

# Consultation Draft Design Supplementary Planning Document

Bracknell Forest Council



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Environment, Culture and Communities  
Bracknell Forest Council  
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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Achieving good design through the planning system

1.1.1 Bracknell Forest Council is committed to securing high quality new development. The requirement for good design is at the heart of this commitment and is central to the assessment of all development proposals within the Borough.

1.1.2 Government Policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), emphasises the importance of good design. The NPPF defines places that achieve good design as being those that:

- *“Function well ... over the lifetime of the development”*
- *“Establish a strong sense of place”*
- *“Sustain an appropriate mix of uses ... support local facilities and transport networks”*
- *“Respond to local character ... surroundings and materials, while not preventing innovation”*
- *“Create safe and accessible environments”*
- *Are “visually attractive ... [with] good architecture and appropriate landscaping”.*

1.1.3 The Council’s Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008) sets spatial objectives for the development of the Borough. Policy CS7 Design requires good design for all development, together with a series of series of criteria as follows:

- *“i. build on the urban, suburban and rural local character, respecting local patterns of development and the historic environment;*
- *ii. provide safe communities;*
- *iii. enhance the landscape and promote biodiversity;*
- *iv. aid movement through accessibility, connectivity, permeability and legibility;*
- *v. enable a mix of uses;*
- *vi. provide high quality usable open spaces and public realm;*
- *vii. provide innovative architecture; and*
- *viii. provide well designed and integrated public art.”*

1.1.4 Saved Policy EN20 and emerging design related policies in the Comprehensive Local Plan further strengthen the Council’s commitment to high quality design within the Borough.

1.1.5 The Council has also adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide guidance on aspects of design. These include:

- the Bracknell Forest Character Area Assessments SPD which assesses local character in key parts of the area and provides guidance on how it can be retained and enhanced;
- the Streetscene SPD, which sets out how to create positive streetscenes;
- the Sustainable Resource Management SPD, which provides guidance on how to make buildings more environmentally friendly; and
- the Parking Standards SPD.

1.1.6 Core Strategy Policy CS7 Design also requires proposals to demonstrate how they will achieve good design, through Design & Access Statements, clear and informative drawings, including streetscenes, and other material that may define the future quality of development proposals, including concept statements, development briefs, masterplans or design codes.

1.1.7 The Council assesses all new development against ‘Building For Life 12’ criteria. Performance is measured at all stages of the planning process and once a development is completed its score is reported as part of the Council’s Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). Therefore all applicants should consider fully meeting the Building for Life criteria from the outset of the design process.

1.1.8 The Council is currently developing a Comprehensive Local Plan (CLP) which will set the long-term spatial vision and development strategy for the Borough up to 2036. Once adopted, it will replace many of the saved policies in the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (2002) and the Core Strategy (2008). It will be wide ranging in terms of the issues that it will cover. Please keep up to date on the progress of the CLP by referring to the Planning Policy pages of the Council’s website.

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## 1.2 Design SPD

1.2.1 This Design Guide document provides design principles and best practice to guide the design quality of development proposals. It elaborates on the design principles set out in both the NPPF and Core Strategy Policy CS7 Design and sets out how development proposals can achieve them. Saved Policy EN20 has also informed this guide.

1.2.2 In particular it focuses on design principles for built development in order to complement the other SPD documents that the Council has already adopted (identified above). In particular, the Streetscene SPD focuses on developments where new streets are to be created so this guide makes reference to it where relevant.

1.2.3 The Council intends to adopt this document as a SPD following a thorough public consultation process. Once adopted, it will form part of the Council's policy context and will be a material consideration when applications are being considered. It is also intended to be of help to householders who may wish to make changes to their properties under their Permitted Development rights.

1.2.4 The content is split into five sections:

- **Section 1:** Introduction (this section);
- **Section 2:** Design and Context;
- **Section 3:** Built Form and Spaces;
- **Section 4:** Extensions and Alterations; and
- **Section 5:** Design and Access Statements.

1.2.5 **Section 2:** Design and Context, focuses on how development proposals should respond to their surroundings. This is relevant to all development proposals, for residential and commercial developments as well as for householder extensions and alterations.

1.2.6 **Section 3:** Built Form and Spaces, provides general design principles for buildings and spaces, and how to relate them together to create positive places. It also provides principles for the design of buildings, and for the associated requirements that need to be accommodated on plot, such as parking, servicing and amenity space. It also provides guidance on the relationships with neighbouring properties. These design principles apply to all forms of development, although the examples focus on residential development, the most common form of development in the Borough.

1.2.7 **Section 4:** Extensions and Alterations, provides design principles for the design of residential extensions and alterations to existing properties.

1.2.8 **Section 5:** Design and Access Statements, sets out the Council's expectations for Design and Access Statements where they are required to accompany a planning application.

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## 1.3 How to use this document

1.3.1 This document is relevant to different types of development although not all sections are relevant to all proposals.

1.3.2 This document refers to 'designers' in a number of places. The design role is vital to securing good design and high quality development. In most cases, it should be carried out by the architect for a project, or another suitably experienced professional (for instance a masterplanner, on a large scale development). However, it should also help and guide local residents wishing to improve their home.

# 2 Responding to the Context

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## 2.1 Key principle

2.1.1 A well designed development relates well to its surroundings. It should be integrated into its context and should respond positively to local character. Where appropriate, new development should also create new places with a positive character. It should also make a contribution towards environmental sustainability.

2.1.2 To achieve this, designers need to understand the site and its context.

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## 2.2 Understanding the site and its context

2.2.1 **Principle: Good design starts from an understanding of the place, the local context and the site. Development proposals should be informed by a thorough analysis of the physical and policy context and character of the area as well as the specific conditions of the site. This should be summarised and the opportunities and constraints identified for pre-application discussion and to support application material. The steps include:**

- a site visit;
- site and context analysis;
- character appraisal; and
- identifying opportunities and constraints.

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### Site visit

2.2.2 Before starting to design, a visit to the site and its surroundings is absolutely essential. On the site visit, designers should identify local features and characteristics that may influence the design or technical approach, including site features (for instance trees), key views in and out of the site and technical issues (for instance drainage). In some cases a site visit will provide enough information. In others, technical surveys will be needed to feed into the design process.

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### Site and context analysis

2.2.3 As a minimum, designers should consider the issues set out below and, where relevant, include them in their site and context analysis. The table shown on the following page provides guidance on which issues are likely to be relevant to different scales of development proposal.

2.2.4 Designers will be expected to identify and analyse the range of issues relevant to their particular site and development proposal. The amount of detail required for each development proposal will depend on its size, the type of development and the complexity of the project.

Issues relevant to different scales of development

Design influences			Development scale		
Scale	Relevant issues	Likely to be relevant to	Scale	Relevant issues	Likely to be relevant to
Wider context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic role and function of the site</li> <li>Settlement pattern</li> <li>Accessibility to facilities, services and public transport by all modes of transport</li> <li>Housing need and/ or market assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major development</li> </ul>	Site features, characteristics and conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site levels</li> <li>Buildings and structures</li> <li>Landscape including trees, hedgerows, ponds, etc</li> <li>Ecology</li> <li>Views within/ out of the site</li> <li>Heritage, including archaeology</li> <li>Flood risk and drainage</li> <li>Pollution including contamination</li> <li>Ground conditions</li> <li>Access for all modes of transport</li> <li>Utilities</li> <li>Microclimate</li> <li>Daylight/ sunlight</li> <li>Boundary conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major development</li> <li>Infill development</li> <li>Householder development</li> </ul>
Local context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pattern of blocks, plot sizes and buildings</li> <li>Townscape character (see 2.2.5 below)</li> <li>Landscape character including open spaces, wildlife corridors and designations (SSSI, SPA etc) (see 2.2.5 below)</li> <li>Local mix of uses including community facilities</li> <li>Topography</li> <li>Views into and out of the site</li> <li>Movement pattern including all modes of transport</li> <li>Drainage</li> <li>Site allocations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major development</li> <li>Infill development</li> </ul>			
Local context for householders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Built heritage including conservation areas, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, locally listed buildings</li> <li>Planning policy designations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major development</li> <li>Infill development</li> <li>Householder development</li> </ul>			



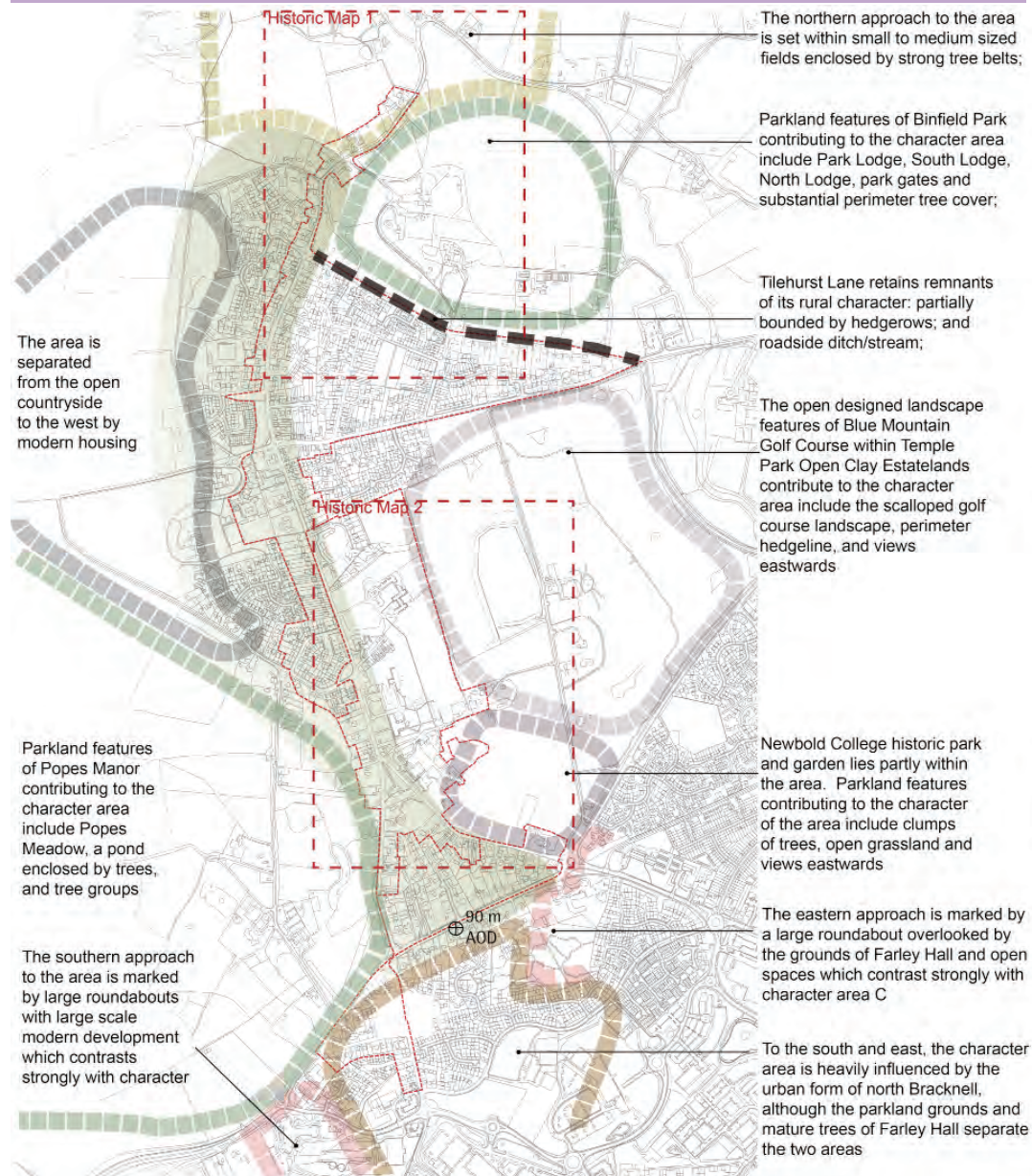
## Character appraisal

2.2.5 To demonstrate an understanding of the existing character, designers should carry out an appraisal of the townscape and landscape character of the site and its local context.

