

# ENCOURAGING GOOD DESIGN

## SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

APPROVED 13 MARCH 2001



MARCH 2001

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**



## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Redditch Borough Council is keen to encourage a high standard of design in new developments throughout the Borough. Local Plan No.2 provides the policy framework to achieve this and in particular Policies SI.1, SI.2, SI.4 and SI.5 in the Standards and Implementation Chapter outline the Council's desire to achieve development of a high design standard.

1.2 Policy SI.1 requires new development to be compatible with the character and appearance of the area and Policy SI.2 requires an appropriate level of landscaping to be provided. Policy SI.5 sets out requirements in respect of extensions to residential properties. Policy SI.4 specifically refers to the need to ensure that new developments are of a good design:

*"The Borough Council will encourage good design in both new residential development and in extensions to existing buildings. This is to facilitate privacy between neighbours, to provide reasonable amenity for occupiers and to prevent an overcrowded appearance."*

1.3 The Borough Council has produced this Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to provide detailed guidance on how a high standard of design could be achieved in new developments. This SPG has been produced in accordance with national guidance provided by Planning Policy Guidance No.12 "Development Plans" (January 2000) following a consultation exercise the details of which are set out in Appendix E of this document. A number of representations made valuable suggestions that improved the SPG and where possible these have been incorporated into the adopted version of the guidance. As a consequence of this, in accordance with Government advice, this guidance should be taken into account as a material consideration in the assessment of development proposals and considerable weight should be attached to it in the determination of planning applications and planning appeals.

### 1.4 Central Government Policy on Design

The Government places great emphasis on improving the standard of urban design. Guidance on this matter is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG1): General Policy and Principles, which states at paragraph 15:

*Good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and should be encouraged everywhere. Good design can help promote sustainable development; improve the quality of the existing environment; attract business and investment; and reinforce civic pride and a sense of place. It can help to secure continued public acceptance of necessary new development.*

Subsequent to this, Planning Policy Guidance No.3 "Housing" (March 2000) recommends that poorly designed housing schemes are refused.

### 1.5 Worcestershire Structure Plan

The Worcestershire County Structure Plan sets out the broad policy framework related to the built environment.

## 2. ENCOURAGING GOOD DESIGN

### 2.1 The Approach

The approach followed by the Borough Council involves setting out a number of guiding principles of good design and the mechanism by which development proposals may be assessed.

### 2.2 Key Design Principles

To provide applicants with a clear understanding of what the Borough Council considers as good design, five key design principles have been identified based on national guidance, such as 'By Design', and other best practice. The proposal should be able to demonstrate the following:

- **respect for the unique nature of the site** - residential developments should seek to maximise the retained features of the site.
- **a sense of place** - residential developments should seek to enhance the sense of place in their location by contributing to the character of their area and seek to improve the attractiveness of their location.
- **safety and security** - residential developments should maximise the amount of natural surveillance in their location and provide clear distinction between public and private space.
- **ease of movement and links to existing networks** - residential developments should seek to promote greater activity, and so increase the natural surveillance, in a location and seek to maximise the use of existing public transport, cycling and walking routes.
- **consideration of sustainability principles** - residential developments should seek to reduce the volume of resources consumed and should help to promote more sustainable lifestyles.

These design principles should not be viewed in isolation as there is a considerable amount of overlap in the issues they cover, and applicants should demonstrate how the principles have influenced the design of their scheme.

### 2.3 Design Statement

To enable the Council to assess how the principles identified in this SPG have been considered, applicants will be expected to submit a Design Statement demonstrating their approach and explaining how the principles have been achieved or justifying why they cannot be achieved. Annex A of PPG 1 "General Policy and Principles" sets out the requirement for Design Statements.

A Design Statement will be required for all sites of five or more dwellings. In some circumstances, the Council may require the submission of a Design Statement for sites of less than five dwellings, where design is considered to be a sensitive issue, such as in Conservation Areas. A leaflet will accompany all planning application forms, providing the applicant with guidance on how to prepare the Design Statement. The text for the leaflet is included as Appendix B to this document.

### 2.4 Spacing Standards

The SPG retains the principle of spacing standards. These are guidelines and give an indication of acceptable relationships between buildings with a view to achieve acceptable standards of amenity including privacy and an appropriate residential environment. The Council's Spacing Standards appear in Appendix C.

