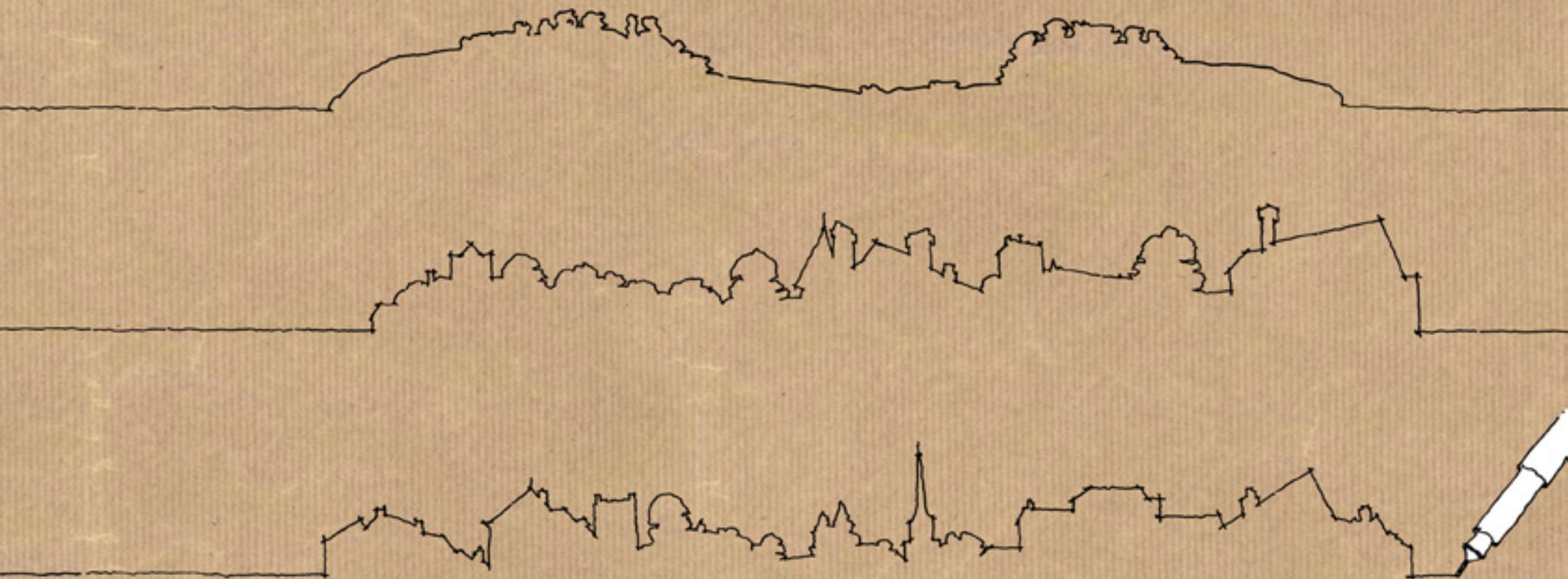# SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE
DESIGN GUIDE

South Oxfordshire
District Council

FOREWORD

South Oxfordshire is an exceptionally beautiful area and has recently been named as the best place to live in the UK countryside. This makes it an attractive place for new development establishing new communities and contributing to existing ones. This design guide has been prepared as part of South Oxfordshire District Council's commitment to securing the highest quality development within the district. The new guide builds upon and replaces the 2008 South Oxfordshire Design Guide and aims to be a more concise, design focused handbook that acts both as a guide and as an assessment tool. It is intended to assist landowners, developers, applicants, agents, designers and planners in the process of developing high quality development and in assessing its design quality. This guide seeks to break the mould of the standard design guide.

The guide promotes best practice in the initial stages of the design process. It recommends the process to be followed and includes an interactive assessment tool to be embedded in the design development process.

The list of criteria set out in this guide tool is to be completed by all applicants and will be used as a tool for assessing schemes at pre-application discussions and at outline or detailed planning application stages. All applicants will be required to test their proposals against the lists of criteria which we will also use to assess the scheme against. By following this process, applicants will be more likely to obtain planning permission.

The guide is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and as such, will be a material consideration in determining planning applications submitted to the Council. It carries considerable weight in decision-making, having been subject to scrutiny and amendment through the public consultation process. The guide is also accompanied by a suite of technical documents focusing on disciplines such as landscape, biodiversity, trees, public art, sustainable energy, etc., all of which need to be taken into account at the outset of the design process. The technical documents also focus on other types of development such as non-domestic buildings, apartments, householders extensions and outbuildings, building conversions, shopfronts and signage.

This guide should inspire and will test new development to ensure that it meets the highest quality of design that is expected in South Oxfordshire. The importance of design quality is intrinsic to national and local policy guidance. The test of whether this design guide is successful will be in the quality of development that comes forward in South Oxfordshire in the future.

Councillor John Cotton (2016)

CONTENTS

PART 1

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE ?

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

We want to improve the **standard of design in developments** being delivered in South Oxfordshire and ensure that only developments of the highest quality are delivered in the future.

The purpose of this guide is to:

- address the challenges we have experienced in the past;

- provide a simple set of design criteria that applications should meet and are easy to follow;

- help applicants gain a better understanding of how to deliver good design by providing guidance on best practice, design principles and the terms and phrases used by design specialists;

- provide an educational tool to help assess developments coming forward;

- help applicants to have the best chance of getting approval in design terms.

We aspire to:

- provide a quicker and easier process that all applicants can follow to help them deliver high quality development and to demonstrate more clearly how their proposals will deliver it;

- inspire landowners, developers and designers to deliver the highest quality development through positive and constructive working relationships;

- promote good quality design by helping people understand the process and the criteria that deliver it;

- instill confidence to the residents of South Oxfordshire that developments will be designed and delivered to the highest quality.

We also want to **break the mould of the standard design guide.** These documents are typically too long, too detailed, too strict and full of complex design phrases and terms.

This design guide:

- is relevant for all scales of development (for example householder extensions, non-domestic buildings or large residential developments);

- is short and more concise with a simple set of rules to follow;

- defines the meaning of relevant design phrases and terms;

- is bespoke, interactive and available as a hard copy version as well as online;

- is part of a larger suite – this guide is accompanied by a suite of concise technical documents focusing specifically on landscape, biodiversity, trees, public art, sustainable energy, householder extensions and outbuildings, building conversions, shopfronts and signage, non-domestic buildings and apartments, all of which need to be taken into account at the outset of the design process;

- must be read in conjunction with other statutory plans.

WE WANT TO DELIVER HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

What do we mean by *high quality development*?

responds to and reinforces locally distinctive patterns of development

is designed with all users in mind

has character

can adapt well

HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

offers variety and choice

is easy to get to and move through

has a clear definition between public and private spaces

has attractive and successful outdoor areas
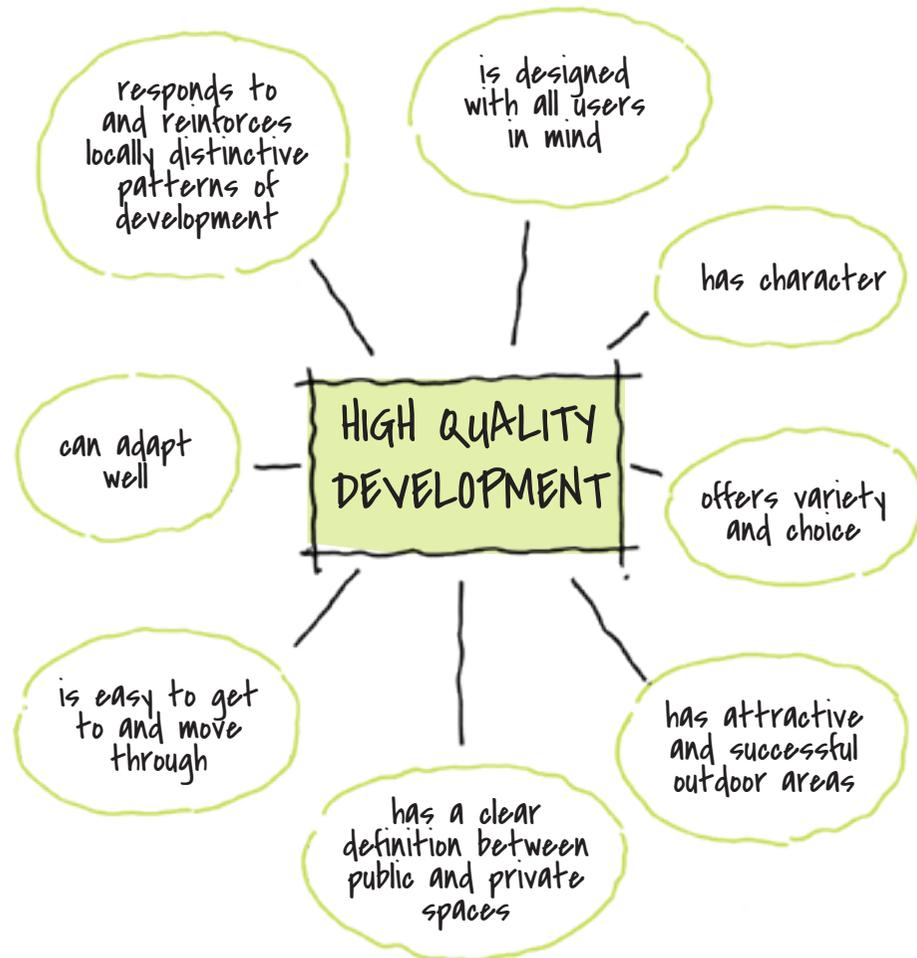
Designers and planning professionals will often refer to their goal as creating sustainable places or communities. The main planning objective of the government is to deliver sustainable development.

What do we mean by *sustainable development*?

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is central to the economic, environmental and social success of the country and is the core principle underpinning planning. Simply stated, the principle recognises the importance of ensuring that all people should be able to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, both now and in the future.

Sustainable development is development that delivers places that work well for everyone and will continue to work well into the future.

What do we mean by *work well*?

Places that *work well* are places where people want to live, work and visit. They allow us to carry out daily activities with ease and offer us choice as how to do them. In short, these opportunities enhance our quality of life, thereby not causing frustration or misery.

What do we mean by *places*?

A *place* is more than just a building and the appearance of that building. It is how the buildings, streets and spaces work together as well as how we use them and how they make us feel.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The value of good design

The importance of design in creating successful places where people want to live and work in is well documented. Design matters because our lives are the villages, towns and homes in which we live, work and socialise. Research and national guidance have all demonstrated the link between good design and improved quality of life, equality of opportunity and economic growth. For instance:

- A well-designed hospital will help patients recover quicker;
- A well-designed school will help improve the educational achievement of its pupils;
- A well-designed public realm will help increase retail rents;
- A well-designed department store will have a direct impact on stock turnover;
- A well-designed neighbourhood will benefit from lower crime and higher house values;
- A well-designed residential development with high quality landscaping, materials and detailing design will attract potential buyers and enhance the existing character and appearance of the area, resulting in a win-win situation for both existing and future residents and developers.