2.2.6 First check whether the site is within a Conservation Area or forms one of the Bracknell Forest Character Areas, as identified in the Bracknell Forest Character Area Assessments SPD. The Council has carried out an appraisal for each of these areas and this should be the starting point. However, it is likely that designers will need to carry out a detailed appraisal of the site in its surroundings to supplement the information that is already available.

- Conservation Areas are statutory designations for areas of “special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. Bracknell Forest’s Conservation Areas can be found at: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/bfconservationareas>.
- The Bracknell Forest Character Area Assessments SPD identifies and assesses areas with distinctive and positive character in the Borough. It makes recommendations for maintaining and enhancing the character of specific areas, including recommendations for future development proposals. It can be found at: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/spds>

Binfield and Popeswood Study Area, taken from Character Area Assessments SPD 2010





2.2.7 The area to be assessed will depend upon the nature and scale of the development proposal. It may be at the level of the neighbourhood, the street, or the site together with neighbouring plots.

2.2.8 The character appraisal should identify and assess the positive and negative characteristics of the site and its immediate context.

2.2.9 The Bracknell Forest Character Area Assessments SPD and the Streetscene SPD together identify a number of elements to be assessed:

- landscape setting;
- townscape and built form;
- streetscene;
- width of street;
- boundary treatments;
- building line;
- plot sizes;
- building heights and sense of enclosure;
- landscaping – soft and hard; and
- parking solutions.

### Identifying opportunities and constraints

2.2.10 Designers should identify the opportunities and constraints that affect the design approach to their site and should explain how these have influenced their development proposals. Positive opportunities for placemaking should be identified as well as constraints to development. There should be a clear link between the opportunities and constraints plan and the development proposals.

Understanding the site and context – critical review	
Is there evidence of a visit to the site and context?	
Is there a site and context analysis that covers the appropriate issues?	
Is there a townscape and landscape character appraisal that identifies both positive and negative characteristics of the area?	
Is there a clear link between opportunities and constraints that have been identified and the development proposals?	

## 2.3 Integrating the site into its surroundings

2.3.1 **Principle:** It is important that proposals for new development, whatever their size, are well integrated into the existing context. This can be achieved in a number of ways, including:

- linking new routes and access points into the existing movement network;
- respecting existing desire lines and making connections to local destinations, such as schools, shopping and employment areas;
- relating well to the existing hierarchy of routes, in terms both of function and character, so the relative importance of routes is clear, to help people find their way around;
- using development blocks and/or plots that relate to the existing grain of development (i.e. the pattern or arrangement of built development and spaces) in terms of size and configuration; and
- responding to prevailing building heights, plot sizes, densities and degrees of variation in the local context.

2.3.2 The Streetscene SPD addresses these issues in more detail.

Integrating into the context – critical review	
Do the proposals create connections to existing streets, pedestrian and cycle paths and public transport stops?	
Have new connections been made, reflecting existing desire lines and creating routes to local destinations?	
Has a clear street hierarchy been established and do proposals support the existing street hierarchy?	
Do the development blocks and plots relate to the existing grain of development ?	
Do building heights and densities respond to the prevailing pattern in the context?	

## 2.4 Placemaking

2.4.1 **Principle:** New development should exploit opportunities to create a positive sense of place that enhances the existing character of the site and also of the local area. This may include:

- incorporating existing positive site features into new development to provide continuity and create an instant sense of maturity;
- creating a sense of place that responds positively to the character of the local area in terms of urban design, architecture, landscape and public realm; and
- creating new places with a positive character appropriate to their role and function within the wider area, eg a new neighbourhood centre or open space/ local park.

2.4.2 For many aspects of design, the ‘right’ approach will depend on the site, the nature of the proposed development and the context. The sense of place and character of a development will depend upon a number of choices that a designer makes in relation to the elements included in section 3 of this guide. Where a choice may have a particular influence on the character of a development, this is highlighted in the relevant section.

### Placemaking – critical review

Do the proposals incorporate existing positive site features into the new development?	
Have local characteristics influenced the design	
Do the proposals create new places with a positive character that is appropriate to their role and function?	



Positive integration of existing mature trees in The Parks, Bracknell and creating usable amenity for office workers

## 2.5 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

**Principle:** SuDS should be considered from the outset and be one of the key factors to inform development proposals, housing layouts and the public realm.

2.5.1 SuDS have been introduced to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, remove pollutants from urban run-offs at source and combine water management with green spaces, enhancing the visual amenity of neighbourhoods, habitats for wildlife and, in some places, recreation areas. SuDS is the opposite to historic ways of dealing with surface water management and therefore piping water away from a site is no longer acceptable unless there is no other way of managing water where it falls.

2.5.2 Surface water drainage is a material consideration and all new development proposals are required to incorporate SuDS and use SuDS to inform layouts and how water will be accommodated on site. Experience tells us that dealing with water where it falls is actually a more cost effective approach for developers than traditional piping systems. This is in addition to the benefits for future residents with higher quality multi-functional public realm, visual amenity and space for wildlife to live alongside us.

2.5.3 The Council is now the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and is a statutory consultee for all planning consultations. Drainage information is also required to validate planning applications. There are many sources of information and guidance on how to achieve successful SuDS. The following are examples:

- CIRIA guidance – The SuDS Manual.
- DEFRA – Non Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems.
- NHBC Foundation – A Simple Guide to Sustainable Drainage Systems for Housing.

2.5.4 Outline applications will need to submit a general drainage strategy setting out how water flows naturally on the site, what is the flood risk, where will water flow after the development is completed and how water will be managed? The general principles for maintenance should also be set out.

2.5.5 For full or reserved matters applications, applicants will need to demonstrate how guidance and technical standards are met, how water is dealt with on the site, design calculations to support the proposals, a detailed management strategy, exceedance routes and temporary drainage during construction.



Sustainable Drainage Systems – critical review	
Does the Drainage Strategy follow the principles of SuDS	
Has sufficient information been supplied for the LLFA to assess?	
Has the layout or proposal clearly been informed by SuDS?	
How is the public realm used to accommodate water where it falls?	
Are there any foreseen management issues that are not addressed?	

## 2.6 Sustainability

2.6.1 The NPPF has a presumption in favour of sustainable development, i.e. development that balances economic, social and environmental sustainability.

2.6.2 The Council has adopted a Sustainable Resource Management SPD, which sets targets and provides guidance on how to make development more environmentally friendly, based on the Code for Sustainable homes and BREEAM standards.

2.6.3 However, the government has now withdrawn the Code for Sustainable Homes. For the time being the Sustainable Resource Management SPD is still in place with some limitations on its application. Please contact the Planning section of the Environment, Culture and Communities department for more details. The council is carrying out a review as part of the preparation of the emerging Comprehensive Local Plan.

2.6.4 The BREEAM standard for non-residential development still applies for commercial development.

2.6.5 **Principle: Proposals should contribute to the environmental sustainability of the development itself and of the local area where possible, including consideration of:**

- climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- sustainable construction;
- water efficiency; and
- the long term robustness of the development proposal, ie how it will perform as lifestyles and technologies change, for instance in terms of its flexibility and adaptability.

Sustainability– critical review	
Do the proposals address climate change mitigation and adaptation?	
Do they incorporate a sustainable approach to construction?	
Do they include proposals for water efficiency?	
Will the development provide flexible and adaptable accommodation?	



# 3 Built Form and Spaces

## 3.1 Key principles

3.1.1 Well-designed developments compose buildings and spaces into a successful whole. This applies to a range of scales and includes the following elements:

- streets, blocks, open spaces and landscape;
- plots;
- frontages; and
- built form.

## 3.2 Streets, blocks, open spaces and landscape

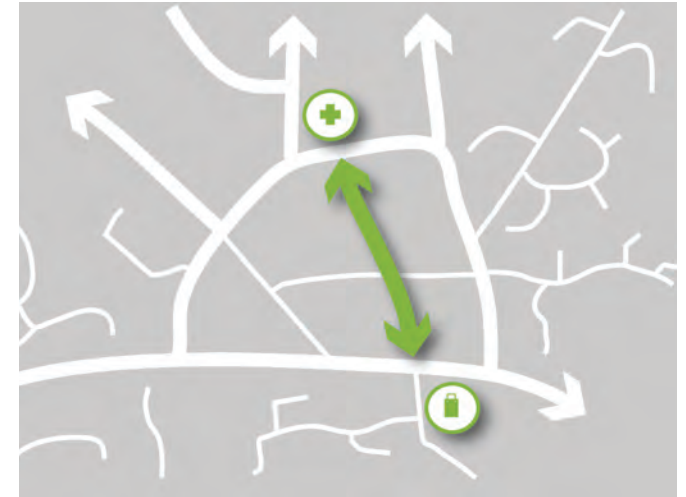
3.2.1 **Principle:** For large sites, the street network should define:

- a connected network of routes for all modes of transport;
- a clear hierarchy of routes, so people can find their way around; and
- a pattern of development blocks and open spaces that provides a basis for creating character and a distinctive identity for the development.

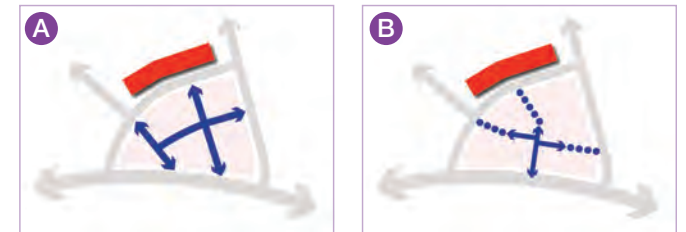
3.2.2 The Streetscene SPD provides further guidance for new developments and housing layouts.

