

LOCAL PLAN SUB COMMITTEE - 8 AUGUST 2019

PART I – NOT DELEGATED

8. LOCAL PLAN TOPIC PAPER: LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS AND PLACE SHAPING (DCES)

1 Summary

- 1.1 This topic paper sets out the issues which the new Local Plan will need to address in relation to local distinctiveness and place shaping and proposes policy wording to be contained within the new Local Plan.

2 Details

- 2.1 The NPPF states at paragraph 124 that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Urban design and architecture can contribute to health outcomes through encouragement of more active lifestyles and development should be encouraged to create places that support mixed communities catering for the needs of different types of people including the young and old, encourage walking and cycling, improve access to public transport, and ensure that new development connects with existing parks and open spaces for recreation. Building exteriors and public realm should be designed in a way that contributes to pedestrian friendly environments.
- 2.2 The Local Plan identifies a requirement to accommodate significant growth over the plan period including the provision of new homes and space for employment and economic development with supporting infrastructure.
- 2.3 Meeting these requirements in a sustainable way will require all proposals to take opportunities to make the most efficient use of land, and in particular there is a need to secure a general uplift in the density of development in town centres and other locations which are well served by public transport.
- 2.4 However, this should not be at the cost of the quality of the environment or quality of life, or the local distinctiveness of our places. It is essential that new all development functions well for all users and will add to the overall quality of the area in both the short- and long-term. Proposals should respond to the elements of a place that make it distinctive, but this does not mean that development should necessarily replicate the scale or density of the existing built form.
- 2.5 Since no two places are identical, there is no blueprint for good design. It is therefore important that planning policy requires that each proposal for development will need to show how the design responds to a thorough understanding of place and context.
- 2.6 Development of larger sites through allocations within the Plan also offers an opportunity for these sites to create their own identity and character, although it remains vital that these developments are integrated with the surrounding area and community.
- 2.7 In all situations, well designed places should be functional; support mixed uses and tenures; include successful public spaces; be adaptable and resilient; have a distinctive character; be attractive; and encourage ease of movement.

- 2.8 Alongside the requirements of other policies of the Local Plan, the draft Local Distinctiveness and Design policy identifies the key design considerations which will apply in Three Rivers to all development proposals including new development, extensions, alterations, conversions and changes of use to create quality places and spaces for our communities.
- 2.9 The draft policy also states that regard will also be had to well established good design principles as set out in national initiatives such as the 'Building for Life' standard, 'Secured by Design' and 'Manual for Streets'.
- 2.10 With regards the planning process, the NPPF¹ advocates the use of review panels for assessing and improving the design of development particularly for large scale development and states that authorities should have regard to the outcome of any such review.
- 2.11 The Hertfordshire Design Review Service (Hertfordshire Building Futures) provides an independent and impartial process for evaluating the design quality and sustainability of development proposals in Hertfordshire. Design review costs vary depending upon the type of review (panel or desktop), and the number, scale, and nature of scheme(s) put forward for review².
- 2.12 The draft policy therefore encourages proposals for largescale major development schemes (delivering more than 200 dwellings or over 10,000sqm floorspace) to undergo assessment by the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel at the pre application stage.
- 2.13 Applications for development are currently required to satisfy the more detailed design criteria set out in Appendix 2 of the Development Management Policies LDD. These relate to privacy, prospect, amenity/garden space requirements, extensions, dormers and roofs.
- 2.14 The criteria have been updated to take account of changes to national policy and the requirement to intensify development. The revised design criteria are set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.15 The proposed Draft Local Distinctiveness and Place Shaping Policy is set out in Appendix 2.

3 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 3.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

4 Financial, Legal, Equal Opportunities, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Communications & Website, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

- 4.1 None specific.

5 Recommendation

¹ Paragraphs 128 and 129

² 1.1 It is intended that the applicants pay for this service at pre-application.

