



[Click to begin](#)

Wokingham Borough Council

Borough Design Guide

Supplementary Planning Document

June 2012



Foreword

I am delighted to launch this document which is a vital part of our drive to encourage developers to bring forward well designed developments which complement and build upon the character of that immediate area.

The guide, which replaces the Borough's Residential Guide, builds on the success of that document in helping the council, and those putting forward applications, to ensure their proposals are appropriate and protect nearby properties from the impact of the development. Responses to our consultations, government guidance and the council's strong aim to ensure we get good development has helped prompt this new document.

It has been through detailed preparation in the form of internal and external workshops and formal consultation. There were a number of very useful consultation responses which have helped the council prepare this final document and we are grateful for the time and effort residents and groups put into reading the document and contributing to its production.

We have included sections on non-residential development to highlight the equal need for good design, including shop fronts, signs, materials etc. In addition we have brought forward guidance on development in rural settings to take account of the different aspects outside our urban areas. This document also incorporates all the Village Design Statements which adds very particular and useful guidance on the character of our villages.

We are fortunate to have such a varied and attractive borough which it is everyone's joint duty to protect and, where possible, enhance. We expect developers to use the guidance in this document in designing their developments from inception to completion.

I look forward to this document further promoting good design, so strengthening our resolve to enhance the special characteristics of our borough and leave us better able to resist inappropriate development. Also it will serve as a local reference for the independent Berkshire Design Panel who will review and comment on all major and some other sensitive applications.

I believe that the interactive nature of the on-line version will aid everyone who uses the document to find the particular guidance for their needs. The referencing in the paper version equally assists this. Equally this document should help applicants in making high quality applications, so enabling an easier and simpler process to planning approval.



Cllr Angus Ross
Executive Member
for Strategic Highways & Planning

Wokingham Borough Council
May 2012

This Design Guide has been prepared by
Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design
on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council.



Foreword

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How to use this guide

This design guide is mainly intended for use on screen rather than in print format, as it contains navigation links.

Firstly, at the initial stages of the project, please check that the proposed development will be in line with the General Principles set out in Section 2. Refer to Section 3A for best practice principles for the Design Process you should follow, to be summarised in a Design & Access Statement. As proposals are formulated in more detail, refer to the specific topic sections that apply to the situation.

Over time, regular users of the Borough Design Guide should be able to go straight to the relevant topic areas.

The electronic format allows you to cross refer between these sections as necessary and to link to the appendices. It also highlights certain specific cross references, where these occur between different sections.

Please note that the design guide should not be used in isolation to guide the preparation of proposals. Other steps should at least include:

- Check compliance with policy in the Adopted Core Strategy, other Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents;
- Check any specific requirements the local planning authority may have for the site or proposed development; and
- A site visit and appraisal of the site in its context.

Where possible the guide uses good examples in the Borough. However examples of good practice in other places have also been used. All proposals will need to respond to their specific local context.

Tip: This document is not web-based and so cannot allow the use of back/return functions to go to the previously viewed page. If no direct link is provided, then please go via either the Main Contents or the start of a Section to return to a particular page.

Urban design principle highlighted in colour

'More →' indicates this section continues onto the following page

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of materials and refinement of detail that is similar to the original.

In many parts of Wokingham the landscape character is strong, for instance resulting from the presence of trees in the 'Ex-woodland areas' such as Finchampstead, or from watercourses, such as the Thames and Lodden. In other places, the built form is the dominant characteristic, e.g. in enclosed villages such as the centre of Twyford.

Local character may relate primarily to the buildings, their form, design and materials, as at Wargrave, or as much to the landscape character, the green backdrop, or gaps between buildings as the buildings themselves, as for instance in Crowthorne.

Designers should make sure that development creates a sense of place that is distinctive and memorable and helps to enhance the character of the surrounding area.

Figure 4.2: In Wargrave, buildings with a gable end to the street are a distinctive local characteristic.

Wokingham Borough Council

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R2: New housing should respond to its context, in particular taking opportunities presented by the physical characteristics of the site and surroundings, including:

- incorporating existing features of value into the proposals, such as existing buildings, structures, landscape, trees and hedgerows;
- capitalising on the potential offered by the land form and orientation of the site;
- relating well to neighbouring land uses and properties; and
- being designed to minimise and/or mitigate any potential adverse environmental impacts relating to such issues as ecology, drainage and noise.

New housing development must respond to both natural and man-made features (built and landscape) that contribute to local distinctiveness.

The contextual appraisal should help to identify features that may help to generate a sense of place for the new development. Refer to Section 3A.

It should also help to identify opportunities for sustainable design, including the potential for integrating environmental technologies or sustainable drainage so that they help to create a sense of place.

For development sites on the edge of settlements see also Section 8 Rural development.

4.3 Making Connections

R3: New housing should connect into and strengthen the existing network of streets and spaces.

Developments should enhance existing routes and provide direct and attractive links between destinations. Any existing desire lines across a site should be accommodated in the new development wherever possible.

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The site has the potential to connect the area together, with convenient routes along new streets

Cute-de-sac do not create connections, so limiting access, especially for pedestrian and cyclists

Figure 4.3: Development should strengthen the street network

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3A Design process — Click to view other related cross reference

8 Rural

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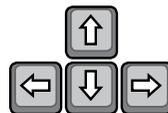
4.2 Character and context — Click to return to a previous location, (shows paragraph number and section name)

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Explanation of principle and its importance

Explanatory illustration and caption

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Tip: Use the 'Find' Function in the Acrobat Toolbar and the 'Find Next / Previous' buttons, to search for a keyword.



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wokingham.gov.uk

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Introduction

Section 1



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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Borough Design Guide brings together, updates and extends previous guidance in line with the Adopted Core Strategy. The Guide has been prepared to help deliver the vision and objectives of the Borough. The overall aim is to enhance the quality of development and make sure proposals are of the highest quality of design. That means inclusive, safe, harmonious, welcoming, sustainable places that are well-related to the surroundings.

The key objectives of this design guide are:

- To promote good design through the development process;
- To create attractive, harmonious and well used places;
- To ensure that all developments improve the character and quality of the area;
- To encourage vibrant communities where people feel safe;
- To create places that provide ease of movement and are accessible to all;
- To respect and be sympathetic to the character of the area in which the development is situated;
- To minimise overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of amenity or over-dominance;
- To take full account of the mass and height of development in relation to adjacent development and surrounding spaces; and
- To ensure that new development meets the needs of its users.

It has been prepared to advise designers and applicants when formulating development proposals and to help the Local Authority assess planning applications.

This guide sets out a series of design principles that should inform all development proposals. In certain cases, a different approach may be acceptable where proposals are of exceptional design quality. In such instances, the Design & Access Statement must demonstrate why it is necessary and appropriate to vary from these design principles.

1.2 Its status

This design guide is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which amplifies planning policies in a Development Plan Document (DPD), in this case the Wokingham Borough Core Spatial Strategy (January 2010) (Core Strategy). This document is an important material consideration in the determining of planning applications.

The SPD was prepared in accordance with the statutory procedures, including a six-week public consultation period. Following consultation, the Council analysed the responses and revisions were made to the draft SPD wherever appropriate.

The revised document was approved for adoption by Executive on 31 May 2012.

1.3 Relationship to other documents

This guide elaborates on policies in the Core Strategy, explaining how they will be interpreted and applied to common topics and forms of development. It is intended to be consistent with the emerging Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD Local Plan), which sets detailed policies for assessing planning applications and has been prepared in parallel with this SPD. It is also consistent with Wokingham Borough's Local Transport Plan 3. [More →](#)



Figure 1.1: Wokingham Borough has many high quality environments

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1 Introduction

A number of area-based SPDs will guide the form and quality of major new development proposals identified in the Core Strategy, including Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) and Wokingham Town Centre.

These are strategic, spatial, place specific and provide guidance on the Council's expectations on masterplanning, design quality and infrastructure requirements. The key elements include:

- location and quantum of development;
- design principles;
- requirements for sustainable design;
- scheme delivery; and
- requirements to be met at outline planning application stage and beyond.

This design guide is complementary and its topic-based guidance will apply to the detailed design of schemes within the SDLs. Other topic-based SPDs also contain relevant technical design guidance. There are cross references to other SPDs at relevant points in this guide.

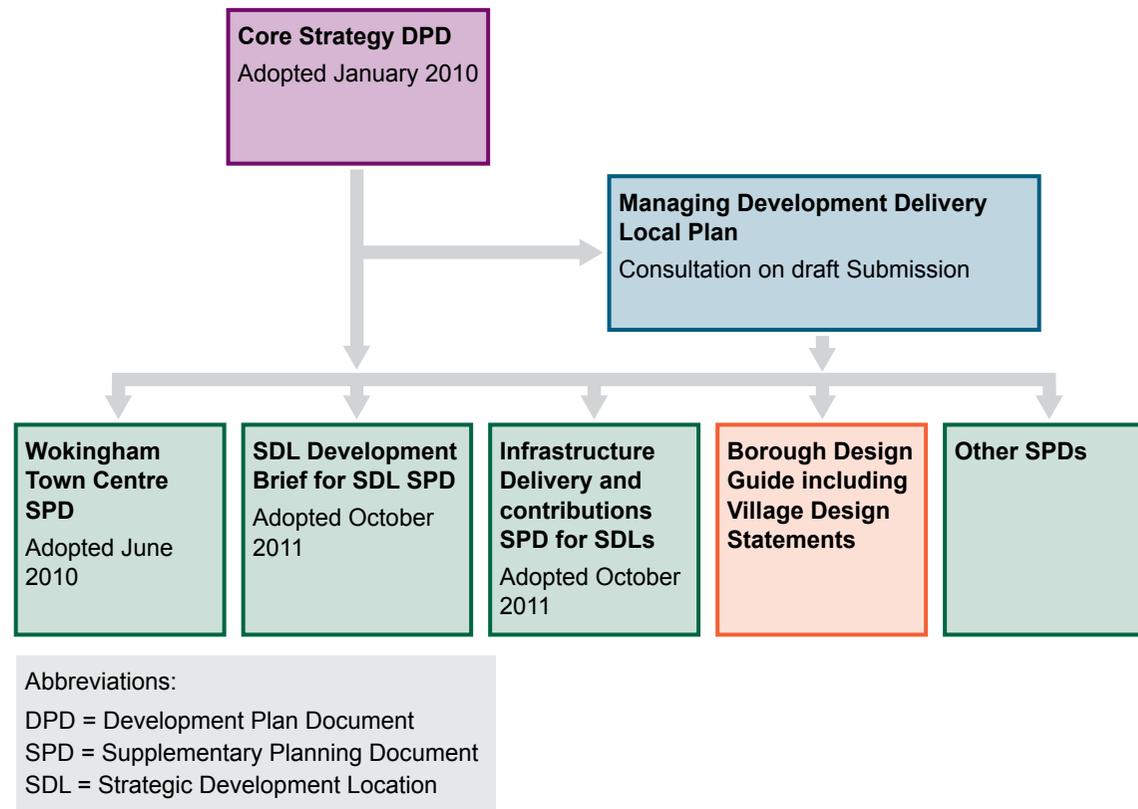


Figure 1.2: Wokingham Local Development Framework: The portfolio of planning policy documents



Figure 1.3: Wokingham Local Development Framework: Other relevant planning policy documents

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1.4 The importance of good design

1.4.1 Legislation and national policy

Good design and sustainable development are identified as national priorities in the legislative framework for planning.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities and all other relevant parties to exercise their functions “with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development”. The Planning Act 2008 requires that the Secretary of State’s functions relating to national policy statements and their review must be exercised with “regard to the desirability of mitigating, and adapting to, climate change; and achieving good design”.

The Acts make it clear that both design and responding to climate change are key factors that have an influence on the sustainability of development.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and it confirms the importance that government attaches to design in the built environment.

A commonly used definition of sustainable development referred to in the NPPF is that used in the Bruntland Report, which is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

The NPPF recognises how good design, good planning and sustainable development are related and that key objectives for design include:

- responding to local character; and
- reflect the identity of local surroundings.

The NPPF also makes clear that sustainable development involves inclusive design, such as:

- locating development to create places that are safe and accessible to all;
- reducing the need for travel;
- widening travel options and encouraging walking, cycling and accessible forms of public transport; and
- involving communities, including Town and Parish Councils and community groups, in the design and planning process.

The NPPF also makes clear that planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles, or stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or style.

“Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.”

“In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area.”

“Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.”

Figure 1.4: The NPPF supports good design

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1.4.2 What is good design?

Good design means development that is:

- attractive;
- durable, ie well built; and
- usable, ie meets the needs of users and works well.

(as used in the NPPF, but first defined by Vitruvius as commodity, firmness and delight).

‘By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System’ is a good practice guide for high quality and inclusive design. It defines good design to include the design of places as well as individual buildings, in terms not only of their appearance but also how they function or work. This is known as urban design.

A range of factors across different scales all contribute to design quality and to the success of a place once it has been built, including:

- the layout in plan form, including the pattern of built development, the network of movement and spaces and the mix of uses;
- the arrangement or grouping of buildings in 3 dimensions (the built form);
- the relationships between the buildings and spaces (the public realm);
- the architecture and hard/ soft landscape design; and
- the materials and details.

Good design means making appropriate design decisions at each of these scales.

‘By Design’ also sets out a series of urban design objectives for good design as shown in figure 1.5.

Objectives of urban design	
Character	A place with its own identity
Continuity and enclosure	A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished
Quality of the public realm	A place with attractive and successful outdoor areas
Ease of movement	A place that is easy to get to and move through
Legibility	A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand
Adaptability	A place that can change easily
Diversity	A place with variety and choice

Figure 1.5: ‘By Design’ objectives for urban design



Figure 1.6: Wokingham Borough contains areas with a range of different types of character in different settlements, both urban as in High Street, Wargrave (top) and suburban such as housing in Twyford (bottom)

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1.5 Wokingham Council's Vision

1.5.1 Adopted Core Strategy

The Local Development Framework (LDF) sets out Wokingham Council's spatial planning priorities. The Adopted Core Strategy defines the spatial objectives and vision for the Borough, together with key strategic planning policies for delivery. It emphasises the importance of developing to sustain economic growth whilst maintaining local character and distinctiveness. High quality design is emphasised throughout, as explained below.

1.5.2 The Core Strategy Spatial Vision

The Spatial Vision for future development is to make sure that the borough continues to be a great place to live and to work, with a good quality of life and opportunity for all, by

- sustaining a strong local economy and delivering the development necessary to support economic growth and fulfil the economic role of the borough in the wider region;
- meeting the needs of different groups in the community by improving access to services and facilities; and
- maintaining the quality of environment.

Maintaining and enhancing the quality of environment includes not only the landscape, ecology and heritage but also the positive character and quality of existing places, both by maintaining so far as possible the existing pattern of development, and features that contribute to the attractiveness of the environment and help create a sense of place.

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Figure 1.7: The aim is to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment in the Borough

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Creating places that offer a good quality of life means:

- providing integrated infrastructure and services for education, recreation and leisure that minimise the need for travel, including open space, community and health facilities; and
- promoting safety and security, and reducing opportunities for anti-social behaviour and crime.

1.5.3 The Core Strategy Spatial Strategy for Development

To achieve these aims, the spatial strategy for accommodating new housing is based on locating the majority of development in Strategic Development Locations (SDLs), where:

- high quality development will create a new sense of place;
- excellent social and community infrastructure can be provided; and
- opportunities for sustainable transport infrastructure are maximised.

Development briefs, adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents, will promote and guide the quality of development proposals in each of the SDLs and the detailed guidance in this document is also relevant to the detailed design of proposals in SDLs.

Some housing development is planned to take place outside the SDLs.

A sustainability appraisal has been used to classify existing places in the Borough into a settlement hierarchy, based on infrastructure provision and accessibility criteria.

The spatial strategy for development outside SDLs is for the scale of development to relate to the settlement hierarchy.

Major development is to be concentrated in settlements with good infrastructure and services, or where new infrastructure and services are proposed. Modest or limited development will take place in other settlements, where it supports the vitality of local services. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan will allocate development sites.

Away from the defined settlements, development will be limited and will mainly be the re-use of existing buildings to contribute to the rural economy and to accommodate activities associated with agriculture, forestry and open air sport/ recreation.

The SDL Development Briefs will provide strategic design guidance for the sense of place that each is to create. Outside the SDLs, there is no site-specific SPD to similarly provide strategic design guidance for future development.

The key priority in these locations, as set out in the Core Strategy, is to maintain the existing quality of environment for local residents. New development is required to be:

- compatible with local character;

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Figure 1.8: Many parts of the Borough have a distinctive character and high quality environment, for example terraced development in Twyford (top) and wooded development in Finchampstead (bottom)

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- of the highest quality, so as to create and/or retain a sense of place; and
- to incorporate existing positive features.

In potential locations for development outside SDLs the Spatial Vision also recognises the importance of accessibility, in particular:

- good transport (given car ownership);
- promoting transport by modes other than the car; and
- creating safe places, accessible to all.

1.5.4 Adopted Core Strategy policies

The Adopted Core Strategy includes a number of high level policies for delivery, with criteria for granting planning permission. These relate to key themes, such as sustainable development and inclusive communities, as well as providing principles to guide development proposals. The following are particularly relevant:

- Policy CP1 Sustainable Development;
- Policy CP3 General Principles for Development;
- Policy CP6 Managing Travel Demand; and
- Policy CP11 Proposals outside Development limits (including countryside).

Other policies with some relevance include:

- Policy CP2 Inclusive Communities; and
- Policy CP4 Infrastructure Requirements.

Appendix A1 sets out the most relevant policy criteria for this design guide, which include a number of urban design principles that cut across the different policy headings.

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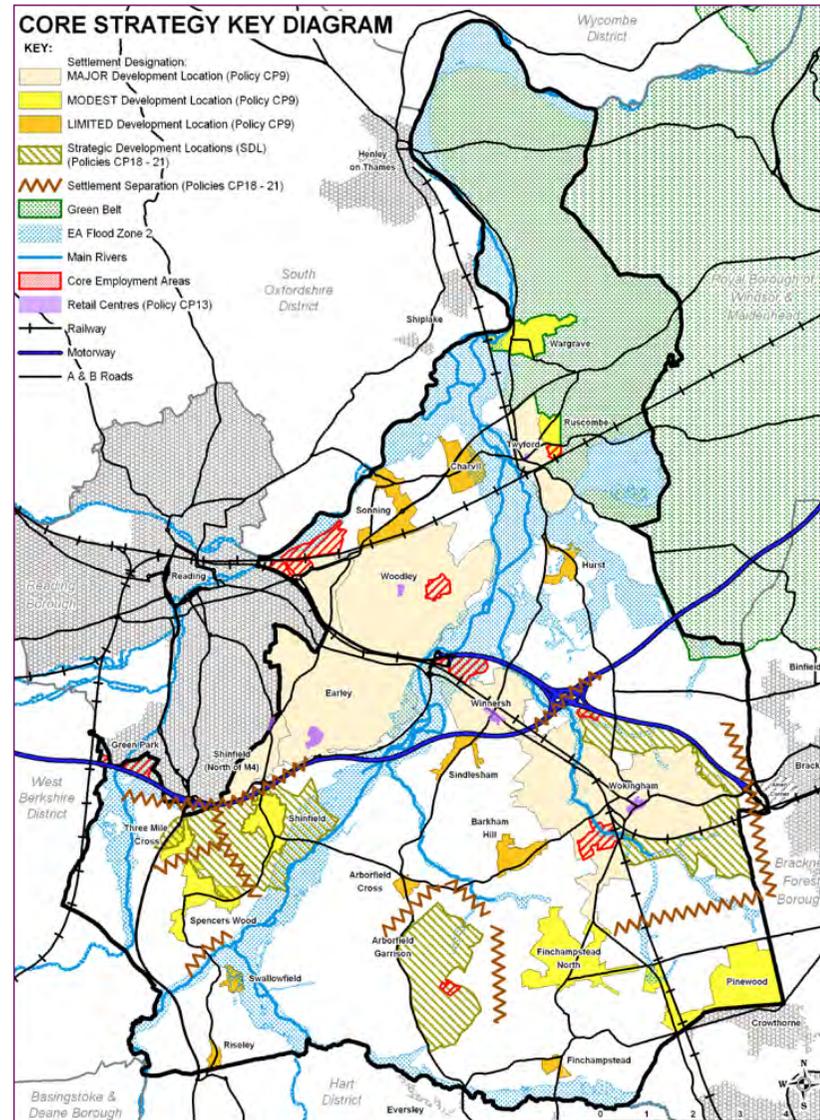


Figure 1.9: Core Strategy Key Diagram

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1.5.5 Village Design Statements

Village Design Statements are prepared directly by local communities, with the support of Parish Councils. They provide a detailed description of the character of a village, carried out in accordance with Countryside Agency guidelines. A number of them have already been adopted by the Council following statutory consultation and are therefore a material consideration in determining planning applications. Others may be adopted in future.

1.5.6 Supporting documents

The design guidance in this SPD is supported by a number of other documents in Appendix A2. These form the evidence base for new topics and in some cases also provide technical design guidance. They include:

- The Space Standard of New Homes in Wokingham Borough, prepared by Housing Vision with Tibbalds; and
- Parking Standards Study Report, an evidence base and technical document, prepared by WSP for the Council.

The Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment has informed this guide. In addition, the Council is preparing a further technical document, 'Wokingham's Living Streets. Street Design Guide' which will provide companion technical advice for those involved in street design.

Appendix A4 provides a list of references.

The Village Design Statements currently adopted by Wokingham Council are as follows:

- Barkham Village Design Statement
- Crowthorne Village Design Statement
- A Design for Hurst
- A Vision for Our Villages: Ryeish Green, Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross
- Riseley Village Design Statement
- Ruscombe Village Design Statement
- Shinfield School Green Village Character Statement
- Sonning Parish Design Statement
- Swallowfield Village Design Statement
- Wargrave Parish Design Statement
- Woodley Design Statement

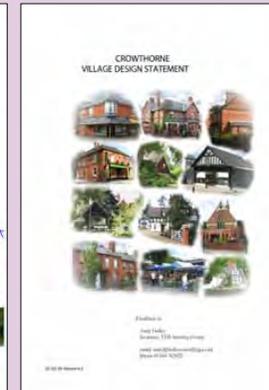
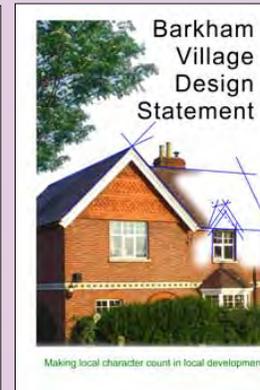
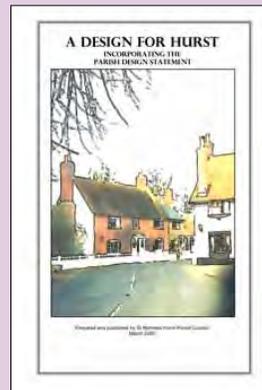


Figure 1.10: Village Design Statements provide more in-depth guidance for particular settlements

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General Principles

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2 General principles

2.1 Scope of guidance

This guide provides general design guidance for all development sites and detailed design guidance for certain topics, these being residential, streets and spaces, car parking and non-residential development issues. It is generally assumed that detailed scheme proposals will be prepared, rather than a masterplan.

This guide provides topic-based design guidance for residential development; streets and spaces; parking; non-residential development (including shopfronts); and rural development.

The Core Strategy makes it clear that good design (as defined in Section 1.4) is important for all development proposals, regardless of the proposed use, scale of development or location.

A number of key urban design objectives, or principles, can be identified from the Core Strategy spatial objectives, vision and strategy and strategic policies, as follows:

Context and character

- Responding positively to the existing context (CP3);
- Retaining or enhancing the high quality of the built and natural environment, including its historic character (CP1, CP14);
- Responding appropriately to the existing character and identity of the area (CP3, CP11); and
- Relating well to neighbours (CP3);

Connection and accessibility

- Providing facilities to promote all modes of transport, including in particular walking, cycling and public transport (CP1, CP6); and
- Reducing the need to travel, through the location of development to promote integration and accessibility (CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6);

Sustainable communities

- Providing functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes that will stand the test of time (CP1, CP2, CP3);
- Ensuring a high quality design of development proposals (CP3);
- Contributing to sense of place (CP3); and
- Meeting the needs of users without a negative impact on others (CP3);

Sustainable development

- Making the most of the site's potential, minimising and/or mitigating environmental impacts (CP1);
- Contributing to the goal of reaching zero carbon development (CP1);
- Using the full potential of the site and contributing to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses (CP3);
- Minimising risks of flooding (CP1); and
- Maintaining or enhance biodiversity (CP3, CP7);

Inclusive design process

- Involving interested groups and communities in the delivery of development.

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Figure 2.1: New development should respond positively to the existing context as here at Ingress Park, Greenhithe



Figure 2.2: New development should promote walking and cycling as here at the Watercolour development in Surrey

2 General principles

2.2 Context and character

To retain the quality of a local environment, it is essential that development proposals are designed to respond positively to their context.

New development should relate well to its surroundings. It should not ignore the existing environment but should respond to it, where possible enhancing it, exploiting site features and incorporating them into the proposals.

G1: Development must respond positively to its site and local context, including;

- Topography and orientation of the site;
- Existing natural and landscape features of value, including the countryside, the Green Belt, mature trees, hedges and field patterns, ponds, rivers and wetlands etc;
- Heritage assets and their settings, for instance archaeological features, listed buildings, historic parks and gardens and conservation areas;
- The local settlement pattern and network of routes; and
- Neighbouring properties.

Section 3A.2.3 in Design Process outlines the issues that may be relevant to an appraisal of the context.

The majority of new development in the borough will be sited in or close to existing residential character areas in established settlements. The Core Strategy emphasises that it is important for proposals to reflect some of the positive characteristics of the locality and to grasp any opportunity to improve the character and quality of the area.

G2: Development must create a sense of place that responds positively to the character of the local area in terms of urban design, architecture, landscape and public realm qualities.

Section 3B: Local Character identifies a number of different character areas that can be found in Wokingham Borough and summarises their characteristic features. It is a starting point for identifying the local character of an area, although, for each site, it is also essential to assess the character of its context.

2.3 Connection and accessibility

The Core Strategy (CP6) aims to manage travel demand by encouraging walking, cycling and public transport provision, wherever appropriate, both within a site and between a site and the surrounding area, in particular to local destinations. A network of streets creates a robust and flexible movement network with good connections and simple and direct routes for all to use.

G3: Development proposals should where possible create, or add to, a connected network for movement that is easy to navigate, safe and comfortable to use, for all modes of transport. In particular, design should promote walking and cycling, and public transport access.

The physical relationship between residential areas, facilities and services, open spaces and employment and their accessibility to one another, influence the need to travel.

More →



Figure 2.3: Development should create attractive, convenient and accessible pedestrian connections which are well integrated into public spaces and streets, Newhall, Harlow



Figure 2.4: Development should create a sense of place through a combination of good quality architecture, urban design, landscape and public realm as here at Bishops Walk, Ely

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Section 2 General Principles

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- 2.2 Context and character
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- 2.4 Vibrant communities
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- 2.6 Inclusive process

Cross references

- 3A.2.3 Appraisal of the context
- 3B Local character

2 General principles

G4: Development proposals should connect places together, in particular providing safe pedestrian and cycle links between residential areas, community facilities and services, open spaces and local employment opportunities.

2.4 Vibrant communities

The Core Strategy requires development to contribute towards creating more sustainable and inclusive communities to meet long-term needs. Built development and the public realm should be designed to work well, so that people want to use them now, and to be capable of being adapted for continued use in the future. This means safe and secure environments that are accessible to all.

G5: Development proposals must be designed to create a sense of place, with an attractive, safe, public realm that is accessible to all.

G6: Development proposals must be designed to provide high quality, functional, accessible, secure and adaptable buildings for their users.

G7: Development proposals should incorporate a mix of uses that are compatible with one another, so that they contribute towards the vitality of places, in particular to centres.

2.5 Environmental sustainability

The Core Strategy promotes sustainable development requiring proposals to be well adapted to their environments.

This means responding to environmental issues on and around a site, such as biodiversity, to avoid harm and where possible enhance the quality of environment.

G8: Development proposals should minimise their environmental impact and, where mitigation is necessary, this should be designed into proposals as a positive feature, wherever possible.

Environmental issues, such as conserving energy and water, avoiding flood risk and adopting sustainable forms of drainage, can play a key role in addressing future climate change.

G9: The layout and design of development proposals should contribute towards climate change mitigation, in particular by minimising energy and water consumption.

2.6 Inclusive process

The Council is committed to promoting inclusivity. One of the Core Strategy's sustainability objectives is to involve local people and interest groups in determining the future pattern of development in the Borough. Design & Access Statements are also required to demonstrate community and professional involvement. The Council's Statement of Community Involvement sets out the minimum requirements for applicants in terms of pre-application consultation, relative to the type and scale of the development proposal.

G10: In formulating development proposals, applicants and their teams should engage with neighbours, the wider local community and other stakeholders and should respond to issues raised through this process.



Figure 2.5: New development should add to the vibrant character of existing settlements, Wokingham Town Centre



Figure 2.6: Good design is an inclusive process involving key stakeholders from the early stages of a project

Section 2 General Principles

- 2.1 Scope of guidance
- 2.2 Context and character
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Design Process

Section 3A

Main contents

Section 3A Design Process

3A.1 Introduction

3A.2 Design process stages

3A.3 Design and Access
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3A Design Process

3A.1 Introduction

A number of key stages of work contribute to the preparation of high quality development proposals, as shown in figure 3A.1. These are known as the design process.

The design process contributes to the quality of the development proposals but also to how effectively they are communicated to planning officers, Council Members and the wider community, and the degree of support or opposition that may be generated in response to planning applications.

The requirement for Design & Access Statements to accompany planning applications is intended to demonstrate that a high quality and inclusive design process has been followed.

3A.2 Design process stages

The stages of the design process are essentially similar for projects of all sizes. The following text explains in more detail some of the key elements that influence the design process and help make sure that proposals are high quality.

Larger-scale projects will need to consider a wider range of issues throughout the design process.

Projects that may be built out by a number of different developers, or in phases, are likely to require a masterplan, which is not covered here. Refer to the CABA publication 'Creating Successful Masterplans; A Guide for Clients'.

Larger-scale or complex projects are also likely to require a professional planning advisor as part of the applicant's team.

3A.2.1 Selection of design team

The design team will need to include someone with design expertise, that is an architect (or in the case of the design of the public realm, a landscape architect or urban designer) with appropriate skills and experience, who already has or will develop an understanding of the local context as part of the project.

For all projects of any size, the design team should also include someone with expertise in sustainability, to advise on energy and carbon emission reduction strategies and to carry out pre-application sustainability assessments. For larger projects, the team will need to include a full range of skills, for instance transport specialists.

3A.2.2 The brief

Design quality will be heavily influenced by the aspirations and expectations of the client. For a scheme to receive planning permission, it must also take into account the quality expectations of the local planning authority as reflected in planning policies and design guidance such as this document. For the Council's pre-application advisory service, see the Council's website.

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- Selection of Design Team.
- The Brief.
- Appraisal of the Context.
- Sustainable Approach.
- Design Concept/ Options.
- Engagement and Consultation.
- Planning applications/ approvals.
- Implementation.

