

Part A:

How to Achieve Good Design

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This part of the Development Requirements SPD provides further detailed guidance on the interpretation of a range of Core Strategy policies in particular and as appropriate:

- CS.9 Design and Distinctiveness

It provides guidance and advice on how applicants can achieve a good standard of design in new development. It should be read in conjunction with other relevant parts of the SPD, in particular Part D: Design Principles. This SPD will be used by Stratford-on-Avon District Council to help reach decisions on whether to approve or refuse planning applications. Making sure that applications comply with the guidance contained within the SPD will make it easier for the Council to grant planning permission. The Council's Planning Policies are set out in the Core Strategy available at www.stratford.gov.uk/corestrategy

Key words or terms which appear throughout the document are included in the Glossary

A1. What is Good Design?

Research has shown that high quality design make places more desirable in which to live work and play¹. Good design adds economic, environmental and social value to an area, creating a premium for property values, generating greater rental and capital value, and significantly increasing in the health and wellbeing of the occupants and users of those buildings and places. Evidence also shows that good design can be achieved without increasing costs, when it is considered from outset and throughout the design process.

When we talk about design, we mean more than just the appearance of a building. What a building looks like can more accurately be referred to as its 'style' and this is subjective. Whether we like it or not is based on our own preferences and tastes. Looking beyond building styles to design in its widest sense, including thinking about layout of buildings, building heights and massing, relationship to streets and spaces, character and local distinctiveness, follows a number of well-established design principles and is, therefore, objective. Part C and D of this SPD provides guidance on the principles of good design.

A quality place has a number of essential components:

- Good range and mix of homes, jobs and services, cultural and public space;
- Sensitive treatment of historic buildings, spaces and landscapes;
- Ample high quality green space and green infrastructure; and
- Well designed and maintained sustainable buildings and spaces.

Good design is not simply a matter of creating attractive buildings and places. The elements of the development must also be sufficiently robust to carry out their function without deteriorating too quickly. Buildings and spaces must be designed to function well for the purpose they were designed for.

Good design should be a positive response to the local character, history and identity. Designing for local distinctiveness involves the integration of local practices with the latest technologies, building types and needs.

¹ The value of urban design, Design Council 2001

A2. The Design Process

Achieving a high-quality design is not a one-off event; it is a process (see below). The level of detail and depth of investigation should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the development proposals.

Step 1 - Appoint your design team



The Council strongly recommends that you engage appropriate professional expertise. Ideally, there should be a professional architect or urban designer or a person with specific urban design skills.

Step 2 - Context Analysis



Carry out a thorough assessment and analysis of context at settlement, local and site level, before any design solution is considered. The Council will expect a high standard of site and contextual analysis and this should be undertaken at the start of the design process.

Step 3 – Involvement/Consultation



Involving the community and stakeholders is crucial not only to gain their support but more importantly, to use their expertise and knowledge to help inform the design. This means asking what you should do, not presenting the community and stakeholders with a fait-acompli of what you are going to do.

Step 4 - Vision



When steps 1-3 are complete, the information should be used to create a vision for the proposed development. For example, what kind of place is it going to be? Where appropriate, a series of aims and objectives should explain how the vision is going to be achieved.

Step 5 - Options, Options, Options



A series of conceptual options should be drafted out. Three is a good minimum number of options to create, although unrealistic options should not be prepared for the sake of it. There is very rarely only one design solution for a site although some designs are better than others. Options allow the designer to explore a wider range of possibilities for the site. The options should be assessed against the visions, aims and objectives. Any issues and challenges identified during this stage should be resolved. It may be that the best solution is a combination of options.

Step 6 - Design



A credible detailed design can only be produced once stages 1-5 have been completed. It is important to ensure that the vision has not been lost or diluted. Only once the design has been finalised should a planning application should be submitted.

A3. Understanding Context

A well-designed scheme makes a positive contribution to the built environment and is the result of an evolving design process that starts with an understanding of the scheme's site specific and wider context. No site will ever be a blank canvas.

Undertaking a contextual analysis means listing the key physical features of the site and the wider area and then using these to influence the design of the scheme.

It is perhaps tempting to see any site features as a constraint to development. However, taking a positive approach sees these 'constraints' turning into 'opportunities' that contribute to the design of the scheme. For example, a large tree on site becomes a focal point of the development built around it.