Good design can help transform places and enhance people's lives. The orientation and height of buildings can have a profound impact on people's wellbeing and mental health – from the simple design and orientation of a rear garden area to the design and layout of a public space. Design affects how people respond to the space and the choices they make when using it. Imagine an open public square – a simple thing like the amount of sunlight that it receives will have a significant impact on the feel of the space and, the economic success and survival of the businesses that surround it. Both physical and mental well-being can be improved through the appropriate use of high quality public realm, including attractive streets and public squares, and multi-purpose green spaces.

When thinking about the value of good design, think about the experience of all users in their journey through the development (e.g. a parent, an elderly person, a person with disabilities, a worker or a child, etc.) and how they are likely to respond and behave. This is inclusive design and what we mean when we refer to all users.

Achieving the design qualities of a neighbourhood (see page 10) can help uplift the value of a place resulting in a multiplying effect or snowball effect where one quality feeds the next, which in turn will positively impact on the attractiveness and value of a place and adjacent neighbourhood. High quality design will benefit both future and existing residents who will take pride in where they live.

It is also important to understand the long term value of good design which can enhance a reputation or provide a positive legacy for the developer. People's expectations are rising and residents do not want to live in 'anywhere' identikit developments, expecting more from where they live. Developers must learn from best practice and aim for award winning designs, taking the best qualities of previous developments and repeating and enhancing these features. Buildings should endure and survive the test of time without the need for costly future extension, modification or adaptation. Rather than erode or dilute local character, new development should celebrate and complement the local character of the area and contribute to a desirable place to live, providing choice (including self-build) within inclusive, cohesive and stable communities.

Where developers focus on customers and understand their needs, a development is likely to be more successful. The motor industry and the electronics industry for example, both continually strive to impress their customers with the latest cutting edge technologies, recognising that in a competitive world, customers are likely to pay more for choice (options) and therefore, for premiums. There is no reason why the same should not be done with new developments.

+ Additional useful and interesting resources:
- Paved with gold: The real value of good street design (CABE, 2007)
- By Design, Urban design in the planning system: Towards better practice (DETR and CABE, 2000)
- The value of good design (CABE, 2002)
- The value of urban design (CABE and DETR, 2001)
- Valuing Sustainable Urbanism (Prince's Foundation, Savills and English Partnerships, 2007)
- Urban Design Group National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) briefing sheet (2012)
- Public Health England briefing for local authorities - Working together to promote active travel (2016)
- Building the foundations - tackling obesity through planning and development (Local Government Association, 2016)

VALUE OF **GOOD** DESIGN

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

KEY DESIGN OBJECTIVES

Meeting the following objectives is critical in delivering high quality development. These objectives should be considered at the outset and throughout the design process.

The development:

- is informed by a **contextual analysis** of the area;

- should use land efficiently whilst respecting the existing landscape character, enhances biodiversity and as a minimum, leads to no net loss of habitat;

- should incorporate and/or link to a well-defined network of **green and blue infrastructure**;

- is sustainable and resilient to climate change and minimises energy consumption and mitigates water run-off and flood risks;

- takes into account landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping;

- provides a clear and permeable hierarchy structure of streets, routes and spaces to create safe and convenient ease of movement by all users;

- ensures that streets and spaces are well overlooked creating a positive relationship between fronts and backs of buildings;

- clearly defines public and private spaces;

- should have access to local services and facilities and, where needed, incorporate mixed uses, facilities and co-located services as appropriate with good access to public transport;

- should provide a wide range of house types and tenures;

- respects the local context working with and complementing the scale, height, density, grain, massing, type, details of the surrounding area;

- conserves and where possible, enhances the significance of heritage assets, e.g. listed buildings, archaeological remains and historic features, spaces, routes and views;

- secures a high quality public realm with well managed and maintained public areas;

- should be of a high quality with no differentiation between market and affordable housing;

- should be designed to take account of possible future development in the local area;

- is built to last, functions well and adapts to changing requirements of occupants and other circumstances;

- understands and addresses the needs of all potential users to ensure **inclusive design**;

- creates safe communities and reduces the likelihood of crime and antisocial behaviour;

- ensures a sufficient level of well-integrated and imaginative solutions for car and bicycle parking and external storage including bins.

Terms for glossary:

Contextual analysis – the process of gathering information to understand a place

Green and blue infrastructure - all the natural features such as landscape and water

Inclusive design - designing with the needs of all users in mind including the elderly, disabled, parents and carers.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

In order to achieve high quality development, you must adhere to the basic design principles. The following are design principles and qualities drawn from local and national planning policy and best practice guidance:

PRINCIPLES	QUALITIES
Character:	Enhancing identity and sense of place
Safety and inclusion:	Ensuring places are safe, secure and welcoming for all, including the elderly and disabled
Diversity:	Providing variety, choice and sensory richness
Ease of movement:	Ensuring places that are easy to get to and move through for all and encourage physical activity
Legibility:	Ensuring places can be easily understood
Adaptability:	Anticipating the need for change
Sustainability:	Minimise the impact on our environment
Designing for future maintenance:	Designing buildings and spaces so that their quality can be maintained over time and will age well
Good streets and spaces:	Creating places with attractive outdoor spaces
Well designed buildings:	Constructing sustainable buildings appropriate to their function and context

Additional useful and interesting resources:

- By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards better practice (DETR and CABE, 2000)

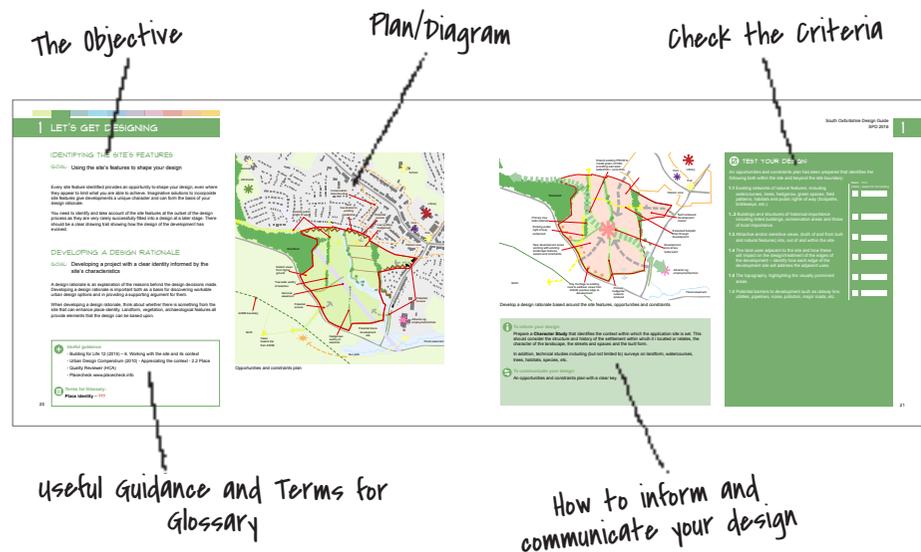- Urban Design Compendium 1 (3rd edition, HCA and Studio REAL, 2013)

Illustrated examples of design principles

HOW TO DO IT

STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE

The pages are arranged in a similar format identifying the main objective, providing additional information and guidance, a plan illustrating a similar situation elsewhere and a checklist of design criteria.

The diagram below shows the format of a typical page in this guide.

The Objective

Plan/Diagram

Check the Criteria

Useful Guidance and Terms for Glossary

How to inform and communicate your design

Key to the symbols:

GOAL   **Objective** - The overall design principle to achieve

Inform your design - Any needed supporting information and visualisations

Communicate your design visually - Give clues about how to understand the design

Test your design - The design requirements that schemes need to achieve

Additional useful and interesting resources - Relevant planning policies and guidance

Terms for glossary - Explanations of key design phrases (in bold text)

Zoom in - Further detailed explanations and examples

This guide is relevant for all scales of development and for different contexts, whether they are rural, urban or suburban. All principles and criteria in this guide are transferable, however, there are likely to be situations where the context of the site means that it will not always be possible for a development to satisfy each point in the criteria. For example, a small site in a rural location is unlikely to be able to provide a range of street types. This guide provides two examples of different scales of development to show how the design process can be followed from beginning to end. The examples are of a large residential scheme and small scale development.

In responding to this guide there may therefore sometimes be a conflict when you are trying to meet all of the criteria set out in this guide. This can occur when you are trying to:

- Meet two different criteria (e.g. when a building is used to form a noise barrier but it will overshadow a garden. An imaginative solution would be to create a rooftop garden);

- Meet a criterion and take account of the results of a technical study;

- Maximise the benefits for existing and future residents.

When conflicts arise, use this as an opportunity for creative problem solving. You will need to consider whether there is any possible mitigation(s) that could help address any negative impacts. Weigh the benefits of each solution and feel confident that the solution you identify is the best in terms of the overall quality of design. If you are struggling to find a solution, you may need to reconsider your design rationale. Once you have identified the best design outcome, you will need to explain this to the Council together with the reason(s) for not meeting the criteria.

Design and Access Statement

We encourage applicants to use the criteria and process set out in this guide to demonstrate how their proposal will deliver high quality design. The guide can help you to explain the design of your proposal. Check the planning portal website (www.planningportal.co.uk) for more information on Design and Access Statements.

Validation checklist

Check the Council's validation checklist to identify the documents that will be required to support your application.

All planning applications

This guide highlights the criteria that all pre-applications and applications should meet in order for the local authority to be confident that the type of development proposed could be delivered to a high quality. In outline applications, illustrative masterplans are often not approved as part of the permission. They should, however, demonstrate that the development proposed for the site can be designed to meet the criteria in this guide.

THE STEPS TO TAKE

To deliver high quality design using this guide, there are four simple steps that need to be followed:

1. SET THE OBJECTIVE

The objectives included in this guide are set out in a specific order and should be followed in that order. This should help you make the right design decisions.

Each chapter within the Part 2 of this guide includes a plan demonstrating how a development can be designed to meet the criteria set out. The order of these plans is important as each should be informed by the previous one.

GOAL

2. INFORM YOUR DESIGN

Development has an instant and lasting impact on the site it is built on and on its surroundings. The impact of all new development needs to be properly understood and addressed.

To understand and address the impact of new development in a positive way, you need to understand both the existing site features and the surrounding area. These features (site and surroundings) should be used positively in the design of the development where possible.

Sometimes specific technical studies need to be undertaken in order to understand the existing features of the site and surrounding area. For example, surveys that assess the quality of trees or identify the presence of a particular species of animal or bird. The results of these studies need proper consideration and should inform the design of your development.

