St.Helens Council

Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document

September 2007

Local Development Framework

Contents

Foreword

Cllr. Neil Taylor

Never before has the pace of transformation been at such a high level in St.Helens, which has seen major new regeneration and economic prosperity. While embracing this new era of growth, St.Helens Council is keen to make sure that the Borough's proud traditions and heritage are reflected in this new renaissance period while making sure standards are maintained and monitored.

In the past, St.Helens has suffered at the hands of indiscriminate, poor design. In order to retain the essence of St.Helens as a place, it is important that new development creates distinctive, high quality buildings and spaces that take account of and enhance the wider area. The Government has placed significant emphasis on achieving high quality design as an essential element of sustainable development and it is important that this occurs in St.Helens.

The design of many developments shows a lack of understanding of St.Helens as a place, as well as being driven by the desire to do things as profitably as possible. Achieving good design requires a strong understanding of a place, followed by high quality, creative design solutions.

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is not intended to cover every eventuality. Its aim is to promote better design through raising awareness and setting the parameters for good design. Developers are encouraged to think more about what makes an area distinctive and how their development can positively contribute toward it.

We want developers to use this SPD positively, to enable high quality development schemes that fulfil their requirements but which also help define the new, confident image of St.Helens, based upon design quality creating a distinctive, enjoyable and memorable place for the people who live, work, visit and spend time here. High quality design has an important role to play in transforming St.Helens into a destination of choice.

Councillor Neil Taylor,
Executive Member for Urban Regeneration

Part 1: Achieving Good Design in St.Helens

Introduction

1.0 The importance of urban design

1.1 Achieving well-designed, good quality development is a central objective of the planning process. Government guidance contained within Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) is unequivocal about the importance of design in our towns, villages and the countryside. Good design plays a vital part in ensuring that we achieve sustainable development, quality and local distinctiveness in our built environment.

1.2 The issue of climate change is one of the most important facing the modern world. The sustainable design of new development will play an important part in helping to reduce the rate of climate change. It is important that St.Helens plays its part in achieving this.

1.3 "Good design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning."

Planning Policy Statement 1

1.4 St.Helens Council recognises the role that high quality design plays in contributing to healthy and vital communities and a sense of individual and collective wellbeing. The Council believes that the achievement of the Community Plan's vision of the Borough as a modern, distinctive and economically prosperous place can only be achieved if economic and social investment and regeneration initiatives are supported by a well-designed environment, including quality new buildings, the sympathetic renovation of older buildings, the protection and enhancement of natural environmental assets, and the management of the spaces between buildings.

1.5 "The Vision for St.Helens, set out in the Community Plan, is to make St.Helens a modern, distinctive, economically prosperous and vibrant Borough."

St.Helens Community Plan 2002-2012

1.6 The Community Plan sets out a vision for the future of St.Helens which is reflected in this Design Guidance SPD.

To ensure clarity in understanding the role and purpose of the SPD, it is important to set out the SPD's objectives, which are drawn from those of the Community Plan and the Unitary Development Plan.

The objectives are:

1. A healthy, safe, attractive and rich environment, with a choice of good transport facilities for all.
2. Reduced crime and a fear of crime.
3. Sustainable and stronger communities, narrowing inequalities with better opportunities for disadvantaged groups.
4. To secure urban regeneration.
5. To balance the needs of new development and protection of the environment.
6. To improve the quality of the environment to make St.Helens a more attractive and safer place to live, work, play, invest and to visit.
7. To take account of the need of all sectors of the community in the provision of housing, employment, transport, recreation facilities and infrastructure.
8. To conserve resources and work towards the principles of sustainable development.

In addition to these plan-based objectives and following the Sustainability Appraisal, four further Design Guidance objectives have been identified:

9. To encourage a shift from car usage towards more sustainable modes of transport in accordance with the Merseyside Local Transport Plan.
10. To secure the sustainable regeneration of vacant or underused previously developed land and to assist in the regeneration of socially deprived and disadvantaged communities in accordance with the St.Helens City Growth Strategy.
11. To help protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Borough through helping to deliver objectives set out in the North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan.
12. To contribute towards reducing global warming and climate change by helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

2.0 The purpose and scope of the SPD

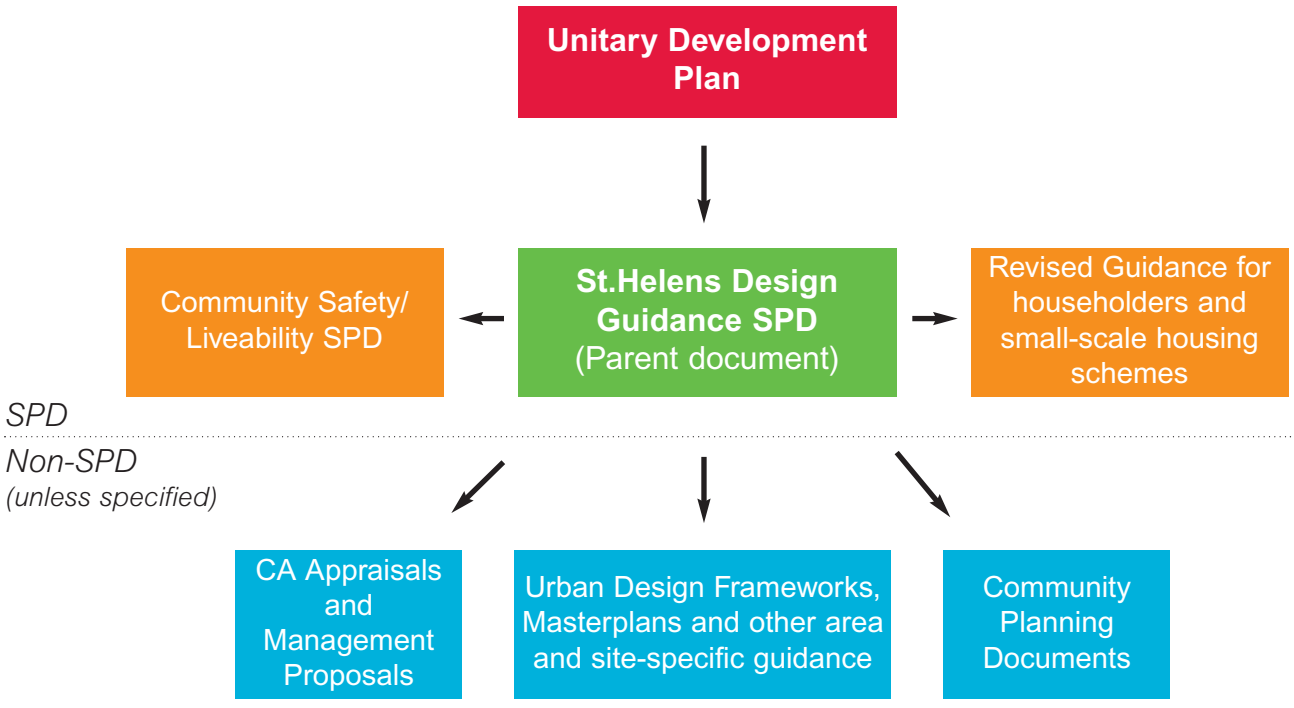
2.1 This booklet has been produced to give an overview of the design principles that the local authority will employ when considering applications for planning permission. It supersedes the existing SPG5 (Supplementary Planning Guidance note on the design and layout of new housing) but covers much more than residential development. The SPD is not a detailed Design Guide, rather it is conceived as a concise document which provides advice on how to approach the design of all new development in St.Helens. It sets out a series of principles for good design, a process through which this can be achieved, and then looks at ways in which general objectives can be applied to specific issues. The SPD does not set prescriptive standards for new development (e.g. minimum distances), but identifies a range of 'performance criteria' which will enable the Council to consider the extent to which a proposed development is promoting high quality design. It is aimed at landowners, agents, developers and designers working on schemes throughout the Borough.

2.2 The advice in this SPD draws on key policy and good practice guidance produced by DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) and CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) (see References, page 63). It applies the principles contained within these documents to the specific circumstances of St.Helens and seeks to implement sub-regional and local policies and strategies. A glossary of urban design terms is provided.

2.3 There is separate guidance for individual householders wishing to extend their property, contained in SPG6: Householder Developments and the associated leaflet, "Guidance for Residential Extensions". This guidance is unaffected by this SPD and will remain in force until it is revised and formally updated.

2.4 The SPD is the parent guidance to a suite of other design and related guidance, the relationship between which is explained graphically below:

Figure 1: The Design Guidance Framework



3.0 Status of the SPD

3.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and accompanying regulations allows for the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents, which are not subject to independent examination and, as the name implies, supplement policies in the development plan. In accordance with procedural requirements a pre-submission draft Design Guidance SPD underwent public consultation between August and October 2005. The representations were considered and a number of amendments were made to the draft document. The amended guidance was further subject to a sustainability appraisal and amended accordingly. This revised draft Design Guidance SPD, together with the associated Sustainability Report, were then submitted to Government Office for the North West in April 2006, which started a further six week period of public consultation. Following this, representations on both documents were considered and amendments made to the Design Guidance. This final version of the guidance was approved for adoption by Executive in September 2007.

4.0 Design and Access Statements

4.1 Under the Planning legislation, applicants are required to produce Design and Access Statements. These should explain the design principles and concepts that have informed the development and the thinking behind a planning application. They should show also that the person applying for permission has thought carefully about how everyone, including disabled people, older people and very young children, will be able to use the places they want to build. Such statements should include a written description and justification of the planning application. Photographs, maps and drawings can further illustrate the points made. Design and Access Statements are needed with most types of application, but not householder applications. The advice contained within this SPD is consistent with this new approach.

5.0 A process to achieve good design

5.1 This SPD advocates a structured approach to the design of new development. The aim is to achieve design schemes which emerge from a thoughtful consideration of the **character** of the local area, the **context** of the site, the attributes of the **site** itself and a range of objectives for healthy and sustainable development. Figure 2 (page 4) summarises this process, which involves four main stages, following the initial idea to develop.

5.2 The **first stage** comprises an initial information-gathering and appraisal process. This includes a number of inputs which may well overlap, key among them being the need to appraise the site context, the site attributes and talk to planning and highways officers.

5.3 The **second stage** involves considering all these issues together and producing a response in the form of a design concept (on larger sites, this may include two or three different options for development). The **third stage** requires that applicants discuss their design concept with Council officers and input their views into a draft scheme design. Depending on the size of the site, this may be an iterative process involving several revisions.

5.4 The final scheme design **(stage four)** will emerge from this process, resulting in the submission of an application for planning permission. The application should include a **Design and Access Statement** as a key output, as well as the final scheme design. This Statement should summarise the design process, illustrating the process of appraising the **context** and **site**, to emerge with a **design concept**. The concept diagram should be included. Any significant deviations from the design concept should be fully explained in the Design and Access Statement. Failure to do so could result in detailed proposals being refused.

5.5 The precise content and level of detail of the Design and Access Statement will vary according to the size of the site, its context, and the nature of the proposals. Advice on what is required will be provided on a case by case basis as part of the process outlined below. For minor schemes, a covering letter may suffice, for others, a more detailed statement will be required.

6.0 Community involvement in design

6.1 Communities should be encouraged to participate in the design of new development to help prevent social exclusion, to encourage ownership and civic pride, and to incorporate local knowledge and community needs to help achieve higher standards of development. Developers should refer to the Council guidance on community involvement (see below).

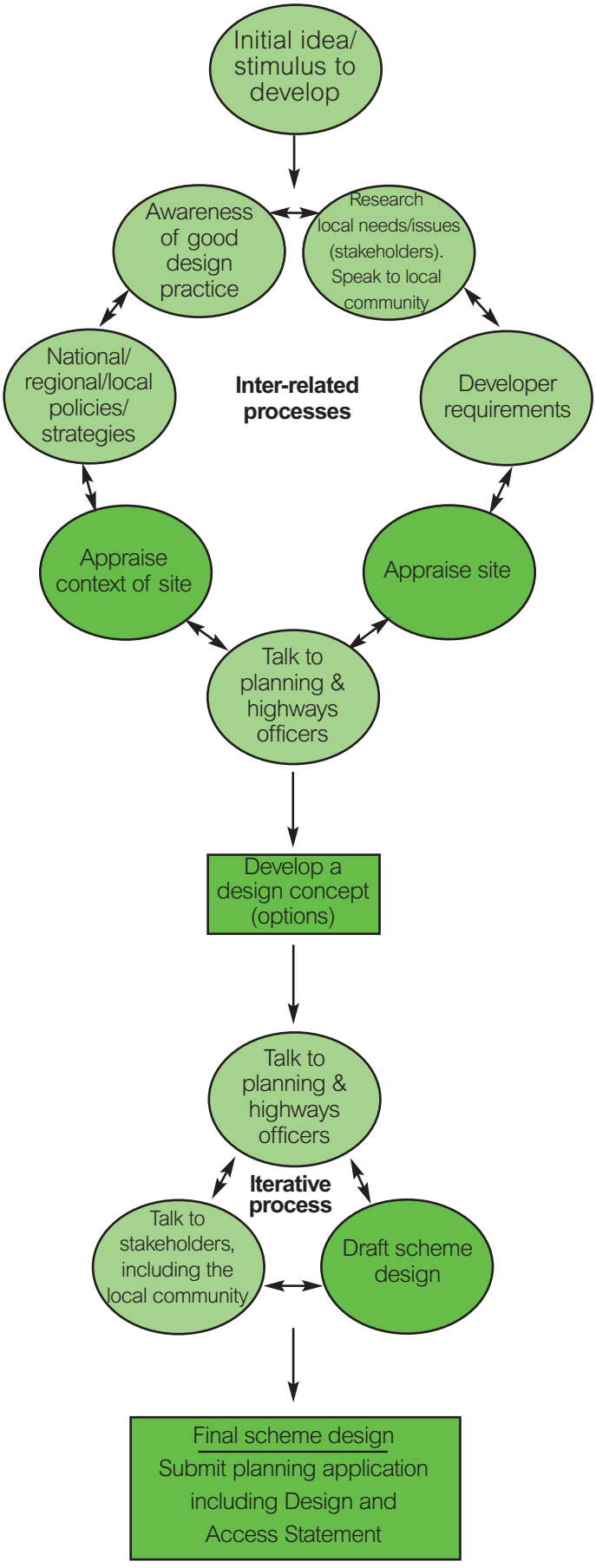
6.2 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) prepared by St.Helens Council sets out its consultation policy and framework for involving the community in the Planning Process. Developers are required to assist the Council in meeting the SCI's objectives.

6.3 Additional advice on the submission of planning applications:

- General planning application guidance notes – provides advice on completion of application forms.
- Information required for non-householder applications, guidance notes and checklist – provides advice on a range of issues which should be considered in preparing a planning application.
- Involving the Community prior to planning application submission.

6.4 The remainder of this Section considers some key principles in terms of inputs into the design process (drawing on the first stage of the diagram). Section 2 focuses on the core activities of appraising the context, the site, and developing a design concept. Section 3 then provides more specific guidance on issues that need to be considered both as part of the development of a design concept, and a detailed scheme.

Figure 2: Process to achieve good design



7.0 Policy context

7.1 The national policy context for all new development, and the Government's objectives for the planning system are outlined in Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development.

7.2 The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West, which is part of the Development Plan for St.Helens, places an emphasis on the need for urban regeneration and renaissance to enhance quality of life in the region.

7.3 At the local level, the St.Helens Council Community Plan (see above) provides an overarching framework for change in the Borough. Planning applications are considered in relation to the requirements of the St.Helens Council UDP (Unitary Development Plan) 1998.

7.4 UDP policies of particular relevance (key policies in red)

S7 Sustainable development
Gen 2 Good environments
Gen 3 Equal Access Opportunities
Gen 4 Security and crime prevention
S5 Retail development
S8 Derelict and vacant land
S9 The countryside
Gen 5 Design and layout of new housing
Gen 6 Incidental open space provision
Gen 9 Parking and servicing
Gen 12 Lighting and security apparatus
Gen 14 Backland and tandem developments
GB 6A Replacement of existing dwellings in the Green Belt
GB 8 Change of use of existing buildings into dwellings
RET 6 Alterations and new shopfronts
ENV 1 Protection of open space
ENV 5 Sites of Community Wildlife Interest
ENV 7 Nature conservation within development sites
ENV 9 Protected Species
ENV 12 Development affecting existing trees
ENV 13 New planting on development sites
ENV 14 Agricultural land quality
ENV 16 Design of agricultural and forestry development
ENV 18 Landscape protection
ENV 21 Environmental improvements within Transport Corridors
ENV 23 Archaeology
ENV 24B Development in Conservation Areas
ENV 25 Listed Buildings
ENV 26 Contaminated land
ENV 30 Drainage
REC 2 Development affecting recreational facilities
REC 3 Children's play
AREA-BASED POLICIES for areas 1 – 6.
A list of other relevant central government and regional guidance to which regard should be had is contained in the References section at the end of this document.

7.5 The UDP sets out the Council's policies for the development and use of land within the Borough. The policies cover strategic and site-specific issues across a range of planning objectives. They include appropriate locations for new development, and areas where specific types of development are considered preferable. **It is recommended that applicants consult both the strategic and site-specific policies in the UDP before designing proposals for new development.** Policies of particular relevance for the design of new development are highlighted here.

7.6 The Council has published a number of other documents which may be relevant to your proposal.

Of particular note are the following:

City Growth Strategy:

7.7 A vision for the future based on four themes including transforming the business base, achieving a cultural transformation, achieving a physical transformation and transforming perceptions of St.Helens. The Strategy highlights the importance of creating a more dynamic, attractive and vibrant town centre that will generate a mood of confidence. It identifies five aspirational 'quarters' in the centre of St.Helens as areas to direct investment.

