

Chapter 10 Designing beautiful and healthy spaces and buildings

Introduction

The design of spaces and buildings is fundamental to how we experience places, and the impact development has on the natural environment. The design of space has a direct impact on people's health, safety, security, inclusion, travel choices, the cost of living, and general quality of life. Design can influence the impact development has on the environment through the method and quality of construction, integration with the context of the local area, and the extent to which spaces and buildings address both immediate and future demands of the climate emergency.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that the creation of high quality places and buildings is a fundamental requirement of the planning and development process. It highlights that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and helps make development acceptable to communities. Local Plan policy is intended to ensure well designed proposals come forward for approval in accordance with the NPPF and national design guidance, contained in the National Design Guide, National Model Design Code, and Guidance Notes for Design Codes.

The Local Plan includes site allocations to enable appropriate levels of development to meet housing targets set at the national level. The design of these strategic allocations is key to safeguarding the character and appearance of our valuable landscapes. It is particularly important that we focus our attention on the most sensitive sites including allocations within National Landscapes or affecting a heritage asset. To address this requirement, and as steered by national guidance, design codes will be produced for a number of allocated sites, and for specific areas, to inform future proposals. Our policies, supported by design codes, will guide the decision making process to ensure that all new development is fit for purpose, being both resilient and well-integrated into the natural, built and historic environment.

Whilst good design is often associated with the physical appearance or functionality of buildings, it is increasingly concerned with achieving more sustainable and energy efficient buildings. These aspects of design are considered in detail under the tackling climate change chapter. Every development provides an opportunity for good design and many of our policies contain a design element. For example:

- Ensuring climate change resilience;
- Encouraging healthy and active lifestyles and travel patterns; and
- Encouraging green infrastructure, including green space and landscaping.



Considered green infrastructure is vital to create healthy places.

New development should create a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. The quality of a home is a determining factor in health outcomes and the need for accommodation which is of a suitable size and layout to meet the needs of the occupier/s is key to this. The Government's nationally described space standard²³ (NDSS) sets minimum standards for the size of new dwellings, based upon the number of bedrooms, storeys, and occupancy. The NDSS provide a common standard that local planning authorities may choose to adopt through local plan policies, subject to evidence of need and viability.

Evidence on the size of new dwellings being built in East Devon over recent years indicates that just 29% are meeting the NDSS in relation to gross internal floor area. Further assessment of a selection of new homes against bedroom area and widths suggested far fewer homes achieve the other requirements of the NDSS. There is a risk that these new dwellings are not providing a reasonable level of internal space to undertake typical day-to-day activities, with potential impacts including a lack of space to prepare and eat food, store possessions, socialise, study, work, relax, or adapt in case of changed circumstances. In applying the NDSS, it will be considered that every habitable room which does not function as the main living room, dining room or kitchen will be regarded as a bedroom. The impact of adopting the NDSS will be considered in the viability assessment that accompanies the East Devon Local Plan 2020-40, to demonstrate that the Plan can be delivered in a viable manner.

62. Policy DS01: Design and Local Distinctiveness

New development, including the refurbishment of existing buildings should be of a high quality design and locally distinctive. Proposals should clearly respond to local policy and guidance including Neighbourhood Plans and Design Guides / Briefs / Codes, whether adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents or promoted through other means. For proposals in the Blackdown Hills National Landscape, reference should be made to the [Blackdown Hills AONB Design Guide For Houses](#); within the East Devon National Landscape, reference should be made to [East Devon AONB Planning Guidance](#). Proposals should also be in accordance with the principles of the National Design Code and Building for a Healthy Life.

