16   Design

16.1   Introduction

16.1.1   The importance of good design in securing high quality development is widely recognised. Design is not just about visual appearance and function: it is about a whole range of social, economic and environmental considerations, which together are a major contributor to quality of life.

16.1.2   One of the objectives of this Plan is to raise the standards and quality of the layout and design of new development. The District Council is strongly committed to promoting good design in new developments and to improving the quality of public spaces. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and can contribute positively to making places better for people. The way in which places and the buildings within them are designed is fundamental not only to creating environments that communities value, but also to ensuring that the use of resources and the environmental impact of new development is reduced.

16.1.3   Good design can encourage healthy lifestyles by encouraging movement on foot and by bicycle. It can also enhance local distinctiveness, promote the vitality of the local economy, facilitate community cohesion by enabling social interaction in secure public spaces and incorporate multi-functional Green Infrastructure networks. In summary, good design can contribute towards creating attractive and safe places where people want to live, work, and visit.

16.2   Design Objectives

16.2.1   To achieve high quality design, there are several intrinsic sustainable development objectives that should be understood by applicants to inform the design of new development. These are to:

1.   Respect, improve and enhance the existing surrounding environment;

2. Respond to existing patterns of development and the local context;

3. Be attractive in appearance but receptive to original design and innovation in construction techniques, design and technologies;

4. Be usable, in terms of accessibility, legibility and be well-connected;

5. Be adaptable and flexible to the needs of the occupiers now and in the future;

6. Be socially inclusive, catering for the current and changing needs of the district's population;

7. Discourage crime and anti-social behaviour;

8. Encourage health and well-being;

9. Incorporate measures to mitigate and adapt against the effects of climate change; and

10. Incorporate water, planting and landscaping into the overall design, including through the creation of adequate private amenity space.

16.3 Sustainable Design

16.3.1   There are many industry examples, toolkits, guidance documents and best practice available that provide sources of information on how to design developments in the most sustainable way.

16.3.2   Building Futures is a Hertfordshire guide to promoting sustainability in development. It includes an interactive Sustainable Design Toolkit, which contains design guidance for six different types of development ranging from householder extensions through to large and mixed-use development:

1. Household extension

2. New dwellings

3. Multi-residential (e.g. care homes)

4. Education & Health

5. Commercial & Industrial

6. Large & Mixed-use

16.3.3   The Toolkit has been created to help those who prepare and assess development proposals in Hertfordshire to better understand the principles of sustainable design and consider how best they can be applied to a specific scheme and site. Using a virtual townscape, the Toolkit aims to provoke thought and inform decisions on the design and build of new development schemes in Hertfordshire. It does this by providing a simple framework of questions, best practice guidance and further information on sustainable design. The questions, guidance and information have been tailored to the six broad types of development to ensure the Toolkit is proportionate and reflects the issues and opportunities typically faced by different types of development.

16.3.4   Users of the Toolkit can choose one of the six development types to navigate a wealth of sustainable design guidance on issues such as climate change, water, materials and safety. It should be noted that some of these measures exceed those required by Building Regulations. As Building Regulations also change over time as standards and technology improves, applicants should therefore seek to employ the best available approach to sustainable design and technology.

Building Futures is an interactive Website which can be viewed at: www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures

16.3.5   Building for Life 12 is a nationally recognised scheme for appraising the overall design of development. The appraisal consists of 12 questions. A well designed scheme will perform well against all 12 of the questions and the performance will be determined using a traffic light system

of green, amber and red. The questions are available for use by anyone who has an interest in new homes and neighbourhoods; from developers to community groups to local authorities. Developers achieving 12 green lights within the appraisal can apply for 'Built for Life' accreditation which can be used to market the site.

16.3.6   Appraisals should ideally be undertaken throughout all stages of the development process, guiding design related discussions with the local community, local authority and other stakeholders. Through this process, all parties should understand what needs to be done in local circumstances to achieve as many 'green' lights as possible, minimise 'ambers' and avoid 'reds'. Any 'ambers' and 'reds' should be identified early so that a suitable design solution can be found where possible.

