

Adopted Local Plan - Design

Design

Objective: To encourage excellence, innovation and creativity in design, in all development proposals, to ensure that schemes are compatible with the scale and character of the local environment in order to enhance the overall quality of the built environment, the attractiveness of the area for investment, economic regeneration and to reinforce civic pride and sense of place for the overall benefit of residents.

Introduction

3.1

The ultimate aim of the Local Planning Authority is to ensure that development respects the built and natural environment of the District, that its quality and character is conserved and achieved in successive development. Excellence, innovation and creativity in design will be encouraged, whilst poor and mediocre proposals will be discouraged.

3.2

The following design policies are not sufficient in themselves to ensure design quality. They provide a strategic framework and act as an integrating device for all forms of supplementary, more detailed, design guidance, such as development briefs and village design statements, to which reference should be made where appropriate. They are intended to be comprehensive without being prescriptive.

3.3

Notwithstanding the fact that the District of Salisbury is diverse in terms of its character the following design considerations, and the thought processes that lie behind them, are as relevant to the control of development in villages and the countryside as to development in the towns and city of Salisbury itself, albeit that aspects of the natural environment will be given more emphasis in the rural context.

Good Design

3.4

Good design is not easy to define, because it is subjective and it depends upon whose values are being applied. What is of particular importance is that good design is not just a matter of attention to elevational design of individual buildings. Local character and quality consist of more than just individual buildings and one-off landmark buildings, they derive from the complex relationships between many elements that make up the built environment.

3.5

In recognition of this Central Government, through its Urban Design Campaign, has placed a renewed emphasis on the importance of good urban design in helping to secure quality in the built environment. Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 - General Policies and Principles (1997), provides a clear framework for the handling of design consideration in the planning process. Urban Design is defined as:-

"the relationships between different buildings; the relationship between buildings and the streets, squares, parks, waterways and other open spaces which make up the public domain; the nature and quality of the public domain itself; the relationship of one part of the village, town or city with other parts; and the patterns of movement and activity which are thereby established; in short, the complex relationships between all elements of built and unbuilt space."

3.6

It is clear that the ultimate aim must be to create buildings and spaces which combine to form an attractive public realm - that is places which can be seen and enjoyed by the public. In order to achieve this there are a number of fundamental considerations to be addressed, essentially these are townscape and public realm considerations.

Townscape

3.7

Townscape may be best described as the urban equivalent of landscape, and relates to all settlements, regardless of their size. It focuses on what is perceived by the observer and has been defined as the "art of the ensemble" or the "art of relationship", weaving the elements together, the elements being essentially the street patterns, spaces, built scale, building character, skylines and views.

3.8

In order to successfully integrate new development into the environment it is necessary to have a knowledge and understanding of its local context. Context should be taken to mean the setting of the building and/or site. As well as including the usual aspects of development such as traffic activities and land use, it should embrace other issues such as the landscape and built form issues; the visual relationship of the development with the wider setting; the character of the neighbourhood in which it is located; its role within the townscape; its relationship to public space either existing or created. Such issues may include understanding the social, economic and functional role of the site as well as its visual role.

3.9

The local context can only be properly understood if it is considered in relation to its wider context. The factors that have shaped the character of the settlement or landscape of the area, such as its geographical setting, origins, its subsequent fortunes and activities, need to be recognised.

3.10

Obviously the importance of contextual characteristics depends on the scale of development and the intended level of integration required. More extensive proposals need to have regard to local context in a different way than a single infill development for example. Notwithstanding this there are a number of basic elements that are considered important in establishing context.

3.11

Landscape – consideration should be given to safeguarding existing important landscape features, for example hedges trees and walls. It is also important for developments, where appropriate, to incorporate structural landscaping within and around sites to screen and augment the built form.

3.12

Street patterns - existing route alignments and widths of the existing street patterns should be retained and preserved or, where appropriate, extended. As in all towns, (except those that have been deliberately planned) street patterns have grown and evolved over time, thereby altering the townscape. A knowledge and recognition of the importance of street patterns will ensure a greater sensitivity to change.

3.13

Spaces - consideration should be given to the contribution of the development to the formation of useable space whether on public or private land and, as importantly, how this space is linked into the surrounding open space network. Space should not be provided as an afterthought or composed of spare pieces of land.

3.14

Spaces form an important component of our townscape, whether they are formal or informal, large or small. Their functions vary and they provide different uses, i.e. for relaxation, congregating, public meetings, shopping, markets etc. They may also form part of a network for pedestrians quite separate from traffic routes. Whilst there may be less scope for the creation of new spaces it is important that, large or small, they are linked into the existing local network.

