

Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted June 2015



Wyre Forest District Council



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1.1 The aim of this Supplementary Planning Document is to provide detailed advice on Wyre Forest District Council's expectations for the delivery of high quality development. The SPD will clearly set out how the District Council's design policies should be interpreted. This will provide certainty and clarity for those bringing forward development within the District. The SPD does not set new policy; it provides detailed guidance for implementing the design policies set out within the District's existing Development Plan. The SPD is a material consideration for anyone submitting a planning application.

1.2 The Wyre Forest District is a considerably diverse area with particularly distinctive characteristics and heritage assets. It is especially important to aim for high quality design in any future development to both complement and enhance this local distinctiveness and create a high quality environment.

Consultation

1.3 The District Council undertook an 'early engagement' consultation between 23rd January and 21st February 2014 to allow key stakeholders and other interested parties to influence and shape the content of the SPD. A draft version of the SPD was made available for consultation between 31st October and 12th December 2014. The representations received have informed the development of the SPD.

Sustainability Appraisal

1.4 The EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive requires certain plans, policies and programmes which are likely to have significant environmental effects to undergo a formal environmental assessment. Additionally, European Directive 92/43/EEC Conservation of Natural Habitats, Wild Fauna and Flora requires a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to be undertaken for plans to establish whether or not the plan, alone or in combination with other plans policies or programmes, is likely to have significant effects on the qualifying features of a European site or sites. Section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to be carried out on a plan. However, section 180(5) (d) of the Planning Act 2008 removes the requirement for SA on SPDs. Therefore SEA, HRA and SA are only needed where an SPD is likely to have significant effects.

1.5 The District Council undertook extensive Sustainability Appraisal on the Adopted Core Strategy, the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan. This SPD does not set any new policy. It only provides detailed guidance on existing policies in these documents. Therefore, it can be concluded that SEA, HRA and SA are not needed for this SPD.

Good Design

1.6 Good design is considered to be essential for sustainable development and it is recognised as a key contributor to community health, economic value, social well-being and inclusion, as well as environmental quality. Good design is needed to create places where people want to live, work and visit. Design is important everywhere, not only in maintaining places which are attractive, but also in revitalising and regenerating places. Good design is not just about individual buildings, but also about how places work as well as look.

1.7 This Supplementary Planning Document should be considered alongside National Planning Practice Guidance (www.planningguidance.planning.portal.gov.uk). Applicants are encouraged to refer to this guidance when considering their proposals for new development. Although it does not set out to repeat national guidance, it is important to emphasise the issues that the NPPG (para. 006) considers are paramount to good design:

- local character (including landscape setting)
- safe, connected and efficient streets
- a network of green spaces and public places
- crime prevention
- security measures
- access and inclusion
- efficient use of natural resources
- cohesive and vibrant neighbourhoods

1.8 The NPPG places great emphasis on promoting local character and this is reflected within this SPD which includes an overarching vision for the design of new development within our area.

Document Structure

1.9 The first part sets out the overarching vision and design objectives which together form a comprehensive approach to delivering development in the District. These support the policies contained within the Development Plan.

1.10 The next section considers local character and identity, both of the built environment and the natural environment. Landscape design is considered along with water management and biodiversity, paying particular attention to the rivers and canal network. Design principles for the town centres, rural areas and commercial development are also outlined in this section. This chapter then considers residential developments, from small infill developments through to large estates as well as householder extensions.

1.11 The final section considers the design process and the different stages required in order to secure planning approval starting with pre-application advice, leading onto design review for larger schemes to actual submission of the planning application. The District Council endorses the use of Building for Life 12 for major residential developments and developers will be expected to familiarise themselves with its principles.

Introduction

2.1 These design objectives set the tone for new development within Wyre Forest. They should be viewed as interlocking objectives, which together form a comprehensive approach to delivering development within the Wyre Forest area and respond to the unique opportunities and landscape that the district offers.

2.2 They support policies set out in the District Council's Local Plan documents. Wyre Forest District Council has an overall vision to protect, improve and enhance the built and natural environment in order to provide an accessible, attractive, enjoyable and healthy place to be. The quality of the district's environment is one of its most valuable assets and includes a rich built heritage, diverse and sensitive habitats and attractive landscapes.

2.3 A key priority for the district is the protection and enhancement of our natural and built environment by safeguarding and enhancing the quality of the environment through appropriate conservation, control of development and attention to design and also by retaining the local character and distinctiveness of the district's landscapes and settlements. Achieving this will mean attractive well designed buildings, spaces and neighbourhoods, with the overall character of the landscape being protected and new development being well designed, locally distinctive, energy efficient and environmentally sensitive.

2.4 The local plan sets out the vision for how the district will be by 2026 where there will be three thriving riverside towns with their own distinctive identities; rivers and the canal and other green/blue infrastructure will be valued links for both wildlife and people connecting the town centres with the surrounding countryside; natural habitats and historic landscapes will offer a range of outdoor interests for education and sustainable tourism; the risk of flooding has been reduced due to a programme of floodplain management, softer landscaping and extensive use of SUDs; Kidderminster benefits from extensive brownfield regeneration with an attractive town centre with urban greenspace; Stourport-on-Severn riverside and the historic canal basins have been fully restored and attract high visitor numbers; Bewdley's flourishing riverside environment offers many opportunities for visitors; the district's landscape character is conserved and enhanced with historic farm buildings repaired and restored and the urban areas have bus priority measures and there's an extensive cycle network.

Objective One - Securing High Quality Design

2.5 Relevant policy framework:

- Core Strategy: CP11 – Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness, CP13 – Providing a Green Infrastructure Network, CP15 – Regenerating the Waterways
- Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan: SAL.UP7 - Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness, SAL.UP8 - Design of Extensions, SAL.UP9 - Landscaping and Boundary Treatment
- Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan: KCA.UP1 - Urban Design Key Principles; KCA.UP2 - Public Realm

2.6 High quality design is inherent in creating great places to live work and play. Design quality contributes to how people perceive places and their enjoyment of the place. Truly sustainable places will be developed with high quality design at their heart; all development types have

competing social economic and environmental considerations, whether this is attracting new businesses, building new neighbourhoods, or regenerating the canal infrastructure, ensuring high quality design will mean the development has the best chance of success.

2.7 High quality development should:

- be reflected through an understanding of the local context
- create well connected places that are easy to move around
- be visually attractive
- create safe and accessible development
- enhance the neighbourhood or surroundings
- be fit for purpose
- be sustainable

Objective Two - Creating & Reinforcing Local Distinctiveness

2.8 Relevant policy framework:

- Core Strategy: CP11 – Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness, CP15 – Regenerating the waterways, CP13 - Providing a Green Infrastructure Network
- Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan: SAL.UP7 - Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness, SAL.UP3 - Providing a Green Infrastructure Network, SAL.UP6 - Safeguarding the Historic Environment, SAL.UP9 - Landscaping and Boundary Treatment

2.9 Areas will have an existing character that is determined by the qualities of the existing buildings and landscape. Where this is strong, new development should respond to the existing qualities and ensure that the proposal presents a positive addition to the streetscape or landscape. Where the existing context is weak or negative, it is important that new development seizes the opportunity to improve the quality of the area.

2.10 Development responding to local distinctiveness should:

- respect the existing qualities of the place that are positive, and look to address those that are perceived as negative
- value the heritage and culture of the local area
- respond to the immediate and wider context
- contribute to creating a sense of place for the local area

Objective Three - Protecting & Establishing Landscape Character

2.11 Relevant policy framework:

- Core Strategy: CP12 – Landscape Character, CP13 – Providing a Green Infrastructure Network, CP14 – Providing Opportunities for Local Biodiversity and Geodiversity, CP15 – Regenerating the Waterways
- Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan: SAL.UP3 – Providing a Green Infrastructure Network, SAL.UP5 – Providing Opportunities for Safeguarding Local Biodiversity and Geodiversity, SAL.UP9 - Landscaping and Boundary Treatment

- Worcestershire County Council Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Guidance

2.12 The built, historic and natural environment informs the landscape character and is an important asset; the qualities of the place as defined through the landscape character help define the sense of place. The setting of the District provides an important backdrop to development. The ease of access to the countryside is a unique asset and ensuring such an opportunity is used to its potential is essential to maintaining and promoting active and healthy lifestyles.

2.13 Development responding to landscape character should:

- enhance and strengthen the setting and character through new development and landscape gain
- not undermine the quality of the landscape

Introduction

3.1 Character and local distinctiveness are important qualities for any development in retaining and creating places with identity. Design details embedded in existing buildings and spaces can present subtle cues to new development. New development should respond to the local context. Where this is positive, the character of the place should be reflected in the design; consideration should be given to density, scale and form, and also to the detailing, such as considering proportion and pattern of fenestration, materials and the landscape. Where the context is weak, a proposal should improve the quality of the area. This could be through use of higher quality materials, different building forms or making new connections, to create a more distinctive and identifiable place. Opportunities should be used to remove inappropriate developments or features to help improve an area's quality. Responding to context is not just about the confines of the site; it is about considering the wider area.