Figure 3A.1: The design process

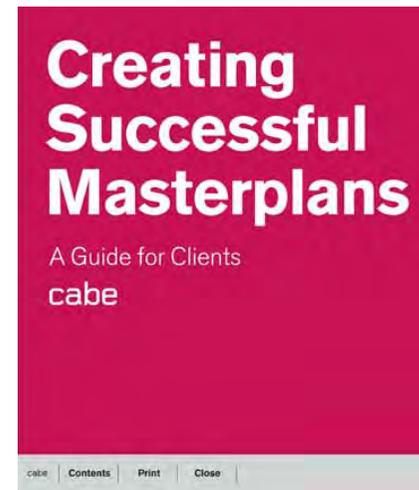


Figure 3A.2: CABA has produced a guide to help clients commission masterplans, available on the CABA archive website

3A Design Process

Responsibility for developing and refining the client's initial brief usually lies with the design team although everyone involved in the project needs to be aware of it. Good design should be embedded at all levels of the project from inception to completion.

3A.2.3 Appraisal of the context

Understanding the place and local circumstances is a vital step towards an appropriate design concept. Design & Access Statements should demonstrate the suitability of the design approach relative to the context, so this step is very important.

In the case of heritage assets, a thorough understanding of their significance should also be demonstrated.

The contents of a brief should include:

- The site;
- The purpose and aims of the proposed development;
- The type of development, size and capacity, use and range of functions it should accommodate;
- The quality and image of the development, eg is it a flagship headquarters building for the client or a back office?
- Targets for environmental performance, such as Code for Sustainable Homes level, Building for Life standard and Lifetime Homes criteria; and
- Budget and timescale.

Figure 3A.3: Suggested minimum content for a brief

For a small site, this must include, as a minimum: the characteristics of the site itself, its surroundings, opportunities to promote sustainability, and any relevant planning policy.

It is also important to consider whether there are other relevant factors that should influence a particular project, as set out in figure 3A.3.

3A.2.4 Sustainable approach

It is vital that design teams consider Sustainability from the early stages of a project, together with the Appraisal of the Context, as there are many overlaps between the two tasks.

The design should demonstrate:

- Mitigation: How it reduces the development's impact on the environment.
- Adaptation: How it will cope with future climate change, as well as changes to the social, economic and physical surroundings, and in the needs and expectations of occupants.

The following shifts in weather are predicted for the UK:

- Hotter drier summers;
- Wetter warmer winters; and
- More intense weather events (rain storms; high winds; extended dry periods or cold spells – snow and ice).

Some issues may have a particular influence on the design approach for a site, including energy/ CO2 emissions; surface water run-off; and ecology.

More →

- Strategic role and function of the site.
- Settlement pattern.
- Movement pattern, including all modes of transport.
- Townscape character.
- Landscape character, including open spaces.
- Built and natural heritage.
- Mix of uses, including community facilities.
- Accessibility to facilities, services and public transport.
- Housing need and/ or market assessment.
- Site features, characteristics and conditions:
 - Topography.
 - Buildings and structures.
 - Landscape, including trees, hedgerows, ponds, allotments etc.
 - Views.
 - Ecology, including wildlife corridors.
 - Ground conditions.
 - Heritage, including archaeology.
 - Access.
 - Flood risk and drainage.
 - Pollution, including contamination.
 - Utilities.
 - Microclimate.
 - Daylight/ sunlight.

Figure 3A.4: Issues that may be relevant to a context appraisal

3A Design Process

A sustainable approach also includes sustainable construction, and helping to encourage more sustainable lifestyles, eg by promoting walking, cycling and public transport.

Refer also to the Sustainable Design & Construction SPD, which includes a sustainability checklist, on the Council's website.

All proposals except for household extensions will need to be accompanied by a sustainability statement (at its simplest, a Code for Sustainable Homes pre-assessment) and an energy statement. Other information may also be required to demonstrate that a sustainable approach to development is proposed.

3A.2.5 Design concept/ options

It is important to have a strong design concept that underpins the proposals. This design concept must be appropriate to the circumstances, including the policy framework, the local context and the client requirements.

There are always alternative approaches to developing a site and some of these should be considered before proposals are formulated.

The preferred approach can be identified and refined as the design is developed in more detail to form a planning application. It is important to make sure that the planning application reflects what is intended to be built.

3A.2.6 Engagement and consultation

This is likely to take place at more than one stage of a project.

For projects of any size, it should include consulting with planning officers, and other technical discussions. The Council offers a pre-application service at two levels:

- Option 1: Advice as to the acceptability in principle of a development proposal; and
- Option 2: Detailed pre-application advice.

See the Council's website for further details.

Street spaces in particular need to be actively designed in collaboration with the highways authority and a number of different agencies. Refer also to Section 5.2: The network of streets and spaces.

Most projects will need to include consultations with interested local people to find out what they feel is important, or how the proposals could help to improve the area.

Initial consultation should take place at the stage when there is an initial appraisal and some conclusions have been drawn, so that these can form the basis of discussion.

Where appropriate, it is advisable to refer the scheme for review by the Berkshire Design Panel, early in the design process, based upon an initial set of proposals.

Once final design proposals have been formulated, it is also advisable to hold a pre-application consultation, both with planning officers and with the wider community.

More →



Figure 3A.5: Consultation with interested local people at the initial stages of a project

- Technical feasibility;
- Economic viability, including value as well as cost criteria;
- Sustainability;
- How well it reflects the design concept and results of the initial stages of work;
- The views of planning officers and the wider community;
- Independent review from a source such as the Berkshire Design Panel; and
- For residential developments the Building for Life criteria, which provide a useful tool for review and discussion.

Figure 3A.6: Factors relevant to selection of preferred approach

3A Design Process

The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the minimum requirements for pre-application consultation depending upon the scale of a development proposal.

3A.2.7 Planning applications/ approvals

The information required for a planning application will vary depending upon whether it is proposed to be in outline or in detail. It should be discussed with planning officers well in advance of submitting the application. See the Council's website for details of the Council's pre-application service.

In almost all cases a Design & Access Statement is required to support and to explain the proposals. See Section 3A.3 below.

For outline planning applications, the Council will require illustrative material to demonstrate that a high quality of design can be achieved in line with the application. As a minimum, this should include an illustrative layout and elevations or street scenes, accurately drawn to scale.

Sufficient information must be provided to allow planning officers, Council Members and the local community to assess the proposals. This should include information on materials and colours.

Planning applications will also need to be supported by evidence that demonstrates how development proposals meet the policy requirements for sustainable development.

Planning conditions may require more detailed information, on materials, colours, details and landscape, to be approved following the grant of planning permission.

3A.2.8 Implementation

The planning approval will set the quality of a scheme in terms of the building form, composition of elevations, material and external landscape.

- However, many design decisions are taken as the proposals are optimised, and even during construction. During this time the design quality of the building or site can easily be eroded if insufficient care is taken.

Developments must be built in accordance with the planning permission, any legal agreements and matters approved under planning conditions.

It is advisable to refer intended design changes to the Council to ensure conformity with the planning permission and relevant conditions so as to reduce the risk of enforcement.

3A.3 Design & Access Statements

Design & Access Statements are required for most development proposals (Guidance on Information Requirements and Validation, Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2012) to explain and support applications for planning permission and listed building consent. A good statement will:

- Be concise;
- Be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the proposal;
- Specific to the application;
- Outline clearly the factors shaping the design; and
- Include accurate and informative illustrations to explain the scheme.

The statement should set out how the scheme has evolved from an analysis of the site and its context, through to the final scheme. It should explain all elements of a proposal and justify either how it fits into the local context, or creates its own character. It should also cover issues of access and inclusive design.

More →



Figure 3A.7: CABE has produced a guide to help with the production of Design and Access Statements, available on the CABE archive website

3A Design Process

In effect, it should form an integral part of the design process, used by the design team to help record the decisions that inform the evolving proposals.

The intention of a Design & Access Statement is not to describe the existing situation or the proposal in great detail. Rather it is to explain and justify the proposal and to identify the benefits it will bring.

Design & Access Statements should include diagrams, plans and photographs that explain an analysis of the site, the over-arching development principles and design concept. These should be accompanied by a simple written commentary.

The statement should set out how consultation was undertaken (for instance meeting with the planning officers, local neighbours and/or public consultation exercises) and how it influenced the design.

Applicants should also demonstrate how they have used this design guide and how it has informed their approach.

Introduction

Appraisal of context

Concept and Options (if appropriate)

The proposal

- **Use:** How the mix of uses fits into the area;
- **Density:** The density of development and why this is appropriate;
- **Layout:** How the layout relates to the surroundings, including how buildings and spaces in and around the site relate to one another;
- **Scale, bulk & massing:** The size of buildings and spaces throughout the site, how they relate to their surroundings and, in particular, adjacent buildings;
- **Landscape/ amenity space:** How the treatments and planting schemes reflect the intended function of the spaces and contribution to sustainability aims; and
- **Appearance:** This illustrates the scheme and how its appearance fits with other aims (eg if the intention is to create a landmark, its appearance, scale and use should reflect this).

Access and movement:

- This should include all modes of transport and access for all, explaining:
- Access and movement in the local area, including links between site and surroundings;
- Movement to and through the site, and the hierarchy of routes for different users (including emergency vehicles, servicing and refuse);
- How walking and cycling will be encouraged;
- The relationship between the internal layout and external spaces, eg entrances; and
- How inclusive access will be achieved across the site, including any consultation.

Sustainability (for larger developments, separate technical documents will also be needed)

- Set out key sustainability principles including:
 - Energy strategy, eg minimising demand, efficiency of supply, the use of renewables and relationship to current Building Regulation requirements;
 - Water resources, including minimising potable water consumption and surface water management (drainage);
 - Strategy to minimise waste, including recycling; and
 - Maintenance and management arrangements.

Figure 3A.8 Suggested contents for Design and Access Statements

3A Design Process

3A.4 Design checklist

This design checklist relates to all forms of development, although for residential development proposals, please refer to Section 4.13 Residential design checklist for a more specific checklist of relevant issues.

1. Do the proposals respond positively to their site and the local context, including topography and orientation, existing natural and landscape features, heritage assets and their settings, the local settlement pattern and route network and neighbouring properties? Is there an appraisal of the site in its context that demonstrates the applicant's understanding and shows how the proposals respond appropriately?
2. Do the proposals create a sense of place that contributes positively and appropriately towards local character in terms of urban design, architecture, landscape and public realm qualities? Is there an assessment of local character that demonstrates the applicant's understanding and shows how the proposals retain or enhance it?
3. Do the proposals create or add to a connected network for movement that is easy to navigate and comfortable to use, for all modes of transport, particularly promoting walking and cycling, and public transport where possible?
4. Where new streets are proposed, have they been designed through a collaborative process, to contribute to both 'link' and 'place' functions appropriately, with responsibility for their long term management and maintenance identified?
5. Where public spaces are proposed, is their role and function clearly defined and appropriate?
6. Does the scheme meet technical requirements for road layout without these becoming dominant in the design?
7. Do the proposals connect places together, in particular providing pedestrian and cycle links between residential areas, community facilities and services open spaces and local employment?
8. Do the proposals create an attractive and safe public realm that is accessible to all?
9. Are parking and servicing areas appropriate in size and location, laid out and designed satisfactorily for their users, and with a positive character, so that they create a high quality setting for development, while minimising any impact on the safety of the public realm?
10. Do the proposals provide high quality, functional, accessible, secure and adaptable buildings and environments for their users?
11. Is the building's height, bulk and massing, and roof form, designed to relate well to the local context?
12. Is the approach to materials and details one of high quality, good design, simplicity and appropriateness to context?
13. Particularly in centres, do the proposals incorporate a mix of uses, arranged either vertically or horizontally in an appropriate manner, which are compatible with one another so that they contribute towards local vitality?
14. Does the design of the proposals minimise their environmental impact and, where necessary, design in mitigation as a positive feature of the scheme?
15. Do the layout and design of the proposals contribute towards climate change mitigation, in particular by minimising energy and water consumption?
16. Have neighbours, the local community and other stakeholders been engaged with the process of preparing the proposals and does the scheme respond to the issues raised?
17. For larger-scale developments that will be built over time or by a number of developers, is there a masterplan to coordinate the implementation of the overall proposals?



Local Character

Section 3B

Main contents

Section 3B
Local Character

3B.1 Introduction

3B.2 Settlements

3B.3 Countryside



3B Local Character

3B.1 Introduction

There is a wide variety of environments in the borough, both in the settlements and the countryside, many of which are highly attractive places to live and work. Some areas have a strong, locally distinctive character that is unique to a specific place.

The following pages illustrate some of the broad brush character types found in the Borough. None of the locations shown are uniformly of one character.

These character types provide an introduction to the character of Wokingham Borough. However, each applicant should make their own assessment of local character at a detailed level for any potential development site.

In simple terms, Wokingham Borough can be categorised as follows (see figure 3B.1):

- Defined settlements, that is places with defined development limits as set out in the Core Strategy;
- Countryside, largely unbuilt, which falls into two policy designations: Countryside and Green Belt; and
- Strategic Development Locations (SDLs), currently unbuilt, but identified in the Core Strategy for major development.

Refer also to the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment, on the Council's website.

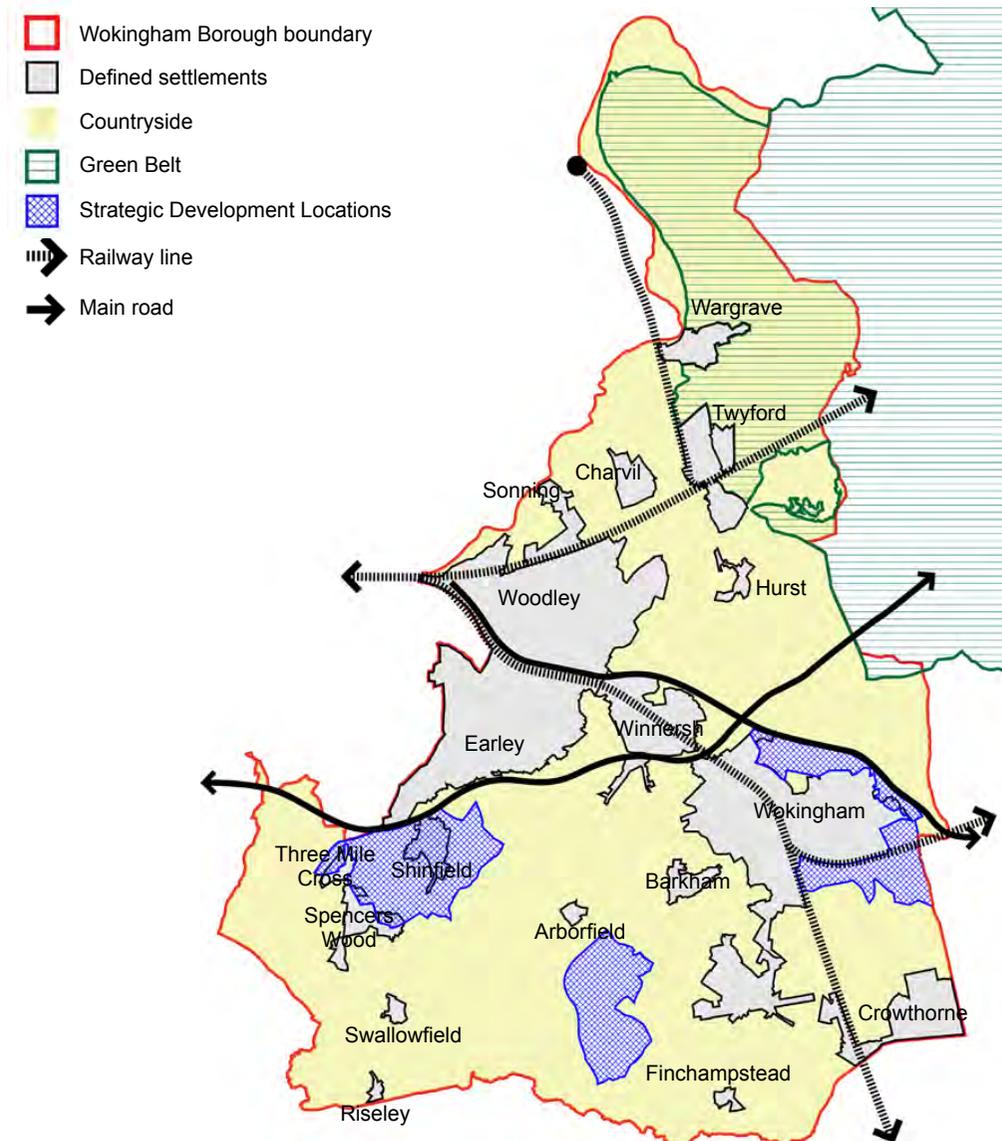


Figure 3B.1: Development categories in Wokingham Borough

Section 3B Local Character

3B.1 Introduction

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3B Local Character

3B.2 Settlements

Wokingham, Winnersh, Earley and Woodley form a substantial band of settlement, located across the centre of the borough. Other settlements, such as Finchampstead and Twyford, lie to the north and south and there are also a number of smaller villages scattered throughout the borough.

The settlement boundaries shown here are indicative and are based on the Core Strategy diagram. For a more detailed definition of settlement boundaries, refer to the forthcoming MDD Local Plan.

Within the settlements there are a number of different character types that can be identified at a Borough-wide level. These are:

- Urban centre;
- Enclosed village;
- Loose village;
- Ex-woodland (forest);
- Formal suburban;
- Informal suburban.

The typical characteristics of each of these types are outlined in the remainder of this section.

Detailed character assessments have been prepared for a number of settlements and can be found in documents such as:

- Wokingham Town Centre SPD;
- Conservation Area Appraisals; and
- Village Design Statements.

More →

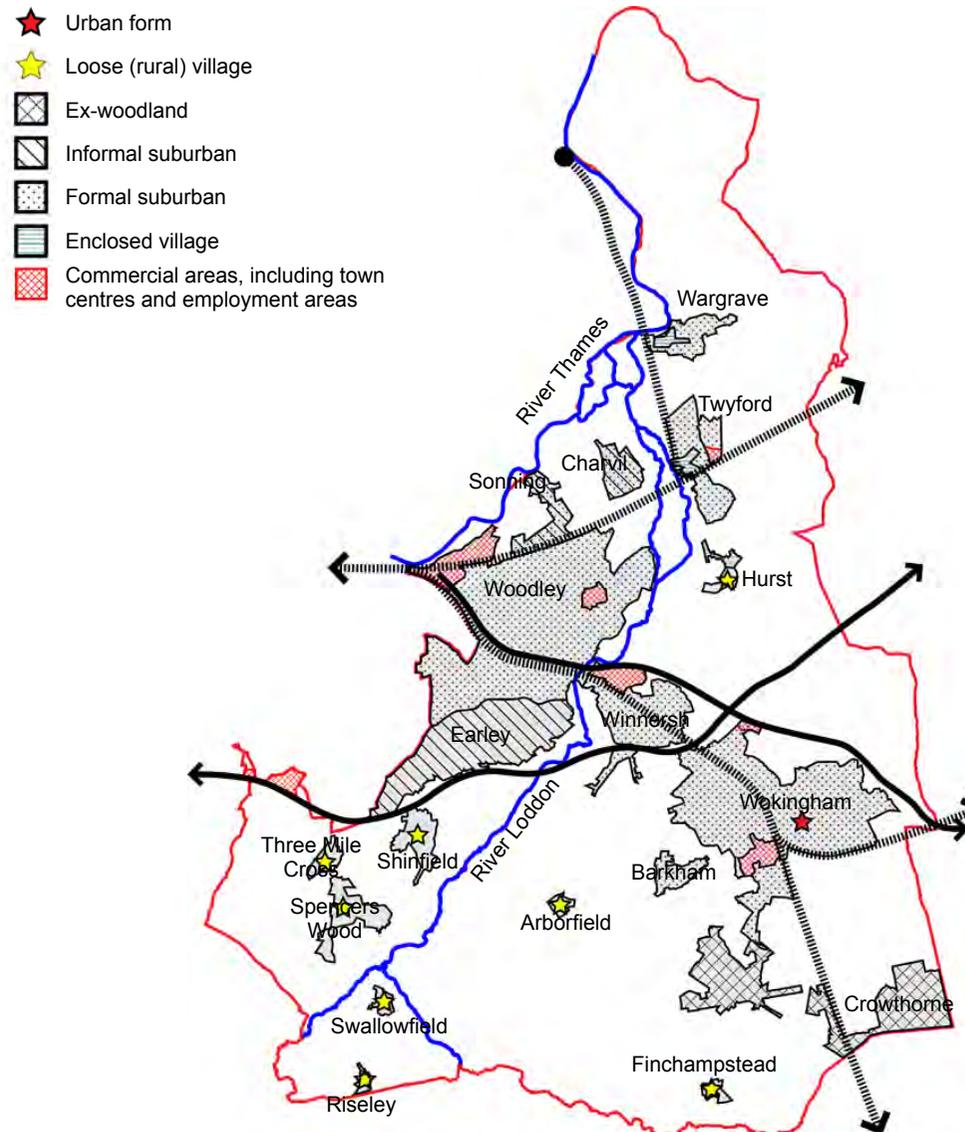


Figure 3B.2: High-level characterisation diagram indicating the different character types in settlements

Section 3B Local Character

3B.1 Introduction

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3B Local Character

3B.2.1 Urban centre

This character type applies to Wokingham Town Centre. Its characteristics are:

- Historic core;
- Buildings adjoin one another, giving a 'walled' sense of enclosure to the streets;
- Tightly defined junctions;
- Buildings are set at the back edge of pavement;
- Building heights are a mix, generally of 2 and 3 storeys (with some basements), with heights decreasing towards the edge of the centre and residential streets being predominately 2 storey;
- Eaves heights and roof forms vary, although eaves parallel to the street or parapets predominate;
- In the central area, buildings generally form groups or terraces, rather than being a collection of individual buildings;
- Fine grain of development plots, which are deeper than they are wide; and
- Parking generally in car parks or at rear of plots, accessed from rear.

Further detail on the character of the town centre can be found in the Wokingham Town Centre SPD (Townscape Appraisal).

The quality of this area has been recognised by the designation of the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area.



Figure 3B.3: Wokingham Town Centre has an urban centre character; buildings adjoin each other and tightly define the street pattern



Figure 3B.4: The figure ground of Wokingham Town Centre demonstrates how the built form gives the streets a tightly defined and enclosed character

Immediately beyond the historic core, generally for the historic pattern of development:

- Buildings are generally grouped or in terraces, rather than being detached;
- Buildings and boundary walls, interspersed with landscape boundary treatments, define and enclose the streets;
- Building groups are set back a consistent distance from the pavement, but this may vary between different groups, with some at back of pavement and others with front gardens; and
- Building heights are generally 2 storeys, or 3 storeys with the top floor in the roof.

More →



Figure 3B.5: Immediately beyond the historic core in Wokingham buildings tend to be grouped or in terraces rather than detached

3B Local Character

3B.2.2 Enclosed village

These are villages with an established, enclosed core. The edges of these settlements often have a looser development form, sometimes comprising other character areas, such as 'Loose village', 'Formal suburban' or 'Informal suburban'.

The central areas of Wargrave, Twyford and Sonning are typical examples. The quality of all three of these areas has been recognised by the designation of Conservation Areas.

Common characteristics of this character type include, in the historic core:

- Buildings adjoin one another, giving a 'walled', sense of enclosure to the streets;
- Tightly defined junctions;
- Buildings are generally grouped or in terraces, rather than being a collection of individual buildings;
- Buildings are set at the back edge of pavements;
- Building heights are mainly 2 to 2.5 storeys, with some 3 storey buildings, with varied eaves heights;
- The pattern of roof forms varies according to each settlement, for instance with a predominance of gables in Wargrave, but roof pitches predominately parallel to the road in Twyford;
- Concealed parking or on-street parking; and
- Fine grain of development plots, which are deeper than they are wide.

More →



Figure 3B.6: The figure ground demonstrates that villages often have a tighter historic core with subsequent development having characteristics of other character areas as here at Twyford



Figure 3B.7: The historic core in Wargrave feels like the 'heart' of the settlement and gives a sense of arrival



Figure 3B.8: A continuous frontage with the building line set at the back edge of the pavement in the centre of Twyford



Figure 3B.9: The historic core in Twyford gives a 'walled' sense of enclosure to the street

3B Local Character

3B.2.3 Loose village

The character of these villages is defined by a dominance of landscape. They are generally more spacious, with streets being less enclosed than in the above character areas. Landscape and the rural hinterland penetrate into the village with trees and vegetation between buildings and along boundaries. These villages generally consist of housing areas that have been built at various times, with the landscape creating a consistency in character.

Typical examples of villages including this character are Spencers Wood, Shinfield, Three Mile Cross, Risely, Hurst and Finchampstead village.

Common characteristics include:

- Typically developed over time from a scattered settlement pattern, often with a variety of development character throughout the settlements;
- Buildings are loosely arranged and tend to be detached;
- Generally few established building lines;
- Some buildings are set back from the highway and some are set close to it; and
- Planting tends to dominate the front gardens and boundary treatments.

More →



Figure 3B.10: Buildings vary in architectural style with landscape being a feature that ties the villages together as here in Spencers Wood



Figure 3B.11: Buildings are loosely arranged and of a variety of character in Spencers Wood



Figure 3B.12: The figure ground indicates that development is predominantly detached and more scattered than in other character areas



Figure 3B.13: Roofs are often the dominant features of houses as here in Hurst

3B Local Character

3B.2.4 Ex-woodland (forest)

This character typology is characterised by the remnant forest. Historically, these areas were covered in forests and mature trees remain as dominant features in the area. This character area is found in the south east of the Borough and corresponds with the forested landscape character identified in the Landscape Character Assessment.

Pinewood and parts of California are typical examples of this character type.

Common characteristics include:

- Typified as former forests and woodland that have become populated by detached and semi-detached housing, with significant tree cover being retained;
- Development is generally set well back from the street often with any building line not being apparent from the street;
- Tree planting is on-street, along the front and side boundaries of plots and in rear garden areas;
- Landscape generally dominates the street scene, with room between buildings for the woodland character to penetrate amongst the development; and
- Buildings generally vary and most are individually designed.

More →



Figure 3B.14: The street scene typically includes substantial trees in the public realm, some on-street and others in plots as here at Pinewood



Figure 3B.15: Landscape, in the form of substantial trees and wooded areas, remains the dominant feature of this character area as at Finchampstead



Figure 3B.16: Houses are generally set back from the road and semi-detached or detached as here at Finchampstead



Figure 3B.17: Hedgerows, shrubs and trees are a characteristic of front boundaries in Finchampstead

3B Local Character

3B.2.5 Formal suburban

Formal suburban development was generally built between the 1920s and 1950s. Typically, these areas have a homogenous feel to them, with house types and architecture being of a single era and in a consistent style. Woodley and some development towards the edges of Wokingham are typical examples.

Common characteristics include:

- Wide principal streets, either straight or gently curved;
- Streets mainly connected with limited use of culs-de-sac;
- Detached and semi-detached housing fronts onto streets with generally consistent building lines, regular gaps between buildings and a formal pattern;
- Front gardens are generally enclosed; and
- In some examples, large front gardens that accommodate driveways and parking.

More →



Figure 3B.18: Formal suburban streets are fairly wide and either gently curved or straight. The streets are mainly connected with few culs-de sac as here at Woodley



Figure 3B.19: Housing in formal suburbia is generally detached or semi-detached with enclosed front gardens as at Woodley



Figure 3B.20: Formal suburban street in Wokingham



Figure 3B.21: Wide streets with verges and consistent building lines create a formal suburban layout

3B Local Character

3B.2.6 Informal suburban

Generally these areas have been built in the last 30 years by volume house builders. They have a homogenous feel to them and have mainly been designed around culs-de-sac. The southern part of Earley, Woosehill and Upper Wargrave are typical examples.

Common characteristics include:

- Curved culs-de-sac, designed for movement by car, with relatively poor pedestrian connectivity, often segregated from streets;
- 2 storey detached or semi-detached houses;
- Small clusters of houses, informally arranged around short culs-de-sac;
- Houses generally facing inwards towards the cluster rather than fronting a street; and
- Building lines are varied and front gardens are often open, with no boundary treatment.



Figure 3B.22: Informal suburban development is typified by curved culs de sac roads designed for the car as here at Earley



Figure 3B.23: Houses in informal suburbia are detached or semi-detached and grouped in small clusters around shared culs de sac as here in the more suburban areas of Twyford



Figure 3B.24: Clusters of houses that look inwards towards each other rather than defining a street in Woosehill



Figure 3B.25: Curved streets and an informal and varied building line in Earley

3B Local Character

3B.3 Countryside

The largely unbuilt area between settlement boundaries, the countryside, is varied in its landscape character and quality. In the north of the Borough the area is also covered by the Green Belt policy designation. The areas of highest landscape quality are:

- the river landscapes surrounding the River Thames and Loddon;
- parts of the chalk landscape in the north of the borough; and
- much of the area of sand and gravel landscapes around Finchampstead and Farley Hill.

In broad terms, the key landscape character types are:

- River landscapes;
- Chalk landscapes;
- Clay landscapes; and
- Sand landscapes.

Their characteristic features are summarised in the sections that follow here.

For more detailed information refer to the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment.

In the countryside, outside the settlement boundaries, development is relatively scarce and is generally characterised by small clusters of dwellings, some mobile home parks, a number of large properties set in large plots and groups of farm buildings.

Design guidance for rural development (that is development in the countryside) is found in Section 8 Rural & Settlement Edge.

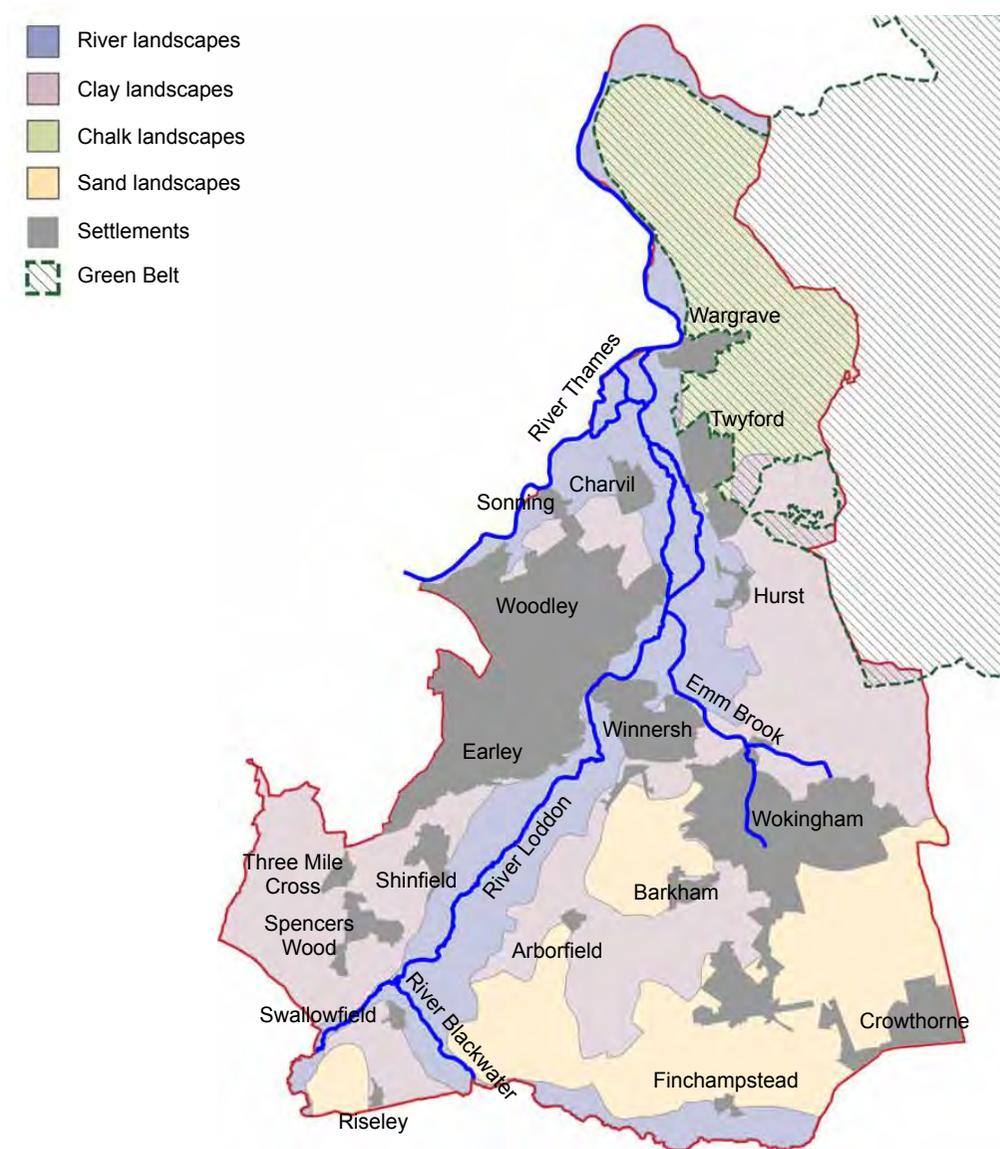


Figure 3B.26: Diagram illustrating the different landscape characters across the Borough

3B Local Character

3B.3.1 River landscapes

River landscapes correspond to the valleys of the Rivers Thames, Blackwater and the Loddon.