3.15

Built Scale and Density - consideration should be given to the built scale of a town/village which is determined by the size of buildings (i.e. their height per se); their average storey heights and the size of plot. Abrupt changes in plot widths and building heights, in particular, are only generally acceptable when there is a recognisable reason for it and/or

some benefit to the townscape results. In considering plot size, due consideration should be given also to the density of existing development in the immediate locality

3.16

Building Character - part of the richness of the architecture found in the District springs from the variations in character between one area and another and one town and another, reflecting the District's varied geology and socio-economic history. Local building materials, local skills, types of buildings (domestic, agricultural, religious etc.) have all had their influence.

3.17

With regard to traditional building materials, the District can broadly be divided into two parts; the heathland and chalk downs of the east, where the buildings are generally of brick, timber-frame and brick, or brick and flint, and the hills and valleys of the west where the buildings are mostly of local limestone, sometimes in combination with flint and brick. Throughout the District roofs of clay tile or thatch are common although stone slates are present in the stone areas of the west.

3.18

Any new development should seek to respect the building character of each locality, which is not to stifle or discourage diversity, but to contain it within reasonable limits. Attention to a combination of the above elements, i.e. plot widths, height and scale may help development to 'hang together' where materials and design may allow more diversity.

3.19

The Local Planning Authority recognises that high quality modern design can contribute to and enhance the built form by, for example creating new compositions and points of interest in the street. It wishes to encourage such development in appropriate locations where it can be demonstrated that due regard to the local context has been given and the schemes would be successfully integrated.

3.20

Mix of Uses - having regard to all other policies in the Local Plan a mix/variety of uses will be pursued where appropriate particularly in the more urban areas of the District. In general terms the most successful urban areas offer a mixture of uses which lead to a variety of activities and experiences. Living, working, shopping and playing all gain from being linked as opposed to being separate. A mixture of uses will result in the ability of an area to possess an intricate sequence of uses and users adding to its vibrancy and vitality.

3.21

Skylines - skylines evoke a sense of place and provide an identifiable image of a place. Traditionally they celebrate landmark buildings of communal, civic importance, or links with political power. The skyline of the Salisbury is protected by a height limitation upon all new development. But elsewhere it is important to protect the skyline from other interests which are not synonymous with those of the community.

3.22

Views - new development should consider how the site and the existing buildings contribute to the local scene and what opportunities there may be for enhancement. Consideration should be given to what views are gained from within the site and from outside looking in.

3.23

Legibility - an important consideration in any development is the ease with which pedestrians and/or drivers can orientate themselves and 'read' an area in order to understand how, for example, the town centre, housing estate or industrial estate is arranged and which way to go for different places, amenities and facilities.

3.24

A number of physical features can play a key role in achieving greater legibility, (i.e. linked sequences of spaces together with landmarks, to act as points of reference and visual and physical linkages along the way), such as public works of art, or landmark buildings; design continuity through paving materials, street furniture; special or enhanced street lighting or floodlighting of buildings; green or landscaped linkages. New development should retain such features to promote integration with existing development. Where large scale development is proposed, new features will also be required within the development to establish or improve the areas legibility.

3.25

Human Scale - in order that new development is successful, it must be mindful of how it will be perceived at eye level. A comfortable pedestrian environment is one that is firstly related to the scale and pace of pedestrians, not to fast moving vehicles. Development should be interesting at eye level, and pedestrian friendly frontages should be encouraged. Consideration should be given to locating activity generating uses on the ground floor of new development that fronts such space, particularly at focal points of pedestrian movement. Frontages to public spaces should incorporate doors and windows to provide physical and visual links between the building and the public space. In facilitating this,

building lines should be re-established to define the streets, squares and all public spaces. Any gaps in the building line should be intentional, well contained and well defined by the buildings that surround it.

3.26

The scale, use and landscaping of public spaces should combine to create attractive and welcoming usable areas, particularly in terms of their visual appearance.

3.27

In further achieving a more comfortable, human scaled environment, development should give due consideration to the division of public and private space and, as importantly, what happens at the interface between the two. As a general rule public space directly adjoining private space should be avoided as this can have a deadening effect. Generally all buildings should have clear fronts and backs, with the totally private space at the back and a front onto public space. The use of semi-private space such as forecourts, front gardens with low boundary walls etc. can provide a useful transition from private to public space. The adoption of these basic design principles, particularly in terms of layout, can assist in crime prevention, creating natural surveillance/informal control of public space. Also, the position of lighting within a development should create a secure environment. Landscaping and trees should form an integral part of the development with planting appropriate to the area.