### Connectivity

3.2.3 Developments should create a connected network of routes through the site, preferably in the form of streets. These routes should be direct, convenient and attractive for people on foot and cyclists, as well as suitable for vehicles.



New development should connect destinations and help people get to where they want to go.



- A Make connections to local facilities and create an extension to the existing road network.
- B Where vehicular links are not possible, pedestrian / cycle links should be provided.



## Street hierarchy

3.2.4 A clear hierarchy of routes should be defined, based on consideration of how each street should be used, including: the relative amounts of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, parking, speed of vehicles, width of carriageway, and the use of the buildings adjoining the street.

3.2.5 The design of the movement network, the streets and open spaces, and the built form adjoining them should reinforce one another so that people can find their way around and understand the development.

3.2.6 A variety of street types helps to create variations in character in large scale developments.



Existing layout: The street hierarchy is incoherent, unsupported by street design, buildings or land uses.



Revised layout: The street hierarchy is improved by realigning the main route and improving junction arrangements, street treatments and the location of community uses.

## Development blocks and open spaces

**3.2.7 Principle:** The pattern of blocks for built development and/ or open spaces should be based on a perimeter block structure that creates well-defined streets and open spaces. This form of development enables a clear distinction between the fronts and backs of buildings, a good sense of enclosure and active edges.

3.2.8 Each development block should be defined by street frontages and/ or open spaces and will be subdivided into a plot pattern. The block and/ or street space will need to accommodate parking and the appropriate private amenity space for residents.

3.2.9 How a street is designed, and the parking strategy for how parking is accommodated within a block or the streetscene, will significantly affect its character and so will need careful consideration.

3.2.10 The size, shape and configuration of the development blocks, the spaces between the buildings, and open spaces all influence the form of development and its character, so need to be considered together with the mix of uses, the type of units and other matters such as parking.

3.2.11 All open spaces should have a clear function and should be located in a suitable position for that function. They should also be sited and designed to play a positive role as focal points in the development, whether to help create a sense of identity, or to bring existing and new communities together.

3.2.12 The pattern of streets, development blocks and open spaces will influence how people find their way around. Designers should consider potential views, both into and out of the development. Potential views within a new development are also important and the creation of focal points or local landmarks should be considered. Views within streetscenes should also be concluded (or terminated) positively (see section 3.7.3 below).

3.2.13 Active edges are created by buildings with entrances off the street and windows overlooking it. Entrances bring activity and animate the street. Windows create a sense of supervision. Both contribute to making the street feel safe and secure to use.



New development area has a well connected street network that links into existing local streets and surrounding destinations. It is based upon the historic street pattern but has transformed parts of it into pedestrian and cycle routes through small open spaces.

## Landscape

3.2.14 Landscape plays an important role in much of the Borough, creating a strong context and character for built development, with significant parts of the area formerly being forested. Different parts of the Borough have a different landscape character, based on their soils and underlying geology.

3.2.15 The strategic approach to landscape should be integrated into the form of development from the earliest stage and not simply added in to a scheme that has already been designed.

3.2.16 The Streetscene SPD provides guidance on incorporating landscape and landscape character into new developments. The Character Area Assessments SPD identifies landscape characteristics within the defined character areas. The Council has also carried out Landscape Character Assessments which provide evidence for the emerging Local Plan. Please contact the Planning section of the Environment, Culture and Communities department for more details.

Streets, blocks and open spaces– critical review	
Do the proposals create a connected network of routes for all users?	
Do they define a clear hierarchy, based on both function and character, and with variation in large developments, so that people can find their way around?	
Is there a clear pattern of perimeter blocks with open spaces suitably positioned to perform the function and role identified for them?	
Is the pattern of streets, blocks and open spaces appropriate to the type of development being proposed, with a clear distinction between fronts and backs?	
Is the approach to landscape an integral part of the development proposal?	

## 3.3 Plots

3.3.1 Development blocks should be sub-divided into a series of plots for different buildings to be developed, or to break down the scale and impact of a large-scale development.

3.3.2 The pattern of plots and how they are developed affects how a development functions, the success of the plot and the character of the wider area. For instance wide fronted plots allow room for parking to be on-plot next to a house, whereas narrow fronted plots would need a different parking solution.

3.3.3 **Principle: Development plots should be large enough to accommodate the proposed built development and the requirements associated with it (such as amenity space, parking, servicing, refuse collection) in an arrangement that is practical and attractive. They should be configured to make sure that new development relates well to its neighbours.**

3.3.4 Where a development is proposed on an existing plot, it should be of a form that responds positively to the existing character of the area. For instance, where there are existing large houses set in large plots, new large houses or a block of apartments are more likely to be able to respond to the existing character than a terrace of smaller houses.

3.3.5 See section 3.9 below for more detail on these issues.

Plots– critical review	
Are plots of a size and configuration to be able accommodate the requirements of the development?	
Do they relate to the pattern of plots in the surroundings?	

## 3.4 Frontages

**3.4.1 Principle:** The buildings that are set alongside a street should be considered and designed together as a group. Development should face onto the street to create a frontage. The two frontages together define and enclose the streetscene and establish an appropriate character for that particular street.

3.4.2 Successful frontages have many different elements that come together to create a pleasant whole. These are:

- building lines and set backs;
- continuity of built development;
- boundary treatments; and
- size of front gardens.

The Streetscene SPD provides detailed guidance for the design of streets.

**3.4.3 Principle:** Frontages should be designed to create a streetscene with a distinctive character that relates to the context of the area. In particular the relationships between existing building lines, set backs, landscaping and the continuity of the frontage should be considered carefully.

3.4.4 The Streetscene SPD sets out how the different elements can be combined to create a range of different characters that may be appropriate in different parts of the Borough.

3.4.5 In general, frontages with a positive character have some elements that are consistent or repeated. These create a framework for other elements to vary. So, for instance, where there is a strong landscape structure in front gardens and on boundaries, the building lines and the buildings themselves may vary without threatening the positive character. Or where there is a regular pattern of semi-detached houses with consistent set backs and spaces between them, the treatment of boundaries may vary.

3.4.6 Together the two frontages to a street will set the character for the street, so they should generally have common features to establish a degree of consistency between them.

3.4.7 Well designed frontages have:

- the fronts of buildings addressing them along their length;
- window openings that overlook the street;
- entrances activating the street;
- no rear elevations or flank walls onto them; and
- any garages being less prominent elements on the frontage than the associated housing.

### Building lines and set backs

**3.4.8 Principle:** The building line is the line created by the main facade of buildings in relation to a street. The design approach to building lines should be justified and should relate to the existing building lines in the area. In particular, the building line for infill developments should follow the existing building line.

3.4.9 Streets with a positive character tend to have a distinctive building line. In most cases, this will be a consistent distance between the front of buildings and the street. However, in some cases, every building is set back a different distance from the street, in which case the variation is characteristic.

3.4.10 The set back of a building line from the street creates space for front gardens. See section 3.4.17 below for more detail.

## Continuity of frontages

3.4.11 **Principle:** The continuity of built form is a measure of how built up the area is. Designers should make sure that the continuity of the frontage is appropriate to the context and local character and the nature of the development proposal.

3.4.12 A continuous frontage makes a street space feel more enclosed, which is likely to be appropriate to the character of an urban form of development, or a centre. Frontages with gaps between buildings are more appropriate to suburban or rural forms of development.

3.4.13 It is important that the degree of continuity suits both the type of development and the character that is proposed. For instance, large detached houses placed very close together are unlikely to create a successful character – the result will be neither urban nor suburban in character. In general, units with larger footprints need space around them, whereas those with smaller footprints are more appropriate to sit on smaller plots.

3.4.14 In some rural and existing suburban areas buildings are spaced far apart and there is no continuity of built frontage. In these cases, continuity is provided by the landscape and boundary treatments, which become the defining characteristic. Strong hedgerows and planting can tie an otherwise discontinuous built form together to create a well defined streetscene.

3.4.15 Topography influences the continuity of frontages. On a sloping site, designers should preferably create more continuous frontages parallel to the contours and use a more broken frontage perpendicular to the slope. Detached houses or short groups of houses can be designed to step up slopes more simply than longer terraces, in terms both of entry levels and roof forms.

## Front gardens

3.4.16 **Principle:** The set back of buildings from the street should be designed positively to accommodate various requirements that may be associated with the development, as well as to contribute to the character of the development. For a residential development the set back should generally take the form of a front garden.

3.4.17 The depth of front gardens has an impact on the feeling of enclosure of the street and reinforces the street hierarchy and character. In a large scale development front gardens should vary in depth across the development, contributing to areas of different character, but they should be consistent in depth along any given street.

3.4.18 Front gardens should:

- be clearly defined as private space belonging to a particular dwelling;
- be rational in size and shape, avoiding awkward fence and boundary lines; and
- relate to the street hierarchy and volume of traffic in terms of treatment and depth, for instance houses set close to a shared surface street with narrow privacy strips are appropriate to a courtyard or mews street with no through movement.

3.4.19 Front gardens should generally include some elements of soft landscape as well as hard landscape, although in some locations hard surfaced privacy strips may be appropriate. They may also need to accommodate parking spaces, refuse storage, utilities boxes, and projecting building elements, such as bays or porches. These elements all need to be designed into the space with some care, so they do not undermine the quality of the frontage.



Continuous frontage: Urban character associated with central urban or village locations - these help to create a high degree of enclosure.



Non-continuous frontage: Formal and regular building line with rhythm. Strong design feature associated with a suburban location.



Non-continuous informal frontage: Informal and irregular building line with building set in large plots. Associated with edge of settlement locations.



Local examples of varying frontages.



## Boundary treatments

3.4.20 **Principle: Boundary treatments such as hedgerows, walls or railings should enclose private spaces in front of buildings.**

3.4.21 Generally boundary treatments to front gardens should allow some views between street and dwelling, so that the development overlooks the streetscene.

3.4.22 Private gardens should not back onto public spaces such as streets, footpaths or open spaces. Where the boundary of a property is clearly visible within the streetscene, a certain quality of boundary treatment will be expected - close boarded fences will not be acceptable in such situations.

3.4.23 Boundary treatments should:

- be consistent within each street and with the local character; and
- where possible and appropriate, use natural screens and hedges complementing the landscape design and enhance biodiversity, or brick walls to provide solid boundaries with a natural appearance and longevity, especially when the material is characteristic of the local area.

3.4.24 Where there is a conscious design decision to have no boundary treatment, then open plan privacy strips or front gardens should be consistently designed so that they contribute to the character of the street and a planting scheme should be provided for these private spaces.

Frontages – critical review	
Do buildings overlook the street with main entrances creating activity and movement within the streetscene?	
Is there a clear approach to the building line and is it justified in relation to the existing or new character of the street?	
Is the degree of continuity of the frontage appropriate for the development proposal and the context?	
Do the proposals handle any slopes well?	
Does the development create front gardens of an appropriate depth, enclosed with suitable boundary treatments?	
Does the design approach to these elements create a consistent character for the frontage and for the street as a whole, one that is appropriate to the development and its context?	