Community Safety Strategy:

7.8 The overall aim of the Strategy is to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour but also prevent it by addressing the causes. The design of new development and public spaces and the behaviour it promotes are important factors in helping to prevent crime and anti-social

behaviour and mitigates impact through design resilience. The Strategy seeks to ensure that community safety considerations are taken into account in designing the built environment. Creating safe buildings, streets and spaces not only improves day-to-day safety but also reassures and helps to promote community and economic wellbeing.

Area-Based Urban Design Documents:

7.9 Several documents have been produced which provide area-specific design guidance for parts of the town centre. Of particular note is the aspiration to create a town centre that is modern and forward-looking with a minimalist aesthetic and an inherent understated style.

7.10 A full list of Documents and Strategies relevant in St.Helens can be found in Appendix 1 (page 55) and these should be consulted as appropriate.

7.11 Area-specific urban design guidance (all central area)

- St.Helens Town Centre Core Refurbishment: Urban Design and Strategy Guidelines (2004)
- St.Helens Town Centre Core Refurbishment: Design Development and Masterplan (2004)
- St.Helens Duke Street Masterplan and Public Realm Design Guide (draft)
- St.Helens Eastside Masterplan and implementation programme, final report (2002)
- George Street Quarter Urban Design Strategy and Guidelines (2001).

8.0 Good Practice in Urban Design

8.1 Urban design includes both aesthetic aspects (the way places look, feel and sound, and 'elusive' issues such as character and sense of place) and functional aspects (the way places 'work', the effect that they have on people's lives and their environmental impacts). Although it includes the design and appearance of individual buildings, it encompasses much more. Urban design also sits within a much broader process involving a wide range of participants and activities.

8.2 "Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted."

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development

8.3 "Urban design is the art of making places for people. It includes the way places work and matters such as community safety, as well as how they look."

By Design. Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice

8.4 There are now a number of sources of advice and guidance promoting good practice in urban design, and this has resulted in a number of different lists of objectives that developers and designers are encouraged to meet. The Strategic Objectives below draw together the content of various documents and reflect broad policy themes contained within national guidance and within the St.Helens Council Community Plan and UDP.

8.5 Strategic Objectives for Designers

- Reinforce or create local distinctiveness by responding to context
- Promote environmentally sustainable development (maximise resource efficiency, including water efficiency, sustainable drainage and waste management)
- Increase community safety
- Promote public life through an emphasis on the quality of the public realm
- Contribute to the achievement of an 'urban renaissance'
- Promote health and wellbeing by facilitating healthy lifestyles and environments that increase quality of life
- Reduce inequalities and address the needs of all in society
- Promote access for all
- Strengthen local communities
- Create places that are visually attractive and aesthetically pleasing
- Ensure that proposals are economically viable

8.5 (continued)

Strategic Objectives for Designers

- Employ a design process that is inclusive and engages stakeholders
- Integrate the design process into the wider planning and regeneration process.

8.6 Good practice guidance also identifies a range of more specific objectives which reflect characteristics of development form to which designers should aspire. The list below draws these together.

8.7 Development form: good practice objectives

- Design layouts and buildings that are adaptable over the longer term
- Create an urban structure that facilitates ease of movement and connections between people and places
- Promote 'legibility' and navigation around urban areas through recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks
- Encourage diversity and variety in uses and building types and forms
- Integrate new development with the existing built and natural environment
- Density; optimise site potential with the appropriate density to support facilities
- Ensure that the scale of development in terms of height and massing (volume and three dimensional expression of a building) is appropriate to context
- Provide an appropriate level of enclosure for every space
- Create continuity in the streetscape
- Create a distinction between public and private space
- Consider the 'grain' of development; the way street blocks, plots and buildings are laid out either on a larger scale (coarse grain) or smaller scale (fine grain).
- Examples of best practice are available at: www.cabe.org.uk/library

8.8 These objectives for urban design in St.Helens reflect the advice contained in a number of good practice guides. These are listed below:

8.9 Main sources of good practice advice (national):

- PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development
- By Design – urban design in the planning system: towards better practice
- By Design – better places to live
- Safer Places – the planning system and crime prevention
- Planning and Access for Disabled People: a good practice guide
- Urban Design Compendium
- Places, Streets and Movement (A companion guide to Design Bulletin 32, residential roads and footpaths).

8.10 Sub-regional and local sources of advice:

- Merseyside Design Aid: Residential developments – highway and transportation considerations
- St.Helens Council – Highways for adoption, a planning guide
- St.Helens Council Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to the Unitary Development Plan (except SPG5 – which is superseded by this SPD). The full list of SPGs can be found in Appendix 1 (page 55)
- Merseyside Code of Practice on Access and Mobility (www.accesscode.info).

8.11 The principles of good practice in urban design, referred to above, are applied to the specific context of St.Helens in Parts 2 and 3 of this document.

8.12 New development should strive to be as environmentally sustainable as possible. This should be achieved through the way in which schemes are conceived, designed, constructed and then used. Further specific references are made throughout this Design Guidance SPD.

Breeam: www.breeam.org

The Building Research Establishment has an Environmental Assessment Method (Breeam) which provides a mechanism for reducing the environmental impact of new buildings and renovations, whilst improving

their impacts on health and wellbeing. Covering issues relating to layout and location as well as detailed building design, the system provides both a checklist to assist developers and an assessment service which gives schemes a rating. The Council strongly encourages designers and developers to make use of this tool to achieve a rating of at least 'very good'.

The Council will strongly promote the development of highly sustainable exemplar projects, especially if the site is Council-owned or if it has an interest in the development.

From April 2007, the Code for Sustainable Homes replaced Ecohomes (the Breeam measure for housing) in England. It covers six key issues:

- energy efficiency/CO2
- water efficiency
- surface water management
- site waste management
- household waste management
- use of materials

The Council will encourage developers to achieve code level 3, an approximate equal to Ecohomes 'very good' score.

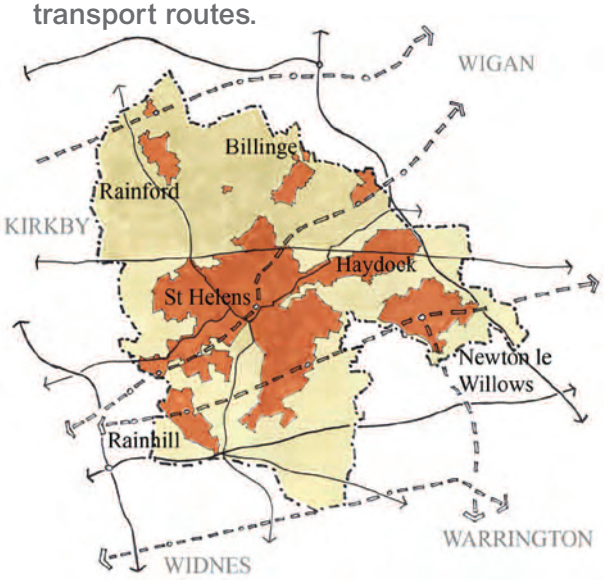
9.0 Local Character in St.Helens

9.1 "Design which is inappropriate to its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted."

Planning Policy Statement 1

9.2 Good practice guides place great emphasis on the need to respond to local character in the design of proposals for new development. Understanding local distinctiveness is, thus, the starting point for the process described in

Figure 3: St.Helens Borough showing urban and rural areas and main transport routes.



Images of St.Helens old and new, built and natural environment.

Theatre Royal, St.Helens

World of Glass

Carr Mill Dam

Figure 2 (page 4). This requires an understanding of the history of a place and the way it has evolved, as this is closely related to the local landscape, settlement form, building types, architectural styles and materials.

9.3 This SPD does not attempt to provide a detailed characterisation of the Borough. The Landscape Character Assessment for St.Helens should be referred to in any landscape design considerations. In addition, the Merseyside Historic Characterisation Appraisal Project will be available in 2007/08 and will be supplemented by a programme of individual Conservation Area appraisals and, hopefully, townscape studies. In the meantime, applicants are advised to consult with the Council regarding the best sources of characterisation information.

9.4 Sometimes, places seem to be lacking in any distinctive local character and, in these circumstances, the Council will require new development to enhance and contribute to the character of the area through the use of good 'place-making' principles and the creative use of contemporary and environmentally sustainable design solutions.

Historic image of Ravenhead Pit, now the site of Ravenhead Retail Park.

9.5 St.Helens identity and history

St.Helens is a Metropolitan Borough with a population of 178,000 split between the settlements of St.Helens itself, Billinge, Eccleston, Garswood, Haydock, Newton-le-Willows (including Earlestown), Rainford and Rainhill. Several of the towns are of some antiquity, but St.Helens itself is not documented until 1552. Although a largely rural area with scattered settlements until the mid C18, St.Helens was at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution. It is noted as home to the country's first industrial canal (The Sankey Navigation) and George Stephenson's 'Rocket' railway trials. During the C19, the area urbanised rapidly and became a centre for the coal, chemical, glass and pharmaceutical industries. This is reflected in the built fabric of the Borough.

The closure of the coal mines and the transition to a post-industrial economy in the late C20 had a major impact on the area, leaving a social and environmental legacy of decline. In recent years, the Borough has begun to recover from this blight and now seeks to redefine itself as a progressive and modern place to live and work, and this should be reflected by new development that reflects the best in contemporary design.

The Green Infrastructure of St.Helens is an important aspect of local character. The 'Town in the Forest Vision' set out in the St.Helens Urban Fringe Action Plan is an important vision for the future of St.Helens and, consequently, as a key theme underpinning this Design Guidance SPD.

10.0 Checklist: Key design considerations

The following checklist summarises a number of key issues that should be considered in a design scheme. The list covers core elements of the process as well as elaborating on the objectives and principles outlined above. The process issues are covered in more detail in Part 2, and the objectives and principles are examined more thoroughly in Parts 2 and 3. The Council will consider all planning applications with these considerations in mind. Broad policy objectives such as promoting sustainable development, community safety, access, equity and wellbeing are reflected across the whole list.

10.1 Appraisal of the context of the site (Part 2)

The context of the site should be appraised to establish:

- Character areas and local distinctiveness (including historical evolution)
- Townscape elements (including urban grain, views/visibility, density and quality of the public realm)
- Landscape, topography and natural features (including ancient woodland)
- Movement, connections and way-finding
- Opportunities and potential to improve biodiversity/geological conservation
- Socio-economic context (including mix of uses, whether the area is 'vibrant' or 'run down')
- Community views, perceptions and behaviour.

10.2 Appraisal of the site (Part 2)

The existing site features should be noted, with attention paid to:

- features which contribute something positive to the site which could/should be retained;
- features that constrain development opportunities on the site; and
- opportunities and potential to improve the aesthetic and functional character of the area.

The following should be considered:

- landscape, wildlife and public realm features (including ancient woodland and important trees);
- existing structures (note those of heritage value);
- views into/from the site and boundary relationships;
- topography, soils and geology (e.g. contours, drainage);
- aspect, orientation and microclimate;
- public utilities (availability and constraints such as the need for buffer zones and avoidance of deep rooted shrubs/trees in their vicinity);
- access (vehicular and other);
- potential land contamination and land stability;
- surface and ground water features and potential flood risk.

10.3 Density (Part 2)

The proposed density should be appropriate to context, for instance its relationship to:

- plot size/coverage, number of storeys;
- variety of density levels within the scheme;
- relationship to the capacity of the site and context; and
- proximity to local facilities and public transport (e.g. neighbourhood centre).

10.4 Layout (Parts 2 & 3)

The layout should demonstrate a coherent and legible structure or hierarchy of routes and spaces, for example:

- the location of uses (e.g. variety, magnet uses, the relationship of uses to adjacent spaces, the compatibility of neighbouring uses);
- differentiation of public and private space (defensible space);
- vehicle speed controlled by built form and layout;
- active frontages should predominate;
- existing and potential connections and nodal points should influence layout;
- access for everyone, regardless of mobility or age should be integrated into the design;
- car parking should be integrated, overlooked and convenient, with visual impact minimised;

- roads and street layout should be designed to reduce the need to use a car for journeys of one mile or less;
- orientation should take advantage of passive solar heating where appropriate;
- buildings can be grouped to minimise thermal loss and create shelter;
- creation of safe and walkable neighbourhoods;
- buildings, public space and streets should be designed together to prevent layouts which only consider traffic issues;
- perimeter block development provides a sound basis for layout and detailed design. The Council would prefer that this approach is used unless the character of the area suggests otherwise;
- the natural form and topography of the site should be used creatively to provide variety whilst also meeting accessibility requirements. Visually more prominent land requires careful consideration/respect;
- the layout should design-in habitat and wildlife features, whilst considering potential functional use (e.g. SuDS).

10.5 Massing and the built form (Parts 2 & 3)

The design of buildings and their massing should be handled carefully to ensure the creation of a sense of place. Thus, sensitive design of the following townscape elements will be essential:

- edges of the development;
- site entrances and gateway features;
- enclosure;
- landmarks/accents and local points of visual interest;
- marking and emphasising corners;
- strong vistas and views;
- termination of views;
- gable ends and corners;
- heights and rooflines;
- continuous/semi-continuous street frontages, scale and proportion of openings and sub-division of buildings;
- footprint of buildings;
- pattern of plot alignments;
- roofscape, including roof pitches, potential to use roofspace creatively and features such as chimney stacks, dormers, balconies and terraces, hips, and gable detailing.

10.6 Public Realm and Landscape (Parts 2 & 3)

The public realm and landscape design should contribute to the creation of a distinctive sense of place. In particular, considerations should be given to:

- creating structure;
- framing views;
- reinforcing boundaries;
- softening visual impact;
- enhancing vistas;
- potential for uses to 'spill out' into the public realm and enhance sense of place;
- creating 'external rooms' with specific functions;
- providing play space for the full age range;
- creation of shelter;
- differentiation of spaces;
- maintaining/enhancing of biodiversity/wildlife corridors;
- using SuDs to ensure that surface water run-off from developments on Greenfield land does not exceed pre-development Greenfield rates.
- agricultural land quality, particularly in the case of rural development.

On larger sites, a landscape strategy should form an integral part of the overall design concept.

10.7 Materials and details (Part 3)

Materials should be selected carefully to relate to the site context, with particular consideration of materials for walls, roofs, openings, surfacing, signs, and other site furniture. Materials should also be chosen for their contribution towards sustainable drainage where the context is appropriate (e.g. green roofing and porous surfaces).

- Openings are the key to an elevation. Symmetry is generally favoured. Unsymmetrical arrangements should be part of a composed effect.
- Material selection and usage should be developed as an integral part of the design process, incorporating both public realm and building design.
- The design of boundaries should be integral to the design process and take a lead from local context.
- Consider colour and texture and how they relate to existing materials in the locality.
- Every effort should be made to use locally sourced and manufactured materials and recycled products.
- Every effort should be made to use energy-efficient materials.
- Locally distinctive materials and details should be used in areas of positive local character.
- Good quality materials should be used in all instances.
- During construction, waste should be minimised and recycled materials used where possible. On-site recycling should also take place.

10.8 Practical issues (Parts 2 & 3)

In addition to the issues covered above, consideration should be given to the way places function, and their ability to support sustainable and healthy lifestyles:

- is there an established need for specific uses on the site (e.g. community facilities/employment units or does potential need to be explored)?;
- storage space for recyclable material and waste for individual houses;
- prioritise integrating renewable energy generation as well as improved levels of energy efficiency;
- the convenient storage of bicycles for individual houses;
- opportunities to work from home and encourage appropriate mixed uses;
- in designing new developments, reducing/preventing crime and disorder should be one of the key objectives in all the stages of the process. New development presents a real opportunity to help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. This should include anti-graffiti treatments to new development;
- Every effort should be made to offer employment to local people and to encourage training opportunities, especially for the more deprived areas of the Borough.

Part 2:
Key parts of the Process

This part of the Guide concentrates on the activities that provide a sound basis for the preparation of a design scheme; namely the appraisal of the context of the site, the appraisal of the site itself, and the development of a design concept responding to the locality, the characteristics of the site, and the additional requirements identified in Figure 1 (e.g. local policy).

11.0 Context Appraisal

11.1 The context of a site and its setting are important in that all new development will relate in some way to its surrounding locality and contribute to the aesthetic and functional characteristics of the area. Development that enhances its local area is dependent on a good understanding of context. The area of study will be different for an urban, suburban or rural setting, but should include the area within which the site and its proposed buildings can be seen, or a 400 metre radius: i.e. walking distance from the site to public transport and other basic services and facilities.

11.2 A wide range of issues can be considered as part of the context appraisal, and the number and variety will vary according to the location and the scale of the site. The list on page 10 provides a broad summary of the issues, and more detailed guidance can be found in the documents suggested below (Paragraph 11.4). In addition, the following questions provide prompts to thinking for the process:

11.3 Location and accessibility

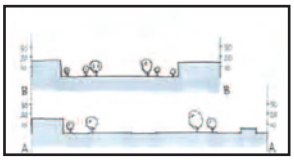
- Is the site in a prominent location (e.g. on an approach to a settlement)?
- Are there established routes/desire lines to which the site should connect?
- Does the site provide an opportunity to improve pedestrian/cycle connections around the locality (permeability)?
- Is there suitable access to/from the site?
- Is there sufficient capacity in the transport network to accommodate new development?
- Are facilities such as shops and community facilities readily accessible by other means than the car?
- Are services such as electricity and drainage readily available?

11.4 Sources of guidance on context appraisal

Urban Design Compendium
By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System
Places, Streets and Movement – A companion guide to DB32.
(full References appear on page 63)

11.5 Development within **Conservation Areas** should pay special attention to preserving and enhancing the character of those areas.
Conservation Areas can be found at:
Victoria Square, St.Helens Town Centre
George Street, St.Helens Town Centre
High Street, Newton-le-Willows
Willow Park, Newton-le-Willows
Rainhill
Rainford (numbers 1 and 2)
Vulcan Village, Newton-le-Willows
There are also a number of **listed buildings** throughout the Borough; new design should consider these as part of site context.