## 2.6 **A sense of place**

Sense of place is an important contributor to creating attractive locations for people to live. Consequently, the needs of people should be a priority. It is important to try to create places and spaces which are attractive, have their own distinctive identity but respect and enhance local character.

Applicants should attempt to identify the features that make a place distinctive or could help to make it distinctive, and then how the development can fit into that space and enhance its surroundings.

This assessment should consider the following:

- the existing framework of routes and spaces, how they connect locally and more widely, and the way developments, routes and open spaces relate to one another;
- the existing urban grain, the pattern of the arrangement of street blocks, plots and their buildings in a settlement;
- the existing character and appearance of land, including its shape, form, ecology, natural features, colours and elements, and the way these components combine;
- the existing scale of buildings, such as their height and mass, and how these relate to views, vistas and skylines;
- the role of local landmark buildings and spaces and how they interact with the site's location;
- the appearance of surrounding buildings, in design details such as decoration and lighting, and in use of materials;
- the mix and density of surrounding development and how these contribute to the vitality of the locality.

These factors provide the context for each development and by seeking to respect these through the design and layout of the development proposal it should be possible to successfully integrate the development into the existing urban fabric.

## 2.5 **Respect for the unique nature of the site**

The development site is the basic resource of all development and seeking to maximise the retained features of the site is an important factor in producing a uniquely designed development. An appraisal of the site and identification of those features and characteristics that are unique to the site is an important first stage in the preparation of the Design Statement.

The assessment should consider the following:

- utilising the site's topography;
  - seeking to retain or re-use existing buildings, structures or materials;
  - retaining and promoting current attractive features, such as trees, hedgerows and other landscape features;
  - accommodating existing wildlife habitats and species, particularly those identified as priorities in the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan, within the layout of the proposal or by using sympathetic construction techniques to safeguard protected species of wildlife;
  - maximising the relationship between the site and neighbouring buildings, spaces and features;
  - taking advantage of good access to the site where this exists by all modes of transport;
  - utilising the site's existing use of private, public and semi-public spaces;
- maximising the views from and of the development or by creating a frame for neighbouring sites.



The retention of natural features can enhance the appearance of a new development

## 2.7 Safety and Security

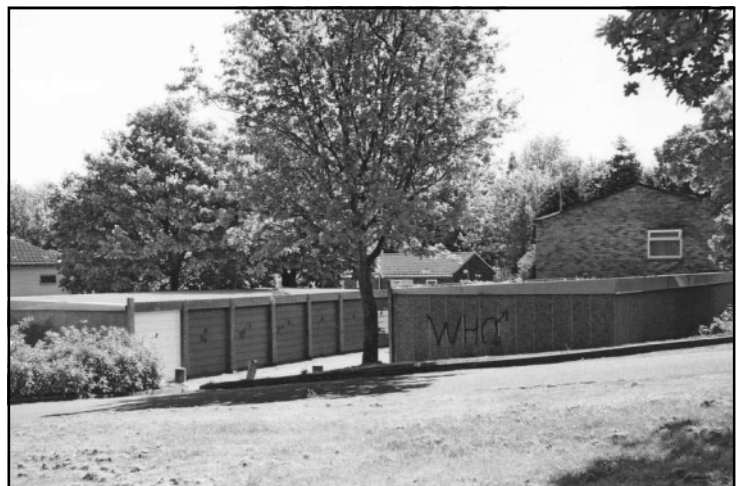
Local Planning Authorities are obliged by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to do all that they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in their area. The Borough Council supports the Secured by Design Scheme and the principles of natural surveillance and defensible space, and expects all applicants to meet those standards where possible.

The role of natural surveillance is paramount when dealing with development proposals as it reduces the potential for offender anonymity and thus reduces the likelihood of crimes being committed. This can be incorporated quite easily into a development scheme through a number of design features, such as:

- fronts of buildings should face the public realm at ground level, particularly rooms with a lot of activity such as living rooms and kitchens and avoiding garage and bin stores;
- corners should be built positively and should not provide 'dead' frontage;
- ensuring entrances to the property are overlooked by the property;
- ensuring car parking spaces are overlooked by the property.