3. COMMUNICATE YOUR DESIGN

When a planning application is made or advice is sought from the Council it is important that people are able to understand the design of your development proposal – not just design/planning professionals. When people do not understand a proposal, they often imagine the worse and this can lead to unnecessary concerns and objections. Communication is therefore key.

This guide recommends effective ways of communicating your design.

4. CHECK THE CRITERIA

This guide provides a simple set of criteria for you to follow to deliver high quality design.

You need to test your design against the criteria and officers will be assessing the scheme against them. The criteria can also be used as part of pre-application discussions.

Occasionally you may be unable to meet a criterion. The situations where this could arise are set out on the previous page. When this happens you will need to demonstrate and justify that in the absence of meeting the criteria, a high quality development can still be delivered.

THE DESIGN PROCESS

The delivery of high quality development is dependent on good design professionals undertaking a robust design process. The diagram opposite illustrates the process which we would strongly encourage all applicants to follow to give yourself the best chance of securing planning permission with a high quality development.

Pre-application advice service

Whatever the scale of development proposed, applying to the council for pre-application advice will add value to the design quality of your scheme and it will help reduce potential uncertainties and delays by identifying any issues at the earliest stage. The Council will work collaboratively with you and other relevant stake holders to ensure a proposed development is in the best shape that it can be at the point it is submitted. Meaningful public consultation is a critical part of this process and whilst the responsibility for this lies with the applicant, the Council strongly encourages you to undertake a two stage public consultation process.

Design Review

The Design Review process is a well-established way of improving the quality of design of developments and it is recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework. This is essentially a means for reviewing schemes with an independent, multi-disciplinary panel of built environment experts. Schemes can be reviewed at all stages of the planning application process but the ideal time for a review is at the concept/pre-application stage to benefit most from the review adding value to the design. There are existing Design Review panels who could provide this service. Please contact the Council for more information.

+ **Additional useful and interesting resources:**
- South Oxfordshire District Council pre-application advice service
- Southvale Building Control Service
- BobMK Design Review Panel
- Design Council CABE
- Design Review Principles and Practice (Design Council, 2013)
- Design South East

The Design Process

Appoint your Design Team → Consider a Design Competition?

Pre-application Advice Service ← understand the Planning Context → understand the Building Regulations

Public Consultation Stage 1 — Southvale Building Control Service

Design Review Stage 1

Refine your design in response to Feedback

To the council ← Explain how you have responded to Feedback

To the Public Stage 2

Design Review Stage 2

Take on board further Comments and submit Planning Application

THE DESIGN TEAM

Who is the design team?

Designing new developments is a collaborative process involving a range of disciplines within the built environment. We believe that it is this creative process of sharing ideas and finding solutions that can enrich and unlock the potential of a site and a development scheme. Urban design helps bring these subjects together to create successful places.

The design team can include the following roles:

- Developer/Agent
- Architect
- Town planner
- Urban designer
- Arboriculturalist
- Archaeologist
- Ecologist
- Landscape architect
- Heritage expert
- Structural engineer

- Highway engineer
- Drainage engineer
- Sustainability expert
- Development economics expert
- Lighting engineer
- Accessibility expert
- Crime prevention design officer
- Housing expert

This list may not be exhaustive and the level of input will of course be proportionate to the scale and type of development and site context.

THE COUNCIL SERVICES

The Council has its own design team made up of the following experts:

- Urban designers
- Town planners
- Arboriculturists
- Ecologists
- Heritage experts
- Landscape architects
- Building control experts

We offer pre-application advice for new development and can draw on our design team to provide specialist input. We offer advice at all stages of the design process and for all scales of developments. For more information about these services, please contact us or visit our website here:

We also have a dedicated team of professionally qualified building surveyors and support staff providing a responsive customer focused service dedicated to delivering high quality advice, technical support, plan assessment and site inspections for a full range of projects. For more information about these services, please contact us or visit our website here:

Additional useful and interesting resources:
- South Oxfordshire pre-application advice service
- Southvale Building Control Service

HOW TO DO IT

WHO TO CONSULT

Design is a multidisciplinary, collaborative process with a balanced input from specialist disciplines. These may include urban design, architecture, landscape, highways, ecology, highways, heritage, archaeology, flooding etc. Next to having these specialists, if appropriate, as part of the design team, it is important to consult the relevant offices within the local authority. This should be done as early in the design process as possible.

Statutory authorities and organisations that might be relevant to consult to provide initial advice:

- Specialist Council officers (who cover urban design, landscape, highways, ecology, trees, conservation, equality and building control);
- Town and parish councils;
- Natural England;
- North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team;
- Chilterns Conservation Board;
- Oxfordshire County Council: access, drainage, highways, transport, rights of way, archaeology and cultural heritage, education, libraries, public health, etc.;
- Historic England: Heritage assets;
- Environment Agency: flooding, rivers and pollution;
- Network Rail (for any development that would impact on the network);
- Utility companies;
- Police service: police liaison and crime prevention officer;
- Fire Service;
- Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group;
- Public Health England;
- Sport England;
- National Register of Access Consultants (Southvale Building Control Service can provide accessibility advice in relation to Part M);
- Local civic societies;
- Local interest groups (e.g. young people, access groups, local societies, etc.);
- Guide Dogs UK.

HOW TO CONSULT

This will depend on the scale of the development.

For householder extensions or alterations:

For householder extensions and alterations, we would encourage you to discuss your plans with your neighbours before you submit a planning application. We would also encourage you to seek pre-application advice from the Council.

For smaller scale developments:

For smaller scale developments such as small residential schemes, changes of use, infill development etc. we would still encourage you to discuss the scheme with all potentially affected neighbours as well as the Parish or Town Council.

For larger scale developments:

If the scheme falls within the definition of a 'major' application, we strongly encourage applicants to contact neighbours and those in the vicinity and to consider arranging a meeting with relevant local residents and amenity groups or other appropriate publicity. The means of notification should be appropriate to the relevant development.

+ Additional useful and interesting resources:
- Commonplace
- Sticky World

Proposals for

Elms Park

from the children at John Hampden Primary School in Thame

Public Consultations and Exhibitions

Workshops

Consultant Meetings

THIS IS SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE

KEY FACTS

The district

South Oxfordshire is an exceptionally beautiful area, rich in architecture of different periods, styles and materials with almost half of the district designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As well as respecting and enhancing the existing natural and built environment of South Oxfordshire, the Council expects the design of new development to be similarly outstanding for the benefit of local residents, visitors and future generations. South Oxfordshire has been named the best place to live in the UK countryside in 2016.

The district of South Oxfordshire covers nearly 670km². Its boundaries reach from the edge of the city of Oxford in the north west along the borders of Buckinghamshire and Berkshire to the outskirts of Reading in the south. It has four main towns: Didcot, Henley, Thame and Wallingford, with Didcot becoming increasingly dominant as the main urban centre.
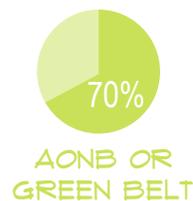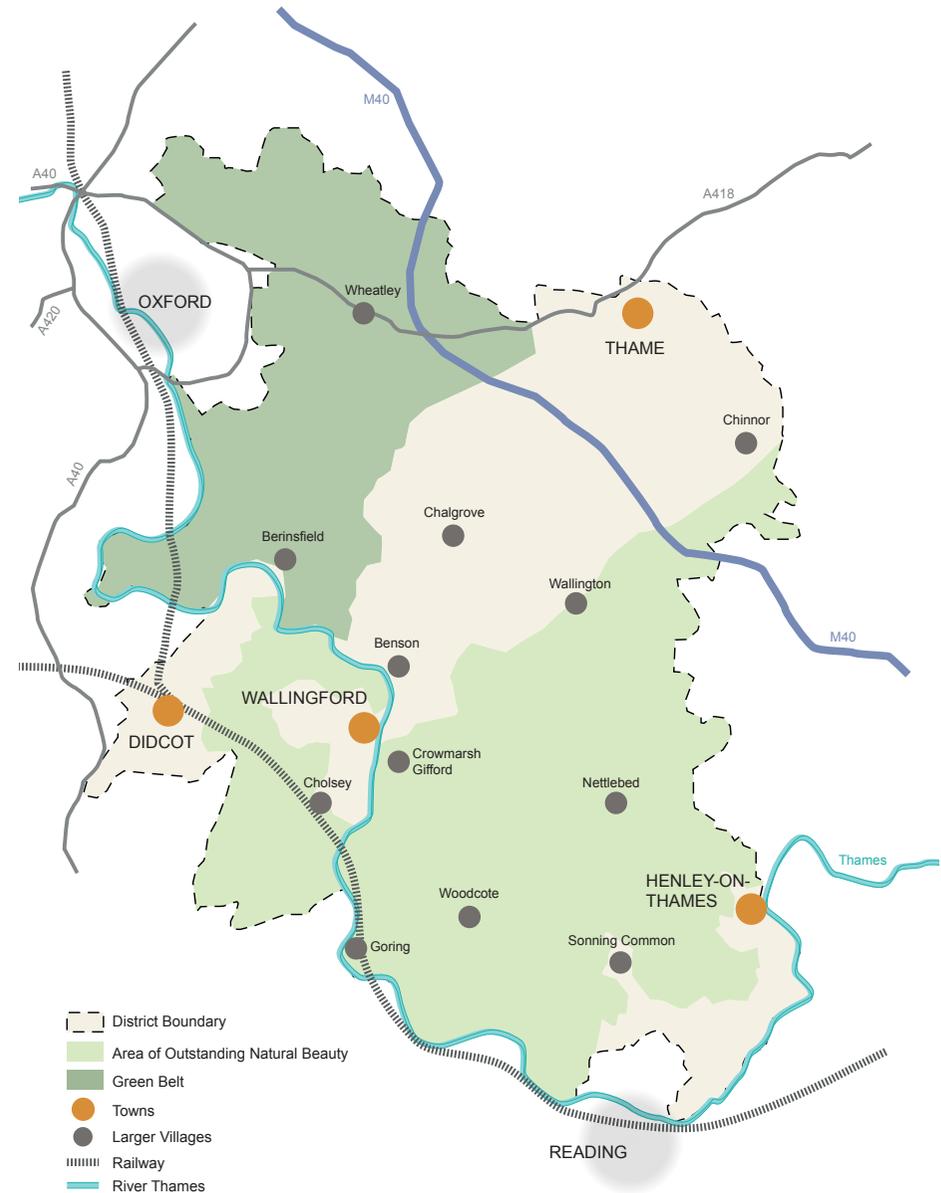
Much of the district is predominantly rural in nature, with most of the land being in agricultural use. The main exception to this is the south east where the wooded Chiltern Hills rise sharply from the Thames Valley. Most of the southern end of the district sits in either of the Chilterns or North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The north east of the district forms part of the Oxford Green Belt. In total, around 70% of the district has a Green Belt or AONB designation.