This landscape type is distinguished by a flat lowland river terrace floodplain generally supporting arable farmland in a semi-enclosed landscape. Landscape has a wetland character with deciduous woodland areas. In some locations, mineral extraction has had a significant and lasting impact upon the valley landscapes.

Along the Thames, small settlements, both nucleated and linear in form, are clustered along the floodplain edge. Warm red brick and flint are the typical building materials. From the river there are views to prestigious detached properties.

In the Blackwater valley, there is a sparse pattern of scattered farmsteads at the edge of the floodplain. Timber framing, brick and thatch are characteristic materials. There is Victorian and more modern development expanding from villages, some ribbon development along main roads, and some larger pockets of low density housing along the floodplain edge.

Along the Loddon, there is low density scattered settlement dominated by traditional warm red brick buildings and farmsteads with important historic riverside features such as bridges at crossing points, water mills and moated sites.

The Environment Agency has advised that the Emm Brook is a water body which, under the Water Framework Directive, has to achieve Good ecology status. Mitigation measures

are required to compensate for the effects of urbanisation.

3B.3.2 Chalk landscapes

Wooded chalk slopes occupy a disconnected sweeping arc of chalk landscape overlooking the Thames Valley in the north of the Borough. The topography is distinctive, rising steeply on either side of the flat lowland of the Thames River Valley. Winding rural lanes and tracks follow dry valleys. In many places, these are sunken and enclosed by steep banks and hedges. Higher land is open and in arable use and presents far reaching views. This area is largely unsettled.

In the north east of the Borough lies an area dominated by deciduous and mixed woodland on high land, with a strongly articulated landform of rounded hills or knolls. Around the settlements of Hare Hitch and Kiln Green, there are large manor houses and farmsteads of architectural merit (many listed), with Georgian buildings being particularly apparent, mostly in formal parkland settings.

In the north, a large area of gently shelving land supports two key land uses – arable farming and urban settlement. With a lack of tree cover and other enclosing elements the countryside area here is open and expansive.

Settlements, ranging from historic Sonning to modern Charvil, are located on the boundary of the wooded slopes. The settlements have a consistent use of materials – predominantly red brick, flint and black weatherboarding.

Large detached farmsteads, halls and manor houses, are dotted across the landscape, often within an estate parkland setting.

[More →](#)



Figure 3B.27: River landscape - Chalk cliff at Remenham



Figure 3B.28: Chalk landscape - The southern part of Park Place Estate in Remenham

3B Local Character

3B.3.3 Clay landscapes

Clay landscapes cover the majority of the Borough to either side of the Loddon Valley. The landscape is distinguished by a shelving/undulating landform, with two predominant land uses - arable farming and urban settlement.

The major areas of settlement include Wokingham and the areas of Woodley and Earley to the east of Reading.

To the east and west, London Clay dominates smaller areas of lowland vale landscape. This has given rise to a sparsely settled landscape dominated by large-scale arable and pastoral fields with denuded hedgerows, often set within wooded horizons. In these areas settlements comprise manor houses and farmsteads, the former with modern agricultural buildings, the latter typically built with traditional brick, weatherboard and clay tile.

Some of the clay landscapes are characterised by large rural settlements, such as Shinfield and Spencers Wood, giving a 'settled' character to these areas.

3B.3.4 Sand landscapes

Sand landscapes are mainly located in the south-east of the Borough.

Some are distinct pockets of wooded sand and gravel hills, characterised by undulating hills rising from 50m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 80m AOD, which contrast with the surrounding clay lowlands and river terrace. The higher parts of the area are typically wooded, often with coniferous vegetation. It is sparsely settled with small stretches of roadside ribbon development, some new executive style houses and isolated farm buildings.

A larger area is predominately forested with pastoral sandy lowlands. This area is characterised by post-Victorian and modern detached houses that are arranged along or located off long linear rides (the Ex Woodland (Forest) settlements). These are set within a strongly wooded context that includes coniferous plantation, mixed woodlands and mature trees retained within the development.

The landscape also includes some areas of heathland and wetlands and is a popular visitor destination including country parks and numerous footpaths.



Figure 3B.29: Sand landscape - Coniferous woodland in the Gorrick Plantation



Figure 3B.30: Sand landscape - South of Finchampstead across Manor Farm

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4 Residential

4.1 Introduction

Wokingham Borough is an attractive and popular place to live. The area includes urban and suburban neighbourhoods, villages and also some development in the countryside.

It is a key objective of the Core Strategy to retain and enhance the attractiveness of the borough's environment through well designed and inclusive development. The majority of development that takes place in Wokingham Borough is residential, ranging in size from domestic extensions, through to individual houses, infill sites, to larger areas of new housing (often called estates).

The quality of new housing, at all scales, is therefore of particular importance.

Most housing development will take place in the defined SDLs. The remaining housing will generally be developed on allocated sites in, or on the edge of, defined settlements. There may be some exceptions, where extensions or new buildings are proposed in the countryside.

This section provides detailed design guidance for all residential development proposals. However it does not address strategic design or masterplanning issues. For SDL sites, these are also covered by location-specific guidance in the form of adopted Supplementary Planning Documents. Where any site is likely to be developed by a number of developers, or in phases, then a masterplan should be prepared to coordinate development. Refer also to Section 3A: Design Process.

Developers should also refer to other legislative requirements that apply to specific locations or types of development.

4.2 Character and context

R1: Residential development should be designed to contribute positively towards the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area. This may be achieved through blending in with a strongly positive existing character, responding where relevant to the positive elements of its historic context or, where the site is large enough to allow for a distinctive identity to be created, by establishing a new character that relates well to the existing.

The character of a place is created by the design of all the different elements and the degree of consistency or variety, including:

- the network and hierarchy of movement, creating streets;
- the layout of development blocks and plots;
- the arrangement and form of buildings, including the building line and gaps between buildings;
- open spaces;
- the architectural design of buildings;
- the hard and soft landscape design of plots, boundaries, streets and spaces, parking areas; and
- the details, decorative elements, materials and planting.

In different places, these elements contribute in varying degrees to the character. For instance in an urban centre such as Wokingham, the form and arrangement of buildings contributes significantly, whereas in the ex-woodland areas, the landscape plays the most significant role. [More →](#)



Figure 4.1: The existing residential areas have a wide variety of character, ranging from urban terraces in historic cores of towns and enclosed villages such as Twyford (top), through suburban areas such as Finchampstead (middle), to 1960s developments such as Woodley (bottom)

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The character of development proposals may be inspired by historical settlement patterns or architecture. Any proposal in a historical style must be carefully designed to use the correct proportions, and a quality of materials and refinement of detail that is similar to the original.

In many parts of Wokingham Borough the landscape is important to local character, for instance the presence of trees in the 'Ex-woodland areas' such as Finchampstead, or the relationship to watercourses, in areas close to the Thames and Loddon. In other places, the built form is the dominant characteristic, e.g. in enclosed villages such as the centre of Twyford.

Local character may derive mainly from the buildings, their form, design and materials, as at Wargrave, or alternatively from the landscape character, or from the spaces between buildings as much as the buildings themselves, as for instance in Crowthorne.

For instance in parts of the Borough, a 'green backdrop' contributes significantly to local character, created by trees and planting along plot frontages, in gaps between buildings and in rear gardens, so that built development is almost always seen against vegetation. In such locations, a loss of vegetation associated with proposals for development in the rear of plots and access to them may harm the character of the area.

In areas of formal or informal suburbia, there is often a pattern of building groups with gaps between them. In such areas, the gaps between the buildings often help to create a

rhythm for the street, particularly where they occur at regular intervals, and they contribute to local character.

Designers should make sure that development creates a sense of place that is distinctive and memorable and helps to enhance the character of the surrounding area.



Figure 4.2: In Wargrave, buildings with a gable end to the street are a distinctive local characteristic

R2: New housing should respond to its context, in particular taking opportunities presented by the physical characteristics of the site and surroundings, including

- incorporating existing features of value into the proposals, such as existing buildings, structures, landscape, rivers, ponds and wetlands, trees and hedgerows;
- capitalising on the potential offered by the land form and orientation of the site;
- relating well to neighbouring land uses and properties; and
- being designed to minimise and/ or mitigate any potential adverse environmental impacts relating to such issues as ecology, drainage and noise.

New residential development must respond to both natural and man-made features (built and landscape) that contribute to local distinctiveness.

The contextual appraisal should help to identify features that may help to generate a sense of place for the new development. Refer to Section 3A Design Process.

It should also help to identify opportunities for sustainable design, including the potential for integrating environmental technologies or sustainable drainage so that they help to create a sense of place.

For development sites on the edge of settlements see also Section 8 Rural & Settlement Edge.

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4.3 Making connections

R3: New housing should connect into and strengthen the existing network of streets and spaces.

Developments should enhance existing routes and provide direct and attractive links between destinations. Any existing desire lines across a site should be accommodated in the new development wherever possible.

Pedestrian routes within the site should connect safely with places that people want to go to within or beyond the site boundary, in particular, schools, shops, leisure/ sports facilities, open spaces and public transport.

The layout of sites and design of buildings should help people find their way around, supported by signage where necessary on key routes.

Development proposals should make street connections at a scale that is appropriate to local character and the function of the existing network. Opportunities to create connections into/ through neighbouring land should be maintained so that a well-connected network can be created in the event of future development.

R4: New housing must create, or fit into, a clear hierarchy of streets and spaces that helps people to find their way around. Whatever the scale of new development and regardless of whether it is in an urban or rural location, all schemes should be based around new streets, or should relate to existing streets.

At the most local level of the street hierarchy, these streets may effectively be culs-de-sac and may take the form of courtyards or mews spaces. At this level of the street hierarchy, spaces should not simply be designed around the technical requirements for vehicles but must create a sense of place.

Cars must be accommodated in new housing, in terms of both movement and parking, without dominating the layout or street scene but also in a manner to deter car crime.

Guidance on designing to accommodate cars is set out in Section 5 Streets and Spaces and Section 6 Parking.

On primary routes, there may be an opportunity to reinforce the street hierarchy through the form of proposed development. The street hierarchy will consider street functions, traffic volumes and building heights. The hierarchy will have an order and scale that will be further informed and emphasised by appropriate landscape, surface materials, lighting and street furniture.

4.4 Safe Streets and Spaces

R5: There should be a clear distinction between public and private areas in new housing development.

The public fronts of buildings should relate to the network of streets and other routes, and private areas should be at the back of buildings.

Where such an approach is not possible, then designers must demonstrate why their design solution is appropriate and that it achieves a satisfactory public/ private distinction.

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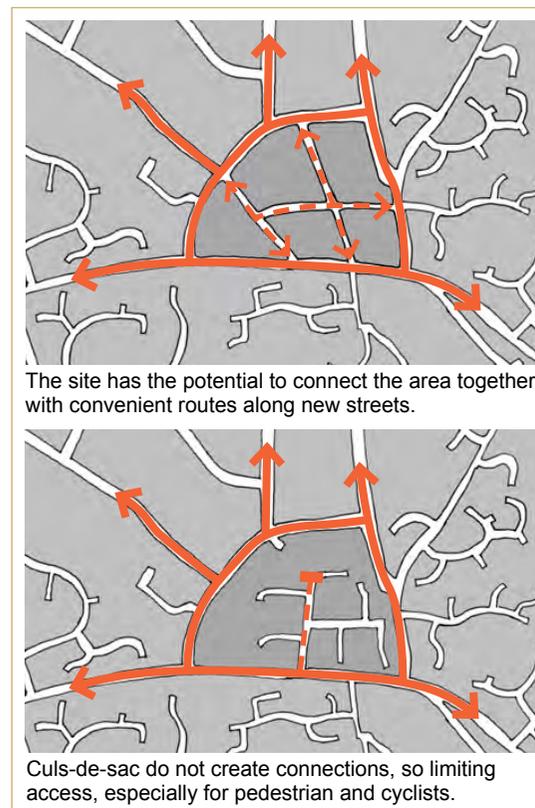


Figure 4.3: Development should strengthen the street network

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Residential development should typically be based on the design principle embodied in perimeter blocks. This arrangement, with clearly separated fronts and backs, is found in traditional forms of development, and has endured well over the years as our lifestyles have changed. It is found in most urban and suburban character areas.

Access and servicing at the rear of dwellings reduces the level of privacy and also potentially the security of properties. For these reasons, rear parking courtyards should be introduced only where other parking solutions cannot be achieved or would erode local character. The security and surveillance of these areas will need careful consideration.

In certain circumstances it may not be possible to design housing in the form of a perimeter block, or there may be some good reason for not doing so in a particular scheme, for instance 'eco-housing' with an emphasis on passive solar measures. In these cases, then it is vital to design the relationships between public and private space with care, with particular emphasis on providing reasonable levels of privacy for residents.

R6: Building frontages should contribute to the safety and attractiveness of the street, by providing natural surveillance from windows that overlook the space, and entrances that generate activity.

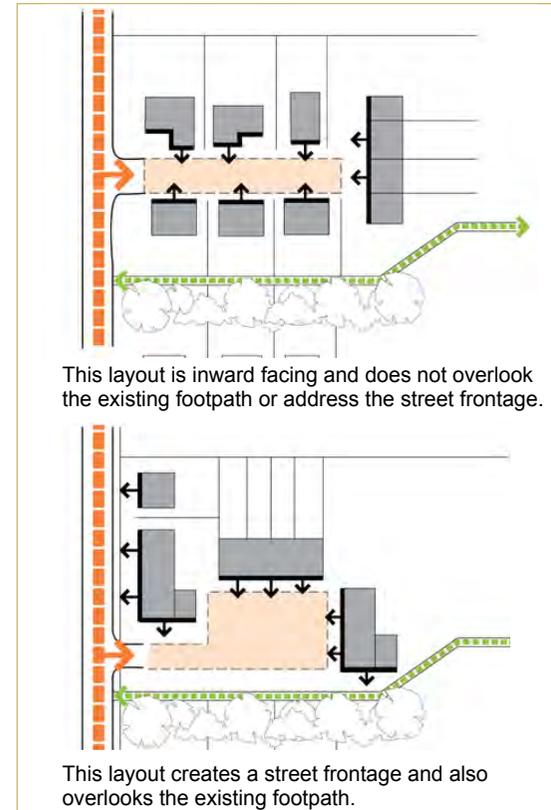
The public facade of a building, including the main entrance and windows to habitable rooms, should be oriented towards the street so as to maximise activity and supervision of the frontage. Blocks of flats should be designed with independent access to all ground floor flats facing onto a public street.

Where there is parking at ground floor level, the loss of natural surveillance can be compensated for in the design of the building, for example by using wide fronted units, which allow for parking and a ground floor window to a living area, or by designing first floor windows to preserve natural surveillance (bay or over-sized windows).

Where vegetation is an important characteristic of an area, boundary planting should be retained and enhanced, or introduced as appropriate, although surveillance of the street should be maintained or provided where possible.



Figure 4.4: Wide fronted town houses with parking and a ground floor level



This layout is inward facing and does not overlook the existing footpath or address the street frontage.

This layout creates a street frontage and also overlooks the existing footpath.

Figure 4.5: New housing should address streets, spaces and other routes in the movement network to create safety and security

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4.5 Creating place

R7: For each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area.

Designers must consider how continuous and consistent the building line should be and whether to continue an existing local pattern or whether new housing can add richness to the character of the area. The Design & Access Statement must demonstrate that the design approach is appropriate to the local context and that it will define the street space appropriately.

Changes in building line can create a more formal or informal character; they can also define strongly linear streets and more static places such as squares.

The more continuous a building frontage is the more urban in character it feels i.e. a street of terraced houses is more urban than a street of detached houses.

The more consistent in position a building line is, the more ordered and formal the character of the street will feel.

Generally more continuous or formal building lines are associated with more important places, such as centres, larger settlements or primary routes. Less continuous or more informal building lines are associated with the edges of settlements or more rural places.

The gaps between buildings can make an important contribution to local character, particularly where they occur regularly, such as between pairs of semi-detached houses.

Where possible, buildings should be sited with their frontage parallel to the route, so that they define and enclose the street space.

It is particularly important for infill schemes to reflect the existing pattern of building lines where this creates a positive street character.

R8: It is important that buildings on corners are designed to respond to their position in the layout. Generally they should have two front elevations with windows to habitable rooms on each. In prominent locations, they may also be also be designed as high quality landmark buildings which fit within the character of the area.

Purpose designed building types will be required which turn the corner in a satisfactory manner, creating focal points and helping people to find their way around.

It may be appropriate for development to create a landmark in visually prominent locations, such as at key junctions, at focal points, at major gateways and to terminate important views. Any proposal for a landmark must respond to the context of the area as a whole. Existing landmarks will not act as a precedent for wholesale change in an area.

A landmark is a building that stands out from its surroundings, by:

- its position in relation to the site boundaries, particularly any corners;
- a local increase in building height; or
- a particular quality of design and detail.

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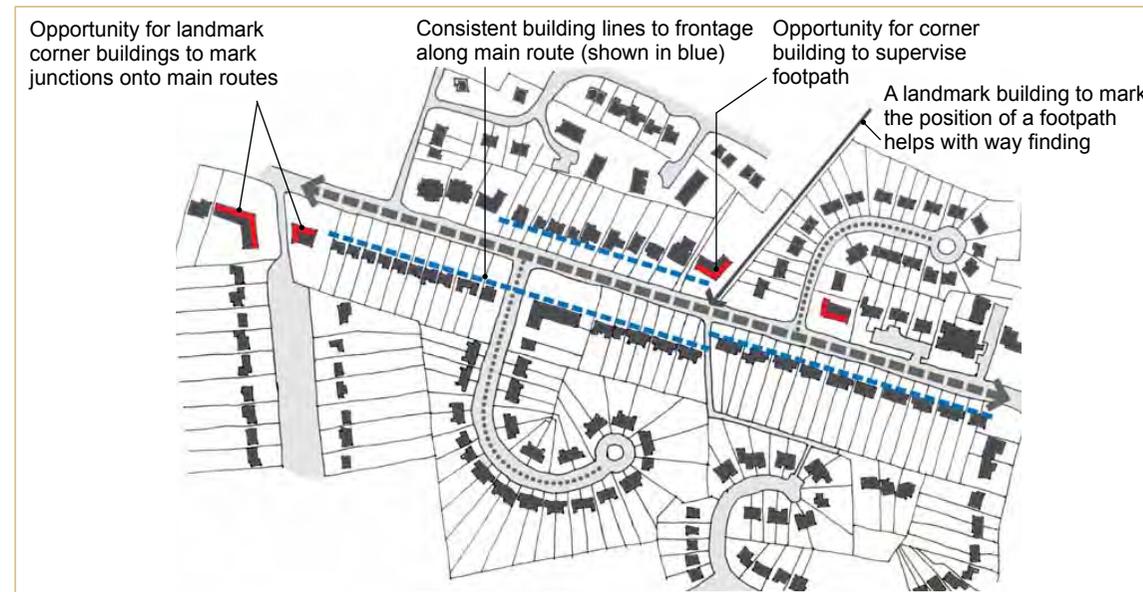


Figure 4.6: A variety of opportunities exist in this street to reinforce the frontage, distinguish this route from its more minor tributaries and raise overall density

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R9: The height of residential buildings should respond to a number of factors:

- the prevailing heights and degree of variation in height in the local context;
- the scale and importance of the space that the building will define or enclose;
- its position in the street hierarchy;
- the position of the building line in relation to the street (ie how far back the building is set from the street frontage); and
- whether it is a potential landmark location.

Buildings proposed to be taller than their surroundings, that is their neighbours or the prevailing heights in the local area, must be of exceptional design quality.

Development in the majority of the Borough consists of two storey buildings, sometimes with attic storeys and dormers. In older settlements, 3 storey houses can be found in the centres, but these are less common.

Many parts of the Borough have a strong and positive local character. In such cases, proposals should reflect the pattern of building heights in the local context. This is particularly important for infill developments.

Buildings taller than their surroundings may only be acceptable where they are sited:

- on major routes, where the scale and significance of the street warrants additional height;
- in landmark locations;
- fronting onto major green open spaces within built up areas (see Section 8: Rural & Settlement Edge);



Figure 4.7: Corner buildings that address both frontages, providing natural surveillance of the street



Figure 4.8: In visually prominent locations, corner building may be designed as local landmarks



Figure 4.9: In existing centres such as Wokingham, some 3 storey development can be found along major routes

- fronting key urban public spaces within larger schemes;
- in settlement centres where there are already other appropriate examples; and
- in local Borough centres, particularly with a mixed use ground floor.

Development proposals at the edge of a settlement or large areas of open space must generally aim to soften the edge and to create a transition between built up areas and the countryside or such open space. In these locations landmark buildings are unlikely to be appropriate.

R10: The assessment of an appropriate density must be design-led as well as considering the number of units per hectare, to ensure that development relates well to local character. This includes:

- the height, bulk and massing of buildings;
- the space around and gaps between them; and
- the space required for parking.

Density is the number of dwellings per hectare or per acre. In itself it does not help with an assessment of whether a proposal will fit into a place, as it takes no account of the size of each dwelling. In practice a block of flats and a single dwelling could have similar floorspace and create a similar scale of building, although the density would be very different.

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The appropriate density for a proposed development will depend upon a range of factors, including:

- how it will relate to the character of the local area, including the form and scale of built development;
- the relationship to its context, and its neighbours in particular;
- the housing mix (with reference to the Council’s Housing Strategy (2010)); and
- accessibility to public transport, facilities and services.

As density increases, communal spaces become more intensively used, so good design is important to make sure the development will be attractive, will work well, and will also be durable. The design and implementation of landscape for parking areas and external space will need to be of particularly high quality and sensitively well-integrated into the local context.

Dwellings must also provide adequate space, lighting, amenity space and outlook for residents. See also Section 4.7 Privacy and amenity, and Section 4.8 Well designed homes.

On larger sites, such as in the SDLs, it is desirable to create local variations in density, between one part and another, as this is one way to create a variation in character. For instance for a site on a settlement edge, it may be more appropriate for a mix of different types, such as some terraced housing with some detached houses in larger plots along the boundary with countryside, than for a development all of the same type of unit.

R11: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.

To create a street scene with a distinctive character, it is desirable to balance the degree of consistency and variety in the design of proposals. Generally, for new developments, it is desirable to create:

- a degree of consistency within a street, so it has an identifiable character and identity; and
- variation between different streets so people can recognise one from another.

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Figure 4.10: A poor example, where too much variation in building forms, elevations and materials within a street means that all streets within a larger development will look the same

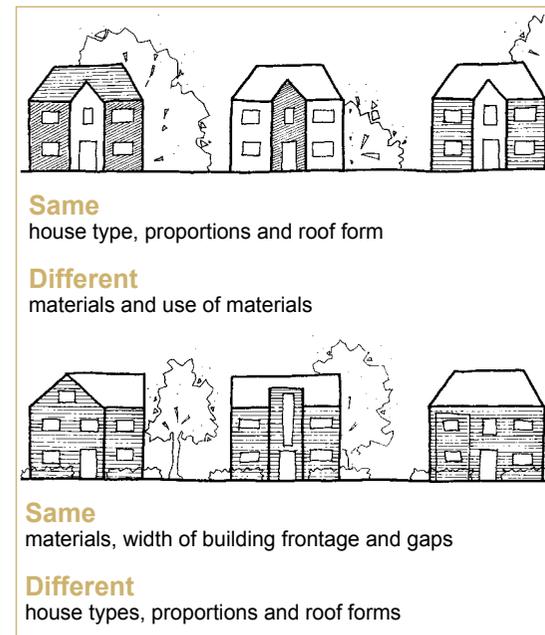


Figure 4.11: Consistency and variety can be balanced in different ways

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For a smaller scale development it may be desirable to create a high degree of consistency so that it has a clear identity as illustrated in the example of development in Norfolk in Figure 4.12.

In this example, key buildings have distinctive Dutch gables or highly textured flint walling (a characteristic of this part of Norfolk), creating visual interest and richness that contributes to a memorable image for the place. The existing public house is integrated into the scheme with its building form repeated in a crescent of houses that front onto a small green at the entrance to the scheme.

A number of historic streets in the borough, such as The Terrace in Wokingham, are characterised by a high degree of variety in the street scene. These streets have developed their degree of variety over time and are notable for their harmonious street scenes, the quality of design and the craftsmanship of their buildings.

In such locations, a proposal to replicate what is already there will potentially reduce the variety and so is not the most appropriate design approach. A high quality scheme that is sensitive to its context, for instance adopting

similar building forms or rhythms to the elevations, or materials, will contribute to the characteristic variety of the street-scene.

Formal townscapes, such as terraces of identical town houses, or the extensive use of symmetry, are not characteristic of Wokingham Borough, although a large-scale new development could create its own character based on formality. Small elements of formal townscape can improve legibility and create a local sense of place within larger layouts.

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Figure 4.12: Trowse, Norfolk, a housing development that creates a strong sense of place

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In areas where the landscape character is dominant a variety of house types and architectural approaches is appropriate. For example in the Ex-woodland areas, such as Wiltshire Avenue, houses are typically individually designed.

Many housing developments from the 1960s and 1970s are highly consistent in terms of both their house types and architectural approach.



Figure 4.13: In areas where the landscape is a dominant feature a variety of house types and styles is appropriate



Figure 4.14: The repeated use of the same house type provides consistency to the street character

Whilst a diversification of house types would be beneficial in these areas, proposals should be designed to relate to the predominant architectural character, for instance with similar building and roof forms and/ or use of materials.

R12: Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.

Boundaries to the public realm should relate to the character of the area. They should be clearly delineated, robust and high quality, so that they last over time. A full height close boarded fence is unlikely to meet these criteria.

Different boundary treatments have different characteristics and are suitable in different locations. Generally, low boundary walls or hedges provide separation between public and private spaces and ensure an appropriate level of privacy for residents at the front of properties. Streets and shared spaces that serve a group of dwellings must be open and accessible to all. See Section 5.4 The design of streets and spaces.

In Wokingham Borough many existing residential areas are characterised by open front gardens. In these areas boundary fences or walls would normally be inappropriate. An exception would be where a boundary treatment is being reinstated, following its removal to accommodate cars in the front garden area. Appropriate levels of privacy for residents should be created in other ways. See Section 4.7 Privacy, visual impact and amenity.



Figure 4.15: Clearly delineated boundary treatments contribute to the character of an area



Figure 4.16: In some suburban locations buildings are set back from the street with vegetation as the dominant characteristic



Figure 4.17: Some areas are characterised by open plan front gardens. In this case the set-back from the street provides sufficient privacy for rooms on the frontage to have large windows

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R13: High quality public open space is required to be provided in association with residential development. It should be designed for safety and integrated into development proposals and well supervised by new or existing housing. Where a development proposal adjoins existing open space, new housing should create a frontage overlooking the space.

Public open space is required for all residential proposals. A variety of public open space should be provided that caters for a wide range of local residents and activities. Refer to Core Strategy policy CP3 and also Core Strategy Appendix 4 – Guidelines for the provision of Public Open Space associated with residential development.

Where the site is located immediately adjacent to existing public open space, then an off-site financial contribution will be considered as an alternative to on-site provision. In certain cases it may be more appropriate to enhance the landscape and facilities of an existing open space so that it can sustain more intensive use.

The term 'open space' is clearly defined into five categories by the Wokingham Open Space & Sports Assessment as follows:

- Public parks, varying in size and nature from small neighbourhood parks to larger Borough parks;
- Children's play space, ranging from areas for casual use, to equipped play space for children 7 years and under, to larger equipped play space for young persons aged 8 years plus;

- Natural and semi-natural green space, consisting of areas containing woodland, scrub grassland, heath / moor, wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and bare rock habitats;
- Playing pitches, including grass, artificial and synthetic surfaces for team sports at junior and senior level; and
- Allotments, open space for allotments gardening and community farming.

In addition, SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) are existing areas of open space that have been identified for enhancement to mitigate the potential impact of additional population on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

The MDD Local Plan will set out the Council's standards for the provision of open space, together with their evidence base.

The Fields In Trust publication 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play' provides guidance on the layout and design of sports and play spaces.

In large-scale developments with new school provision, the developer and education authority should explore the potential for dual use, although this will not replace public open space that is accessible at all times.

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Figure 4.18: Key considerations for the design of play spaces

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Open spaces must be integral to development proposals. They should:

- be located so that they appeal to a wide range of potential users;
- relate to the topography and character of the surrounding area;
- form part of a wider network of open spaces;
- create a focal point for residents;
- be easy and safe to access from the dwellings they are intended to serve, in both existing and new communities; and
- have a well designed landscape that creates a safe, attractive and interesting environment that will become well-used.

To achieve this, proposals for open space and landscape design must be integrated into schemes from the earliest stages of design.

Key considerations for providing high quality open space are:

- **Position and orientation:** Spaces that receive direct sunlight and that are sited in a well-connected location are used more frequently, and are enjoyed more and for longer periods throughout the year.
- **Integrating Sustainable Urban Drainage features:** Open spaces should contribute to the green infrastructure of the Borough and, where suitable, include features such as ponds and soakaways. For these features to be considered as part of an open space they must be designed to enrich the landscape and ecology of the space, for instance by introducing wetland habitats, and not simply be functional landscape drainage features.

- **Preserving or enhancing biodiversity and wildlife habitats:** Native and locally distinctive tree and shrub species should be used, particularly in countryside or village locations.
- **Sensitivity to landscape character:** Open spaces positioned at the edge of settlements should be rural and informal in character, so that they relate well to the surrounding countryside.

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Figure 4.19: Dwellings front onto an open space, which provides a focal point in the layout.



