

# Understanding the National Design Guide

Design Network

June 2020



**Design  
Network.**

**d:m design:midlands**

**/// design:southwest**

**/// creating  
excellence**

# Objectives

## - how the National Design Guide

- relates to national planning policy;
- to local planning policy and practice;
- provides 10 characteristics, and their interconnections
- its practical use to evaluate design quality
- relates to tools and processes you can use to secure good design





## Paragraph 130 NPPF

*“Permission should 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....*

*...taking into account any local design standards or styles guides in plans or supplementary planning documents.*

but...

*...where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision maker as a valid reason to object to development.”*



**LOCAL PLAN**  
(including design policy and guidance)

consistent  
with

**NATIONAL POLICY**  
(NPPF and PPG inc. National Design Guide)

# National Design Guide

**Explains the design sections of the NPPF and PPG**

**Informs local design guidance**

**Provides design guidance when local guidance is absent**

*Checklist*

*Common language*

*Structure for documents*





- **Context** – enhances the surroundings.
- **Identity** – attractive and distinctive.
- **Built form** – a coherent pattern of development.
- **Movement** – accessible and easy to move around.
- **Nature** – enhanced and optimised.
- **Public spaces** – safe, social and inclusive.
- **Uses** – mixed and integrated.
- **Homes and buildings** – functional, healthy and sustainable.
- **Resources** – efficient and resilient.
- **Lifespan** – made to last.



*The ten characteristics of well-designed places*

## Colour coded characteristics

## Key attributes under each characteristic

## Definitions for technical terms



**Homes & buildings**  
Functional, healthy and sustainable

- Well-designed **homes and buildings** are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them.
- They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as the ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time.
- Successful buildings also provide attractive, stimulating and positive places for all, whether for activity, interaction, retreat, or simply passing by.
- Well-designed homes and buildings:
  - provide good quality internal and external environments for their users, promoting health and well-being;
  - relate positively to the private, shared and public spaces around them, contributing to social interaction and inclusion; and
  - receive the details of operation and servicing so that they are unobtrusive and well integrated into their neighbourhoods.

Illustration for quality of internal environment. It depicts an open-plan living area with a mix of internal and external spaces. Photo: *Home & Society*

**Homes & buildings**

- environmental factors that may affect the ability, such as sunlight and shade, noise or pollution;
- wider environmental factors affecting its quality or sustainability, such as a green corridor or drainage;
- Well-designed shared amenity spaces feel safe and secure for their users. They are social spaces providing opportunities for activity, interaction and recreation, including play. For residents, regardless of the type or tenure of homes, they are well-maintained and all of the residents who share them experience them readily;
- Inclusive amenity spaces including balconies enhance visual and outdoor amenity. They can also provide a degree of privacy and separation for living areas from adjoining outdoor spaces. Home-owners may have greater planning to add to outdoor features within the public space;
- Well-designed buildings relate well to the public spaces around them. The interface between building and public space is carefully designed so that it is justified and appropriate to its context (see also **Quality of internal and external spaces**) and to the experience and plans for the site itself.

- Attention to detail, storage, waste, servicing and utility;
- Well-designed places include a clear intention to detail. This considers how buildings operate in practice and how people experience and use them on a day-to-day basis, both now and in future. They include:
  - Local water drainage, employment and pick-up/drop-off lines for all the different types of vehicles, including bicycles, scooters and four-wheelers. They are accessible and well integrated into the design of streets, spaces and buildings, to minimise visual impacts, neighbourhood and street clutter. Where vehicle lines are required to be on a street, signage or a bollard, post or other form is used, they are fitted with well-designed refuge strips that are easy for occupants to use;
  - Features including tables and shelter, seating, simple electric, lighting and water systems are placed and well designed. They are easy to access, clean and maintain;
  - Service details, drainage, gutters and water lines are integrated into the wider design to avoid a cluttered appearance;
  - Cycle storage. Community provision and services are integrated into public spaces, amenity spaces or buildings.



**Well-being**  
Quality space: The outdoor space associated with this is a terrace. Photo: *Home & Society*

- Quality, comfortable and safe internal and external environment.
- Good design promotes quality of life for the occupants and users of buildings. This includes function – buildings should be easy to use. It also includes comfort, safety, security, amenity, accessibility and adaptability.
- Well-designed homes and buildings are efficient and cost-effective to run. They help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by incorporating features that encourage sustainable behaviour. They maximise natural ventilation, avoid over-heating, minimise heating/cooling and have good quality