Population

South Oxfordshire District has a growing population, which has increased by 15% in the last 20 years. 40% of the population now lives in the main towns of Didcot, Henley, Thame and Wallingford. Didcot is the largest settlement and is expected to accommodate 25% of the district's population over the next 10 years.

Economy

The District has a mixed economy where smaller rather than larger enterprises are typical. There is very little heavy industry and an increasingly dominant service sector. A significant proportion of the district's population commutes to work outside the area, principally along the M40/M4 road corridors to London and by rail from Didcot Parkway and Reading to London. Agriculture remains an important land use within the district. Tourism plays an important part in the district's economy, centring on the Thames and Chilterns. There are also important links to the surrounding tourist hot spots of Oxford, Windsor and the Cotswolds.
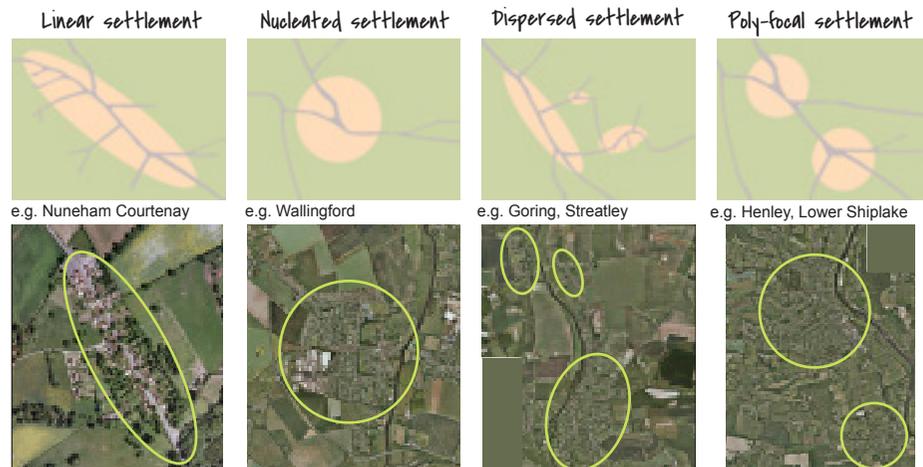
670 KM²

70%
AONB OR GREEN BELT

40% IN MAIN TOWNS

District Boundary
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Green Belt
Towns
Larger Villages
Railway
River Thames

CHARACTER AREAS

Landscape character

South Oxfordshire is a predominantly rural district which embraces a diverse pattern of landscapes, identified in the South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment. These broad landscape character areas are described on the following pages and represent a key consideration when assessing new development proposals.

Settlement patterns

The settlement patterns in South Oxfordshire can be arranged into four different types, each of which has evolved over time. **Nucleated settlements** (compact, with development concentrated in the core, historically formed around a significant building such as a manor house or a church), **poly-focal settlements** (development concentrated in more than one core, developed around several important buildings, frequently eroded over time due to development filling the gaps), **linear settlements** (with a distinctive ribbon form, development concentrated along a primary road, depth of development generally narrow with views of the surrounding countryside from within the settlement) and **dispersed settlements** (evolved around separate original manors or separate farm groups forming foci for development, open land is a key component, later infill can reduce the openness of these settlements). Consider using figure ground diagrams to understand settlement patterns (a black and white contrast plan showing built-up and unbuilt areas).

Linear settlement | Nucleated settlement | Dispersed settlement | Poly-focal settlement

e.g. Nuneham Courtenay | e.g. Wallingford | e.g. Goring, Streatley | e.g. Henley, Lower Shiplake

+ Additional useful and interesting resources:
- South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment SPG (2003)
- Chilterns Building Design Guide (CCB, 2nd edition, 2010)

South Oxfordshire Character Areas

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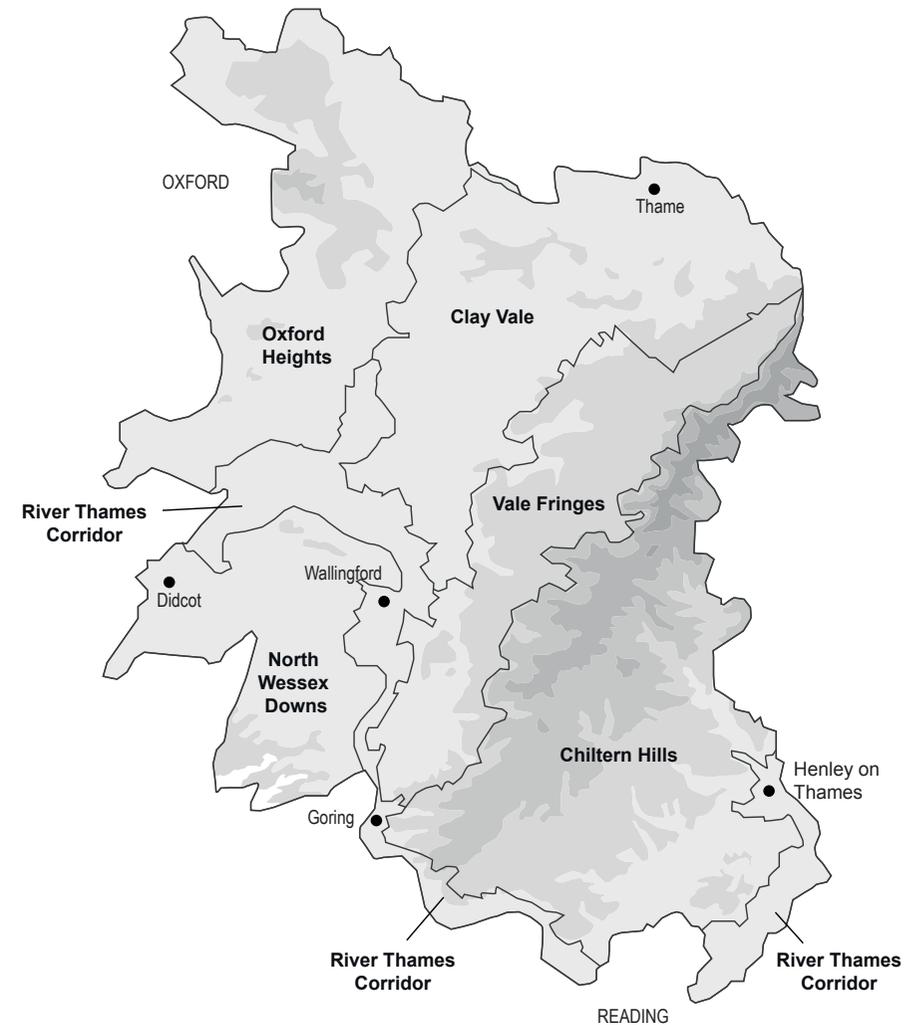
THIS IS SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE

CHARACTER AREAS

AREA	LANDFORM AND LANDSCAPE	SETTLEMENT PATTERNS
THE OXFORD HEIGHTS	The area forms a belt of low limestone hills and ridges that surround Oxford and separates the low-lying clay vales which lie to the north and the south.	Villages are generally found on hilltops and ridges, some of which have spread into nearby valleys. A network of narrow, winding lanes connect the villages with each other.
THE CLAY VALE	The area embraces the lowland agricultural landscape of the central clay vale, which lies between the hills of the mid-vale Ridge and the chalk of the Chiltern Hills. The landscape character is remarkably unvarying, dominated by gently rolling or undulating landform.	The settlements are situated on high ground made up of sandstones and mudstones. Settlement pattern is strongly influenced by physical factors. The heavy clay soils and a risk of flooding have traditionally discouraged settlement on areas underlain by the Gault Clay.
THE RIVER THAMES CORRIDOR	This area covers the flat and low-lying flood plain of the River Thames and the lower part of its main tributary, the River Thames.	The area includes a string of riverside towns and settlements, many of which originated as favoured sites on the terrace gravels above the most flood prone areas.
THE VALE FRINGES	A distinctive belt of low, rounded hills and grey, flinty soils follows the base of the Chiltern escarpment and forms a transitional zone between the chalk uplands and the low-lying Clay Vale and River Thames floodplain.	Many settlements were originally nucleated in form, with buildings clustered around a church and central open space. During the last two centuries many villages have developed a more linear form. The south of the belt is more sparsely settled and characterised by a dispersed pattern of farmsteads with a few small nucleated villages and straggling rows of houses.
THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AND WESTERN VALE FRINGES	This area is part of the north face of the North Wessex Downs. It is typical chalkland scenery made up of smoothly rounded open hills and dry and wooded valleys.	Settlements are typically clustered along the foot of the Downs. Many of the villages have a typically nucleated form.
THE CHILTERN HILLS	A tilted layer of Upper Chalk produces the dramatic, steep scarp face to the north west, while the gentle dip slope falls to the south east. Extensive deposits of clay-with-flints lie over the plateau and are covered by broad-leaved woodland with small areas of heath and grass common land.	Settlements typically have a loose, linear form and many are associated with a village green or larger area of common land.

LOCAL MATERIALS

Walls: Older houses made from the local Corallian limestone with timber lintels. In higher status houses, stonework and dressed stone for quoins and around windows and doors
Roofs: Plain clay tiles or thatch.
Plot division: High stone walls.

Walls: Local stone with brick sometimes used for dressings. In Thame, a range of materials has been used: Timber framed, brick in a variety of patterns and colours, local stone for side and back walls. Slate has also been used since the 1800s.
Roofs: Thatch or clay tiles.
Plot boundary: Local stone or hedges (front).

The full range of local materials can be found in the ancient towns of Dorchester and Wallingford. Older buildings are timber framed, including the use of brick for massive chimneys and 'nogging'. Stone and flint are commonly used. Patterned brickwork is the main material from the 18th century and cob can be found in some buildings.

Walls: Locally produced brick, local soft 'clunch' used in association with brick dressings.
Roofs: Thatch or plain clay tiles.

Walls: Timber framed, sometimes with herringbone brick 'nogging'. Flint and 'clunch' with brick dressings as well as tile hanging on older cottages. Barns have low weather boarded walls with great sweeps of plain tiled roofs and projecting wagon porches.
Roofs: Thatch or plain clay tiles, with slate from the 1800s.
Plot boundary: Brick and flint walls and occasionally cob under a thatched roof.

Walls: Red and grey brick with silver-grey vitrified brick. Flint widely used for cottages and smaller farmhouses with plain clay tiles and slate used for roofs. Farmsteads are often characterised by large timber framed barns, typically clad with black, horizontal weatherboarding with gable walls made out of brick and flint.