Appraisals and Management Plans are to be produced for each of the existing Conservation Areas and for any new ones that are designated. These will be considered as supplementary technical information to help deliver the SPD's objectives and policies of the UDP.



Cross-sections help to understand context. Consider soft enclosure as well as hard.

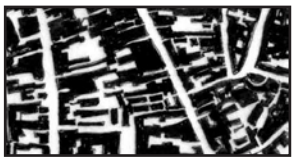
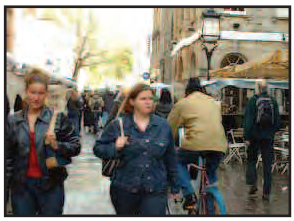


Figure ground plans provide a tool for understanding urban grain, density and layout.

Who lives, works and plays in the area?



How do people move around?

Uses: this area includes pavement cafes, shops and housing.

What kinds of paving are prevalent?

Natural features contribute to local distinctiveness in urban as well as rural settings.

What are the ages and styles of local buildings? Is there a palette of materials?

11.6 Landscape/townscape character

- What key things define local distinctiveness in the surrounding area? Or is the character poorly defined?
- How has the area evolved? Are there lost and lamented buildings/places that should be reinstated? Historic place/street-naming can add to the sense of place and help mitigate any loss.
- Are there key features in the area (e.g. landmarks, barriers such as railways or important meeting points or landscape/ ecological features such as steep slopes, trees, hedges or woodlands)?
- How visible is the site? Are some parts more exposed to view than others? Should views across the site be maintained (e.g. to an important building)?
- What are the prevailing building styles, development forms, densities or materials?
- What is the "grain" of the surrounding development (pattern of surrounding streets, property size and shape in relation to plot, relationship of building to streets)?
- Will the surrounding land uses have an impact on the proposed development (including those currently under construction/about to be started)?
- Is there an established hierarchy of streets and spaces?
- What is the quality and condition of the streetscape and public realm?
- Are there any areas of woodland (including ancient woodland) or other forms of significant open space such as parks/gardens in the vicinity to act as a leisure and health resource for the development?
- What are the characteristics of the local geology and hydrology and how will this influence the design?

11.7 Socio-economic context and community

- Is there any inappropriate or anti-social behaviour/crime in the locality that the development should respond to (e.g through provision of natural surveillance/increase in evening activity)?
- Is there an established activity/movement axis or dominance of use (e.g. retail)?
- How do local people perceive the locality and site (vox pop interviews or behavioural observation can assist here)?
- Is the area dominated by a particular community (e.g. age, ethnic background)?
- What is the mix of uses in the area?
- Does the area appear to be thriving or more run down (indices of multiple deprivation could be useful in establishing the social/economic profile of the area)?

11.8 The results of the Context Appraisal should form part of the Design and Access Statement submitted with the planning application. This could take the form of a map-based or graphic analysis with annotation drawing attention to the most important features of the area, and the things which development on the site can improve upon.

Are there any local landmarks?

Historical maps can assist in the process.

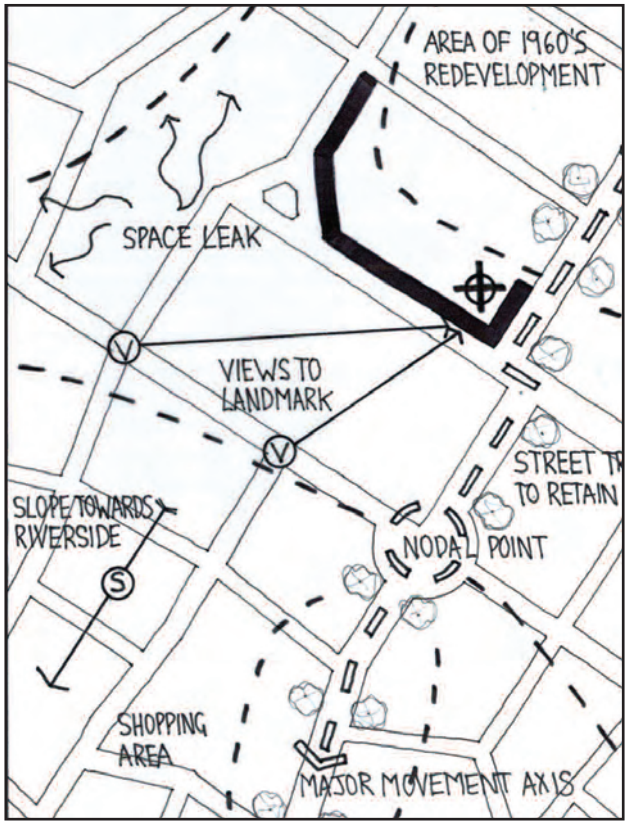


Figure 4: Hand-drawn example of a Context Appraisal submission for a site in a town centre context.

12.0 Site Appraisal

12.1 Site assessment should examine the nature and attributes of the site and its immediate boundaries. This builds on the understanding of site context, and both should influence the preparation of a design concept for the site, and then a more detailed scheme.

The list on page 10 (key design considerations) provides a broad summary of the type of information that the site appraisal should present. This should be much more than a description of what is present. It should specifically consider the way that site features contribute to the locality, any site constraints and opportunities to improve the area through new development on the site.

Matters to consider at this stage include:

12.2 Landscape, biodiversity and public realm features

- existing vegetation - trees of amenity and ecological value (especially those covered by TPO, or of ancient or veteran character) and other vegetation, such as that forming wildlife corridors, should be retained and enhanced where possible;
- potential ecological constraints such as protected species or habitats, and invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed;
- potential secondary risks that may arise 'off site' from development (e.g. impacts on adjacent wildlife sites by increased public use, changes to drainage and pollution);
- hard landscaping – remnant paviours to retain or potential to improve the quality of materials in the streetscape;
- heritage landscapes, and archaeological constraints;
- ground conditions - contamination may be a constraint, particularly on previously developed land, and this may restrict use;
- sources of noise and potential to minimise impacts;
- water features such as ponds, lakes, streams and canals.

12.3 St.Helens Council UDP Supplementary Planning Guidance note 3: Sites of Community Wildlife Interest and Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) gives advice on sites of designated wildlife/biodiversity importance in conjunction with the North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan and the St.Helens 'A Policy for Nature'. The Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service can also be approached for advice.

12.4 Views into/from the site and boundary relationships

- the extent to which development is visible (e.g. development adjoining an open landscape will be visually exposed and must be carefully sited);
- would development be visible from significant viewpoints or important 'gateway' locations?;
- how might new development relate visually to the existing settlement pattern/built form? (e.g. skyline, materials, landmarks);
- would development be less visible in certain parts of the site than others? (e.g. open space could be more prominently located);

Urban sites can be hidden behind existing buildings.

This site is in an exposed location and visible from a considerable distance.

Are there existing buildings on site that can be re-used?

Are existing buildings unsightly? How can this be mitigated?

Sources of noise adjacent to the site will need to be taken into account.

Power lines across sites have an impact on the design solution.

This church tower is visible from many places around the site.

Topography will influence site design.

Biodiversity resources need to be protected.

There may be opportunities to improve natural settings and increase biodiversity.

- physical links with adjoining areas, and visual connections and relationships into and across the site. On larger sites, consider visual links between different areas;
- will lighting enhance the prominence of the site at night or will it detract from the character in rural locations? (Public lighting schemes can add to the quality and atmosphere of the public realm, but in all instances the issue of light pollution will be important.);
- form and condition of boundaries and their potential relationship to development.

12.5 Existing structures

- the condition and potential for re-use of existing buildings, structures, boundary walls, railings and surfaces;
- listed buildings and their settings.

12.6 Topography, geology and drainage

- using the topography positively can help add interest and achieve a sense of place/ distinctiveness;
- an elevated location implies that development is likely to be exposed and could intrude on the skyline (this may be a positive or negative, depending on the context);
- drainage, streams and flooding constraints;
- consider topography, soils and geology and their design implications/opportunities.

12.7 Aspect, orientation and microclimate

- this will influence the location of development - to maximise solar gain and to provide shelter and prevent thermal loss caused by wind/exposure and to enable natural cooling in summer.

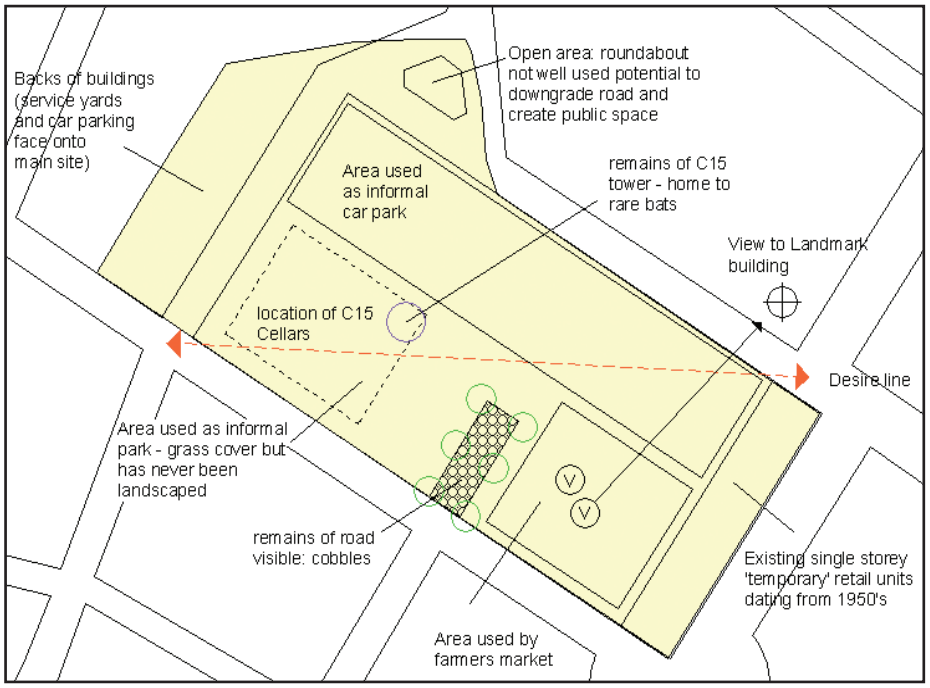


Figure 5: Computer-generated example of a site appraisal submission for a town centre site.

12.8 Public utilities

- assess proximity and capacity of services, power lines or other utilities crossing the site (underground, overhead) and their existing wayleaves.

12.9 Access

- access arrangements onto the site (vehicular, cycle and pedestrian);
- existing rights of way and desire lines that will need to be accommodated within the development.

13.0 Developing a Concept

13.1 The Design and Access Statement should contain a concept plan which represents the general design objectives for the site.

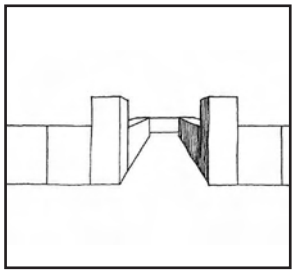
13.2 This concept plan should emerge from a consideration of the inter-related issues identified in Figure 2, including appraisal of context and site, as well as local needs, policy requirements, good practice, the developer's own requirements and talks with planning and highways officers. It should reflect thinking about the key principles outlined on pages 10-12 and convey a vision, key objectives and ideas about structuring a scheme.

13.3 Concept statements are an approach to site planning and design that are equally applicable to urban as well as rural settings. This may be a useful approach for illustrating concepts for the site and in articulating ideas within the Design and Access Statement, as well as in promoting initial ideas before the design becomes more detailed.

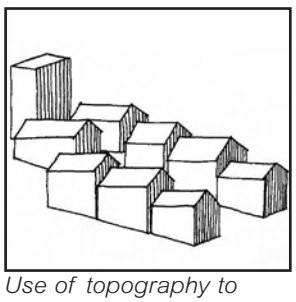
A. The Vision and objectives for the site

13.4 The concept is the set of basic objectives underlying the scheme. This may include a 'big idea' for the type of development on the site, but it will also include objectives responding to a range of characteristics on the site and in the nearby area.

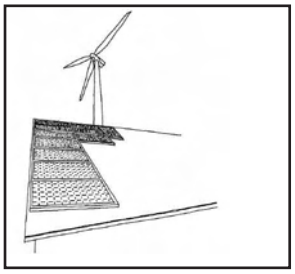
Big ideas might include:



Creating a gateway scheme.



Use of topography to create skyline or landmark development.



Emphasis on energy efficiency and environmental sustainability through innovation, technology and orientation or protection of wildlife resources.

A homezone/ pedestrian priority area.

13.5 The following questions may also be considered in defining the concept:

- Will the reinstatement of a demolished street frontage be important?
- To what extent will places focus on existing features such as buildings, trees, hedges, watercourses?
- To what extent will the scheme look inward or outward?
- What visual/acoustic relationships will there be with surrounding areas?
- What densities will be appropriate?
- Will the scheme be strongly influenced by the existing built form, materials and details in the area? (Where sites are in close proximity to important existing buildings, will the design seek to replicate or totally contrast with the historic character?)
- Where surroundings are monotonous, or run down, how will the scheme seek to define/ enhance character?
- How will the scheme connect to the neighbouring street pattern? Will residents be able to walk directly to nearby schools, shops and public transport and other facilities?
- How will the impact of cars be minimised? What parking arrangements will there be and what alternatives are being looked at (e.g. community car sharing, public transport improvements)?
- In respect of housing, what will the mix in forms and sizes be? And how does this respond to the local context?
- How can public art be integrated into the scheme at an early stage to help shape its evolution? Can opportunities be created for artists to work with local communities in developing this?

- How can species/habitats be positively managed and are there features outside the site that could be enhanced?
- How will the impact on surface/ground water be managed?
- How will geology, soil quality and topography help shape the scheme?
- How is the reduction of crime and disorder to be addressed in the concept design?

It is the process of bringing all these things and other issues together that will make the scheme distinctive/unique and achieve a sense of place.

B. Structuring a scheme

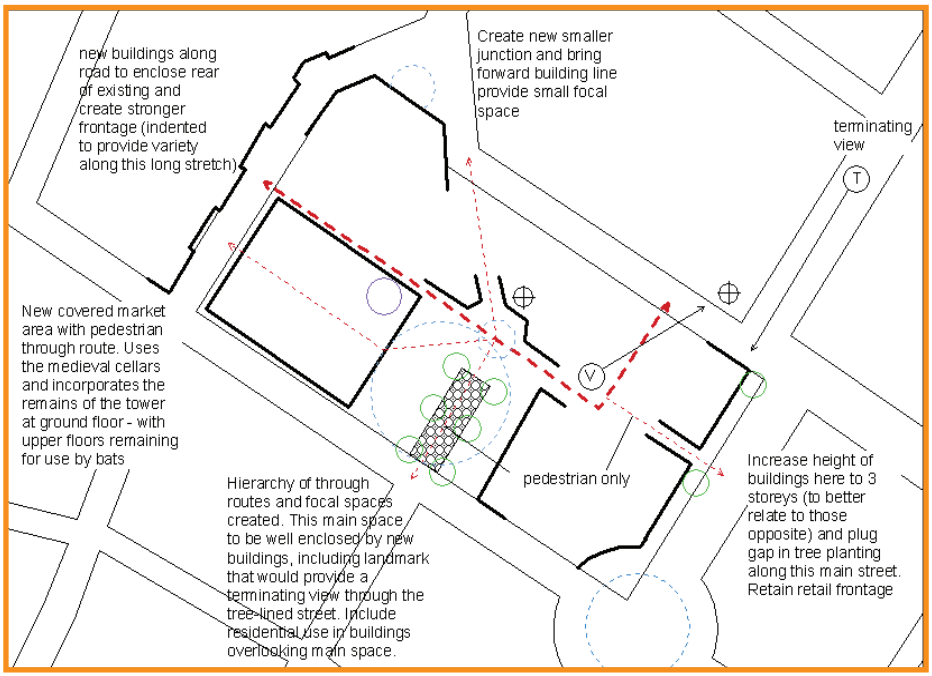
13.6 The **concept plan** should indicate how the buildings, streets and spaces will be structured. Key issues to consider in structuring a scheme are as follows:

- location of uses on the site and different levels of intensity of use (including residential density). On smaller sites or in central areas, density levels may be uniform;
- creating a hierarchy of streets and places including focal spaces and landmarks so that way-finding (legibility) around the area is made easy;
- creating variety and different 'places' each with an identifiable character. (This might include formal or informal areas, urban 'quarters' with a particular focus or residential places such as courtyards or homezones);
- sense of enclosure provided by the width to height ratio of streets, buildings and vegetation, and whether street frontages are continuous or broken;
- movement and connectivity around the site and relationships with neighbouring areas. Direct routes facilitate walking whilst circuitous routes encourage car use for short journeys. However, direct routes can sometimes result in crime and disorder issues, if they link to potential bad neighbour uses (e.g. pubs/bars);
- define the landscape structure and strategy as an integral part of the concept and ensure this fulfils natural environment objectives, both within and surrounding the site.

13.7 The issues of movement and connectivity, enclosure and frontages are examined in more detail in Part 3, page 22 (Layout: Structure and Grain).

13.8 The diagram below provides an example of a concept plan for a town centre site. It responds to the characteristics identified in the appraisal of context and site (see pages 14 and 16), and considers the issues identified above.