Good natural surveillance of parked cars



Poor natural surveillance of garage court

In addition, Secured by Design identifies the importance of highlighting the difference between public space and private space, what is known as defensible space. This helps inform people of land they have a legitimate right to use and land that is privately owned, and complements the requirement set out in this SPG to design the proposal to link into its surroundings and to avoid what has been described as SLOAP (Space Left Over After Planning). This includes design features such as:

- the inclusion of a low front boundary wall / hedge at the boundary between public and private space;
- flatted developments should maximise front doors onto the street and ground floor flats should generally have separate entrances as this minimises the shared access space;
- the primary access to buildings should be from the public realm with well defined entrances at frequent intervals;
- the use of secure gates on alleyways that provide access to the rear of properties;
- designing housing layouts so backs face backs (private space to private space);
- a change in road surface material.

Further advice can be sought from the West Mercia Constabulary Crime Risk Manager, Development Control Officers or from the good practice guides listed later in this SPG.



Entrance features reinforce a sense of privacy

## 2.8 Ease of movement and links to existing networks

Ensuring that new housing developments promote ease of movement is a key element to creating successful locations that have a sense of place. Streets are more than just channels for vehicular traffic and should promote a safe and attractive environment for all. Well designed streets encourage people to use them, and make going outside a safe and pleasant experience.

In addition, a network of well-connected streets can provide:

- shorter routes between places thereby encouraging more people to walk or cycle, particularly to facilities such as schools, shops and parks, thus promoting healthier lifestyles;
- increased public transport use by making bus stops more accessible and convenient;
- greater choice of routes for pedestrians and cyclists, and allow them to find a natural shortest route to their destination;
- greater viability to commercial uses which can generate more passing trade;
- increased natural surveillance creating a more safe and secure environment;
- greater flexibility to accommodate future change.

Increased access may cause concerns over the potential increased volume of vehicular traffic but development proposals can avoid this by designing the street to take into account the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. This can be achieved by:

- designing developments with regard to their effect on traffic speeds and looking to manage traffic speeds by the arrangement of buildings and spaces;
- ensuring that physical traffic calming measures are considered as an integral part of the design;
- changes in materials or 'gateways' at the entrance to low speed areas to alert motorists to the need to reduce speed;
- introducing smaller corner radii to encourage more careful vehicle movement;
- using short culs-de-sac off a series of well-connected streets to provide areas for children to play away from the main traffic flow;
- increasing the natural surveillance of pedestrian routes, ensuring good lighting is used and that routes are effectively managed and maintained.



Physical traffic calming measures are part of original design



## 2.9 Sustainability Principles

The principles of sustainable development have been incorporated into the planning system by successive British governments, and sustainability is now the central element to national planning policy.

The majority of land within a settlement is taken up by housing. Therefore, if sustainable development principles are to be fully embraced, new residential developments should incorporate sustainability as early in the design process as possible. Four ways in which new developments can be made more sustainable are:

- by reducing car borne travel;
- by promoting mixed-use development;
- by making better use of land;
- by employing more sustainable design and construction techniques.

### Reducing Car-Borne Travel

A principal aim of sustainable development is to reduce the amount of energy consumed in transporting people, whether it be to work or school or to the shops. Historically, modern suburban housing developments have tended to increase car-borne travel by being located increasingly further from existing facilities.

To achieve more sustainable patterns of development, residential uses will need to be located closer to local facilities and employment opportunities, good public transport corridors, attractive and safe pedestrian and cycle routes or make provision for new transport modes where none exist.



Government guidance (PPG 3 and draft PPG 13) and the Development Strategy of the Worcestershire Structure Plan requires these principles to be adopted in new development. One of the likely consequences of this modal shift is that less land will be required on new residential developments to accommodate cars.

### Promoting Mixed-Use Development

Mixed-use developments can enhance the character of an area through the introduction of a variety of land-uses. Conversion of vacant upper floors above shops and offices to residential use is a good way of making more efficient use of space and where appropriate, e.g. in district or town centres or where good links to public transport networks exist, parking standards may be relaxed.

### Making Better Use Of Land

Modern suburban housing developments have largely been built at low densities and thus have been relatively profligate at consuming land. Making more efficient use of land, i.e. building at higher densities is more sustainable.

Government guidance states that Local Planning Authorities should be looking to secure residential developments at densities between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare net, with greater intensity of development at places with good public transport accessibility, such as town, district and local centres or around major nodes along good quality public transport corridors.

The Proposed Modifications to the Deposit Draft Structure Plan Policy D10 recommends that in order to make efficient use of land, district planning authorities will be expected to discourage low density housing development, of less than 30 dwellings per hectare net, unless there are local circumstances which indicate otherwise. Sites within or adjacent to urban areas or rural settlements should be developed at densities of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare net. Within town and local centres where there is good public transport accessibility and around major nodes along good quality public transport corridors, densities of about 70 dwellings per hectare net should be achieved.