The layout and design of building curtilages, roads, parking, pavings, open space, site furniture footpaths and boundary treatments should make a positive contribution to the street scene / public realm and the integration of the development with its surroundings and setting. Recycling and waste storage facilities should be in locations well related to collection points. Particular care will need to be given to boundary treatments that abut public or communal areas in order to avoid adverse impacts

Proposals will only be permitted where they:

1. Respect the key characteristics and special qualities of the area in which the development is proposed;
2. Ensure the appearance of buildings, including scale, massing, density, height, fenestration, and materials, relate well to their context;
3. Do not adversely affect:
 - a) The distinctive historic or architectural character of the area;
 - b) The urban form, in terms of significant street patterns, groups of buildings and open spaces;
 - c) The amenity of occupiers of adjoining residential properties;
 - d) The operation of existing uses outside of the proposed development;
 - e) The future amenity of occupants of proposed residential properties, with respect to access to open space; protection from noise and pollution; provision of adequate internal light; storage space for bins, bicycles, prams, and other uses; and
 - f) Meet nationally and locally described space standards¹.
4. Have due regard for important aspects of detail and quality and should incorporate:
 - a) Attractive, secure layouts with safe and convenient access for the whole community, including disabled users and incorporating appropriate measures to reduce the potential for crime;
 - b) Necessary and appropriate street lighting and furniture and, subject to negotiation with developers, public art integral to the design;

- c) Features that maintain good levels of daylight and sunlight into and between buildings to minimise the need for powered lighting where this does not conflict with shade and tree planting requirements;
- d) Appropriate soft landscape (greening) measures and open space provision to enhance amenity and biodiversity value.
- 5. Measures that minimise risks associated with climate change, including consideration of a fabric first approach, the use of appropriate materials, techniques, and technologies to reduce carbon emissions over the lifetime of the development
- 6. Mitigate potential adverse impacts, such as noise, smell, dust, arising from developments, both during and after construction.
- 7. Include measures to secure the management of waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle, recovery, disposal) during the construction and operational phases.

¹ Technical Housing Standards - www.gov.uk

Justification for inclusion of policy

Paragraphs 131 to 141 of the NPPF establish the mandate for planning authorities to create policy that facilitates the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable places and buildings. Paragraph 132 states ‘plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable’. The NPPF makes clear that in order to provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design preferences.

This policy is an updated version of Policy D1 – Design and Local Distinctiveness of the adopted local plan, one of the policies most often quoted in decision notices and appeals. In addition to the design specific policy, the plan policies embed good design throughout the Local Plan.

63. Policy DS02: Housing Density and Efficient Use of Land

Proposals for residential development should optimise the density of the site in a manner that conserves or enhances the character of the area and makes efficient use of land.

Proposals for major development schemes and those in environmentally or heritage sensitive locations will be required to be supported by a design code

agreed with or produced by the council as planning authority. Codes, amongst other matters, will specify density recommendations for key allocations,

Further design codes may be produced to address more generic area specific design and density concerns. This work is dependent on the final selection of site allocations, to be informed by the outcomes of the consultation process

Justification for inclusion of policy

Paragraphs 123 to 130 of the NPPF deal with making effective use of land and achieving appropriate densities. In order to meet our sustainability goals we need to ensure that we make efficient use of land and build at the maximum density that is compatible with the character of the surrounding area. Where there is an anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, the NPPF (paragraph 129) advocates minimum density standards for town centres and other locations well served by public transport that significantly increase the average residential density of such areas. The NPPF also suggests that a range of densities could be set to reflect the accessibility of different areas.

Advertisements

The display of advertisements is controlled in a similar way to the need to apply for planning permission for some development, but under a separate legal system. It is appropriate to have a policy to guide decision makers on how to deal with applications for advertisement consent.

64. Policy DS03: Display of Advertisements

Applications for the display of advertisements will be considered in terms of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts. Advertisements should be:

1. Appropriately positioned and scaled in relation to their context;
2. Safe in terms of highway safety;
3. Sympathetic to the character of the area;
4. Designed with colours and materials compatible with the building and area; and
5. Where illuminated, the type and level of illumination should reflect the general level of lighting in the area.

Justification for inclusion of policy

The NPPF highlights that the character of an area can be undermined when advertisements are poorly sited and designed but should only be controlled in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts (paragraph 141). The proposed policy will help to protect amenities and public safety.