

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

3.0 RESIDENTIAL DESIGN AND LAYOUT

National Context

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states that one of the core land-use planning principles is to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design can have a large impact not only on individual buildings but also on the wider 'public realm', including our streets, town centres, parks and open spaces. 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, should be refused permission.

Design and Access Statements

- 3.2 The Government now requires that Design and Access Statements accompany most planning applications and applications for Listed Building Consent (information on when Design and Access Statements are needed is detailed in the Planning Validation Checklist). This requirement provides an opportunity for the early consideration of design and access. Design and Access Statements should contain relevant information and details compatible with the scale and complexity of the proposal, including:

- A full site analysis of existing features and designations
- An accurate site survey including landscape features and site levels
- The relationship of the site to its surroundings
- Existing access for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles
- Any features of historical importance.

It will need to demonstrate how the proposed development will:

- Maximise energy efficiency and address water and drainage requirements
- Achieve an inclusive environment that can be used by everyone, regardless of age, gender or disability
- Take account of the transport considerations and
- Incorporate crime prevention measures in the design of the proposal and how the design reflects the attributes of safe, sustainable places set out in Safer Places – the Planning System.

The Design Council provides guidance on Design and Access Statements which is available at www.designcouncil.org.uk. Further advice, on 'Secured by Design' principles are available from the Police at <http://www.securedbydesign.com>.

Building Futures: A Hertfordshire Guide to Promoting Sustainability in Development

- 3.3 The Council, working in partnership with the County Council and other Districts in Hertfordshire, has prepared guidance on how design should complement local architectural traditions and how sustainable construction techniques can be incorporated within the context of quality and the character of the existing built heritage. It also includes guidance on how to take account of

crime prevention and community safety considerations as part of the design and layout of new development. Further details can be found at <http://www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures>.

Local Context

- 3.4 The principle of design forms one of the overarching policies within the Council's Core Strategy (CP12). Design can have a significant impact on individual buildings and spaces as well as the wider environment. The Council recognises that high quality residential design and layout is integral to meeting the objectives within the Core Strategy, addressing issues such as crime and anti social behaviour, the reduction in carbon emissions, the reuse and recycling of waste and other community objectives in Three Rivers.
- 3.5 Many areas within the District consist of low density housing with large (or long) rear gardens. These areas often experience pressure for development on garden land or for infill development which, if not managed, can erode the particular character of an area or impact on the residential amenity of both existing and new occupants. In particular, the Council will not support development proposals which result in a tandem form of development (two or more houses directly behind one another on the same plot and sharing the same access) or backland development hemmed in by houses and accessible only by a long driveway.
- 3.6 For the purpose of this policy, infill development means the filling of a small gap, which, having regard to the width of neighbouring residential curtilages and the general character of the site and surrounding areas, is capable of accommodating a single dwelling, a pair of dwellings or short terrace in an otherwise built up frontage.
- 3.7 The Council also acknowledges that additional dwellings can be provided through the subdivision of existing larger properties to form maisonettes or flats. These types of applications can be a satisfactory way of raising densities in low density areas close to local transport nodes and local services. However, such applications will be carefully assessed to ensure that character and residential amenity are protected.

Further Guidance for Applicants

- 3.8 Applicants are advised to refer to Core Strategy Policy CP12 for additional policy guidance on design of development. Further information will be outlined in the Council's forthcoming Design SPD which will seek to provide comprehensive information relating to a number of subjects including extensions, development in the Green Belt, conservation issues and sustainability.
- 3.9 Further guidance on design is provided by the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE) and the Design Council, for example through the national standard 'Building for Life'. This standard includes how to consider character, public space, design and construction and the surrounding environment and community. Developers are encouraged to incorporate these principles in proposals.
- 3.10 Applicants should consider design from the outset to ensure that development complements and enhances the characteristics of the area in which it is located. The Council encourages applicants to seek pre-application advice prior to the submission of a formal planning application.

DM1 Residential Design and Layout

All applications for residential development should satisfy the design criteria as set out in Appendix 2 to ensure that development 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 housing layouts are taken into account.

a) New Residential Development

The Council will protect the character and residential amenity of existing areas of housing from forms of “backland”, “infill” or other forms of new residential development which are inappropriate for the area.

Development will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not result in:

- i) Tandem development
- ii) Servicing by an awkward access drive which cannot easily be used by service vehicles
- iii) The generation of excessive levels of traffic
- iv) Loss of residential amenity
- v) Layouts unable to maintain the particular character of the area in the vicinity of the application site in terms of plot size, plot depth, building footprint, plot frontage width, frontage building line, height, gaps between buildings and streetscape features (e.g. hedges, walls, grass verges etc.)

b) Subdivision of Dwellings

Subject to other development policies, proposals for the conversion of single dwellings into two or more units will generally be acceptable where:

- i) The building is suitable for conversion by reason of its size, shape and number of rooms. Normally, only dwellings with three or more bedrooms will be considered suitable for conversion
- ii) The dwellings created are completely self-contained, with separate front doors either giving direct access to the dwelling, or a secure communal lobby or stairwell which itself has a secure entrance
- iii) Adequate car parking, services and amenity space can be provided for each new unit in compliance with the Council's standards
- iv) The character of the area and the residential amenity of immediate neighbours are protected
- v) If conversion of semi-detached dwellings is proposed, generally this takes place in pairs in order that privacy and the amenities of the occupants of the adjoining dwelling are maintained.

The Council will take into account the individual and cumulative effect of applications for development on the character of an area, and will resist piecemeal development in favour of comprehensive proposals that properly address the criteria above.

<i>Policy Links</i>	
National Policy (others may also be relevant)	National Planning Policy Framework
Related Core Strategy Policies	CP1: Overarching Policy on Sustainable Development CP2: Housing Supply CP3: Housing Density CP9; Green Infrastructure CP12: Design of Development
Core Strategy Strategic Objective	S3, S9, S10, S12

<i>Further Guidance</i>	
Supplementary Planning Documents	Design SPD
Additional Information	Hertfordshire Building Futures: http://www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures Roads in Hertfordshire – Highway Design Guide: http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/transtreets/transplan/infdev/roadsinherts/

Reasoned Justification

- 3.11 Policy DM1 is in accordance with national and regional policy frameworks and reflects local priorities to maintain, protect and enhance the quality of the built environment and in particular residential amenities. The approach will contribute directly to the Core Strategy Objective 3: in relation to adapting design and considering climate change; to Objective 9: in relation to conserving and enhancing the countryside and diversity of landscapes, wildlife and habitats; to Objective 10: new development respecting the unique character and identity of the towns and villages in the District; and Objective 12: creating safe and attractive places to live.