Figure 4.20: Play areas can have features that fit in with the natural surroundings



Figure 4.21: SUDs features can be designed to contribute to public open space and to enhance biodiversity

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- Retaining existing mature landscape, such as hedges and mature trees, where possible. In particular in the Ex-woodland areas existing trees must be retained and new ones of a similar species planted. New trees should be planted so that they have the space to mature and contribute to retaining the woodland character in the future. If tree felling is necessary or appropriate then semi-mature replacements must be planted and maintained.
- Considering the function of the space in relation to surrounding housing. The Fields in Trust guide 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play' sets out guidance in terms of sizes of play space, equipment and distances from housing.

R14: Development proposals should provide space for and include well designed hard and soft landscape to create a high quality setting for new housing that is appropriate to the character of the local area.

In many parts of the Borough the quality of landscape, in particular the soft landscape, contributes significantly to the character of the local area and to the quality of the residential environment. This includes landscape:

- in the public realm (for instance street trees);
- on front boundaries (hedges shrubs and/ or trees); and
- in plots and/ or communal areas, such as for parking.

See also R12 above for boundary treatments and Section 5.5 Detailed design, in Streets & Spaces for street trees.

Where there are existing landscape features of value, such as hedgerows or trees, these should be retained and incorporated into landscape proposals for a development. Existing trees should be protected in accordance with BS5837 both in terms of the layout of new development and during construction.

Existing trees and hedgerows should be incorporated into a development proposal as a feature that contributes to the character of the public realm, rather than being located within plots or at the rear of new housing.

Designers should make sure that the gardens to proposed new housing will not be completely overshadowed by existing trees.

Hard landscape within plots and communal areas should be designed to be attractive, fit for purpose and robust. There should be sufficient space to provide areas of soft landscape as well as hard landscape. Parking areas should include some form of planting to soften the space.

Planting species should be selected to:

- provide visual interest;
- relate to the character of the area, using native or characteristic species wherever appropriate;
- support biodiversity;
- create a safe and attractive living environment; and
- suit the proposed arrangements for management and maintenance.



Figure 4.22: Existing mature trees and new landscape can create a strong character for a new development



Figure 4.23: High quality new landscape creates a setting for new housing

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4.7 Privacy, visual impact and amenity

R15: Buildings must be designed to provide reasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms.

Reasonable levels of privacy are required between new and existing properties.

Distance is the most common way to avoid potential overlooking or visual impact. It can also be achieved by design in locations where this may not be appropriate to local character.

The appropriate degree of privacy varies, with less distance being reasonable on the street (public) side and more on the garden (private) side. It also depends upon how rooms relate to one another.

Design proposals should demonstrate how habitable rooms within each dwelling are provided with an adequate level of privacy in relation to neighbouring properties, the street and other public spaces.

Studies have shown that perceived privacy is determined more by the degree to which one hears one's neighbours than by overlooking. It is often more difficult to screen against noise than against views. This is particularly relevant to the design of flats, when the stacking of different rooms above one another can cause nuisance to residents.

The design of windows, balustrades, landscape in gardens and boundary treatments can all influence the potential for overlooking.

The Council's minimum distance of 22m is a generally accepted guideline for there to be no overlooking or material loss of privacy between the rear of two buildings that directly face one another. Across a street, the Council's minimum distance of 10m is an accepted guideline for the distance to provide sufficient privacy. These distances will generally be considered adequate for the relationships within new developments but may not be appropriate in relation to existing properties.

Character, privacy and provision of external space need to be considered together in the design process. The layout and design solution must balance these requirements to come up with an appropriate response to the specific site and its local context, whilst ensuring a good quality of life for residents.

The relationships between existing properties and new development can be particularly sensitive. In such cases, where there is living accommodation on an upper floor, it will be necessary to provide a greater distance or to incorporate additional design features to minimise any harm caused by perceptions of loss of privacy or other potential impacts at the rear of properties.

Frontages should be designed to provide residents with a reasonable degree of privacy whilst inside their house.

This may be achieved in a variety of ways, for instance:

- set back distance from the footway, to provide a front garden;
- boundary treatments or planting, such as hedge planting;
- windows that are vertically proportioned and not too large in size; or
- the internal arrangement of rooms, for instance the kitchen rather than living room facing the street.

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Figure 4.24: Different ways to provide appropriate levels of privacy on street frontages. Victorian houses with large bay windows tend to have a front garden with boundary hedge. Cottages without front gardens have taller, narrow windows to reduce the potential for looking inside

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R16: New housing must provide easy access to some form of amenity space.

Houses

The size of garden should relate to the house type and to the proposed number of occupants. In addition, achieving a degree of privacy at the rear of the house, in particular in rear gardens, is a concern for many people.

The settlement pattern in most of the Borough is predominantly suburban or rural in character. In these locations, it should be possible to provide private gardens of sufficient size to allow a variety of activities with an appropriate level of privacy for each of them. The Council's minimum garden length of 11m is a generally accepted guideline for private garden space, provided the space is usable.

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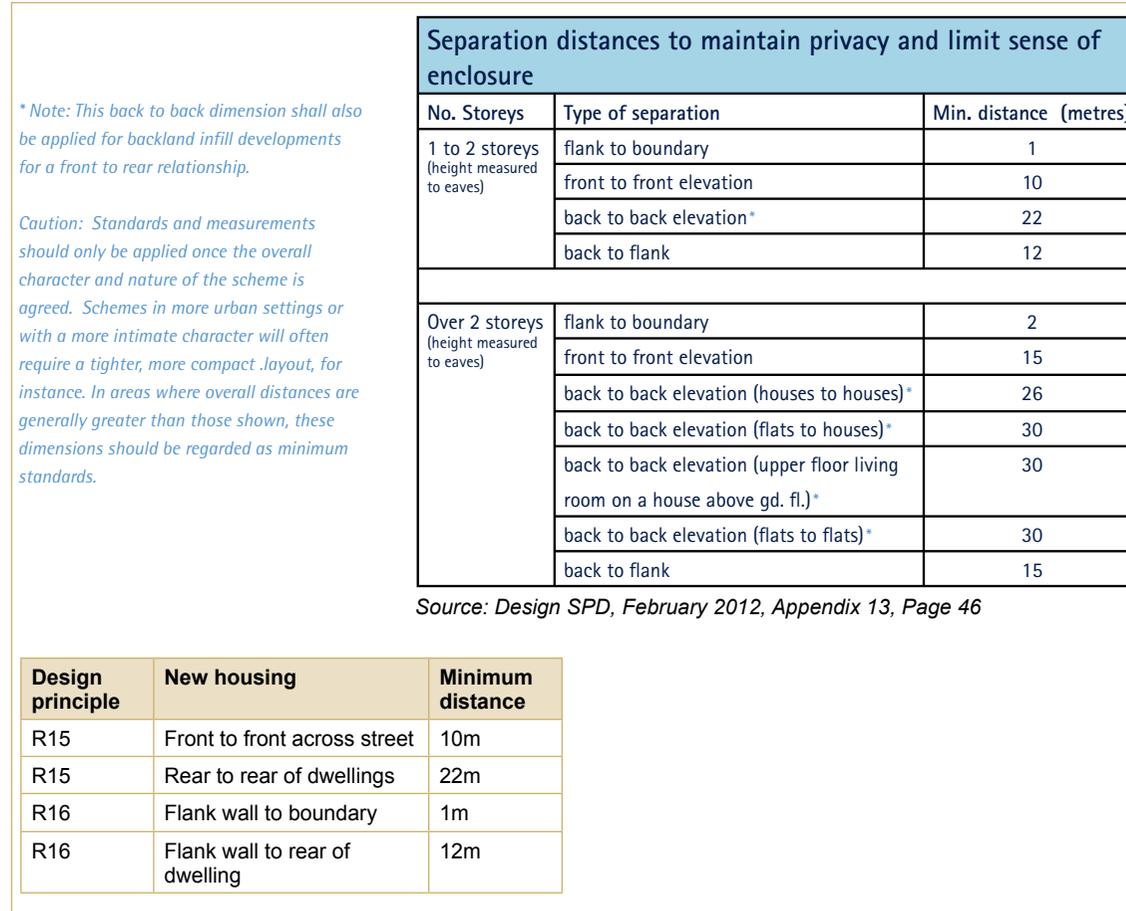


Figure 4.25: Summary of the Council's minimum privacy and amenity distances guidelines in this section; refer to text for explanation and specific guidance for each. Character and context will also be relevant to the approach in any specific case

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In areas with an urban character, for instance Wokingham Town Centre, more compact gardens may be appropriate to create a more urban development form that relates to the local character. In these cases, it may be possible to compensate for the loss of rear garden space by providing roof terraces, balconies or wintergardens, so long as they do not overlook existing properties.

Private garden space should be usable. This generally means that gardens should:

- be roughly rectangular in shape;
- receive direct sunlight for some of the day;
- be capable of accommodating activities such as sitting, play, clothes drying and outside storage space, which will require a level area within the garden; and
- provide a secure external access to the rear garden for cycle storage.

Where new housing has flank elevations, these should be set away from the site boundaries to allow residents to have access for maintenance purposes and to access their garden areas. A distance of 1m from the site boundary is generally accepted as providing adequate access.

In areas with an urban character, it may be appropriate in some cases to build up to the site boundary, where the applicant can demonstrate that this will reinforce local character.

In other parts of the Borough, gaps between buildings make an important contribution to the rhythm of the street and to local character and should be incorporated into the layout of new housing.

Figure 4.26 illustrates the guidance for minimum garden sizes and for the minimum distance for retaining access to flank elevations.

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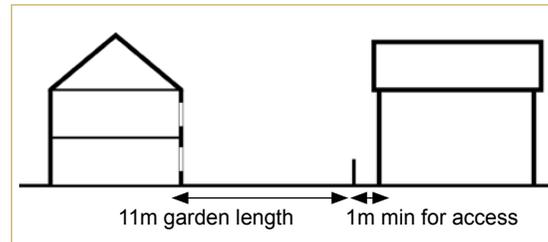


Figure 4.26: The Council's minimum garden length and distance for retaining access to flank elevations



Figure 4.27: Balconies and roof terraces can provide amenity space for people living in urban areas or in flats

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Flats

All dwellings should have access to some form of amenity space, preferably in the form of private or communal garden space.

In practice, upper floor flat dwellers rarely have access to gardens. In such cases, it is important to provide private outdoor space in the form of balconies, upper level terraces or wintergardens.

Balconies, roof terraces and wintergardens should be positioned and designed to:

- provide some degree of privacy;
- benefit from sunlight where possible; and

- protect the privacy of existing residents.

There should normally be enough space for 2 to 4 chairs and a small table.

The design of balustrades should balance the benefits of allowing light into the space against those of providing a visual screen to it.

Where balconies are proposed at the rear of proposed housing, then the design approach will need to balance the issues of privacy and providing amenity space with care. This will be particularly sensitive where a proposed development adjoins existing buildings.

Possible solutions may include screens to ensure that views from balconies are directed away from neighbouring properties.

The building form can be modelled to create a degree of privacy for balconies as in the example in Figure 4.28 below at Kingsmead Road, High Wycombe. A mix of balconies for upper level units, private patio gardens for ground floor units and a communal garden area provide amenity space for this development.



1) Private patio gardens at rear for ground floor units with privacy created by level changes in site. Balconies to upper level flats with privacy created by modelling of building elevation.

2) Street frontage relates well to building line of adjoining buildings with modelling to break down scale of building and to create some privacy for balconies of upper floor units.

3) Communal rear garden area.

4) High quality landscaped parking area.

5) Landscaped boundary to street frontage retained to screen views of cars and maintain green setting for development.

Figure 4.28: Kingsmead Road, High Wycombe

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4.8 Well designed homes

R17: All dwellings must provide adequate internal space in an appropriate layout to accommodate a range of lifestyles. Living areas and bedrooms should be large enough to accommodate a range of private and communal activities.

Sustainable homes suit today's needs and lifestyles, and are capable of continuing to meet them into the future.

To achieve this, homes need to provide space in sociable rooms, for family and friends, and private spaces, for quiet relaxation or study. Research has shown that school performance is affected by the ability of a child to do homework in a quiet space. Play, work and study are as much part of daily life as cooking, eating and sleeping.

Adequate storage and circulation areas are needed to support these activities.

Minimum internal space standards will be adopted as part of the MDD Local Plan.

The size and layout of internal spaces in all new properties should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate a range of residents over time, for instance by satisfying 'Lifetime Homes' requirements. See also Section 4.9: Sustainable design.

Figure 4.29 provides detailed guidance for assessing these issues in most housing.

For more unusual forms of housing, applicants must demonstrate that their design approach will create attractive homes for residents, for instance by providing:

- Furniture layouts for each room; and/ or
- Defining the intended niche housing market in the Design & Access Statement.

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Internal space standards

The London Housing Guide's internal space standards are based on the space that is needed to accommodate the lifestyles of a range of residents over time. The minimum space required for activities such as cooking and eating is the same regardless of the location of the dwelling, so the London Housing Guide standards are used here. Minimum internal spaces standards are set out below and it is envisaged that these will be adopted through the MDD. Three storey houses will need more space to accommodate the additional circulation required.

Dwelling Type	Minimum Gross Internal Area (sqm)
1 bedroom flat	50
2 bedroom flat	61
2 bedroom house	83
3 bedroom house	87
4 bedroom house	100

Living Areas

Living spaces must be able to cater for activities involving all members of the household, with or without guests. Generally there should be enough space for a table and chairs that allows all residents of a fully occupied property to enjoy a meal together.

Narrow living rooms tend to be inflexible in use. Living rooms should be sufficiently wide so there is room both for furniture and circulation space.

Family houses should generally provide two social spaces, for example a living room and a kitchen/dining room.

A guideline size for living/kitchen/ dining spaces in combination (living areas) is set out below:

Designed occupancy (bed spaces)	Minimum combined floor area of living, dining and kitchen space (sqm)
2 person	23
3 person	25
4 person	27
5 person	29
6 person	31

Bedrooms

People often use bedrooms for work and study as well as for sleep. Children and young people need space in bedrooms for homework, play and hobbies, and entertaining friends. Double bedrooms should be a minimum of 12 sqm and single bedrooms a minimum of 8 sqm.

Each bedroom should provide wardrobe space for the number of occupants.

Storage

Homes also require general storage which should be suitable for the likely requirements of occupants, for instance space for items such as buggies and larger-sized toys in family sized housing or for equipment for people with disabilities in Lifetime Homes. In houses, storage is often accommodated in garages, causing pressure on parking provision within new developments.

The minimum storage space for 2 persons should be a cupboard space of at least 1.5 meters in length, with an additional length of 0.5 m for each extra person.

Room configurations

It is important that the position of doors, windows and any built-in furniture is well-considered, so that the space within homes is usable and practical, for instance so that furniture can be accommodated.

Figure 4.29: Detailed guidance for assessing internal space and layout (based on the London Housing Design Guide, GLA, August 2010)

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R.18: Dwellings must be designed to provide appropriate levels of daylight and sunlight to new and existing properties.

Research, for instance by the World Health Organisation and MIT, has shown that natural lighting contributes to the health and well being of residents.

New housing should be designed to:

- provide a reasonable outlook for each dwelling;
- be dual aspect where possible;
- avoid north facing, single aspect flats; and
- to have no material impact on levels of daylight in the habitable rooms of adjoining properties.

This can be assessed using the methodology set out in BRE report BRE 209 'Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight'.

Figure 4.30 provides guidance for assessing the potential impact of a new development on the daylight in existing habitable rooms.

Where development proposals do not comply with the guideline, a more detailed assessment of daylight and sunlight should be provided to demonstrate there is no material impact, in accordance with the BRE guidance.

R19: New housing must be designed with care and with a coherent design approach that influences the whole building, from its form to the elevations, including the detailing (whatever the architectural style may be).

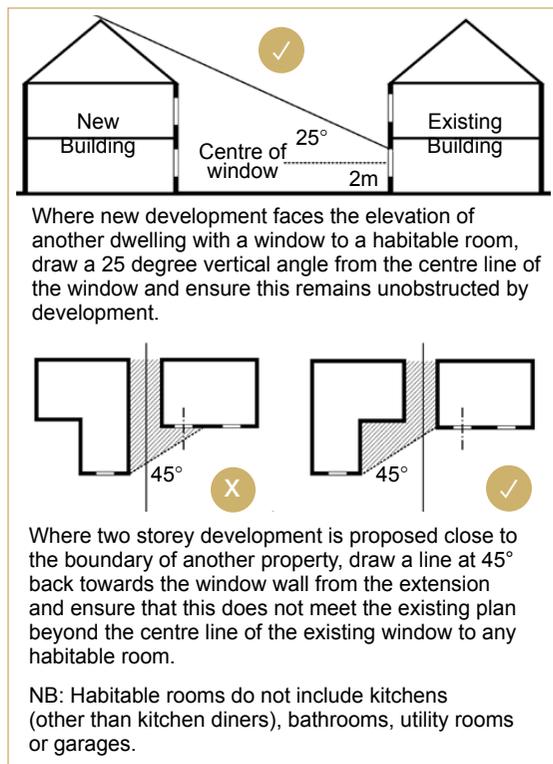


Figure 4.30: Guidance for ensuring that new development has no impact upon daylight in existing properties



Modern houses often emulate traditional buildings but lack their three dimensional qualities. For example, windows are flush with external walls and porches; balconies and bay windows appear to be 'stuck on' to a simple box rather than being an integral part of the design; or random changes in materials and brick colour are used to 'add interest' to the appearance of the building.

All too often the result is buildings that are a poor pastiche of historic styles. If a traditional approach is to be followed then it should correctly use traditional proportions and details and a similar quality of materials to the source for inspiration.

Generally, buildings should be designed as follows:

- as a three dimensional whole, so that elements such as bay windows are designed in from the start;
- with windows and doors set back from the external surface of the building, to introduce some depth and modelling to the facade; and

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Figure 4.31: Well designed and well proportioned elevations may be traditional or contemporary in design

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- with changes in material related to the design of the building, for instance related to a change in shape, i.e. to a set back or projection, or with some other identifiable role in the design.

Where a contemporary approach is adopted, then the proportions of the form and elevations and quality of detailing will be important.

R20: The following elements, often the 'forgotten elements', must be considered early in the design process and integrated into the overall scheme:

- Bin stores and recycling facilities;
- Meter boxes;
- Bicycle storage;
- Walls, fences and gates;
- Lighting;
- Flues and ventilation ducts;
- Gutters and pipes;
- Satellite dishes and telephone lines; and
- External letter boxes.

Bin stores and recycling facilities should be designed to screen bins from public view, whilst being easily accessible for residents.

Bin stores must be placed in a position that meets the Council's Highways standards.

Bin stores should be as close to the highway edge as possible and no greater than 10m from a point of access for the collection vehicle.

See also the technical highways guidance in 'Wokingham Living Streets'.

Meter boxes need not be standard white units: consider a bespoke approach that fits in with the materials used for the remainder of the building. Position them to be unobtrusive.

Bicycle storage facilities should be secured, covered and conveniently located for the use of residents.

The materials used for walls and fences should relate to the materials used for the remainder of the building. Boundaries to public areas, such as streets, should be robust, for instance brick walls or railings, or other appropriate boundary treatments, while avoiding the use of less robust solutions such as close boarded timber.

Carefully position flues and ventilation ducts, ensuring they are as unobtrusive as possible. Use good quality grilles that fit in with the approach to materials for the building as a whole.

Ensure that gutters and pipes fit into the overall design approach to the building and aim to minimise their visual impact.

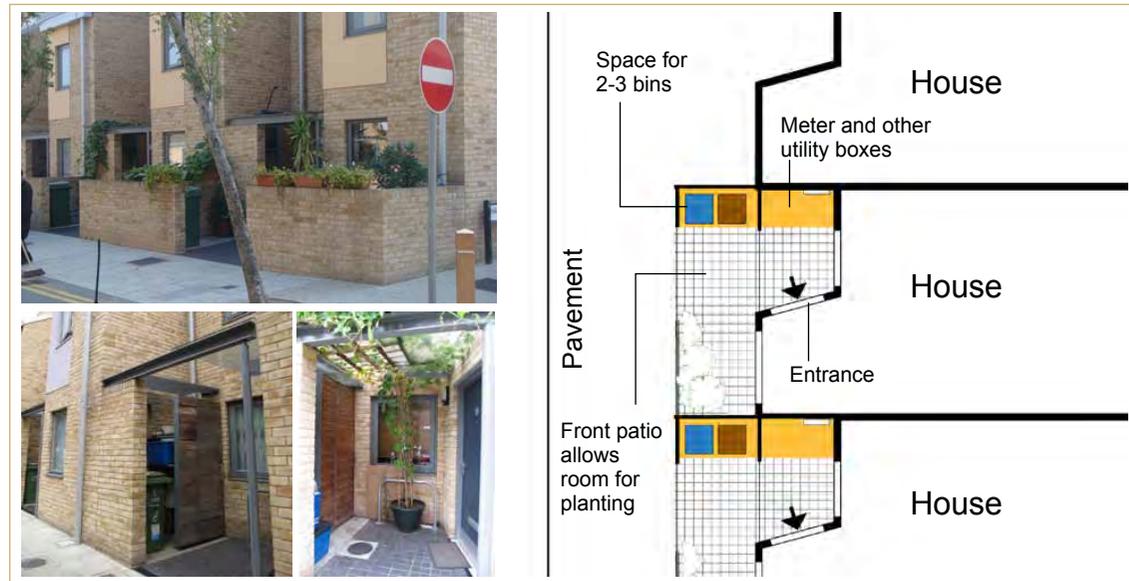


Figure 4.32: Early consideration of detailed elements such as bin stores and meter boxes influences the quality of the development. Example of well integrated bin store and storage space in an urban development where it relates well to the character of the local area

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4.9 Sustainable design

R21: The layout of new residential development must contribute towards environmental sustainability and in particular towards mitigating climate change.

The MDD Local Plan will define the requirements for new housing in terms of Code for Sustainable Homes and Lifetime Homes. Applicants should also refer to the Sustainable Design & Construction SPD.

Promoting walking and cycling

Secure, covered and convenient bicycle storage should be provided, to encourage bicycle ownership and use.

Conservation of water resources

Developments should be designed to incorporate measures for the conservation of water resources. This may include:

- minimising the consumption of potable water through measures such as rain water collection for garden irrigation or use within the home, installing low water usage toilets and appliances;
- ensuring that as much water run-off from roofs and areas of hard standing can permeate into the ground through the use of soft landscape and permeable surfaces in hard landscape areas and car parks; and
- incorporating sustainable drainage wherever feasible, including features such as green verges and swales, shallow ditches and balancing ponds.

Energy strategies

The layout of development proposals should respond to the proposed energy strategy, for

instance:

- orientation of buildings to maximise passive solar gain; or
- design of roof pitches to maximise the potential for solar power; or
- the proximity of certain uses to allow an area based approach to power and heat generation.

Where new technologies, such as solar panels, are proposed to be installed on existing buildings, careful consideration should be given to their potential visual impact on the character of the area.

Sustainable construction

Development should use construction methods and materials that are not only fit for their intended purpose and make a positive contribution to design quality, character and appearance, but also contribute to the sustainable use of resources.

Sustainable construction methods should be used and the amount of waste produced during construction should be firstly reduced and secondly recycled or reused. Materials should come from sustainable sources, be reclaimed or have a high recycled content, be locally sourced and have a low lifetime environmental impact.

Adaptability

Housing must be designed to be adaptable where possible. Design and Access Statements will be expected to demonstrate how adaptability has been considered.

A sustainable approach to design is critical if we are to create environments that endure.

Measures to promote adaptability may include:

- Providing a flexible arrangement that allows for residents choice and customisation, for example by providing roof with an adequate pitch and structure to allow for a future loft conversion;
- Adequate circulation space for wheelchairs;
- Car parking space with direct and convenient access, and capable of being enlarged;
- The incorporation of information and communication technology into dwellings;
- Providing a roof form that is easily adapted to accommodate sustainable technologies; or
- Allowing for a home office to be provided.

'Lifetime Homes' gives practical advice and technical criteria for designing housing that can meet the needs of people throughout their lives. Details can be found on their website.

Crime

Measures to reduce crime can contribute significantly to reducing CO2 emissions associated with the consequences of crime.



Figure 4.33: Street scenes can be designed so that roofs are at the most suitable angle for efficient solar panels

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4.10 'Backland' development

R22: As back gardens are no longer classed as brown field proposals for such backland development, if appropriate, will need to be located and designed to the highest standards to ensure that they:

- do not harm the existing character of the local area;
- relate positively to the existing layout and urban form;
- maintain the quality of environment for existing residents; and
- create a satisfactory living environment for the new home or homes and existing surrounding properties.

'Backland' development is the development of sites that do not have an existing street frontage. 'Tandem' development is a specific type of 'backland' development, the development of a new house behind an existing house in the rear of a plot.

The NPPF states that local authorities should consider setting policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, which falls outside the scope of this design guide. It excludes private residential gardens from 'previously developed land' and suggests that developing them would be inappropriate where it would cause harm to the local area.

By its nature and location, it is difficult for 'backland' development to reflect existing character. In some cases it may be acceptable, where it results in a high quality environment for both the proposed and existing residents. Where more than one dwelling is proposed, it must also create a positive sense of place.

'Backland' development must:

- not harm the character of the local area, for instance if existing trees on the plots contribute to a characteristic 'green backdrop';
- relate to a site of sufficient size and suitable shape to accommodate the number of dwellings proposed, together with their external space, access and parking requirements;
- be orientated to avoid conflicts between public and private space and avoid creating a security risk for neighbours, by ensuring that boundaries to the rear gardens of existing properties are well screened and wherever possible relate to the private space of new dwellings;
- avoid any potential for overlooking or visual impact on neighbours by designing the orientation of new housing appropriately, positioning windows with care and making sure there is no potential for overlooking from the upper floors of new housing into existing properties in particular;
- be accessed without harming the character of the existing street frontage, and with no loss of important features, whether these are existing buildings or the green gaps between existing buildings;
- contribute to the public realm, where there is more than one dwelling proposed, by creating public streets and/ or courtyard spaces, not designed solely around technical highways requirements;
- create a safe, well supervised public realm that is attractive for walking and cycling; and

- be of an appropriate scale and height relative to the scale of development on the existing street frontage and surrounding the site.

Incremental 'backland' development on a site-by-site basis is unlikely to be able to take up opportunities to contribute to the character of the area, unless it is designed in the context of a more comprehensive approach to the site and area and based around new public realm, such as a new street, mews or courtyard.

More →

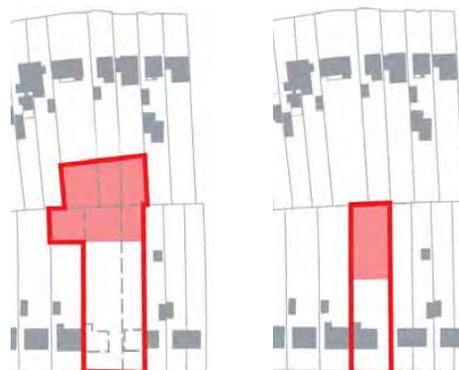


Figure 4.34: Left - 'Backland' development site. Right - 'Tandem' development site



Figure 4.35: An example of 'backland' development which has maintained the character of the local area

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On a piecemeal basis, 'backland' and in particular 'tandem' development will potentially erode the character of an area, in terms of the street frontage, landscape character (particularly where there is a 'green backdrop') and impact on neighbours. It may also fail to take opportunities to create a positive character in itself.

4.11 Alterations and extensions

R23: Alterations and extensions to buildings should:

- be well designed;
- respond positively to the original building;
- contribute positively to the local character; and
- relate well to neighbouring properties.

Alterations and extensions should respond positively to the context, maintaining or enhancing the street scene and local character.

The General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) 1995 (as amended) sets out the criteria for determining whether alterations and extensions to dwellings require planning permission or whether they are deemed to be permitted development. The government has produced a number of interactive guides for householders relating to different house types. These can be found on the Planning Portal website.

Regardless of whether they require planning permission, alterations and extensions to buildings should be well designed.

Key considerations include:

- where there is a regular pattern to the built form, with a repeated building type on a consistent building line and with consistent gaps, then any alterations or extension that is visible from the street should not unbalance the rhythm of the frontage;
- where gaps between buildings allow views to a green backdrop that contributes to the established, positive, character of the area, alterations or extensions should not close off such views;
- where the pattern of gaps between buildings creates a regular rhythm along a street that contributes to local character, then alterations or extensions should not interrupt that rhythm;
- alterations or extensions should be clearly subservient to the form and scale or the original building in most situations, although there may be exceptions where it is more appropriate to design a seamless continuation;
- the design of the proposed extension must be well considered and should complement the existing building, either by adopting its style, or by a carefully considered contrast;
- the roof form of the extension should take its form from the main building. In certain circumstances contrast may be desirable, as for instance where there is an opportunity for green roofs, solar panels or solar water heating. In such cases, the quality of design will be balanced against consideration of local character;
- the materials selected for alterations or an extension should match or improve upon

the quality of those of the existing building; and

- the potential impact on neighbouring properties. Refer also to R15 and R16 above.

The detailed guidance on the following pages may be used for assessing common forms of extension and alteration to houses, together with an assessment of their design quality.

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Figure 4.36: Extensions that relate well to the original buildings

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Rear extensions

The primary consideration is impact upon neighbours.

Rear extensions should not project more than four metres from the main rear wall where they are close to a side boundary.

On terraced houses, 2 storey rear extensions must be carefully positioned and designed to minimise any potential impact upon neighbours.

Maximum eaves and ridge height should be no more than those of the existing property.

The side walls of extensions must not contain windows especially at first floor level, to minimise any potential impact upon the privacy of neighbours.

The eaves height of single storey extensions should not exceed 3m within 2m of a side boundary.

Side extensions

The primary considerations are impact upon neighbourhood and upon street scene and local character.

Side extensions should follow the detailed guidance for rear extensions where they are sited close to a boundary.

A gap should be retained between the building and the site boundary and this should be a minimum of 1m in width.

Two storey side extensions to end-of-terrace properties should seamlessly continue the design and proportions of the terrace or be clearly subservient, for instance by a set-back from the frontage, lower height and/ or significantly narrower bay width and proportions.

Side extensions should not generally project forward of the building line on the street frontage(s).

For properties in formal suburbia, whether detached, semi-detached or short terraces, the rhythm of buildings and the gaps between them along the street frontage is often important to the character of the area. Side extensions should be set back from the building line by at least 1m, preferably with a lower roof line and should be set at least 1m from the plot boundary.