**Internal/Planning Policy**  
Township & clusters

- Well-designed towns and community areas provide a good standard and quality of internal spaces. This includes room sizes, floor-to-ceiling heights, natural and external storage, sunlight, daylight and ventilation. The quality of external space needs careful consideration in higher density developments, particularly for family accommodation, where secure, private, daylight and external amenity spaces are also important.
- Where a need is identified, local plans may address the housing type described (apartments and those for accessibility and well-being).
- Well-designed buildings have building safety requirements under other legislation in mind from the outset to provide a safe and secure environment for occupants and users. They allow ease of access for emergency services, and facilities for the safe access to and from buildings in the event of evacuation.
- Well-related to external amenity and public spaces.
- Well-designed buildings are carefully integrated with their surrounding external spaces. All private and shared external spaces including parking (see **Quality of internal and external spaces**) and amenity spaces have a reasonable degree of privacy. External spaces are designed to respect the local character, so appropriate solutions will vary by the context, for example whether it is a town centre or suburb.
- Well-designed private or shared external spaces are fit for purpose and incorporate parking wherever possible. The appropriate size, shape and position for an external amenity space can be defined by considering:
  - how the site is related to buildings in the wider context, including access to public and open spaces;
  - how the amenity space will be used, what it is, and by whom;



**Good practice examples**

- These photos are used to illustrate the general design of the building, which is a modern, multi-story apartment building with a balcony.
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**Looking forward**  
Open-air courtyard  
These photos illustrate the general design of the building, which is a modern, multi-story apartment building with a balcony.

## Introductory overview

## Cross references to NPPF chapters

## Cross references to other characteristics

## Illustrations to highlight good practice

## Good practice examples with captions

## Looking forward – issues to consider



# Context

Enhances the surroundings

Well-designed places are:

- based on a sound **understanding** of the features of the site and the surrounding context, using baseline studies as a starting point for design;
- **integrated** into their surroundings so they relate well to them
- **influenced** by and influence their context positively
- **responsive** to local history, culture and heritage.





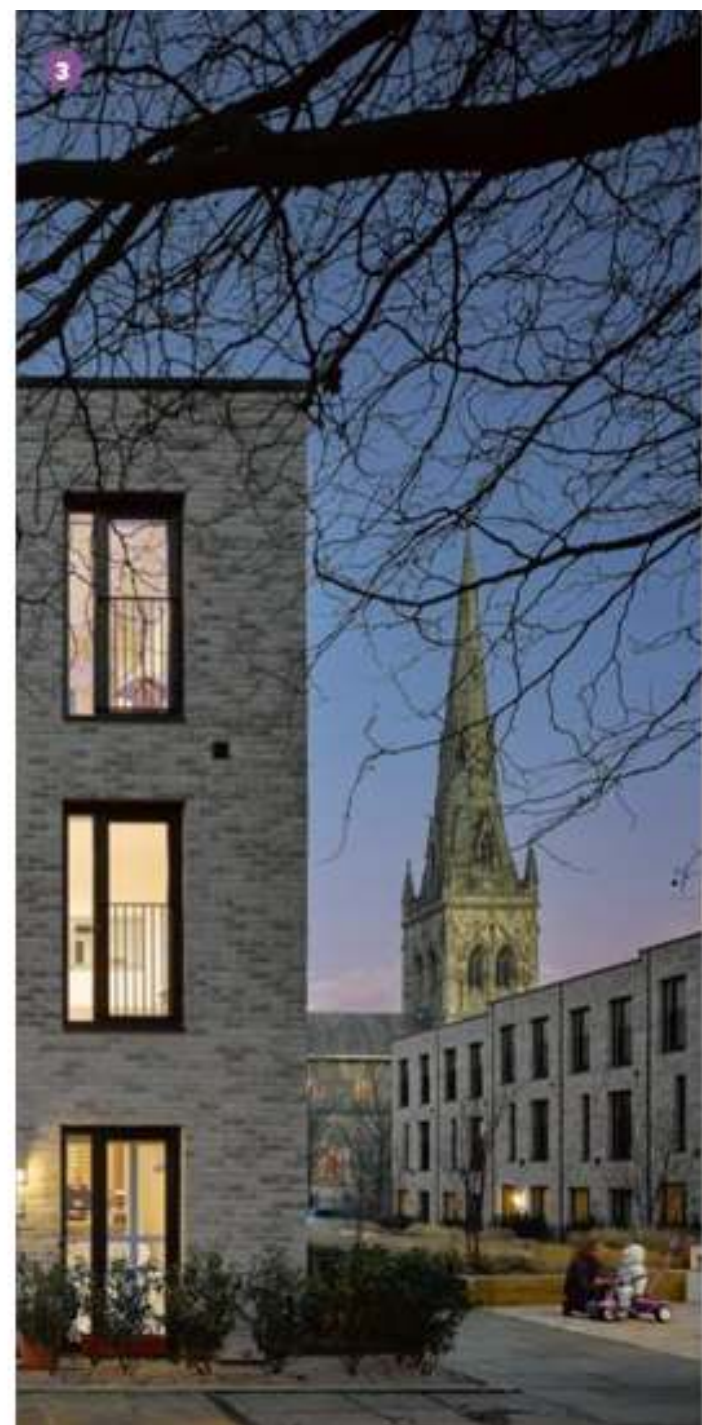
# Context



*Identifying the existing features of the site and the wider area highlights opportunities for the design of new developments to link well into their context and enhance these features for the benefit of new and existing residents.*