3.2 The heritage of an area brings with it challenges. Proposals need to respond to the setting of heritage assets, whether specific or area based. This can include statutory assets such as conservation areas, listed buildings and archaeological designations, but also locally important assets. The heritage of the area can help inform new development, but this does not mean a literal interpretation through pastiche development for example. There are 17 Conservation Areas within the district, one covers much of Bewdley town centre, 4 in Stourport-on-Severn, 4 in Kidderminster, 7 in rural settlements and a linear one covering the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. Character Appraisals for these Conservation Areas are available on the website.

3.3 Topography creates opportunities and constraints, enabling views or creating difficult gradients. Development proposals should clearly give understanding to how topography is dealt with, responding creatively and positively to the issues presented. It should be used to enhance local distinctiveness.

3.4 New development should be used to positively reinforce townscape and character and to ensure a sense of enclosure and a continuity of enclosure are created. The height and massing of a building should be informed by the character, function and width of the streets they are sited within. A broad range of residential 'character types' are identifiable within the District. These are listed at Appendix 2. These character sheets are there for the benefit of the designer to help their understanding of character and to inform creative design. These are only for guidance purposes. They are not intended to prescribe exact approaches. It is also important, where applicable, to refer to the relevant Conservation Area Character Appraisal. In areas covered by a Neighbourhood Plan, this should also be taken into account.

3.5 The component parts to built character are summarised as follows:

- Street proportion – Height and width of a street in section – this creates the sense of enclosure and character to the street
- Building Form – This includes storey heights and the type of development, such as terraced, detached or apartment
- Plot Width – This is the width of the building plot within the street. The building frontage may extend across only a proportion of the full plot width if the property is detached
- Building Line Set Back – The distance the building is set back from the back of pavement within the building plot; a terraced property may not have a set back if opening straight onto the street.

- Front Elevation Composition– The proportion and arrangement of the street facing frontage, including size, shape and pattern of fenestration, eaves heights and details such as bay windows.
- Roof Composition – The proportion and form of the roof, referring to details such as pitch, ridge, hipped or gable end.
- Materials – The construction materials for the walls and roofs; this can include colour, type, textures and finishes.
- Boundary – Typical construction details, such as walls, railings or hedging, at the front boundary with the pavement edge, demarcating the public and private realms.
- Landscape – The size and arrangement of a typical front garden space, for example paved or grassed
- Parking – the typical arrangements for private parking, this can include on-street, or private off-street drives.

Building Stone

3.6 In many parts of the district, sandstone is a prominent feature with deep cuttings and even small dwellings cut into the rock. This is especially prevalent in the north of the district around Wolverley. Sandstone is used in churches, barns, some dwellings and for boundary walls. Other examples where sandstone is used is as a plinth, for coping and for dressings. The predominant building material in historic buildings is red brick with clay tiles for roofs. It is possible that "Local Distinctiveness" will be compromised by a lack of local sources of building stone to build new and repair existing vernacular and listed features and buildings which incorporate local stone. Details on potential sources for building stone can be found at www.buildingstones.org.uk. The emerging Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan contains proposals to encourage local sources of building stone. The District Council will encourage the salvage, collection, storage and resale of local stone produced during redevelopment and rebuilding to allow its reuse in the local area. The Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy (2012) also encourages the recycling and reuse of resources and is available to view on the Worcestershire County Council website.

Brooklands, Wolverley



Frenchman Street, Arley



Landscape Design

3.7 The quality of a place is expressed by both the buildings and its spaces. A poor quality private and public realm can impact negatively on a higher quality building.

3.8 The landscaping should be specific to the place, and recognise the context, picking up on existing materials for example. High quality approaches should be used wherever possible, focusing on detail, such as front boundaries, delineating streets, marking out parking bays etc. Public spaces should always be well enclosed with development that provides good opportunities for natural surveillance to ensure safety at all times of day. The setting of landscape features should inform the design and the character of the landscape and be captured in the design.

Landscaped Gardens at Wyre Forest Crematorium



Landscape Quality in Residential Developments

3.9 Where appropriate, larger residential developments should have open space as a dominant feature and should:

- Appeal to a wide range of users
- Relate to the surrounding character of the area
- Link into a wider network of green spaces
- Form a focal point for residents
- Be safe, attractive and easily accessible for all physical abilities
- Not be designed as an addition but integrated into the design from the beginning
- Integrate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems to include landscape features such as ponds and swales to enrich the landscape and enhance biodiversity and ecology through wetland habitats. (see paragraph 3.17)
- Survey and retain existing landscape features of value including trees, hedges, woodland, ditches, ponds, grassland and verges. Retaining these features helps to enhance new development in a cost effective way, creating a sense of place

Cope Gardens, Areley Kings



- Use existing water features and canals as part of the design, enhancing them to encourage leisure use and improve access (see paragraph 3.26) for further guidance from the Canal & River Trust)
- Car parks should not be central to a design. Pocket parks can be fitted into the smallest spaces, breaking up car parking schemes and other vast expanses of hard surfaces.
- Ensure a clear definition between public and private spaces

Communal Gardens at Round Hill Wharf, Kidderminster



Design of Space for Play

3.10 New development proposals should make suitable provision for both formal and informal play spaces as set out in the Planning Obligations SPD. Size should be based on the expected child population of the local area. Where practicable, play spaces should embrace the concept of natural play, using formal and informal elements and be designed in context with the existing landscape character. Well designed play spaces should:

- Use the existing landscape to release additional play potential, making use of natural elements
- Allow for children to shape and manipulate their environment (sand and water play, den making etc.)
- Be safe and fit for purpose
- Be well located and overlooked by houses or shops etc
- Encourage imaginative and free play alongside equipped play spaces
- Provide scope for a child to develop and be accessible to both disabled and able bodied children
- Allow children of different ages and abilities to play together
- Include elements of managed risk and challenge
- Encourage access to and engagement with nature and develop healthy lifestyles
- Provide a buffer zone between play spaces and residential dwellings
- Provide seating for parents and carers
- Consider future maintenance

Planting

3.11 Planting is an important part of any new development, providing structure, enhancing aesthetics and providing ecological benefit. Good planting design considers the following:

- Provide visual interest and create a safe and attractive living environment
- Create a sense of place
- Can be used to frame views
- Provide shade from the sun and shield exposed sites from the wind
- Create green networks and enhance and create habitats, supporting biodiversity
- Provide visual screening or use as a sound barrier

- Create a sense of cohesion within the space
- Help new developments to blend into the existing landscape
- Planting should be suitable for the environment and location it is being used in
- Native and naturalised trees and shrubs should generally be specified where possible
- Consideration should be given to future management and maintenance (see BS8545)
- Existing trees and hedges should be retained where possible

Water Management

3.12 Water is central to the identity of the district with the 3 main towns all located along rivers or canals. The town centres have a history of flooding from the Rivers Severn and Stour and flood alleviation measures have been put in place for Kidderminster and Bewdley. Many locations in the district have been affected by surface water issues and flooding from smaller watercourses. In the past, development has led to an increase in surface water run-off which contributes to flooding when the sewers and watercourses are unable to cope in times of extreme rainfall. Water is often seen as a risk rather than an opportunity. However, when imaginatively and innovatively integrated into the built environment, water creates attractive places for people to live, work and play as demonstrated by recent development.

3.13 Most of the eastern half of the district is underlain by Permo-Triassic sandstones which are classed as Principal Aquifers as large volumes of water can easily be drawn up from them via boreholes or wells. Much of the public water supply comes from these but they are also highly vulnerable to surface contamination. Source Protection Zones have been modelled by the Environment Agency to protect these boreholes.

3.14 Water Sensitive Urban Design integrates water cycle management with the built environment through planning and urban design. Soft planted, green drainage schemes cost less than conventional methods whilst increasing property values and providing multiple benefits, for example, increased biodiversity, better air and water quality, improved public health and enhanced land values. Further information is available at the following link http://www.ciria.org/Resources/Free_publications/Water_sensitive_urban_design_in_the_UK_-_Ideas_book.aspx

Riddings Brook detention basin, Bewdley



3.15 In Wyre Forest, the North Worcestershire Water Management Team has been set up to deal with flooding, drainage, ordinary watercourses and surface water issues. It should be noted that the main rivers still fall under the remit of the Environment Agency. Core Strategy policy CP02: Water Management helps to ensure that new development has regard to all aspects of the water cycle within the district. Using a Water Management Statement will help to ensure that all relevant aspects of flood risk and water management will be covered when applying for planning permission. Appendix 3 provides detailed guidance on water management issues for applicants.