Seeking to achieve higher densities also requires a review of the standards that are applied to new development, particularly with regard to roads, layouts and car parking, as recognised in PPG 3. The Borough Council's spacing standards are set out in Appendix C. However, as is also set out in PPG 3, in seeking to achieve the objective of making more efficient use of land this should not be at the expense of compromising the quality of the environment.

### More Sustainable Design And Construction Techniques

The recent Construction Task Force identified in its report, 'Rethinking Construction', the measures necessary to continue the ingenuity and design flair shown by the construction industry over many years and to achieve a highly successful and sustainable industry. Following this work, the Government produced 'Building a Better Quality of Life - A Strategy for more Sustainable Construction' which will guide its policies towards construction.

This Strategy identifies a number of practical actions that the Construction Industry can do to achieve more sustainable development. These are:

Re-use existing built assets - *consider refurbishment and / or renovation to meet a clients' functional requirements.*

Design for minimum waste - *both during construction and from the useful life - and afterlife - of the building by involving the supply chain and using recycled materials.*

Minimise energy in construction - *promote the use of local resources or suppliers.*

Minimise energy in use - *consider more energy efficient solutions in design including passive systems using natural light, air movement and thermal mass, as well as solutions involving energy produced from renewable sources.*

Preserve and enhance biodiversity - *look for opportunities throughout the construction process - from the extraction of raw materials, through the construction phase, to the landscaping of schemes - to provide and protect habitats and species.*

Conserve water resources - *design for increased water efficiency in building services and water conservation within the built environment.*

The more sustainable forms of housing development that can be achieved following these actions are best practice and cannot all be statutorily required. However, it is the Borough Council's aim to encourage good design and the Council will seek to promote good examples that come forward.

### 3. CONSERVATION AREAS

#### 3.1 Background

Conservation Areas are designated by the Local Planning Authority. They are areas of special architectural or historic interest and under the provisions of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 there is a requirement to pay special attention, in the exercise of planning functions, to the desirability of preserving or enhancing their character or appearance.

#### 3.2 Feckenham Conservation Area

##### Character

The village of Feckenham still retains much of its original character. Feckenham was designated as a Conservation Area in 1969 and the Conservation Area was extended in 1995. Given its special character, the Borough Council will require a Design Statement for all new-build residential proposals within the Conservation Area boundary.



High Street, Feckenham

Development in Feckenham is likely to be limited but where residential development is proposed, the proposal will be required to pay much greater attention to the detail of the existing character to avoid unsympathetic development, and some detail on the existing character of Feckenham is provided below.

##### General layout

In the High Street, buildings of small domestic scale are casually grouped together, interspersed with large houses of the Georgian period. Around the Square, cottages enclose a village green shaded by mature trees, whilst development along the Droitwich Road, the old Saltway, reflects the old settlement pattern of ribbon development spreading out from the road junction. A unifying feature of the parts of the village is the distant views and glimpses of the church.

##### Form and massing

There is a wide variety of building forms in the village. In the centre, terraces of irregular form predominate. Within these terraces can be found cottages of one and a half, two or even three storeys, sometimes terminating in a much larger house. There are shorter terraces of timber framed or part-timber framed cottages, which generally are of no more than one and a half storeys. Interspersed are larger more formal houses of three storeys, often link-detached by miscellaneous outbuildings. Towards the edges of the village (where one assumes land was not at such a premium), are detached double fronted houses, many quite low and cottage-like in proportion.

Most buildings feature wings or outbuildings of irregular form which have evolved over the centuries. Generally these are single storey, however to the rear of High Street these can be two, even three storeys. Several former agricultural buildings had in the past been converted for industrial uses, however there has been a tendency in recent years for these to be converted to dwellings. The lack of backland development is intriguing; most development of this type has taken place in recent years.

A particular feature in Feckenham are the one and a half storey cottages. These invariably use gabled dormer windows above eaves level to light the first floor. The dormers themselves are generally small, reflecting the size of the opening below, with clay tiled roofs and lead or rendered cheeks. Many do not have separate gutters and the absence of lead flashings is quite common.