Understanding context is fairly straightforward and at its very basic requires the following 2-step approach:

Step 1: List Key Features

On a plan of the site, record the location of key features, which may include the following:

- Topography and gradient
- existing or proposed access arrangements and public rights of way and bridleways
- Trees and vegetation
- Canal and Rivers
- Water and flooding
- Protected habitats and species
- Green space
- Neighbouring development
- Public views
- Microclimate
- Existing buildings
- Conservation areas and listed buildings
- Archaeology and non- designated heritage assets
- Land/soil contamination risk
- Continual noise sources
- Air pollution and Bad Odour Services
- Services and Utilities
- Safeguarded Areas

Step 2: Establish Key Principles

Once the key features have been recorded, assess how these will influence the design of the scheme. This can be both in terms of protecting a particular feature or using the proposed development to mitigate or resolve a constraint. Good contextual analysis is a crucial step in achieving good design in the planning process. It should be prepared so that it identifies the wider and local context within which the application site is set. Including such an analysis within the planning application shows the Council how the proposed design responds to its context and will contribute towards local distinctiveness.

A4. Character

Strategic Objective (3) in the Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy states:

- *'The character and local distinctiveness of the District will have been reinforced by ensuring new development is of high quality design, taking into account the intrinsic and special value of its landscape and townscapes'*

An essential ingredient in making an attractive and successful place is the preservation, enhancement or the creation of character. In areas where there are already well-established and recognised settlement patterns, styles of architecture, scale and landscape, such as typically exist in a Conservation Area, new development should pay special attention to them (without slavishly trying to copy existing buildings). New development may be encouraged to continue elements of these local styles, where integration with the surrounding built form is deemed important.

In other areas, such as in retail parks or residential areas, where there is very little existing character or a weak character, the emphasis will be on development producing new high quality and distinctive places. Part B of this SPD provides further guidance in respect of the character of the District.

A5. Why Local Distinctiveness is Important

Everywhere is different. The key factor to achieving good design is not just applying the principles of good design, but applying them to the local context. Transposing an example of good design from one location to another will not result in good design if it fails to take account of the characteristics of its unique location.

Local distinctiveness is about valuing the uniqueness of a particular location and creating a design that strengthens its common features as opposed to destroying or diluting them. Good design adds cohesion to a place. Individual features can be the extraordinary or even the ordinary and every day; both contribute to defining a particular place. Places with a strong local distinctiveness have a sense of place.

Many of our local communities have produced Village Design Statements that set out design principles for development. Village Design Statements (VDS) are adopted by the Council as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. They are a valuable resource which assists in defining local distinctiveness within individual settlements. Applicants are advised to refer the documents when considering the design of future applications. Parish Plans should also be checked to see whether they contain any local design guidance.

In addition, there are a number of local communities in our district that have either draft or made Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). They include design policies that should be taken into consideration when preparing a future planning application.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that Parish Councils are contacted at an early stage of the planning application stage to discuss future planning proposals. Parish Councils can provide an invaluable source of local information that may assist in the design of future proposals.

Development Requirements Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

A list of adopted Village Design Statements, Parish Plans and Neighbourhood Development Plans are available on the Council's website. It is also advised that applicants contact the Policy Team (via email at www.planning.policy@stratford-dc.gov.uk) to find whether there is a VDS or NDP at draft stages.

When considering how local distinctiveness can be developed and/or enhanced, it is useful to consider what contributes towards eroding local distinctiveness. A better appreciation of what contributes to and builds local distinctiveness can be developed by understanding what erodes local distinctiveness. Some examples of eroding local distinctiveness are set out below.

Don't

- Use existing poor design in the locality as an excuse for further poor design
- Use non-local vernacular materials
- Ignore local scale and massing
- Ignore established building lines
- Design proposals where the streets are dominated by the car
- Use inappropriate landscape design and boundary treatment.

Local distinctiveness may be developed and enhanced by the consideration of some of the design issues below.

Do

- Consider the inclusive design principles from the outset and as part of the integral design;
- Use development as an opportunity to introduce positive urban design and character qualities;
- Capitalise on opportunities to frame views and vistas to, from and within a development;
- Consider streets as a key component of the public realm, designing proposals whereby pedestrians are an essential consideration;
- Incorporate local character scale and massing;
- Take account of established building lines;
- Use local vernacular materials;
- Use street furniture that reflects the local character and is well located.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list.

Further information on landscape design is found in Part N: Landscape Design, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure.

Building for Life

The Core Strategy supports the implementation of Building for Life and it is a useful tool for applicants when considering the design of buildings and places and provides a valuable checklist to ensure the proposal covers all aspects of good design.