# Context

C2 Value heritage, local history and culture





# Design is a process

- Analyse **context** at a range of scales
- **Interrogate** brief
- **Identify** opportunities
- **Identify** site constraints
- **Clarify** design principles
- **Test** options
- **Develop** site response
- **Develop** design response
- **Review** and respond to feedback
- **Demonstrate** quality
- **Communicate** impact

1. Survey
2. Analysis
3. Plan

# Identity

## I2 Well-designed, high quality and attractive

- adopting **typical building forms, features, materials** and details of an area;
- drawing upon the **architectural precedents** that are prevalent in the local area, including the proportions of buildings and their openings;
- using **local building, landscape or topographical features**, materials or planting types;
- introducing built form and appearance that adds **new character and difference** to places;
- creating a **positive and coherent identity** that residents and local communities can identify with.



# Identity

## 13 Create character and identity



# Built form

## B2 Appropriate building types and forms





## Recognisable streets



# Movement

M1 An integrated network of routes for all modes of transport





# Movement

**M2 A clear structure and hierarchy of connected streets**





# Nature

## Enhanced and optimised

Well-designed places:

- **integrate existing, and incorporate new natural features** into a multifunctional network that supports quality of place, biodiversity and water management, and addresses climate change mitigation and resilience;
- prioritise nature so that **diverse ecosystems can flourish** to ensure a healthy natural environment that supports and enhances biodiversity;
- provide **attractive open spaces** in locations that are easy to access, with activities for all to enjoy, such as play, food production, recreation and sport, so as to encourage physical activity and promote health, well-being and social inclusion.



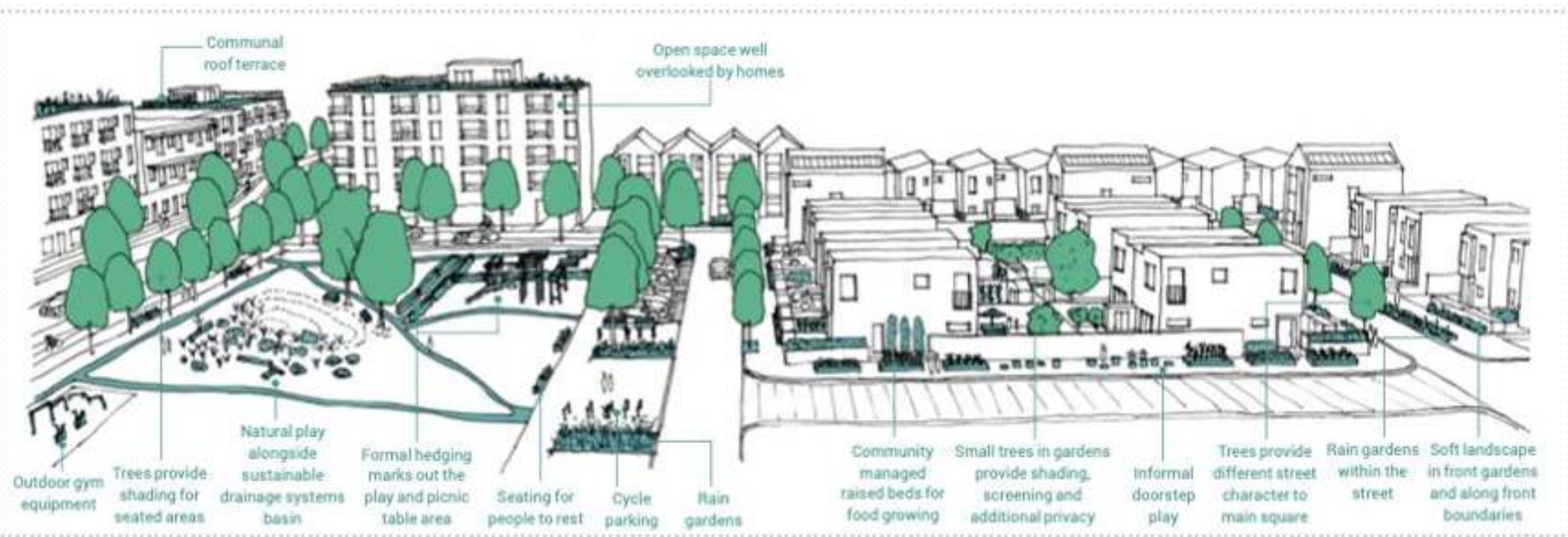


# Nature

**N1 Provide high quality, green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities, including play**



# Nature





# Public spaces

Safe, social and inclusive

Well-designed places:

- include well-located public spaces that **support a wide variety of activities** and encourage social interaction, to promote health, well-being, social and civic inclusion;
- have a **hierarchy of spaces** that range from large and strategic to small and local spaces, including parks, squares, greens and pocket parks;
- have public spaces that **feel safe, secure and attractive** for all to use; and
- have **trees and other planting** within public spaces for people to enjoy, whilst also providing shading, and air quality and climate change mitigation.



# Public spaces

## P1 Create well-located, high quality and attractive public spaces





# Public spaces

P2 Provide well-designed spaces that are safe





# Uses

## U1 A mix of uses





# Uses

**U2 A mix of home tenures, types and sizes**



# Uses

## U3 Socially inclusive





# Homes & buildings

Functional, healthy and sustainable

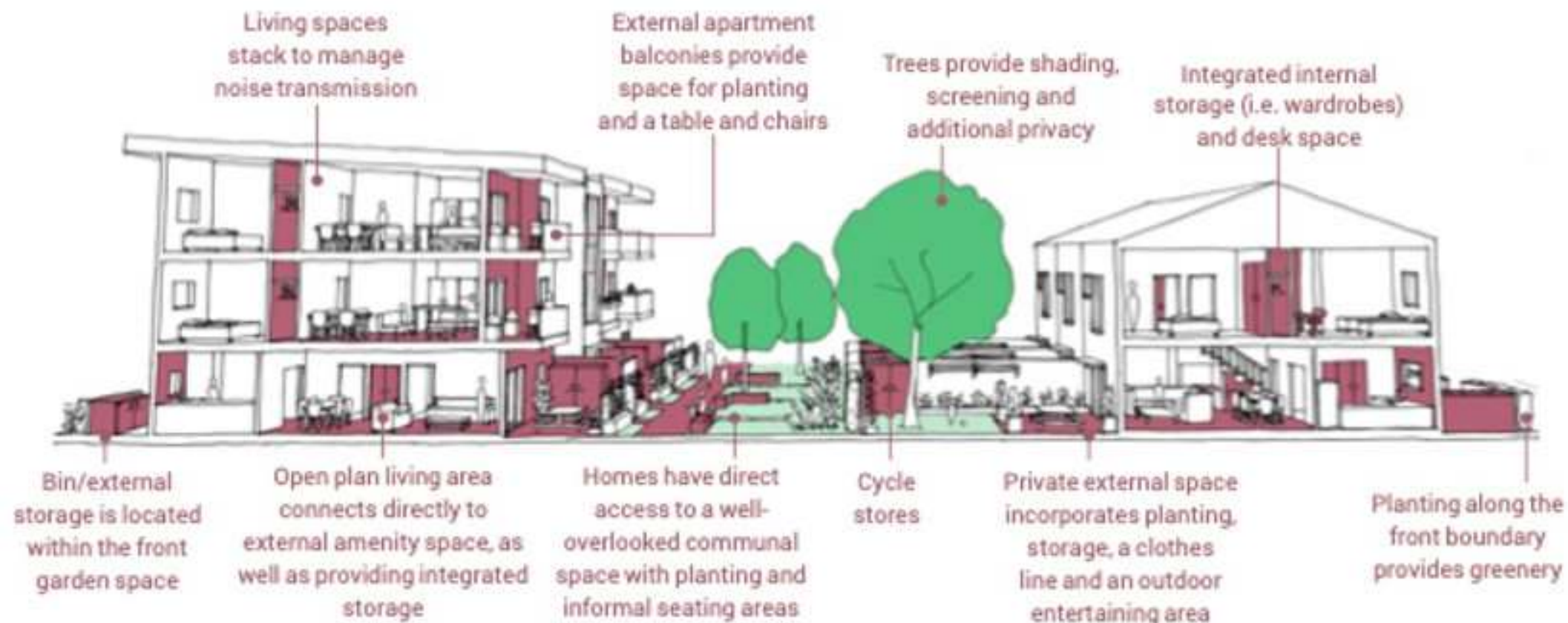
Well-designed homes and buildings:

- provide good quality **internal and external environments** for their users, promoting health and well-being;
- relate positively to the **private, shared and public spaces** around them, contributing to social interaction and inclusion; and
- resolve the details of **operation and servicing** so that they are unobtrusive and well-integrated into their neighbourhoods.