5.1 That the Local Plan Sub Committee note the contents of this report and recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee:

- the Design Criteria as set out in Appendix 1
- the Draft Local Distinctiveness and Place Shaping Policy as set out in Appendix 2

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Background Papers

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

Hertfordshire Building Futures <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/building-futures/design-review-panel/hertfordshire-design-review-service.aspx>

Development Management Policies LDD (2013)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Draft Design Criteria

Appendix 2 Draft Local Distinctiveness and Place Shaping policy

APPENDIX 1

DRAFT DESIGN CRITERIA

Design Criteria

- A3.1 Buildings, streets and spaces should be of the highest quality. In addition to the policies of the Local Plan, development proposals should satisfy the following more detailed criteria to ensure that new development creates a positive sense of place, does not lead to a gradual deterioration in the quality of the built environment, and that landscaping, the need for privacy and amenity space and the creation of identity in new development are taken into account.
- A3.2 It is important to note that whilst a development may be in accordance with the guidance contained in this document, in some cases it may still not be considered acceptable based on site circumstances. Likewise, certain developments may not comply with all guidance but could still be considered acceptable, particularly in Town and District Centres and other locations where high density development is considered appropriate and a relaxation of standards may be justified to enable efficient and effective use of land. All applications will be assessed and determined on their own merits.
- A3.3 The following criteria provide more detailed guidance for all new development including new dwellings, replacement dwellings, and extensions or alterations to existing dwellings.
- A3.4 For the purposes of these guidelines, habitable rooms are considered to be living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, studies and bedrooms.
- A3.5 Non-residential space is not given the same degree of protection as residential properties. However, proposals should still ensure that development provides for suitable standards of amenity for existing and proposed non-residential space to maintain these as attractive spaces contributing to the economy of the District, and that commercial development including new buildings, replacement buildings and extensions or alterations to existing buildings do not adversely affect the character or amenities of the District.

Privacy

- A3.6 All developments are expected to maintain acceptable standards of privacy for both new and existing residential buildings. The degree of overlooking and privacy inherent in a development will depend on density, layout, distances and angles between buildings, internal layout, positioning of windows, relative levels and, to some extent, the presence of trees, hedges or other landscape features.
- A3.7 In the interests of privacy and to prevent overlooking:
- a) Distances between buildings should be sufficient so as to prevent overlooking, particularly from upper floors. As an indicative figure, 22m should be achieved between the faces of single or two storey buildings backing onto each other or in

other circumstances where privacy needs to be achieved. Distances should be greater between buildings in excess of two storeys (especially dwellings/flats) with elevations which directly face one another or in situations where there are site level differences involved. Mitigating circumstances such as careful layout and orientation, screening and window positions may allow a reduction of distances between elevations.

- b) A proportion of each garden should be a private zone abutting or close to the dwelling that is not visible from the gardens or ground floor habitable rooms of adjoining properties. This should be of a minimum distance of 3 metres from a wall of the dwelling and be permanently screened by walls or fences.
- c) Development should not incorporate balconies, or first floor conservatories which overlook neighbouring properties to any degree.
- d) Trees and hedges (either existing or planted as part of the development) can provide an effective screen but should not be solely relied upon due to the loss of leaves in winter or the possibility of storm damage, disease etc.
- e) Windows of habitable rooms at first floor level should not generally be located in flank elevations. Flank windows of other rooms should be non-opening, below 1.7m (from internal floor level) and obscure glazed. High level windows with a sill height of 1.7 metres or more may be acceptable where a secondary light source is necessary.
- f) Ground floor windows should be located away from flank boundaries. Where flank windows to ground floor habitable rooms have to be incorporated, the boundary must be satisfactorily screened by a fence, wall or evergreen hedge.
- g) Reliance should not be placed on high screening fences or walls (2 metres and above) where these would form a dominant and oppressive feature.