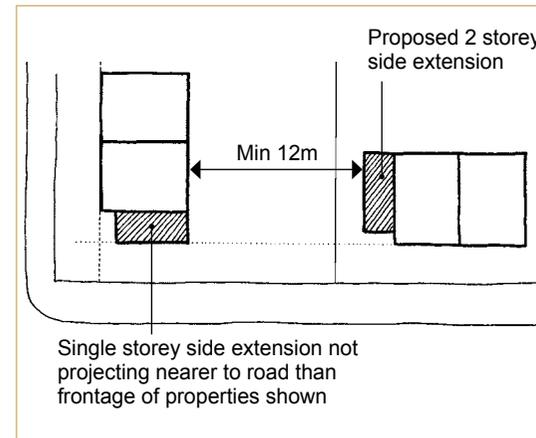
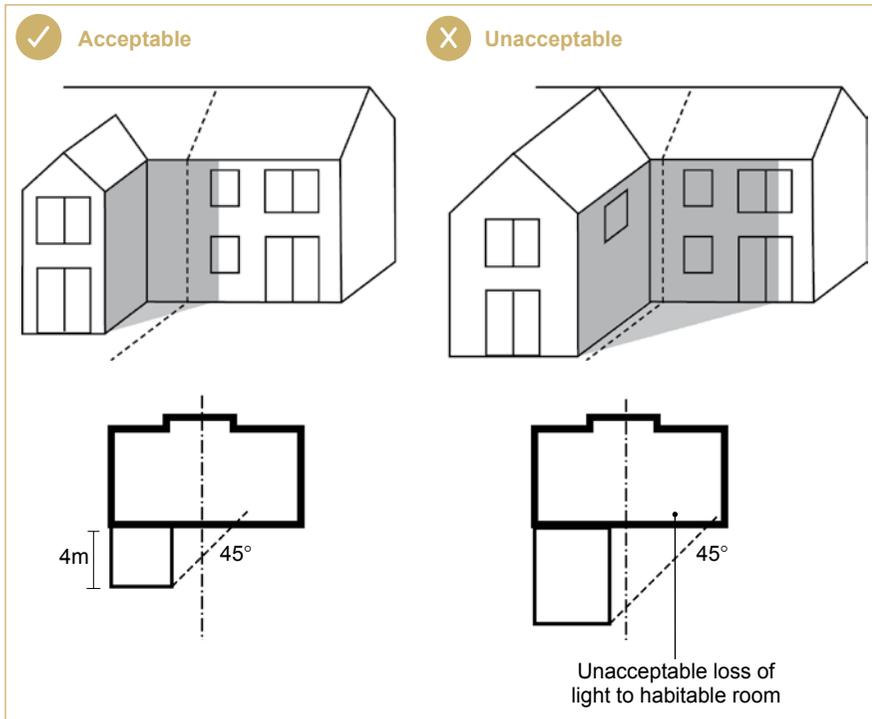


Figure 4.37: Detailed guidance for assessing common forms of alterations and extensions (continues on next page)

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Roof Alterations and Dormer Windows

The eaves and/ or ridge heights of a property should not be raised in height unless buildings in the local context are significantly taller.

Loft conversions and dormer windows should not project above the existing ridge line.

Dormer windows should generally be positioned within the main roof, by being set back from both eaves line and the sides of the roof.

Dormers should relate to the design of the existing building in terms of roof form, materials, positioning and window proportions.

On some buildings gables may be acceptable if they are designed to become an integral part of the building.

Front extensions and porches

Generally only acceptable where the building is set well back from the street frontage in a large plot or where the building is set further back from the street than the prevailing building line.

Front extensions should generally be no more than 1 storey in height and should not project significantly forward of the building line.

Porches (ie not fully enclosed extensions) should generally project less than 2m forward of the building line.

The overriding consideration in all cases will be the impact on the street scene and local character.

Garages and parking

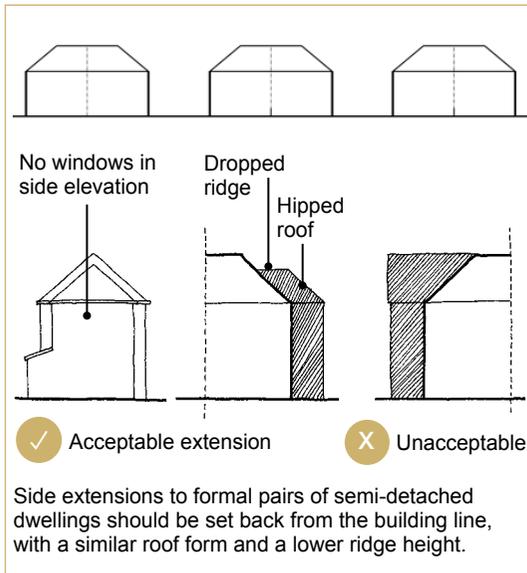
Where properties are extended then the extended property will be required to comply with the Borough parking standards. See Section 6: Parking. This may mean that an additional parking space is required.

Similarly, where a garage is to be converted into a room, then the parking space will need to be replaced.

Parking spaces proposed in front gardens must be paved with permeable surfaces to avoid any increase in surface water run-off and should include space for soft landscape.

Garages should not be sited in front gardens but should be to the side or rear of a dwelling.

Garages should not project forward of the building line of a property.



This example demonstrates an example of an extension with a ridge height that is subordinate to that of the original property

Figure 4.37 (continued): Detailed guidance for assessing common forms of alterations and extensions

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4.12 Gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople sites

National policy is set out in the CLG publication 'Planning for Traveller Sites', March 2012.

CLG published a Good Practice Guide for Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites (2008).

This guidance outlines some of the key considerations for the layout of permanent sites for gypsies and travellers. The locations for these sites will be allocated in the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan. Design considerations for suitable locations include:

- Means of access and accessibility to local transport and services;
- Provision of a healthy and safe environment for residents;
- Integration between the site and local community;
- Appropriate ground conditions, site levels and avoidance of areas with high flood risk; and
- Visual and acoustic privacy.

R24: The layout and design of gypsy sites should provide a safe living environment that meets the needs of residents, while respecting the character of the local area.

The layout and design of sites should be based on local consultation with potential occupiers, and with the settled community in the local area.

Key considerations for site layout include:

- a clear demarcation of boundaries that is sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area;
- a clear gap of 3m inside site perimeter boundaries for fire prevention;
- a degree of privacy for individual households whilst maintaining a sense of community;
- the ability to manoeuvre living accommodation to the site and onto each pitch, based on trailers of up to 15m in length;
- safe access and egress to site;
- easy access and a safe turning places for emergency and refuse vehicles;
- natural surveillance to allow residents to oversee all areas of the site;
- clear delineation of public communal areas and private space, with boundaries to each pitch;
- a communal play area for children and potentially a building to house communal facilities;
- a 6m separation distance between each caravan, trailer and park home, for fire safety reasons; and
- infrastructure such as water and electricity supply, surface water and storm drainage, lighting and waste disposal arrangements.

For the layout of individual pitches/plots:

- adequate space for car parking on each pitch;
- pitch boundary fences;

- ability to position caravan away from overhanging trees for fire safety reasons;
- a hard standing area suitable for use by trailers, touring caravans or other vehicles; and
- an amenity building to provide as a minimum water and electricity supply, toilet, personal washing and laundry facilities.

For the purposes of planning policy 'pitch' means a pitch on a 'gypsy and traveller' site and 'plot' means a pitch on a 'travelling showpeople' site (also called a 'yard').

The difference reflects the likely need for travelling showpeople to store equipment.



Figure 4.38: An example of a well laid out site

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1. Do the proposals contribute positively and appropriately towards local character?
2. Do they relate well to their context, including both the existing site and neighbouring properties?
3. Are the proposals well connected into the existing street network and designed to contribute to a clear street hierarchy?
4. Does the scheme accommodate cars, without them dominating the layout or street scene?
5. Will the streets have a sense of place as well as accommodating movement?
6. Will there be a clear distinction between public and private areas?
7. Will buildings provide natural surveillance and activity on all of their street frontages?
8. Do the proposals have a coherent building line that defines the street space?
9. Will the proposed heights of buildings relate well to their surroundings, including building heights, size of spaces, importance of routes, distance from street?
10. Is the building taller than its surroundings and if so is it in a potential landmark location of exceptional design, quality and be appropriate for the area?
11. Does the proposed density lead to a scheme that relates well to the character and form of the local area taking into account the height, bulk and massing of buildings, the spaces and gaps around them, and the area required for parking?
12. Do the proposals create street scenes with a coherent and appropriate character, in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour, particularly in areas where buildings are an important component of local character?
13. Do boundary treatments contribute to the quality of the public realm and to local character?
14. Do the proposals integrate high quality, well-supervised, public open space into the development?
15. Will the proposed hard and soft landscape create a high quality setting that is appropriate to local character?
16. Does the scheme provide residents with reasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms?
17. Will residents have easy access to some form of amenity space?
18. Will the accommodation provide adequate internal space in a layout that allows for a variety of lifestyles and patterns of use?
19. Will new and existing housing receive appropriate levels of daylight and sunlight?
20. Is the building carefully designed, with a coherent design approach that includes its form, elevations, and detailing, regardless of its architectural style?
21. Does the design integrate detailed elements, such as bin stores, meter boxes, letter boxes, satellite dishes, cycle storage etc, into the overall proposals to avoid future clutter?
22. Does the layout contribute towards environmental sustainability, in particular to mitigating climate change?.
23. For any scheme of 'backland development', is the scheme located and designed so that:
 - it does not harm existing local character of the local area?
 - it relates positively to the existing layout and urban form?
 - it maintains the quality of environment for existing residents? and
 - it creates a satisfactory living environment for the new and existing home or homes?
24. For proposed alterations or extensions to existing dwellings, is the proposal well-designed in relation to the original building, to neighbouring properties and to the character of the local area?

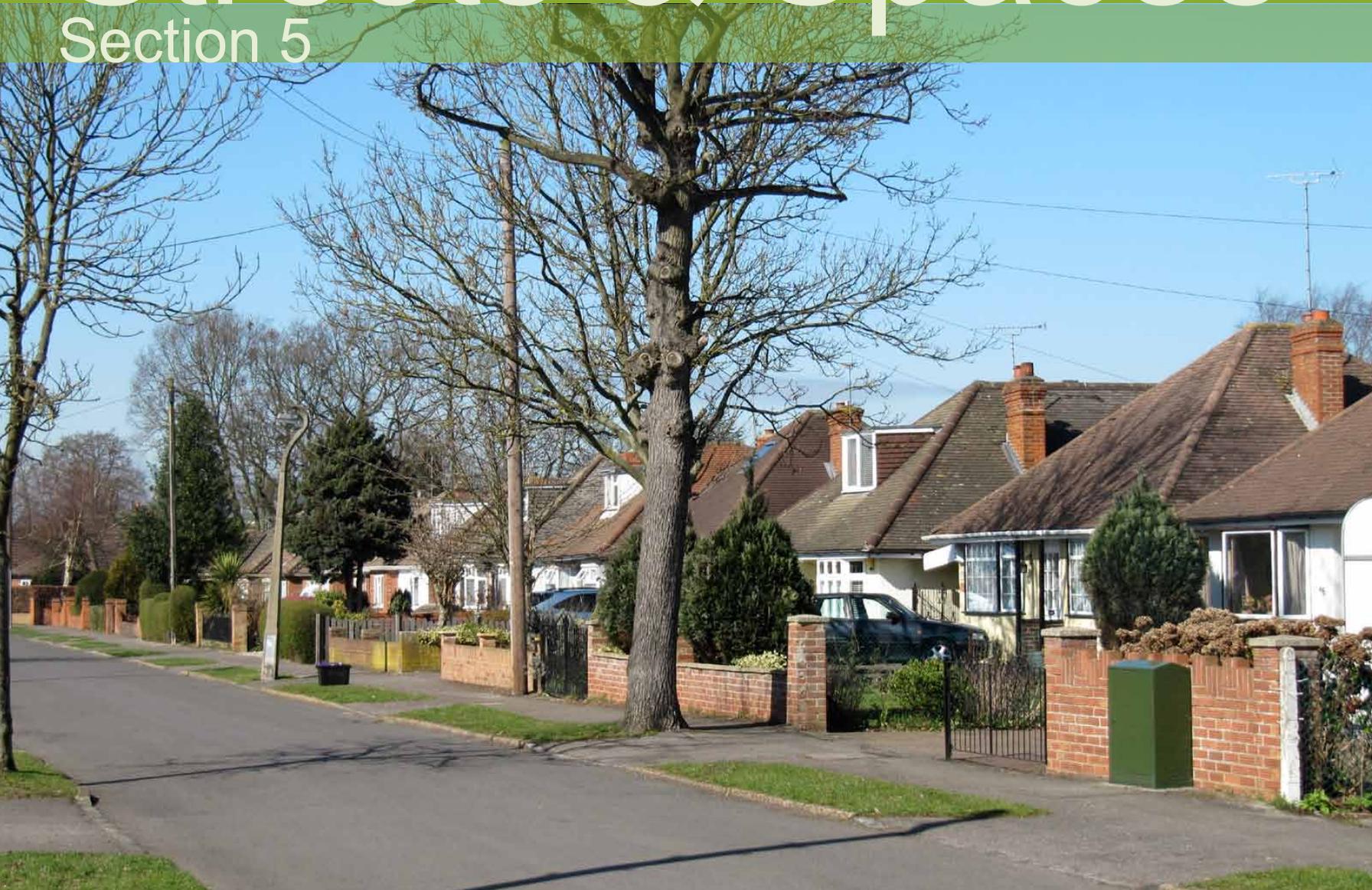
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Streets & Spaces

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5 Streets & Spaces

5.1 General principles

Streets and public spaces have many different functions, principally:

- as places for social interaction and activity;
- for through movement;
- for access;
- for parking; and
- to provide services and utilities.

In the past there has been an emphasis on designing to serve the 'link', or movement, function, with little attention given to the 'place' function. The guidance in Manual for Streets (MfS) and Manual for Streets 2 is that for street design 'place' and 'link' functions should be considered in combination and in relation to the specific street context.

Streets serve a wide variety of users, who have a range of different needs and requirements, relating to their mode of transport but also to the role of a particular street and other circumstances, such as familiarity with the area etc.

The design of new development must consider how any proposed street will function and must balance the needs arising from different user requirements.

Most new streets to be designed will be within SDLs and will be guided by the Development Briefs, this document, and any specific design guidance/ codes prepared for these major developments. The design guidance here applies to all development and to all streets, both adopted and unadopted.

It is focused on proposals that include:

- new residential streets, with relatively low levels of traffic; and
- proposals that relate to and include some adaptation or alteration to existing streets.

S1: The design of new streets and alterations to existing streets must recognise and respond to 'link' and 'place' functions in a coherent and planned manner.

Manual for Streets provided detailed guidance on placemaking in street design for residential streets with relatively little traffic. Manual for Streets 2 extended these principles to a wider range of streets, including all 30mph speed limits and some 40mph speed limit zones (where actual traffic speeds are under 40mph for much of the day).

Wherever possible, the design of streets should incorporate placemaking principles, to create a high quality public realm. All residential areas and areas where leisure activities might take place should prioritise place.

Roads: Highways designed essentially for the movement of vehicles.

Streets: Typically lined with buildings and public spaces and serving a wider range of functions than movement alone.

Public realm: The space between buildings which is accessible or visible to members of the public, including front gardens, streets, parking courts (where visitor spaces are included), retail car parks, parks, squares etc.

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Figure 5.1: Streets need to incorporate a variety of different users whilst also creating an attractive public realm



Figure 5.2: Streets, particularly in residential areas, should be designed as 'places', to encourage residents to use them for a variety of activities

5 Streets & Spaces

S2: The design of streets must respond positively to the local context. Factors to take into account include:

- the functional needs of development and surrounding activity and uses;
- existing routes and movement patterns;
- the shape and character of the existing settlement pattern;
- landscape and ecology; and
- local topography and boundaries.

It is important that new developments should be well integrated into their surroundings to make sure there is good accessibility between different parts of a place and also to create or reinforce a positive local identity or 'local distinctiveness'.

An understanding of the context must inform the design of new or alterations to existing streets. This does not necessarily mean replicating what is already found in the locality, but rather applying best practice, sustainable urban design principles in a way that is appropriate and sensitive to the locality. In some instances, there may be an opportunity to improve the local character, for instance creating a sense of focus associated with a mixed use proposal through a more urban form of development.

An appraisal of the site in its surroundings at an early stage will help ensure that development relates well to existing places and to the characteristics that distinguish them. See section 3A: Design Process and Section 3B: Local Character.



Figure 5.3: Depending on the settlement pattern, streets will have different characters and functions

The appraisal should identify such things as:

- local destinations, for instance shops, parks, public transport, health and educational facilities;
- complementary activities, such as leisure uses;
- existing and potential desire lines for pedestrian/ cycle movement;
- environmental assets, such as sensitive ecological habitats or mature trees;
- natural/ landscape boundaries such as rivers, flood plains and field boundaries; and
- key characteristics which contribute to the local character, for instance tree screens along front boundaries in ex-forest areas, or sinuous curves for streets.

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5 Streets & Spaces

S3: The design of streets and spaces should contribute to environmental sustainability and to mitigating climate change in particular. Opportunities for promoting sustainability should be integrated into proposals from an early stage.

Streets and spaces can and should play a role in contributing to sustainability and to climate change in particular.

This should include such things as:

- measures to encourage walking, cycling, and to accommodate public transport where appropriate, such as direct and convenient routes, good street lighting and also a high quality of design and implementation;
- mitigating any potential 'heat island effect' through providing soft landscape and shade, for instance by tree planting;
- sustainable urban drainage measures to manage run-off;
- contributing towards creating a joined up 'green infrastructure' network;
- designing robust streets with potential flexibility and adaptability in the long term;
- the use of recycled materials; and
- low energy equipment such as street lighting and traffic signals.

Sections 5.2 to 5.4 below provide further guidance on these issues.

S4: Street spaces need to be actively designed. In many instances this will involve a collaborative process to design and delivery, to find the right balance between different requirements and to ensure that the street will perform its different functions efficiently and effectively.

The range of functions of a street mean that a number of different agencies have an interest in the design, relating to issues such as planning, highways, waste collection, drainage, utilities, accessibility, landscape etc. For existing streets the local community of residents and businesses also need to be included.

It is imperative that there is early liaison with the highway authority as part of any design process.

For large-scale developments or significant alterations to the design of existing streets, there are clear benefits to establishing a coordinated and multi-disciplinary approach to street design, both within the local authority and with outside bodies.

Utilities are encouraged to liaise with the Borough regarding their proposals for street works, so as to minimise potential disruption and ensure that proposals are coordinated to minimise street furniture clutter.

Travel plans are an important part of the design process for movement and will be required as part of any planning application that is likely to have significant transport implications.

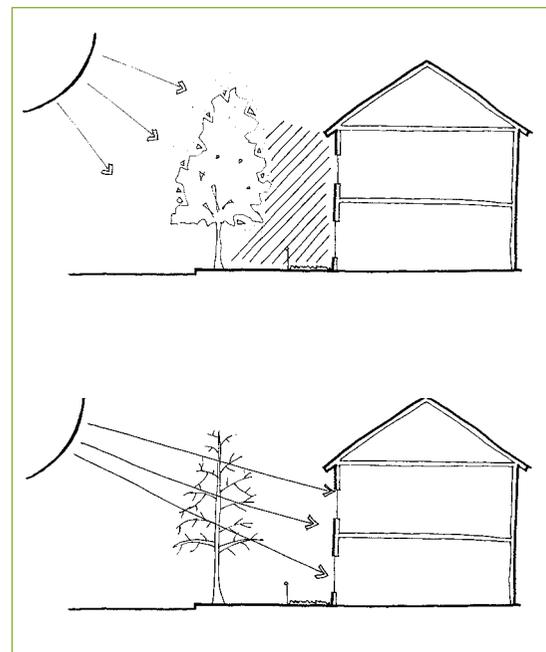


Figure 5.4: Street trees can play an important role in reducing overheating. In summer months trees provide shading to prevent too much solar gain. During the winter, as leaves are lost, lower level winter sun can pass into the building and provide solar gain during the colder months

5 Streets & Spaces

5.2 The network of streets and spaces

Providing direct and attractive connections between new development, places of interest and facilities helps to create places that are more convenient and inclusive.

S5: Streets and spaces must be designed to create connected networks with a choice of routes within a site wherever possible. This is important for encouraging pedestrian and cycle use, but should also apply to vehicular movement wherever possible.

Where through vehicular movement cannot be achieved at present, but connections are possible, streets should be designed to allow connections to be made in future.

Where connections for vehicles cannot be achieved, for instance because of the potential impact of traffic flows through areas of different uses, or where landscape features make connections undesirable or prohibitive in cost, then pedestrian and cycle connections should be provided, wherever possible.

The layout of development should:

- connect together all parts of a site;
- ensure that any new pedestrian routes connect to the facilities and places that people wish to visit;
- accommodate the needs of different users and different activities, for instance connections may include some pedestrian only paths and spaces;
- prioritise pedestrian, cycle and public transport movement where possible, but not compromise the ability of other road users to find their way around; and

- create clear and safe routes for vehicles.

In parts of the Borough, the street layout is typically based on culs-de-sac. It is now recognised that these layouts tend to lead to tortuous journeys on foot or by cycle. They generate additional vehicular travel and vehicle emissions and may also concentrate traffic impacts onto a small number of existing properties. They can also be wasteful in land terms.

In certain locations, culs-de-sac may be required because of landscape or boundary constraints. However, in general, culs-de-sac are only appropriate for the most local level of the street hierarchy or for developing awkward sites where through-routes cannot be achieved. They should be short in length and serve limited development.

S6: The street network must be well connected into the surrounding area to create safe, convenient and attractive links to neighbouring areas and to local destinations, for pedestrians and cyclists in particular. Local destinations include: schools, local shops and other services, public transport stops and open spaces.

The route network within a site should connect into existing routes around the site and should incorporate any existing or potential desire lines that cross the site. It should recognise that people in the existing area may wish to access facilities in the new development and vice versa.

If new public alleyways are proposed, then they should be overlooked and/or close to active areas so that they are well supervised.



Figure 5.5: Where a vehicular connection is not possible, a pedestrian / cycle connection should be provided. These should be well overlooked and inviting to use



Figure 5.6: Cul-de-sac or mews streets can be designed as positive spaces by thinking about the space as somewhere for other activities as well as just functional requirements such as parking and turning circles

5 Streets & Spaces

5.3 Public spaces

S7: The role and function of proposed public spaces must be clearly defined and should be appropriate to the site's location and nature of the proposed development. The design of the space should aim to incorporate a range of informal activities, as well as its formal role.

Public spaces include:

- squares and other spaces with predominantly hard landscape;
- greens and other spaces with hard and soft landscape that are generally integrated into the street network; and
- open spaces, with predominantly soft landscape, which may be integrated into the street network or not.

For more guidance on public open spaces, see Section 4.6 Open space and landscape in Residential.

Public spaces of all types should fulfil a variety of functions, including social and recreational activity that supports daily life and promotes healthy lifestyles; helping to manage environmental quality and movement.

In some cases, this may include vehicular movement either within the space or around its edge, although this should not be the dominant activity unless the space is designed to be a car park.

Where there is a vehicular route in or around a public space it must be designed to create a safe environment for users. For instance, where houses overlook an open space, across a street, then the street must be safe for residents, including children, to cross ie not a busy through route.

Public spaces should be well connected into the wider networks of:

- pedestrian and cycle movement; and
- 'green' infrastructure.

Good quality public spaces provide a sense of place for new development, where they can establish a character for a new area. In existing neighbourhoods, the redesign of existing street spaces can create new public spaces that become a local focus of activity for the area.

The purpose of a public space must be clearly identified at an early stage. It should be located so that it is well integrated into the development and easily accessible to all user groups. Public space should also accommodate a range of other activities, so that it will appeal to a wide range of users at different times.

The quality of landscape in terms of materials, planting, street furniture and details will be of particular importance in public spaces. Different materials and/or surfacing can help to define areas for different activities and/or the hierarchy of routes of spaces.

Public art can help to create a distinctive sense of place and local character for a space.

'Green' infrastructure network: The natural and managed green areas in urban and rural settings, acting as a multi-functional environmental resource. This includes countryside, open spaces, river corridors and wetlands, SUDS landscape features, 'green' corridors, allotments, ecological corridors, private gardens and green roofs.



Figure 5.7: Public space includes open spaces which can incorporate a variety of different functions and also act as a focus for a new development



Figure 5.8: Public spaces can also be more urban in character. The use of paving and carefully selected street furniture and landscape in this example helps to define different activities within the space

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5.4 The design of streets and spaces

S8: Within each place, the design of streets must help to establish a clear hierarchy, including both function and character, to indicate how routes relate to one another and help people find their way around.

A spatial hierarchy of streets and spaces is important as it helps visitors and residents to navigate around the area, allowing clear and confident route-finding without the use of signage. Establishing a hierarchy involves the consideration of how each street should be used.

Issues involved in this would be the relative amounts of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, parking, speed of vehicles, width of carriageway and the use of the buildings adjoining the road.

Once a hierarchy is established, it should be reinforced by the design of both:

- buildings, for instance, height, position of building line and continuity of frontage; and
- landscape, for instance, planting, materials and street furniture.

As well as the purpose of the route, the speed of traffic should be an influence on the position of a street in the hierarchy. The appropriate design speed for a street should be identified and agreed at an early stage and the street design should aim to manage the speeds of motorists accordingly. For residential streets the design speed should generally be 20mph.

S9: The design of streets must contribute to the character, identity and environmental quality of an area. This includes the highway and landscape design of the space and also the design of development and how it relates to the street.

Places should be easy to understand, with a clear hierarchy of routes and spaces that is supported by the built form. Views to landmark buildings or other features will help users orientate themselves. To achieve this and to create interesting places, there needs to be a balance between:

- consistency, such as the use of a coherent architectural style or palette of materials; and
- diversity, for instance in architectural form, planting species and landmark buildings.

Street trees can reinforce the hierarchy of routes so helping people find their way around. They can also help to establish a positive character for a neighbourhood.

The character of streets varies in different parts of the Borough. In urban areas, streets are generally tightly defined by buildings and take the form of a carriageway with pavements on either side, with street lighting. In suburban areas, the street space is often defined by soft landscape as well as by buildings, with pavements, street lighting and in some cases verges and street trees. In rural areas, streets may be defined by buildings, boundary walls or landscape, often with no pavements or street lighting.

Where new development introduces new streets or alters existing streets, a balance should be struck between local character and the needs of users. For instance in a rural area, where there may be a pedestrian safety issue, it may be possible to design a footway behind a retained hedgerow, rather than directly alongside the carriageway.

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Figure 5.9: There are a wide variety of street types that exist within the Wokingham Borough, varying from more historic traditional streets, to suburban and rural examples

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S10: The design of streets must meet the technical requirements for road layout, but these must not become dominant. The design should demonstrate balance in making provision for the needs of all road users and functions, not just for motor vehicles, so that streets are safe for all to use.

The vulnerability of cyclists and pedestrians places them at a natural disadvantage when sharing spaces with motor vehicles. When designing streets, a user hierarchy should be adopted, so that the different needs are considered in a structured manner (see Figure 5.10).

Where there is potential for bus services to access a development, public transport infrastructure must be integrated into the design of the layout. This will influence the width, alignment and general layout of streets and will be reflected in the proposed street hierarchy.

Access for refuse and deliveries must be integrated into layout design from an early stage so that efficient and non-intrusive solutions can be found without dominating the proposals.

All adoptable streets must be capable of being serviced by refuse, domestic delivery and emergency vehicles. Refuse vehicles will not normally access private roads.

S11: Streets and spaces must be designed to be inclusive, that is: public; accessible; safe; and attractive to use, for all.

Streets should provide access for all, free of clutter and with ramped access routes where necessary. They should not be gated. Surfacing should be appropriate for the location and intended use.

The public realm should be safe and active during the day and also - where appropriate - it should encourage activity outside work hours. Routes should be immediately apparent to the user, with clear sight lines and forward visibility, a generous width and good lighting.

Streets and spaces should provide and support a range of activities and facilities that appeal to all members of the community, including formal provision, such as play areas, and also creating opportunities for informal and spontaneous use, for instance through providing steps that can be used as seating.

See also Section 4.5 Creating place in Residential and the Council's forthcoming technical guidance on street design.

Consider first



- Pedestrians
- Cyclists
- Public Transport Users
- Specialist Service and Emergency Service Vehicles
- Other Motor Vehicles

Consider last

Figure 5.10: User hierarchy



Figure 5.11: Streets should be designed to be inclusive for all



Figure 5.12: Streets should be designed to incorporate a variety of activities and should be engaging for all members of the community

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S12: Streets and spaces should be designed to create a neutral, high quality safe setting for the built form, rather than to be the focus of attention. The use of materials should contribute to character, influence the behaviour of users, and help people to find their way around. Any departure from conventional surfacing materials must use high quality materials that will enhance the street scene. The selection of materials must also address the long term management and maintenance implications for the Council.

In many locations, the conventional approach to surfacing, ie bitmac, is acceptable. Other materials should be used with care, in order to create a particular desired character and should represent an improvement in quality that enhances the street scene.

Paving should be simple in design, robustly detailed and should be appropriate to the character of the area. It should be easy for all to negotiate, with dropped kerbs and tactile paving designed with care. The requirements for management and maintenance, including those of the utilities, should be planned in from an early stage.

Different materials can be used to reflect the hierarchy and the use of different streets or spaces within a street. They will be most appropriate where they denote special locations or spaces, for instance in town centres. In such locations, it is essential that the quality of landscape materials and street furniture is high. A clear design ethos should

be adopted, avoiding any mixing of modern and pastiche elements. The quality of detail is important to ensure the long term permanence of the space. In these instances, the Council may need to store materials for repair or reinstatement at a future date.

The use of recycled materials is encouraged where is appropriate to the character of an area.

A variation in materials may also be appropriate within a non-traditional street, for instance a shared space.

The Council will require the payment of commuted sums for any non-standard materials or street furniture.

S13: Street furniture should be minimised, and clutter must be avoided. A coordinated effort should be made to organise streetscape elements efficiently.

Generally, street furniture should be minimised, and used only where really necessary. It should be selected to be appropriate to the character of the place, although this does not necessarily mean a 'heritage' approach in all established urban areas. A simple modern design can also complement historic townscapes.

The siting of street furniture and colour or design palettes should be coordinated. Signage should be consistent and appropriate in scale to the context.

The design of streets and public spaces should address the likely patterns of use both during daytime and the night-time hours,

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Figure 5.13: Paving can be used to help delineate areas for different activities in a street



Figure 5.14: In this example paving and landscape is used to define a seating area and performance space within a town centre

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considering issues for all users on the basis of the approach set out in Figure 5.10. Where evening use will be encouraged, good quality lighting and surveillance must be provided, so that places feel safe to use. Lighting should not be obtrusive or disturbing to existing residents.

Bespoke street furniture may be appropriate in special locations, provided the scale of the forms complements the space and does not overpower it.

Routes between leisure facilities, car and cycle parks, bus stops and railway stations are of particular importance; these are likely to be focal points for activity in themselves.

A clutter of streets signs, bollards, benches, railings, litter bins, and light columns in a street can significantly detract from its appearance and obstruct pedestrian movement, especially for the partially sighted.

The aim should be to:

- Remove obsolete signs and street furniture;
- Maximise the clear pavement area for pedestrians by locating street furniture in a single strip;
- Avoid 'fencing in' pedestrians with guard rails; and
- Where possible, combine signs and street furniture (e.g. by fixing signs to lighting columns).

S14: Trees, both new street tree planting and the retention of existing trees, contribute to the character of the street scene in existing places and new developments and will generally be expected as part of landscape proposals. Space should be provided within the highway

and infrastructure requirements as an integral part of street design. Any proposed trees will need to be integrated into proposals from the outset, and designed in such a way as to minimise any potential future maintenance liabilities.

Tree planting, provided it is used in an organised way, is a simple but effective means of varying the character of different streets.

It may be provided either within development plots or on-street. Tree species must be selected with care so that they will be appropriate to the area, and in scale relative to the size of the street and their position in relation to buildings.

Trees can contribute to the public realm in a number of ways, by:

- helping to enclose spaces;
- providing 'green links' between green spaces;
- creating shade, to reduce any potential 'heat island' effect; and
- mitigating air quality.