3.16 Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) help to control the flow rate of surface run-off, protect/enhance water quality, create new wildlife habitats among watercourses and promote natural groundwater recharge. Further guidance on SUDs is available in the NPPG. In areas at risk of flooding, new development should only be considered appropriate if priority has been given to the use of SUDs. All major development should provide SUDs unless it can be shown to be inappropriate. Details of the different SUDs techniques can be found at www.susdrain.org. In addition to managing flood risk, SUDs can also help to meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive by helping local rivers and streams to achieve 'good' status by 2027.

Wyre Forest Crematorium



3.17 The implementation of SUDs has widespread benefits for both people and wildlife in terms of their contribution to green infrastructure. Further information can be found at www.rspb.org.uk/Images/SuDS_report_final_tcm9-338064.pdf. This issue is further explored under biodiversity (see paragraphs 3.20 -3.24).

Microclimate

3.18 It is essential to assess the microclimatic conditions of a site and its surroundings. There needs to be enough, but not too much warmth and light, shade, cooling breeze and shelter. Buildings and urban space can be designed to reduce harmful wind effects and contribute to successful well-used external spaces. Building orientation affects how much light is let in for passive solar gain and can help reduce overheating of the interior. Main openings are best facing south, kitchens better facing east, living rooms to south and west and bedrooms often better facing north. Maximising solar gain, can reduce the need for artificial lighting and thus reduce carbon use. South or west facing roofs allow for electricity generation via photo-voltaic panels.

3.19 Public spaces should have direct sun for a significant proportion of the day to encourage maximum usage. Shade should be provided in streets, spaces and focal points that receive direct exposure to midday and afternoon sun. Trees are one of most effective ways of improving microclimate. They moderate temperature extremes and reduce heat island effects, provide shade whilst letting light through and provide shelter from the wind. They also improve air quality, provide habitat, reduce pollution and can be a potential fuel source.

Brise soleil at Wyre Forest House, Kidderminster



Incorporating Biodiversity into Developments

3.20 There are a number of local plan policies regarding green infrastructure and biodiversity, including CP13, CP14, and SAL.UP5. With a large number of green spaces within the District there is the potential to provide a comprehensive linked network. The District's rivers and canals in particular can help with these links. A large number of potential development sites are situated along the waterways and it is vital that the opportunity to improve biodiversity is maximised for the benefit of both wildlife and people. Wyre Forest also has significant areas of acidic heathlands which are becoming increasingly fragmented. Any development which could help to reconnect these important habitats through sustainable landscaping would be beneficial.

Green wall, Monastery Avenue, Kidderminster



3.21 If possible, green infrastructure should be incorporated into all new development as it has a number of benefits including allowing both animal and plant species to move around and counteracting flooding and temperature extremes. Access to nature can have health benefits and improve quality of life. Further information is available at http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/GI-signposting_tcm6-11961.Pdf and <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/planning-for-a-healthy-environment-good-practice-for-green-infrastructure-and-biodiversity.html>

3.22 There are also opportunities to retrofit green infrastructure using green roofs and roof gardens, green walls to provide insulation or shading, new tree planting and by managing highway verges to enhance biodiversity. It is also important to consider air quality, ground and surface water and soil protection when designs are drawn up. The impact of lighting on biodiversity should also be considered. Where lighting is required for safety reasons in areas of high wildlife value such as along rivers and canals, it is possible to minimise light spillage onto the adjoining watercourses.

Kemp Hospice - Image provided by Kidderminster Shuttle



Biodiversity Features in the Landscape

3.23 SUDs (see paragraphs 3.16 - 3.17) provide opportunities to form new wildlife corridors and can be planted with native species as well as allowing natural colonisation. Rain gardens are landscaped areas placed next to impermeable surfaces such as roofs, roads and car parks for the purpose of storing and absorbing run-off during rainfall. They often take the form of planted depressions in the ground. Plants should be hardy to withstand sudden downpours. They can also act as traffic calming measures and provide attractive landscaped areas for wildlife. See guidance at <http://www.landscapeinstitute.co.uk/policy/GreenInfrastructure.php>

Special Consideration Around Canals and Rivers

3.24 Wyre Forest District is dominated by three main watercourses: the River Severn, the River Stour and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal which follows the valley of the Stour. There is also a very large network of streams and pools. Many of these features are also heritage assets, being built or modified to perform particular functions. The Hoo Brook, Blakedown Brook and Dowles Brook all have national significance for biodiversity. Many of the key regeneration sites are situated alongside these waterways and it is important that developments are designed with the 'blue' infrastructure at the heart of any proposals. Design principles relating to canals include:

- individual waterways and water spaces should be viewed as part of wider network
- water is a space and leisure/commercial resource in its own right.
- need to consider development views both towards the water and also from the water
- tow path should be integral part of public realm
- siting, configuration and orientation of buildings must optimise views of water with natural surveillance and encourage and improve access to/from and along water

3 | Local Character and Identity

- waterside development needs to be considered holistically with opportunities for water-based development, use and enhancement
- improve site appearance from both tow path and from water itself and enhance environmental quality of waterway corridor
- appropriate boundary treatment and access issues may be different for tow path side and offside of waterway
- biodiversity improvements could include hedge planting, linear orchards, provision of bird/bat boxes and wildflower verges
- new buildings should enhance the historic environment with siting, orientation, massing, scale, materials and setback considered carefully
- highways and parking need appropriate screening when sited adjacent to waterways
- access from new development to the waterway should be convenient, attractive and safe
- new bridges should integrate well into the surroundings and have minimal impact on the environment

Further information is available at <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/planning-and-design>

Lichfield Basin development, Stourport-on-Severn



3.25 Development alongside rivers and streams should:

- Open up culverted watercourses where practicable
- Create and retain shallow open river banks
- Include features that shield the river corridor from the effects of light and other disturbance
- Provide features for aquatic and riparian animals such as fish, otter and water vole
- Provide special niches for species such as kingfisher and bats
- Be designed and constructed in such a manner as to pose a minimal risk to the river from contaminated or silt-laden run-off
- Include an ecological management plan to control riparian invasive weeds

- Include undeveloped buffers that can support appropriate wetland species and help to reduce disturbance to watercourse corridors in protecting habitats/ecology. Buffers also provide a suitable easement for access to undertake flood risk maintenance and/or improvement works when required
- Provide ongoing access and maintenance to any watercourses within or adjacent to the site

Further information is available at http://www.therrc.co.uk/rrc_manual.php

Special Consideration Near Acid Heathlands

3.26 The Wyre Forest District contains several areas of acid heathland which is not found anywhere else in Worcestershire. Development proposals in the vicinity of acid heathlands should:

- Conserve existing acidic heathland plants and animals
- Include native acidic plants in both the landscaping and on the buildings
- Ensure that any new acidic habitats are continuous with adjacent existing habitat
- Include features for reptiles and invertebrates in the landscaping
- Include an ecological management plan to ensure the sustainability of the newly created acidic grassland habitats

Urban Design Principles for Town Centres

3.27 The District's town centres in order of size are Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley. Kidderminster is the strategic town for the District, and the other urban areas are designated as market towns. The town centres are key to the success of the District, creating a hub of activity and a focus for commerce, retail, culture and leisure, providing for residents and workers alike. Strong urban design principles will assist in retaining the vitality and vibrancy in these areas. Further information relating to Kidderminster town centre can be found in the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan and the Churchfields Masterplan. Specific guidance for Stourport-on-Severn can be found in the Public Realm Design Guide, the Bridge Street Basins Link Development Brief and in the Severn Road Development Brief. These documents are available to view on the planning policy pages of the website.

River Stour alongside Morrisons store in Kidderminster



Listed Slingfield Mill in Kidderminster with modern glass extensions



High Quality Public Realm

3.28 Key principles for the creation of a high quality public realm in the town centres include the following:

Artist's impression of Exchange Square outside Kidderminster Town Hall



Listed Piano Building at Weavers Wharf, Kidderminster with new extension



- The street hierarchy should be understood whereby the importance and function of differing streets is prioritised in terms of the physical treatment.
- Reduce impact of physical barriers created by main streets, using public realm to support movement; pedestrian movement should be prioritised over the movement of vehicles.
- Create safe, well-enclosed public realm that creates ease of movement at street level.
- Create a network of high quality spaces within the town centre, providing a variety of functions, such as leafy shaded areas, multi-use spaces or tree lined streets.
- Support the use of space through the use of high quality attractive materials and the provision of street furniture; however, street clutter must be avoided.
- Ensure space has uses which support activity and high levels of surveillance throughout all times of day, to give an appropriate level of security. Isolated, disconnected or poorly maintained spaces will not be successful.
- A programme of maintenance should be proposed as part of any works to ensure longevity of any improvements.