Chimneys projecting from end gable walls of one and a half storey cottages were so located to minimise the risk of igniting thatched roofs, however as tile and brick construction became the norm chimneys were often centrally located. Not only was this more economic, but the chimney itself was better protected from the weather. The older houses feature very substantial projecting brick stacks reflecting the wide, open fireplaces used for cooking. On the later Georgian and Victorian buildings their size is considerably reduced - a result of the development of cooking ranges and register grates.

### Materials

Buildings of red brick predominate, although many, especially those with partial timber framing, have been painted white. The local brick is generally a hand made stock in varying shades of warm red. These shades are generally well-mixed so the distribution of bricks within a particular elevation can be quite even, although the shades vary from dark red-brown to a pale yellow-orange.

Where the local sandstone is used this is generally for decoration, in the quoins or in dressings around windows and doors. Considerable use was made in the past of sandstone for plinths for timber framed buildings, and in foundations for the Georgian buildings.

The timber framed houses would have originally been thatched, however this has been superseded by plain clay tiles of mellow red. Clay tiles were in general use throughout the eighteenth century, however the Welsh slate was introduced during the first half of the nineteenth century.

## **3.3 Church Green Conservation Area**

Church Green which is within Redditch town centre was originally designated as a Conservation Area in 1971 and extended in 1978. Given its special character the Borough Council will require a Design Statement for all new-build residential proposals within the Conservation Area boundary.

Opportunities for new development in the Church Green Conservation Area are likely to be extremely limited, but if such a proposal does come forward, the development will have to pay attention to the detail of the existing character of the Church Green Conservation Area.

### General Layout and Character

The Conservation Area covers a triangular green around the church of St. Stephen and incorporates adjacent building frontages on Church Green East. The character of the area is predominantly Victorian. This is evident from the architectural styles of the buildings and the Listed fountain and bandstand on the green. Most of the buildings were constructed in the mid eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Church Green East, Market Place and Alcester Street are pedestrianised areas where there are strong pedestrian flows. However, Church Green West is used by vehicular traffic and can be quite busy at times.

Church Green East is characterised by financial and service uses such as banks and estate agents. Church Green West and Market Place have a mix of retail and service uses.

## 4. EXTENSIONS TO DWELLINGHOUSES

4.1 Achieving a high standard of design is particularly important when considering extensions to existing properties as the appearance of a building can be altered significantly by an insensitive addition to its form. For this reason Local Plan Policy SI.4 also extends the commitment to encouraging good design to extensions to existing buildings.

### 4.2 Scale and Design of Extensions

Successful extensions to buildings are normally those that reflect the proportion and harmony of the existing building. To achieve this the extension should normally be of a smaller and less significant scale than the main building as over-large extensions can unbalance the proportion and harmony of the building and may even have a detrimental affect on the street scene.

When designing any extension to a building, there are a number of practical steps that can be followed to ensure that the extension contributes to the overall character and harmony of the building:

- Keep width, height and bulk in proportion to the existing property, thus avoiding making the extension the central feature of the building, particularly in relation to garages;
- It is often advisable to set the extension back from the front wall of the existing house. This allows the joint between the new and old to be disguised. On symmetrically detached or semi-detached houses, it also preserves the original symmetry of the property and allows a better appreciation of the character of the house;
- Use a pitched roof similar to that of the existing property, particularly where a two storey extension is proposed. This contributes to the harmony of the building and avoids the long term maintenance problems associated with flat roofs;
- Align windows / doors and other details such as sills and lintels with the existing building, and ensure that these features are of a similar or matching design and size. This ensures that the harmony of the building is not disrupted;
- Use matching bricks, roof tiles or other facing materials. This again ensures that the extension will complement the existing building and not detract from its appearance;

Avoid dormer windows that are deeper than half the depth of the roof slope, and ensure that they have square proportions or a vertical emphasis.



A two storey side extension which is in keeping with the design of the original house

### 4.3 Overshadowing

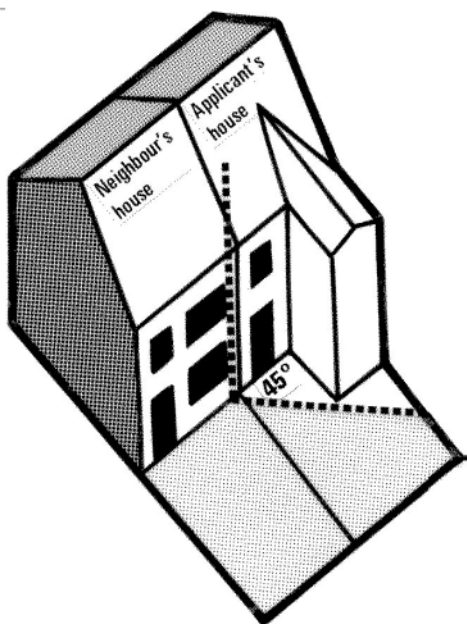
A principal concern for officers when assessing a proposed extension is the potential for overshadowing of an overbearing impact upon neighbouring properties, and the Borough Council's spacing standards, as set out in Appendix C, include guidelines to help avoid these problems.