An example of the buildings found in the Oxford Heights in Wheatley

An example of contemporary buildings found in the Clay Vale in Thame

An example of the buildings found in the River Thames Corridor in Dorchester

An example of the landscape character found in the Vale Fringes in Ewelme

An example of the streetscape character in the North Wessex Downs in West Hagbourne

An example of the building character found in the Chiltern Hills in Watlington

HERITAGE AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Archaeology

Scheduled ancient monuments are statutorily protected. Archaeology in South Oxfordshire is looked after centrally across the whole county by Oxfordshire County Council. The county archaeologists will be consulted on all planning applications and developments which have the potential to harm known archaeological remnants or deposits. Their comments will carry significant weight.

Listed buildings

Listed buildings are buildings that appear on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, administered by Historic England. There are over 3,500 listed buildings in South Oxfordshire which are statutorily protected and recognised in Government's national policy and guidance as irreplaceable assets. As well as houses and cottages, they also include structures such as bridges, memorials, telephone kiosks and gravestones that are chosen for a number of reasons, including their architectural style, historical associations, construction methods or their value as part of an attractive group.

The South Oxfordshire Design Guide does not override listed building considerations. Listed building consent will be necessary to alter or extend (or to demolish part of) a listed building in any way that affects its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest. This includes the interior of a building as well as its exterior.

Conservation areas

A conservation area is an area of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance'. They may also include unlisted historic or modern buildings which can contribute to the streetscape as well as open spaces, trees or any other features of local interest.

There are 72 conservation areas in South Oxfordshire. The main purpose of conservation area designation is to acknowledge the special character of an area. Within these areas, permitted development rights are restricted: applications for planning permission are required for certain types of work that would not normally need consent.

Some conservation areas have an additional level of control called an Article 4 direction, protecting the façade of a property from works which may otherwise be permitted, but that have the potential to harm the special interest of that specific area.

Other historic environment designated heritage assets

South Oxfordshire has 52 Scheduled Monuments (a 'nationally important' archaeological site or historic building, given protection against unauthorised change), 12 Registered Parks and Gardens and 1 Registered Battlefield site in Chalgrove. Locally important and designated heritage assets are identified in conservation area appraisals.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The beauty of the district is recognised in two AONBs which are North Wessex Downs and the Chilterns.

+ 3,500 LISTED BUILDINGS

72 CONSERVATION AREAS

52 SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

12 REGISTERED PARKS

1 REGISTERED BATTLEFIELD

2 AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Natural Environment

South Oxfordshire contains a rich variety of natural habitats of local, national and international importance. There are a total of 192 designated nature conservation sites and numerous records for nationally and internationally protected species. The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) holds records for all known protected habitats and species and should be contacted at a very early stage in the planning process to ensure there are no issues that are likely to prevent or significantly constrain development opportunities.

Ecological surveys should be conducted at an early stage in the design process to ensure any constraints identified can be successfully integrated into the design. As many ecological surveys are seasonal in nature, it is advisable to ensure sufficient time is allowed to conduct the required surveys and incorporate the results into the proposals before the submission of a planning application.

All designs should aim to achieve a no net loss of biodiversity with enhancements wherever possible. To help designers in understanding the impacts of development proposals we recommend the use of biodiversity accounting. Biodiversity accounting measures the biodiversity value of the site prior to the development (the baseline condition) as described in the ecological survey report. It then values the site post development to determine if it achieves a no net loss.

Additional useful and interesting resources:

- Planning Practice Guidance on alterations and extensions to listed buildings
- National Heritage List for England (NHLE): database of all nationally designated heritage assets
- List of designated conservation areas in South Oxfordshire with character appraisals, management plans and interactive conservation area map
- Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record
- Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation
- Biodiversity technical document
- Guidance on application for planning permission and for relevant demolition in a conservation area
- Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology website
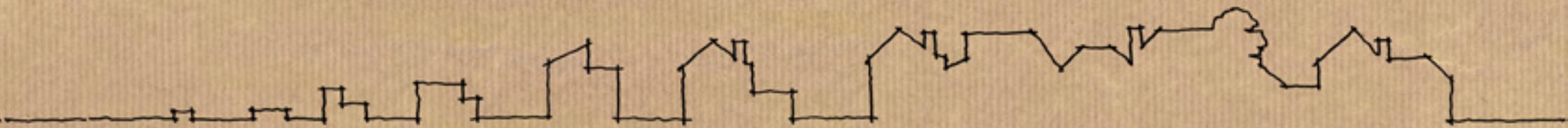- Chilterns Building Design Guide (CCB, 2nd edition, 2010)

Heritage and the natural environment to be found in South Oxfordshire

PART 2

THE STEPS TO TAKE

UNDERSTANDING THE SITE'S FEATURES AND ITS SETTING

GOAL: Identifying the site's features and its context

One of the first things to consider before designing a development is to look beyond the red line of the application site. This is the site context. To do this, you should undertake a contextual analysis which will then be submitted to support your pre-application enquiry or planning application.

A contextual analysis identifies the context within which the application site is set. This should consider the structure and history of the settlement within which it is located or relates to, the character of the landscape, biodiversity, the streets and spaces and the built form. The level of detail in the analysis should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the development proposals.

Every site feature identified provides an opportunity to shape your design, even where they may initially appear to limit what you are able to achieve. Imaginative solutions to incorporate site features can give developments a unique character and can form the basis of your design rationale.

You need to identify and take account of the site features at the outset of the design process as they are very rarely successfully retrofitted into a design at a later stage. There should be a clear drawing trail showing how the design of the development has evolved.

DEVELOPING A DESIGN RATIONALE

GOAL: Using the site's features and context to shape your design

A design rationale is an explanation of the reasons behind the design decisions made. Developing a design rationale is important both as a basis for discovering workable and imaginative urban design options and in providing a supporting argument for them.

When developing a design rationale, think about whether there is something from the site that can enhance place-identity. Landform, vegetation, archaeological features, etc. all provide elements that the design can be based upon and inspired by.

When thinking of creating different character areas in a development, move away from notional character areas. Use the existing site features to inform where these may naturally occur. Do not tightly define character area boundaries but make sure to have a gradual transition between them. Focus on the character of the streets as a way of creating attractive and defined spaces.

Opportunities and constraints plan

+ Additional useful and interesting resources:
- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 6. Working with the site and its context
- Urban Design Compendium (3rd ed., HCA and Studio REAL, 2013) – 2.2 Place
- Quality Reviewer (HCA, 2010)
- Placecheck and character appraisals tool kits
- South Oxfordshire District Council Developers guidance on Air Quality
- South Oxfordshire Conservation Area Appraisals
- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England, 2008)

Extended existing PROW to create green corridor providing east-west pedestrian and cycle links

Extended footpath links through development

Historic core

Woodland

Primary tree belts retained

Existing public right of way enhanced

Self-contained development cluster

New development zones working with existing landscape features, assets and constraints

Development core at key nodal point

Key frontage to existing road to address views from AONB: positive edge to development

Potential future development

Primary hedgerow network retained

Not to scale

Develop a design rationale based around the site's features, opportunities and constraints

Inform your design:

Prepare a **contextual analysis** that identifies the wider and local context within which the application site is set. This should consider the structure and history of the settlement within which it is located or which it relates to as well as the character of the landscape, biodiversity, streets and spaces and the built form.

In addition, technical studies including (but not limited to) surveys on landform, watercourses, trees, habitats, species, etc. Agree the scope of a landscape and visual impact assessment with the local authority.

Communicate your design visually:

An opportunities and constraints plan with a clear key.

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

A contextual analysis including an opportunities and constraints plan (which will inform your design rationale) of the wider and immediate site context has been prepared. It identifies the following both within the site and beyond the site boundary:

		Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
1.1	existing networks of natural features, including watercourses, trees, hedgerow, green spaces, field patterns, habitats and public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways, etc.);		
1.2	the landscape character, natural features and topography highlighting visually prominent areas. This includes existing landscape features, water features, trees and hedges, views and skyline;		
1.3	attractive and/or sensitive views (both of and from built and natural features) into, out of and within the site;		
1.4	buildings and structures of historical importance including listed buildings, conservation areas and archaeological remains;		
1.5	potential barriers to development such as railway lines, utilities, pipelines, noise, pollution, major roads, land contamination, etc.;		
1.6	the land uses adjacent to the site and how these will impact on the design/treatment of the edges of the development - identify how each edge of the development site will address the adjacent uses;		
1.7	the settlement structure of the site and surrounding area: This includes studying the historical development of the settlement, the existing connections, the structure and hierarchy of streets and spaces, the **townscape**, the place-identity, density, gateways, nodes, plot and block sizes. Figure ground diagrams can help understand a settlement structure;		
1.8	the streets and public spaces surrounding the site: The enclosure of streets and public open spaces, the layout and form of spaces and the public and private interface;		
1.9	the built character: The scale, form and massing of the built environment, treatment of building frontages and boundaries, building types and materials.		

NATURAL FEATURES AND RESOURCES

GOAL: Working with and enhancing the natural features and resources of the site

The physical features of a site include its topography, orientation, landform, geology, drainage patterns, field patterns/boundaries and vegetation cover, for example.

A site's natural resources includes the amount of daylight, sunlight, wind and rainwater that the site benefits from. You should use these resources positively to benefit the intended users of your development and ensure that it does not have a negative impact on neighbouring properties and spaces.

New development should not be 'hidden away'. Trying to reduce the impact of new development by simply hiding it behind a landscape buffer does not deliver high quality development. New development should be respectful of its setting within the landscape.

Technical studies will show you whether there are any features with a high biodiversity or ecological value. These features could include surface water features, mature trees and other planting. This technical information is needed to support your application.