Creating Legible and Active Connections

3.29 The layout of streets and how they connect into the wider area needs to be given much thought in the design:

- Prioritise street users; pedestrians and cyclists, access for mobility impaired, and access to public transport should be considered as a priority. Further consideration needs to be given to ensure commercial access and servicing can be achieved. Design key junctions to ensure ease of movement and reduce the impacts of traffic.
- Strengthen linkages and connections for pedestrians around the centre creating clear circuits around the centres.
- Ensure way finding is considered, through the creation of attractive landmarks and appropriate signage, particularly at prominent sites.
- Connect the activities and services within the centre to surrounding neighbourhoods, providing easy links to and from shops, public transport and other focuses for activity.

- Create pedestrian routes that are safe and feel welcoming.
- Create linkages out of centres, connecting into green infrastructure and waterways.

Active Street Edges

3.30 Active street edges will ensure places are inviting to users:

- Keep building lines and frontages to the street strong with variety and detail providing interest.
- Ensure the definition of public and private space through the use of appropriate and quality boundary treatments, using hard or soft materials.
- Where uses bound the street, these should be maximised in their potential for passive surveillance; the design of the frontage should respond to this.

Vitality and Vibrancy

3.31 It is important to design development which will be used throughout the day and the evening to encourage more people into town centres outside normal working hours:

- Support a mix of uses across the town centre, appropriate to creating a centre that remains active after the traditional 9 am to 5.30 pm opening hours.
- Support clustering of activities to retain an active and healthy early evening economy, looking to retain families and workers within the centre, and attract a rising residential population to support activity in the centre after traditional opening hours.
- Development should consider further adaptability and future potential uses, to ensure longevity of the proposed development and minimising vacancy potential.

Artist's impression of new public space planned for Bullring in Kidderminster



Shop Front Design Guidance

3.32 High quality design plays an important role in the viability and vitality of shopping areas. Shop fronts should be designed to be compatible with both the individual building and the general street scene. Planning permission is required for any new or replacement shop fronts and any other alteration which affects the external appearance of the building. Conservation area consent may also be required in the case of major works. Ensuring shop fronts are well maintained will be crucial to improving the design quality across the District.

3.33 Contemporary designs can be appropriate where these are well executed; these will generally comprise predominantly glazed frontages with simple signage. When refurbishing historic shop fronts, try to incorporate any original features. The scale and proportion of existing buildings should be respected. Materials should be durable and of high quality. Signage should be sympathetic to the existing building and context. Security shutters should be mounted within the interior of the shop frontage, and wherever possible be designed into the shop front from the initial concept. These should be perforated or lattice grilles to improve feelings of safety on the street outside of daylight hours through activity and interest.

3.34 For further guidance specific to historic areas, please refer to 'Shop Front Design Guidance for the Historic Environment' available on our website.

Design Principles for Rural Development

3.35 The rural character of the District is a key attribute that should be considered, with about 85% of the district's area being classed as rural. The rural areas contain a network of villages and settlements each with their own distinct character and identity. Building on earlier sections, this character should be enhanced through any development and not undermined. Appropriate development to support local needs that is in accordance with current policy should be respectful of the context; it should reinforce the character and its location, design and visible appearance within the wider landscape. Under policy DS01 of the adopted Core Strategy, there are limited opportunities for development in the rural settlements and development in the open countryside will be closely controlled to safeguard the integrity of the Green Belt and landscape character. The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan also contains a section on rural development with specific policies on reuse/adaptation of rural buildings, chalets and equestrian development. The Chaddesley Corbett Neighbourhood Plan (2014) has specific policies to ensure any development is sensitively designed and maintains and enhances both the built and natural environment. New design should respond positively to local character. Policies CC8-10 set out design principles. The Neighbourhood Plan is available to view on the Council's website.

Barn conversions at Hodge Hill Farm on outskirts of Kidderminster



Under policy DS01 of the adopted Core Strategy, there are limited opportunities for development in the rural settlements and development in the open countryside will be closely controlled to safeguard the integrity of the Green Belt and landscape character. The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan also contains a section on rural development with specific policies on reuse/adaptation of rural buildings, chalets and equestrian development. The Chaddesley Corbett Neighbourhood Plan (2014) has specific policies to ensure any development is sensitively designed and maintains and enhances both the built and natural environment. New design should respond positively to local character. Policies CC8-10 set out design principles. The Neighbourhood Plan is available to view on the Council's website.

3.36 Under Paragraph 55 of the NPPF, local planning authorities should avoid isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances - requirement for rural worker to live on site, viable use of a heritage asset or enabling development to secure its future, reuse of redundant building which would enhance its setting and finally a dwelling of exceptional quality or innovative nature. This final clause may potentially offer exemption from planning constraints if a dwelling is 'architecturally outstanding'. In order to satisfy this clause, a dwelling must be truly outstanding or innovative, help to raise design standards more generally in rural areas, reflect highest architectural standards and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the area. Any proposal submitted under this clause of paragraph 55 would be expected to go down the route of Design Review with the Council's partner MADE. Applicants will be expected to meet any costs of this process in full.

3.37 Potential development may include affordable housing provision, community facilities and services, or contribute to the rural economy in terms of traditional employment sectors or farm diversification as appropriate. Within this, there will be individual design challenges. Where appropriate development is sought within the Green Belt, the reuse or replacement of existing buildings will be supported as a priority providing an adverse impact on the integrity of the landscape does not result. Equestrian activity and horsiculture are prominent and growing uses. Any necessary infrastructure and development to support this will need to be balanced with the potential impact on the landscape and character.

3.38 Within villages the following design principles are appropriate:

- Demonstrate a positive response to context, based on a site analysis, and responding to height, scale, building lines and materials in particular.
- The proposed development should be respectful of existing densities.
- The proposed street network should respect or enhance existing provision, ensuring ease of movement.
- Uses sited adjacent to each other should be respectful of privacy and amenity, and provide adequate car parking. These should seek to reflect existing development patterns.
- Elevations should be respectful of existing character and detailing.
- Landscaping should be appropriate to the context, proposals for addressing topography and boundaries should be reflective of the existing character; this could include set backs /front to front distances.

3.39 Landscape character is an important factor that is considered in the assessment of a planning application. At a national level, English Nature have divided up the landscape into National Character Areas. Wyre Forest District falls within the Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau - the central catchment of the Rivers Severn and lower Stour. Within Worcestershire, these are further divided up into Regional Character Areas, with Wyre Forest District falling into Kinver Sandlands (land to east of River Severn) and the Wyre Forest Plateau to the west. These areas are then further divided into Landscape Character Types which are determined by analysing maps of geology, topography, soils, tree cover, land use and settlement patterns. Landscape Types are generic and can be found anywhere in the country where the same combinations of physical and cultural landscapes occur. An application for residential development should show that the key characteristics of the Landscape Type have been considered in the siting, design, scale and layout of any proposed change. There are 6 Character Types represented within the district. These are set out within the Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment SPD (available on the County website) and can be summarised as follows:

- Timbered Plateau Farmlands - hedged fields, scattered farms, woods and wooded valleys

- Sandstone Estatelands - open rolling landscapes with large arable fields often enclosed by thorn hedges
- Estate Farmland - ordered agricultural landscape of medium / large size fields, small plantations and ornamental trees of large country houses
- Principal Wooded Hills - wooded landscape with steeply undulating topography
- Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings - intimate densely settled landscape with wayside cottages and smallholdings, dense hedges with hedgerow trees
- Wooded Forest - only found in Worcestershire within the Wyre Forest itself

3.40 The district contains a large number of historic farmsteads. Any proposals for development affecting them will be expected to follow the Worcestershire Farmstead Assessment Framework (available at www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology/farmsteadsguidance). The document is based around a number of key considerations:

- The landscape context –including boundaries and habitat potential.
- The whole site – form, scale and siting of buildings.
- The extent of historic change to the whole site and its landscape context, including where traditional buildings and farmyards have been lost or replaced – informing opportunities regarding buildings & spaces.
- The architectural patterning – styles, materials and details and potential siting of new buildings.

Meadow Farm, Arley



Design Principles for Commercial Development

3.41 This section refers predominantly to larger scale commercial developments, where a development site is subject to a number of functions. This could be office space, workshops, storage, manufacturing, distribution or retail. Whilst the end use may differ, there are a number of design challenges that can drive this development type; these include the need for large floor areas, provision of substantial car parking, a cost effective build and the free standing nature of such buildings.