Prospect

- A3.8 Developments which rely on outlook over garage courts, extensive parking areas, railway lines etc. will be discouraged. All residential units should have an outlook over a public or private highway, garden or other open space.
- A3.9 Where the rear of a building looks onto the side of another (for instance at a corner in a housing layout), the distance between them must be sufficient to avoid the flank wall having an overbearing effect.

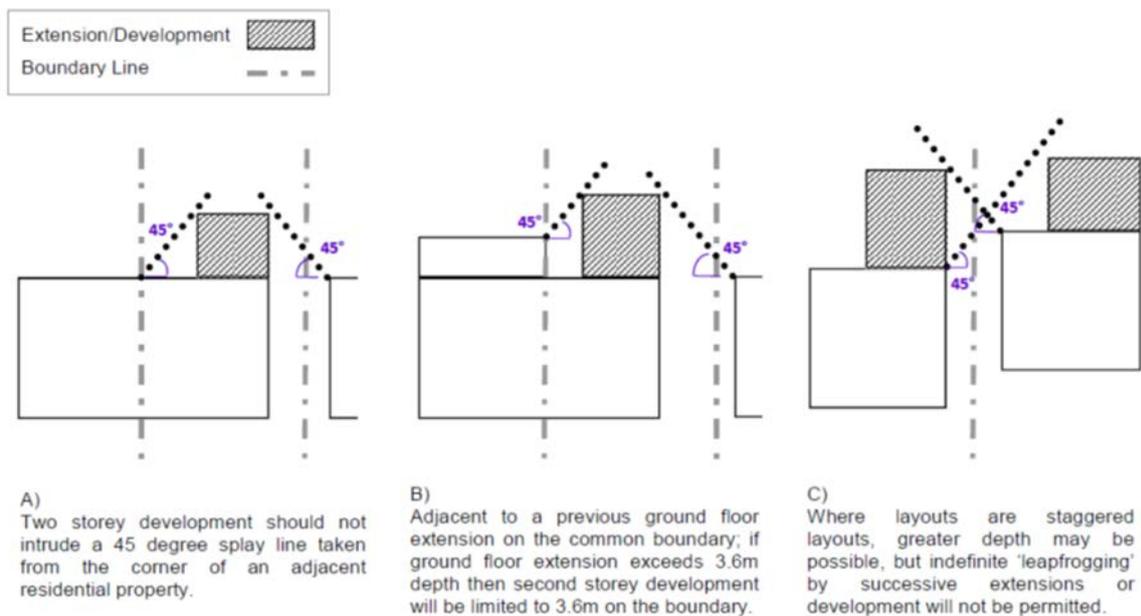
Daylight, Sunlight and Outlook

- A3.10 Development should ensure a good level of daylight, sunlight and outlook, throughout the day and the year and minimise impact on surrounding properties and spaces.

A3.11 The design of all development is required to maximise natural light into the room (subject to passive heating and cooling considerations). All dwellings should provide for direct sunlight to enter the main habitable rooms for a reasonable period of the day and living rooms, kitchens and dining rooms should preferably receive direct sunlight.

A3.12 Two storey development should not intrude into a 45 degree splay line drawn from the corner of an adjacent residential property. This principle is dependent on the spacing and relative positions of the dwellings and consideration will also be given to the juxtaposition of properties, land levels and the position of windows and extensions on neighbouring properties. Figure A.1 provides illustrative examples.

Figure A.1 Examples of the 45 Degree Splay Line Principle



Aspect

A3.13 All new residential units should be dual aspect, unless provision of dual aspect is demonstrated to be impossible or unfavourable. Where such circumstances are demonstrated, all single aspect units must:

- a) Provide a good level of daylight for each habitable room, and optimise opportunity for direct sunlight;
- b) Ensure that the aspect is not predominantly north-facing and does not face onto main roads or other significant sources of air pollution and/or noise and vibration, which would preclude opening windows;
- c) Provide a good level of natural ventilation throughout the dwelling via passive/non-mechanical design measures; and
- d) Ensure that future occupiers have a good level of privacy and do not experience adverse impacts from overlooking.