Where front gardens are open and minimal, care is needed to ensure some space for planting is provided to visually soften the streetscene.



An example of consistent and high quality boundary treatment.



An example of a typical garden depth with railings that clearly define private space from public space.

## 3.5 Addressing edges

3.5.1 In certain locations, frontages should respond to their specific location and site conditions, as well as to the general principles outlined above. These include:

- settlement edges; and
- edges to open space.

3.5.2 **Principle:** Development should generally be designed to face outward when it overlooks a route or open space, or there are existing houses facing towards the site boundary.



In this example, dwellings front onto an open space, which provides a focal point in the layout.

### Settlement edges

3.5.3 **Principle:** Development on the edge of a settlement or in the countryside should respond to the unique character and setting of each site, taking into consideration a thorough understanding of the local pattern of settlement and its setting in the wider landscape.

3.5.4 The location, siting and design of new development on the edge of settlements should be carefully designed to:

- create an edge to the built up area that relates to the local development and landscape pattern; and
- incorporate soft landscape to soften the edge of settlements and to help integrate new housing into its rural setting.

3.5.5 New development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character and biodiversity of the area. This includes elements such as:

- field patterns and lanes;
- landscape features, such as trees and hedgerows;
- wetlands and watercourses;
- typical species of vegetation; and
- characteristic local habitats.



Settlement edges, views towards them as well as from them should be carefully considered and respond to local characteristics.



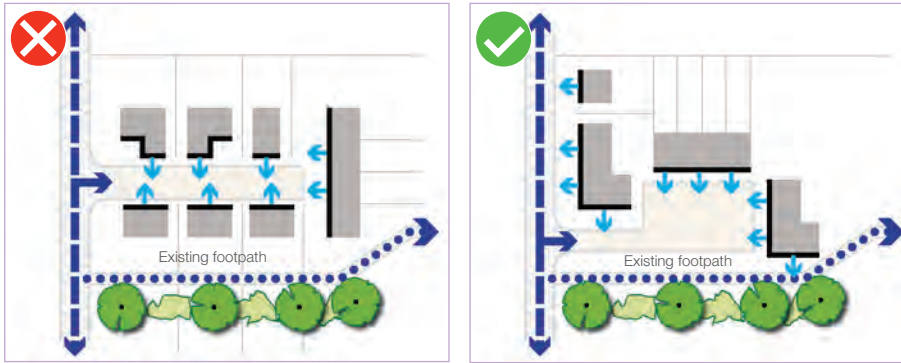
### Edges to existing open spaces and routes

3.5.6 **Principle:** Development should face outwards onto all existing and proposed open spaces and routes, and provide active frontages to animate and overlook them, particularly where there are existing houses facing towards the site boundary.

#### Addressing edges – critical review

Does the development create a settlement edge that responds to the character of other edges, and it is softened by landscape?

Does it face outwards to animate and overlook open spaces and routes?



Where development lies adjacent to existing pedestrian routes, it must help to improve their quality and pedestrian safety.



Sketch illustrating how buildings can successfully provide overlooking and enclosure to an open space.



The sketch illustrates the idea for an informal character that relates well to the homes on the other side of the road.

## 3.6 Backland development

3.6.1 Some applications for development relate to sites that are located behind street frontage properties and so only partially visible from the street. These sites are known as backland sites.

3.6.2 **Principle: All backland development should be subordinate, ie it should occupy a minor proportion of the block in which it is sited; should be designed to the highest standards and should have a positive a legible entrance**

3.6.3 Backland development should:

- not harm the existing character of the local area;
- relate positively to the existing layout and existing urban form;
- create a positive and legible entrance to the backland site;
- maintain the quality of environment for existing residents;
- create a satisfactory living environment for the new home owners and existing surrounding properties;
- relate to a site of sufficient size and suitable shape to accommodate the number of dwellings proposed when compared to the existing grain of development in the area, together with their external space, access and parking requirements;
- not be taller than the existing buildings nor be highly visible from the main street frontage;

- be accessible without harming the character of the existing street frontage, and with no loss of important features, whether these are existing buildings, or trees and planting between existing buildings; and
- contribute to the public realm, where there is more than one dwelling proposed, by creating public streets and/or courtyard spaces that are not designed solely around technical highways requirements.

### Backland development – critical review

Is backland development subservient to the block that contains it and is it designed to the highest standards?	
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Houses should not be facing rear boundaries

Houses set facing the public realm generally create a more positive environment for residents

Houses should be arranged to face each other across a road or space.

## 3.7 Built form

3.7.1 **Principle:** The design of the built form should be specific to its location and role within the proposed development and the context. The height, shape and form of buildings should be considered at the scale of the street frontage and the street as a whole, in terms of how they contribute to the streetscene and create character.

### Building heights

3.7.2 **Principle:** The height of buildings should respond to a number of factors:

- the existing heights and degree of variation in height in the local context;
- the scale and importance of the space that the building will define or enclose;
- its position in the street hierarchy;
- the position of the building line in relation to the street;
- whether it is a focal point or landmark location in the development; and
- the density of the development.

3.7.3 Within large developments taller buildings should be positioned in strategic locations to help people find their way around the development. These may include centres, focal points, landmark locations, the gateways or entrances to the development, and along main streets.

### Key buildings – corners, landmarks and focal points

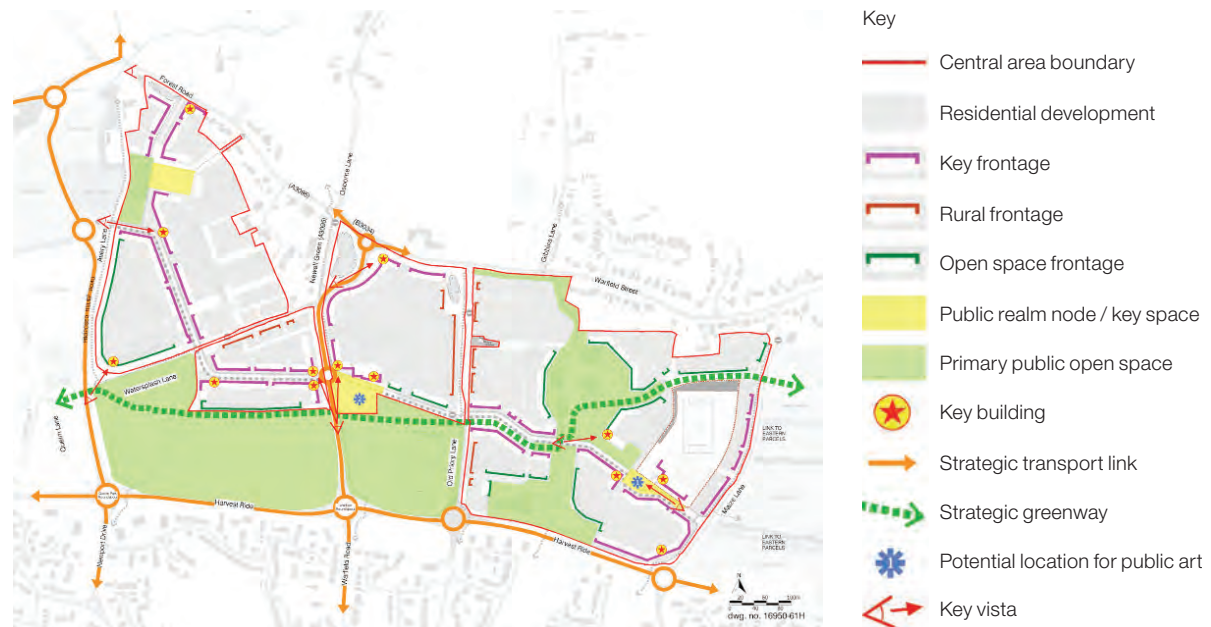
3.7.4 **Principle:** Key buildings are prominent because of their siting – they may terminate views along key streets, or define and enclose focal points or open spaces, or they may mark key decision points for navigating around a development. These buildings should be designed to reflect the importance of their role in the development.

3.7.5 In some (but not all) cases, key buildings should be taller than the buildings around them. Key buildings may also stand out because of their form (including at roof level), the design of their elevations, or a degree of contrast between them and adjoining buildings, for instance in terms of materials. The extent to which they should be distinguished from their surroundings will vary from situation to situation.

3.7.6 All key buildings should be designed and built to the highest quality, as they are the most prominent elements of the development and so must be special.

3.7.7 The Streetscene SPD identifies that buildings on corners should be designed to respond to their position in the layout. Generally they should have two front elevations with windows to habitable rooms on each. In prominent locations, it will also be appropriate to design them as high quality landmark buildings that fit within the character of the area.

3.7.8 Where a new building is proposed in an established context, then it should not block, compete or distract from an important view towards an existing landmark building.



Key buildings and focal points should be carefully considered and clearly detailed on masterplans and layout proposals. Image courtesy of Barton Willmore.



3.7.9 Important vistas should be terminated with buildings of an appropriate scale, massing and quality of design. Buildings that are visible at the end of a street/road have the function of ‘concluding’ or ‘terminating’ the view. The form of the building or group (including its roof) should be coherent at a distance, and its elevations (including the pattern of openings and the combination of materials) should be designed to have a formality that is appropriate to the vista. A symmetrical composition is one way to create a suitable scale and formality.

3.7.10 Groups of more than one building may also be used to enclose and define focal points within a development—for example buildings around a public square, or an open space.

3.7.11 When designing groups of buildings in key locations, designers should:

- meet the expectations of their location and visual prominence;
- follow an overall design concept for the group, including details, features and materials;
- consider the composition as a whole in terms of harmony, balance, symmetry and rhythm – elevations and axonometric drawings of key building groups should be provided to test these compositions; and
- use high quality materials effectively, and detail to create impact.

### Composition of buildings

**3.7.12 Principle: Compose buildings as three dimensional forms in groups, so that the relationships between them (the roof forms in particular) are specifically designed to create an attractive frontage when viewed from all directions.**

3.7.13 This is particularly important for residential developments, where different house types may be grouped and arranged in different ways to suit the street network in different parts of the site. Small changes to the position of dwellings in the plan form of units can have a bigger impact upon the resulting form of the development.

3.7.14 Apartment blocks may take different forms depending upon the location, context, and local character. Their layout and plan form should be designed to respond to these factors as well as to provide high quality homes. For instance, a deep plan apartment building may introduce a bulky built form that does not relate well to an established context, whereas a shallower plan may relate more positively to its surroundings. Height is also an important consideration and should relate to the character of the area and the development surrounding the block. Apartments should also be placed on plots where a good balance between the built form, parking and usable amenity space can be achieved. (See section 3.9 below).