Trees should be selected to maximise the potential for winter solar gain, where appropriate to local character.

Discussions with highways officers and utility companies should aim to establish good conditions for street trees to avoid any potential for future problems caused by them, such as pavements or cracking, drainage systems rupturing. Large tree pits with root barriers and root trainers should be specified where possible.

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Figure 5.15: Bespoke street furniture can be appropriate in certain locations such as town centres

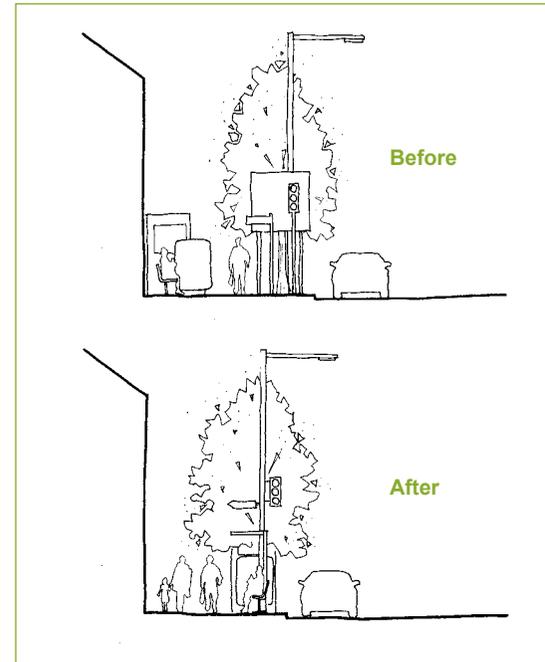


Figure 5.16: Street clutter should be avoided, unnecessary signs, bollards and benches should be avoided and the 'clear' pedestrian area should be maximised

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Where trees are to be retained, then they should be integrated into the layout of a development proposal and protected in accordance with BS5837. Where possible retained trees should be set in soft landscape. Streets and buildings should not be positioned too close to mature trees, to avoid future issues with occupants of a development.

Trees contribute significantly to local character in parts of the Borough and the design of streets/ access points in these areas must ensure their retention.

S15: The design of new streets and spaces should incorporate sustainable drainage features and, wherever possible, these should be designed to contribute to the character of the space, whilst addressing public safety considerations.

There are a wide variety of sustainable drainage features, ranging from:

- permeable paving with storage reservoirs beneath, which may be the most appropriate solution for areas of parking with a strongly urban character; to
- swales, wetlands and ponds, which contribute to creating streets and spaces with a soft, 'green' character.

The SUDS strategy for a proposed development may use a combination of different features. It will depend upon local ground conditions, in particular whether the subsoil is clay, or chalk/sand.

SUDS design should be considered from the earliest stage and should take any opportunities to integrate features that will contribute to local character.

See also the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.

S16: The long term management and maintenance responsibility for streets and spaces and their landscapes, including street trees and SUDS, must be identified by designers. These matters need to be considered from the outset in relation to such matters as the layout and design, safety, choice of materials, street furniture and planting species.

It is vital to identify clearly who will be responsible for streets, public spaces and incidental space and to design so that those responsible take 'ownership' and look after their spaces. Good planting and early years management mean that landscape becomes established and can thrive.

Regular maintenance is often as important as the initial investment into a public space.

Good management can lead to better use and supports an investment in better quality, as people adapt their behaviour to their surroundings. Better surveillance reduces the likelihood of vandalism.

Management factors that influence the quality of public spaces include the corporate policy framework and clarity of lines of responsibility within the management structure; and the degree of engagement with the community in the process of establishing a space.

Targeting limited funding towards one location at a time, so as to maximise its impact is a more effective approach than minor works across a large number of spaces.



Figure 5.17: Poorly supervised incidental space at the side of a dwelling which has become neglected and is underused in comparison to space at the front of a dwelling which is well maintained and makes a positive contribution to the public realm



Figure 5.18: Drainage features can play a positive role in open spaces and the street environment if 'designed in' well

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Parking

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6 Parking

6.1 Introduction

Wokingham Borough has a dispersed pattern of settlement and employment. Associated with this is a high level of car ownership and relatively sparse public transport. This has placed pressure on space for parking particularly in older areas, which were designed before car ownership rose to current levels.

Restraining formal car parking provision for new housing, as part of an overall strategy to reduce travel by car, has not reduced car ownership. Instead, the street scenes in new housing have become dominated by informal parking: on-street, where there is not enough width for passing; on footways; on forecourts too small to accommodate cars.

Research on the use of car parking has shown that where parking spaces are shared so that they can be used flexibly, then fewer spaces are required in total. This applies to:

- areas of housing, where the level of car ownership will vary between households; and also
- town centres and other mixed use areas, where there may be demand for parking from different user groups at different times of day, for instance for work and leisure.

A Parking Standards Study has been carried out to determine appropriate levels of parking to meet local circumstances (see Appendix A2). Parking standards will be adopted through the MDD Local Plan.

P1: The location, layout and design of parking areas for all uses and purposes must accommodate cars satisfactorily.

Development proposals should also be accompanied by sustainable travel plans to demonstrate how the need for parking is being minimised.

Suitable parking areas should also be provided for cycles, motorcycles and disabled badge holders.

P2: Parking in residential development should aim to accommodate car ownership in a manner that is compatible with local character and creating a high quality environment that functions well. It must also include cycle and motorcycle parking.

Research has shown that this can most efficiently be achieved by providing a mix of allocated and non-allocated parking spaces. The Parking Standards Study has identified local car ownership patterns for different parts of Wokingham Borough, which show slight variations. From this it has derived the parking needs for different combinations of allocated and non-allocated spaces. It has also studied the patterns of car parking in recent housing developments and has concluded that in many cases people do not park in garage spaces.



Figure 6.1: On street parking that has been well designed to incorporate street trees and form a positive part of the street environment

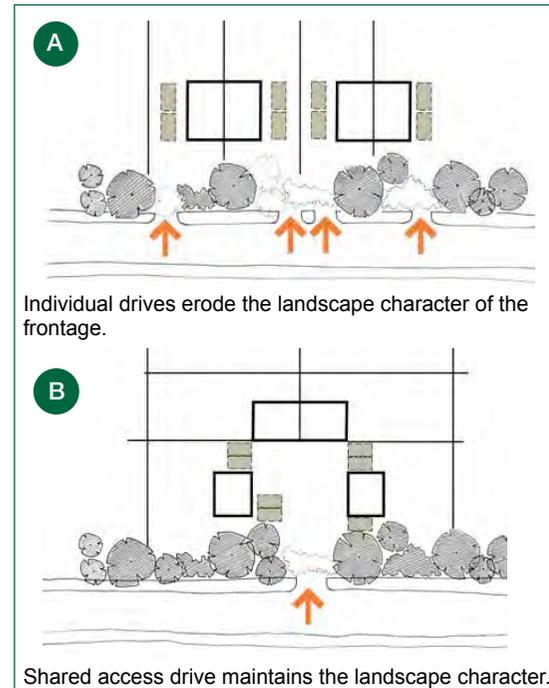


Figure 6.2: The design of access and parking should respond to local character, as here in the Ex-woodland area

6 Parking

6.2 Design principles

Technical design guidance is provided in the Parking Standards Study. The design guidance in this section focuses mainly on residential development.

P3: Parking spaces and areas should be positioned and designed with care so they:

- are safe and convenient for users, ie overlooked from the street or adjoining housing, and close to the dwelling, preferably the front door;
- create a high quality setting for development, not dominated by cars; and
- are sited to minimise any impact on the safety of the public realm.

Achieving this balance is particularly important in residential development, where car owners will expect to be able to park close to their property and where the supervision of parking areas contributes to their security.

Parking can be provided in a number of ways:

- On plot;
- In-structure, within or beneath the dwelling;
- In communal parking courts; or
- On-street, or within the public realm.

Well designed developments of any size tend to integrate a variety of parking solutions so the impact of parking is not concentrated into any particular location. For smaller developments, the approach to parking must be sensitive to local character.

Provision of car club will reduce car parking requirements.

6.2.1 On-plot parking

On plot parking may be provided to the front, rear, or side of dwellings. It may include garages or car ports. It is most suitable in suburban locations and likely to be difficult to achieve in places with a tight urban form.

Parking spaces should generally be set behind the building line so that the street scene is not dominated by cars. Where parking is proposed in front of buildings, then space will be required for pedestrian access and for planting e.g. landscape to soften the view of parked cars.

Parking in rear gardens, accessed via drive-throughs or carriage arches, should be designed to make sure the rear of properties is not vulnerable to crime, for instance by providing a gated entrance. Rear garden areas should provide usable outdoor space when a car is parked.

On-plot parking generally requires many crossovers from the highway into plots. In ex-forest character areas, the landscape screen along front boundaries is a key element of local character. In these locations, a single shared drive may be required from the street to serve dwellings with on-plot parking.

Structures for parking, such as car ports or garages, should generally be set back from the building line so that dwellings, rather than parking, are the dominant features in the street scene, providing animation and supervising the public realm. The set-back should be designed to deter informal parking that obstructs the footway.

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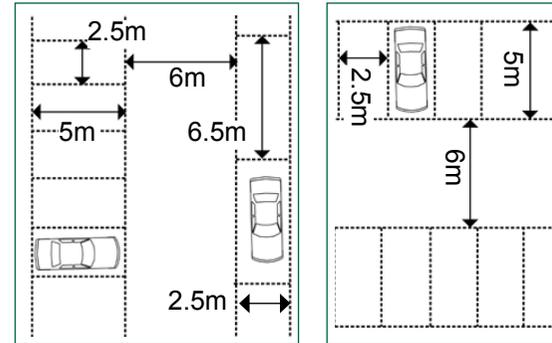


Figure 6.3: Size of parking spaces for perpendicular and parallel parking (Wokingham's Parking Standards Study)

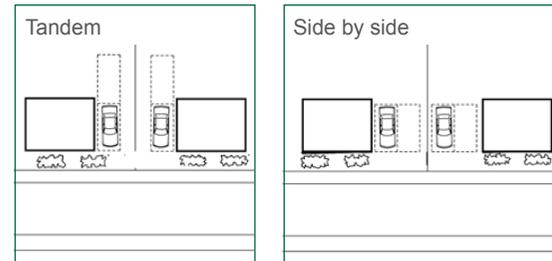


Figure 6.4: Parking should be set behind the building line so that it doesn't dominate the street scene

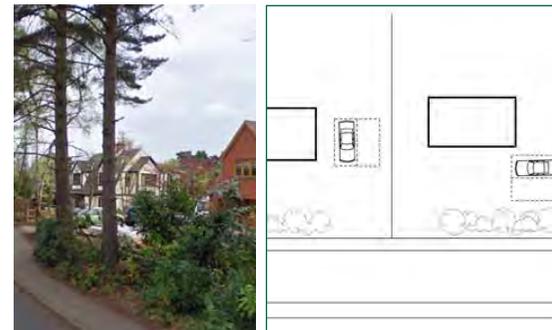


Figure 6.5: In Ex-woodland areas, housing is generally set well back from the street with a heavily planted frontage. In such locations it may be appropriate for parking to be in front of the building provided a strong screen of soft landscape is retained

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6.2.2 In-structure parking

In-structure parking includes integral garages and car ports, and undercroft parking. It is most suitable in urban locations and generally relates to an urban scale of buildings of 2.5 or more storeys in height.

Integral garages or undercroft parking can be acceptable on frontages if used to a limited degree, particularly when:

- dwellings are wide fronted, also allowing for a window to a ground floor room;
- first floor windows to principal rooms are generous in size, (perhaps accompanied by a balcony) to create good surveillance of the street;
- included in mixed groups of dwellings, some without integral parking; or
- undercroft parking is at basement or semi-basement level, secure and with a good level of surveillance.

In-structure parking should be set on or behind the building line, so that it does not dominate the street scene. The set-back should be designed to deter informal parking that obstructs the footway.

Undercroft parking should be close to and easy to access from the building it serves. The vehicle access point and any ramps to undercroft parking should be located and designed with care so that it does not become an intrusive element in the street scene.

6.2.3 Communal parking courts

Communal parking courts are private car parking areas, which may be positioned either to the front or rear of dwellings.

Parking courts are most appropriate in places with an urban character and to serve blocks of flats. Rear parking courts potentially reduce security at the rear of dwellings and should be avoided where possible.

Where a rear parking court is to be provided, it should serve no more than 6 dwellings with allocated parking spaces close to the dwellings they serve. Such courts must be easily accessible to the dwellings they serve, well overlooked and designed clearly to be semi-private.

Parking courts should be designed as spaces in their own right, rather than simply as car parks, with a high quality of landscape, (boundary treatments in particular), lighting and tree planting or other soft landscape where possible.

Flats over Garages (FoGs) or chauffeur units may be introduced to improve security in parking courts although these buildings and spaces must be designed with particular care.

Front parking courts in particular must be designed to be part of the public realm, as attractive spaces which happen also to contain some parking and should not be gated.

Wherever possible parking courts should be designed to incorporate sustainable drainage.

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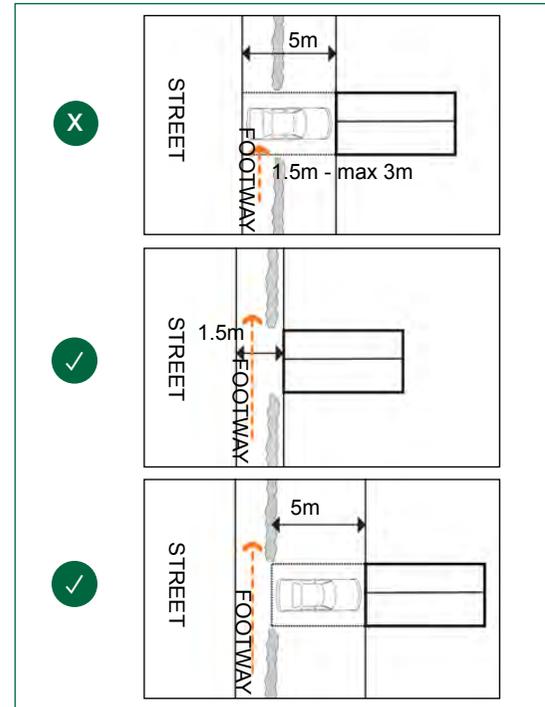


Figure 6.6: It is important to position garages so that cars do not park across the footway



Figure 6.7: Parking courts can be designed as positive spaces

6 Parking

6.2.4 On-street parking

On-street parking can add to the vibrancy and variety of a street scene if well designed. It can provide a number of benefits including:

- bringing people, and activity, into the street;
- convenience, to visitors in particular; and
- its ability to be used for multiple purposes at different times of day.

There is a preference for visitor and non-allocated parking to be provided on-street where possible and appropriate to local character.

Where on-street parking is proposed, then the street must be purpose designed to accommodate it.

It may be appropriate to provide a clearly delineated bay, offset from the carriageway, which should generally include no more than 6 spaces. Bays can fulfil a variety of functions within the street scene:

- helping to promote the safety of pedestrians crossing at junctions;
- providing order within a street space where different activities take place; and
- integrating landscape and parking into a zone within the street space.

In residential areas, parking bays may accommodate parallel, perpendicular or angled spaces. Individual parking spaces should not be marked out within each parking bay to deter 'ownership' issues arising.

On-street parking increases the width of the street space relative to the height of the dwellings that enclose it. To make sure the space is well enclosed and to soften the impact of parking, street trees and other planting may be needed between blocks of on-street parking.

6.3 Car parks

P4: Car parks should be designed as positive spaces. These may be urban in character or may be softened by planting of trees and other vegetation. Wherever possible sustainable drainage should be designed for use in such areas.

Car parks open to the public (for instance for shopping) should be considered as part of the public realm. The key to the success of these areas is that they should have a strong landscape or townscape structure, so that they are not only defined by the number of cars. Where this is done convincingly, substantial parking can be accommodated.

For large areas of car parking, soft landscape is likely to be required to help enclose the space, provide visual screening and soften the views of cars.

These car parks should have a high quality of hard and soft landscape and should be easily accessible, overlooked and well lit.

For all public car parks, the Council promotes the Safer Parking Scheme in the interests of public safety and responding to the fear of crime.

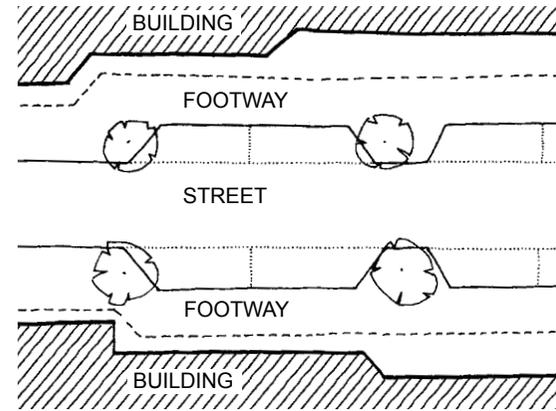


Figure 6.8: On street parking should be designed to be well integrated with footways and street trees



Figure 6.9: On street parking can make a positive contribution to the street scene



Figure 6.10: Large areas of car parking can be softened by incorporating soft landscaping

Non-residential

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7 Non-residential

7.1 Introduction

Non-residential development includes a wide range of uses, with different types and forms of building. Most of the non-residential development in the Borough takes place in association with retail centres, employment areas and business parks.

This section provides guidance for design issues that are commonly associated with non-residential development proposals in Wokingham Borough. The general design principles set out in Section 2 apply to all development proposals.

Developers should take into account any other legislative requirements that may apply, especially where they may impact on the design.

In many cases design issues arise where the proposal is for a large-scale or deep plan floorplate relative to its surroundings. These urban design issues include:

- creating a sense of place appropriate to the context, rather than somewhere that only meets operational needs, is often challenging for employment areas and business parks, but also where 'out-of-town' forms of development are proposed in retail centres;
- scale relationships in the townscape and landscape, and between different types of development, particularly in retail centres and employment areas;
- addressing street frontages;
- creating a coherent public realm;
- mixed use relationships, both horizontal and vertical; and

- integrating parking, servicing and storage areas.

7.2 Creating a sense of place

NR1: Non-residential development should be designed to respond to and exploit key features or characteristics of the site and the local context.

Each site has its own particular characteristics. Responding to these is one way to help create a development with its own character. These may include the features of the site itself or qualities it gains from its context.

Where possible, non-residential development proposals should retain and exploit the distinctive features of the site. These include the site topography, any remnants of historic landscape, structures or buildings, landscape and ecological features such as hedges and trees, watercourses or waterbodies, etc.

Views to be considered should not be limited to arrival at the site by car. Sites may be visually prominent from major routes through the area by road, railway or from the river and views from all of these transport corridors are important. These may also be visible from other places, from town centres or residential areas. Developments should be designed to address these views where they occur.

Designers should identify and ensure that the scheme responds to:

- the most distinctive features of the site and local context; and
- the key views of the site from all locations and transport modes.

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Figure 7.1: In this development, Green Park, an attractive public realm has been created which is well used



Figure 7.2: The development creates successful open spaces and incorporates landscape and water features

7 Non-residential

The quality of non-residential development is as important as where we live, because people spend more than a third of their time at their workplace or visiting other developments.

Non-residential development should create well designed, attractive environments that people enjoy using, as well as being successful in attracting occupants. It must also add to the quality and character of the place and help to maintain or increase its appeal.

NR2: Non-residential development should be designed to contribute towards improving the character and quality of the area. Proposals will be required to demonstrate the appropriateness of the approach in each case.

The context appraisal should include an assessment of the existing character of the area. This should help to identify an appropriate sense of place for the new development.

In some situations, the approach might be to respect or enhance the existing character of the area, for instance where a single building is being introduced into an established context. In others, it may be appropriate to create a new 'quarter' with its own character.

NR3: Developments must be arranged to create a positive impression on arrival for people arriving by all modes of transport.

Developments should ensure that:

- users and visitors can identify a clear route into the site and to the building;
- building entrances are clearly visible on arrival;

- pedestrians can reach entrances by direct and attractive routes, i.e. they should not have to walk through parking spaces to reach an entrance, although shared surfaces may be appropriate; and
- servicing and infrastructure is integrated sensitively into the site so that it does not dominate on arrival.

NR4: Buildings should address the street.

Buildings should face towards the street so that the site frontage is as well supervised as possible by windows and entrances.

The building line should be positioned so that it defines and encloses the street space. It should not be set back behind large expanses of car parking.

Where the building line is set away from the street, tree planting or other landscape will be required to enclose the street space. In these situations the quality of boundary treatments will be of particular importance.



Figure 7.3: A clear route from car park to building entrance in this business development

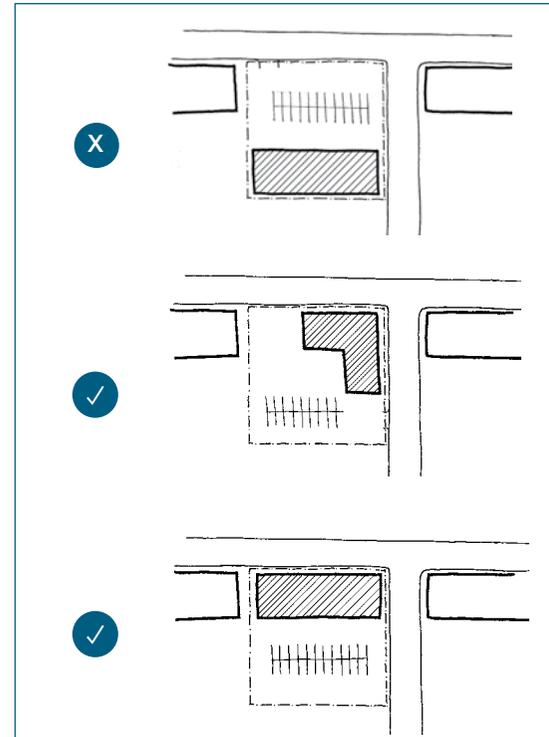


Figure 7.4: buildings should define the street with parking tucked behind the building line



Figure 7.5: Large format retail units arranged to define and street with parking behind

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7.3 Building design

NR5: Building height, bulk and massing should be designed to relate well to the local context.

The built form will be heavily influenced by the type of business the development is designed to accommodate. Different approaches will be appropriate in different locations and contexts.

The scale of business development is often greater than that of dwellings in terms of plot size, footprint and, in some cases, height.

The height of proposed buildings should relate well to those found in the surrounding area. Where there is a highly uniform townscape then there will be less scope for changes in height than where there is already a variety of heights.

Key considerations include:

- where the site is a gateway or landmark location, it may be appropriate for a building to be taller than its surroundings;
- there should be a positive relationship between the height and bulk of the proposal and its surroundings; and
- the relationship and potential impacts should be considered from key viewpoints in the public realm, not only from the front.

NR6: Where there are significant differences in height and/ or bulk between immediately neighbouring buildings, the design approach must moderate its impact.

The perceived scale of buildings can be moderated by:

- modelling the form and massing of the building, including attic storeys, bays and set backs;

- articulation of the building line or roof line;
- grouping elements on the elevations to influence their rhythm and proportions; and
- the use of colours and materials.

The visual impact of large elevations can be reduced by the use of materials or colours to break down the scale and relate it to other buildings in the surrounding area.

Proposals should demonstrate a design approach that responds to the key views of a site.

NR7: Roofs and roofscapes need to be carefully designed in relation to the context, and should respond to their visibility.

Where roofs may be visually prominent, the shape of the roof and the colour and finish of roof material should be carefully considered.

Where a building is on a valley floor, the potential for using 'green' or 'brown' roofs should be investigated, for visual reasons as well as the environmental benefits of such features, in terms of surface water drainage or flooding.

For development on the skyline, it is the roof profile that may be prominent. The roof line will need to be composed either to draw attention or so that it recedes as a backdrop element. Any plant at roof level should be screened and should be unobtrusive in long views.

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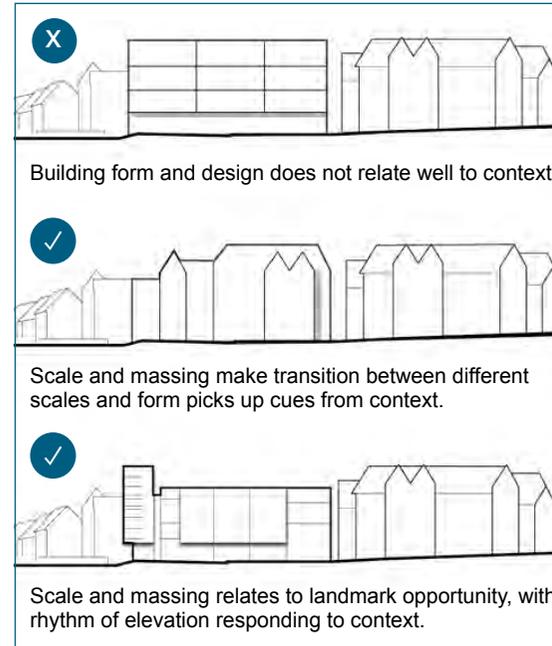


Figure 7.6: Large, bulky buildings can be broken down in a number of ways, such as through the massing of the building or through elevational treatments



Figure 7.7: The roof form of this supermarket echoes the shape of the hills beyond the town

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Designers should address the following:

- the visual prominence of the roof in both close and long views;
- the form and profile of the roof in response to its location;
- choice of roof materials appropriate to the context; and
- the potential impact of elements such as plant and services in key views.

NR8: The approach to materials should generally be a simple one, focusing on high quality materials and components, with the appropriate level of intricacy and detail being guided by the nature of the viewer experience.

In general, the preference is to focus on a simple, well proportioned design approach, using high quality materials, with simple, well designed details.

Where people come into close contact with a building, for instance around entrances or along the street frontage, is an appropriate place to focus the quality of materials, colour and texture.

Developments must demonstrate a coherent approach to the use of materials and colours that relates well to the local context.

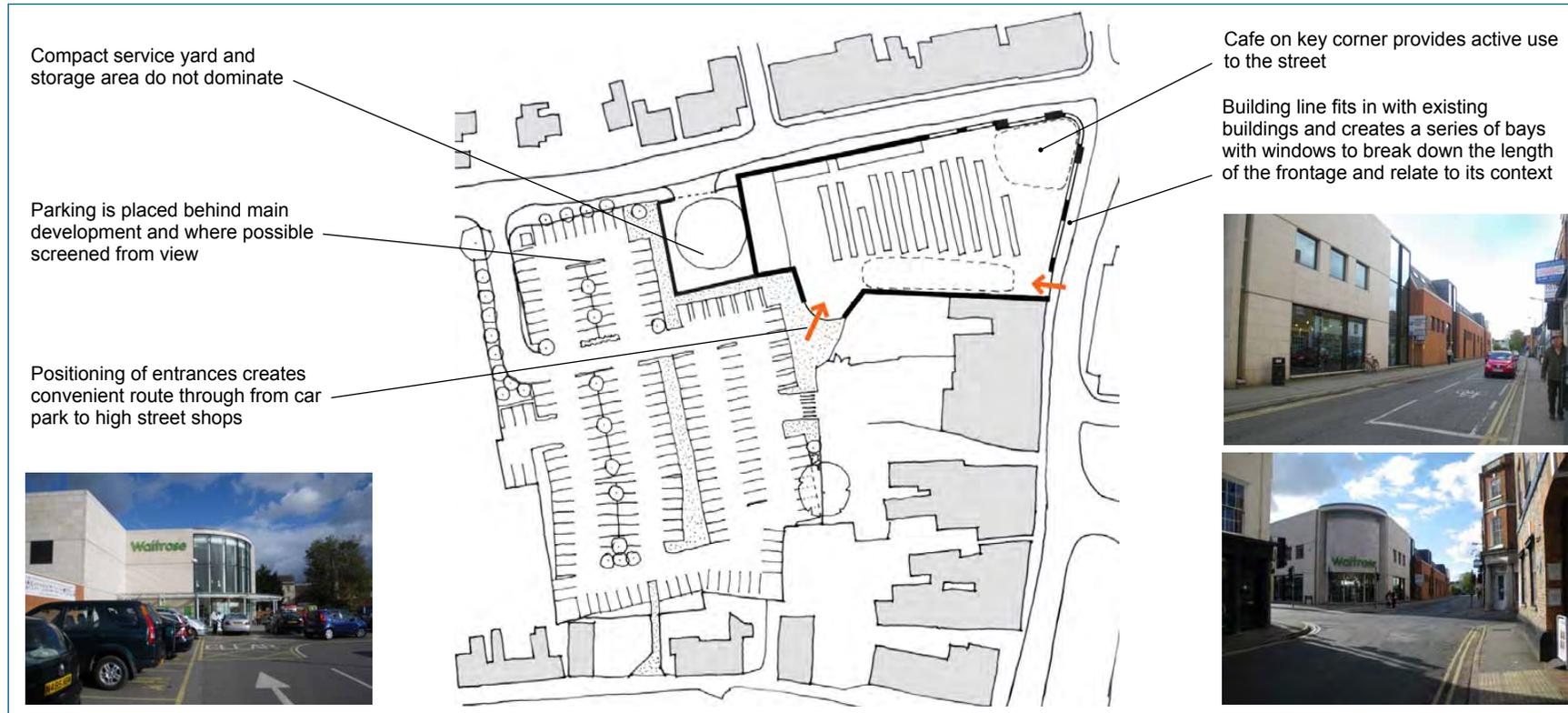


Figure 7.8: Supermarket in centre, Waitrose in Wallingford

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7.4 Integrating large floorplates into their context

High quality places combine a variety of different densities, unit types and sizes, parking arrangements and street types. These elements contribute to an interesting environment provided they are carefully designed, follow a design concept and create a hierarchy of places.

For sustainability reasons it is desirable to locate uses that attract visitors in centres wherever possible. Where these are large floorplate users, then there may well be a conflict between the characteristics of the proposed use and local character. Similarly where a large floorplate use is proposed on the edge of a settlement or in the landscape, its scale may have a significant impact in views. Schemes must be designed to minimise the potential impact of large floorplate developments on local character.

A mix of uses can be helpful when integrating large floorplate uses into an existing context, by creating more active frontage than otherwise.

For instance:

- an upper level use may introduce additional entrances and more supervision than would be possible for a single use development; or
- a mix of uses or unit types can be used to wrap the perimeter, so avoiding blank walls onto the street, or screening service areas.

In some cases, it is possible to achieve a similar result with the activities that are found within the main use, such as a cafe associated with a supermarket, or staff offices and staffrooms.

NR9: Large floorplate uses must be designed with care to minimise any potential impact on their context and local character.



Figure 7.9: A mix of uses helps to integrate this supermarket into its context, creating an urban scale of development and providing more activity and supervision of the public realm than a single use development



Figure 7.10: The use of materials, the canopy and overhang of the roof help to create a human scale for this community centre

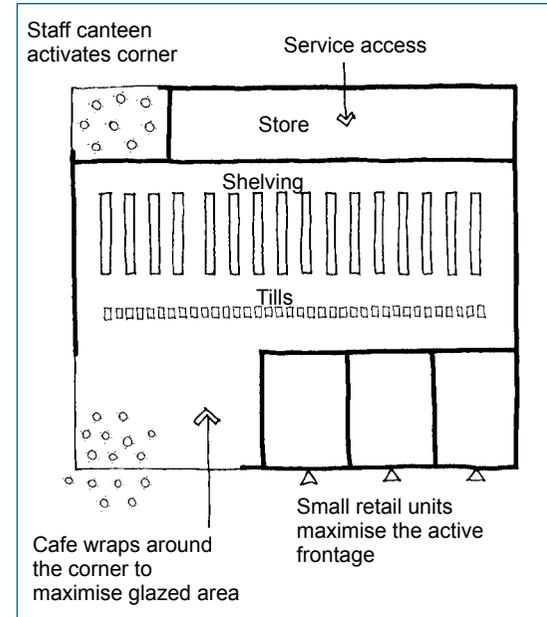


Figure 7.11: Large floorplate retail stores need to be designed with care and to integrate well with existing context. Providing a mix of uses and an active frontage to existing public realm is one way to achieve this



Figure 7.12: The large bulk of a supermarket is set back from the street with only the entrance visible in views along the historic street

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7.5 Site layout

NR10 Car parking should be positioned unobtrusively and well designed and landscaped.

