

- 1) All new development is required to achieve high quality design that contributes to enhancing local distinctiveness (including landscape and townscape character) of the area and help shape a place to create a strong sense of place. Essential elements of place shaping include creating economically and socially successful new places with a distinctive identity that promotes wellbeing.
- 2) Development should satisfy relevant Design Criteria at Appendix X.
- 3) Innovative designs will be encouraged where appropriate. Development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions will be refused.

Distinct Local Character

- 4) All new development should be designed to respond to locally distinct patterns of development and character, including landscape setting and the historic environment. Proposals will need to take account of local design guidance including that contained within Conservation Area Appraisals, Neighbourhood Plan character areas, where available and Supplementary Planning Documents to preserve or enhance the character, amenities and quality of an area. Large new developments should reflect the diversity of architecture in the area.
- 5) Development should make efficient use of land whilst respecting the distinctiveness of the surrounding area in terms of density, character, layout and spacing, the pattern of street blocks and plots, building forms, amenity, scale, height, massing, style, landscaping and the use of materials.

- 6) The layout of proposals must be easy to navigate, with buildings designed and positioned to define and enhance a hierarchy of streets and spaces and create a density appropriate to the site, taking account of factors such as the relationship between building height and street width, and the relationship between the height, width and depth of buildings.
- 7) Materials should be sustainable, practical, durable and attractive with regard to aspects including their colour, texture, grain and reflectivity.
- 8) The size, function or density of some of the allocations for development within the Local Plan are such that it may not be appropriate for these sites to always reflect locally distinct patterns of development. In such cases, sites should take opportunities to create their own identity while ensuring cohesive and vibrant neighbourhoods.

Connections

- 9) The layout of development should be designed to ensure it connects appropriately to existing street patterns and built form, and creates safe and accessible spaces.
- 10) Buildings and open spaces should be designed to create a high quality public realm, promote positive social interaction and create attractive environments that maximise opportunities and encourage people to move around by cycling and walking.

Safeguarding Amenity

- 11) Development should protect the amenities and the attractiveness of the living environment for both existing and future occupiers by taking into account the need for adequate levels and disposition of privacy, prospect, amenity and garden space, and suitable access.

Landscaping and Public Realm

- 12) Development should incorporate visually attractive frontages to adjoining streets and public spaces and should provide for high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping.

- 13) A landscape led approach must be considered as an integral element of the layout and design of development, including integration with adjoining networks of green infrastructure, open space, surface water management systems and recreation and wildlife movement networks where appropriate and retaining, enhancing or improving important existing natural features such as trees, hedgerows and walls as far as possible.
- 14) Proposals for landscaping should show how the design, planting species and materials have been selected with regard to factors including the character of the area, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment, and ongoing management and maintenance.
- 15) All proposals must provide landscape schemes, hard and soft landscape specifications, planting schedules and plans and management and maintenance plans for a minimum of five years during the aftercare period.
- 16) Development should provide for a clear distinction between public and private space and should provide boundary treatments which enhance the appearance, character and amenity of the site and area, whilst ensuring wildlife is able to move freely across boundaries.
- 17) Development should enhance the public realm to promote social interaction, including making provision for adequate lighting and for street furniture and public art where appropriate and ensuring that all appropriate frontages contain windows and doors that assist informal surveillance.

Safeguarding Assets and the Environment

- 18) All development should conserve and enhance natural, built, cultural and heritage assets, including public open space.
- 19) Proposals must take opportunities to make sustainable design integral to the development and build resilience into a site's design taking into account climate change including through flood resistant design, Green Infrastructure, sustainable drainage, minimising the use of natural resources, reducing waste and ensuring that buildings and spaces are capable of adaptation to other uses and functions where practical in order to ensure their long-life.

Safety and Security

- 20) Development must design out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour through the incorporation of appropriate measures to minimise the risk of crime and create safe and attractive places taking into account the Police 'Secured by Design' standards and where appropriate guidance on terrorism in the Government's Planning Practice Guidance.
- 21) Development should provide natural security through layout and design with attractive, well enclosed, and overlooked streets, roads and spaces with clear consideration for the interrelationship of land use with external spaces and landscaping.