OGL Computer, Stourport-on-Severn



Wyre Forest House offices, Kidderminster



3.42 Commercial development design should:

- Demonstrate a positive response to context, based on a site analysis, and responding to height, scale, building lines and materials in particular.
- Respond to the existing streetscene and creating a positive urban structure where the building contributes to creating strong frontage and interaction with the street.
- Respond to the human scale of the street, buildings should create depth and visual interest within the streetscene, with elements broken down where appropriate.
- Use robust and appropriate materials that will withstand the test of time.
- Entrances and primary frontages should address the street and be subject to the highest standards of design to support the creation of an attractive and active streetscene.
- Plant and machinery associated with the building should be discretely accommodated on the site and be integral to the architecture.
- Signage and branding should be appropriate to the scale of the development, be well considered as part of the development design and well related to the frontage and entrance/access.
- Activity generating uses should be located on the principal frontages, adjacent to public spaces or streets wherever possible.
- Inward looking developments should be avoided; buildings should be outward facing towards existing streets and spaces.
- Landscape should be designed to be appropriate to the site; the scheme should provide a coherent and unified structure for the site.
- Appropriate boundary treatments should be proposed with regard to the context.
- SUDs drainage should be incorporated (See paragraph 3.17)
- Parking should not dominate developments; this should be carefully integrated where required to ensure frontages are not dominated by car parking.

3 Local Character and Identity

- Service areas should be located away from primary frontages.
- Security should be carefully considered to ensure a balance between physical protection and the maximised opportunities for natural surveillance.

Beakbane Ltd, Stourport Road, Kidderminster



Amada (UK) Ltd, Kidderminster



Design Principles for Residential Development

3.43 The District Council has an important role to play in influencing essential elements of housing design in new residential areas, in older established areas where infilling takes place and where extensions to existing dwellings are proposed.

3.44 Housing development will be designed to meet the overarching design objectives. The creation of a successful housing scheme is the sum of a number of parts, from creating the right connections, successful streets and a housing layout that supports amenity for residents with both privacy and public spaces to create cohesion. However, the homes themselves are often the subject of debate with much criticism levelled at 'standard house types'.

Small Scale Developments

3.45 Small scale developments (1 - 9 homes) are predominantly driven by the context and character of their surroundings. The design should respond to the context, creating better places and making a positive addition to how the place functions wherever possible. The design should fit into or help establish the place.

3.46 The Council would expect new development proposals to consider the following:

- **Infill** – if the site is part of an existing street, how will the proposal fit in with the existing scale, density, building line, eaves and ridge heights, and elevational detailing of both the immediate properties and the wider surroundings? A proposal could respond through architecture which replicates existing architecture or be innovative and creative but must respond to the parameters set by the context.
- **Repair / Completion** – New development sometimes improves or repairs the townscape, creating a positive place where previously this had been undermined by poor quality

Flats at Monastery Avenue, Kidderminster



development, or where a site has remained vacant for some time. The addition of development, whether buildings and/or landscaping can work to create and connect places.

- **Creating** – Small scale developments are sometimes hidden away, such as a small infill site accessed from an existing connection that has limited frontage. In such cases, the creation of its own character may be appropriate, responding to the site constraints; for example, the creation of a small courtyard development.

Large Scale Developments

3.47 Large scale developments (10+ homes) offer the opportunity to create new neighbourhoods with character. A strong urban design framework will help to set a clear vision for the scheme based around a series of layers including movement, buildings, landscape and land uses.

3.48 An initial analysis of how the site connects to the surrounding area will set out the structure for the site, illustrating a clear street hierarchy, and where site access is to be taken from the existing network. The creation of a structure will start to help define development plots. Connections to the site and within it will need to be considered together with the existing street hierarchy in the area. Proposals should aim to build on existing views and landmarks or perhaps create new ones. The layout should encourage natural surveillance at all times of day.

3.49 The next stage is to set out the various development blocks, demonstrating how the edges will be dealt with, along with any relationships with existing buildings or spaces. Important views / aspects or corners will also need to be indicated where appropriate. Thought needs to be given to density, scale, height and massing of the buildings, materials to be used and impact on any heritage assets in the vicinity. The next stage is to identify the locations of landscape treatments proposed, key areas of public space, SUDs, and areas of tree planting. Developers will need to consider the landscape setting, existing topography, microclimate and local materials. Finally, development blocks should be shown with the type and mix of development, indications of height, density and how the uses will interact with public space.

3.50 Large scale residential developments will be assessed against Building for Life 12 principles (see 4.12).

Former British Sugar Site, Kidderminster



Hurcott Road/Medal Close, Kidderminster



Georgian Way, Kidderminster



Design Principles for Residential Extensions

3.51 A range of extensions and alterations are permitted by Schedule 2, Part 1 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended) without the need for express planning consent. A list of these is available to view and download at www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/commonprojects/extensions. The advice provided in this guide aims to minimise the impact of any extension or alteration on the amenity enjoyed by the occupants of neighbouring properties and to ensure the development appears appropriate to both the host property and to the streetscene and the character of the area. These principles should, ideally, be applied to all extensions regardless of whether or not planning permission is required.

3.52 Whether planning permission is required or not, it may be necessary to gain approval under Building Regulations in order to ensure that any development is structurally sound and accords with the requirements of the relevant Building Acts legislation.

3.53 Local Plan policies require that any extensions should have no serious adverse effect on the amenity of neighbouring residents or occupiers. (Refer to policies SAL.UP7, UP8 and UP9). Extensions should enhance a dwelling and contribute to its character. They should be sympathetic to the original building and be visually subservient. To help address this, extensions should:

Extensions on corner of Baldwin Road, Kidderminster



- Respect the existing character of the area and the appearance of the streetscene by avoiding a harmful terracing effect and other incongruous additions.
- Maintain original frontage rhythms by stepping back slightly from the original building line. Typically, a first floor side extension should be set back 0.75m from the front elevation of the original building.
- Ensure that ridge heights are lower than the original building. Eaves heights should not exceed those of the original building.
- Ensure that the “front face width” of extensions is based on the original proportions of the house to be extended. As a general rule extensions to the side should have a maximum width of 4/7ths of the original front face width.
- Any projections should not detract from an established building line at the front of the property.
- Distinctive landscape elements such as trees should not be compromised.
- The use of flat roofs has the potential to have a significant impact on the aesthetics of a development. As such, proposals incorporating flat roofs will be assessed on their merits.
- Dormers should be finished with pitched roofs and be positioned away from the edges of the roof.
- In order to preserve the privacy enjoyed by the occupants of neighbouring dwellings, the positions of windows and the inclusion of features such as balconies should be carefully considered.

- To preserve the levels of light and outlook enjoyed by the occupants of neighbouring properties, the 45° code guidelines would normally be applied.
- Outbuildings should not unduly diminish the amenity space around the property and should not prejudice the outlook from neighbouring properties.

3.54 Additional good practice guidance is available on the District Council's website.

3.55 The materials used in an extension should match or be sympathetic to the existing dwelling in terms of type, colour and texture. Changes in appearance as a result of weathering should be taken into account when selecting bricks and tiles. It may be worth considering re-using roof tiles from the rear of properties for the front of extensions.

3.56 In addition to respecting general proportions, the detailed design of the windows and surrounds is also an important consideration. The style of the windows, materials, glazing pattern, sill and lintel treatments of the existing windows should be taken into account when designing a new extension. Such details must be indicated on application plans.

3.57 Buildings often have distinctive architectural features which contribute to their special character and these can be used to good effect to help match the design of the extension with the original. It is worth considering whether the property to be extended has any decorative features (door architraves, decorated lintels, sills and eaves detail) which could be incorporated into the design of the extension. However, it is recommended that unnecessary or ornamental decorations which can appear too fussy are avoided. Attention to details such as the correct siting of rainwater pipes and correct fascia depth and alignment is also very important. Whenever possible, soil vent pipes should be concealed within walls.