Built form – critical review	
Do building heights relate to their position in the development and the context?	
Are key buildings appropriate to their siting and designed to the highest quality?	
Have buildings been designed successfully as groups and is this demonstrated in three dimensional drawings?	
Is the form of any apartment blocks appropriate for the context and local character of the area?	

## 3.8 Building design

3.8.1 **Principle: Design new buildings with a coherent design approach that influences the whole building or development, from its form to the elevations, including the use of materials and detailing, whatever the architectural style may be.**

3.8.2 The Council's Core Strategy Policy CS7 Design specifically encourages innovative architecture. Where a contemporary approach is adopted then the proportions of the form and elevations and the quality of materials and detailing will be of particular importance. Designers will need to be able to explain how their design approach is appropriate to the context and local character as well as to the client's brief for the site.

3.8.3 Generally, design buildings to reflect some of the attractive qualities of the local form of housing, for example in terms of scale and proportion of elevations.

3.8.4 If a traditional approach is to be followed then the design of a building should correctly use traditional proportions and details and a similar quality of materials to the source for its inspiration.

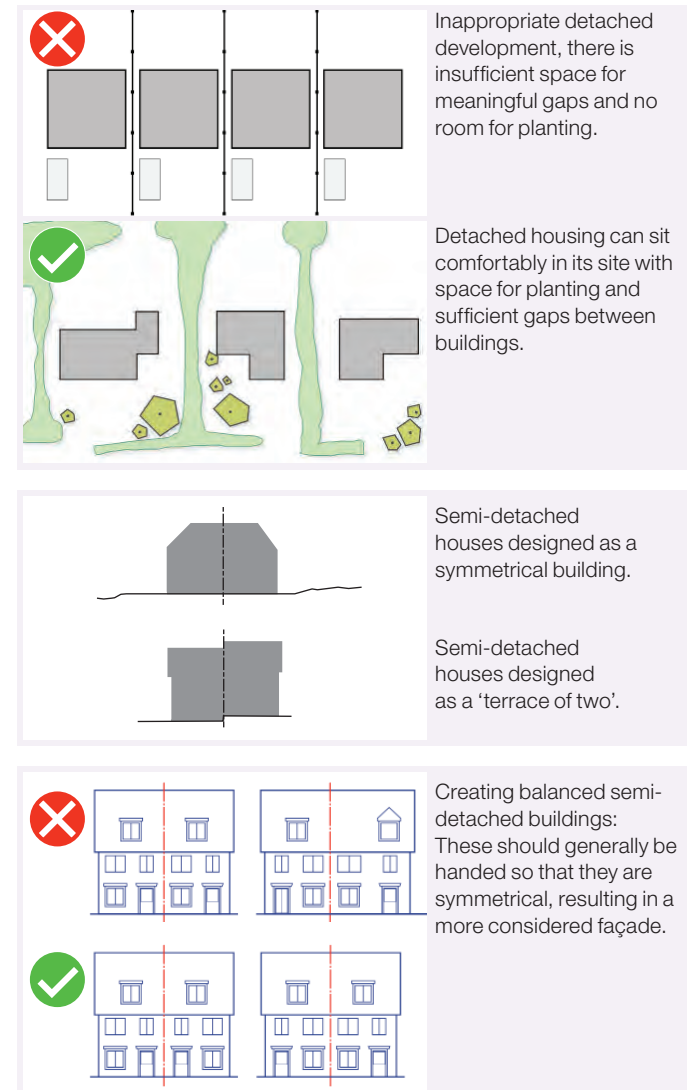
### Roofs

3.8.5 The form of new buildings, including roofs, should relate well to those found in the local context. This may include:

- how forms are orientated, with ridges parallel or perpendicular to the street with either eaves or gables on the building frontage;
- the roof type and pitch, for instance whether it is a hipped roof or has gables;
- the scale and position on the roof of gables, dormers or mansard roofs;
- projecting elements, such as bays or porches; and
- consider how the roofscape will be viewed from higher levels or longer distances, in particular where development is located in undulating landscape, on hillsides and ridge lines.

3.8.6 Generally, in new development, design buildings so that their roofs:

- have ridge lines parallel to the longer side of the building or building block, creating buildings that are better proportioned and with a less dominating roof;
- are simple and uncomplicated, avoiding difficult and unnecessary detailing;
- can be continuous, avoiding unnecessary stepping and staggering of the building line, as this looks unattractive along the street and makes the verge details very prominent; and
- relate well to the existing topography.

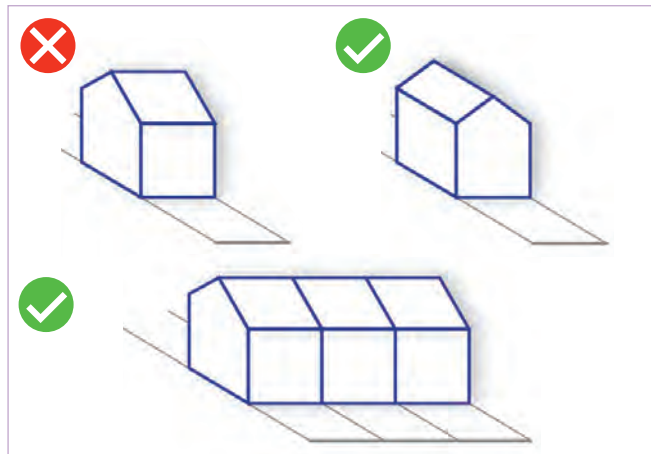


3.8.7 Gables have a stronger presence in the streetscene than roofs with eaves, even when the buildings are the same height. Gables can be used where a key building is required, for instance on corners to mark the presence of a junction. However, where they are sited on the street frontage it is important that they are designed with care, to be well proportioned, and with openings at ground floor level to create an active frontage in the streetscene.

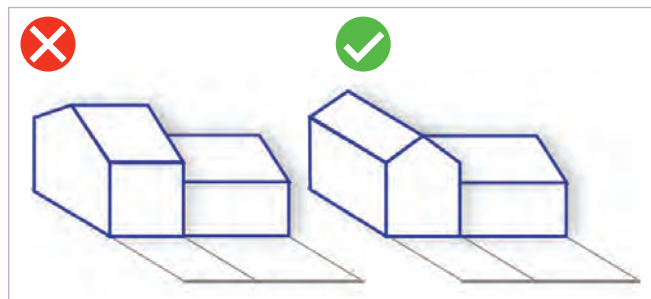
3.8.8 Roof pitches affect the character of a development. Traditional buildings generally have steeply pitched roofs with a narrow span, also with chimneys. New development is often deeper in plan than existing buildings. In an existing context, roof forms will need to be designed with care so that the result is not much taller or more bulky than the surrounding buildings.

3.8.9 Mansard roofs should be smaller than the building they span, so that they are set behind a parapet, and do not overhang the walls of the building at any point.

3.8.10 Dormer windows may either take the form of small gables on the line of the façade or should be inset from the eaves line. They should be designed in three dimensions to make sure their position and proportions relate well to the roof and the building as a whole.



Ridge lines parallel to the longer side of the building are better proportioned.



Where house types of different depth are combined with each other we have to take particular care of the roof forms. Ridge lines that are parallel but not of similar height or in a continuous line create awkwardly shaped roofs and details. It can help to change the orientation of the roof to create a better design.

## Elevations

3.8.11 Design elevations to:

- respond to the local context;
- be well balanced;
- follow a consistent design approach/ architectural style;
- reflect their position, i.e. elevations fronting the street must be designed as a welcoming frontage; and
- respond to their aspect, for instance with larger openings on the south side of the building.

3.8.12 The proportions of the windows and their positioning within the overall elevation are important to the quality of the design.

3.8.13 The style of window should relate well to the proportions of the opening.

3.8.14 All entrances should be from the street frontage. Apartment blocks may also have a secondary entrance from parking areas. It is important to provide independent access to all ground floor flats facing onto streets to create activity and movement within streetscenes.

### Windows and doors



Random sizing and placement of windows attempts to create a frontage, but lacks any sense of proportion and composition.



Semi-detached building with a clear primary frontage and secondary frontage, each entrance positively addresses both the green and the street.



The front of the building is clearly oriented towards the street with a few windows facing onto the car park.



Clear and consistent placement of windows and doorways creates a positive street scene.

### Elevation



Building of three townhouses sets out to create symmetry without following through in the design of the facade.



Well proportioned building with formal symmetry.

### Materials



In these two examples the change in material appears random and adds unnecessary complications.



An elevation should contribute towards creating a positive street environment. The elevations of groups of houses should be considered as a whole in order to create a positive street-scale, in terms of proportion, materials, roofing and the placement of windows.



## Materials and details

3.8.15 Generally, changes in material should relate to the form of the building and should have a clearly identifiable role in its design.

3.8.16 In traditional buildings, generally a change of material is associated with a set back or projection rather than being on a flush façade. Where designers are adopting a traditional approach, it is important to make sure that the design includes the modelling that is associated with traditional buildings.

3.8.17 A change in materials, if well designed, can help to articulate a building form and elevation and relate it to the scale of its context. However, it cannot successfully overcome the problems of a form that is too bulky for its context, or an elevation that is not well proportioned.

3.8.18 Design quality can be achieved through simple, well proportioned forms and elevations with limited decoration, using high quality materials and detailing.

3.8.19 Where materials are used to reflect traditional building forms and vernacular architecture, they should be real, rather than 'stick-on' features. For instance, chimneys should be genuine and relate to fireplaces.

3.8.20 Plant, for instance air conditioning units, or lift overruns, should be enclosed within designed structures and not be visible from the streetscene.

Building design – critical review	
Is there a coherent design approach to the building or buildings?	
Are key buildings designed to be appropriate to their siting and of the highest quality?	
Are the roof forms well designed and appropriate to their location and role in the development? How will they be viewed from the immediate streetscenes and in more distant views? Has the topography and site levels been considered?	
Are elevations well proportioned, appropriate to their siting, and coherent in their architectural style?	
Are high quality materials proposed and do they have a clear role in the design?	

## 3.9 Other residential requirements

3.9.1 **Principle:** Site dwellings so that all of their associated requirements, including outdoor space, parking and refuse storage/ collection, can also be arranged appropriately within a plot, and function well for the end user. The development, as a whole, should also relate well to neighbouring properties and its surroundings.

### Outdoor space

3.9.2 **Principle:** All new dwellings should have easy access to usable outdoor space (private or communal).

3.9.3 All gardens should be able to accommodate activities such as playing, drying clothes, cycle and refuse storage.

3.9.4 The sizes of private gardens should be proportionate to the size of the dwelling, the potential number of occupants and the location of the development. Generally in town centres or urban areas, people have a lower expectation for garden size, compared with suburban or rural areas. Therefore garden sizes should vary according to the context.

3.9.5 External access to private gardens at least 1 metre wide should be provided for each unit, unless incompatible with local character.