#### The 45 and 60 degree rules

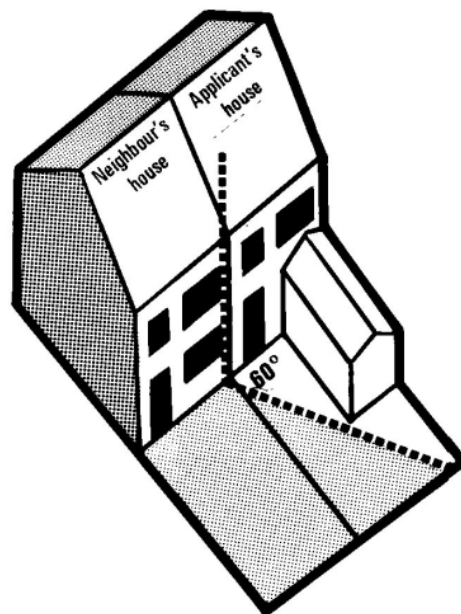
While all development proposals still have to be assessed on their individual merits the 45 degree and 60 degree rules complement the guidance on scale of extensions and aim to avoid the problem of overshadowing and loss of outlook that can occur from over-large extensions. The 45 degree rule is applied to extensions of two or more storeys, while the 60 degree rule applies to single storey extensions. Extensions of two or more storeys are subject to a more acute angle due to their greater potential for overshadowing caused by their increased height. In both cases, orientation of properties is critical when assessing overshadowing.

They are best shown by the following diagrams.

#### Two Storey Extension



#### Single Storey Extension



## APPENDIX A

### EXTRACT FROM THE BOROUGH OF REDDITCH LOCAL PLAN NO. 2

**Policy SI.4            The Borough Council will encourage good design in both new residential development and in extensions to existing buildings. This is to facilitate privacy between neighbours, to provide reasonable amenity for occupiers and to prevent an overcrowded appearance.**

As a means of encouraging good design and in the interests therefore of privacy and amenity and to prevent an overcrowded appearance, the Borough Council has formulated spacing standards. Adherence to these standards is to be encouraged but the standards are not to be applied rigidly as the Borough Council recognises that some designs which fail to meet these standards may sometimes be capable of achieving satisfactory living conditions. The Borough Council's standards are Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The range of possible factors in development is immense and therefore it is inappropriate to justify the imposition of absolutely rigid standards on proposals for the design and layout of residential areas. However firm, but not totally rigid, standards are useful in avoiding problems of noise, overlooking and lack of general privacy in residential areas. This is because some designs which fail to achieve appropriate standards are often vulnerable to the effects of disruptive lifestyles on the part of one or more households and to the exercise of ordinary rights of permitted development.

It is important that the spacing standards detailed within the Supplementary Planning Guidance should not be interpreted as a substitute for the thorough, careful and imaginative design of new residential areas. In addition therefore to the consideration of standards, applicants should consider other aspects of estate planning such as character, harmonious design, respect for site features, the creation of enclosures and the deterrence of crime. Nevertheless, these standards are viewed as useful in encouraging successful design and will be applied in many circumstances. The presence of large trees or significant slopes may require more spacious layouts to retain usable garden areas, to reduce the potential for overlooking or in some other way to avoid injury to the amenity of residents or neighbours. The extension of individual dwellings will be expected to retain, as appropriate, these spacings in the interests of amenity and the appearance of an area.

## **DESIGN STATEMENT**

### **What should a Design Statement do?**

A Design Statement is a method by which applicants / agents should be able to show how they have taken into account good design in their development proposals.

This should include the relationship between buildings and the streets and spaces around them and squares, parks, waterways and other spaces. It should demonstrate how the proposal has addressed the principles of good design set out in the Borough Council's Encouraging Good Design Supplementary Planning Guidance, such as how the proposal fits the context of the site, how it relates to its immediate surroundings and, if appropriate, to wider parts of the borough.