Flatted Developments

- A3.14 Proposals for flatted development, or involving the conversion of residential unit(s) into a larger number of units must provide for a good standard of amenity for all occupiers and consider the effect of development on the amenity of adjacent properties, and put in place measures to address any adverse impacts raised. This will include (but is not limited to) the following considerations:
- a) The number of units per core and storey should not normally exceed 8 in order to encourage neighbourly interaction, and a smaller number is preferable;
 - b) Internal communal corridors should be a minimum of 1.5m wide and should ideally have windows which open to promote cross ventilation and maximise daylight;
 - c) Common/shared entrances should lead to a hall large enough for people to manoeuvre with shopping and/or baby buggies, and in wheelchairs, with ease;
 - d) Access cores must provide an access control system, with entry phones in all dwellings linked to a main front door with remote electronic lock release.
 - e) Internal layouts, including the relationship of rooms on different floors within the scheme, and the position of entrances, extensions and fire escapes should ensure amenity for all occupiers;

Residential Amenity Space

- A3.15 This section refers to provision of private and semi-private communal amenity space to serve individual dwellings rather than requirements for public open space which are set out at Policy XX.
- A3.16 New residential development should provide private amenity space within the curtilage of the development in accordance with the following indicative minimum levels:
- a) Houses
 - 2 bed house – 45sqm;
 - 3 bed house – 60sqm;
 - 4 bed house - 75sqm;
 - Additional bedrooms – 15sqm each.
 - b) Flats (space may be allocated specifically to each flat or provided communally)
 - 1 bed flat - 15sqm;
 - 2 or more bed flat – 25sqm.
 - c) Specialist and Supported Housing for older people:
 - 15sqm per bedspace to be provided communally.
- A3.17 These standards provide guidance for all new residential development. However it is acknowledged that in some situations, such as where existing buildings in town centres are converted to residential use, there may be challenges in meeting these standards. Some flexibility will be applied where developments would still provide a good standard of living for future residents. This may, for example, include additional internal living space or the provision of winter gardens.

- A3.18 Amenity space provided should be of practical shape and utility, with care taken to ensure the space offers a good standard of amenity. Where privacy is achieved by means such as careful layout, screening, or differing levels, rear gardens may be of varied lengths. However, where rear garden length alone is relied on to provide privacy the minimum length should be 11 metres.
- A3.19 The minimum depth and width of balconies and other private external spaces should be 1500mm.
- A3.20 Depending on the character of the development, the amenity space provided may be in the form of private gardens or in part, may contribute to formal spaces/settings for groups of buildings or existing mature trees. In the latter case this can help avoid problems which can arise from the proximity of large trees to houses.
- A3.21 Communal space for flats should be well screened from highways and casual passers-by but should benefit from good levels of natural surveillance. Amenity space that lacks clear landscape proposals and consists of simple grassed or hard surfaced areas will not be acceptable.
- A3.22 Where space in the front of a dwelling is assigned to that particular property, it should be defensible space in the sense of being enclosed as part of the original layout.
- A3.23 Purely visual amenity space plays a different role; it should be prominent and may well include mature trees and key areas of planting, and serve as a visual asset to the development without necessarily being heavily used by the occupants.

Built Form

- A3.24 All proposals should be in keeping with the prevailing landscape/streetscape, reflecting the variety of local building types by using complementary building materials and designs, and should not result in overdevelopment or unacceptable intensification by reason of scale, form, bulk, height, spacing, density and design.
- A3.25 New development, including extensions to existing properties should take into consideration impacts on neighbouring properties, both within and surrounding the development, and visual impacts generally. Oversized, unattractive and poorly sited development can result in loss of light and outlook for neighbours and detract from the character and appearance of the street scene, or original property in the case of extensions.
- A3.26 Few properties are designed to incorporate future extensions, therefore any additions built need to take into consideration their effect on neighbouring properties and their visual impact generally.