+ Additional useful and interesting resources:

- South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)
- Biodiversity by Design – A Guide for sustainable communities (TCPA, 2004)
- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 6. Working with the site and its context
- Planning for a healthy environment - good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity (TCPA and The Wildlife Trusts, 2012)
- Check supporting technical documents of this guide (landscape, sustainable energy, biodiversity and trees)
- The SuDS Manual (CIRIA, 2016)

Terms for glossary:

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) – a more natural way of draining surface water from a site than routing the water through a pipe to a watercourse

Townscape - the urban equivalent of landscape: The overall effects of the combination of buildings, spaces views and features
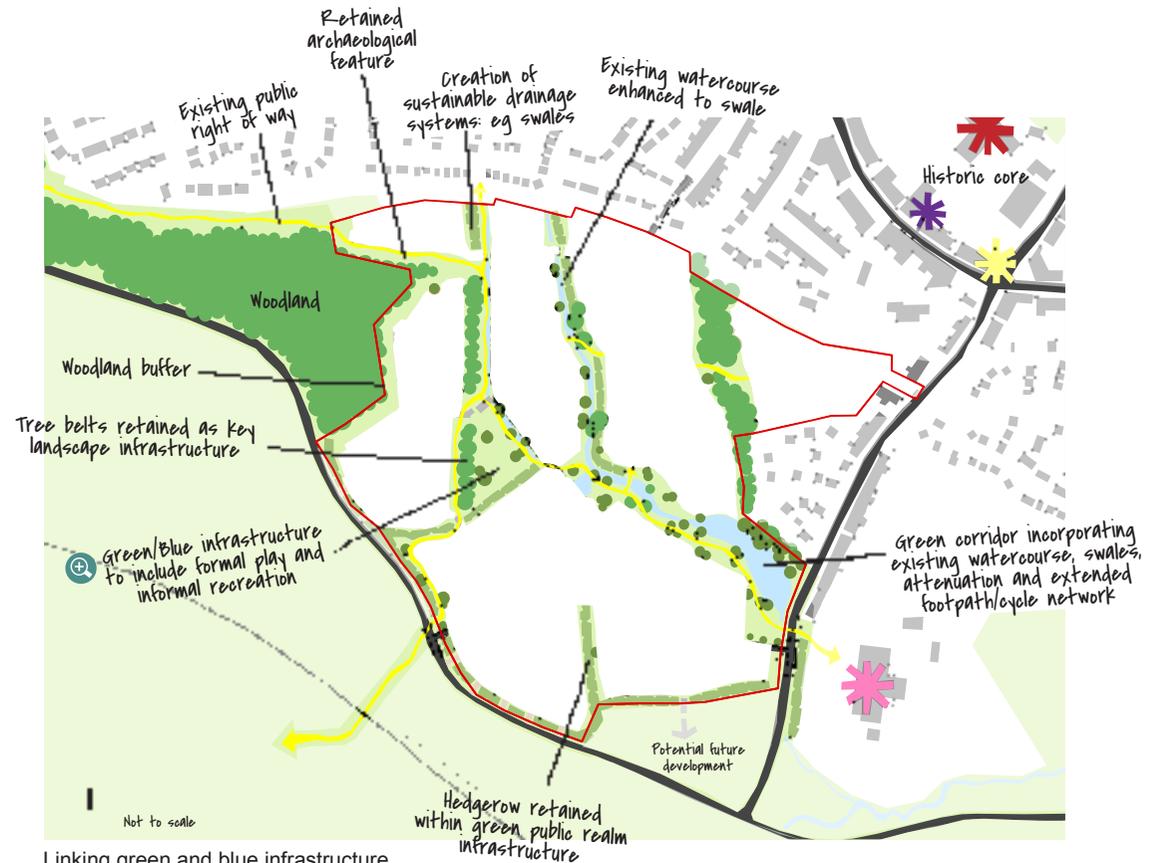
Linking green and blue infrastructure

ⓘ Inform your design:

Technical studies including (but not limited to) surveys on trees, habitats, species etc.

⇄ Communicate your design visually:

- Prepare a Landscape Strategy that sets out your plan for your development's landscape including details of how the existing landscape and biodiversity features on the site will be maintained and managed;
- Demonstrate how the features of **Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)**, e.g. retaining ponds and swales, will be integrated into the development's landscape.

Example of open space as an integral part of a development

Example of successfully incorporated mature trees and sustainable drainage systems into the network of streets and open spaces (Cholsey, South Oxfordshire and Upton, Northampton)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

Ensure the scheme:

		Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
2.1	uses the physical features of the site and the results of technical studies positively/ imaginatively in its design;	☐	
2.2	is designed to maximise the benefits of natural resources and does not negatively impact on the benefits enjoyed to neighbouring properties and spaces;	☐	
2.3	strengthens and retains wherever possible the site's landscape features including field patterns and those with a high biodiversity/ecological value such as hedgerows and ponds;	☐	
2.4	creatively integrates and enhances the survival of archaeological remains and features;	☐	
2.5	retains and creates views in and out of the site to prominent landscape features and landmarks;	☐	
2.6	creates new habitats to increase the number of species on site;	☐	
2.7	has a joined up network of open spaces which form an integral part of the development and should be located where existing and new residents can access them easily. Open spaces are not located on the edge of the development or where there is 'left over space';	☐	
2.8	does not use landscape as a barrier between new and existing development and is therefore integrated into the development;	☐	
2.9	recognises and works with noise or smells from neighbouring uses (e.g. sewage treatment works, railway line, a ring road etc.);	☐	
2.10	identifies noise, air quality and contaminated land sources to inform the orientation and location of a development. The same for air quality, and contaminated land may also alter where they put the habitable spaces compared to car parks etc.;	☐	
2.11	has 'Sustainable Drainage Systems' that is an integral part of the development's open space network.	☐	

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CREATING A NETWORK OF PATHS AND STREETS

GOAL: A place that is easy to get to and move through for all users

When creating a network of paths and streets, remember that these are some of the most permanent features of our built environment. The street network needs to cater for different modes of transport and different users.

Designers are always keen to promote sustainable transport choices. There is often a misconception that the best way to prioritise walking and cycling is by restricting the movement of cars through the use of **culs-de-sac** for example. However this commonly results in a more engineered, car dominant environment. It is also land inefficient and causes confusion and frustration. Connected environments work best for all users and all modes of transport. In designing, when we refer to all users we mean everyone who could live, work or visit the development. This includes people with disabilities, parents, carers, pregnant women and older people.

Prioritising walking and cycling should be addressed as part of the design of the streets rather than simply reducing the connectivity of the development. By avoiding culs-de-sac you will provide people choice of movement. By offering options for movement, traffic gets dispersed. Think about different users' experience as they travel through the site (e.g. blank façades in the public realm do not provide an attractive experience from a pedestrian point of view). Think about who your users are and how they are likely to use the space throughout the day.

Movement strategy and **street hierarchy**

⊕ **Additional useful and interesting resources:**
- Manual for Streets 1 (DfT, 2007) and 2 (ICHT, 2010)
- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 1. Connections and 8. Easy to find your way around
- Planning Healthy Weight Environments (TCPA and Public Health England, 2014)
- Shared Space (DfT, 2011) and Inclusive Mobility (DfT, 2005)
- Living Streets: The UK charity for everyday walking
- Space Syntax

📑 **Terms for glossary:**

Cul-de-sac/private drive layouts – streets that are closed at one end, also known as no-through roads

Street hierarchy – the order or ranking of a street within a development. A standard hierarchy normally contains the following: Primary street, secondary street, tertiary street

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ⓘ **Inform your design:**
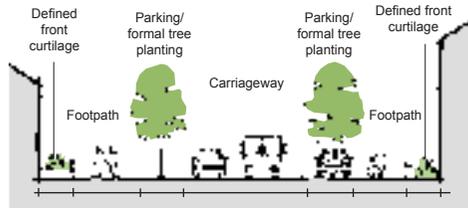Traffic modelling/survey.
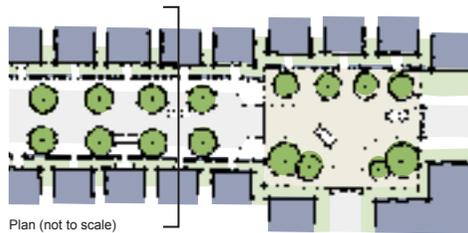
⇄ **Communicate your design visually:**
- Prepare a movement strategy that sets out the network of streets and spaces and their hierarchy. This plan should also show how this connects to existing streets and paths;
- The local authority requires that travel assessments and travel plans are prepared for certain types of development. Check Local Plan policies.

Different street types as part of the street hierarchy and their characters
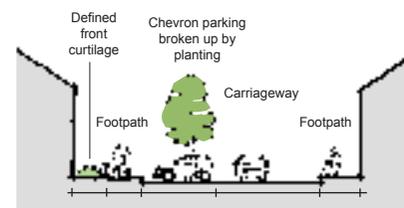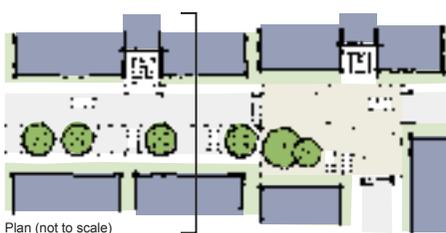
PRIMARY STREET

Defined front curtilage

Parking/ formal tree planting

Parking/ formal tree planting

Defined front curtilage

Carriageway

Footpath

Footpath

Section

Plan (not to scale)

SECONDARY STREET

Defined front curtilage

Chevron parking broken up by planting

Carriageway

Footpath

Footpath

Section

Plan (not to scale)

INFORMAL MEWS COURT

Shared surface for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists; informal parking

Informal landscaping and planting
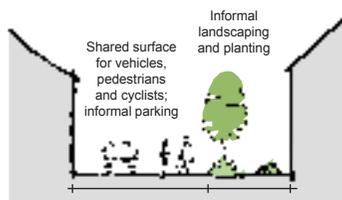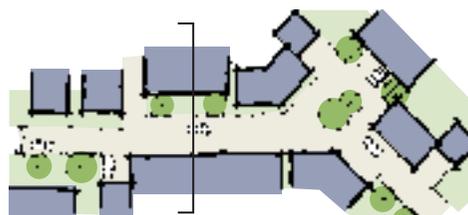
Section

Plan (not to scale)

PRIVATE DRIVE / TERTIARY STREET

Informal landscaping integrated with park planting

Shared surface for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists; informal parking

Front curtilage
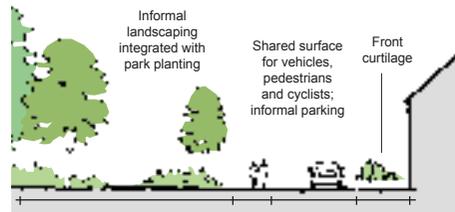
Section
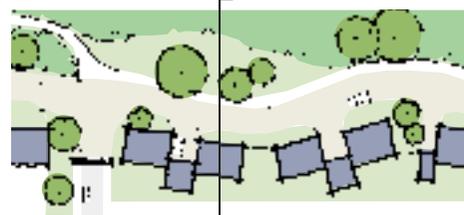
Plan (not to scale)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

Ensure the scheme:

3.1 has a network of streets and spaces that connect with each other and create a choice of routes for all users and all modes of transport;

3.2 has a clear and logical order of streets – often referred to as a **'street hierarchy'** - that use a range of street types. These can be identified by their differing features including their width, enclosure, frontage, parking arrangements, how connected they are to each other, a range of uses, landscaping and materials;

3.3 has streets where buildings rather than the highway are visually dominant;

3.4 provides links to neighbouring land that could be developed in the future making them an integral part of the street network and hierarchy;

3.5 connects to existing streets and paths and creates direct, safe and attractive links for all users whilst avoiding 'cul-de-sac' layouts;

3.6 provides direct pedestrian and cycle links to local services and facilities that follow natural desire lines and uses the features identified in the opportunities plan to create a visually interesting and attractive route;

3.7 locates facilities and services within a short walking distance of homes (5 to 10 minutes) and provides easy access for existing and new residents.