# Homes & buildings

## H1 Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment





# Homes & buildings

H1 Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment



DES

De  
Final

27

28

29

# Homes & buildings

H2 Well-related to external amenity and public spaces





# Homes & buildings

**H3 Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities**



# Resources

Efficient and resilient

Well-designed places:

- have a layout, form and mix of uses that **reduces their resource requirement**, including for land, energy and water;
- are fit for purpose and **adaptable over time**, reducing the need for redevelopment and unnecessary waste;
- use materials and adopt technologies to **minimise their environmental impact**





# Resources

## R3 Maximise resilience





# Lifespan

Made to last

Well-designed places, buildings and spaces are:

- designed and planned for **long-term stewardship** by landowners, communities and local authorities from the earliest stages;
- **robust, easy to use and look after**, and enable their users to establish a sense of ownership and belonging, ensuring places and buildings age gracefully;
- **adaptable** to their users' changing needs and evolving technologies; and
- **well-managed and maintained** by their users, owners, landlords and public agencies.





# Lifespan

## L1 Well-managed and maintained



# Lifespan

**L2 Adaptable to changing needs and evolving technologies**





# Lifespan

## L3 A sense of ownership



# components of the built environment

*Layout*

*Scale*

*Landscape*

*Form*

*Appearance*

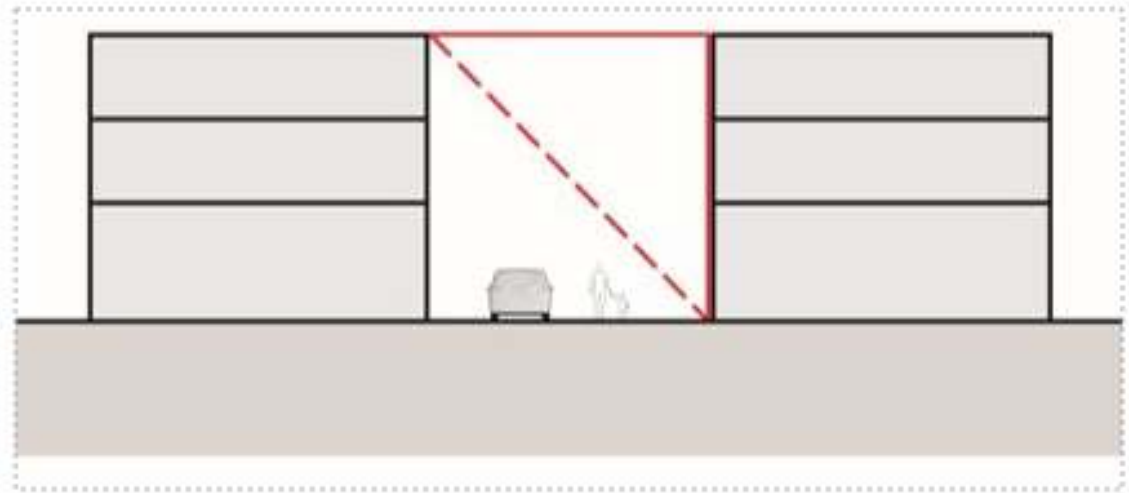
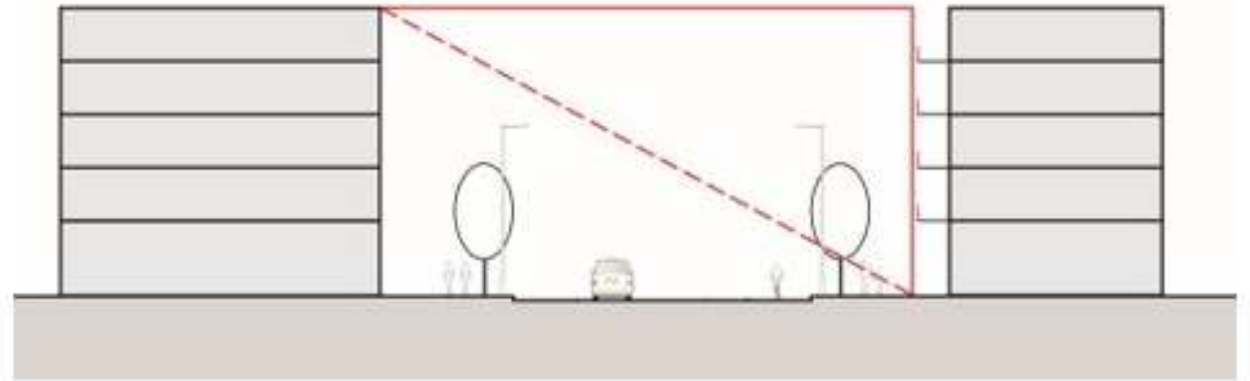
*Materials*

*Detailing*



# Scale

'The size or level of something'



# Appearance

'the way a thing looks to other people '