Development Requirements Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Building for Life is a national standard for well-designed buildings, homes, places and neighbourhoods. The 20 Building for Life criteria are founded on government policy and best practice guidance and are used to evaluate the quality of schemes at both pre- planning and post- construction phases. A more concise set of criteria are also available as part of the 'Building for Life 12' publication.

Further information on Building for Life is available using the link

below: <http://www.builtforlifehomes.org/>

A6. Sustainable and Healthy Communities

Sustainable development in our district includes the creation of healthy communities. The links between planning and health are well established and the built and natural environment recognised as major determinants of health and wellbeing².

The Council will expect healthy communities to be created by ensuring that development proposals incorporate the following considerations:

- Design of urban form and the public realm;
- Accessibility;
- Inclusive environments;
- Warm and safe accommodation;
- Healthy, sustainable and liveable environments;
- Attractive and pleasant work places;
- Age and dementia friendly environments.

Design of the built environment and public realm

The design of the built environment can have a profound effect on the physical and mental wellbeing and how people perceive their environments. The location, density and mix of land uses can result in wide-reaching implications on how individuals carry out their daily lives; it can affect the user experience of access to and provision of key community facilities, such as shops and services, employment opportunities and open space provision. The way in which buildings and areas are connected through street layout, footpaths and cycle paths and open space can have an impact on physical and mental health and the amount of physical activity people can undertake. For example, developments which incorporate well-connected, attractive safe and legible streets, footpath and cycle paths can encourage more people to walk and cycle, promote physical activity and opportunities for social interaction and help to reduce the frequency of car use. [Part C and D of](#) this document provides further guidance on design.

High quality public realm is also essential to both mental and physical health. The public realm should be designed to encourage and promote physical exercise and mental wellbeing.

² Marmot M et al (2010) Marmot Review, Fair Society Healthy Lives

Development Requirements Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

This can include the overall quality of public spaces, street layout and connectivity, green infrastructure /landscape design and traffic calming measures. The urban form plays a critical role in influencing physical activity, particularly through providing opportunities for walking and cycling and physical exercise.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a crucial factor in the creation of healthy sustainable communities. Development should ensure that there is good access for all to recreation opportunities and facilities and services. For example, creating a safe and direct route to a local playground may encourage families to walk or cycle to the park, and 'step-free' flat routes and pathways can open up facilities for residents requiring wheel-chair access.

Inclusive Environments

Healthy communities are more inclusive places. Development should be designed so that barriers are not created that result in undue effort and separation from the built and natural environment. Everyone should be able to participate equally, confidently and independently in everyday activities, which are important contributors to overall health and wellbeing. This is particularly important when addressing needs of the elderly.

Age friendly and dementia friendly environments

There are presently 11.8 million people aged 65 or over in the UK. It is predicted that by 2030, the number of people aged 60 or over is expected to pass the 20 million mark. Stratford-on-Avon District reflects this national trend with an ageing population, with approximately 25% of its population being aged 65 or over.

Older People require supportive and enabling living environments to compensate for the physical and social changes that are associated with ageing. The changing needs may include reduced mobility, prevalence of physical disability and chronic diseases, as well as potential greater stress from isolation².

Providing older people with the opportunities to remain physically active, it is more likely to assist them in living independently. Regular physical activity is shown to increase immunity and resistance to illnesses. However, research has shown that physical activity levels decline drastically with age³. The Age UK (2017) report that 12.04% or 1.2 million people aged 65 and over in the England feel lonely, whilst 12% reported feeling cut off from society.

The built environment can reduce these risks by enabling social interaction and connecting people with places and other people. The provision of green and open spaces and walkable neighbourhoods can also encourage and facilitate increased physical activity and social integration for older people. It is essential that these spaces and routes are safe, well-maintained and accessible. They should also be well lit and evenly surfaced. Where there are some changes to ground levels, the transition should be gradual. Where steps are unavoidable, railings should be provided. Accessible public transport links with bus stops located within easy walking distance from homes is vital to maintain older people's independent life styles.

³ Saurabh Ram Bihar Lal Shrivastava et al (2013) Health –care of the Elderly: Determinants, Needs and Services, International Journal of Prevention Medicine 2013 Oct; 4(10):1224-1225.

Development Requirements Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The majority of people would prefer to remain in their own homes as they grow older, and wherever possible, make changes to their homes to meet their changing need.