3.9.6 All gardens, terraces and balconies should receive direct sunlight for at least part of the day at all times of the year. For this reason, areas that are fully shaded by tree canopies are not suitable for private or communal outdoor space. This applies to private or communal gardens for apartment blocks as well as to houses.

3.9.7 Cycle and refuse storage in gardens should be accessible through the garden and the levels fully considered. Steps leading to refuse collection areas are not acceptable.

3.9.8 Where a block of apartments is proposed, a careful balance is needed between the building footprint, its position on the plot in response to local character, parking provision and usable open space for residents.

3.9.9 Wherever possible, upper floor inhabitants of apartments should have access to a communal garden area, a communal or private roof terrace, or a private balcony.

3.9.10 Careful consideration will be given to issues of overlooking and privacy where balconies are proposed. The design of balustrades should balance the benefits of allowing light into the space against those of providing a visual screen. North facing balconies are unlikely to receive adequate sunlight and should be avoided.



Balconies and roof terraces can provide amenity space for people living in urban areas or in flats.

## Privacy

### 3.9.11 **Principle: All development should be arranged on plots to achieve reasonable levels of privacy for the inhabitants and for residents of neighbouring buildings.**

3.9.12 Reasonable levels of privacy can be achieved by considering the distance between windows on different plots.

3.9.13 For two storey houses a minimum back to back distance of 22m between facing windows is accepted as providing a reasonable degree of privacy for the occupants of both dwellings. With a building(s) with windows above first-floor level, a back-to-back separation of no less than 30m is considered reasonable. As storeys rise additional separation distances may be necessary to mitigate against overlooking, overshadowing and overbearing impacts. In addition to providing adequate back-to-back separation, overlooking impacts can be mitigated by oblique siting relationships, where within the building habitable rooms are located, window design (e.g. use of obscure glazing for non-habitable rooms, high-level windows and rooflights) and screening such as outbuildings or vegetation. In applying these separation distances the impacts of levels differences on sloping sites will also be taken into account.

3.9.14 Blocks of flats do not necessarily have private 'backs' the way most houses do. In considering siting relationships between blocks of flats a minimum distance between facing habitable windows of 22m will be sought to avoid unacceptable levels of overlooking. However, each case will be considered on its own merits and it being demonstrated that a development proposal adheres to the additional guidance to safeguard residential amenity as set out in section 3.9 of this SPD.

3.9.15 Issues of privacy and overlooking of private garden areas, particularly sitting out areas immediately behind dwellings, also needs to be considered. To avoid unacceptable overlooking, first-floor windows should be a minimum of 10m from a boundary with a neighbouring back garden. Where a building has facing windows above first-floor level, a minimum distance of 15m to a neighbouring garden boundary is considered appropriate."

3.9.16 Generally a distance of 12m between windows on the street side of dwellings is accepted as providing a reasonable degree of privacy to the occupants of both buildings. This distance is likely to be the minimum required to accommodate the carriageway, footway(s), services, and privacy strips or front gardens.

3.9.17 Where the building line is close to the street, a reasonable degree of privacy can be achieved through one or more of:

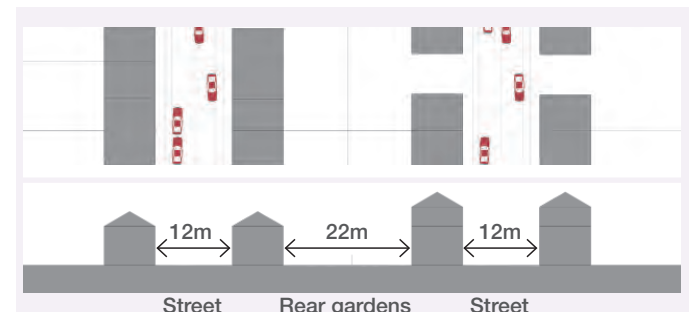
- a small planted privacy strip;
- the internal planning of accommodation, such as kitchen facing the street and bedrooms at the rear;
- a boundary treatment that creates some degree of screening, for instance a hedgerow; and
- vertically proportioned windows that are not too large in size.

3.9.18 Ground floor residential accommodation will feel more overlooked in mixed use areas than in a residential area, so may require all of the above measures to create a reasonable level of privacy.

3.9.19 On a sloping site, accommodation that is raised above the level of pedestrians will feel private, whereas accommodation below the level of pedestrians will feel overlooked. Designers should consider carefully the relationship of routes to dwellings to achieve a reasonable level of privacy for all residents whilst maintaining accessibility for all.



The careful orientation of terraces and placement of windows can ensure that both privacy and high density is achieved.



22 metres is considered an acceptable rule of thumb distance for there to be no overlooking between buildings at the rear where people expect more privacy. 12m is a generally accepted rule of thumb distance for there to be sufficient privacy across streets.



## Relationship to neighbouring properties/ surroundings

3.9.20 **Principle:** New development should be sited and designed to minimise any potential impacts on neighbouring properties and/or its surroundings.

3.9.21 New development should make sure that neighbouring properties continue to receive adequate levels of sunlight and daylight and that new development is not unduly overbearing.

3.9.22 The appropriate distance from an apartment block to on-site assets such as trees, or to neighbouring properties, and between different buildings that form part of the development, should be governed by:

- sunlight and daylight considerations, so that each dwelling has some sunshine in its living spaces for part of the day, and habitable room windows should be assessed in accordance with BRE standards; and
- how the blocks enclose the space to create attractive places that are comfortable to use, whether these are communal outdoor spaces or parking areas.

3.9.23 The Streetscene SPD provides guidance on enclosing street and other spaces.

3.9.24 New development of more than two storeys will generally need a degree of separation from a boundary with the garden of an existing property.

This is particularly important for new apartment blocks and commercial/office accommodation, where planting may also be required to soften the impact.

## Parking

3.9.25 **Principle:** Parking should be accommodated within the development in convenient positions, to encourage people to use the designated locations.

3.9.26 The Parking Standards SPD sets out the required levels of car parking for new development. The Streetscene SPD provides detailed guidance on how parking within the streetscene can affect character.

3.9.27 Parking for houses should be:

- sited so that it does not dominate the streetscene or development;
- designed as positive and attractive spaces and incorporate planting where appropriate to soften parking areas;
- conveniently located for the property it serves providing a safe and easily accessible route;
- garages should generally be set behind the building line or positioned so as not to be visually dominant within streetscenes; and
- designed to contribute to a sustainable drainage system.

3.9.28 Where a block of apartments is proposed, parking should ideally be located underground in a basement. Where is not a viable option, parking should be integrated into the landscape around the building.

3.9.29 The Streetscene SPD and Parking Standards SPD provide detailed guidance on parking layouts, design and the level of provision required.



Example of well integrated car parking fronting onto a public space, including an example of a flat over garage (top).



## Refuse and recycling storage/collection

3.9.30 **Principle:** Refuse storage should be designed into the development in convenient positions both for collection and to encourage people to use them.

3.9.31 Generally for houses, refuse storage should be provided in private gardens, accessed externally.

3.9.32 For apartment blocks, refuse storage areas should ideally be incorporated into the ground floor layouts, integral to the building. However, where an external store is necessary, this should be sensitively designed and located where it is not be highly visible within the streetscene, but still within the required carry distances for both residents and refuse collectors. As new Waste Management technologies are developing, consideration should be given to providing up to date ways of dealing with waste and its collection for dwellings and commercial premises. Suitable provision will therefore be required by the Council's Waste Management team.

3.9.33 The Streetscene SPD provides detailed guidance on refuse stores and collection, including for blocks of apartments.

Other residential requirements – critical review	
Does the development provide usable outdoor space for all dwellings with sunlight for part of the day?	
Is there a reasonable level of privacy between the new development and existing properties and for the inhabitants of the new development?	
Is parking well designed and convenient?	
Is refuse storage well designed and convenient?	



Examples of attractive well considered storage designs with robust, sturdy waterproof materials that compliment architecture.

# 4 Extensions and Alterations

## 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Extensions and alterations to houses do not always need planning permission since Permitted Development rights, a national grant of planning permission, allows certain building works to be carried out without having to make a planning application.

4.1.2 The exercise of Permitted Development rights is subject to conditions and limitations (for example limits on height, size or location etc.) to control the impact of a development and to protect local amenity. Please contact the Planning section of Environment, Culture and Communities for more information or refer to the Planning Portal at

[https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200125/do\\_you\\_need\\_permission](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200125/do_you_need_permission).

4.1.3 It is important to note that extensions or external alterations to apartments do not, in general, have Permitted Development rights and there are a range of exclusions which apply to protected areas, such as a Conservation Areas.

4.1.4 This section of the Design SPD provides guidance for designing extensions and alterations to houses that are not Listed Buildings or within Conservation Areas. Proposal for extensions and alterations in Conservation Areas or on a Listed Building should be discussed with the planning section at an early stage to identify whether or not permission will be required.

4.1.5 Many residential areas in the Borough have a distinctive and attractive character, which is created by the combination of buildings and landscape. This helps to make each place a unique and attractive place to live, somewhere that people feel they belong. In most cases, this character is not something that will result in a formal designation such as a Conservation Area but, nevertheless, it is important locally.

4.1.6 Over time, lifestyles change and people use their homes differently. Alterations or extensions allow homes to be adapted so that people can continue to live in their local area.

4.1.7 Each alteration or extension, in itself, makes a small change to an area and to its character. However, many such alterations and extensions can erode the attractive qualities of a house, the residential environment for inhabitants and neighbours, and can undermine the character of the area.

4.1.8 However, if well designed, extensions and alterations can relate well to the home, the neighbouring properties and the character of the area.

## 4.2 General guidance

4.2.1 In addition to the guidance given in this section, guidance is also given in chapter 3 of this document on issues of separation and overlooking of neighbouring properties which will also be relevant and should be considered. The design of an extension or alterations to a property should start from:

- the original design of the building in its plot; and
- the character of the street or area.

4.2.2 Extensions or alterations should respond to the scale, proportions and design of the original building. This may include:

- the shape of the building, in particular its roof, and original features such as bay windows, porches, dormers or chimney; and
- the relationship with neighbouring properties, including the building line, the roof pitch and slope, the topography and the aspect of each house.

4.2.3 Extensions or alterations may adopt a design approach that integrates the proposal into the design of the original building, or they may adopt a contemporary design approach that complements its design. In both cases, the proposal must be considered together with the original building, so that it creates a coherent and well-designed whole.

4.2.4 The Council's Core Strategy Policy CS7 specifically encourages innovative architecture. The Council will therefore welcome modern design using contemporary materials provided it is high quality and appropriate to its context. A high quality, contemporary design can help to improve the environmental sustainability of a property and, at the same time, enhance the appearance of a building.