> Building for Life guidance can be viewed at: www.designcouncil.org.uk

16.4   Planning Applications

16.4.1   The District Council expects a high standard of design in new development. To achieve this, applicants should ensure:

1. A comprehensive design process has been carried out including: a site and context appraisal and assessment of relevant policies; involvement with the local community; and the design of the development scheme based on assessment, involvement, and evaluation of information collected;

2. That in the design of the scheme there should be clear evidence that design principles based on the sustainable development objectives set out above have been followed, understood and integrated within the constraints of the development proposal. It is essential that skilled architects are involved in the early stages of any development proposal, to ensure that the potential of any site can be maximised;

3. That where necessary, a Design and Access Statement has been completed and accompanies the application. The statement should make it clear how the proposal has integrated sustainable design principles into the scheme. Applicants will be encouraged to use the Building Futures Sustainable Design Toolkit and Building for Life 12 questions within their Design and Access Statements.

16.5 Design Codes

16.5.1 A Design Code is a set of specific rules or requirements to guide the physical development of a site or place. The aim of design coding is to provide clarity as to what constitutes acceptable design quality and thereby a level of certainty for developers and the local community alike that can help to accelerate the delivery of good quality new development.

16.5.2 The District Council will consider using Design Codes where they will help to deliver high quality outcomes on particular sites/areas.

16.6 Design Reviews

16.6.1 The publication of the NPPF has re-iterated and reinforced the role of Design Reviews. Where appropriate the District Council will ensure that local design review arrangements are in place to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design.

16.6.2 The new Hertfordshire Design Review Panel, funded by Hertfordshire County Council, has been set up to help planners, developers and designers realise the full potential of development schemes. It is a new addition to the Building Futures initiative and provides a resource to support the delivery of high quality, sustainable design for those bringing forward development proposals.

16.6.3 The majority of schemes brought forward for review would be at the pre-application stage, i.e. at the early design stage. They would normally be major schemes as defined by their scale and nature, or which have a significant impact

on the character of Hertfordshire's landscape, settlements and built form. Schemes submitted for review may include proposals for new housing, commercial development, infrastructure or community facilities (e.g. schools) as well as public realm and open space enhancement schemes.

16.7   Local Character and Amenity

16.7.1   Many features contribute to East Hertfordshire's character, including its historic environment, the landscape and the pattern of towns and villages, rivers and open spaces. This context makes the district a very attractive and desirable place to live.

16.7.2   Buildings and landscapes that demonstrate a distinct character and are aesthetically pleasing, contribute greatly to the success of a place. Many modern development schemes (especially schemes involving a number of dwellings) can be bland and generic. However, if a development scheme is based on a sensitive understanding of site and context, it can exhibit a distinct character and identity while also belonging to the wider locality. For example, development in proximity to water spaces should respond to and incorporate the water space in the design to add to the character of development. Therefore successful development should respond to locally distinctive patterns of development, building methods and detailing, landscape and history.

16.7.3   If development is to be successfully integrated within the existing environment then scale is an important design element. When designing to the local character of building forms, patterns of development and the natural environment, the scale of new development should:

1. Avoid obscuring important views, vistas and skylines;

2. Ensure the height and massing does not interrupt the rhythm of an existing building/roof line and overall streetscape, or detract from the local and wider area's character;

3. Respect the existing scale in the detailing and composition of elements such as windows, doors etc; and

4. Have regard for the principal users of development schemes so that buildings and infrastructure are scaled for their maximum benefit and enhance their experience of the space.

16.7.4   Taller buildings are often more suited to key locations such as on corners, along principal routes, the end of vistas or around parks.

16.7.5   The layout, form, building details and massing of a development will have a great impact on a locality, and the opportunity to enhance, add variety and local distinctiveness. Layouts should observe good urban design principles, with a clear sense of public and private frontages and buildings, positively addressing public routes within and around a site. The layout and alignment of built form, plots and blocks should respect and be well integrated within the grain of the wider townscape.

Major Developments

16.7.6   Proposals for major development should include attractive gateway features, focal points, landmarks and vistas; should include a variation in density to reflect different parts of the site, with higher densities along major internal routes, at gateways, and around local centres, and lower densities elsewhere, as appropriate; and should incorporate distinct character areas linked by well-defined points of transition to encourage movement through the site.

16.7.7   Such large scale proposals should be designed using a comprehensive master planning approach to the whole site within its immediate and wider context, rather than following landownership parcels.