HAPPI Design Principles

The Council will expect that housing built for independent living for older people as set out in Part N. Specialised Housing must be built to Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) design principles. Residential Care Homes and Nursing Homes should aspire to meet the HAPPI Standards.

The HAPPI principles are based on 10 key design criteria. Many are recognisable from good design generally - good light, ventilation, room to move around and good storage - but they have particular relevance to the spectrum of older persons' housing which needs to both offer an attractive alternative to the family home, and are able to adapt over time to meet changing needs.

They include the following design issues:

- Space and flexibility;
- Daylight in the home and in shared spaces;
- Balconies and outdoor space;
- Adaptability and 'care ready' design;
- Positive use of circulation space;
- Shared facilities and 'hubs';
- Plants, trees, and the natural environment;
- Energy efficiency and sustainable design;
- Storage for belongings and bicycles;
- External shared surfaces and 'home zones'.

Find out more

Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI)

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/>

Designing dementia friendly communities

Dementia is the term for a group of diseases affecting the brain. Dementia affects cognitive, sensory, social, emotional and physical functions. As a result people may experience problems with thought processing and concentration, as well as how they perceive and interact with the external environment.

There are currently 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK. This figure is projected to increase to over 1.1 million by 2021 and 2 million by 2051.⁴

Dementia is recognised as one of the most significant public health priorities in Warwickshire, with its far reaching effects on people living with dementia, their carers, family, friends, communities, businesses, health, social care and voluntary services and the economy.

⁴ Dementia UK, Second Edition, Alzheimer's Society, 2014

Development Requirements Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

It is estimated that by 2025, over 11,000 people aged 65 or over will be living dementia in Warwickshire. By 2020, approximately one fifth (18%) of those aged over 80 in Warwickshire are predicted to have dementia.

Dementia costs society an estimated £26 billion a year, more than the costs of care for people with cancer, heart disease and stroke. In the next 30 years, the predicted costs are expected to treble.⁵

A high quality designed environment benefits everyone and plays an important role in addressing some of the limitations, constraints and feelings of isolation which people living with dementia experience.

The outdoor environment can be perceived as unsafe and unfamiliar by many people living with dementia, which leads a tendency to remain at home more and subsequent increased feelings of isolation. The provision of:

- well-lit;
- safe;
- segregated and walkable routes;
- connecting local green spaces and essential amenities.

These could enhance chances to continue the lives as part of the community. For example, being able to walk to a park could offer opportunities for quiet and relaxing time spent amongst other people.

It is important that pathways contain seating areas located in strategic places, to allow people living with dementia time to reflect on their location and destination. Where possible, seating should be:

- located under street trees to provide shading in hot weather; and
- street furniture should be kept to a simple design so that it is not mistaken for a different object.

Dementia affects people's perception of their surroundings and different surfaces. Paving and tarmac should:

- be plain and non-reflective;
- contrast with walls in terms of colour and texture;
- avoid dark areas which may appear as a hole in the ground; and
- avoid reflective/glaring or shining surfaces which may appear as water or as slippery surfaces.

People living with dementia may feel confused when large amounts of information are presented to them at the same time. They generally function better amongst simple and familiar objects in the environment. Signage should be designed using a tonal contrast of colours with a simple and clear font.

⁵ Department for Health, 'Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia 2020' (Feb 2015)

Find out more

Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), Dementia and Town Planning: Creating better environments for people living with dementia (January 2017).

http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/2213533/dementia_and_town_planning_final.compressed.pdf

A7 Pre-Application Advice

Submitting a planning application should come at the end of the process. However, this does not mean that the formal application stage is the first time the Council should be involved in the scheme. The Council welcomes an early and open dialogue to ensure that the best possible design is achieved. Indeed, engaging in pre-application advice and resolving any issues before an application is submitted can help faster and more straightforward planning decisions to be made, whilst delivering a higher standard of design.

Find out more about the Council's Pre-Application Service using the following link:

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/preapplicationadvice>

For major developments, applicants are encouraged to seek the views of the local parish or town council or ward members at an early stage.

Warwickshire County Council offers a pre-application advice service as the Highways Authority.

Please email: highwayconsultation@warwickshire.gov.uk

A8 Design and Access Statements

In many instances there is a requirement to prepare a Design and Access Statement to support a planning application. This Design Guidance will provide assistance in preparing such statements. Further information on the requirements of a Design and Access Statement is available [in the Council's Local List](#) for planning application, and the [Planning Practice Guidance](#).