Figure 6: Computer-generated example of a concept plan for a town centre site - responds to the context and site appraisals presented on pages 14 and 16

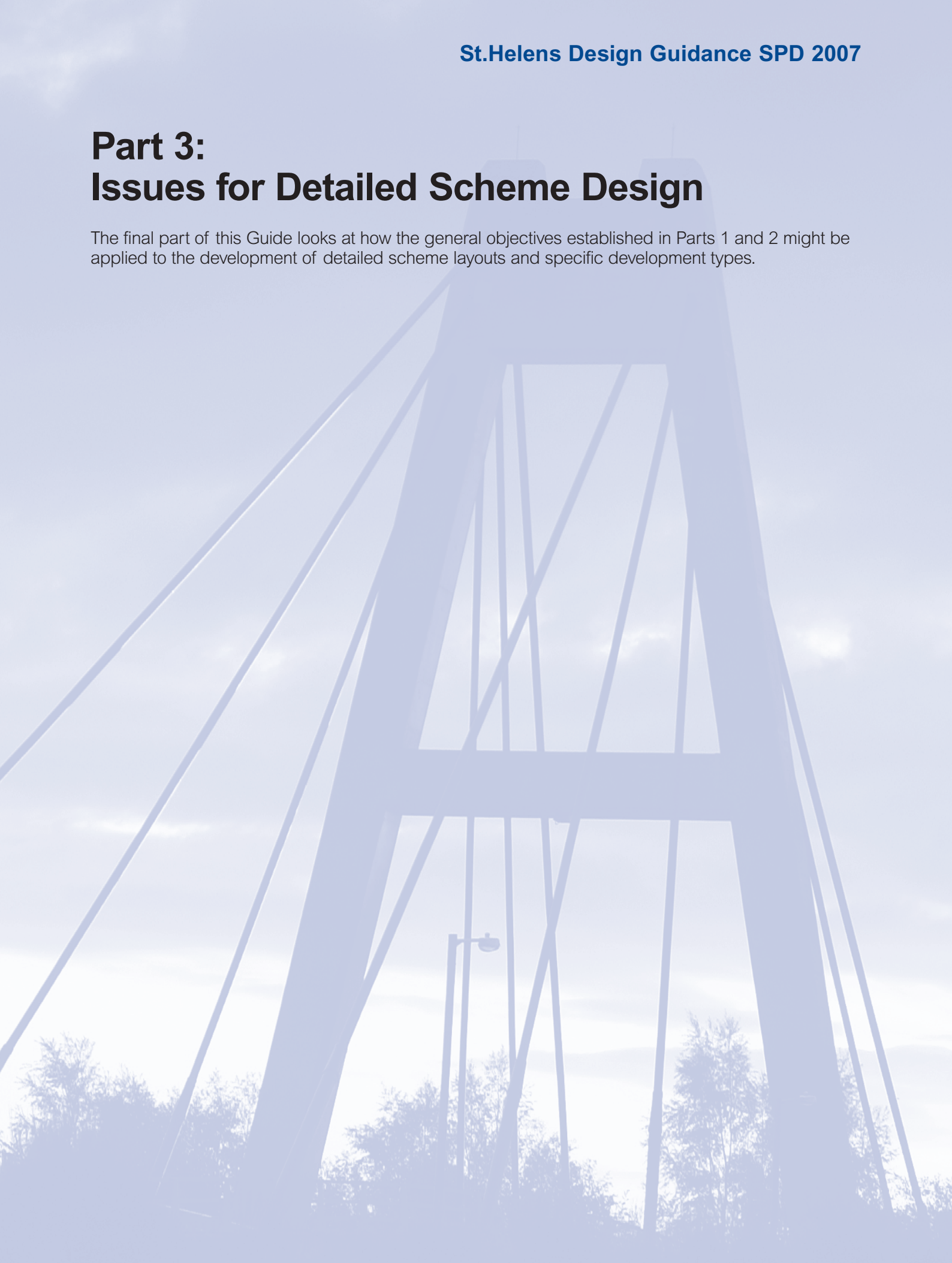


Incorporating good practice

Objectives such as those identified on page 7 should be fully integrated into the layout of a scheme. Of particular importance are access, community safety, health and wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

Part 3:
Issues for Detailed Scheme Design

The final part of this Guide looks at how the general objectives established in Parts 1 and 2 might be applied to the development of detailed scheme layouts and specific development types.



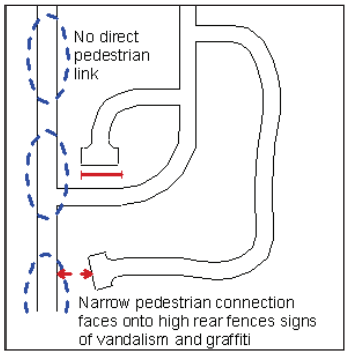
14.0 Layout: Structure and Grain

14.1 The structure and grain of development is explored in more detail here, picking up on the ideas that were considered in developing the design concept (page 18) and providing advice on how these should influence the layout. This Section covers principles that apply to all types of layout. More specific issues relating to residential development, infill, large-scale buildings, and development in the countryside are considered in the following pages.

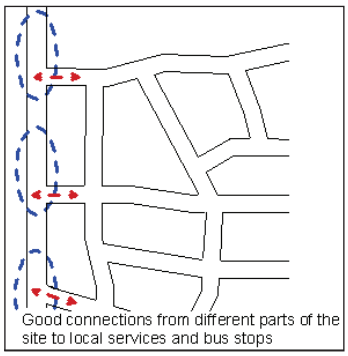
A. Movement and connectivity

14.2 Connections

Direct links between development and a range of services/facilities promote walking and, hence, safe and secure streets where people encounter each other.



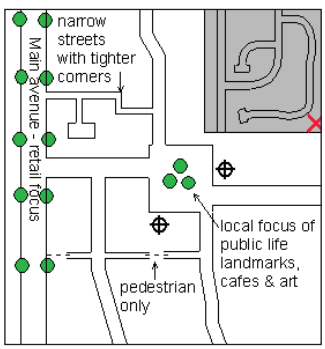
a. Poorly connected site: reduced access to local facilities and public transport and encourages car use.



b. Well-connected site: direct and over-looked routes for walking means less congestion on local High Street and better use of public transport facilities.

14.3 Hierarchies

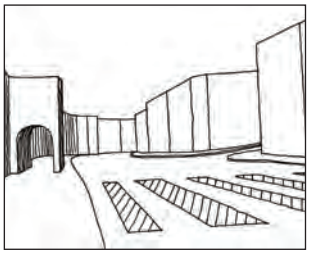
A clear hierarchy of avenues, streets, squares and courts create a legible structure reinforced by landmarks, variety in use and pinch points to provide gateways. Streets with irregular carriageway widths that allow for large vehicular movements.



14.4 Urban design involves dealing with streetscape, urban form and function in an integrated way to ensure that environments prioritise people ahead of car use. Highway design needs to respond by integrating cause into the public realm without affecting its quality.

14.5 **For advice on the layout of streets and highways, see:**

- Residential developments; highway and transportation considerations, Merseyside Design Aid, 2005
- Highways for adoption, a planning guide, St.Helens Council, 1995
- St.Helens UDP Supplementary Planning Guidance notes:
  No. 7: Garaging, parking and servicing
  No. 9: Cycle parking provision
- Places, Streets and Movement, a companion guide to DB32 Residential Roads and Footpaths, DETR, 1998
- Better Streets, Better Places, delivering Sustainable Residential Environments. Available from the ODPM
- Inclusive Mobility - A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure, DfT, 2002.



14.6 Speed Control

Speed can be controlled through the layout of streets. For more heavily trafficked routes such as avenues, boulevards and through routes, pinch points (created by buildings, not just road widths), bends with terminating views and junctions provide natural slowing mechanisms. For minor streets, short lengths with terminating views, and tighter corners can be appropriate.

14.7 Movement Framework

For larger-scale developments (applicability to be agreed in advance with the Local Planning Authority), consideration must be given to the movement framework associated with the development, including the 400 and 800 metre walking thresholds for the respective facilities and services. Further guidance is available in the Urban Design Compendium (see References - page 64).

Area-specific design guidance

14.8 A list of existing area-specific design guides and masterplans relevant in St.Helens Council can be found on page 6. These documents have been produced by the Council in order to assist and inform developers when they are preparing design schemes.

In addition, for larger or more sensitive sites, the Council will require developers to produce their own **masterplan** documents which set out the principles for development on the site. A detailed guide to the preparation of masterplans is available from CABE (see References, page 63). In summary, the Council would expect masterplans to convey a clear vision and objectives for development. They should include a spatial element; layout showing buildings, spaces, landscape structure, movement, intensity and type of use, and a process element; an explanation of how the spatial proposals will be delivered, including their viability.

Design codes are increasingly used as a tool to implement the spatial masterplan. They provide a means to prescribe in detail how buildings, streets and spaces will be laid out, and are particularly useful when a larger site is to be developed by different companies. Advice on design codes is available from CABE.

B. Development blocks

14.9 The perimeter block provides a sound basis for layout. It can achieve a wide variety of density/intensity levels and incorporate a range of uses.

14.10 Consider Dimension, Shape and Intensity

Designs should seek to balance the following:

- facilitate pedestrian connections;
- maximise solar gain;
- ensure adequate internal space for servicing, gardens and/or car parking;
- contribute to character and place-making through size, shape, continuity and variety.

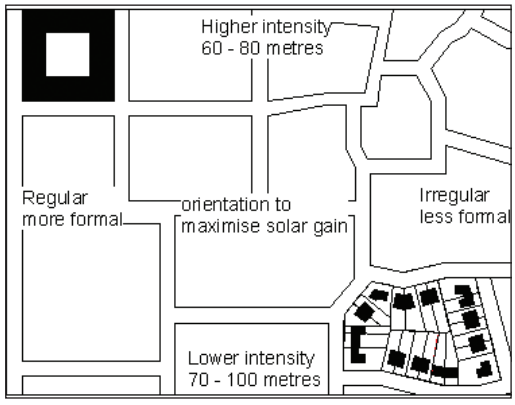
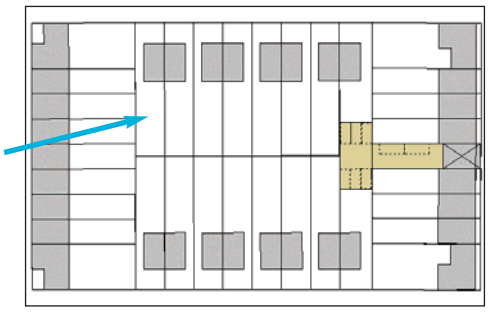


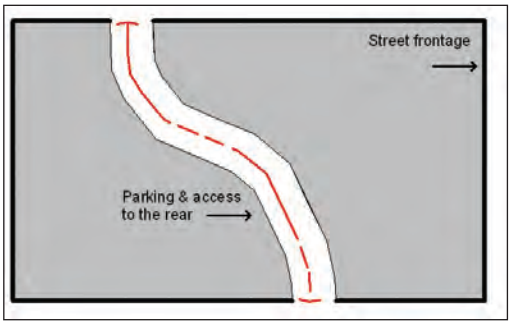
Diagram showing form of perimeter block at different density levels and shapes.

14.11 Aim for clearly defined public and private areas

Fully enclosed gardens or (in higher intensity areas) courtyards promote privacy and security.



Semi-private rear parking courts are acceptable if they are limited in size, with only one entry point, well over-looked and designed to discourage public access. Undercroft or gated access deters strangers.



Fully open perimeter blocks provide parking and access to the rear of buildings. This should be avoided, where possible, in residential areas as it creates confusion, can be unsightly and provides greater opportunity for crime. Elsewhere, when rear access is required for servicing, it should be designed to convey the message that this is not a public area.

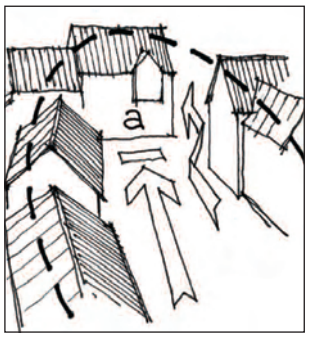
C. Enclosure

14.12 Places with a good sense of enclosure have a positive impact on sense of wellbeing. Places that are poorly enclosed can feel exposed and are often less well used.

1. Defining spaces

14.13 Both 2 and 3-dimensional elements contribute to sense of enclosure. Key objectives are:

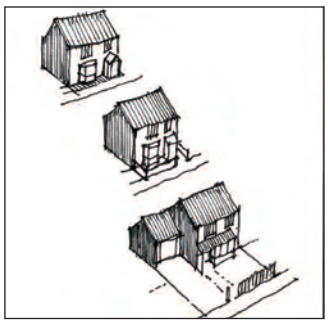
- buildings should define spaces rather than sit in them as islands;
- create rhythm and continuity in building height;
- consider the transition between different levels of enclosure as people move through spaces;
- enclosure is created by trees, slopes, walls and hedges, not just buildings;
- views in and out of enclosed spaces contribute to both character and way-finding (legibility).



Well-enclosed streets and spaces can be more 'comfortable', whereas places where space 'leaks' out can make people feel more vulnerable. Buildings which terminate views can help to enclose spaces and reduce traffic speed.

14.14 **2. Types of frontage**

Frontages can be continuous, or spaced (either regular or irregular). The degree of spacing has an effect on the sense of enclosure.



The extent to which buildings are set back from the pavement helps to define the sense of enclosure and establishes the character of a street.

The degree to which buildings address the street not only affects sense of enclosure, but also impacts on natural surveillance and community safety. Inward looking layouts create weakly defined spaces and present blank walls to the outside world, alienating passers-by.

Example of a well-enclosed public space/ street.

Example of an irregular frontage.

Example of a frontage with a deep set back from the street.

15.0 The Public Realm

15.1 The "public realm" refers to the wide range of public places and spaces that provide the canvas for public life. The public realm can positively influence wellbeing and quality of life. At the same time, it can be a source of stress when security and community safety are in question. As the density of development and living spaces in towns increases, the role and influence of the public realm in our daily lives is also likely to increase. As people move through an area, they should experience a sequence of spaces of different size, shape, and character.

A. Structural issues: physical and social

15.2 The layout of buildings frames the public realm and, hence, the structure and layout of both should be considered together. The character, and 'sense of place' of the public realm is influenced by both physical and social qualities. In physical terms, enclosure, and the form, style and layout of buildings are important (see previous section). In social terms, the need for activity in the public realm and the importance of type and intensity of use add vibrancy and attract use and are central to the success of public places.

The following should be considered:

- the need for a variety of spaces/places to cater for different people and preferences;
- the role of spaces as casual meeting places, outdoor rooms and focal points for community life;
- the importance of adjacent uses that 'spill out' into the public realm to create activity (shops/community centres);
- the transition areas between public and private (e.g. balconies/communal gardens);
- continuous activity and surveillance to prevent crime;
- secure cycle storage should be provided within the public realm at key areas of activity to help promote cycle use.

Restaurants and cafes 'spill out' into the public space in Graabrodre Torv, Copenhagen.

B. Design detail: Landscaping

1. Principles

15.3 Hard and soft landscape design should contribute to the creation of a distinctive sense of place. It should be:

- integral to the whole scheme design;
- appropriate to its context, the site and use of space;
- appropriate to the scale of the development and the specific location;
- practical, long lasting, resilient to wear and vandalism and cost-effective to maintain;
- vegetation should enhance wildlife value and contribute to the Community Forest Strategy and North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan where appropriate.

2. Soft Landscaping

15.4 Existing vegetation is an asset and can provide structure, scale, a foundation for additional planting, shelter, screening, a 'sense of place', wildlife habitats and corridors linking through development.

15.5 Ancient woodland and individual ancient/veteran trees within or adjacent to the site are important ecologically and in creating a sense of place. They should be protected from the impact of development.

Existing hedgerow retained within the public realm in new development.

15.6 New planting can:

- create structure;
- soften visual impact;
- differentiate spaces/uses;
- provide shelter;
- reinforce boundaries;
- provide entrance views/frame vistas.

Buildings should be located and orientated to maximise benefits but minimise unwanted shading.

15.7 Species should be chosen to promote natural surveillance and security, and break up open areas (e.g. car parks). On larger sites, a landscape strategy should form an integral part of the overall design concept.

Vegetation defines spaces within the larger public square, Savigny Platz, Berlin.

Birch trees provide structure and softness but allow good visibility; perimeter block, Berlin.

15.8 The creation of Ecoparks and meadowland within parks and larger open spaces would help enhance biodiversity whilst also reducing the level of maintenance required for these areas.

3. Hard Landscaping

15.10 Materials should complement buildings and context, be limited in range, and appropriate in scale. Variations can be used to define differences in public and private areas. Water should only be used if maintenance can be assured and health and safety issues addressed. Consideration should be given to use of porous surfaces as part of the design for sustainable drainage systems.

15.11 Shared surfaces can be used to define areas where vehicles are 'guests' in the pedestrian-dominated environment. Proposals for 'Homezone' style developments should be discussed with planning and highways officers together.

15.12 Site furniture (lighting, signs, litter bins, railings) should reinforce the character of the site in a co-ordinated approach. Public art will be encouraged, especially where it is designed in participation with communities, or performs functions such as providing seating/focal point for activity.

Variation in surfaces at Queen Square, Bristol, clearly defines areas for different functions.

Protection of existing vegetation/wildlife

15.9 Under policy ENV 11, a tree survey will be required where trees are on the site. This should make an assessment of their ecological, historical and amenity value and clearly identify ancient/veteran trees. It should establish an appropriate safeguarding/buffering which will determine the 'set back' of development to prevent damage to vegetation/nuisance to occupiers. Essential tree surgery should be undertaken before development commences to avoid damage and ensure clear working areas.

Bats, owls and breeding birds may roost/nest in trees and old buildings. The area may also be populated by other protected species. Where affected, the guidance of an ecologist should be sought.