Design Principles for Effective Parking Solutions

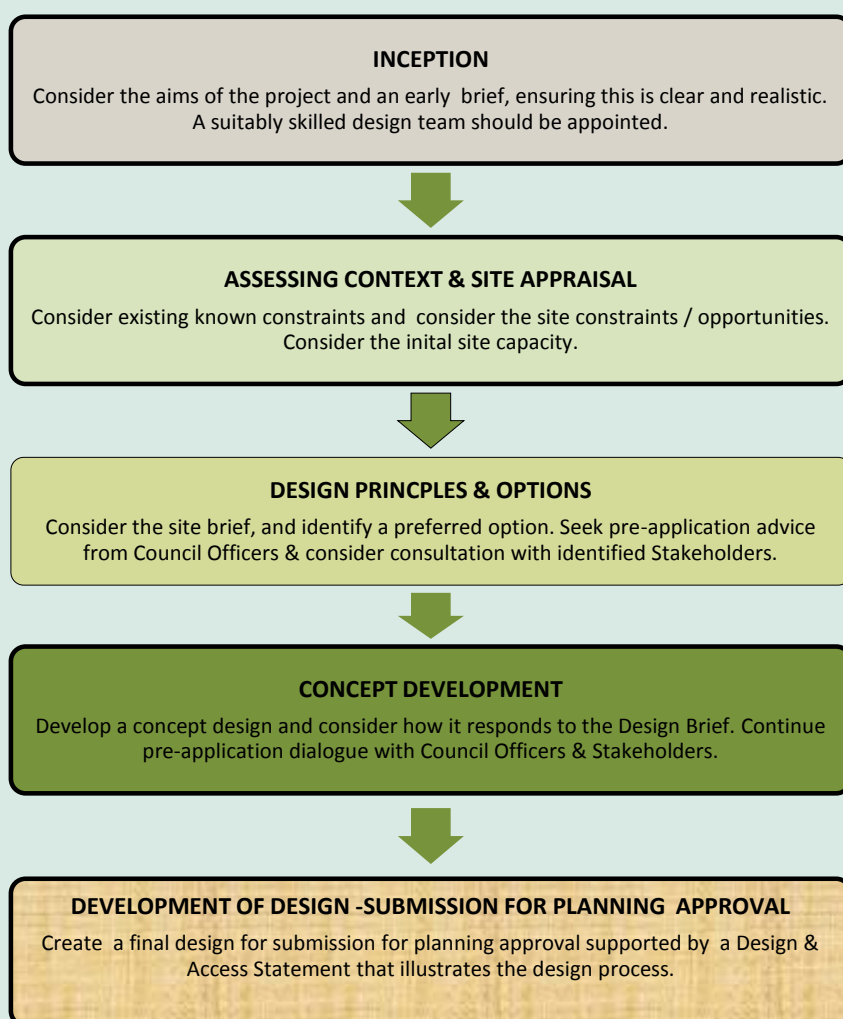
3.58 On any development a single parking solution may be ineffective and often a variety of solutions is the most successful approach. As the design agenda has evolved there has been a move away from courtyard parking; however this still has its place within some developments. The solution should be most appropriate to the context and the challenges and opportunities it presents:

- In-curtilage spaces – A popular solution with house builders. However, to maximise densities these are frequently provided at the front of properties, which requires careful design to ensure landscaping is incorporated to minimise impact on the streetscene. The number of spaces needs to be minimised in this arrangement to ensure that they do not dominate the streetscene.
- Parking Courtyard – where a strong frontage needs to be implemented, or access to properties is limited, a rear parking courtyard may be a preferable solution to enable safe access to properties. The location and boundaries of these needs careful design, to ensure natural surveillance and that these are not undermined by people parking informally on-street instead.
- On-street Spaces – these generally work best when these are in marked bays, with landscaping treatment, to lessen the visual impact within the streetscene. The design and provision needs to work with a cross site strategy to ensure sufficient provision is provided.

Introduction

4.1 The delivery of high quality design and development is reliant on an effective design process. This moves from the initial concepts and assessment, through to the final construction and delivery following the granting of planning permission. The planning system is an integral part of this process, and WFDC are clear that the highest design standards and robust design process will be required to secure planning approval.

4.2 The design process involves a number of different assessment stages including an analysis of the site and its context, existing buildings in the vicinity, the landscape around the site and movement both within and from/to the site. The NPPG promotes the use of appropriate planning processes and tools to help achieve good design recognising that the promotion of good design should be sought at **all** stages of the planning process from policy formulation to pre-application discussions right through to the use of planning conditions and agreements. The following section sets out the District Council's approach to securing good design at all stages of development. Applicants and developers should use this chapter as a framework for compiling a planning submission and for entering into pre-application discussions with the District Council.



Applying for Planning Permission

Stage 1 - Pre-Application Discussions and Advice

4.3 Pre-application discussions are an opportunity to discuss the design policies, requirements and parameters that will be applied to a site. Discussions allow the local authority to explain the design issues they consider to be most important and the developer can explain their objectives and aspirations for the site. It is easier to inform and influence a design early on in the process than make revisions at a more advanced stage, especially for major developments. The District Council welcomes pre-application discussions for all types and scales of development. Guidance on what is required at the pre-application stage can be found in the Council's 'Charging for Permitted Development & pre-application Advice' Guidance Note on the website.

4.4 As set out earlier in the document, the Development Plan documents contain a number of policies with a design focus. There are also several other planning documents of relevance including those mentioned at paragraph 3.29. In addition to the key principles on shop front design set out in the previous chapter at 3.34-3.35, more detail can be found in the Shop Front Design Guide for the Historic Environment. The Chaddesley Corbett Neighbourhood Plan also sets out design policy for the parish.

4.5 The District Council has produced a number of advice leaflets (all are available on the website) including the impact of extensions on daylight to neighbouring properties - 'the 45° Code', good practice for building domestic extensions - 'A Guide to House Extensions', making provision for disabled users of developments - 'Inclusive Environments' and a guide to developing sustainable drainage systems - 'A Planning Guide to Sustainable Drainage Systems'.

Stage 2 - Design Review

4.6 The District Council encourages the use of a design review prior to submission of a formal application. Schemes that have been through the design review process, and have developed positively in response to recommendations from the design review panel, are less likely to be refused planning permission on the grounds of poor design. The District Council will have regard to the recommendations of the design review panel in determining any subsequent planning application.

4.7 Design Review is relevant for all types and scales of development. Smaller or householder schemes may only require an informal review with the input of a Development Control Officer for example, whereas larger schemes or those on more sensitive sites will require the advice and expertise of other colleagues. The District Council's 'A guide to the 'joined-up' approach to planning - A Guide to the Development Team Approach' sets out how the expertise of relevant professional will be engaged at the design review stage.

4.8 The District Council has formed a partnership with MADE for the purposes of design review. Applicants are likely to be asked to enter into a formal design review process with MADE where, in the opinion of the District Council, any major scheme is likely to have a significant impact either due to its scale, location or nature of the development proposed. The applicant would be expected to meet the costs associated with the MADE design review process.

4.9 The District Council endorses the approach to producing well-designed homes and neighbourhoods as set out in the Building for Life 12 document. Developers should familiarise themselves with the principles at the pre-application stage as this will be used to assess the quality of design in relation to all large residential schemes. Further details are set out below.

Stage 3 - Application Submission

4.10 Different types of information will be required to accompany a planning application depending on the scale and nature of the development proposed. As a general rule, the larger and more sensitive the proposed development is, the more supplementary information will be required. The District Council has produced a Validation Checklist which sets out the types of information required according to the size and type of development proposed. This is available to view on the website. Details of when a full Design and Access Statement is required are also included on the Validation Checklist.

4.11 Any decision taken by the District Council will take into account the design objectives set out in this document and the development plan. If a planning application is refused, a clear explanation will be given.

Building for Life

4.12 Building for Life 12 (BfL12) is the industry standard for the design of new housing developments. It was launched in September 2012 by CABE at the Design Council, Homebuilders Federation and Design for Homes. This nationally recognised standard will be considered by Wyre Forest District Council to inform decision making. The document is aimed at all involved within the development process and is a tool that can be used to assist in design discussions during the preparation of a planning application. The process aims to create a development that is the best possible design for the local conditions. Developers, in conjunction with the District Council, should use the BfL12 traffic light system to assess the design merits of a scheme. A matrix based on the BfL questions can be found at Appendix 1. This is to be completed by the developer in the first instance and then assessed by the District Council to give an overall picture of the 'design' merits of a scheme. This will then form the basis of structured discussions between the two parties. The Building for Life 12 document (January 2015 edition) can be found online at: <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/knowledge-resources/guide/building-life-12-third-edition>

4.13 BfL12 is strongly aligned to the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Policy Guidance and local planning policies. The following table sets out how this is applied:

Table .1

Building for Life 12 section	BfL12 section sub heading	NPPF paragraph reference	NPPG Design section paragraph reference	Core Strategy or Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan policy reference
	Integration into the Neighbourhood			
1	Connections	9, 41, 61, 75	7,8,9,22	CP11, SAL.CC1
2	Facilities & Services	38, 58, 70, 73	9,13,17	CP07
3	Public Transport	9, 17, 35	12	CP03, CP11
4	Meeting Local Housing Requirements	9, 47, 50	14,17	CP05

Building for Life 12 section	BfL12section sub heading	NPPF paragraph reference	NPPG Design section paragraph reference	Core Strategy or Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan policy reference
	Creating a Place			
5	Character	17, 56, 58, 60, 64	7,20	SAL.UP7
6	Working with the Site and its Context	9, 10, 17, 31, 51, 58, 59, 118	7,20,21,26	CP01, CP11, CP12, CP13, CP14, SAL.UP7
7	Creating well-defined Streets and Spaces	58	24	CP11, SAL.UP7
8	Easy to Find your Way Around	58	22	CP11
	Street and Home			
9	Streets for All	35, 58, 69	8,18,42	SAL.CC1, SAL.UP7, SAL.UP9
10	Car Parking	39, 58	40	SAL.CC2, SAL.UP7
11	Public and Private Spaces	57, 58, 69	9,18,24	SAL.UP7
12	External Storage and Amenity Space	58	40	CP01
	Overarching Paragraph 63 in NPPF promotes innovation to raise the standard of design so is applicable to all Questions.			