# Landscape

'all the visible features of an area of land'



# Materials

'a physical thing (e.g. wood, stone) with qualities that allow it to be used to make other things '





# Detailing


'the small features of something that you only notice when you look carefully'

**Material key**

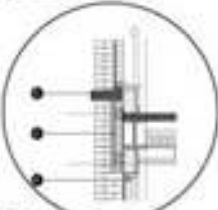
- 1 Facing brick (Type tbc)
- 2 Recessed facing brick (Full brick or brick & half reveals)
- 3 Ceramic clay tile facade system (NRK or similar) - colour tbc
- 4 Double/triple glazed windows - anodised frame - colour bronze (RAL tc)
- 5 Reconstituted stone sills - nom.75/40mm - colour white
- 6 Reconstituted stone lintels - nom.75mm - colour white
- 7 Reconstituted stone banding - nom.150mm - colour white
- 8 Reconstituted stone coping - nom.75mm - colour white
- 9 Balcony balustrade - mild steel - bronze colour (RAL tbc)
- 10 Feature balcony balustrade - ceramic clay tile (colour tbc)
- 11 Juliette balcony balustrade - part of window assembly - anodised finish, bronze colour to match window frame
- 12 Timber boarding - stained finish (colour tbc)
- 13 Bio-diverse roof with PV's
- 14 Concrete paving (colour tbc)
- 15 Metal panel soffit, bronze colour (RAL tbc)
- 16 Soffit brick clad lintel

**Window module**

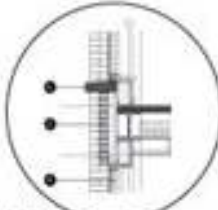
The majority of Block C utilises one window module. Variety created through window placement in conjunction with variations in brick depth, windowsills and infill panels.




**DETAIL H**  
Window head/Sill detail



**DETAIL**  
Window head/Sill detail/  
Recessed brick




**Feature windows**




To create a distinctive feature, some windows on the central elevation have angled panels which taper back to the windows. These windows are set back a full brick's depth from the main facade creating deep shadows.

**Street level windows**



On the lower portion of the facade, three reveal depths are used to create a more ornate elevation. Brick piers ground the window into three, half a brick in the front of the rest of the brick facade. The windows and decorative heads are then set back a whole brick depth, again to create deep shadows. (See detail 04)

**Rear windows**



To animate the rear facade, windows (and brick infill panels) are set back a full brick to create deep shadows. This, in conjunction with project sills, adds texture to the facade, which changes during the day.



achieving well  
designed places



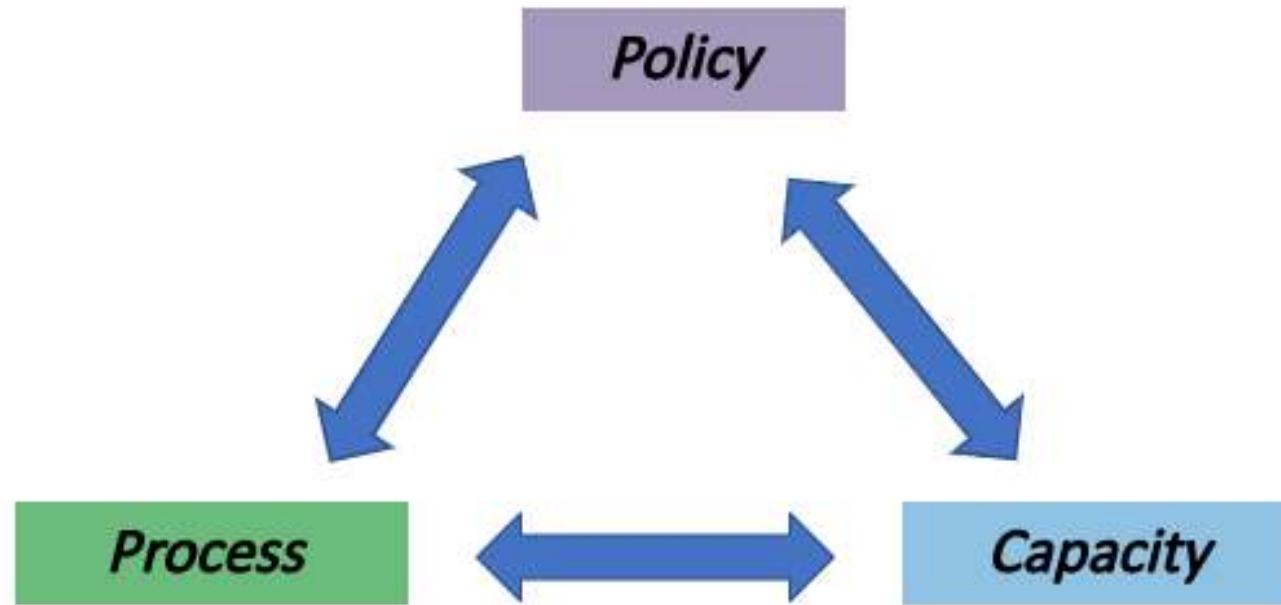


*“Well-designed places and buildings come about when there is a clearly expressed ‘story’ for the design concept and how it has evolved into a design proposal...This ‘story’ will inform and address all ten characteristics. It is set out in a Design and Access Statement that accompanies a planning application.”*