3.8 provides bus stops within a five minute walk (400m) of homes, is preferably 600m from a primary school and 1500m from a secondary school, and where possible, close to local services and facilities;

3.9 encourage movement by prioritising the needs of pedestrians, people with disabilities, cyclists and public transport users over the needs of motorists;

3.10 takes into account different users' experiences as they travel through the site and include a safe and manageable route for wheelchairs/ pushchairs including dropped kerbs (a minimum of 2m footpath).

Meets criteria | If not, reason for not meeting

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4 DEVELOPMENT BLOCKS

DENSITY AND USES

GOAL: Using an appropriate scale and density to create a place of a human scale

The appropriate size for a **perimeter block** is large enough to fit adequate amenity space and parking, yet small enough to allow a **permeable** and walkable street pattern.

Density should be appropriate to the location, respond to and/ or enhance the character of the existing settlement. For larger development proposals, a range of densities, building types and forms will be required. Increased densities should be focused around key movement intersections, along strategic routes, overlooking public spaces and within neighbourhood, local and village centres. This varied density profile adds character and interest, supports local facilities and public transport and can provide the building mass to create strong framing of public spaces.

Successful communities require a full range of local services and facilities, including commercial, live-work units, educational, health, spiritual and civic uses. These need to be conveniently sited and connected to residential areas by safe and comfortable routes. Cluster facilities around a high quality public realm or public space as a central focus. This could range from a village green, a small public square to a simple widening of the street.

Establishing streets and blocks

Labels on diagram:
- Creation of sustainable drainage systems
- Existing public right of way
- Existing watercourse enhanced to swale
- Historic core
- Woodland
- Tree belts retained as key landscape infrastructure
- Central nodal junction: creation of community focus
- Green/blue infrastructure to include formal play and informal recreation
- Green corridor incorporating existing watercourse, swales, attenuation and extended footpath/cycle network
- Primary route with appropriate landscaping
- Primary route with appropriate landscaping
- Potential future development
- Hedgerows retained within green public realm
- Not to scale

Additional useful and interesting resources:
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Urban Design Compendium (3rd ed., HCA and Studio REAL, 2013) – 3. Creating the urban structure
- Valuing Sustainable Urbanism (Prince's Foundation, 2007)
- Building for Life 12 (2015)– 2. Facilities and services and 4. Meeting local housing requirements
- Check supporting technical documents of this guide

Terms for glossary:

Perimeter Blocks - development blocks where buildings front onto streets and spaces and back onto rear gardens

Permeable - easy to move through

Inform your design:
Technical studies including sun paths (sun angle diagrams) and wind modelling, where needed.

Communicate your design visually:
- Share the results of sun path and wind tunnelling modelling;
- Prepare a plan showing the distribution of uses and the mix of house types and tenures. It is useful to also prepare a table showing this information;
- Prepare a plan showing the location of landmark buildings and focal points;
- Prepare a plan showing the walking routes and related distances to local facilities and services (not 'as the crow flies').

A typical example of a perimeter block

Creating usable and accessible facilities within walking distance (Didcot Orchard Centre)

Using public art and changes in material to create local 'landmarks' and focal points (Portishead)

Example for a soft edge of the site connecting to the surrounding landscape (Poundbury)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

Ensure the scheme:

		Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
4.1	consists of **perimeter blocks** that respond to the pattern and shape of blocks in the local area;	☐	
4.2	uses a range of appropriate densities that do not detract from the character of the local area and uses land efficiently. Increased densities are focused around key movement intersections, along strategic routes, overlooking public spaces and within neighbourhood, local and village centres;	☐	
4.3	places landmark buildings and focal points in prominent locations that help people to navigate and remember the network and order of streets and spaces;	☐	
4.4	positions buildings to make the most of the benefits of daylight and sunlight (provide a sun angle diagram and incorporate active solar energy systems);	☐	
4.5	has regard to microclimate so as not to create areas with too much shade throughout the day or a wind tunnel effect;	☐	
4.6	has a mix of uses, housing types and tenures that meet local and district needs, are justified in terms of planning policy and viability, and takes account of the ageing population and needs of people with disabilities;	☐	
4.7	addresses the edges of the site in a positive way by facing properties outwards and not placing side and rear fences next to the public realm or the countryside;	☐	
4.8	will not result in a conflict between uses which could arise from issues with noise and/ or odour (for example, pubs, outdoor cafes, loading bays).	☐	

CREATING DEFINITION AND ENCLOSURE

GOAL: Attractive streets and spaces defined by buildings rather than the highway

Designers often talk about the definition and enclosure of streets and spaces. This simply means how the height and width of the buildings and the gaps between them relate to the width of the street or space in front of them and the buildings on the other side.

Enclosure is mostly created by a strong building line but also by well defined boundaries and street trees. You can also use enclosure to create variety and visual interest with subtle changes in street widths, building heights, and street angles. This can help an attractive street scene unfold at a human scale and provide opportunities to surprise and delight with these changes.

The boundary treatment between public and private spaces can take many forms including planting, hedges, walls and fencing. Sometimes it is appropriate to have a physical barrier, for example, the change from public to private space can be shown by a change in materials. Your choice of boundary treatment should reflect the high quality treatments used in the local area. It is important to provide a clear distinction between public and private space.

Relationship of frontages to streets and spaces

Additional useful and interesting resources:

- Urban Design Compendium (3rd ed., HCA and Studio REAL, 2013) – 3. Creating the urban structure
- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 7. Creating well defined streets and spaces

Terms for glossary:

Habitable rooms – Any room that is used for living and/or eating, cooking or sleeping. Enclosed spaces such as bath or toilet facilities, service rooms, corridors, laundries, hallways and utility rooms are excluded from this definition.

Inform your design:

Assessment of street definition and enclosure in the local area – the relationship between building heights and street widths and the continuity of buildings along the streets (the gaps between buildings and their distance from the street edge).

Communicate your design visually:

- Demonstrate how the definition and enclosure of the streets and spaces reflect that of the local area;
- Prepare a plan showing the location of all building frontages, main entrances and front doors;
- Provide details of the boundary treatment to be used including the height.

Main entrances provide direct access to the street and as a result natural surveillance (Upton, Northamptonshire)

Distinction between public and private space (Dorchester-on-Thames)

Windows to primary/ **habitable rooms** provide natural surveillance of the street (Newhall, Harlow)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

Ensure that the streets and spaces:

		Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
5.1	are defined and enclosed by buildings with a human scale;	☐	
5.2	are well overlooked by windows serving ground floor and first floor **habitable rooms** (this is known as 'natural surveillance');	☐	
5.3	are fronted by main entrances/front doors which provide direct access to the street or space (this is known as an 'active frontage' or 'active edge');	☐	
5.4	are defined by boundaries that reflects the character of the area and that do not limit the amount of natural surveillance from adjacent buildings but clearly differentiates public space from private space;	☐	
5.5	provide residents of the adjacent buildings their privacy by providing a sufficient amount of private space between public and/or communal spaces and the adjacent buildings (also known as 'semi-private' space);	☐	
5.6	avoid awkward/ vulnerable corners which may arise from left over space in order to ensure land efficiency, a clear definition of public and private space, avoid ambiguity of ownership and providing security.	☐	

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STREET DESIGN

GOAL: Streets and spaces designed for everyone where people can rest, gather and socialise

Streets and spaces are the public face of our towns and villages where people walk, meet, rest and interact. They are also often the most permanent features of our built environment. An attractive **public realm** enhances people's quality of life and the perception of a place.

The quality of our streets and spaces can be undermined by overly engineered traffic calming measures such as speed humps. This type of traffic calming is unattractive and can be frustrating for all transport modes. Natural methods of traffic calming can include narrowing down the carriageway, use of planting and build outs to incorporate street trees, use of on-street parking, change of colour/ materials, use of shared surfaces, varying the alignment of the vehicular route, use of tight junction radii. When designing turning areas, think of imaginative solutions as they do not always need to be formal. Also remember that Sustainable Drainage Systems can be incorporated into street designs and used imaginatively to provide unique features that help identify a specific order of street or signal an important route through a site.

If you design for the elderly and disabled, you are designing for all. This is inclusive design. Research has shown that sensory-rich environments are places that attract a diverse range of visitors and have benefits for disabled people - particularly those with sensory impairments such as visual impairment or learning disabilities. Provide a range of opportunities for people to engage with a place through their senses.

Streets and spaces are the public face of our towns and villages (Sutton Courtenay, Henley-on-Thames and Copenhagen, Denmark)

⊕ Additional useful and interesting resources:
- Manual for Streets 1 (DfT, 2007) and 2 (ICHT, 2010)
- Shared Space (DfT, 2011) and Building Regulations Part M (2015)
- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 9. Streets for all
- Streets for all (English Heritage, 2004)
- Urban Design Compendium (3rd ed., HCA and Studio REAL, 2013)
- Soundscapes of European Cities (COST, 2013)
- Oxfordshire Transport and Access Group (OXSTRAG)

▤ Terms for glossary:

Street furniture – this includes street signs, posts, lighting columns, seating and items that are placed within streets and spaces

Public realm – Any publicly owned streets, pathways, rights of way, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities.

ⓘ Inform your design:
- Use your Movement Strategy to inform the detailed design of your streets. Make sure that the design of a street reflects its order in the street hierarchy;
- Use your Landscape Strategy to identify appropriate trees and soft landscaping for each street type;
- Seek advice from appropriate professionals (landscape and tree specialists) who can provide advice on what species might be appropriate for your development

⇄ Communicate your design visually:
- Prepare a plan and sections showing the features of each street/order of street and how they work together to create different types of social spaces, including appropriate trees, soft landscaping and **street furniture**;
- Explain how appropriate traffic speeds will be achieved and indicate where natural methods of traffic calming have been integrated into the street design, where needed.

Example of a successfully integrated open space offering space for all users and incorporating planting, seating, play area and sustainable drainage systems (The Triangle, Swindon)

Planting adds to the character of the streetscape and provides a soft and clear boundary between private and public spaces (Newhall, Harlow)

Shared surfaces give priority to pedestrians and create a more informal character (Upton, Northampton)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

The streets and spaces:

		Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
5.7	have been designed as social spaces providing places for people to rest, gather, socialise and spectate;	☐	
5.8	encourage movement by prioritising the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users over the needs of motorists;	☐	
5.9	integrate natural methods of traffic calming within the street design;	☐	
5.10	consider shared surfaces/homezones on lower order streets and/or local centres, next to public spaces, or other appropriate locations. When designing shared surfaces, think about providing tactile strips/colour contrast paving solutions to cater for visually and mobility impaired people;	☐	
5.11	are convenient, safe and easy for all people to use, including people with disabilities;	☐	
5.12	provide continuous and generous footpaths to meet the needs of all users including the visually impaired and to allow enough room for wheelchairs and pushchairs to be used safely and comfortably (2 metres minimum);	☐	
5.13	include trees and soft landscaping that create a distinction in street types/ areas. The species provided must be appropriate to the environment and their location, both at time of planting and maturity;	☐	
5.14	provide opportunities for people to engage with a place through their senses (sensory richness);	☐	
5.15	provide opportunities to have access to space to grow food – for example roof, communal gardens or allotments;	☐	
5.16	must be designed with all users' needs in mind.	☐	

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OPEN SPACE DESIGN

GOAL: A range of open spaces with a clear purpose that are accessible and can be used by all

All open space should have a purpose and be of a size, location and form appropriate for the intended use, avoiding space left over after planning (SLOAP) or pushing open space to the periphery of development. Landscape should not be used as a divisive measure between new and existing development.