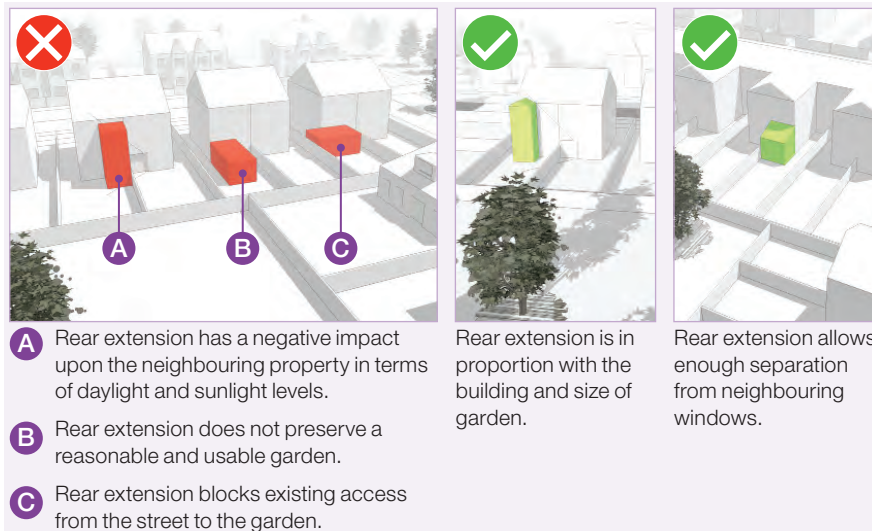
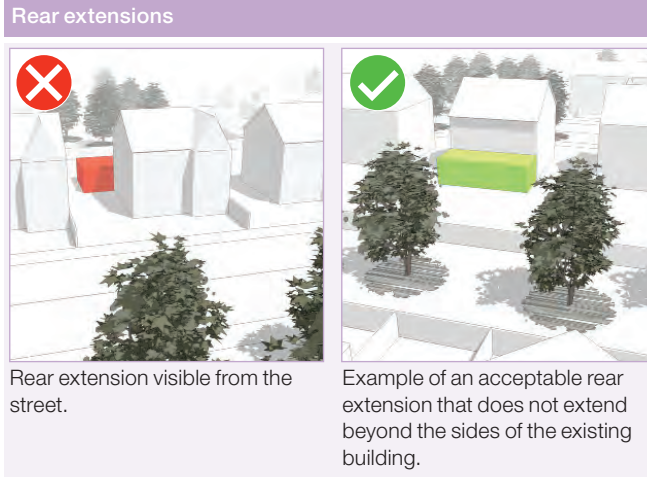
4.2.5 Where an innovative architectural approach is proposed, then designers should provide a rationale for their design approach, including where departing from any of the detailed design guidance below.

## 4.3 Rear extensions

4.3.1 Rear extensions should maintain the quality of residential environment, should relate well to neighbouring buildings and should generally not be visible from the street.

4.3.2 Rear extensions should retain a reasonable living environment for the property being extended, by:

- preserving a back garden of a reasonable size, appropriate for the potential number of occupants of the house, and able to accommodate activities such as playing, drying clothes, cycle and refuse storage;
- being set behind the original building, and not projecting beyond it at the sides;
- maintaining an external access to the garden;
- being subordinate to the original building in height, with eaves height no taller than the original eaves height;
- following the style of the original building, or complementing it with a high quality modern addition;
- ensuring that the roof form is well proportioned and does not alter or interfere with the main roof form; and
- being appropriate in size to the buildings, gardens and plots of both the original and neighbouring properties.

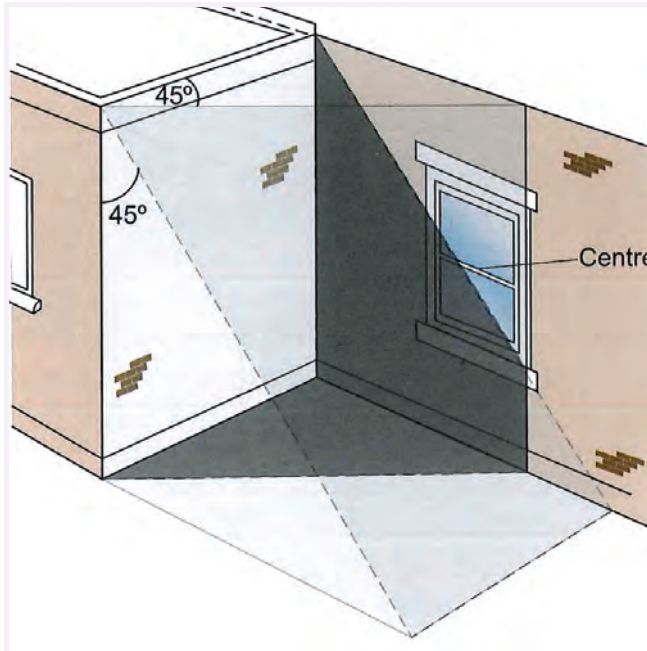




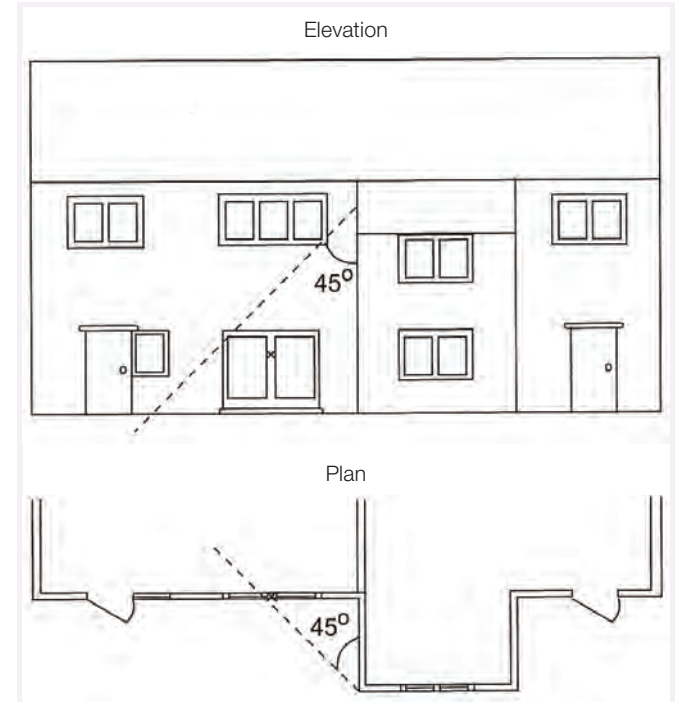
4.3.3 Rear extensions should maintain the quality of environment for neighbours, by:

- ensuring reasonable levels of daylight and sunlight to the habitable rooms in adjoining properties - use the 45 degree rule to check this (see diagram opposite);
- positioning windows to minimize any potential overlook the neighbouring property or its garden;
- where windows are required in side elevations, ensuring that any at first floor level are obscure glazed with opening fanlights only; and
- setting the extension away from the property boundary so as to avoid any dramatic change in scale in relation to the neighbouring garden.

The '45 degree rule'



Application of the 45 degree approach to a domestic extension. A significant amount of light is likely to be blocked if the centre of the window lies within the 45 degree angle on both plan and elevation. Here the centre of the window lies outside the 45 degree angle on elevation, both impact of the extension is likely to be small.  
 Taken from *Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight A Guide to Good Practice* Second Edition 2011 BRE Press.



Here the extension has a pitched roof, so a point halfway along the roof slope is used as the start of the 45 degree line on the elevation. The affected window is a patio door, so a point 1.6 metres above the ground has been taken. This point is within the 45 degree angles on both plan and elevation, so a significant reduction of light is likely.  
 Taken from *Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight A Guide to Good Practice* Second Edition 2011 BRE Press.



## 4.4 Rear infill extensions

4.4.1 Rear infill extensions are popular in traditional terraces of houses, where there is an L-shaped building with a side return. The side return is generally a narrow and relatively dark alley to the garden. Filling in the side return offers owners the opportunity to create open plan kitchen and living areas at the rear of their properties.

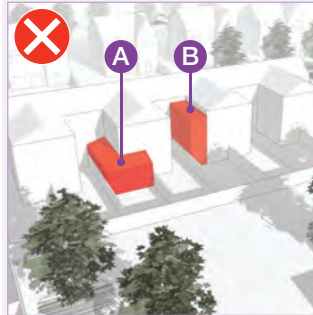
4.4.2 Infill extensions should generally retain the form of the original building and should be carefully designed to make sure they maintain the quality of living environment for neighbouring properties.

4.4.3 Infill extensions should:

- be subordinate to the original building and limited to a single storey in height;
- minimise the height on the party wall line;
- maintain the integrity of the original building, for instance by retaining a column at its rear corner, and avoiding a wrap around extension; and
- follow the style of the original building, or complement it with a high quality modern addition.

4.4.4 They should maintain the quality of environment for neighbours by ensuring reasonable levels of daylight and sunlight to the habitable rooms in adjoining properties, preferably with a sloping roof and keeping the height on (or adjoining) the party wall as low as possible.


### Infill extensions



**A** Wrap-around extensions do not retain the integrity of the original building.

**B** This infill extension is overbearing and impacts on the neighbouring environment.



 Examples of award winning rear extensions. Exceptions to the general guidance can be acceptable if there is a clear justification and exceptional design quality.



## 4.5 Side extensions

4.5.1 In some residential areas, there is a regular pattern of buildings and spaces, for instance in 1930s semi-detached suburban housing. In these locations, where the rhythm of the street frontage contributes to local character, side extensions should not interfere with this.

4.5.2 Side extensions should be sited and designed so as to minimise any impact on local character, by:

- being well back from the original building line, and preferably not seen in views along the street;
- being subordinate to the original building, in particular so that extensions of 2 storeys are noticeably smaller in footprint than the original building;
- having a carefully designed roof form that is in scale with the original roof;
- following the style of the original building, or complementing it with a high quality modern addition; and
- avoid terracing where this is not currently present.

4.5.3 Side extensions should retain a reasonable living environment for the property being extended, by:

- maintaining a gap between the dwelling and the site boundary of at least 1m to allow external access to the garden; and
- retaining off-street parking provision behind the building line where it exists at present.

4.5.4 Side extensions should maintain the quality of environment for neighbours, by:

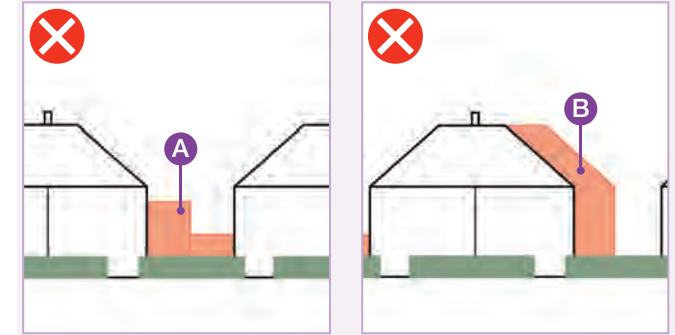
- ensuring reasonable levels of daylight and sunlight to the habitable rooms in adjoining properties – use the 45-degree rule to check this (See section 4.3.3);
- positioning windows to minimise any potential to overlook the neighbouring property or its garden;
- where windows are required in side elevations, ensuring that any at first floor level are obscure glazed with opening fanlights only; and
- setting the extension away from the property boundary so as to avoid any dramatic change in scale in relation to the neighbouring garden.