4.14 Assessment in line with BfL uses the traffic light system:

- Green - the question has been addressed.
- Red – need to change aspects of proposal.
- Amber - clear evidence of local constraints prevent the proposal from achieving a green.

4.15 BfL 12 is a process which will allow all the parties involved in the development process to be clear as to what needs to be done to achieve as many green lights as possible within the specific site conditions, minimise ambers and avoid reds. Through pre-application discussions, any ambers and reds identified should be considered early on to allow a suitable design solution to be found where possible. Applicants need to evidence their application to how it performs against each question, justifying their chosen outcome. (See matrix at Appendix 1) Further information can be found at: www.builtforlifehomes.org/go/about.

National Standards

4.16 In March 2015 the Government announced a new simplified approach to housing standards covering access, water efficiency, internal space, security and waste storage in new dwellings. There will be optional building regulations requirements for access and water efficiency which will be higher than the minimum national standard (see Building Regulations circular 01/2015), a nationally prescribed space standard will be implemented through the planning system, a new security standard will be introduced via building regulations and there will be clearer statutory building regulation guidance on waste storage to ensure it is properly considered

in new housing development. Further details can be found in the NPPG under Housing - Optional Technical Standards. Policy to support the new space standards will be considered as part of the Local Plan Review.

BfL 12 DESIGN DISCUSSION PROFORMA	APPLICANT RESPONSE		WYRE FOREST RESPONSE	
	Colour	Evidence	Number	Comments
Integrating into the neighbourhood				
1.Connections Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones whilst also respecting existing buildings and land uses along the boundaries of the development site?				
2. Facilities and services Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?				
3. Public Transport Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?				
4. Meeting local housing requirements. Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?				
Creating a place				
5. Character Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?				
6. Working with the site and its context Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates?				
7. Creating well defined streets and spaces Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?				

BfL 12 DESIGN DISCUSSION PROFORMA	APPLICANT RESPONSE		WYRE FOREST RESPONSE	
	Colour	Evidence	Number	Comments
8. Easy to find your way around Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?				
Street & Home				
9. Streets for all Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?				
10. Car Parking Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?				
11. Public and private spaces Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?				
12. External Storage and amenity space Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles?				

Notes:

This proforma should be completed and submitted by the applicant in support of large scale housing development. BfL 12 guidance should be referred to for each question to ensure that the applicant fully understands the sub questions and recommendations. This guidance can be found at: <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/knowledge-resources/guide/building-life-12-third-edition>

The applicant should carefully consider the traffic light system and how their scheme responds to each question; evidence should be robust and clear.

Wyre Forest expects the proforma to provide the basis for discussions with the applicant to ensure that any issues are identified early on in the scheme development, and that these are understood by all parties.

APPLICANT RESPONSE	RED	Question not addressed and it is recognised that aspects of proposal need to be changed
	AMBER	Question not addressed but clear evidence of local constraints on the scheme that prevent it from achieving a green is provided
	GREEN	Question fully addressed ; evidence is provided to demonstrate how
WYRE FOREST RESPONSE	RED	Question not addressed; a redesign of identified aspects of proposal is needed
	AMBER	Question cannot be addressed; applicant provides mitigating evidence & justification
	GREEN	Question addressed; evidence successfully provided

Appendix 2 - Character Studies of Different Eras of Housing

Georgian / Victorian / Edwardian

-
- The map shows a section of London with the following features:
- Streets:** ALBERT ROAD (top left), Victoria Court (center), and a street at the bottom labeled with a scale of 64.0m.
 - House Numbers:**
 - Along ALBERT ROAD: 61, 51, 49, 125, 1, 7, 52, 55, 119, 115, 113.
 - Along Victoria Court: 5, 10, 7 to 10, 6.
 - Along the bottom street: 131, 70b, 70a, 70, 120, 71a, 71, 72, 74.
 - Other Labels:** "Victoria Court" is written vertically along the central street.
 - Scale:** A scale bar at the bottom indicates a distance of 64.0m.

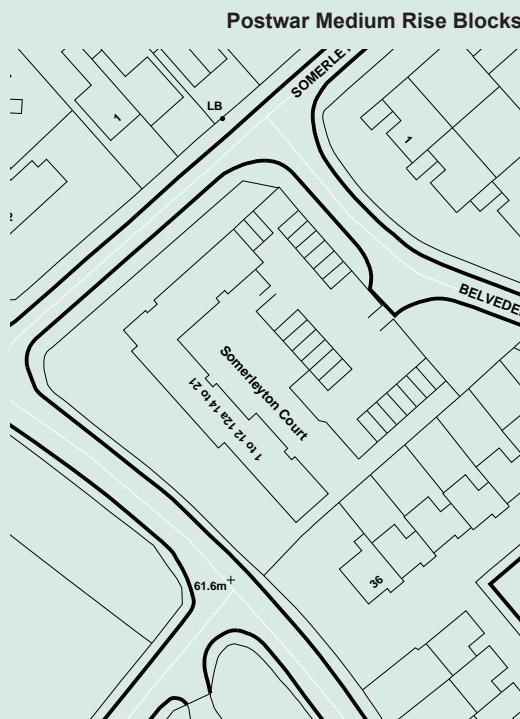
Interwar Suburban

-

Appendix 2 - Character Studies of Different Eras of Housing

Postwar High and Medium Rise Blocks

- Street Structure: Single access from street
- House Types: Up to 12 storey apartment buildings
- Building Line / Street Width: Setback ranges from no-set back to 18m for larger buildings
- Materials: Brick with flat roofs
- Detailing: Largely featureless with picture windows
- Boundary Treatment: Open plan, or low wall
- Parking: Courtyard car parking within landscaped setting.



Later Twentieth Century

- **Street Structure:** A range of infill developments connecting into existing street structure, or larger extension estates predominantly based around cul-de-sac structure
 - **House Types:** Infill predominantly town houses of 2 – 3 storeys; larger estates predominantly 2 storey detached properties, with lesser numbers of semi detached/terraced houses.
 - **Building Line / Street Width:** Setback creates relatively enclosed streets, around 3.5 - 5.5m. Larger homes set within more generous plots with greater setback.
 - **Materials:** Plain red / orange / yellow bricks
 - **Detailing:** Decorative window frames, bays, gable and porches, predominantly drawing from Georgian/ Tudor eras. Larger detached properties exhibit greater range, including Scandinavian styles.
 - **Boundary Treatment:** Open plan or landscaped with hedge/wall.
 - **Parking:** Parking courts / integral garage for infill; or drive and garage to side.
-



Assessing Off-Site Impacts

When water draining from a site leaves the development, the water may flow through a variety of watercourses or surface water sewers before reaching its destination in the River Stour or Severn. The rate and quality of flow can therefore easily affect locations downstream. For this reason a drainage strategy must take a catchment based approach

and consider the route and impacts of flows after they leave a development site. Two examples of how this could affect a drainage strategy would be:

- if the post-site flow route takes water into a wildlife site then the water quality of the discharge will be particularly important.
- if the post-site flow route takes water past properties that would be expected to flood if flow rates increased then the determination of appropriate discharge rates will be essential.

Site drainage is a key part of flood risk management and must be clearly discussed within a site specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). It is therefore strongly encouraged that a site drainage strategy gets developed alongside the FRA and forms an integral part of the planning application. Ground conditions must be understood at an early stage and, in order to reduce abortive work on the developer's part, preferably before drainage designs are commenced. The presence of land contamination may influence whether infiltration is appropriate and therefore dictate the most appropriate discharge method. Subject to contamination results, soakage tests will be required to determine the scope for infiltration on site. The results of the tests must accompany the planning application.

Loss of permeable (porous) ground as part of development could increase surface runoff flow rates and potentially increase the flood risk. The council requires under Policy CP02 that new developments will incorporate appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS). The philosophy behind SUDS is to mimic natural drainage processes, remove pollutants and manage flood risk at source. SUDS components work in several ways: they can infiltrate (soak) into the ground, convey (flow) into a watercourse (or if necessary a sewer), they can also provide storage on site and attenuate (slow down) the flows of water. In most case a combination of components is required to provide the best results. There are a wide range of sustainable drainage components available, each using slightly different techniques to manage water. It is likely therefore that there will be a technique and component suitable for each site. Examples of SUDS are green roofs, soakaways, permeable pavings, filter strips, rain gardens, swales, detention basins and wetlands.