Creating new or 'retrofitting' homezones can increase the opportunity for casual interaction among neighbours as people use their front gardens more.

Public art in Spandauer Vorstadt, Berlin, acts as a fountain, seating and an informal play feature.

15.13 Public art is an important aspect of place-making and it is crucial that artists become involved as early as possible to help shape and inform the character of the public realm and the wider development scheme. Art should be an integral part of creating sense of place and adding prestige and value to development schemes. The design should be developed closely with the local community.

The Council will seek to make use of planning conditions and Section 106 Agreements for the inclusion of public art in new developments.

C. Recreation areas

15.14 Key principles:

- accommodate a variety of users;
- provide for the full age range as well as different types of activity (e.g. formal play, informal recreation);
- encourage activity at different times of the day.

15.15 Careful consideration should be given to the location of play areas for younger children. They should be away from roads, close enough to housing, and located where the activities of teenagers can be observed/policed through passive surveillance. They should have more than one access point, be well-lit and include landscaping and facilities for both children and adults. Play areas can even be accommodated in shared surface streets as part of a Homezone concept. Play areas should also be 'dog-proof'.

Play area well over-looked by housing; trees reduce noise and echo within the perimeter block.

15.16 Much of the recreational activity of children, young people and adults takes place in informal areas. Where possible, schemes for new housing development should include links to the existing informal open space network, including Greenways and public rights of way. Such areas should be safe to use, easy to maintain and of wildlife benefit.

Development on the edge of Stoke Park, Bristol, provides opportunities for connection to the park as informal play space.

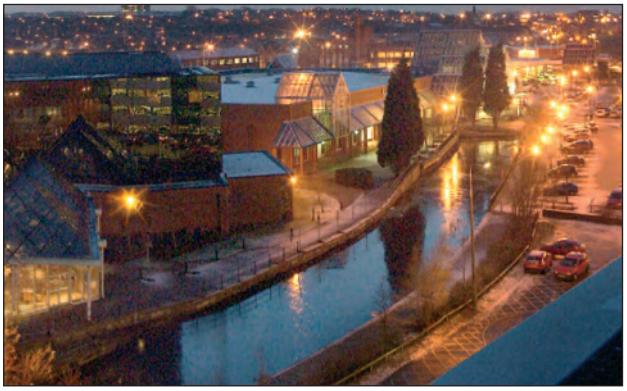
Public realm and open space policy and provision

15.17 Policy GEN 4 of the St.Helens UDP covers safety and security in the public realm, GEN 6 and REC 2 describe the requirements for open space and recreation in new developments, and REC 3 covers children's play. The Council has completed a full assessment of existing open space provision and local needs in line with the requirements set out in PPG17. This determines areas of under or over-provision of different facilities which, in turn, will allow the preparation of a recreation strategy, setting out the Council's requirements for the retention and/or rationalisation of existing facilities and the need for new facilities.

In smaller developments, where play space is not required (see REC 2), the Council will seek an appropriate compensatory contribution to the maintenance or enhancement of existing facilities off site. This will be nearby if facilities are deficient and elsewhere in the Borough if they are sufficient.

D. Waterside development and use of water

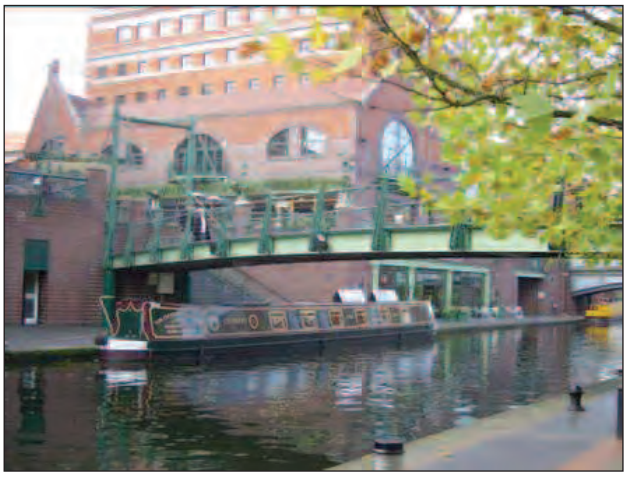
15.18 Waterways should be viewed as an integral part of the wider realm and open space network. They should be seen as leisure and commercial resources and not just a setting or backdrop for a development scheme.



St.Helens Canal - a key asset of the Borough.

15.19 In planning and designing proposals for waterside development, the following key principles apply:

- waterways and the environs should be viewed as an integral part of the public realm;
- siting, configuration and orientation of buildings, should maximise views of the water, create natural surveillance over it and encourage access to, from and alongside the waterspace;
- protect and enhance the natural environmental qualities of the waterway;
- consider the impact of the development on the visual amenity of users of the waterway/towpath, i.e. consider impact when viewed from the waterspace and its environs;
- new waterside development should be considered holistically with the opportunities for water-based development, usage and enhancement;
- buildings and structures associated with its historical development and usage should be sensitively incorporated within development proposals to help create a sense of place and local connections.



A good example of a waterside development proposal. Brindley Place, Birmingham.

15.20 The Council will make use of planning conditions and Section 106 Agreements to secure waterway enhancement as part of development proposals.

16.0 Residential Development

A. Local distinctiveness

16.1 Achieving or contributing towards a strong sense of place and distinctiveness is important. Key buildings and landmarks help to achieve this. These were traditionally provided by churches and commercial buildings. A creative approach needs to be taken to achieve variety in the streetscape and create buildings of interest. (e.g. community facilities, changes in height, or features such as clock towers).

Hampden Gurney Primary School, London. Known locally as 'the Beehive', the building provides a notable landmark in the local neighbourhood.

B. Visual impact of highways

16.2 The layout and built form should be designed in order to minimise the visual impact of highway design; the place should not be dominated by roads. A road hierarchy which defines places where cars are dominant and places where they are guests in the pedestrian environment can help to achieve this.

View from a traffic-free courtyard looking towards an area where cars are permitted. Both areas contribute to that part of the road hierarchy which is less busy with vehicular traffic and more dominated by pedestrians.

C. Private open space

16.3 Wherever possible, dwellings should have some form of outdoor private space. In lower density areas, gardens can be accommodated. In higher density areas, a creative approach is needed. Private space can be divided in apartment blocks so that some have front and others have rear gardens, some have first floor or roof terraces and others have balconies.

Golden Lane Mews, Brighton. Space for gardens was significantly restricted, so each house has a terrace running the length of the property. In addition, balconies on the first and second floors allow interaction with the semi-public space in the mews.

D. Public spaces and community facilities

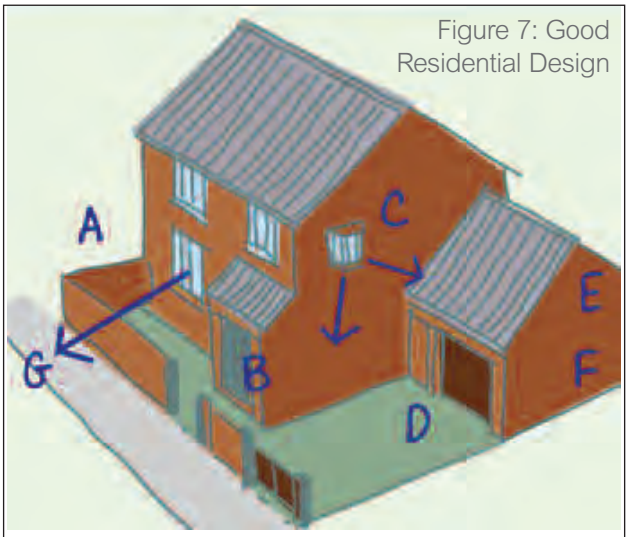
16.4 Public spaces and community facilities can provide identity and local distinctiveness, if they are designed to respond to the particular needs of the local population. Although it is important for facilities to be built early in the process, some aspects of design can wait until the local community is in residence.

Blaagaards Plads, Copenhagen. The central area is an informal football pitch used also for basketball and hockey. Children's play facilities are adjacent. The surrounding apartment blocks have shops, cafes and community facilities on the ground floor, a number opening out onto the square.

E. Community safety

16.5 Good residential design can help to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Security and community safety should be a priority. Natural surveillance is important, particularly for footpaths or areas that may be less busy. The transitional area between public and private space should be carefully considered. A clear division is needed between the two, but there are areas, such as balconies, where the two can overlap successfully provided that they are not inappropriately located so as to compromise security.

Figure 7: Good Residential Design



- A Defensible space: a semi-private zone, it can be as narrow as 0.5m but it acts as a demarcation of territory before the front door is reached
- B Front door visible on the front of the house
- C Oriel window on gable end allows passive surveillance of the building's blind side
- D Side gated, designed as a lockable door
- E Pitched roofs deter break-in at first floor
- F Garage designed with enough space to store bicycles
- G Eyes on the street: passive surveillance of the public realm.

F. Topography

16.6 Topography should influence the layout and built form of homes and other buildings in residential areas. Hillsides should never be 'cut away' to accommodate standard house types, but the difference in levels used creatively as part of the design concept (e.g. to accommodate two dwellings, a basement or mews car parking).

Alpine 'chalet' style development on excavated site.

Buildings that make use of a steep hillside, using the levels to increase amount of frontage and entrances.

G. Natural resources

16.7 All schemes should provide **environmentally sustainable housing** that meets the aspirations of the Code for Sustainable Homes (see page 8). The Council will particularly encourage the following:

- grouping buildings to minimise heat loss;
- designing for future adaptability, (e.g. future use of roofspace);
- achieving energy efficiency through orientation, insulation and use of energy-efficient lighting (including external) and heating;
- considering the generation of electricity in homes or locally;
- considering the minimisation of waste and its re-use and recycling;
- considering water saving devices such as low volume taps, dual flush toilets and water/energy-efficient appliances;
- consider use of SuDS such as grey water systems, green roofs and porous hard landscaping/access ways;
- consider making best use of good soil on gardens and open spaces;
- the use of recycled and local materials and those with low 'embodied energy';
- provision of public transport facilities and cycle storage;

- opportunities for local food production (allotments/city farms);
- maintaining and increasing biodiversity;
- environmentally sensitive landscape schemes which contribute to biodiversity;
- modern construction methods can help to minimise the use of natural resources, reduce construction costs and speed up the process of development. Developers are strongly encouraged to adopt these methods where it is compatible with other objectives in the Guide.

H. Density levels

16.8 The Council will require housing to use land efficiently. Minimum requirements for density levels are set out in PPG3. However, appropriate levels vary considerably depending on the location and type of housing provided:

Highest density: town centres/areas of highest public transport accessibility;

High density 60+ dwellings per hectare (dph): areas with good accessibility;

Medium density (40-60 dph): areas with moderate accessibility;

Lower density (at least 30 dph): areas with poor accessibility.

16.9 Advice on designing new housing, including appropriate densities, can be found in the following CABE documents:

1. Better Neighbourhoods: making higher densities work.
2. What homebuyers want: attitudes and decision-making among consumers.

I. Housing Quality

16.10 It is important that new homes are soundly built, energy-efficient and provide sufficient levels of amenity, space and facilities for the occupants to make the property pleasant to live in and help create a decent quality of life. The housing should also be designed to be accessible and adaptable to help meet the changing needs of owners and occupiers.

The Lifetime Homes Standard developed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation sets out a number of design requirements that enable housing to be accessible and flexible enough to meet the changing needs of occupants through different phases and events of their lives. The Council would strongly encourage that new housing should be designed to meet the Lifetime Homes Standard.
www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes

16.11 The 2010 Decent Homes Standard is a Government initiative aimed at improving the social housing stock. Principles within the Decent Homes Standard could also be applied to new private housing developments.
www.decenthomesstandards.co.uk

J. Car Parking

16.12 Car parking should be provided in accordance with the standards set out in PPS:3 Housing. For sites within or close to town and local centres or on good public transport corridors/nodes, a reduced level of parking should be secured to encourage more sustainable transport usage.

16.13 In all instances, parking provision should be designed to minimise its visual impact in the street scene, through appropriate siting and screening away from public view. Where on-street parking is to be provided, it should be designed so as to maintain highway safety whilst also integrating positively into the street scene. Further technical guidance in relation to streets is contained in the Government's 'Manual for Streets' document, 2007.

Example of an environment where cars do not dominate.

An environment where cars dominate the street scene.

17.0 Infill Development

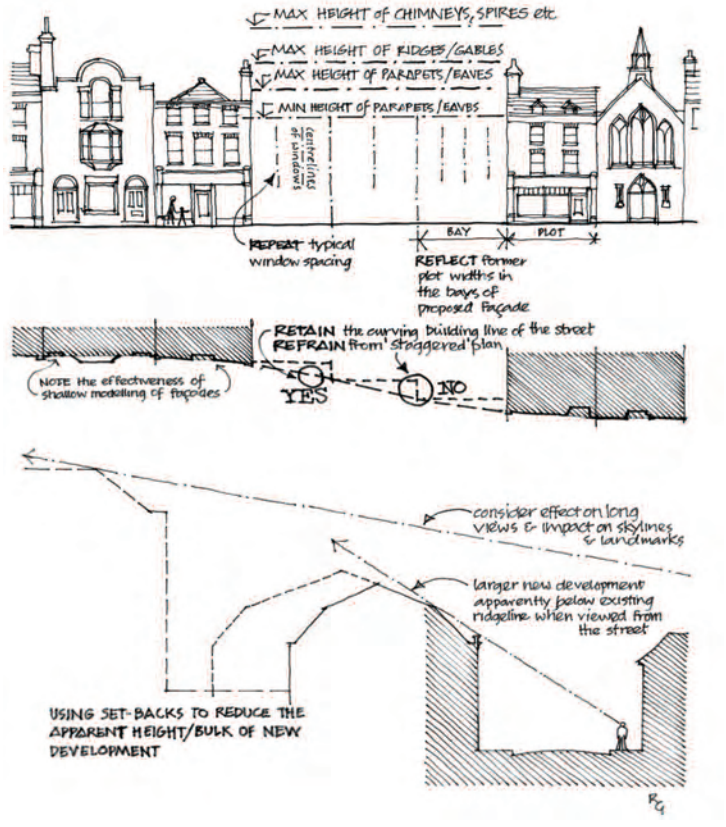
17.1 Small sites for individual or small groups of buildings within existing streets constitute infill development. Sites can be found in a variety of locations including older urban areas or those more recently developed, and in areas with mainly residential buildings or those with a range of uses.

Context is especially important. Some locations, including those within Conservation Areas or adjacent to Listed Buildings, can be particularly sensitive. Site-specific solutions are required.

17.2 Key considerations for infill development

- Establish the capacity of the site first. What is the appropriate height, footprint and massing in relation to neighbouring buildings? (see diagram below). Is it possible to reduce the space taken up by roads and, thus, increase the site area?
- Respect the existing building line and consider the appropriate frontage type (e.g. continuous or spaced, regular or irregular).
- Respect views to important or dominant buildings.
- Consider the nature and quality of existing buildings (are they listed? Old or new? Dominant or recessive in the street scene? Is there a prevalent architectural style?).
- Consider materials, in particular, in terms of colour and texture. Is there a local 'palette' on which the scheme can draw?
- Consider the proposed use. Is this compatible with neighbouring buildings?
- Consider the prevailing rhythm/character of neighbouring buildings, in particular aspects like: the pattern, size and detail of windows and other openings, the integrity of horizontal elements such as: eaves and ridge lines, string courses and fascias at ground floor, the proportions of particular elements and, lastly, architectural detailing and embellishment (e.g. balconies, parapet details, chimneys, etc.).

Figure 8: Key Considerations for Infill Development.



17.3 Different approaches to infill development

Design solutions for infill development can take three broad forms. A deferential approach (often where existing buildings are of high quality), a dominant approach (where existing buildings can be complemented by a new more striking addition), and a range of solutions between the two. The table below examines the merits of different approaches to infill development.

Example of a sensitive extension to a Listed Building, Victoria Hall, Stoke.

Sensitive infilling following existing street layouts and built form can reinforce the character of urban areas. George Street Quarter (left).

17.4 **'Building in context; new development in historic areas' (English Heritage/CABE)**

Provides advice and case study examples of infill development in existing urban areas. The solutions examined are both traditional and contemporary in their approach.

17.5 The Council will produce **design briefs** in order to provide detailed guidance on the design of new development on certain prominent or sensitive sites.

Table 1: Infill Design Options.

	Characteristics	Context	Comment
Copy existing or adjacent	On vacant site or a rebuild of an existing unstable building. Adjacent building/s copied in bay widths, storey heights, fenestration, materials, jointing, decoration and style.	Usually most appropriate in a unified townscape composition e.g. unfinished Georgian Square, otherwise when a Listed Building is demolished and required to be replaced.	Deceptively easy option, but requires great attention to detail, supervision and workmanship. Materials (especially traditional) may be expensive. Should the appearance be aged? If so, how?
Critical parameters	Basic briefing by planners regarding the new building envelope, includes massing layout, scale, heights, skyline, proportions, building lines, fenestration and materials.	Appropriate in most typical street scenes where maintenance of scale is important, but style could be varied.	A cool, measurable approach which can be well-articulated and defended at appeal. Can result in lifeless conformity. Need for negotiation between architect and local authority.
Context expressive	An eclectic approach drawn from an analysis and response to the character, style and use of the street or area. Often, Post-Modern in style.	Usually in an area of varied and rich character and style, not especially of 'high' architecture, but mixed use, adapted, or vernacular contexts.	At best, is both scholarly and witty in its references and adaptation of motifs. Relies on a good architect. At worst, can be glib and can look clichéd/outdated in a short time.
Bold contrast	A Modernist/High-Tech approach: an expression and celebration of 21st Century technology and/or building function.	Appropriate in confined sites as one-off jewel-like contrast in larger, cleared or run down areas where a statement of change and confidence is needed.	Appropriate if scale is right. Should be 'friendly' at street level (active frontage and accessible), could be over-assertive if not well-designed. What would be the effect if repeated in the street?