A3.27 Most dwellings in the District are terraced, semi-detached or detached. Limited enlargements or alterations to these types of properties may be 'permitted development' under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended). Permitted development rights may also allow for extensions and alterations to commercial buildings. The local planning authority has no control over these works unless there are restrictions imposed by a planning condition, there is an Article 4 Direction, or the permitted development allowance has been taken up by previous works.

A3.28 Where permission is required, applications will be assessed on their own merits but new development and extensions or alterations to existing properties must:

- a) Not be excessively prominent in relation to adjacent properties or to the general street scene.
- b) Have the appropriate number of car parking spaces and/or garages in accordance with the Council's parking standards.
- c) Respect the character of the property/street scene particularly with regard to the spacing of properties, roof form, positioning and style of windows and doors, and materials.
- d) Not result in loss of light to the windows of neighbouring properties nor allow overlooking.

A3.29 The following guidelines will apply:

Single Storey Extensions

- Side extensions: proximity to the flank boundary will be individually assessed.
- Rear extensions: generally, the maximum depth should be 3.6m, or 4m in the case of detached dwellings. This distance may be reduced if the extension would adversely affect adjoining properties or be unduly prominent.
- Front extensions: applications will be assessed on their individual merits but should not result in loss of light to windows of a neighbouring property nor be excessively prominent in the street scene.

Two Storey Extensions

- Side extensions: in order to prevent a terracing effect and maintain an appropriate spacing between properties in character with the locality:
 - First floor extensions (i.e. over a garage or previous ground floor extension) shall be a minimum of 1.2m from the flank boundary.
 - Two storey extensions may be positioned on the flank boundary provided that the first floor element is set in by a minimum of 1.2m.

This distance must be increased in low density areas or where the extension would have an adverse effect on an adjoining property. In high density areas an absolute minimum of 1m will be considered. See Figure A.2 for illustrative examples.

- Rear extensions: in terms of size and volume, each application will be assessed on its individual merits according to the characteristics of the particular property.
- Front extensions: applications will be assessed on their individual merits but should not result in loss of light to windows of a neighbouring property nor be excessively prominent in the street scene.

New Development

- Development at first floor level and above should be set in from flank boundaries by a minimum of 1.2m. This distance may be increased in low density areas or where development would have an adverse effect on an adjoining property. In high density areas, an absolute minimum of 1m will be considered. See Figure A.2 for illustrative examples.

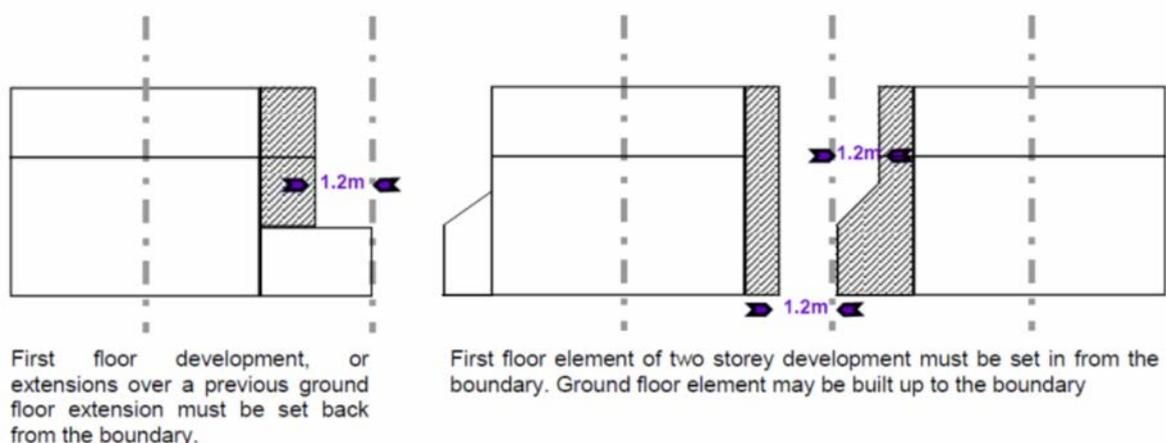
Dormers

- Dormer windows should always be subordinate to the main roof. They should be set below the existing ridge level, set in from either end of the roof and set back from the plane of the front or rear wall. The roof form should respect the character of the house if possible.
- Front dormers may not always be appropriate in the street scene.
- Multiple dormers should be proportionate in scale and number to the host roof.