Where parking is provided on the street frontage, then high quality boundary treatments will be required to the street frontage, and the quality of design will be of particular importance.

Other car parking should be positioned away from the street frontage.

Designers should:

- position parking carefully to minimise its visibility from the street;
- make sure that car parks are supervised and feel safe to use;
- design and construct car parking to create attractive spaces, including space for planting trees and hedges or shrubs to act as visual screens and to break down the scale of the car park whilst also considering natural surveillance and public safety; and
- Incorporate SUDS measures such as swales or permeable paving into the scheme to facilitate drainage and flood attenuation.

NR11: The impact of servicing areas upon the public realm should be minimised through locating them sensitively and screening.

Servicing is a key part of the operation of much business development. However servicing areas often have a negative effect on the quality of environment, visually and in terms of noise etc.

Key considerations are:

- service areas should be located away from the main arrival points and the street frontage;
- they should not be positioned where noise or secure lighting will create a nuisance to existing residents; and
- to mitigate the potential visual impact of any service areas positioned close to the street frontage, they should be screened by soft landscape or other boundary treatments that will improve the quality of views.

NR12: Boundary treatments should form an integral part of the design of proposals for non-residential development.

Local character is strongly influenced by the design of the street frontage, how the buildings and landscape are arranged and how they relate to the public realm.

The treatment of site boundaries has a significant impact on the quality of the public realm. The quality of environment must be the primary concern and any security considerations must be integrated into a well designed solution.

A coordinated approach to boundary treatments can help to create a coherent character.

Boundary treatments should

- relate to the public realm and adjacent boundary treatments;
- provide security without reducing the safety of the public realm; and
- contribute positively to local character.

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Figure 7.13: Parking areas should be carefully designed to include space for trees and hedges to reduce their visual impact



Figure 7.14: Beech hedges screen cars at all times of year

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NR13: Non-residential development should contribute to the quality of the public realm, either by creating high quality new spaces, streets or other routes that are accessible to the public, or by enhancing the existing public realm in terms of its safety; convenience and/or quality. This can be achieved through high quality hard or soft landscape, street furniture or equipment such as seating, and/or public art.

The layout of non-residential development must provide people with opportunities to walk, cycle or use public transport, as well as to use their car. The public realm needs to be designed not only for the convenience of drivers, but also for pedestrians and cyclists to enjoy.

Where there are opportunities, development should also contribute towards joining up more fully the network of green space, by means of public access or public space, or landscape that performs an environmental function.

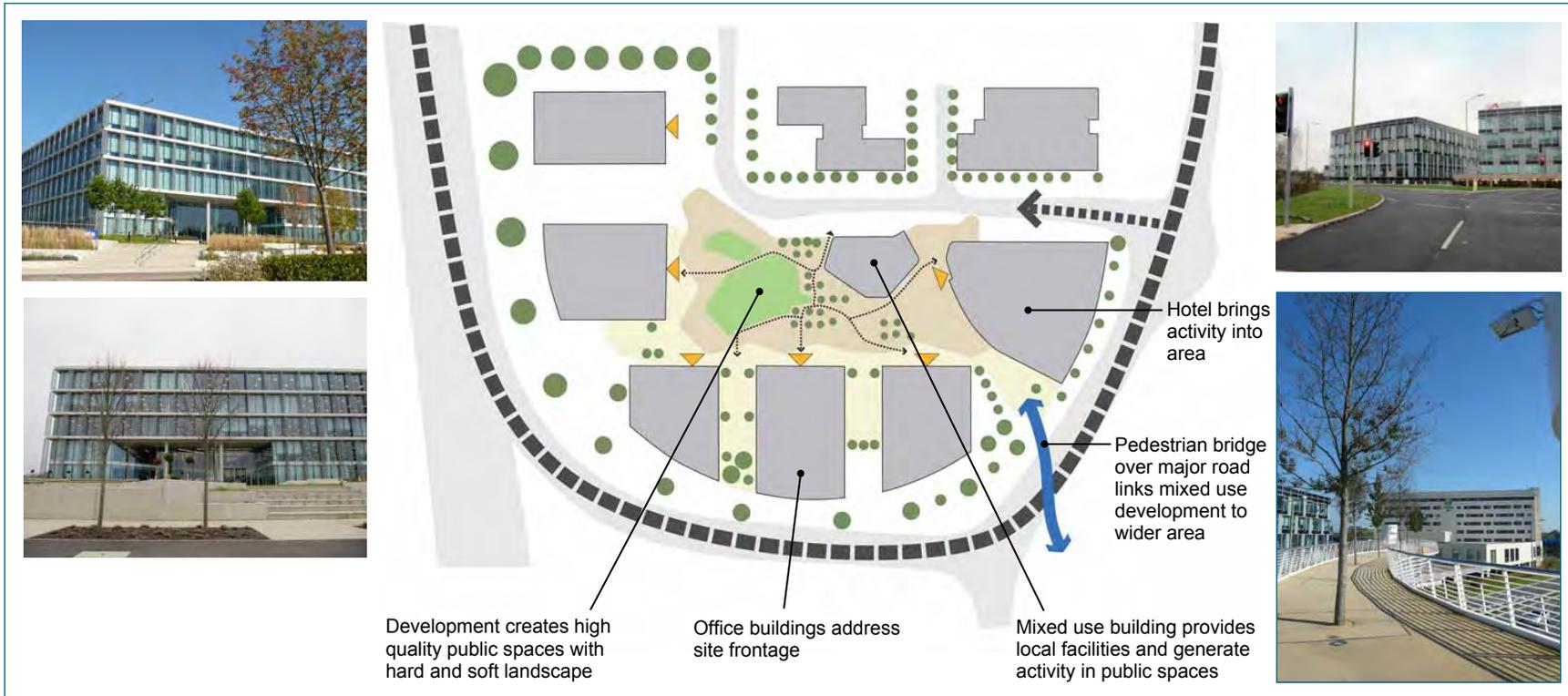


Figure 7.15: Eskdale Road, Winnersh

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7.6 Large-scale developments

NR14: For larger sites, where individual development plots are likely to come forward over time, a masterplan will be required to coordinate the design of new development.

Proposals for non-residential development often take place on a site by site basis with no overall coherence or consistency between sites. While businesses should be able to express their corporate identity through their physical development, it is important that such areas contribute to the environmental quality of the place for all those who live in and use it.

One of the key ways of achieving this is to coordinate the approach to certain elements of the development, so that there is a level of coherence between different sites that may be developed separately.

A masterplan or design guide is a tool for coordinating an area-wide approach to development.

This is likely to relate to:

- the design of the public realm itself; but it may also relate to
- the design of frontages;
- the landscape; or to
- certain characteristics of the buildings themselves, for instance through a palette of materials or colours.

NR15: Large-scale developments must be designed with a clear structure and hierarchy of streets and spaces, so that people can safely find their way around and locate any address without difficulty. They should include some form of focus, created through the arrangement and design of urban or open space and/ or local facilities, which will be attractive for a wide range of different users.

Non-residential buildings may become outdated and subject to redevelopment proposals as technology and lifestyles evolve over time. However, it is likely that the network of streets and spaces will be a more permanent feature of a place, as it contains services and infrastructure which are costly to divert or replace. It is particularly important that new large-scale developments create places which are easy for people to use and attractive in their own right.

NR16: New developments must create a high quality public realm and wherever possible should include some form of focus, in terms of urban or open space and/ or local facilities.

Large-scale developments offer an opportunity to create places with their own distinctive character.

The quality of the public realm plays an important role in the quality of environment as a whole, particularly where plots may be developed on a phased basis by different developers.

It can provide a unifying character and a distinctive identity as well as a coherent setting for different developments.

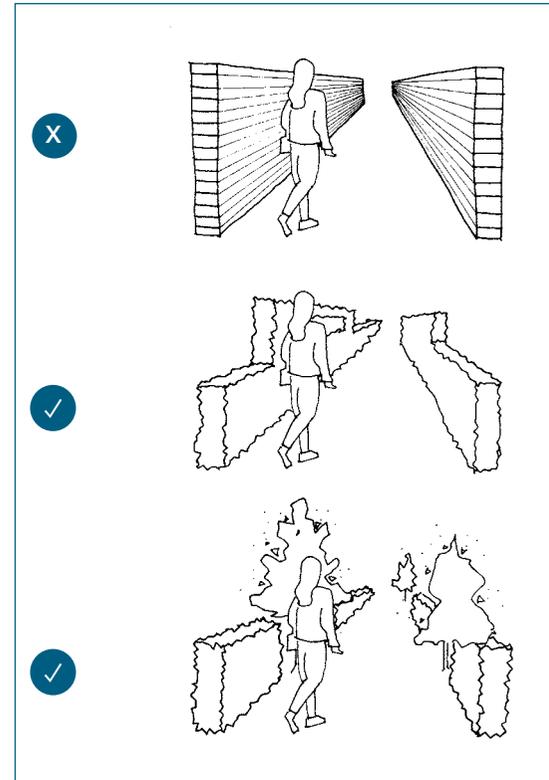


Figure 7.16: Design codes and design guides are useful for larger scale development. In this example guidance is given as to appropriate boundary treatments within an office development

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7.7 Mixed use

Successful communities require a range of different uses, including residential, workplaces, local facilities and services. If places are to be sustainable then the aim should be to create:

- Walkable neighbourhoods, with a range of facilities within 10 minutes walking distance of residential areas, which encourage people to travel on foot or by bicycle; or
- Neighbourhoods with sufficient density of development to support public transport services to provide access to facilities in centres.

Sustainable places must also be accessible to all.

Planning policies set out suitable locations for certain non-residential uses. Where possible and appropriate, new developments should incorporate uses that enrich the mix of uses in a local area. This must be balanced with the desirability of reinforcing local character, which may depend in part upon a distinctive mix of uses in a local area.

Where the mix of uses will include both residential and non-residential uses, then a number of design issues will need to be resolved to make sure there are no potential conflicts between the different uses.

Designers should provide as much flexibility as possible to increase the longevity of the building or site should circumstances change.

7.7.1 Horizontal mixed use

Horizontal mixed use is where different uses are sited in close proximity to one another.

NR17: Non-residential development should be designed so that complementary facilities and services and/ or residential areas in the local area are easily accessible.

This applies particularly to workplaces. Employment is vital to the success of a place and should be designed wherever possible to be an integrated part of that place. People at work also need to be able to reach other facilities and services, for instance shops, cafes, public conveniences, sports and leisure facilities, child care and schools.

To encourage sustainable living, the balanced mix of uses should aim to include employment, facilities and services and residential areas all located so that they are easily accessible to one another, particularly by walking, cycling and public transport.

NR18: Mixed use developments must be carefully planned to create a high quality environment for all potential occupants.

This includes making sure that:

- the different uses are essentially compatible with one another in terms of their operational requirements, such as hours of activity;
- each of the developments is designed to meet the needs of its users or occupants;
- the site layout is designed so that the physical relationships between different

uses are well managed and arranged to minimise any potential for nuisance to immediately adjoining dwellings, particularly at night time in residential areas, for instance by security lighting, or service deliveries at unsociable hours;

- traffic is dispersed or well managed so that there is no significant impact on existing or proposed dwellings;

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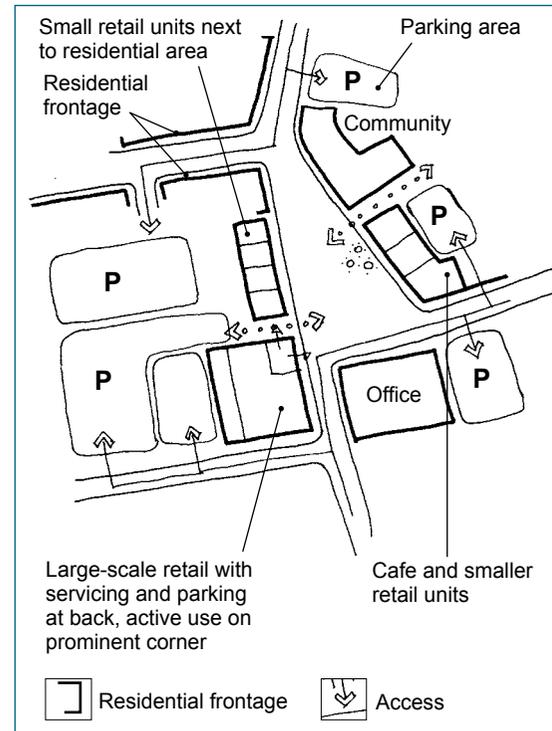


Figure 7.17: A variety of uses can help to create a sense of place and successful focus of activity with a sense of place. Where possible parking should be behind building frontages. Active uses such as cafes should be allowed to spill out into open spaces. Careful design can also create a high quality residential environment

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- there is no conflict between the needs of the different users and, where possible, there is some synergy. For instance a local nursery may provide convenient childcare for local residents, reducing their need to travel by car to childcare facilities; and
- where there is a mix of uses within a block the relationships in the interior, where the more private residential areas are likely to be found, are designed with particular care.

The Council may use planning conditions to make sure this principle is achieved.

7.7.2 Vertical mixed use

Vertical mixed use is where different uses occupy different levels of a building. It is most appropriate in centres, where an urban form and scale, and a concentration of activity, are key ingredients of local character.

In many cases, vertical mixed use means residential on upper floors above a non-residential use. It may also mean offices or other business use, community facilities or education above other uses.

NR19: In centres, the scale of development should be at least two storeys, with upper floors in active use (not only for storage) and a mix of uses where the ground floor use has no upper floor accommodation requirement.

A vertical mix of uses helps to maximise the development potential of a site. Where upper floor uses are designed in from the outset, the likelihood of vacant, neglected upper storeys in town centres is minimised.

NR20: Where mixed uses are proposed then the design of the building and site layout must create an environment that is appropriate for each of the uses.

This includes:

- selecting uses in different parts of the building that are potentially compatible with one another;
- making sure that the entrance to upper floor uses is safe, convenient, attractive and easy to find, preferably from a street frontage of the building;
- integrating services, such as mechanical ventilation, or lifts, into the scheme from the early stages, so that plant and ducting are well considered and do not have any adverse impact (noise, vibration or visual) on the upper floor use, particularly where this is residential;
- providing private amenity space for upper floor residential wherever possible, potentially in the form of roof terraces (where ground floor uses are deeper in floor plan) or alternatively balconies;
- making provision for enclosed refuse storage for the commercial uses, which is particularly important where upper floor uses have access to the rear of the building;
- ensuring that there is adequate noise insulation between different uses; and
- making sure that security lighting does not affect residential properties at night.



Figure 7.18: Large floorplate developments should ensure that ground floor and upper floor uses are integrated well. In the bottom example the elevation of the building has been designed as a whole whereas in the top example the retail use and upper floor uses have been designed separately



Figure 7.19: A mixed use development of offices with shops on the ground floor integrates well into its local context

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7.8.1 Introduction

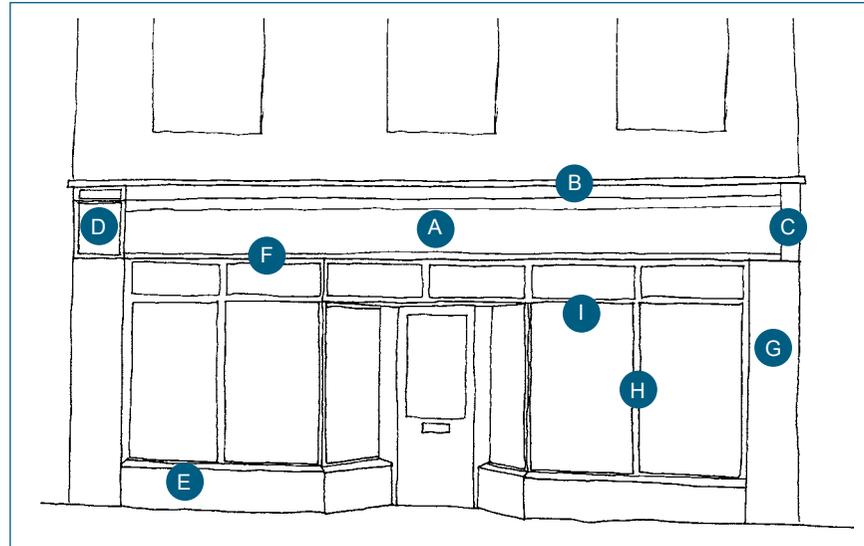
Wokingham Borough includes a variety of shopping areas, ranging from Wokingham Town Centre, the most significant centre in the Borough, to local shopping parades or individual shops.

They are found in a variety of environments. Shopping areas are located in historic environments, designated as conservation areas, for instance Wokingham Town Centre; Twyford; and Wargrave. A number of centres are associated with twentieth century large-scale development, such as at Lower Earley and Woodley. In other cases, shops occupy listed buildings.

This guidance applies to shopfronts in all locations. Where a proposal relates to a listed building or is within a Conservation Area, then an early pre-application discussion with the Council's Conservation Officer is advisable.

For details of the Council's pre-application advisory service, please see the Council's website.

[More →](#)



- A Fascia
- B Cornice
- C Console bracket
- D Console
- E Stallriser
- F Architrave
- G Pilaster
- H Mullion
- I Transom

Figure 7.20: The parts of a shopfront



Figure 7.21: Shops in historic environment - Wokingham



Figure 7.22: Shops in 20th century centre - Woodley

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7.8.2 Design quality

SH1: The design of all shopfronts should demonstrate a high quality of design and detailing.

Shopfronts contribute to the character of an area and to the quality of its public realm.

They represent the most visually prominent parts of buildings in centres, as many shoppers do not look up above shopfront level. Their design therefore plays a key role in setting a perception of quality of environment in the shopper's mind.

People come into close contact with shopfronts, when shopping, window shopping or just walking along the street, so the detailed design is also important to the quality of environment.

SH2: Shopfronts of design quality should be retained and reused. Existing features or details of design quality that survive from original shopfronts should also be retained and incorporated into proposals.

This applies particularly but not only to traditional timber shopfronts in Conservation Areas. Traditional timber shopfronts contribute to the distinctive character of the local area and to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area.

They should be retained in use and repaired. If it proves necessary to replace a traditional timber shopfront, then the replacement should also be a traditional timber shopfront.

Surviving features may include hanging signs, tiling, shutters, engraved, etched or coloured glass, curved glazing, or traditional canvas blinds. These are often unique, add visual interest to a shopfront and contribute to the distinctive character of the local area.

Surviving details can also contribute significantly to local character. These may include decorative tiling or other mouldings, unusual door or window details, curved glazing, historic fascia signs and/ or lettering.

In some cases, when more recent shopfronts are removed for refitting, earlier decorative features can be uncovered and incorporated into new proposals.

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Figure 7.23: Traditional shopfronts such as this example at the Dressing Room, Twyford should be retained and reused in any future development



Figure 7.24 Historic features such as curved glazing should be incorporated into new shopfronts as here at Halifax, Wokingham

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7.8.3 Response to context

It is important that shopfront design responds to the design of the building as a whole, but also the wider street scene.

SH3: Proposals for shopfronts should respond positively to the design of the building as a whole.

Shopfront proposals should respond positively to the scale, rhythms and architectural character of the building into which they are fitted. The appropriate design approach will vary according to the architectural character of the building. Where a shop is within a listed building or in a Conservation Area the shopfront will need to be particularly sensitively designed.

For instance, the position of any proposed columns or mullions should align with the structural divisions of the upper storeys.

In a strongly symmetrical building it may be appropriate for the shopfront also to be symmetrical. Generally, the presence of a fascia and pilasters to frame a shopfront does increase design freedom within the frame.

The height of the shop window and of the fascia should relate to the storey heights and proportions of the elevation as a whole. The scale of the fascia, in particular its height, should relate to the proportions of the building as a whole.

Stallrisers traditionally provided a solid base to the shopfront and protected the shop window from damage.

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Figure 7.25: In this example at Woodley, the shopfronts at ground floor level relate to the building as a whole



Figure 7.26: Shopfronts should respond to the building as a whole. At Oxfam in Wokingham the symmetry of the shopfront relates to the symmetry of the upper storeys



Figure 7.27: In these examples the fascia is in proportion with other elements of the building and fits in with the overall street scene

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SH4: The design of an individual shopfront, in particular the height, depth and alignment of the fascia, should fit well into the street scene and relate to those on adjacent buildings in particular.

In many centres, local character is created as much by the relationships between adjoining buildings as by the individual buildings themselves. The relationship of a shopfront to the wider street scene is therefore important. This applies particularly, but not only, to shopfronts within a Conservation Area.

Traditionally shopfronts were designed with pilasters on either side. These were made either in the same material as the shopfront itself ie timber, or were stucco or stone. Where they are stucco or stone, the effect is to bring the materials of the upper floor elevation down to ground level and to create a frame for the shopfront. Pilasters play a role in local character as they help to define the rhythm of frontages along the street, and link to the historical development of the centre.

Where console brackets remain, the fascia should be aligned with them and should be no taller in height than the brackets.

SH5: Shopfronts should be designed to relate positively to the footway space in front of the building.

In places with narrow footways, for instance much of Wokingham Town Centre, it is important that the shop does not spill out into the public realm.

The design of new shopfronts should create more space for pedestrians, where possible and where this can be achieved without affecting the architectural character of the building as a whole. For instance this might be achieved by recessing the entrance to allow people to stop and look into the shop window.

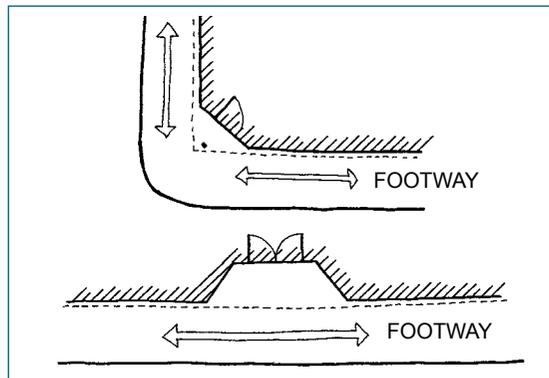


Figure 7.28: Shopfronts can be designed to create space for pedestrians to pause and look in the windows

In other places, such as Woodley, where there are large pedestrian areas, or in new pedestrianised areas it may be desirable that shops colonise some of the pedestrian space, bringing life and activity into it. This may suit cafes and restaurants, but also certain shops. Where there is sufficient space, then clear zones for movement should be defined and maintained. The positioning of street furniture can help to create these zones.

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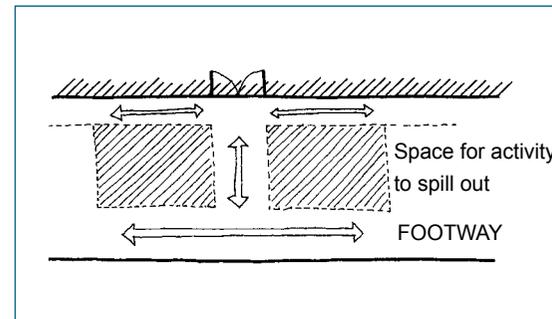


Figure 7.29: Where there is a large pedestrian area, space for activities to spill out onto the pavement can help to animate the space

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7.8.4 Materials

SH6: The materials for shopfronts should be compatible with the character of the building and the area. High quality, robust and sustainable materials should be used.

In Conservation Areas, traditional materials and finishes, such as painted timber, glass, cast iron and render should be used, as they are still the most commonly used materials for good shopfronts. Plastics are not considered to be appropriate.

In other locations, a wider range of more contemporary materials may be used, such as steel or aluminium, provided they are of high quality and the design approach relates to the architectural character of the building. For instance, a traditional timber shopfront is unlikely to be the most appropriate solution in a location such as Woodley.

7.8.5 Signs

SH7: In general, signs should be positioned on the fascia.

Fascia materials must be appropriate to their context, with lettering and logos well proportioned relative to the size of the fascia.

The proportions of fascia signage must be designed to be appropriate to the building and should not be guided by predetermined proportions of brand signage.

Where buildings have not been designed with shopfronts (for instance bank conversions), it may be appropriate for individually mounted

lettering to be applied to the elevation, provided it relates well to the character of the building.

Space for advertisements should be planned into new development, to reduce the need for additional external freestanding signs in the future.

SH8: Externally illuminated signs (including projecting signs) will be appropriate for all shopfronts. Internally illuminated signs may be appropriate in some locations away from heritage assets provided they are well designed and in proportion with the building.

In Conservation Areas signs should be externally illuminated. Internally illuminated signs will only be appropriate where shopfronts are set behind colonnades or beneath solid canopies, as for instance at Woodley. In similar situations within Conservation Areas, halo or fret cut lettering on a solid background board may be acceptable on certain buildings, provided it is well designed.



Figure 7.30: In this traditional building a high quality wooden and glass shopfront has been inserted that respects the character of the existing building whilst providing a modern, stylish solution

External illumination of signs should be low energy, using the minimum number of light fittings of the simplest possible design, and minimising any light overspill. External strip lighting should be limited to the fascia only.

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Figure 7.31: Where a building has not been designed with a fascia, individually mounted lettering can be an appropriate solution



Figure 7.32: Illuminated signs may be appropriate in a number of locations; where shops are in a darker area location

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SH9: Generally one projecting sign per shopfront will be appropriate, provided that it is designed to complement the design of the shopfront, and to relate to the fascia in size, and style.

Projecting signs may be hung at fascia level or positioned between the windows on the floor above.

In Conservation Areas, projecting signs should be externally illuminated, using fittings that minimise clutter.

7.8.6 Shutters and canopies

SH10: Security measures, such as shutters or alarm boxes should be integrated within the overall design of the shopfront.

They should not compromise the appearance of the shopfront, the building as a whole or the character of the wider street scene.

Solid external shutters reduce the attractiveness and perceptions of safety in shopping streets after dark. Where they are installed at a later date than the shopfront, protruding shutter boxes are obtrusive. Internal metal lattice shutters are preferred as they maintain visibility into the shop window and allow the shutter box to be hidden inside the shop window. Where external shutters are demonstrated to be necessary the design should not have a negative impact on the street scene. Open grilled designs are preferred.

SH11: Canopies and awnings can add visual interest and provide shelter and shade to footways and shop windows. Canopies should be high quality and well designed as part of the overall shopfront.

The scale and materials used for a canopy should relate to the architectural character of the building. In a Conservation Area, plastic Dutch blinds with large lettering are unlikely to be considered appropriate.

When in a folded position, the canopy should sit neatly within the design of the shopfront and not obscure the architectural features of either the shopfront or the building. Blind boxes should be integrated into the fascia and set below the fascia sign at architrave level.

Where traditional canvas blinds and blind boxes remain they should be retained and reused where possible.



Figure 7.33: Projecting signs in appropriate locations for each building



Figure 7.34: Projecting signs may be hung at fascia level or positioned between windows at the storey level above

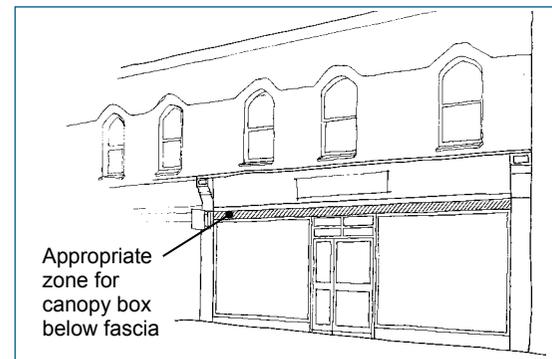


Figure 7.35: Canopies and canopy boxes should be designed to sit neatly within the shopfront and should not obscure architectural features of the building

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Rural & Settlement Edge

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8 Rural & Settlement Edge

8.1 Introduction

This section primarily focuses on rural development. However, it also provides guidance for development at the edge of settlements, where there is a need to respond sensitively to both the settlement and rural character.

Guidance for rural development relates to development proposals in the following areas:

- Green Belt (which is also designated as Countryside);
- designated Countryside; and
- sites on the edges of settlements, particularly where they extend the settlement edge into the countryside.

The Countryside and Green Belt designations aim to protect the environment. National and local planning policy protects the openness of land designated as Green Belt.

Local planning policy, in Core Strategy Policy CP11 aims to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of environment outside settlement boundaries, generally by restricting development, except for:

- sustainable rural enterprise or countryside recreation;
- residential extensions;
- replacement dwellings;
- essential community facilities; and
- affordable housing on exception sites.

The criteria for assessing development proposals include:

- not excessively encroaching upon countryside or expanding development;
- not resulting in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building; or
- bringing about environmental improvement; and
- being contained within suitably located buildings that are appropriate for conversion.

Land in these areas may also be covered by other environmental policy designations, such as Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas (SPA), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Nature Reserves, Areas of Special Landscape Importance and, for the built environment, Conservation Areas. In these areas, reference will need to be made to the relevant national and local policy and guidance.

Identifying appropriate locations for development is, in the first place, a matter of policy.

This design guidance applies to locations where development complies with the policy requirements, and it supplements guidance found in other sections of this guide.

It is also intended to inform future policy and guidance, as it may need to evolve over time.

Villages or hamlets referred to in this section include settlements where the Core Strategy does not envisage development taking place and which do not have defined Development Limits.



Figure 8.1: Village inn in Arborfield



Figure 8.2: View out from Barkham village

8 Rural & Settlement Edge

8.2 General principles

RD1: New development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character and biodiversity of the area.

This includes elements such as:

- field patterns and lanes;
- landscape features, such as trees and hedgerows;
- wetlands and watercourses;
- typical species of vegetation; and
- characteristic local habitats.

Historically, settlements were shaped by the landscape character that existed before development took place. Traces of that character may still be found in places, providing local distinctiveness and a link to its history. In Wokingham Borough, this can be seen in areas that are forested, or formerly forested, particularly in the south-east of the area.

The rural areas defined here lie within a number of different character areas as defined in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment, including:

- river landscapes;
- clay landscapes;
- chalk landscapes; and
- sand landscapes.

See also Section 3B.3 Countryside.

RD2: New development associated with existing villages or hamlets should retain, enhance and incorporate some of the existing features and characteristics of the settlement pattern, wherever possible.

Development in or on the edge of the Countryside must respond to the unique character and setting of each site, taking into consideration a thorough understanding of the local pattern of settlement and its setting in the landscape.

Village Design Statements are a detailed statement of local character and should be referred to wherever relevant to a site.

The character of a place as a whole comes from all of its parts, although often the pre-twentieth century development is considered to contribute most to its character and identity. It is the parts of a settlement with a positive character that should be a reference for the design of new development, which in many cases, will be the historic character.

Where new development is directly related or linked to the historic core of a village, then it should relate to the characteristics of the historic part of the village.