3.28

Accessibility - good access is an integral part of the design and planning of existing and new buildings and development. Development of land should provide the opportunity to secure a more accessible environment for everyone, including those with disabilities and parents with young children

Policies D1, D2 and D3

Salisbury City

3.29

Salisbury is perhaps the best surviving example of a medieval planned town in England. The Cathedral and Close, the historic chequer pattern and the architectural quality, variety and coherence of the buildings combine to make this a city of outstanding historic interest. At the same time Salisbury is a busy market town and an international tourist attraction that has been fortunate in surviving modern development pressures relatively unscathed. In the centre of the city, it is the essentially human scale of the buildings, together with variety of architectural styles and

natural building materials which combine to produce Salisbury's unique and historic character. It is the combination and balance of landscape setting and built environment that gives Salisbury its special character, sense of place, and unique quality as one of England's more important historic towns.

3.30

Street Pattern - the City's Chequer street pattern, originally laid out in the 13th century, is characterised by continuous lines of buildings set at the back of the pavement, producing a tightly knit, dense streetscape, without front gardens or breaks in the frontage. The street picture is unified by its continuity and, broadly speaking, a common eaves height. Generally, individual buildings are narrow, domestic in scale and respectful of the scale and proportions of neighbouring buildings providing compatibility rather than being competitive. Modern developments often require vehicular access to the rear of sites, thus introducing an uncommon feature in the Chequers. Where such breaks in the frontage are proposed, they should be suitably designed and detailed to contribute to the street scene.

3.31

The Eastern Chequers contains the major part of the tight medieval grid-iron street pattern and is predominantly residential. The streets are narrow with much kerbside car parking and have tight junctions that are difficult for service vehicles to negotiate. The area contains several notable historic buildings.

Policy D4

3.32

Due to the character of the Chequers, breaks in the street frontages are not common. Modern developments often require vehicular access to the rear of sites and where these are proposed, they should be suitably designed and detailed to contribute to the street scene.

3.33

Spaces - the urban open space network in the centre of Salisbury consists of streets, squares and parks. The public enjoys a right of entry to these spaces, for example Poultry Cross, Butchers Row, the Market Place and the Guildhall Square, which connect to provide a variety of forms, in turn contributing to the essential character of the city. The Market Place contains a fine collection of historic buildings, most notably The Guildhall, and its character differs from the tightly knit fabric of the

Chequers especially with regard to the wider and taller views afforded of the buildings.

3.34

The central area's green open spaces are to be found in the north east of the Chequers at The Greencroft, the grounds of St. Edmund's Church, Bourne Hill, and the recreation ground adjacent to the old swimming pool. Queen Elizabeth Gardens and Churchill Gardens are on the verge of the city marking the space where the watermeadows meet the built environment.

Policy D5

3.35

Roofscape and Skyline - the Cathedral spire is a dominant feature of the skyline. Views of Salisbury are dominated by the Cathedral spire rising above the roofscape of the city. The shape, scale, variety of construction, materials, colouring and weathering of roofs in the city contribute to a roofscape that is a vital part of the area's character and appearance. The spire's dominance has been maintained by the implementation of policies in both Structure and Local Plans. Policy D6 seeks to continue this dominance by restricting new development to the traditional form of low rise buildings with pitches roofs within the city. The Council recognises, however, that there may be instances where new roofscape features can add variety to the skyline and will consider proposals for individual high quality architectural features which contribute to the city's silhouette. Due to the compactness of the city, its small scale and the fine detail of existing features, such as church spires, such proposals will only be permitted where they do not include useable floorspace.

Policy D6

3.36

In terms of more extensive development, new proposals should ensure that they are accessible to pedestrians and assist in the overall accessibility or permeability of the locality as a whole. New routes should be continuations of existing routes from as many places as possible outside of the site and follow genuine desire lines. It is important that new proposals are visually accessible as well as physically accessible (i.e. pedestrians should be able to see that they are able to walk through an area and have some visual clue as to where it will lead and be able to see that they have a number of alternative routes to choose from). New routes should be safe and convenient and be designed to include natural surveillance from surrounding buildings and public areas.

Site Analysis

3.37

Site analysis is a fundamental part of the design process as it forms the basis of the design concept for the site and assists in the achievement of successful development. This is particularly important for larger and sensitive sites. Plans, sketches and explanatory information should be used to demonstrate the influence of the townscape and public realm considerations upon the development proposal. The Local Planning Authority will therefore expect a full site analysis to be submitted for larger and more sensitive sites which illustrates the opportunities and constraints of the site and demonstrates that full consideration has been given, in the wider context, to the following:

- (i) legibility, permeability, views and vistas;
- (ii) layout, form, scale and character of townscape;
- (iii) the social, economic and functional role of the site;
- (iv) public open space; and,
- (v) significant landscape, environmental and ecological features.

Policy D7

Public Art

3.38

Public Art, such as fine art, crafts, signage, street furniture and decorative materials on buildings, can play an important role in improving the legibility of the public realm and also the general visual quality of the environment as a whole. The Local Planning Authority will seek its provision in appropriate development schemes, particularly where it would enhance public spaces or buildings which surround these spaces.

Policy D8