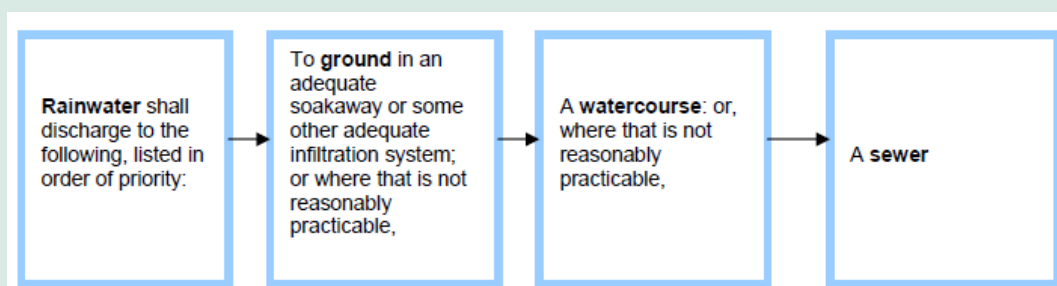
In the absence of National Standards developers within the district are being encouraged to work with the following design principles:

- a. The number of treatment stages within a drainage system must be appropriate to the uses on site and the receiving water body.
- b. The full range of SUDS techniques must be considered for all sites with the most appropriate technique(s) taken forward.
- c. All drainage strategies must demonstrate flow paths and exceedance routes, mimic natural drainage paths and include appropriate mitigation measures. An exceedance route is a flow route that water will take over land when the capacity of a drainage system is exceeded.
- d. Allowances for climate change must be factored into designs.

Appendix 3 - Detailed Guidance on Water Management Issues for Applicants

- e. There should be appropriate storage incorporated within the drainage system to allow for rain events up to a 1% annual probability (1 in 100) and an allowance for climate change.
- f. Where applicable, previously culverted watercourses should be opened up to create more natural drainage and reduce the likelihood of bottlenecks/blockages that can occur and cause flooding in localised areas
- g. The ease of maintenance is an essential part of the design of sustainable drainage system
- h. As well as managing water quantity and quality, SUDS can and should enhance the wider environment by providing opportunities for a net gain in biodiversity and delivering public amenity. However it must be remembered that the primary function of SUDS is to effectively drain an area.

Drainage strategies must demonstrate adequate consideration of each stage of the Building Regulations rainwater drainage hierarchy (see figure) before moving to the next discharge option. New surface water connections to the combined or foul systems will not be permitted.



Mitigation Measures

It is important to minimise flood risk by applying a sequential approach *within* the site design, steering the most vulnerable uses towards the lowest risk parts of the site, and the least vulnerable uses, such as amenity spaces, towards the highest risk parts of the site. This approach should take into account flood risk from all sources. Low lying ground can be designed to maximise benefits by providing flood conveyance and storage as well as recreation, amenity and environmental purposes.

Where it is not possible to avoid flood risk or minimise it through site layout, raising floor levels above the flood level is a possible option to manage flood risk to new developments. Any proposals to modify ground levels will need to demonstrate in the FRA that there is no increase in flood risk to the development itself or to any existing property in any location. Where land on site is raised above the level of the floodplain to protect properties, compensatory land must be returned to the floodplain.

Residual risks are those remaining after the sequential approach has been applied to the layout of the different site uses and after specific measures have been taken to control the flood risk. At this stage management measures are no longer about reducing the risk, but about planning for flooding. Management of the residual risk must therefore be the very last stage of designing and planning a site, where all options for removing and reducing risk have already been addressed.

Different types of measures to manage residual risk include:

- a. developer contributions towards publically funded flood alleviation schemes

- b. designing sustainable drainage systems so that storm events which exceed the design standard are properly planned for and the exceedance routes are known and appropriate
- c. incorporating flood resistance measures into building design. Flood resistance stops water from entering a building and can be referred to as dry proofing. Measures include doorway flood barriers and airbrick covers.
- d. incorporating flood resilience measures into building design. Flood resilient construction accepts that water will enter the building but thorough careful design minimises the damage to allow the re-occupancy of the building as soon as possible. Measures include water resistant fixtures and materials for floors and walls and the siting of sockets, cables and electric appliances at higher than normal levels.
- e. flood warning and evacuation plans. It can be checked with the Environment Agency whether their flood warning scheme that prompt telephone calls and SMS text messages to registered individuals covers the development site. Evacuation plans must include dry vehicular access and egress routes wherever possible.

Overview of responsibilities of developers

Those proposing development in areas of flood risk are responsible for:

- a. demonstrating that the proposed development is consistent with national and local planning policy
- b. undertaking sufficient and early consultation with the flood risk consultees
- c. providing a site specific FRA and a drainage strategy, as part of the planning process
- d. demonstrating that the development is safe for its proposed lifetime without increasing the flood risk elsewhere, by incorporating appropriate flood management measures, including the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems.
- e. demonstrating that the deterioration of the water environment gets prevented
- f. ensuring that any necessary flood risk management measures are sufficiently funded to ensure that the site can be developed and occupied safely throughout its proposed lifetime
- g. identifying opportunities to not only reduce flood risk, but also enhance biodiversity and amenity
- h. Owners of land or property adjacent to a river, stream or ditch may also have additional responsibilities for maintenance. (Further guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/riverside-ownership-rights-and-responsibilities>)

Detailed guidance notes for householders and developers can be accessed at the following link.

<http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/community-wellbeing-and-environment/emergencies/land-drainage-and-flooding/consent-for-works.aspx>

Active Frontage

The ground floor of a building livened up by people either entering or leaving the building or by activities within the building being easily seen from the street.

Affordable Housing

Low cost or subsidised housing for sale or rent intended to meet the needs of local people who cannot afford accommodation on the open market. Affordable housing is often provided by a housing association acting as a Registered Social Landlord.

Building Line

The line formed by the front of buildings with a common setback along the street.

Character

The sense and identity of a place that comes from its unique set of features, characteristics and form, including the underlying natural features, man-made features such as settlements, streets and buildings, as well as the activities that go on within them.

Conservation Area

An area designated as being of special architectural or historic interest, where the preservation and enhancement of its character and appearance is a priority. Within a conservation area the local authority has extra controls over demolition, minor developments and works to trees.

Context

The setting or surroundings of a site, including factors such as traffic, activities and land-use as well as landscape and existing buildings.

Density

A measurement of the amount of residential development within a given area usually calculated in dwellings per hectare (dph).

Form

The physical structure or arrangement of a settlement described variously in terms of: street pattern or layout, plot pattern, building pattern, building type, density, size (height and massing), materials and details (appearance) and landscape planting of a development.

Frontage

The boundary between a plot of land and the public highway.

Green Infrastructure

The existing or planned network of green spaces and natural features in an area including parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and private gardens, as well as accessible countryside. As 'infrastructure', the network should be conceived and managed as a multi-functional resource.

Heritage Asset

A building, site, place, monument or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning applications. Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment whether designated or not.

Landmark

A building, structure or other feature that stands out from its background by virtue of height, position, size or some other aspect of its design. In general, landmarks are visible from a number of different locations in an area and help in wayfinding.

Landscape

In general, the natural and man-made features of an area such as hills, woodland, fields, roads and settlements, perceived together as a whole. At the smaller scale, landscape or landscape design refers to the arrangement of outdoor spaces from networks of open space and structural planting down to local planting, surface materials, street furniture and signage.

Local Distinctiveness

The full range of things that make a place unique from buildings and landscapes, streams and wildlife, trees, orchards, local habitats and products. A term coined in 1983 by Common Ground. In their words 'local implies neighbourhood or parish. Distinctiveness implies particularity.'

Listed Building

A building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II* or II, with grade I being the highest.

Massing

The combined effect of the height, bulk and silhouette of a building or group of buildings.

Micro-climate

The distinct conditions of sunlight, temperature, wind, humidity and precipitation restricted to a small area due to the influence of orientation, topography, vegetation, buildings and boundary features.

Natural Surveillance

The ability of people to see and be seen by other people within the public realm as a result of the structural arrangement of streets and the orientation of buildings. Natural or passive surveillance is most commonly achieved by creating active streets with active edges where windows face out onto the street. The aim of natural surveillance is to deter nuisance, anti-social behaviour and crime.

Public Realm

The areas of a settlement for the general use of the public such as streets, squares and parks, most frequently in the ownership of a public body.

Sense of Place

The unique experience that a person gets from being in or walking through a particular locality, often as a result of the particular characteristics and quality of a neighbourhood, street or public open space.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs)

Schemes for handling surface water by means other than pipes and storm drains, such as permeable surfaces, filter drains, filter strips, swales, retention or balancing ponds, infiltration basins, trenches and soakaways, to reduce the potential of flooding and improve water quality on new and existing urban developments.