

## LP24 - Design and Residential Amenity

### Policy background and explanation

- 15.48 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and has the potential to maintain and enhance existing environments. It can also have benefits in terms of the health of residents and community safety. The Plan provides a framework to promote high-quality, well-designed developments, and good quality housing. In order to achieve this aim, applicants should work collaboratively with the Councils at an early stage. In determining applications regard will be given to the 'Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas', and any other relevant local design codes and documents endorsed by the Councils, where appropriate. This also includes the principles of Suffolk Design and any supplementary planning documents.
- 15.49 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts are rich in landscape and heritage assets which can be sensitive to new development design. In order to best safeguard these features and context, proposed new development of exceptional quality in accordance with the NPPF (Para. 80(e)) and/or in design sensitive areas/landscapes will be required to undertake a review through the Suffolk Design Review Panel. Design sensitive areas/landscapes are normally considered to be schemes proposed within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Project areas, Conservation Areas and the settings of listed buildings. The design review process can assist to improve and refine the scheme and also verify the quality of a design.
- 15.50 In addition, dwellings built to adapt to and accommodate the needs of the occupier over their lifetime can facilitate choice, help meet the needs of an ageing population and improve quality of life. There is a Building Regulation standard in force relating to accessible dwellings, which sets standards in relation to accessible and adaptable dwellings (Part M4(2)) and wheelchair user dwellings (Part M4(3)), which are over and above the minimum requirements. LPAs can apply these standards, by incorporating a requirement within their planning policies. The SHMA identifies that there will be an increase of people with accessibility needs across the Districts during the Plan period.
- 15.51 The Plan seeks new dwellings to be designed to meet these needs using the Building for a Healthy Life design assessment framework or other similar design or equivalent replacement considerations, as appropriate. The Councils consider that good practice in design principles would include active frontages/edges, permeability, strong street composition and connectivity. While specifically for the public realm, good visual design signatures would include signage, hard landscaping and public art. Appropriate long-term design principles and measures in terms of privacy and adequate facilities would include suitable bin storage (including recycling and re-use bins), secure cycle storage and garden space.
- 15.52 In order to address the needs of the ageing demographic in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, design standards should also take account of the need for buildings to address specific requirements, including dementia friendly accommodation, where considered appropriate. Dementia-Friendly Design Principles are set out in the RTPI guidance (2020). Key factors which would determine whether locations are appropriate include: good public transport links, close accessible services and facilities such as attractive nearby areas e.g. garden, park, courtyard, paved area and shopping centres.

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- 1. All new development must be of high-quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its context. As appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals must:**
  - a. Respond to and safeguard the existing character/context;**
  - b. Create character and interest;**
  - c. Be designed for health, amenity, well-being and safety; and**
  - d. Meet Space Standards<sup>34</sup>.**
- 2. In order to achieve this development proposals shall:**
  - a) Respond to the wider townscape/landscapes and safeguarding the historic assets/ environment and natural and built features of merit;**
  - b) Be compatible/harmonious with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;**
  - c) Protect and retain important natural features including trees or hedgerows during and post construction;**
  - d) Create/reinforce a strong design to the public realm incorporating visual signatures;**
  - e) Take account of the Building for a Healthy Life design assessment framework and include good practice in design principles. Non-householder schemes of exceptional design and/or development within a sensitive area/ landscape will be required to undertake a design review to test incorporation of good design principles ;**
  - f) Incorporate high levels of soft landscaping, trees and public open space that creates, and connects to, green infrastructure and networks;**
  - g) Prioritise movement by foot, bicycle and public transport, including linkages to create/contribute to a ‘walkable neighbourhood’;**
  - h) Design-out crime and create an environment for people to feel safe, and has a strong community focus;**
  - i) Protect the health and amenity of occupiers and surrounding uses by avoiding development that is overlooking, overbearing, results in a loss of daylight, and/or unacceptable levels of light pollution, noise, vibration, odour, emissions and dust, including any other amenity issues;**
  - j) Provide appropriate long-term design principles and measures in terms of privacy and adequate facilities such as bin storage (including recycling and re-use bins), secure cycle storage and garden space;**
  - k) Where appropriate demonstrate that the design considers the needs of disabled people and an ageing population and follow Dementia-Friendly Design principles<sup>35</sup>; and**
  - l) Provide at least 50% of dwellings which meet the requirements for accessible and adaptable dwellings under Part M4(2) of Building Regulations (or any relevant regulation that supersedes and replaces). Where site viability issues exist, proposals must be supported by a viability assessment which convincingly demonstrates what the maximum viable contribution for accessible and adaptable dwellings is.**

<sup>34</sup> Applicable for residential development as set out in the Government’s Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standards (as amended).

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/practice/2020/september/dementia-and-town-planning/>

- 3. All developments must also demonstrate that they have regard to the design principles set out through Suffolk Design, the Councils' Design Supplementary Planning Documents, design documents which support Neighbourhood Plans and/or village design statements. Development which fails to maintain and, wherever possible improve, the quality and character of the area will not be supported.**