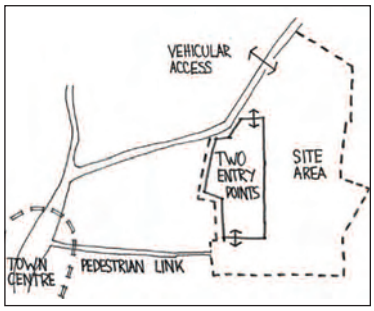
18.0 Large-scale Development

18.1 Principles of good design apply equally to large-scale buildings including those for retail, employment, education and other purposes. The following points are particularly important:

18.2 PPS6 states: policies for the design of development for main town centre uses, regardless of location, and for development in town centres, should promote high quality and inclusive design, in order to improve the character and quality of the area in which such development is located and the way it functions.

A. Site location

18.3 Buildings that act as 'magnets' such as shops and high intensity employers should be located in order to minimise reliance on the private car and, thus, the space required for parking. Sites should be chosen on the basis of their accessibility/sustainability balanced against site availability as determined by the sequential test set out in PPS6. Ideally, however, they should be located within easy walking/cycling distance of urban centres or in locations well served by public transport.



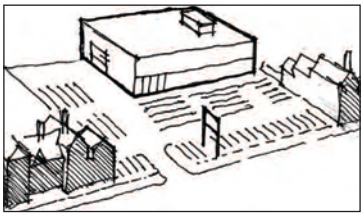
Opportunities should be taken to increase pedestrian connections to sites on the edge of town centres in order to provide a real alternative to car-based travel.

B. Position and orientation on site

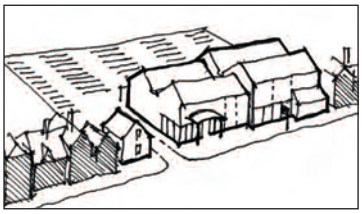
18.4

- position the building close to the main street for pedestrian convenience and consider pedestrian connections onto the site from other directions to help create a stronger enclosure of the street and sense of place;
- orientate the main entrance onto the street;
- on large sites, prioritise pedestrian connections around the site and ensure that there is an active street frontage.

Unsatisfactory approach



Satisfactory approach



C. Intensity of development

18.5 Single-storey development for larger-scale uses does not use land efficiently and is not recommended in urban areas.

- large retail units should consider the provision of a complementary use above the shop (e.g. apartments/car park);
- active frontages should be provided adjacent to streets (e.g. small shops fronting larger retail units, or offices/reception areas fronting factory units). This helps to create activity and an added sense of security in the street.

Example of apartments provided above a small supermarket, Redcliff, Bristol. This could be done on a much larger scale.

D. Massing

18.6 Large-scale buildings can appear out of context in their surroundings and inhuman in scale. Aim to:

- create sub-divisions in the main structure to reduce its bulk (both in terms of vertical emphasis and horizontal projections);
- avoid large single-span roofs. Break the roof up to give more vertical lines.

The BA Waterside Building, Harmondsworth. The building is the corporate headquarters for British Airways and consists of six horseshoe-shaped buildings backing onto an internal 'street'. The layout and variation in height breaks down the overall mass of the building.

E. Creating landmarks

18.7 Large-scale buildings provide opportunities for creativity and innovation in contributing to streetscape variation and local distinctiveness.

- Variety in form, height, roofing and materials can all be used effectively.
- New technology and materials to provide energy-efficient design solutions, and renewable energy generation also provides opportunities.

The Quay Bar, Manchester. Contemporary design using materials appropriate to local context.

F. Materials

18.8 Materials can be innovative, but should relate to the existing palette of colours and textures.

- Materials should be human in scale and the use of large panels at street level should be avoided.
- The Council will encourage creative use of glass and new technology in a manner consistent with its vision of St.Helens as a progressive and modern place to live.

Jubilee Campus, Nottingham University. The requirement to incorporate environmentally friendly technology and materials was a requirement from the outset, and this ensured that there was no impact on capital costs.

G. Car Parking

18.9

- Avoid the provision of large areas of surface car parking. It wastes space and feels too 'open'.
- Where a substantial amount of car parking is required, creative solutions such as undercroft/above the main building should be considered.
- Car parking can be provided on several storeys and the visual impact mitigated by 'wrapping around' single aspect apartments or other uses. Safety and security of people and vehicles should be a priority.
- Surface car parks should be well over-looked, and sub-divided with landscaping to minimise their impact.
- Pedestrian routes should be level and easily found.

A 'sea' of car parking contributes to the breakdown of the townscape.

An attempt has been made to conceal parking undercroft. However, the lack of active ground floor use means that the opportunity to create activity on the canalside has been lost.

H. Business Parks

18.10 Business parks are often isolated single-use 'zones' that have one main entrance with campus-style development within. In order to create a more diverse range of uses on sites to support the daily needs of employees and reduce the need to travel, the following opportunities should be considered in relation to all new development on business parks:

- the need to create a service 'hub' on sites within walking distance of all units, if possible. Appropriate uses include shops, cafes, hairdressers, employment agencies as well as a transport hub;
- to promote safety and security, compatible uses that generate some movement beyond office hours will be encouraged, but not those which will attract large numbers of car-borne visitors;
- opportunities to make connections into neighbouring residential areas should be taken, especially where this could create a focal point for shops and services to be shared between both residential and employment areas;
- in rural fringe locations, groups of buildings either in pavilion formation or 'farm cluster' formation are appropriate. Pale colours are more visible from distance and, therefore, darker colours are preferred.

Offices in a countryside setting, Newton-le-Willows.

19.0 Development in the Countryside

19.1 The guiding principle for development in the countryside is that it should harmonise with the rural landscape and draw on it for inspiration. Anyone wishing to develop in the countryside should consult the policies within the environment chapter of the UDP along with site-specific policies. Almost all of the St.Helens countryside lies within the Green Belt where there is a strong presumption against development, except that related to agriculture and forestry and for recreation. SPG2 gives more detailed advice on the design and siting of new farm buildings and roads. Development should be designed to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land from irreversible damage or loss. A soil management strategy should be developed as part of any scheme.

A. General principles for new agriculture, forestry and recreational buildings

19.2 Policy ENV 16 outlines requirements for the design of new buildings and alterations and extensions to existing buildings for agriculture and forestry. In addition, development is more likely to be acceptable if it conforms to the following requirements. It should:

- avoid prominent and exposed locations, minimise wind exposure and maximise solar gain;
- respond to landscape setting by locating buildings in hollows, on hillsides or in sites well-sheltered by mature vegetation;
- avoid excavation. Instead, use the slope to influence the form and layout of the building;
- avoid sloping sites for large form buildings which are unable to respond to landform without large excavations;
- building forms should be simple. Long, low forms are characteristic of the local area. Large bulky buildings should be avoided and their forms broken down into constituent parts;
- decoration and fenestration should be simple in character;
- boundaries should use natural or traditional materials and follow the contours of the land. Avoid approaches used in suburban areas;
- contemporary designs can be appropriate when they are based on modern interpretations of the traditional rural form and character. New technologies for energy generation and conservation will be encouraged;
- materials are particularly important in rural locations. The Council requires the use of high quality materials of a colour and texture that reflect traditional approaches. Innovation and new technology should be balanced with this approach. Where metal cladding is considered appropriate, it will normally be required to be dark in colour and matt in finish so as to minimise its visibility;
- minimise the impact of lighting;
- consider the impact of potential highway improvements (particularly for recreational development).

Farm grouping set in hollow.

The conference centre and welcome hall at the Earth Centre, Doncaster. Environmental sustainability was a prerequisite. The Building forms respond to a brief to use recycled materials and new technologies to achieve a carbon-neutral development on a former colliery spoil heap.

Example of new recreational building that works in context: Risley Moss Visitor Centre, Mersey Forest.

The Cardboard Building, Westborough Primary School, Westcliffe on Sea is made of cardboard and timber with 90% of the materials being recycled.

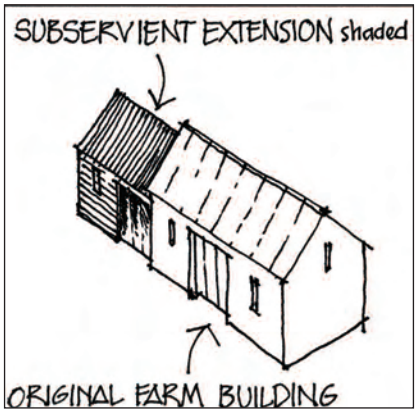
The Ecology Centre and Art Pavilion, Mile End Park, London. Although in an urban area, the park buildings respond to the topography of the site in a way appropriate to a rural context.

B. Re-use of redundant buildings

19.3 It is usually preferable that uses are found which maintain a link with the agricultural holding and offer opportunities for farm-related diversification. Alternatively, conversions to office, workshop or residential accommodation may be considered. Where buildings may be suitable for conversion, it is important that the character of the buildings is retained by:

- keeping new openings to a minimum;
- avoiding domestic/suburban detailing;
- retaining internal spaces as much as possible through the use of open plan layouts;
- ensuring that any extensions are subservient to the main building(s) in order that the significance of the latter is not compromised.

The materials and simple shapes of traditional farm buildings contribute to the character of the area. These features should be retained in any conversion proposals.



Extensions should be subservient to the original farm building.

Business units created by conversion of outbuildings.

19.4 Be aware of the potential that owls and bats may be nesting or roosting in disused buildings.

C. Landscape schemes

19.5 Landscape schemes will be required for all development in the countryside.

19.6 For agricultural holdings, the Council is keen to encourage the preparation of 'whole farm' landscape plans. Such proposals could accord with the Mersey Forest Community Forest Strategy, and financial support may, therefore, be available.

19.7 For recreational development, landscape proposals should be in character with the landscape and should contribute to the Community Forest Strategy as well as the maintenance/enhancement of local biodiversity.

19.8 Policy ENV 3 safeguards a strategic network of Greenways which provide structural landscaping and contribute to biodiversity throughout the Borough. Development in the countryside should enhance and reinforce these Greenways where possible.

19.9 DEFRA operate the Environmental Stewardship Scheme, which offers grants for whole farm landscape schemes.

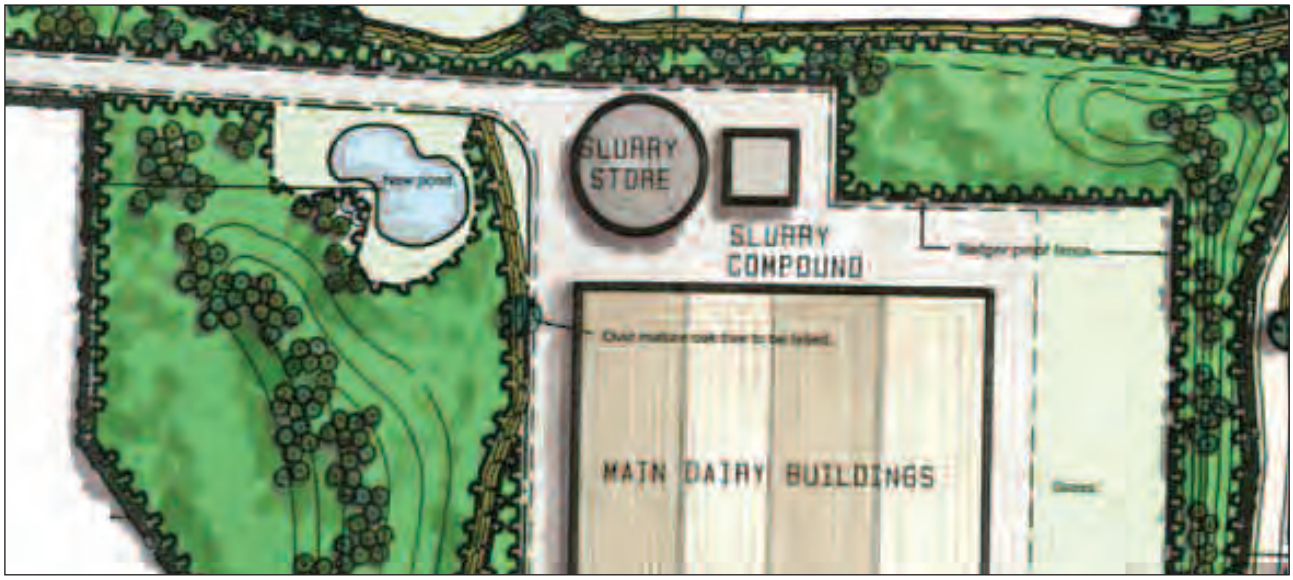
Village and Town Design Statements

19.10 Village and Town Design Statements are documents which capture the distinctive character of a town or village, focusing in particular on what local people value about a place. They include consideration of the shape and form of a settlement, the style and qualities of the buildings within it, and its landscape setting.

The purpose of such documents is to manage change in villages and rural towns so that new building which takes place is appropriate to the location, and contributes to the character and distinctiveness of the local area. They can be a useful tool in the drive to promote higher quality development in an area. Village and Town Design Statements are produced with the active involvement of local communities, often as a partnership between the village/town and the local authority. Statements are often adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents by the local authority and, as such, can influence the decision-making process on all applications for new development.

19.11 In the countryside, planning permission is not required for certain development for agriculture and forestry purposes. Advice on this can be found in Annex E of PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. In addition, you are advised to consult with Council officers for clarification.

Figure 9: Extract from a landscape strategy for a farm complex.



20.0 Shopfronts

20.1 Policy RET 6 gives advice on shopfront design. The age of shopping areas varies from those built during the period of industrial expansion (primarily in smaller town centres) and those built more recently as part of modern shopping areas. The core shopping area of St.Helens town centre is primarily modern in character.

20.2 The design and appearance of shopfronts can have an important impact on local character, and distinctiveness.

20.3 The predominance of national and regional multiples in shopping areas and the need to project a corporate image has proved detrimental to individuality. Notwithstanding the needs of corporate businesses, the Council wishes to encourage a more innovative and creative approach to shopfront design, working within tried and tested principles of traditional design (page 41). High quality design/finish with practicality in mind can help improve the aesthetic and retail performance of town centres.

Access

20.4 Shopfronts should be designed in order to promote ease of access for the disabled/less mobile. Key principles:

- avoid the use of steps – a ramped access can be accommodated more easily when doors are recessed.
- ensure that entrances are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs/pushchairs;
- handrails can be helpful where there are changes in level;
- frameless glass doors can be hazardous to blind/partially sighted people;
- doors should be capable of being opened by people of all ages, heights and abilities.

A. Context

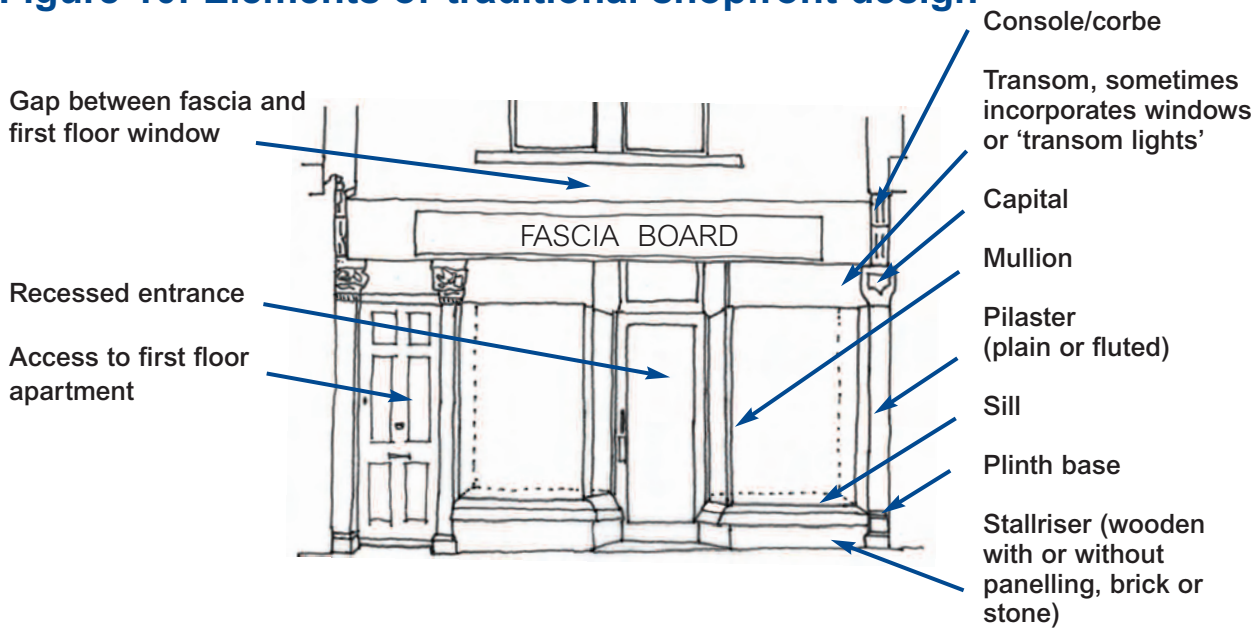
20.5 The design of shopfronts should respond to the context of the building and street within which it is located. On older buildings, a more traditional approach will be appropriate, on more modern or contemporary buildings there is room for creativity. Variety and diversity in the shopfronts on a single street will be encouraged in accordance with the variety and diversity of building ages and architectural styles.

Example of a shopfront which extends over several properties, at the same time retaining the integrity of the individual bays, and traditional features.