Access and Inclusion

- 22) Places, spaces and buildings must be accessible to all potential users, including those with mobility difficulties taking into account the setting of buildings in the wider environment, the location of buildings within plots, gradient, transport infrastructure and public realm.
- 23) Development must provide appropriate levels of parking for cycles to support sustainable travel choices and appropriate levels of parking for vehicles to avoid additional on-street parking where this would cause congestion or harm to amenity or highway safety. Parking and cycle storage areas should be convenient, safe and visually attractive areas that do not dominate the development or its surroundings or impact on driver, cyclist or pedestrian sight lines.

Ancillary Facilities

- 24) Development must provide appropriate facilities for individual and communal use including cycle storage, amenity areas and facilities for the storage and collection of refuse and recycling materials which are designed and sited in accordance with current Council standards, avoiding adverse impacts on safety or security, the street scene, or the amenities of the proposed and existing properties.

Reasoned Justification

4.4 The NPPF states that creating high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, it creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Urban design and architecture can contribute to

health outcomes through the encouragement of more active lifestyles and development should be encouraged to create places that support mixed communities catering for the needs of different types of people including the young and old, encourage walking and cycling, improve access to public transport, and ensure that new development connects with existing parks and open spaces for recreation. Building exteriors and public realm should be designed in a way that contributes to pedestrian-friendly environments.

4.5 The Local Plan identifies a requirement to accommodate significant growth over the plan period including the provision of new homes and space for employment and economic development with supporting infrastructure.

4.6 Meeting these requirements in a sustainable way will require all proposals to take opportunities to make the most efficient use of land, and in particular there is a need to secure a general uplift in the density of development in town centres and other locations which are well served by public transport.

4.7 However, this should not be at the cost of the quality of the environment or quality of life, or the local distinctiveness of our places. It is essential that new development functions well for all users and will add to the overall quality of the area in both the short- and long-term. Proposals should respond to the elements of a place that make it distinctive, but this does not mean that development should necessarily replicate the scale or density of existing built form.

4.8 Since no two places are identical, there is no blueprint for good design and each proposal will need to show how the design responds to a thorough understanding of place and context.

4.9 Development of larger sites through allocations within the Plan also offers an opportunity for these sites to create their own identity and character, although it remains vital that these developments are integrated with the surrounding area and community.

4.10 In all situations, well-designed places should be functional; support mixed uses and tenures; include successful public spaces; be adaptable and resilient; have a distinctive character; be attractive; and encourage ease of movement.

4.11 Alongside the requirements of other policies of the Local Plan, Policy D1 identifies the key design considerations which will apply in Three Rivers to all development proposals including new development, extensions, alterations, conversions and changes of use to create quality places and spaces for our communities.

4.12 Further specific requirements which apply to certain forms of development or sites are set out within other preferred policies in this document. Regard will also be had to well-established good design principles as set out in national initiatives such as the 'Building for Life' standard, 'Secured by Design' and 'Manual for Streets', and further guidance will be provided through Supplementary Planning Documents in future.

4.13 Proposals will not be supported where they do not address these policy requirements and where opportunities to improve the character and quality of the area in which they are located are not taken.

4.14 Innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area are encouraged, so long as they are appropriate with regard to the character, distinctiveness and amenities of the area and address the objectives and policies of the Local Plan as a whole.

4.15 The Council encourages applicants, especially major development proposals, to engage in early and ongoing pre application discussions about design and other material planning considerations with both the Local Planning Authority and the local community. In accordance with the NPPF, applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community will be looked on more favourably than those that cannot. Reference should be made to the Building Futures sustainable development initiative which provides the Hertfordshire Design Review Service.

4.16 Largescale major development schemes delivering more than 200 dwellings or over 10,000sqm floorspace are encouraged to undergo assessment by a Design Review Panel to provide independent, objective feedback and advice on design proposals. Applicants are strongly encouraged to undertake a design review at pre application stage and to show how feedback has informed proposals for a site. In considering proposals, regard will be had to the outcome of any review undertaken.

4.17 Steps will also be taken through the use of planning conditions and careful consideration for any proposed amendments after the grant of permission to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between the grant of permission and completion. This will include (but is not limited to) consideration for materials, architectural detailing, landscaping and layouts.