16.7.8   It is also important that layouts are configured in such a way that they are easy to understand, are well-connected,

inclusive, feel safe, and have clearly defined public and private spaces.

Public Realm and Inclusive Design

16.7.9 Public realm refers to all publicly accessible open spaces and public and civic building facilities, publicly owned streets, pathways, water spaces, rights of way and parks. For places to work and foster sustainable communities it is important that the public realm is of a high quality, feels safe, is inclusive to all social groups, and is adaptable to the changing needs of the community. This is achievable through:

1. Careful design that prioritises and promotes walking

1.2. Design that encourages cycling, including through the provision of safe and secure cycle storage;

2.3. The quality and materials of the hard landscaping (paving, kerbs, walls etc);

3.4. Uncluttered and simplified street furniture, which includes the provision of clear and legible signage where necessary, EV charging points and recycling facilities;

4.5. Planting (trees, grassed areas, flowers);

5.6. Green space for being retained, enhanced and integrated into the design of a development scheme, including the creation of space for local food production or community gardens. ThisIt will reinforce the quality and character of a place, increase biodiversity and deliver a wide range of environmental and health and wellbeing benefits as well as foster a sense of community;

6.7. Lighting being integral to the design and not added at the end. Lighting schemes should be designed to prevent light pollution;

7.8. Incorporating inclusive design features that benefit everyone in the community e.g. play areas, Wi-Fi technology; and

8.9.   Public amenity space which is of a high standard and an adequate size for the development and needs of the community. Private and public space should be considered in the process of designing buildings and places. This prevents non-specific, unused and anti-social spaces being created.

16.7.10   The built environment should promote independent lifestyles particularly for those with restricted mobility, such as the elderly and the disabled, and also for those with young children. 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods' is an established concept to build inclusive communities, ensuring that age or disability does not prevent people from accessing basic amenities, green and open spaces, cultural facilities, places to meet and relax, and local shops and services. The layout and function of the public realm, including the provision of facilities such as toilets for public use and seating should be consciously planned into proposals at the outset.

16.7.11   'Lifetime Homes' are ordinary homes designed to add to the comfort and convenience of the home and supports the changing needs of individuals and families at different stages of life. Lifetime Homes are all about flexibility and adaptability; they are thoughtfully designed to create and encourage better living environments for everyone, enabling occupants to adapt their property according to their needs such as from raising small children to coping with illness or dealing with reduced mobility in later life. This enables occupants to stay within their home for longer and to maintain an independent lifestyle. Residential development should be built to achieve Lifetime Homes standards in accordance with Policy HOU1 (Type and Mix of Housing) and Policy HOU6 (Housing for Older and Vulnerable People). Decent room sizes will be expected in all residential developments, ensuring that the intended functions of each room can be satisfactorily achieved.

Innovation

16.7.12 Innovation can be incorporated into development schemes via building construction methods, building materials, and the use of new technologies (e.g. solar panels and passive ventilation). Innovation can be an important design element if it raises the standard of a development scheme by enhancing its performance, quality and aesthetics, resulting in its desirability, longevity and status. Innovation does not have to be limited to one-off developments or modern districts. If sensitive and intelligent design is utilised, new and old can co-exist without disguising one as the other.

16.7.13 The Council wishes to encourage good design without stifling innovation, originality or initiative. Permission will be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

Small-scale Developments

16.7.14 Many developments that occur are of a small scale, often extensions to existing properties or the replacement of single dwellings. It is important that the character of the locality and the potential amenity impacts of these smaller developments respect the local character and do not significantly detract from the amenities of any neighbouring property by shadowing, loss of privacy, or similar.

