

Design Quality

Introduction

- 7.73 Government Policy and Guidance recognises that good design is a key element in achieving sustainable development through creating attractive, useable, durable and adaptable places that people want to live in. To build upon the District's rich environment and restore areas in need of regeneration, good urban design, landscape design and high quality architecture that respects local heritage are essential. This will assist with developing vibrant safe places with a distinct identity that provide healthier places for those living, working or visiting the District.

Context

- 7.74 The Council shares the objectives of government policy to create places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, are visually attractive, safe, accessible, functional, inclusive, have their own distinctive identity and maintain and improve local character.

- 7.75 Good design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. The District is an attractive place to live and work, with its high quality countryside and vibrant towns and communities, with distinctive character and historic assets. Developers are expected to bring forward sustainable and environmentally friendly new housing developments. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions will not be accepted.
- 7.76 Spaces between built developments are equally important and new open spaces should improve the quality of the public realm through good design to create places where people can meet and socialise.

Relevant Strategic Objectives

8, 11, 12, 14 and 15

Local Issues

- 7.77 The Council's commitment to "improve the quality of life for those who live and work in the District" is reinforced by strategic themes in the Corporate Plan such as, protecting the environment, promoting healthier communities and promoting community safety. Current priorities which include working with our communities to provide a safer environment, valuing our environment and reducing our carbon footprint, all support the need for more robust design policies.
- 7.78 Similar objectives are included in the Selby Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council's Climate Change Strategy, which promotes carbon reduction measures and policies, including sustainable construction methods. The Selby District Community Safety Partnership Plan, (2008-2011), also prioritises safer neighbourhoods designing out crime.
- 7.79 In order to improve the quality of design in villages the Council is working in partnership with local communities to prepare Village Design Statements (VDSs) which it has adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents. These and any future Design Codes give advice and guidance to anyone who is considering any form of development no matter how large or small. They set out the elements that make up local character in order to improve the quality of design where change is proposed. The adopted documents should be taken into account by householders, businesses and developers and form an integral part in the decision making process when the District Council considers formal planning applications.
- 7.80 The quality of design in its local context is more important than relying on a minimum housing density figure to benchmark development.

Development should make the best and most efficient use of land, but it should also provide choice and variety that reflects up to date housing needs surveys (and other such evidence) and considers the quality of the local environment. Therefore the Council does not propose to set a development density figure in this strategic plan, but may identify particular design requirements including indicative densities and /or specific allocations as part of future local plan documents.

- 7.81 New developments need to be planned positively to ensure high quality and inclusive design for individual buildings, public and private spaces that are locally distinctive and responsive to their unique location. The diverse needs of people should also be considered so that barriers are broken down in a way that benefits the whole community.
- 7.82 Well designed sustainable communities can contribute to improved health and social well-being. The principles of 'active design'⁹⁷ and access to good quality green infrastructure allow more participation in exercise including more walking and cycling. There are therefore health gains in the layouts of new developments; transport and green infrastructure plans (see also other Core Strategy policies).
- 7.83 Selby District is recognised as a low crime area and the reduction in crime is continuing, however, the fear of crime is a significant concern. Therefore it is important to create a high quality public realm which can accommodate the needs of all people and create public places where people feel safe and at ease with reduced opportunity for crime and reduced fear of crime, particularly through active frontages, inclusion of natural surveillance, and distinctions between public and private spaces. The same considerations should also be given to proposals for new development including new housing by ensuring that schemes adopt the principles of Secured by Design⁹⁸ (SBD). The Secured by Design Developers Award is a certificate given to building developments which, following consultation with local Crime Prevention Design Advisors (sometimes called Architectural Liaison Officers), are built to conform to the SBD guidelines and so reduce the opportunity for crime. Such requirements are a key element in the Building for Life standards.
- 7.84 New development should not just be sustainable by way of its location but through the materials and techniques used for construction, its energy efficiency, and water and waste arrangements. The impact and function of the development over its lifetime needs to be considered in the design process to ensure that areas can adapt in the future. Expectations for meeting nationally recognised standards (such as the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM) are also dealt with in the climate change section of this Core Strategy.

⁹⁷ Active Design is an innovative set of design guidelines published by Sport England, to promote opportunities for sport and physical activity in the design and layout of development

- 7.85 The Council therefore supports the key principles of the Building for Life⁹⁹ scheme as this supports the Council's sustainable development objectives to meet the needs of the District's residents in the longer term.
- 7.86 Building for Life is the national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods and promotes design excellence in the house building industry. The 20 Building for Life criteria embody a vision of functional, attractive and sustainable housing. New housing developments are scored against the criteria to assess the quality of their design. 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' is a similar concept, which seeks to achieve well-designed communities.
- 7.87 'Lifetime Homes' is a design concept aimed at providing internal and external environments, which are constructed to standards that ensure houses properly meet people's needs throughout their lives or can be easily adapted to meet special circumstances such as physical disability (temporary or permanent)¹⁰⁰. The Council is keen to encourage all new housing developments to attain these standards. Future local plan documents or SPDs will consider detailed requirements.
- 7.88 The Council is a partner in the York Design Review Panel in cooperation with neighbouring authorities to consider the design qualities of major development proposals. At a more local level, the Council also offers pre-application discussions which include design advice.

Policy SP19 Design Quality

Proposals for all new development will be expected to contribute to enhancing community cohesion by achieving high quality design and have regard to the local character, identity and context of its surroundings including historic townscapes, settlement patterns and the open countryside.

Where appropriate schemes should take account of design codes and Neighbourhood Plans to inform good design.

Both residential and non-residential development should meet the following key requirements:

- a) Make the best, most efficient use of land without compromising local distinctiveness, character and form.**
- b) Positively contribute to an area's identity and heritage in terms of scale, density and layout;**
- c) Be accessible to all users and easy to get to and move through;**

- d) Create rights of way or improve them to make them more attractive to users, and facilitate sustainable access modes, including public transport, cycling and walking which minimise conflicts;**
- e) Incorporate new and existing landscaping as an integral part of the design of schemes, including off-site landscaping for large sites and sites on the edge of settlements where appropriate;**
- f) Promote access to open spaces and green infrastructure to support community gatherings and active lifestyles which contribute to the health and social well-being of the local community;**
- g) Have public and private spaces that are clearly distinguished, safe and secure, attractive and which complement the built form;**
- h) Minimise the risk of crime or fear of crime, particularly through active frontages and natural surveillance;**
- i) Create mixed use places with variety and choice that compliment one another to encourage integrated living, and**
- j) Adopt sustainable construction principles in accordance with Policies SP15 and SP16.**
- k) Preventing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water, light or noise pollution or land instability.**
- l) Development schemes should seek to reflect the principles of nationally recognised design benchmarks to ensure that the best quality of design is achieved.**