Design statements are a requirement of Planning Policy Guidance Note no. 1 - General Policy and Principles and you may wish to refer to this for further background advice.

### **How will a Design Statement help?**

It will help the Planning Authority, Members, neighbours, the public and yourself to:

- understand fully your proposals and the principles of the design;
- consider the proposals against the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance;
- consider the proposal against design objectives in Planning Policy Guidance Note no. 1 from which the Design Statement requirement comes.

Your proposal may be refused if it is not accompanied by a Design Statement.

### **What do I need to do?**

There are three essential steps to produce a Statement and these are:

1. site analysis
2. identifying design principles
3. creating design solutions



## Step 1 - Site Analysis and Evaluation

This is a brief study of the site's environment, usually drawing based and including a short written statement, that highlights the site's context and identifies those features that make the site unique, such as:

- the site's topography;
- existing hedgerows or other features that contribute to the sites biodiversity;
- its relation to surrounding buildings and open space;
- its relation to public transport, cycle and pedestrian links;
- local building styles and street patterns;
- important views and frontages and visual links to the site's surroundings.

This can only be done by an examination of the site and its surroundings and cannot be done as a desktop exercise.

## Step 2 - Identifying the Design Principles

The key design principles are set out in the Borough Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance and should be incorporated into this section. However, you will need to demonstrate how these principles have influenced your design as just listing them will not be enough.

The influence of the design principles should clearly relate to the site analysis and evaluation findings, so where a feature would contribute to the sense of place of the site's location or would help provide a more attractive or sustainable location to live, then it should be highlighted in this section. In more complex proposals design principles may include the retention of important public views, mass and scale of buildings should be similar to those in the street or conversely a new building ought to create a strong feature because of the site's relationship to neighbouring buildings. Important trees may need to be kept or the buildings may need to face a particular way or be in specific positions to form acceptable relationships with surrounding properties.

## Step 3 - Creating the Design Solution

The third stage is to produce the design solution. There may of course be several design options and you are encouraged to discuss these with a Planning Officer prior to submitting your planning application.

The important factor is that the design solution should incorporate the design principles which in turn can be justified against the site analysis and evaluation. The Design Statement should not simply seek to defend a design solution; without proper site analysis and design principles the design is likely to be flawed. Explaining the Design Solution will usually be drawing based supported by notes or a written statement.

This may sound like a lot of work but applicants and agents are going through these thought processes already before making applications. The only change is that they have not previously been explained as part of the application submission. Yes, there is some additional work to present these ideas and thoughts, but it can be done simply and will lead to improvement to the design and appearance of a development which will not only add value to the site's economic value but also the enjoyment and quality of life of end users.

## **So what will a Design Statement look like?**

There are no set rules or ways of presenting a Design Statement and the level of appropriate detail will vary between applications.

It is likely to be drawing based and may include annotation or a short written statement to help illustrate the point. Drawings and plans do not need to be precise at this stage and simple schematic sketches, or notes and illustrations on plans can be most effective to explain even the most complex of sites and proposals. However, drawings and plans should be able to clearly demonstrate the point being made.

Photographs of the site and its surroundings are also helpful, and the Statement should relate to the wider context of the site and not just the site itself.

## **Where do I get help?**

Planning Officers are willing to advise you on Design Statements and what might be needed for your proposal. This is best done before you make a planning application.

In order for Officers to help you, you will need to have already done an analysis of the site. Officers will be able to advise you of the principles of good design identified in the 'Encouraging Good Design' Supplementary Planning Guidance, or you can view or purchase a copy by visiting the Town Hall Main Reception. It is usually better to contact your Planning Officer to arrange a meeting if you want to discuss your proposal in relation to the contents of the 'Encouraging Good Design' Supplementary Planning Guidance.