Policy DES1 Local Character and Amenity

I. All development proposals, including extensions to existing buildings, must be of a high standard of design and layout to reflect and promote local distinctiveness. Proposals will be expected to:

(a) Make the best possible use of the available land by respecting or improving upon the character of the site and the surrounding area, in terms of its scale, height, massing (volume, shape), orientation, siting, layout, density, building materials (colour, texture), landscaping, environmental assets, and design features, having due regard to the design opportunities and constraints of a site;

(b) Incorporate homes, buildings and neighbourhoods that are flexible to future adaptation, including the changing needs of occupants and users, and changes in wider employment and social trends;

(c) Avoid significant detrimental impacts on the amenities of neighbouring properties and land;

(d) Embrace high quality innovative design, new technologies and construction techniques, including zero or low carbon energy and water efficient, design and sustainable construction methods;

(e) Make provision for the storage of bins and ancillary household equipment. Garages and driveways should be capable of accommodating family sized vehicles;

(f) Ensure all internal rooms are of an appropriate size and dimension so that the intended function of each room can be satisfactorily achieved. All dwellings shall be identified by their square metreage.

II. Proposals must not prejudice the development opportunities of surrounding sites.

III. Development proposals which create new or have a significant impact on the public realm should:

(a) Maximise legibility and accessibility of the public realm through the layout of buildings, landmarks, use of colour, landscaping, paving, high quality public art, street furniture and infrastructure including clear and legible signposting, rest places and public toilets, in a way that maintains uncluttered spaces and enables easy navigation and movement through the space;

(b) Maximise opportunities for urban greening, for example through planting of trees and other soft landscaping wherever possible;

(c) Avoid creating 'left-over' spaces with no clear purpose or function;

(d) Ensure that long-term maintenance and management arrangements are in place for the public realm as appropriate.

(e) Engage the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel as part of the Pre-application stage and throughout the Development Management process where appropriate.

16.8 Crime and Security

16.8.1   To ensure cohesive and sustainable places it is important that a sense of personal and community safety is present within the built environment. Various measures can be designed into development schemes, which can assist in discouraging crime and anti-social behaviour. Such measures include:

1. Places with well defined interconnected routes and spaces;

2. Public and private spaces that are clearly defined;

3. Natural surveillance, by fronting buildings, parking and play areas onto the public realm;

4. Strategically placed effective lighting; and

5. Physical access control and security hardware such as CCTV.

16.8.2   The District Council supports the 'Secured by Design' initiative and will expect proposals for new residential or commercial development to incorporate crime prevention measures. Applicants are also advised to consult the Hertfordshire Constabulary Architectural Liaison Officer for advice on measures to facilitate crime prevention prior to the preparation of a detailed layout. Such advice is always subject to other planning criteria and policies as well as the requirements of the Building and Fire Regulations.

16.8.3   Security features should be designed in a sensitive manner which respects the overall character of the area. On shop fronts and commercial premises the use of architectural solutions combined with the use of an internal open lattice grille is preferred.

Policy DES2 Crime and Security

I. Developments should be designed to reduce the opportunity for crime by encouraging the natural surveillance of streets, footpaths, parking and communal areas, and the creation of areas of defensible space. Such measures should not significantly

compromise the provision of high quality design and landscape schemes nor be prejudicial to the existing character of the area and public amenity.

II. Security features should be designed in a sensitive manner which respects the overall character of the frontage and location, whilst maintaining an attractive street scene and minimising light pollution.

16.9 Advertisements and Signs

16.9.1   The display of advertisements and signs is subject to complex and detailed regulations. In many cases it is necessary to obtain express consent from the local planning authority.

16.9.2   Advertisements and signs vary greatly in their purpose. Many are essential, even mandatory. Others are provided for the purpose of direction or information, or simply to announce a particular product, service or premises. Signs are most usually displayed on the land or premises to which they relate, but are sometimes positioned some distance away.

16.9.3   The impact of signs varies greatly. Individually, they may cause little offence, except where they are excessively large, or are insensitively located. However, it is often the cumulative effect of signs and notices that is likely to cause the greatest visual impact and detrimental effect.

16.9.4   In the rural area, many signs or advertisements could appear incongruous. It is acknowledged that commercial concerns in rural areas experience difficulty in announcing their premises, but a proliferation of signs would be detrimental to the landscape, and any unnecessary sign is likely to be resisted.

Policy DES3 Advertisements and Signs

I. Consent will not be given for advertisements that are harmful to amenity or public safety.

II. The number, size, position, siting, illumination, design, colour and materials of advertisements, displayed on or close to a building, must respect the character and appearance of the environment, and the design, scale, features, function and setting of the building.

III. The display of advertisements of an inappropriate size, position, siting, illumination, design, colour and materials, will not be permitted.