Roofs

- Crown roofs can exacerbate the depth of properties and often result in an inappropriate bulk and massing. As such, they are generally discouraged and more traditional pitched roofs are generally favoured.
- Increases to ridge height will be assessed on their own merits at the time of a planning application, and a street scene plan will be required as part of any application. Where roof forms are of a uniform style/height and appearance, it is unlikely that an increase in ridge height will be supported by the Council.
- Hip to Gable extensions are discouraged in the case of semi-detached houses as it is considered that this unbalances the pair and results in a loss of symmetry. In some cases, roof forms in a street may be uniform and therefore this type of alteration may erode the group value of the street and will not be supported by the Council.

Figure A.2 Examples of Single and Two Storey Side Extensions/Development and Flank to Boundary Distances



Servicing and Ancillary Facilities

- A3.30 Careful consideration should be given to services for dwellings, bin and bike storage, access to meter boxes, space for clothes drying and places for deliveries. These should be designed to ensure that they are discreet and can easily be used in a safe way and should be designed as part of the building envelope wherever possible.
- A3.31 In all cases facilities should be designed to minimise visual impact on the street scene and ensure the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.
- A3.32 Provision of sufficient and accessible external storage space for the accommodation of containers for refuse and recycling is particularly important, and must be carefully designed and located to be accessible to the occupiers of developments and waste operatives and to minimise impacts on the character and amenities of an area.
- A3.33 The layout and location of parking areas are key features affecting the overall quality of residential and commercial schemes. There are many different approaches that can support successful outcomes, such as on-street parking, in-curtilage parking and basement parking.
- A3.34 The provision, location and type of car parking and service areas will be considered in context to ensure the most successful outcome can be delivered in each case, with consideration for factors including:
- a) Safety and security, including suitable levels of natural surveillance for parked cars;
 - b) Degree of impact of parking on the street scene and public realm;
 - c) Suitable and safe access for all users, including from the highway and between parking and buildings;
 - d) Landscaping and materials.

APPENDIX 2

DRAFT LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS AND PLACE SHAPING POLICY

Local Distinctiveness and Place Shaping

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

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

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

D1 Local Distinctiveness and Place Shaping

- (1) All new development is required to achieve high quality design that responds to distinctive local character (including landscape character) of the area in which it is set and contribute to a strong sense of place. Essential elements of place making include creating economically and socially successful new places with a clear identity that promote wellbeing.
- (2) Development should satisfy relevant detailed Design Criteria at Appendix xx.
- (3) Innovative designs will be encouraged where appropriate, however development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions will be refused.

Distinct Local Character

- (4) All new development should be designed to respond to locally distinct patterns of development and character, including landscape setting. Proposals will need to take account of local design guidance including that contained within Conservation Area Appraisals, Neighbourhood Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents to conserve or enhance the character, amenities and quality of an area.
- (5) Development should make efficient use of land whilst respecting the distinctiveness of the surrounding area in terms of density, character, layout and spacing, the pattern of street blocks and plots, building forms, amenity, scale, height, massing, style, landscaping and the use of materials.
- (6) The layout of proposals must be easy to navigate, with buildings designed and positioned to define and enhance a hierarchy of streets and spaces and create a density appropriate to the site, taking account of factors such as the relationship

between building height and street width, and the relationship between the height, width and depth of buildings.