4.5.5 On corner plots, side extensions may be considered as being both side extensions and front extensions, as they will potentially relate to both streets. Both elevations should be designed as street frontages.

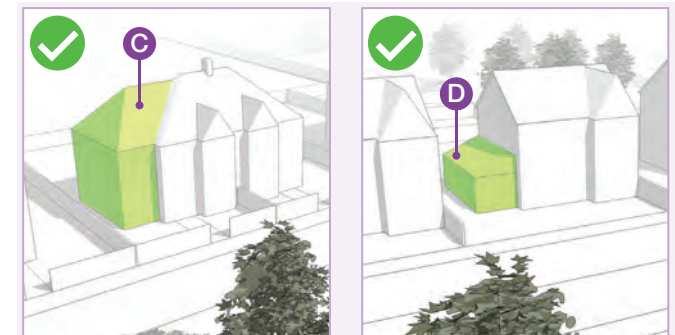
4.5.6 On corner plots, side extensions should contribute to local character by:

- turning the corner, i.e. facing in both directions to create two frontages, each with windows at ground floor and upper levels overlooking the street;
- being set back from the existing building line on both streets; and
- following the boundary treatments along both streets, in terms of its position, height and materials.

### Side extensions



- A Side extensions, even when subordinate can lead to the infill of gaps between houses, detracting from character.
- B A side extension to this semi-detached house makes it look unbalanced and 'lop-sided'.



- C Side extension is subservient and in proportion with the existing building.
- D Side extension retains space between buildings and is clearly subservient to the existing building.

## 4.6 Front extensions and porches

4.6.1 Front extensions are highly visible in the streetscene and should be carefully designed to make sure they do not erode local character.

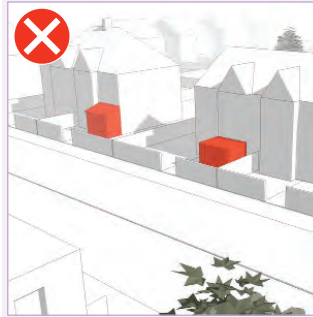
4.6.2 Generally, small porches are an acceptable form of front extension. Because of their prominence in the streetscene, the design, materials and details of any other front extension will need to be high quality.

4.6.3 Front extensions should maintain local character by:

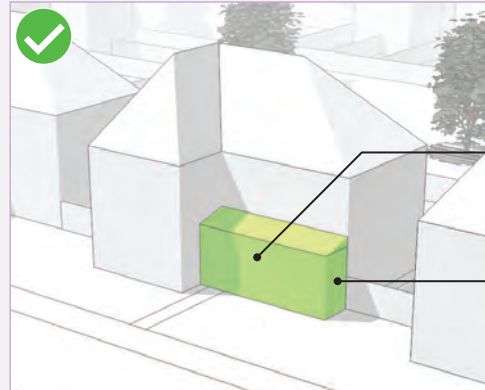
- being small in footprint relative to the original building;
- being set behind the existing building line so that they are not dominant elements in the streetscene;
- being subordinate in scale so that they do not dominate the original building;
- generally following the style of the original building in terms of design, materials and detailing, including roof materials and pitch; and
- being consistent with others on a terrace or other group of buildings, and not having an unbalancing effect on the group as a whole.

4.6.4 They should maintain the quality of environment for neighbours, by ensuring reasonable levels of daylight and sunlight to the habitable rooms in adjoining properties – use the 45-degree rule to check this (See figure 3.1)

### Front extensions and porches



Front elevations that sit in front of the existing building line negatively impact upon the streetscene.



Example of an acceptable extension.

Sits behind predominant building line.

Does not extend beyond width of original building.

## 4.7 Roof extensions

4.7.1 Roof extensions should not affect the local character or the environment of neighbouring properties.

4.7.2 Roof extensions should:

- not unbalance the symmetry of a terrace or semi-detached dwellings;
- be clad in appropriate materials;
- ensure that the roof material and the shape of new windows relate well to the original building;
- position dormer windows with care, avoiding front or side slopes where they may unbalance the building or disrupt the consistency of a group or terrace;
- size dormers so they are subordinate elements at roof level, and do not extend across the full width of the roof;
- ensure that dormers do not rise above the ridge or hip of a roof;
- preferably align new openings with those on lower levels; and
- preferably locate skylights on side or rear roof slopes.

Roof extensions



**A** Dormer is out of proportion with the remainder of the house.

**B** Impacts on the symmetry and integrity of the semi-detached houses.

**C** The dormer and its windows have a poor relationship with the rest of the house.



Example of an acceptable roof extension.



The dormer extends above the roof-line.



Example of an acceptable dormer window.



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## 4.8 Windows and doors

4.8.1 The design and detailing of windows/doors on the street frontage is of particular importance as it contributes to local character.

4.8.2 The design of new windows and doors should relate well to those originally used in the building.

4.8.3 Replacement windows and doors on street frontages should:

- complement the existing by matching the opening arrangement, material and details to the originals;
- maintain the original glazing pattern which is generally an integral part of the appearance and quality of the building; and
- where the building is part of a group or terrace, they should maintain its consistency of appearance.

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## 4.9 Solar panels, satellite dishes and air source heat pumps

4.9.1 These additions generally do not require planning permission. However, it is important to consider their impact on the attractiveness of new and existing individual dwellings and the street.

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### Solar panels

4.9.2 Where possible solar panels should not be placed on the front elevation of buildings or in a position that is visible from the street frontage. They should preferably be mounted in a regular pattern with equal set backs from the eaves and ridgelines.

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### Satellite dishes

4.9.3 Satellite dishes should be placed in the least prominent position, avoiding the front elevation wherever possible.

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### Air source heat pumps

4.9.4 Air source heat pumps should not be placed on front elevations or in a position that is visible from the street. If this cannot be avoided then they should be sensitively screened.

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## 4.10 Balconies and roof terraces

4.10.1 New balconies and roof terraces on existing buildings should not affect neighbouring properties, or alter local character, either of a group of buildings or of the streetscape.

4.10.2 Balconies, including Juliet balconies, and roof terraces should be:

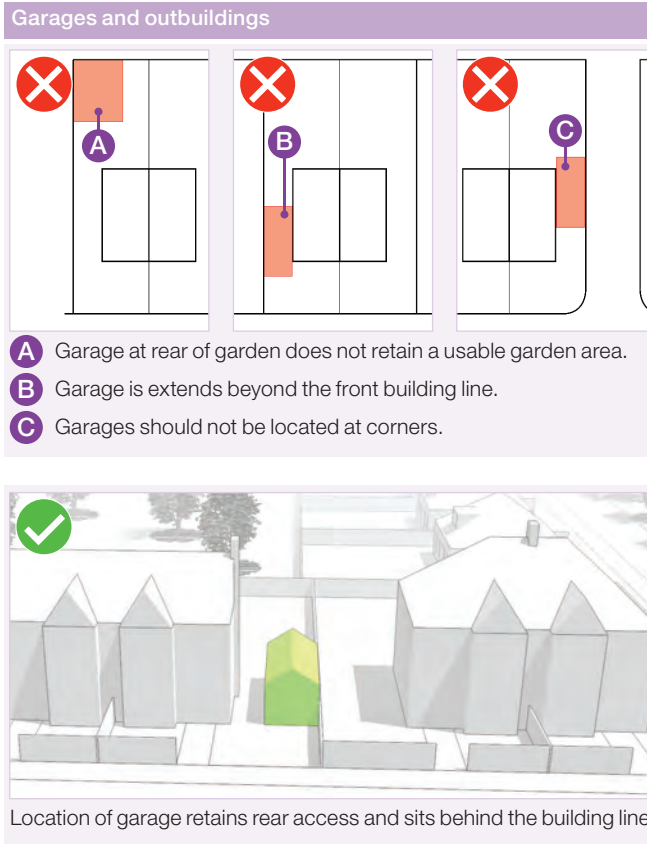
- positioned, and screened if necessary, so that they do not overlook neighbouring homes or gardens; and
- sited away from locations that are sensitive to additional levels of noise or disruption.

## 4.11 Garages and outbuildings

4.11.1 New garages and outbuildings should not affect the quality of the living environment or the character of the streetscene or the area.

4.11.2 Garages and outbuildings should:

- preserve a back garden of a reasonable size, appropriate for the potential number of occupants of the house, and able to accommodate activities such as playing, drying clothes, cycle and refuse storage;
- be set back behind the building line of the original house so they do not intrude in the streetscene;
- be subordinate in footprint and scale to the original house;
- follow the style of the original building, or complement it with a high quality modern addition; and
- ensure that the roof form is well proportioned and in scale with the original house and its roof.



# 5 Design and Access Statements

## 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 A Design and Access Statement is a short report that needs to be submitted with certain applications for planning permission and listed building consent. These include:

- all major development proposals;
- development in conservation areas for one or more dwellings;
- development in conservation areas for more than 100 sqm of floorspace; and
- listed building consent.

5.1.2 A Design and Access Statement is used by the local planning authority and others to help understand the development proposal, why it is as it is, and how it has evolved.

5.1.3 The level of detail should be proportionate to the complexity of the application but it should not be a long document.

5.1.4 This section refers to applications for detailed planning permission. For information on listed building consent applications, please contact the Planning section of the Environment, Culture and Communities department.

## 5.2 Content of a Design and Access Statement

5.2.1 The Design and Access Statement should explain how the development proposal is a suitable response to the site and its setting and it should demonstrate that it can be accessed by all.

5.2.2 It should:

- explain the relevant design principles and concepts;
- outline the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development;
- demonstrate how the design approach takes that context into account;
- explain the approach to access;
- explain how relevant Local Plan policies have been taken into account;
- detail any consultation with the local planning authority and local residents and how this has informed the proposals; and
- explain how any specific issues that might affect access have been addressed.

5.2.3 Outline planning applications must provide information about the proposed uses and amount of development proposed for each use. They must also indicate the area or areas where access is proposed to the development. Applicants may also provide additional information as part of the application to help the Council assess it against planning policies. The Design and Access Statement should explain how the application will achieve high quality design and so comply with Core Strategy Policy CS7 and any other relevant policies.

5.2.4 A Design and Access Statement is an opportunity for an applicant to showcase the development proposals. It should be easy to understand, engaging to read, have a high level of information expressed in a diagrammatic format and should realistically communicate what the proposals will look like, how they will function and the impact they will have on the surrounding area.

5.2.5 For more information on Design and Access statements, please see:

<http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/design-and-access-statements-how-to-write-read-and-use-them>