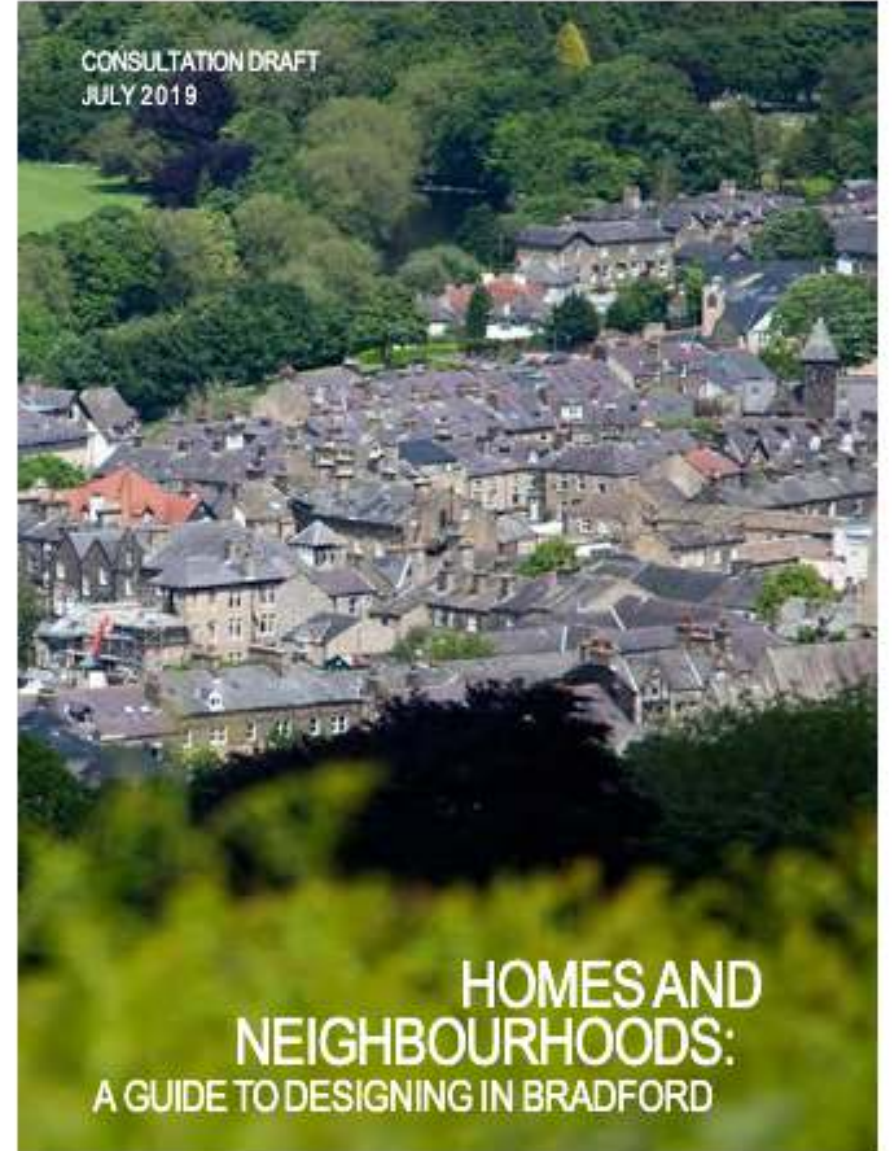
Section	First steps <i>(Local Plan Allocation process may take place between 2 &amp; 3)</i>		Pre-App Process <i>(Iterative, non-linear process Timeframes set according to PPA)</i>				Decision-Making			Post-Decision	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Stage	Inception	First Formal contact	Setting / Agreeing PPA	Site Analysis and Design Principles	Design Evolution	Informal Opinion	Submission and statutory process	Decision, Conditions, Obligations	Pre-construction design audit	Construction	Completion / Post Completion
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarity around ultimate desired outcome</li> <li>Understanding of key constraints and needs</li> <li>Everyone feels well-informed</li> <li>Common ground established</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trusted process of engagement between public, LPA and applicant</li> <li>Iterative process outlined by PPA</li> <li>Confidence in successful outcome for the scheme evidenced by DAC and SoCG</li> <li>Certainty in process and ultimate outcome</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transparency</li> <li>Recognition of acceptability of development</li> <li>Formal acceptance</li> <li>Understanding rationale for decision</li> <li>Reflection of previous stages</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning and reflection</li> <li>Evaluation of input</li> <li>Recognition and celebration</li> <li>Learning and reflection</li> </ul>	
Applicant-LPA Dialogue / Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dialogue opened</li> <li>Online information signposting</li> <li>Partners / consultees / departments informed</li> <li>Landowners forum (if required)</li> <li>Developer shares pre-engagement work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suffolk Design Approach and SDMP explained to applicant</li> <li>Site history shared</li> <li>SoCG Policy approach set</li> <li>Collective SWOT analysis to jointly understand threats and risks</li> <li>Test of soundness (suitable, available, achievable)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sit-down session with key stakeholders</li> <li>Agreement on project milestones and timeframe using template SD PPA</li> <li>SoCG: topic areas identified</li> <li>Establishing baseline Design Audit Checklist (DAC) contents</li> <li>Establishing likely planning obligations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshops with key stakeholders and consultees</li> <li>Expansion of DAC</li> <li>Establishing validation requirements</li> <li>Updating likely requirements: conditions, s106 etc.</li> <li>Updating DAC contents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshops with key stakeholders and consultees</li> <li>Evolution of DAC</li> <li>SoCG evolved including statement(s) of changes</li> <li>Updating likely conditions, s106 etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment against DAC</li> <li>Design Review</li> <li>Final SoCG agreed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment against DAC</li> <li>Statement on changes</li> <li>All formal standard statutory requirements</li> <li>Statutory consultees formal input</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decision made</li> <li>Conditions, s106 etc. agreed, drawing on what was previously identified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultee and stakeholder forum to assess progress on reserved matters and conditions and assess these against DAC</li> <li>Statement on changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statement on changes</li> <li>Site visits from officers to assess construction process against DAC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of level of quality – likely to be eligible for Suffolk Design Awards?</li> <li>Developer Survey</li> </ul>
Internal LPA Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team resources assessed and dedicated officer set</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal LPA Project Leader officer / team set</li> <li>Portfolio holder briefing</li> <li>SoCG handover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conversations with all departments involved in community engagement in/near site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involvement of workshops</li> <li>Briefings if unable to attend</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officers brief parish and ward Clls to understand what everyone expects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member briefing</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Findings from assessments shared with Clls via Member briefing</li> <li>Member visits to selection of completed schemes</li> </ul>
Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicly-accessible information kept updated</li> <li>Consideration of site's relationship with made/ emerging Neighbourhood Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online information signposting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community engagement milestones set out in PPA</li> <li>Joining up LPA and developer communications team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Named officer as point of contact</li> <li>Early public 'co-creation' event</li> <li>Non-technical summary of key documents published</li> <li>Community representatives attendance at key meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation events</li> <li>Community representatives attendance at key meetings</li> <li>Community representatives attendance at key meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community attendance and representation at Design Review where possible / appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal statutory public consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-technical summary of decision and reasons why published</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updates on progress and timeframe published on website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Named officer available for contact</li> <li>Community Liaison Groups for strategic sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New resident satisfaction surveys</li> <li>Community able to vote for Suffolk Design Awards</li> <li>Links between development and benefits published</li> </ul>