- (7) Materials used should be sustainable, practical, durable and attractive with regard to aspects including their colour, texture, grain and reflectivity.
- (8) The size, function or density of some of the allocations for development within the Local Plan are such that it may not be appropriate for these sites to always reflect locally distinct patterns of development. In such cases, sites should take opportunities to create their own identity while ensuring cohesive and vibrant neighbourhoods.

Connections

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

Safeguarding Amenity

- (11) Development should protect residential amenities and the attractiveness of non-residential buildings and spaces which contribute to the economic success of the District for both existing and proposed occupiers by taking into account the need for adequate levels and disposition of privacy, prospect, amenity and garden space, and suitable access.

Landscaping and Public Realm

- (12) Development should incorporate visually attractive frontages to adjoining streets and public spaces and should provide for high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping.
- (13) Landscaping must be considered as an integral element of the layout and design of development, including integration with adjoining networks of green open spaces where appropriate and retaining, enhancing or improving important existing natural features such as trees, hedgerows and walls as far as possible. Proposals for landscaping should show how the design, planting species and materials have been selected with regard to factors including the character of the area, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment, and ongoing management and maintenance.

(14) Development should provide for a clear distinction between public and private space and should provide boundary treatments which enhance the appearance, character and amenity of the site and area.

(15) Development should enhance the public realm to promote social interaction, including making provision for adequate lighting and for street furniture and public art where appropriate and ensuring that all appropriate frontages contain windows and doors that assist informal surveillance.

Safeguarding Assets and the Environment

(16) All development should conserve and enhance natural, built, cultural and heritage assets, including public open space.

(17) Proposals must take opportunities to make sustainable design integral to the development and build resilience into a site's design taking into account climate change including through flood resistant design, Green Infrastructure, sustainable drainage, minimising the use of natural resources, reducing waste and ensuring that buildings and spaces are durable capable of adaptation to other uses and functions where practical in order to ensure their long-life.

Safety and Security

(18) Development must design out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour through the incorporation of appropriate measures to minimise the risk of crime and create safe and attractive places taking into account the Police 'Secured by Design' standards and where appropriate guidance on terrorism in the Government's Planning Practice Guidance.

(19) Development should provide natural security through layout and design with attractive, well enclosed, and overlooked streets, roads and spaces with clear consideration for the interrelationship of land use with external spaces and landscaping.

Access and Inclusion

(20) Places, spaces and buildings must be accessible to all potential users, including those with mobility difficulties taking into account the setting of buildings in the wider environment, the location of buildings within plots, gradient, transport infrastructure and public realm.

(21) Development must provide appropriate levels of parking for cycles to support sustainable travel choices and appropriate levels of parking for vehicles to avoid additional on-street parking where this would cause congestion or harm to amenity or highway safety in accordance with Policy xx. Parking and cycle storage areas

should be convenient, safe and visually attractive areas that do not dominate the development or its surroundings or impact on driver or pedestrian sight lines.

Ancillary Facilities

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

Reasoned Justification

The NPPF states at paragraph 124 that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Urban design and architecture can contribute to health outcomes through encouragement of more active lifestyles and development should be encouraged to create places that support mixed communities catering for the needs of different types of people including the young and old, encourage walking and cycling, improve access to public transport, and ensure that new development connects with existing parks and open spaces for recreation. Building exteriors and public realm should be designed in a way that contributes to pedestrian friendly environments.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Further specific requirements which apply to certain forms of development or sites are set out within other policies of the Local Plan (including Policies xx, xxx, xxxx and Appendix x). Regard will also be had to well established good design principles as set out in national initiatives such as the 'Building for Life' standard, 'Secured by Design', 'Manual for Streets' and Hertfordshire Building Futures Toolkit.

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

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

The Council encourages applicants, particularly for major development proposals, to engage in early and ongoing pre application discussions about design with both the Local Planning Authority and local community. In accordance with the NPPF, applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community will be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.

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

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