You can contact Planning Officers at:

Development Control Section  
Redditch Borough Council  
Town Hall,  
Alcester Street,  
Redditch  
Worcs.  
B98 8AH

Telephone Direct Line: 01527 534062

## APPENDIX C

### THE BOROUGH COUNCIL'S SPACING STANDARDS

The Council will seek compliance with the following spacing standards unless it has been demonstrated in a Design Statement that the character of the area or the quality / contribution of the scheme to other issues justifies an exception being made:

1. 22m between rear dwelling windows that directly face each other. (Although this distance can be reduced if houses are offset from each other it should be noted that all applications will still all have to be assessed on their individual merits and in certain circumstances, for example, where changes in level occur a greater separation may be required).
2. A usable rear garden (not in canopy of trees, usable gradient, etc.) of 11m in length or an area of 70m<sup>2</sup> where not achieving this length unless adjacent garden areas are not to this standard where the equivalent distance as other properties in locality should be used.
3. A minimum separation of 1m between the plot boundary and each semi-detached or detached dwellings to enable adequate spacing and access.
4. Extensions to existing properties, of two or more storeys, will not normally be acceptable where the extension is built beyond a line drawn at 45 degrees horizontally from the nearest part of any main window of a habitable room in any adjoining property. Single storey extensions to existing properties will not normally be acceptable where the extension is built beyond a line drawn at 60 degrees horizontally from the nearest part of any main window of a habitable room in any adjoining property. In both cases, however, other factors such as the orientation of properties is also critical when assessing overshadowing and it should be noted that all proposals will still have to be assessed on their individual merits.
5. 35m<sup>2</sup> of communal amenity space for flats
6. Balconies will only be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that the privacy of adjacent residents can be safeguarded by ensuring that there is no direct overlooking of windows or, at close quarters, the rear gardens of adjacent dwellings.

The Council will expect developments to show how they have sought to accommodate these spacing standards as part of the Design Statement unless adequate reasons in terms of material considerations are provided. Failure to do so may lead to the proposal being refused if the scheme is judged to be not acceptable.

The Borough Council encourages pre-application discussions with the relevant development control officer to discuss the content of this document at an early stage to avoid delays in dealing with your application. To arrange a pre-application discussion please refer to the contact list on page 17.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

### Borough Council Policy

Redditch Borough Council (1996)  
***Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 2***  
 Redditch Borough Council

### Government Guidance

DoE (1997)  
***PPG 1 - General Policy and Principles***  
 HMSO

DETR (2000)  
***By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System: toward better practice***  
 Thomas Telford Publishing

DETR (2000)  
***PPG 3 - Housing***  
 HMSO

DETR (2000)  
***PPG 12 - Development Plans***  
 HMSO

DETR (1999)  
***PPG 13 - Transport (draft)***  
 HMSO

DoE (1994)  
***PPG 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment***  
 HMSO

DETR (2000)  
***Building a Better Quality of Life - A Strategy for more Sustainable Construction***  
 HMSO

DoE/DoT (1992)  
***Design Bulletin 32 - Residential Roads and Footpaths: Layout Considerations***  
 HMSO

DETR (1998)  
***Places, Streets and Movement - A companion guide to Design Bulletin 32 - Residential Roads and Footpaths***  
 HMSO

DETR (1998)  
***Planning for the Communities of the Future***  
HMSO

DETR(1998)  
***The Use of Density in Urban Planning***  
HMSO

### **Other Useful References**

Urban Task Force (1999)  
***Towards an Urban Renaissance - Final Report of the Urban Task Force***  
E & FN Spon

DETR (1998)  
***Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice***  
HMSO

BRESCU (1997)  
***Planning for Passive Solar Design***  
BRE

West Mercia Constabulary (1999)  
***The Secured by Design Award Scheme*** - [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)  
ACPO Crime Prevention Initiatives Limited

**STATEMENT OF THE CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN AS PART OF THE PREPARATION OF THIS SPG**

On 26th September 2000, the Planning and Transportation Committee considered a report which recommended that the existing SPG on Residential Design be reviewed to reflect recent Government guidance and to meet its obligations under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and approved draft Supplementary Planning Guidance on Good Design for the purposes of public consultation.

The consultation period commenced on 11th December 2000 and lasted until 26th January 2001. An advertisement was placed in the Redditch Advertiser and a press release was issued detailing where the SPG was available for inspection.

Further to this, copies of the draft SPG were sent to Feckenham Parish Council, the House Builders' Federation (HBF) and a number of interested organisations and bodies. A total of eight representations were received and these were discussed in a committee report presented to the Planning and Transportation Committee of the Borough Council on 13 March 2001 (ref P.501). A number of the representations made valuable suggestions that improved the SPG and these were incorporated into the adopted version of the guidance. However, this was not the case with all representations and the committee report set out for Members the reasons for not incorporating all the suggested modifications.



**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL  
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE  
ENCOURAGING GOOD DESIGN**

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