This may include the typical patterns of:

- The streets - how wide and how straight, do they cross contours or follow them?
- The shape of building plots - whether they are characteristically wide fronted or narrow and whether all are of the same type and size;

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Figure 8.3: The historic pattern of development over time is an important characteristic of the village of Sonning



Figure 8.4: Sonning, seen from across the Thames

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- The positioning of buildings within a plot - how far they are set back from the street frontage and how consistent is the positioning;
- The orientation of buildings on the plot - do they face the street or sit at an angle to it?
- The proportion of the plot and the plot frontage that is built up; and
- The grouping of buildings on plots.

The character of a village or hamlet is the result of much more than just the appearance of its buildings.

As within the defined settlement boundaries, much of the character is set by the pattern of settlement - the pattern of streets and/ or plots and how the buildings occupy plots. However, the pattern of settlement in the countryside also tends to be influenced by the landform and landscape.

It is also typically, although not always, more informal, varied and dispersed in settlement pattern than urban areas. Streets may reflect the line of former field boundaries rather than the most direct route from A to B; plots may be all the same size or may vary; buildings may be positioned so there is no clear building line; and they may be grouped in a variety of ways other than in consistent groups. All of these factors may influence the character of a specific village or hamlet.

Where new development follows the principles of the settlement pattern of a particular place, it will help to fit into that place. Each place is

different and it is important to understand its specific characteristics rather than to apply generic village design principles.

RD3: The location and design of new development must respond to and should not harm the setting of the village in the landscape.

Designers should make sure that development:

- Retains the features that contribute to the landscape character;
- Maintains gaps in the settlement pattern, which separate different groups of dwellings, or which provide the setting for significant buildings or places, for instance the local church or public house;
- Retains characteristic soft vegetation, for instance soft verges, hedgerows, trees in the public realm and on-plot;
- Maintains and enhance open spaces to provide good local facilities, for instance childrens' play, whilst being appropriately rural in character; and
- Where possible, contributes new features that enhance the setting of the village in the landscape.

The relationship between the village and its landscape setting contributes to its character, particularly where the landscape comes right into the heart of the village. This may be recognised open space, but farmland or woodland may also help to make up the character of a village.

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Figure 8.5: Field patterns and woodland areas that form the setting for the built development contribute to the local character of Swallowfield



Figure 8.6: Traditional building at the entrance to Swallowfield village

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RD4: New development must be carefully composed in relation to important views into or out of a village, so that the setting of the village in the landscape is maintained or enhanced.

This should include:

- Existing views into the village from beyond its boundaries, which may include the road network, places accessible to the public, and other settlements;
- Existing views of the wider landscape from the village itself; and
- New views into and out of the village that might be created through development.

The characteristics of views which are likely to be important to the setting of the village in the landscape are:

- The skyline of the village and its most significant buildings, or features - are they landmarks in key views?
- The balance between vegetation and buildings in long views - for instance, are there layers of trees with buildings visible between them?
- The nature of the edges of the village - is it less densely developed towards the edges or does it contrast strongly with the landscape around it?

In a village, key views that contribute to the setting of the village in the landscape are likely to include:

- Views along key routes, streets or paths, into the wider landscape beyond;
- Views across open spaces or gaps in the settlement pattern;
- Views from the setting of important buildings such as the church; and
- In these views, the ability to see into the landscape is likely to be as important as the openness of such views.

8.3 Built form

RD5: New development in the rural area should respond to the typical forms of buildings in the village or locality.

In doing so, designers should generally take into account and respond to:

- The pattern of building forms that helps create the character of a settlement, for instance whether there is a consistency or variety;
- The ways in which buildings address the street;
- The heights of buildings;
- Roof forms and slopes, for instance whether there are gables or eaves facing the street;
- The ways that buildings are grouped together either on a single plot or on several plots, for instance whether larger buildings are made up of several smaller scale elements;

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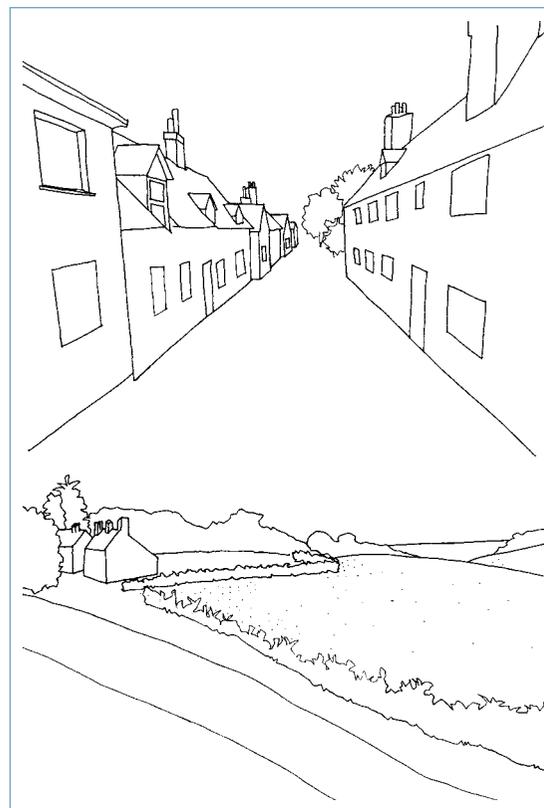


Figure 8.7: Views within a village and outwards to the countryside beyond are of importance in rural settlements

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- The ways that roof forms are grouped, for instance whether there are dormers and what form they typically take; and
- Opportunities that building form offers for environmental sustainability, including passive measures, such as solar gain or shelter, and active measures such as roof slopes suitable for solar panels, either now or in the future.

Environmental considerations have influenced the form of development throughout history and many of the typical building forms seen in villages today are a reflection of that past influence. Today environmental measures are once again important for our future. Where they need to influence the form of a building then they should do so provided that the development responds to the character of the village in some of the other ways identified in this section.

RD6: The elevations of new buildings must be well composed, well proportioned and well detailed.

New development should be sympathetic to the traditional character of a village. This does not necessarily mean that it must look the same as the other buildings. High quality contemporary design can be responsive to and enhance the character of a village, provided it follows the other principles outlined in this section.

If a design approach replicates a historical style, it must be demonstrably based upon careful observation and replication of the prevailing styles, details and materials in the locality.

RD7: New buildings should respond to the materials, details and colours that may be distinctive to a locality.

Designers should aim to incorporate into their schemes some or all of the following:

- Materials that are distinctive to the locality, either to the rural area as a whole or to a particular village;
- Typical ways these materials may be used, for instance in decoration;
- Colour palettes that relate to or complement traditional materials or other local features; and
- Details similar to characteristic traditional details, for instance in relation to eaves, or gables or dormers.

New developments may use materials, colours or details in the same way as in existing traditional buildings. There is also scope to use these locally distinctive elements in different ways that reflect the nature of building today rather than the methods of the past. This approach is also a valid way to respond to local distinctiveness.

Using local materials, colours or details in themselves is not sufficient to make a development fit into local character.



Figure 8.8: New development can respond to existing rural development by using a similar massing and form, without being designed as a pastiche

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8.4 Spaces and landscape

RD8: The relationships between public and private space and the transition between them in new developments should relate to the existing character of the village.

Refer also to: Section 5.3 Public spaces.

The design of public streets and spaces in new developments should take into account:

- Existing landscape features such as hedgerows, trees and watercourses, retaining and incorporating these into proposals wherever possible;
- The types of roads and streets that are characteristic of the locality, retaining the character of those that exist already and creating new routes with similar characteristics;
- Rural routes do not generally correspond to standard highways practice, rarely being a standard width carriageway with two footways. When designing new routes, design solutions should be found that balance highway safety with creating and maintaining a rural character, using site-specific rather than standard solutions to any issues of forward visibility;
- Routes within rural settlements should be designed to keep vehicle speeds low, through appropriate design measures, avoiding urban traffic solutions such as mini roundabouts or speed cushions;
- Aim to remove all clutter of signage and highways controls so far as possible and make sure that any necessary signage and street furniture is appropriate in character; and

- Changes of level, particularly between development plots and the street, should be designed with care, adopting solutions that create a positive character, such as a raised footway with soft verge.

The design of the boundaries between public and private spaces and of private gardens themselves both contribute to local character. They should:

- reflect the nature, scale and material of boundary treatments typically found in the village;
- where they are a local characteristic, front gardens with soft landscape should be provided or retained; and
- maintain tree cover in private gardens (both front and rear), particularly where trees are mature as this can contribute significantly to the character of a village.

Where proposals for car parking in front of buildings require planning permission, then front gardens should retain some soft landscape and, where possible, parts of the front boundary treatment.

Areas of hard-standing should be kept to a minimum and should be appropriate to a rural setting, for instance gravel or strips of brick paving, rather than large areas of concrete block paving. Surfaces must allow surface water to percolate into the ground.

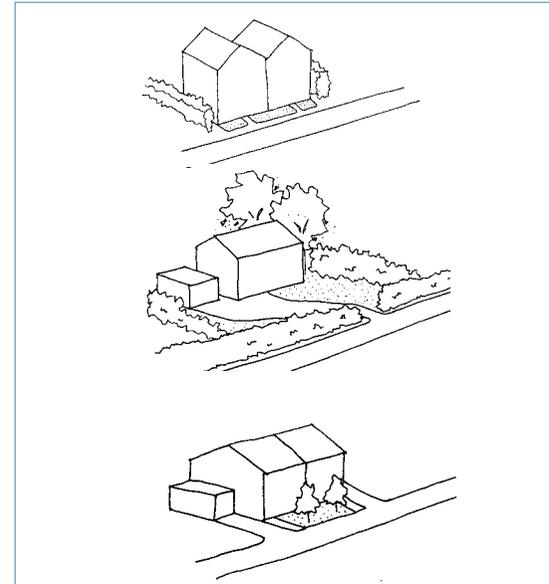


Figure 8.9: Different treatments between public and private space add to the character of streets and spaces

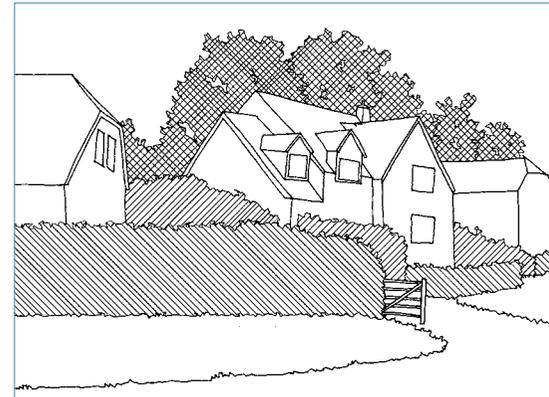


Figure 8.10: There are different 'layers' of landscape that all add to the character of rural development. Front gardens, boundaries and planting in back gardens are all important

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8.5 Specific guidance

General guidance in Sections 8.2 and 8.3 also applies where relevant to the situations below.

8.5.1 Development on settlement edges

New development for affordable housing or community facilities may be appropriate outside the development limits of a settlement. Other development proposals may be sited on the edge of the developed area.

RD9: The location, siting and design of new development on the edge of settlements must be carefully designed to:

- create an edge to the built up area with a character that relates to the local pattern; and
- incorporate soft landscape to soften the edge of settlements and to help integrate new housing into its rural setting.

New development located on the edges of settlements or important green spaces must demonstrate how the interrelationship between open countryside and development form is respected.

This may be achieved by incorporating soft landscape into the proposals. The aim should be for the development to recede and soften in relation to adjoining open countryside. 'Hard' urban edges or taller, landmark buildings are unlikely to be appropriate in most situations.



Figure 8.11: Development on the edge of settlements should incorporate soft landscaping to soften edges and help development integrate within the rural settlement



Figure 8.12: New housing that creates an open space and links into the wider landscape beyond

8.5.2 Conversions

The conversion of buildings outside development limits may be appropriate for sustainable rural enterprises or other activities that contribute to recreation or the enjoyment of the countryside. Such buildings should be:

- suitably located; and
- appropriate for conversion.

Suitable locations will depend upon the use and the number of people who will visit it. They will generally be close to other settlement and capable of access by walking, cycling and/ or public transport as well as car.

RD10: Proposals for conversions should be based on a detailed understanding of the building and its appropriateness for conversion, which will depend upon factors such as:

- its heritage significance, where relevant;
- the proposed use;
- the structure and construction of the building; and
- its condition.

The conversion of listed buildings should be discussed with the Conservation Officer at the outset of the project, to make sure the proposals have no impact on its heritage significance. See the Council's website for more information on their pre-application service.

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In many cases, non-residential uses have more flexible accommodation requirements than residential and so may be more suitable for converted agricultural buildings.

The aim of conversion works should be to retain the architectural character of the building and its original fabric where possible.

The condition of the building will affect the scope of works required for its re-use. Conversion works should not compromise the architectural character, the stability of the original structure or the retention of original fabric. Common design issues that may need to be addressed include:

- providing sufficient daylight without altering the characteristic features of farm buildings, for instance their unbroken roof slopes;
- the subdivision of large-scale, open barn spaces where double height spaces and long sight lines are a characteristic;
- retaining distinctive features such as ventilation openings and large cart doors without changing their character inappropriately;
- maintaining an appropriate setting for the building; and
- meeting today's requirements for services and energy efficiency.

In the Green Belt, it may be appropriate to re-use buildings, provided they are of permanent and substantial construction.

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Figure 8.13: In this example a variety of openings have been incorporated to bring light into the interior without being overly domestic in style



Figure 8.14: Retention of original features such as the stable joinery in this example is important to retain the character of the building



Figure 8.15: A good example of a barn conversion in Finchampstead



Figure 8.16: Converted farm buildings form the basis for this craft village development

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8.5.3 Replacement buildings

Replacement dwellings may be permissible within the Countryside, only where:

- there is no inappropriate increase in scale form or footprint; or
- they bring about environmental improvements.

Generally, replacement dwellings will be expected to be sited in the same location as the original building.

There may be circumstances where it is preferable to site a replacement dwelling in another location, for instance where:

- the visual or other impact of the replacement dwelling is more appropriate than the original building; or
- the proposed location is preferable in environmental terms, such as further from a watercourse in a flood risk zone.

The scale, or height, of a building has an influence on its relationship to the landform and landscape and also to its visual impact. Generally the aim will be to minimise the impact of buildings on the Countryside although there may be exceptions where a development proposal of particularly high quality has a positive rather than negative impact.

Figure 8.17 provides an illustration of guidance for assessing height.

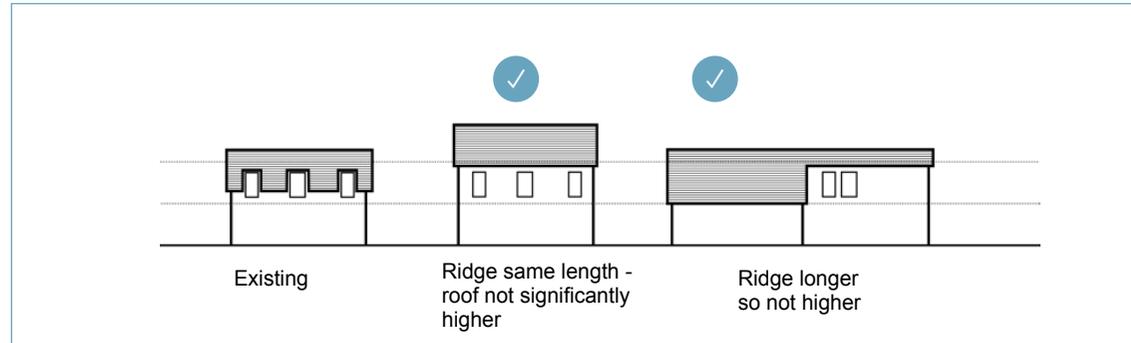


Figure 8.17: Guidance for the height of replacement dwellings. The height of new dwellings should not be significantly higher than the ridge line of the original building

In the Green Belt the aim is to retain openness.

Where the visual impact is likely to be different to that of the existing dwelling, then an assessment of views from key viewpoints will be required.

RD11: The form, or massing of a replacement dwelling should relate well to its context and to local character. The relationship between the form of the building, the topography and landscape, will be of particular importance.

It is often possible to relate a replacement dwelling to local character by adopting similar forms to the traditional patterns of development, rather than necessarily by copying the appearance or elevations of traditional buildings.

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Figure 8.18: The form and massing of the extension relates well to the original building

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The footprint of a building is an indication of its size. Generally the footprint of a replacement dwelling should not be significantly larger than that of the existing dwelling. In the Green Belt, any increase in footprint is likely to have an impact upon its openness.

Where there are substantial, permanent outbuildings, then it may be possible to replace them together with the existing dwelling, provided that the impact upon the countryside is more appropriate than the existing form of development.

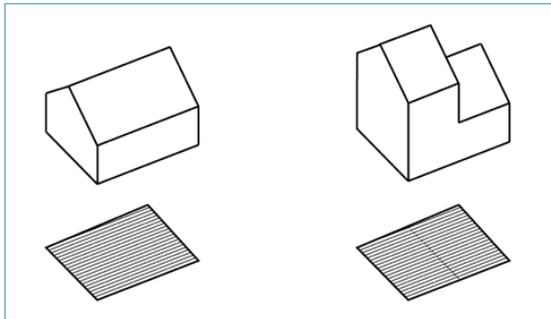


Figure 8.19: Guidance for the volume of replacement dwellings. A 50% increase in volume for a 1 storey development is acceptable when compared with the original building

8.5.4 Extensions and additions

Extensions may be permissible provided that the scale, form and footprint does not have an unacceptable impact upon the countryside.

The general guidance on extensions set out in Section 4.10 applies as does the guidance on replacement dwellings set out earlier in this section.

Where an existing building has been converted from another use already, then there is likely to be less scope for extension than on other buildings.

Conservatories may be appropriate forms of extension, provided they:

- are lightweight and unobtrusive structures;
- are relatively small in size compared to the footprint of the original building; and
- relate well to the character of the original building and the context.

Where a dwelling is proposed to be extended to create an integral garage, then it should be sited and designed so that it does not dominate the street frontage.



Figure 8.20: a) not good, the extension impacts on sense of openness as it elongates the building; b) extension is enclosed within existing development zone, therefore minimising impact on landscape



Figure 8.21: Well designed extensions can add to the character of existing rural buildings

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Appendices

Appendix A1: Core Strategy Policies

The Core Strategy Policies are high level policies for delivering the objectives and spatial vision of the Core Strategy. They provide a series of criteria for assessing development proposals and for granting planning permission. Of particular relevance to this design guide are:

CP1: Sustainable Development

CP1 requires development proposals to:

- maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment (1);
- provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes (10);
- demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car in line with CP6 (11); and
- contribute towards the goal of reaching zero-carbon developments as soon as possible by:
 - including appropriate on-site renewable energy features; and
 - minimising energy and water consumption by measures including layout and orientation, building form, design and construction and design to take into account microclimate (12).

CP3: General Principles for Development

CP3 requires development proposals to:

- be of high quality design and of an appropriate scale and character to the

area, without having any negative impact on the quality of life in neighbouring properties or open spaces (a);

- provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme (b);
- have no negative impact on important ecological, heritage, landscape, geological features or watercourses (c);
- maintain or enhance ecological habitats and diversity (d);
- use the full potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses (e); and
- contribute to the sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings, (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscape (f).

CP6: Managing Travel Demand

CP6 requires development proposals to:

- provide for sustainable forms of transport (a);
- be located where there will be transport choices available and which minimise the distance people need to travel (b);
- improve the existing infrastructure network, and enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including those with reduced mobility (c);
- provide appropriate vehicular parking, having regard to car ownership (d); and
- enhance road safety (f).

CP11: Proposals outside Development Limits (including Countryside)

To maintain the separate identity of settlements and the quality of environment, development proposals must include environmental improvements and should not lead to inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.

CP2: Inclusive Communities

To ensure that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities to meet long term needs, development proposals are required to address the requirements of all sections of the population, including families with children, older people etc. This encompasses such issues as:

- schools within walking and cycling distance of homes; and
- providing robust, flexible and adaptable dwellings that are capable of standing the test of time.

CP4: Infrastructure Requirements

CP4 requires arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure, services and facilities necessary for a development to be agreed. This may include provision of or works to streets, open spaces, utilities, public transport and other mitigation measures, for instance, ecological works.

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Appendix A2: List of supporting documents

The Space Standards of New Homes in Wokingham Borough, Housing Vision with Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design, 2011.

Parking Standards Study Report, WSP, 2010.

These documents are available to download at: wokingham.gov.uk

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Appendix A3: Glossary

Accessibility

The degree to which buildings and spaces are accessible to all sections of the public.

Active frontage

The ground floor front of a building or development block, where the development addresses a street or area of public space.

Adaptability

The capacity of a building or space to be changed, responding to social, technological and economic conditions.

Affordable housing

Housing which should meet the needs of eligible households, affordable, determined with regards to local incomes and house prices. Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing provided for specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market (see adopted Affordable Housing SPD).

Amenity

A positive element or elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area or place. For example, privacy, open land, trees, buildings, structures and the inter-relationship between them, or less tangible factors such as tranquillity.

Amenity Green-space

Open land, often landscaped, that makes a positive contribution to the appearance of an area or improves the quality of the lives of people living or working within the locality. It may also provide opportunities for unstructured recreational activities or relaxing and can serve other purposes such as reducing the noise from a busy road or providing shelter from prevailing winds.

Back

The back of a building or development block, often not readily or only partially visible from public areas.

Backland development

Development of 'landlocked' sites behind existing buildings, such as rear gardens and private open space, usually within predominantly residential areas. Such sites often have no street frontages.

Bio-diversity

The whole variety of life encompassing all genetics, species and ecosystem variations, including plants and animals.

Boundary

There is no legal definition of where a boundary may run. Some boundaries are administrative such as Borough or Parish boundaries, others may be formed by physical features such as walls and fences.

Building

The term building refers to the whole or any part of any structure or erection. It does not include plant or machinery within a building.

Building Line

The line formed by buildings along a street.

Bulk

The size, mass and volume of a building or structure, more often used in the context of larger buildings or structures.

Carriageway

The part of a road along which traffic passes.

Character

The combination of qualities or features that distinguish one area from another. A term relating to the appearance of any location in terms of its landscape or the layout of streets and open spaces, often giving places their own distinct identity.

Climate Change

Long-term changes in temperature, precipitation, wind and all other aspects of the Earth's climate. Often regarded as a result of human activity and fossil fuel consumption.

Code for Sustainable Homes

National standard for sustainable design and construction of new homes launched in December 2006.

Conservation Area

Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Also known as 'Designated Conservation Area'.

Context

The nature of the surroundings in which a site is located including both landscape and built form.

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Core Strategy

A key planning document prepared by the Council as Local Planning Authority, setting out long term strategic objectives and spatial and land use policies for the Borough. The Core Strategy forms part of the Council's Local Development Framework. The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy was adopted in January 2010.

Countryside

Areas outside the settlement boundary as defined by the Local Plan.

Density

The intensity of development in a given location. It can be expressed in terms of plot ratio (for commercial development), number of units or habitable rooms per hectare (for residential development).

Design Brief

A design brief is a comprehensive written document for a design project developed in concert by a person representing the business need for design and the designer. The document is focused on the desired results of design – not aesthetics. Design briefs are commonly used in consulting engagements, when an independent designer or a design agency executes a design on behalf of a client.

Design and Access Statement

A design and access statement indicates the design and access principles upon which a proposal is to be based. It may also be submitted in support of a planning application. It is a submission requirement for most planning applications.

Desire Line

Paths or routes, which may or may not exist currently where pedestrians or other people desire to travel between points.

Development

Development is defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as “the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land.” Most forms of development require planning permission (see also “permitted development”).

Dwelling / dwellinghouse

A self-contained building or part of a building used as a residential accommodation, and usually housing a single household. A dwelling may be a house, bungalow, flat, maisonette either purpose built or converted from an earlier use.

Edges

Linear elements not used or thought of as routes, which may act as a barrier between areas or create a distinctive break between areas. Edges may take many forms including roads, railway lines, property boundaries, hedges or simply a point where one use or buildings cease and a different use or buildings start.

Elevation

The external faces of buildings. The actual facade (or face) of a building, or a plan showing the drawing of a facade.

Enclosure

The physical containment of a street, public space individual or group of buildings. Often associated with a distinctive hedge, fence or wall line, generally referred to as a means of enclosure.

Evidence Base

The information and data gathered by local authorities to justify the “soundness” of the policy approach set out in Local Development Documents, including physical, economic, and social characteristics of an area.

Flood plain

Generally low-lying areas adjacent to a watercourse, tidal lengths of a river or the sea, where water flows in times of flood or would flow but for the presence of flood defences.

Grain

The pattern of the arrangement of street blocks, plots and their buildings in a settlement. The degree to which an area's pattern of blocks and plot subdivisions is respectively small and frequent (fine grain), or large and infrequent (coarse grain).

Green Corridor

Green corridors can link housing areas to the national cycle network, town and city centres, places of employment and community facilities. They help to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling within urban areas and can also act as vital linkages for wildlife dispersal between wetlands and the countryside.

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Gypsy/traveller

Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.

Habitable Rooms

Any room used or intended to be used for sleeping, cooking, living or eating purposes. Enclosed spaces such as bath or toilet facilities, service rooms, corridors, laundries, hallways, utility rooms or similar spaces are excluded from this definition.

Heat Island

Heat Island refers to any area, populated or not, which is consistently hotter than the surrounding area. Heat islands can affect communities by increasing summertime peak energy demand, air conditioning costs, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, heat-related illness and mortality, and water quality.

Infill development

The development of a relatively small gap between existing buildings.

Landscape Character

The distinct nature of an area of land in terms of such elements as its shape, geology, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement patterns.

Layout

The way buildings, routes and open spaces are placed or laid out on the ground in relation to each other.

Legibility

A legible area is one with a strong sense of local identity. Locations, streets, open spaces and places that have a clear image and are easy to understand. For example, a location that is easy to find your way around.

Listed building

A building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II* or II with grade I being the highest. Listing includes the interior as well as the exterior of the building, and any buildings or permanent structures (e.g. wells within its curtilage).

Local Plan

English Heritage is responsible for designating buildings for listing in England National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Masterplan

A Masterplan includes both the process by which organisations undertake analysis and prepare strategies and the proposals that are needed to plan for major change in a defined physical area.

Material consideration

A matter that should be taken into account in deciding a planning application or on an appeal against a planning decision.

Natural surveillance

The discouragement to wrongdoing by the presence of passers-by or the ability of people to be seen out of surrounding windows. Also known as passive surveillance (or supervision). See also Planning Out Crime.

Overdevelopment

An amount of development (for example, the quantity of buildings or intensity of use) that is excessive in terms of demands on infrastructure and services, or impact on local amenity and character.

Overlooking

A term used to describe the effect when a development or building affords an outlook over adjoining land or property, often causing loss of privacy.

Overshadowing

The effect of a development or building on the amount of natural light presently enjoyed by a neighbouring property, resulting in a shadow being cast over that neighbouring property.

Passive Solar Heating

A solar heating system using a simple solar collector, building materials, or an architectural design to capture and store the sun's heat. Very simple examples include a garden greenhouse, or a south-facing window in a dwelling.

Photovoltaics / photovoltaic cells

Conversion of solar radiation (the sun's rays) to electricity by the effect of photons (tiny packets of light) on the electrons in a solar cell. For example, a solar-powered car or a calculator.

Place

A location with an identity and characteristics which foster a sense of community and belonging.

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Planning Out Crime

The planning and design of street layouts, open space, and buildings so as to reduce the actual likelihood or fear of crime, for example by creating natural surveillance.

Private Open Space

Open space that is usually privately owned and is not usually accessible by members of the public.

Protected Species

Plants and animal species afforded protection under certain Acts and Regulations.

Public Art

Permanent or temporary physical works of art visible to the general public, whether part of a building or free-standing. For example, sculpture, lighting effects, street furniture, paving, railings and signs.

Public Open Space

Urban space, designated by a council, where public access may or may not be formally established, but which fulfils or can fulfil a recreational or non-recreational role (for example, amenity, ecological, educational, social or cultural usages).

Public Realm

Those parts of a village, town or city (whether publicly or privately owned) available, for everyone to use. This includes streets, squares and parks.

Public Right of Way

A public right of way is a highway over which the public have a right of access along the route.

Regeneration

The economic, social and environmental renewal and improvement of rural and urban areas.

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy is energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment, for example from the wind, water flow, tides or the sun.

Rhythm

A strong regular repeated pattern of plot and/or house sizes.

Rural

Of, relating to, or characteristic of the country.

Setting

The context or environment in which something sits.

Shop Fascia

Part of the face or elevation of a shop, displaying the retailer's names.

Solar gain

Also known as solar heat gain or passive solar gain) refers to the increase in temperature in a space, object or structure that results from solar radiation. The amount of solar gain increases with the strength of the sun, and with the ability of any intervening material to transmit or resist the radiation.

Spatial strategy

The Spatial Vision for WBC is based on locating the majority of new housing in high quality Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) with excellent infrastructure whilst seeking to protect the character of the

Borough. The SDL's are South of M4 (comprising the villages of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross), Arborfield Garrison (comprising the Garrison and land to the immediate south), North Wokingham and South Wokingham.

Suburban

Suburban mostly refers to a residential area. It is a residential district located on the outskirts of a city. Any particular suburban area is referred to as a suburb, while suburban areas on the whole are referred to as the suburbs or suburbia.

SUDS

SUDS, or Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems are a sequence of water management practices(1) and facilities(2) designed to drain surface water in a manner that will provide a more sustainable approach than what has been the conventional practice of routing run-off through a pipe to a watercourse.

Sustainable approach / sustainability

International and national bodies have set out broad principles of sustainable development. Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future set out five 'guiding principles' of sustainable development: living within the planet's environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

More →



Appendices

Tandem development

'Tandem' Development, is backland development, where a new dwelling is placed immediately behind an existing dwelling and served by the same vehicular access.

Terracing effect

This is where the visual gaps between buildings are a feature of a locality and where the loss of these gaps will give an impression of an almost continuous built frontage. This is particularly harmful to the character of an area where two storey side extensions are proposed and the regular and often limited gaps existing between properties are reduced.

Topography

The shape of the landform ie. The arrangements of valleys and hills.

Townscape

The form and visual appearance of settlements; the appearance of streets, including the way the components of a street combine in a way that is distinctive.

Travel Plan

A travel plan aims to promote sustainable travel choices (for example, cycling) as an alternative to single occupancy car journeys that may impact negatively on the environment, congestion and road safety. Travel plans can be required when granting planning permission for new developments.

Traveller or Gypsy

Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.

Travelling showpeople

Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above.

Urban

Relating to, or constituting a city or town.

Urban Design

The art of making places. It involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, to create successful development.

Urban Grain

See Grain.

Vernacular

Construction based on local and traditional construction methods, materials and decorative styles.

Village Design Statements

A Village or Town Design Statement [VDS] is a practical tool to help influence decisions on design and development. Prepared correctly, a VDS will provide a clear statement of the character of a particular village or town against which planning applications may be assessed. It is not about whether development should take place (this is one of the purposes of the Borough's Local Plan), but about how development should be undertaken so as to respect the local identity.

Zero Carbon Development

Over a year, the net carbon emissions from all energy use in the building or development are zero. This includes in a house, for instance, energy use from cooking, washing and electronic entertainment appliances as well as space heating, cooling, ventilation, lighting and hot water.

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Appendix A4: References

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Wokingham Council's planning policy and guidance documents can all be found at:
www.wokingham.gov.uk

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