20.6 Shopfronts should respect the scale and proportion of the building and its façade. The following are particularly important:

- The upper floors of a building should not appear top-heavy but should be visually supported by the shopfront.
- Where shopfronts extend across more than one bay, sub-divisions should be made in the glazing in line with those in the building above.
- Materials used should be appropriate to the age and style of the building as well as local context.
- Original decorative features should be retained on older buildings where possible.

Figure 10: Elements of traditional shopfront design



The traditional shopfront design is based on classical proportions. On modern buildings, pastiche designs and mere replication of this format should be avoided. However, the design of shopfronts should reflect what works in terms of proportion, scale and the relationship to the rest of the building.

B. Security

20.7 The consideration of security issues should be an integral part of shopfront design. The security of the shop itself and the area within which it is located should be considered. The following are relevant:

- Window-shopping should be possible at all hours of the day – views into shops make disturbances visible and enhance the vitality of the area.

This shopping street is 'closed' after hours. The area feels closed. Walking through is like going through a tunnel.

- Glazing should not be continued down to ground level. Stallrisers provide added security, especially when strengthened with concrete. In addition, mullions can be strengthened with steel.

Glazing continued down to ground level makes this shopfront appear unbalanced with no sense that the ground floor is supporting the upper floors.

- Ideally, any security shutters should be internal. External shutters will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where a security risk can be clearly demonstrated. External shutter boxes will not be allowed and external shutters should stop at the stallriser and be latticed to allow good visibility.
- Recessed doorways can be gated in the evenings to deter loitering and promote visibility.
- Entrances and frontages should be well-lit.

Internal shutters allow good visibility and the shop can contribute to the vitality of the area beyond trading hours.

C. Signage

20.8 Fascia signs should be designed to respect the scale and proportion of the building façade. They should:

- be limited to the ground floor of the building - signs which reach the window sill of the first storey dominate the building façade;
- not reach beyond the pilasters;
- not extend across two buildings of different styles, without a break;
- be of appropriate materials – plastic fascias are unlikely to be appropriate on older buildings;
- include lettering which is proportional to the scale of the building;
- not use deep illuminated signs on older buildings.

For more detailed advice on signage, consult **St.Helens UDP Supplementary Planning Guidance note 8; Advertising in St.Helens.**

Example of inappropriate signage creating a very cluttered and poor quality frontage to the shop.

Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas

20.9 For Listed Buildings and in Conservation Areas (see page 14 for a list), the Council will seek the highest standards of design. The following principles apply:

- Original shopfronts should be retained.
- When modern shopfronts are being replaced, original designs should be restored where possible, otherwise the Council will seek a design more appropriate to the building.
- Internally illuminated fascia signs will not be appropriate on older buildings.
- Corporate signs may need to be altered to respond to the specific context of the building and locality.
- External shutters will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where a security risk can be clearly demonstrated. External shutter boxes will not be allowed and external shutters should stop at the stallriser and be latticed to give a good view of the internal area. Solid external roller shutters will not be appropriate.
- Materials should be appropriate to the building. Anodised metals and plastics will generally be resisted in favour of timber. Colours and finishes should be appropriate to the local palette.

Less is more? Sensitive design of shopfront in the George Street Conservation Area.

30.0 Details and Materials

30.1 Details and materials can make or break a scheme. Key issues are quality, context, scale, proportion, texture and colour. Different solutions are appropriate in urban and rural areas.

A. Windows/doors

30.2 Openings are the key to an elevation. A balance must be found between internal function and external function (impact on street scene). There are few absolutes and what is appropriate varies depending on context and whether the building has a more traditional or a contemporary design.

Windows and openings generally work best when arranged symmetrically, either in terms of an individual building or as part of a street composition.

Random arrangements are generally only appropriate when they form part of a composed effect. (British Embassy, Berlin.)

Traditionally, windows of vertical proportions are favoured with a window: wall ratio of 50:50 or less. In urban contexts, vertical emphasis is more appropriate, horizontal emphasis can be appropriate in rural areas.

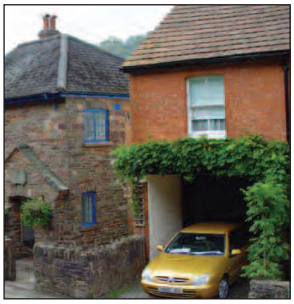
The modernist approach is more varied, and includes square windows and minimal sub-division. Contemporary designs can include 100% glazed façades. (William Gates Building, Cambridge University.)

Lintels and archways should convey quality and substance.

Blank gable ends do little to promote surveillance and community safety.

B. Other details

30.3 *The impact of garage doors is greatest in mews terraces. Avoid 'up and over' doors.*



Open archways (with or without rear garages) reduce street impacts.

In residential areas, dormer windows, porches, bays and other projections should form a substantive element of the building and not appear as merely decorative elements.

Chimneys are details often omitted on new developments but they can help to create interesting and varied roofscapes whilst providing visual connection with the wider character of an area (if chimneys are a characteristic).

C. Boundaries

30.4 Boundary structures are usually the immediate interface between public and private realm and play an important role in defining the ambience of streets and spaces.

Avoid large areas of high blank walls. Where they face onto the public realm, they reduce surveillance both into sites (e.g. industrial areas) and onto the street (e.g. in neighbourhoods).

The use of railings for front gardens and non-residential sites improves surveillance and community safety. This is especially useful where high boundaries are needed to prevent access.

High close-boarded fences create an image of poor quality and turn away from the public realm.

Hedges as boundaries add softness to the public realm and can support wildlife if native species are used.

Back of pavement terrace.

Building in village setting.

30.5 Providing front boundaries may not be appropriate in some instances where the character is based on back of pavement development as in some terraces and in certain village settings.

D. Materials

30.6 Key principles are outlined on page 12. The following should also be considered:

- There should be a particular emphasis on quality for prominent and high profile developments. This will be slightly less critical on elevations only visible from private vantage points.
- In urban areas, a wide variety of materials can be considered appropriate, depending on context.
- In rural areas, natural materials such as timber and stone, as well as red brick, are likely to be most appropriate.
- A balance should be sought between variety in colour and texture and simplicity in terms of the number of different materials used in a single scheme.

Materials are available in an increasingly wide range of textures which can add variety and interest.

Traditional or contemporary materials?

30.7 Traditional materials in St.Helens reflect those of Lancashire as a whole. Before 1800, buildings were either half-timbered with thatched roofs, or built of stone. New red sandstone was quarried at Rainhill. Post-1800, most buildings were built of local brick known as 'Accrington bloods' with a deep red appearance. Victorian roofs were often of Welsh slate, but around the turn of the 19th Century these began to be replaced by smooth red or pink tiles.

A wide variety of 'contemporary' materials and finishes are available today. The Council wishes to promote innovation and creativity in the use of such materials. It is particularly important that this is done in a way which is energy-efficient and respects local context, in order to ensure that new buildings enhance rather than detract from the existing. Therefore, contemporary materials that complement the colour palette of existing areas will be preferred. In particular, the Council supports the considered and creative use of glass as this has a particular relevance to the locality.

E. Lighting

30.8 Lighting is of particular importance in promoting community safety, and ensuring the use of streets and the public realm after dark. It should be designed as an integral part of a scheme. Issues to consider are:

- focus lighting on pedestrian areas rather than on highways – the height of columns in such areas should be human in scale;
- avoid directing lighting into the sky as this wastes energy and causes light pollution;
- avoid directing lighting into private gardens or onto windows as this can be a source of nuisance;
- the design of lighting fixtures should be appropriate to the local context and the design scheme. Different solutions will be appropriate for residential areas than in town centres;
- the Council is keen to encourage creative solutions to the provision of lighting in terms of height and appearance;
- low energy lighting solutions should be used wherever possible;
- in quiet areas where safety may be an issue, low level lighting may not provide sufficient visibility;
- ensure that key movement axis and desire lines across public spaces are particularly well-lit;
- the sensitive lighting of key buildings, artworks and spaces should be secured to help create a strong sense of place within new development and enhance the public realm.

St.Helens Town Centre

30.9 A series of masterplanning documents is currently being used to guide the regeneration of the inner area of St.Helens (see paragraph 7.11, Page 6). These documents give advice, and in some cases detailed specifications regarding the types of materials, including paving and lighting that will be appropriate in specific areas. In the town centre, where many of the buildings are modern in appearance, the Council is particularly keen to see the use of innovative solutions using new technologies.

Energy-efficient materials

30.10 The **Breeam** system and Code for Sustainable Homes (see paragraph 8.12, Page 7) includes tools to assist designers and developers in ensuring that the materials used in new buildings, conversions and renovations achieve optimum environmental performance. The Council will particularly encourage the use of these systems when considering the use of new technologies and materials in contemporary-style projects.

Performance Criteria and Monitoring

The purpose of this section is to assist all those commenting and making decisions about planning applications, in their assessment of the design quality of the proposals. It identifies performance criteria and a set of qualitative 'standards' that can be used to measure the proposals against the elements of good urban design set out in the SPD. The criteria are organised in terms of the process and product recommended by the SPD. Whilst the use of performance criteria is considered useful, the aim has been not to apply 'rigid' assessment methods. Each site and proposal is different, and using quantitative measurements is not always appropriate in assessing the creative and thoughtful response to the objectives of good design. Using the criteria, therefore, requires a certain level of interpretation and value judgement.

The performance criteria monitoring would form part of the overall implementation package for the SPD, requiring a programme of training for those involved in using the guidance and for assessment. The assessment and monitoring would be implemented on a phased basis, entailing only certain types and sizes of applications at specific stages to reflect a gradual increase in capacity (design awareness and resources). Details of managing this process will need to be finalised once the SPD is adopted.

Assessment criteria

Process: putting together a Design and Access Statement

1. The applicant makes early contact with the Planning Section in order to discuss their ideas in relation to specific site and general design and policy requirements.
2. There is evidence of demonstrable pre-application community involvement for 'major' applications.
3. A Design and Access Statement which describes a systematic approach to the design process has been submitted with the application. The length and content of the Statement will vary according to the size and potential impact of the scheme. The Statement responds to the requirements set out by the Development Control officer at the pre-application meeting. For householder applications, a covering letter may be sufficient. For other applications, the Design and Access Statement and discussion/negotiation with the applicant convey:
    - An awareness of good design practice and planning policies, reflecting understanding of the objectives and policies outlined on pages 5, 6, 7 and 8.
    - An appraisal of the character of the area around the site (its context). (The size of the area covered will vary depending on the potential visual and other impacts of the development; often 400m is appropriate.) The map-based appraisal covers the issues set out on pages 10 - 17.
    - A map-based appraisal of the site demonstrates that the matters outlined on pages 10 - 17 have been considered.
    - A concept plan represents the general design objectives and principles for the site as set out on pages 18 and 19.

Product: Content of the Design and Access Statement and Scheme

4. There are clear links demonstrating that the final scheme responds to the appraisal of site and context, and that it takes forward design principles identified in the concept plan.
5. The Design and Access Statement clearly identifies:
    - the amount of development proposed;
    - the density levels for different parts of the site; and
    - the use or mix of uses proposed.
6. The scheme layout demonstrates a coherent and legible structure, is well integrated with the surrounding area, retains existing routes where possible/appropriate and responds to the issues identified in paragraph 10.4, page 10.

7. The scale and massing of buildings is identified using both 2D and 3D images.
8. The scale, massing and built form demonstrates intelligent use of the elements identified in paragraph 10.5, on page 11, responding to the appraisal of site and context.
9. The public realm and landscaping is designed as a part of the overall layout and built form, including the elements identified in paragraph 10.6, page 11. It responds to the appraisal of site and context.
10. Materials and details relate to site context, and respond to the elements identified in paragraph 10.7, page 12.
11. The design of the scheme demonstrates an intention to implement environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development which will create 'sense of place' and support healthy and environmentally responsible lifestyles and communities. It also reflects consideration of the 'practical issues' identified in paragraph 10.8, page 12.

Performance measurement

Innovative/good quality

1. The applicant has responded to all the requirements identified at the pre-application meeting.
2. A Design and Access Statement has been submitted. The appraisal of site and context covers an appropriate area. It not only identifies the issues, but demonstrates a thoughtful consideration of features which contribute something positive, or something negative, as well as constraints and opportunities to improve the character and appearance of the area, along with the way it is used. The appraisal demonstrates a sound knowledge of the objectives of urban design.
3. A concept plan is produced which clearly demonstrates a series of well thought out principles for development that have emerged from the appraisal process. These principles are reflected in the final scheme.
4. The scheme identifies the amount, use and density of development in a way that is clearly conveyed and easily understood.
5. The layout, massing and built form, public realm and landscape design, and materials and details demonstrates consideration of all the issues identified on page 12 and successfully implements the design principles identified in the concept plan.
6. A series of 2 and 3-dimensional images (cross-sections and models) convey the scale and massing of individual buildings and convey a strong impression of what the place will be like, showing topography and the enclosure of spaces.
7. There is a strong commitment to quality and innovative attempts to implement environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development which will create 'sense of place' and support healthy and environmentally responsible lifestyles and communities. The scheme responds creatively to the 'practical issues' identified on page 12, as appropriate.
8. In Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings or sites affecting the setting of Listed Buildings, particular attention has been paid to materials and detailing.

Above average

1. The applicant has responded to most of the requirements identified at the pre-application meeting, including all the essential requirements.
2. A Design and Access Statement has been submitted, which identifies the relevant issues and begins to evaluate these critically.
3. A concept plan is produced, it makes connections to the appraisal process. The key issues and principles are reflected in the final scheme.
4. The scheme identifies the amount, use and density of development.
5. The layout, massing and footprint of buildings are appropriate for the site and context.
6. The layout and built form, public realm and landscape design, and materials and details demonstrate consideration of most of the issues identified on page 12 and successfully implements the design principles identified in the concept plan.
7. The application includes some 3-dimensional images (cross-sections) that help convey the scale and massing of individual buildings and an impression of what the place will be like.
8. There are attempts to implement environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development that will create 'sense of place' and support healthy and environmentally responsible lifestyles and communities. The scheme responds to some of the 'practical issues' identified on page 12, as appropriate.
9. In Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings or sites affecting the setting of Listed Buildings, particular attention has been paid to materials and detailing.

Below average

1. The applicant has not requested a pre-application meeting.
2. The Design and Access Statement does not address all of the relevant issues or evaluate them critically.
3. No appraisal of the site or its context has been submitted.
4. The scheme fails to identify the amount of development, uses or density levels.
5. The layout does not respond to context, there is no apparent movement hierarchy and no focal points for public life. Roads are over-engineered and circuitous with limited access points and the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are poorly considered.
6. The scale, massing and height of buildings is unclear.
7. None of the elements of 'massing and built form' identified on page 11 appear to have been considered.
8. The public realm is poorly defined and enclosed by buildings. There is little consideration of how outdoor spaces will be used, and landscape treatment is absent or cursory. There is little or no evidence that the issues on page 11 have been considered.
9. No information is provided on sourcing of materials or their energy efficiency. There is little or no evidence that the elements identified on page 12 have been considered.
10. The scheme creates an impression of 'anywhere' development, with a sense that pre-existing designs or 'house types' have been fitted onto the site with little or no consideration of creating spaces and a sense of place. No consideration has been given to sustainable or healthy lifestyles and communities.

Monitoring Framework

Monitoring of the impacts of this SPD will be undertaken to better understand how well the process and outputs envisaged by the SPD are being implemented, and whether there are any unforeseen adverse effects. The broad framework for monitoring is based on three main areas: the usability of the SPD, the quality of design schemes submitted, and the quality of subsequent changes to the built environment. A framework for the monitoring of the SPD will be set up and the associated indicators will be reviewed in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report.

Usability

In order to assess usability, a customer satisfaction survey of stakeholders (architects, developers, agents, local amenity/conservation groups and parish councils) will be undertaken within 12 to 18 months of adopting the SPD. This could be supplemented by a more informal survey of a limited number of stakeholders yearly thereafter. The aim of both will be to establish the extent to which the document is understood and used, including:

- Percentage of stakeholders (identified above) who say they understand the requirements for the design process (including site and context appraisal, developing a concept, and designing a final scheme).
- Stakeholder comments on the usability of the SPD more generally.

Quality of submissions

Monitoring will be based on a phased/rolling programme of implementation, starting with a limited number of application categories and a sample basis. The process will involve completing a pro forma for each affected planning application. On a phased basis, the scheme will then be rolled out to include a larger range of applications. The results will be analysed on an annual basis.

- Percentage of schemes that were judged to be either innovative/good quality, acceptable, or unacceptable under the performance criteria.
- Percentage of applications meeting BREEAM 'Very Good' standard or Code for Sustainable Homes, Level 3.
- Number of major proposals involving demonstrable pre-application community involvement.
- Number of applications refused on design grounds (including specific reasons cited).
- Number of appeals on design grounds and percentage upheld.

Quality on the ground

A random sample of developments will be selected each year for monitoring purposes. This will be chosen from the completions of applications approved since the SPD has been adopted. The assessment will be undertaken by a panel (possibly including Chair of the Planning Committee, Executive Member for Urban Regeneration, the Urban Design officer, Development Control officer, Development Plans officer, the Design Champion and an external design assessor).

- Percentage of new-build homes and house extensions meeting Code for Sustainable Homes, Level 3, and percentage of commercial buildings meeting BREEAM 'Very Good' standard.
- Net density levels of new development schemes compared with their location (high, medium or low accessibility).
- Proportion of residential schemes that fall into the silver or gold standard categories when assessed against the Building for Life standards and proportion of residential schemes that include homes designed to the Lifetime Homes standards and Secure by Design standards.
- Proportion of new developments that incorporate measures to promote environmental

sustainability in each of these areas: energy efficiency, water efficiency, surface water management, site waste management, household waste management, and use and sourcing of materials.