# Policy

- **Planning for well-designed places**
  - Plan vision
  - Strategic and non-strategic policies
  - Local design guides
  - Masterplans
  - Design codes
  - Supplementary planning documents





## Process: discussions and decisions

- **Making decisions about design**
  - Pre-application discussions
  - Outline planning applications
  - Parameter plans
  - Design and Access Statements including a narrative for design approach and rationale
  - Use of conditions, including important design details to be set out at application stage
  - Ensuring quality is not diminished between permission and completion, including a strategy for maintaining original design intent



## Process: assessment and engagement

- **Tools for assessing and improving design quality**
  - National Design Guide
  - Local design guides and codes
  - Effective Design Review
  - Assessment frameworks, including Building for Life 12
- **Effective community engagement on design**
  - How local communities can be effectively engaged early in the design process
  - Effective community engagement tools





# Capacity

- **Skills**
  - Specialist officers
  - CPD for generalist officers
  - Engaging planning committees with training and support
- **Resources**
  - External resources – design support and placements
  - Design Workshops
  - Design Review
  - Networks
- **Culture**
  - Collaborative approach
  - In-house projects/procurement
  - Design Charter
  - Design awards



Training



Workshops



Design Reviews

# Understanding the National Design Guide

Design Network

June 2020



**Design  
Network!**

**d:m design:midlands**

**design:southwest**

part of  
**creating  
excellence**