- The number of developments that have received an award for design excellence under the St.Helens local awards scheme (this requires a scheme to be established in St.Helens).

Glossary

active frontages – ensuring that the part of the building that faces the public realm is occupied by uses that ensure a high level of activity (e.g. shops, cafes)

bay – a major spatial division in a building (e.g. each house in a row of terraces)

BMV agricultural land – Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. This land falls within Grades 1 to 3A of the former MAFF classification

building line – the line formed by the frontages of buildings along a street

defensible space – semi-public space that is defensible because it is surveyed, demarcated or maintained by somebody

development/built form – the layouts (structure and urban grain), density, scale (height and massing), appearance (materials and details) and landscape of development

footprint – the ground floor plan of a building (not the entire plot area)

frontage – the part of a building that faces onto the public realm

gateway – an arrangement of buildings to give a sense of entrance through a 'gateway' into a place. Can be by creating a 'pinch point', giving emphasis by increasing height, or by using undercroft access

grain (urban grain) – the pattern of the arrangement and size of buildings and their plots in a settlement and the degree to which an area's pattern of street-blocks and street junctions is respectively small and frequent (fine grain) or large and infrequent (large grain)

green infrastructure – the physical environment within and between our cities, towns and villages. It is a network of open spaces, waterways, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, street trees and open countryside that brings many social, economic and environmental benefits to local people and communities

legibility – the degree to which a place can be easily understood so that people can find their way around (way-finding)

local distinctiveness – the positive features of a place and its communities that contribute to its special character and sense of place. It includes the form of a place, the way it is used, buildings – density and mix, height and massing, urban structure, grain, landscape and building traditions

magnet uses – a use within a building that generates a high level of pedestrian and other traffic

massing – the combined effect of the height, bulk and silhouette of a building or group of buildings (3D expression)

nodal point – a place where activity and routes are concentrated

passive solar heating – orientation, design and construction of buildings to maximise benefits from solar energy

passive/natural surveillance – the extent to which the public realm is over-looked from neighbouring buildings, increasing the likelihood that wrongdoers will be seen

perimeter block – a form of development that locates buildings around the perimeter of each development block, giving rise to internal enclosed spaces

performance criteria – a way to assess whether development achieves a particular requirement (e.g. promoting natural surveillance) rather than specifying absolute standards (e.g. minimum distances between dwellings)

pinch point – narrowing a street at a certain point by bringing the building line forward on either side (without necessarily narrowing the carriageway). Can act as a traffic-calming device

sense of place – spirit of a place or genius

loci is seen as a unique and indefinable quality; the special character that each place possesses. It is a synergistic quality that combines physical and social aspects of places, along with meaning and symbolism, akin to the idea of local distinctiveness

Sustainable urban Drainage System (SuDS) – a sequence of management practices and control structures designed to drain surface water in a more sustainable fashion than some conventional techniques

townscape – the urban equivalent of landscape; the overall effect of the combination of buildings, changes of level, greenspaces, boundary walls, colours and textures, street surfaces, street furniture, uses, scale, enclosure and views

Tree Preservation Order (TPO) – an order made by the Council to protect trees which are considered to make a significant contribution to their local surroundings. Such an order makes it an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or wilfully destroy a tree. Any works to protected trees require the Council's permission

undercroft – often refers to a room or space below ground floor level. Also used to refer to ground floor access beneath a first floor arch

vox pop – literally means 'voice of the people', an unscientific technique used to test opinions by asking passers-by a limited number of questions.

Appendix 1:

Local/Regional documents and strategies influencing design in St.Helens

Community and Planning

- St.Helens Council Community Plan.
- St.Helens Council Unitary Development Plan including the following Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes:
  1. Fire escapes.
  2. New farm buildings and roads.
  3. Sites of Community Wildlife Interest etc.
  4. Hazardous installations & pipelines.
  5. Design & Layout of New Housing (to be superseded when Design Guidance adopted).
  6. Householder development.
  7. Garaging, parking and servicing.
  8. Advertising in St.Helens Council.
  9. Cycle parking provision in St.Helens.
- Interim Planning Policy - Housing Developments.
- St.Helens Statement of Community Involvement (Adopted January 2007).

Technical and Strategies

- Merseyside Design Aid - Residential developments - Highway and Transportation Considerations (draft) - already provided.
- North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan.
- St.Helens Council 'A Policy for Nature'.
- Merseyside Local Transport Plan.
- Merseyside Walking Strategy.
- Merseyside Bus Strategy (new version is out for consultation at present) - gives an insight into bus provision criteria in the area.
- Landscape Character Assessment for St.Helens, Countryside Agency 2006.
- St.Helens Council Strategy for Social Inclusion.
- St.Helens Council Economic Development Plan.
- St.Helens Council Town Centre Strategy.
- St.Helens Council Housing Strategy.
- St.Helens Council Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.
- St.Helens Council Community Safety Strategy, 2002-2005.
- St.Helens Council City Growth Strategy.
- St.Helens Council Greenspace Strategy (draft).
- St.Helens Council Cycling Strategy.
- St.Helens Council Parking Strategy.
- St.Helens Council Highways for Adoption, a Planning Guide - to be provided asap.
- St.Helens Council Highways for Adoption, a Construction Guide.
- St.Helens Council Arts Strategy (draft).
- The Future in Our Hands - A Cultural Strategy for St.Helens, 2002-2007.
- St.Helens Tourism and Visitor Strategy, 2002-2006.
- St.Helens Environmental Detractors Study, Feb 2004 (a City Growth Strategy document).

Urban Design and Masterplanning

- George Street Quarter Urban Design Strategy and Guidelines (2001).
- St.Helens Council Eastside Masterplan and Public Realm Guide (2002).
- St.Helens Town Centre Core Refurbishment: Urban Design and Strategy Guidelines (Jan 2004).
- St.Helens Council Town Centre Focal Point - Design Intent and Phase 1 Masterplan (draft, Jan 2005).
- St.Helens Council Duke Street Masterplan and Public Realm Design Guide (draft).

Development Briefs/Site-specific guidance

- Park Road South, Wargrave, Newton-le-Willows (draft).
- Former Parr High School, Fleet Lane, Parr.
- Carr Mill Car Auction site, Laffak Road, Carr Mill (draft).
- Elephant Lane, Thatto Heath (draft).
- Hamblett School, Rainford Road, Windle.
- New Street, Sutton.
- Land c/o Park Road North/High Street, Newton.
- Worsley Brow Masterplan.
- Lea Green Colliery Masterplan.
- Deanway, Sutton.
- Lowther Drive/Penrith Road, Portico.
- Design Review West Point, St.Helens Council (Nov 2004).
- A Design Concept for Former Foster Brothers' Site, Shaw Street, St.Helens. (Oct 2004).

New documents to be produced by end of 2007

- St.Helens Council Heritage Strategy, 2006.
- St.Helens Council Historic Characterisation project (part of wider Merseyside Historic Characterisation project) – draft.
- St.Helens Urban Fringe Pilot project.
- Town in the Forest (City Growth Strategy Initiative).
- St.Helens Council Public Open Space Audit (PMP consultants – expected Apr/May 2006).
- St.Helens Local Development Framework and associated Area Action Plans (yet to be finalised).

Appendix 2:

Equality impact assessment of relevant functions and policies

1. Title of Function or Policy: Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document
   Service: Development Plans
   Department: UR&H
   Responsible Officer: Tom Ferguson
   Date Completed: 01-02-06

   Aims: These have already been identified as part of the screening process of the policy or function and how they will work.

Providing a framework for design quality in the built environment.

2. **Impact upon different sections of the Community:** Please indicate in the table below how the needs of different groups were identified and taken into account in relation to the proposed policy or decision.

Checklist – Impact upon different sections of the Community.

Consultation: The following question could be asked as part of your consultation process to gather information for this section of the impact assessment: 'In your opinion, could the aims of the document raise any issues or problems for different sections within the community?'

Evidence: Use whatever information you have to identify for any of the following Equality Groups if there is a specific need that should be taken into account or a potential impact (positive or negative) that could be the result of the proposals. If you have identified an issue, please state how it will be taken into account or set right.

Equality Group	Indentified need or potential impact on proposal	How will this be taken into account?
General	Consultation on document	First stage, Aug – Oct 2005. Using Guidance from Statement of Community Involvement, groups include parish councils, civic societies, disability groups in the Borough
Black & Minority Ethnic People	Translation	The SPD will have information on how to access translation
	Consultation	Using groups from LDF consultation database – there are no BME community groups in the Borough. Further consultation to link in with Corporate Consultation Officer and Consultation Strategy toolkit to identifying stakeholder from BME communities

Equality Group	Indentified need or potential impact on proposal	How will this be taken into account?
	Participation in the design process	National awareness that people from BME groups do not participate within the design process; this impacts on the opportunity for ideas from different ethnic communities to influence the design process. Ensure the Community Safety and Liveability SPD promotes inclusive community consultation – which links to the Statement of Community Involvement objectives
Disabled People	Translation	The SPD will have information on how to access translation
	Accessibility to facilities and employment	Incorporating Spatial Structure best practice from the 'Urban Design Compendium' that recommends a movement framework; setting walking thresholds for distances from home to facilities or transport networks
	Accessibility in design	SPD takes recommendations from national Guidance on Accessibility in Design, listed in References. This SPD is strategic and looks at accessibility on a broader level. The Community Safety and Liveability SPD is the policy and guidance document that will incorporate codes of practice for accessibility mobility
	Changing needs with decreased mobility	Lifetime Homes standard – promoting developer to develop housing to Lifetime Homes standard which incorporates flexible design enabling adaptability to changes in life circumstances
	Consultation	Using groups from LDF consultation database – these included Coalition of Disabled People. Further stages of consultation will extend to other disability groups including DASH and Disability Empowerment Network

Equality Group	Indentified need or potential impact on proposal	How will this be taken into account?
	Participation in the design process	Ensure the Community Safety and Liveability SPD promotes inclusive community consultation – which links to the Statement of Community Involvement objectives
Children	Participation in the design process	Ensure the Community Safety and Liveability SPD promotes inclusive community consultation – which links to the Statement of Community Involvement objectives
	Consultation	Using groups from LDF consultation database – no specific children's groups were included in first stage of consultation. Further stages of consultation will extend to link in with schools – good practice to ask teachers to target particular groups of pupils interested in design
Older People	Participation in the design process	Ensure the Community Safety and Liveability SPD promotes inclusive community consultation – which links to the Statement of Community Involvement objectives
	Consultation	Using groups from LDF consultation database – no specific older people's groups were included in first stage of consultation. Further stages of consultation will extend to groups such as Age Concern
	Changing needs with decreased mobility	Lifetime Homes standard – promoting developer to develop housing to Lifetime Homes standard which incorporates flexible design enabling adaptability to changes in life circumstances
Carers	Changing needs with decreased mobility	Lifetime Homes standard – promoting developer to develop housing to Lifetime Homes standard which incorporates flexible design enabling adaptability to changes in life circumstances

Equality Group	Indentified need or potential impact on proposal	How will this be taken into account?
Gay or Lesbian People	No specific issue	
Lone Parents	No specific issue	
Travellers	Guidance for Traveller sites or pitches	Driven by policy in the LDF – supported by guidance note - ensure actions are planned to explore the need for particular guidance note to cover issues of site development and design – including visual appearance, landscaping issues, on-site facilities, security and location in relation to facilities
Religious or belief groups	Participation in the design process	Ensure the Community Safety and Liveability SPD promotes inclusive community consultation – which links to the Statement of Community Involvement objectives
	Churches as listed buildings	Links in the Design Guide to PPG15, planning in a historic environment
People disadvantaged by deprivation	Accessibility to facilities and employment	Incorporating Spatial Structure best practice from the 'Urban Design Compendium' that recommends a movement framework; setting walking thresholds for distances from home to facilities or transport networks
Gender	Participation in the design process	Ensure the Community Safety and Liveability SPD promotes inclusive community consultation – which links to the Statement of Community Involvement objectives
Young People	Participation in the design process	Ensure the Community Safety and Liveability SPD promotes inclusive community consultation – which links to the Statement of Community Involvement objectives

3. **Indirect discrimination**

Are there any rules or requirements in the policy/decision that:

a Can be met by a considerably smaller proportion of people from a particular section of the community?

b Are to the disadvantage of that group?

c Cannot be justified by the aims and importance of the policy?

If all three conditions apply, then there may be evidence of indirect discrimination.

~~Yes~~/No

Sections 4 to 7 are only completed if there is evidence of an actual or potential impact upon a community group that cannot be addressed within steps 1 to 3. If the issues have been addressed within Sections 1-3, then go straight to Section 8.

As all actual or potential impacts have been addressed in Sections 1-3, only the concluding Section 8 is required to be completed.

8. **Publishing the results of the assessment:**

Policy

This Equality Impact Assessment Report must be published as an appendix of the Policy.

References

The list below references documents other than those produced at local/regional level (these appear in Appendix 1).

Policy and Guidance

- Better Places to Live by Design: a companion guide to PPG3. Dtlr/CABE, 2001.
- By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System: towards better practice. Detr/CABE, 2000.
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- Planning and Access for Disabled People: a good practice guide. ODPM, 2003.
- PPG3 Housing. Detr, 2000.
- PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. ODPM, 2004.
- PPG17 Planning for Open Space. ODPM, 2002.
- PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development. ODPM, 2005.
- Residential Roads and Footpaths - layout considerations, Design Bulletin 32, 2nd Edition. DoE, DoT, 1992.
- Safer Places: the planning system and crime prevention. ODPM/The Home Office, 2004.
- PPS6 Planning for Town Centres, ODPM, 2005.
- PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, ODPM 2005.
- PPS10 Planning for Sustainable Waste Management, ODPM 2005.
- PPS12 Local Development Frameworks, ODPM, 2004.
- PPG13 Transport, DoE 2001.
- PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment, DoE 1990.
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Advice

- Arm Yourself with a Placecheck, a users' guide. UDAL, 2001.
- Better Neighbourhoods, making higher densities work. CABE, 2005.
- Better Streets, Better Places, delivering sustainable residential environments. Available from ODPM.
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- Building in context, new development in historic areas. English Heritage/CABE, 2001.
- Circular 01/06 (DCLG); Guidance on changes to the development control system, June 2006.
- Concept Statements and Local Development Documents. Countryside Agency, 2003.
- Creating Successful Masterplans, a guide for clients. CABE, 2004.
- Design and Access Statements, 'How to write, read and use them', CABE 2006.
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- Design Review Programme. CABE, 2001.
- Developing naturally - A handbook for incorporating the natural environment into planning and development. English Nature and Association of Local Government Ecologists, 2000.
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- Homezone - Design Guidelines. Institute of Highway Incorporate Engineers, 2002.
- Housing Layouts - lifting the quality,

House Builders' Federation, Planning Officers' Society, Detr, 1998.

- Keepers of time - A statement of policy for England's ancient and native woodland. HM Government, 2005.
- Manual for Streets, Department for Transport, 2007.
- North West Best Practice Design Guide, North West Regional Assembly, 2006.
- One Future - different paths. The UK's shared framework for sustainable development. HM Government, 2005.
- Paving the Way, how we achieve clean, safe and attractive streets. CABE/ODPM, 2002.
- Protecting Design Quality in Planning, Turley Associates. CABE, 2003 (undated).
- Shaping Neighbourhoods, H Barton, M Grant, R Guise, spon. 2002.
- Space for People. The Woodland Trust.
- Sustainable Urban Extensions - Planned through Design. English Partnerships, CPRE, Detr, 2000.
- The 2002 Designing of Streets for People. Report. Institute of Civil Engineers, 2002.
- The Value of Housing Design and Layout. FPD Savills & Davis Langdon and Everest, CABE, 2003.
- The Value of Urban Design, CABE, Dtlr, UCL, 2001.
- Towards a new Vernacular, promoting high quality sustainable new development in the countryside.
- Town Design Statements, why and how to produce them. The Countryside Agency, 2003.
- Urban Design Compendium. Llewelyn-Davies, English Partnerships, Housing Corporation, 2000.
- Urban Design Guidance. R Cowan (ed.) Urban Design Group, 2002.
- What Homebuyers Want: attitudes and decision-making among consumers. CABE, 2005.
- Working Together - a guide for planners and housing providers. RTPI/UCL supported by Dtlr NHF HBE HC 2001.
- Working with the grain of nature. A biodiversity strategy for England. DEFRA, 2002.

Further reading

- Responsive Environments, a manual for designers. Bentley et al, Architectural press, Oxford 1985.
- Public Places, Urban Spaces: the dimensions of urban design. Carmona, M et al, Architectural Press, Oxford, 2003.
- The Concise Townscape. Cullen, G, Architectural Press, Oxford, 1961.
- Life Between Buildings, using public space. Gehl, J, 4th ed. Arkitektens Forlag, Copenhagen, 2001.
- The Death and Life of Great American Cities. Jacobs, J, Random House, New York, 1961.
- The image of the City. Lynch, K, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1960.
- Towards an Urban Renaissance, final report of the urban taskforce chaired by Lord Rogers of Riverside, DTLR, London, 1999.
- The Japanese Knotweed Manual, Lois Child and Max Wade, 2000.

Websites

www.communities.gov.uk – for copies of Government guidance and advice

www.cabe.org.uk – for copies of CABE publications

www.breeam.org – for advice on the social and environmental impacts of new development

www.woodland-trust.org.uk

www.countryside.gov.uk

www.environment-agency.gov.uk – for advice on water resources, waste and landfill, flood risk, pollution prevention, biodiversity and foul and surface water drainage

www.merseysidebiodiversity.org.uk

www.odpm.gov.uk/index – indicies of multiple deprivation

www.unitedutilities.com – for advice on water and wastewater services.

Contacts in Planning

For advice and pre-application discussions, please contact the following:

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