New and existing landscapes and open spaces should be linked to form connected green networks. These networks are often more useful for visual amenity, recreational use and wildlife corridors than isolated parks. Where direct links are not possible, it may be appropriate to link these together through green routes, shared surface streets and boulevards. Tree lined avenues can achieve a visual and physical connection to open space.

Open spaces need to offer choice for the needs and desires of all users. For example, outdoor gym equipment, productive gardens, vertical gardens, allotments, etc. By offering choice, you will encourage healthier lifestyle choices. When creating your range of open spaces, it is important to offer choice for all users. Do not forget the importance of quiet spaces where people can simply be (mindfulness).

Play Spaces

The location of play spaces needs to take into account the surrounding context. Factors to consider will be the intended age of the children using the play space, the size of it, the type of equipment and the proximity to existing residential properties. Play spaces should be accessible to all children. Reference should be made to existing national guidance on inclusive play.

Strategic open spaces and green infrastructure

+ Additional useful and interesting resources:

- Urban Design Compendium (3rd ed., HCA and Studio REAL, 2013) – 3.5 Landscape and 5.5 A thriving public realm
- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 11. Public and private spaces
- Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces (Play England, August 2008)
- Public Space Lessons: Designing and planning for play (CABE, 2008).
- Quietening Open Spaces (City of London Corporation, 2010)
- A good practice guide to Disabled People's Access in the countryside (1997)
- Planning for Healthy Weight Environments (TCPA and PHE, 2014)
- Active by Design (Design Council, 2014)

ⓘ Inform your design:

Use your opportunities and constraints plan to identify what types of open space are located in the local area and choose open spaces that will complement and/or add to the range of uses.

⇄ Communicate your design visually:

- Prepare a plan showing the location of the open space and identifying the purpose of each and the type of furniture and equipment provided in the space.
- Explain how the open spaces work together along with existing open spaces in the local area to provide a range of different spaces for the existing and new residents to use.

'urban play':
Play does not have to be swings and roundabouts. In this example, dancing water jets provide play opportunity within an urban context

Areas for adult play: eg running loops and outdoor gyms

Open spaces are well overlooked by neighbouring properties

Inclusion of more open 'kickabout' areas

Network of informal seating spaces focused within green corridor infrastructure

Places to meet, greet and relax: in this case outdoor seating for adjoining cafe

Not to scale

Parking provision at attractor location

Integrated footpath/cycle links create opportunities for informal recreation

Network of informal play spaces focused within green corridor infrastructure

Natural play eg 'beach' for pond dipping

Example of a detailed open space plan showing landscaping, planting, play areas and pedestrian links

Example of informal recreation (Culham)

Example of well integrated formal play benefitting from natural surveillance (Sutton Courtenay)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

The open space(s):

	Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
5.17 are delivered in an early phase;	☐	
5.18 use natural features identified in the opportunities and constraints plan as focal points;	☐	
5.19 are integrated into the landscape of the scheme and located so that residents can access them easily and directly;	☐	
5.20 are linked with existing to form connected green networks along key walking and cycling routes;	☐	
5.21 are not, where possible, pushed to the periphery of the development and are properly integrated to the rest of the development;	☐	
5.22 have a clear purpose and are the right size, shape and layout to fulfil that purpose and meet the needs of all users;	☐	
5.23 are appropriately defined and enclosed by buildings that front the open space and have ground floor windows from habitable rooms providing natural surveillance;	☐	
5.24 include both formal and informal play spaces that can be accessed by all children, whatever their needs;	☐	
5.25 contain furniture and equipment that is robust, durable and varied;	☐	
5.26 are located so that play spaces do not cause disturbance to the occupants of nearby buildings;	☐	
5.27 recognise the need for quiet open spaces which should be preserved and considered in the design;	☐	
5.28 offer choice for the needs and desires of all users (for example an outdoor gym);	☐	
5.29 provide opportunities to have access to community gardens or enough space to grow food (e.g. a roof, allotments, communal gardens or a balcony);	☐	
5.30 are accessible to all users including people with disabilities, parents, carers, pregnant women and older people.	☐	

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STREET FURNITURE, LIGHTING AND PUBLIC ART

GOAL: Provide robust and durable street furniture that contributes to the character and sense of place

The design and location of street furniture needs to be considered as part of the early stages of the design process. It should also take into account the character of the area. Think carefully about the multifunctional role that street furniture can have and the role it can have in enhancing existing character and creating new character.

Design with all users' needs in mind. The regular spacing of street seating on pedestrian routes to facilities should be provided to allow all people the opportunity to rest (in particular, think about the elderly, pregnant women and disabled people). In order to keep the amount of street furniture to a minimum the functions they perform can often be combined. For example, street trees can be protected by a circular bench.

Street furniture as public art (Oxford)

Benches and seating can function as planters or as tree protection (Copenhagen, Denmark)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

The new development should ensure:

	Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
5.31 the amount of street furniture is kept to a minimum - where possible, the functions performed by street furniture have been combined in order to minimise street clutter;		
5.32 the street furniture is simple, high quality, robust and has been informed by the most commonly used high quality street furniture in the local area or the design rationale of the development;		
5.33 the scheme avoids the use of bollards and uses other treatments where they are required;		
5.34 the lighting features follow the design approach used for other street furniture and avoid causing light pollution in sensitive and dark rural areas. Glare must be avoided from any lighting scheme or building design;		
5.35 all users' needs have been considered (inclusive design) and careful consideration is given to the safety and comfort of mobility-impaired and visually-impaired people;		
5.36 an appropriate type of public art and location(s) so that it is well related to the design rationale of the development and creates a place or focus.		

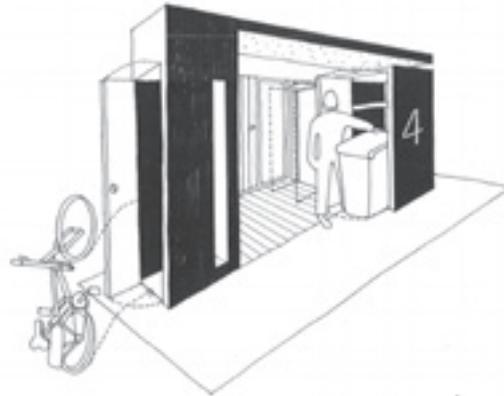Lighting on buildings reduces street clutter and trees are used in place of bollards (Poundbury)

⊕ Additional useful and interesting resources:
- Manual for Streets 1 (DfT, 2007) - C. Detailed design issues
- Guidance for the reduction of obtrusive light (ILE,2012)
- Technical documents of this guide such as public art and trees

Bin storage areas should be considered as part of the architecture (Newhall, Harlow)

Example of a positively integrated utility box (Poundbury)

Example of vacuum systems (Malmö, Sweden)

Communicate your design visually:

- Prepare a plan showing the location of bin storage areas and collection points and the access provided between the two;

- Prepare a plan showing the route that service vehicles can take to access each building/ dwelling, also known as a Swept Path Analysis or Vehicle Tracking Plan;

- Provide details of the treatment of bin storage areas, utility boxes, cable runs and maintenance access points.

STORAGE, SERVICING AND UTILITIES

GOAL: Design in servicing requirements at the outset

The quality of our streets and spaces can be undermined by the clutter of bins, bikes and services if these are not properly designed into the building. The provision and location of utility requirements should be considered at an early stage to minimise potential conflict and reduce the impact. Whilst most utilities run underground they have an impact on where trees may be planted within the public realm and above ground supply boxes can be unsightly. When considering bin storage, think of imaginative solutions that incorporate storage as part of the front façade and visually screened from the street scene or through vacuum systems (used commonly in countries such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Spain).

+ Additional useful and interesting resources:

- South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils' wheeled bin policy and SODC and VWHDC waste planning guidance

- Manual for Streets 1 (DfT, 2007) – 6. Street user's needs

- Waste management in buildings – code of practice, BS5906 (2005)

- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 12. External storage and amenity space

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

Ensure the scheme:

	Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
5.37 provides sufficient space to store bins and containers. The storage areas are convenient for residents (in a communal collection point if necessary or as part of the front elevation) and visually screened from the public realm;		
5.38 provides access between bin storage areas and collection vehicle access. Long path/alley ways between rear gardens and the street have been avoided;		
5.39 gives convenient access for service vehicles that avoids the need for them to frequently turn around with priority to through routes;		
5.40 integrates services like substations, utility boxes, cable runs and maintenance access points positively into the scheme and do not conflict with landscape features, tree planting (leaving enough room for trees to establish themselves) and/or the design of the public realm.		

6 PARKING

PARKING STRATEGY AND SOLUTIONS

GOAL: Integrate parking to support attractive streets and spaces

Providing sufficient car parking to meet the needs of residents whilst creating attractive and successful development schemes can be a significant challenge. Too much parking can visually dominate the street and weaken its enclosure. Too little results in frustration for residents and visitors alike and can lead to indiscriminate parking. The need for parking is a reality however, and imaginative solutions should be adopted to respond to this challenge.

Residents tend to favour parking solutions which maintain a line of sight between their dwellings and their vehicle. As such parking courts to the rear of properties tend to be less successful solutions.

Parking on-street remains one of the most successful ways to accommodate parking as part of a balanced solution. Parking on the street is an efficient use of space and people understand how it works. Unlike rear parking courts, on-street parking increases activity on the street and between the street and the house.

On-street parking should be designed into the street scene from the outset. It may be parallel to the kerb, angled to the kerb, perpendicular to the kerb or within a central reservation; however, it should not be allowed to dominate the environment or to negatively impact on the character of a street. All solutions for parking within the street benefit from landscaping and the materials used should be of the highest quality.

Developers should consider the promotion of car clubs/ rural car clubs and bicycle hire schemes as a means of reducing the need for people to have their own vehicles. Consideration will need to be given to the parking requirements of hire or pool vehicles in accessible locations, including the storage of cycles and the charging needs of electric cars and cycles.

Garages set back from the main building line whilst retaining a good degree of enclosure to the street (Great Western Park)

Electric charging point and on-street parking broken up by landscaping (North West Bicester, Oxfordshire and Upton, Northampton)

To inform your design:

Prepare a parking study which demonstrates the needs in private plots, visitor and on-street parking and the ways to achieve them.
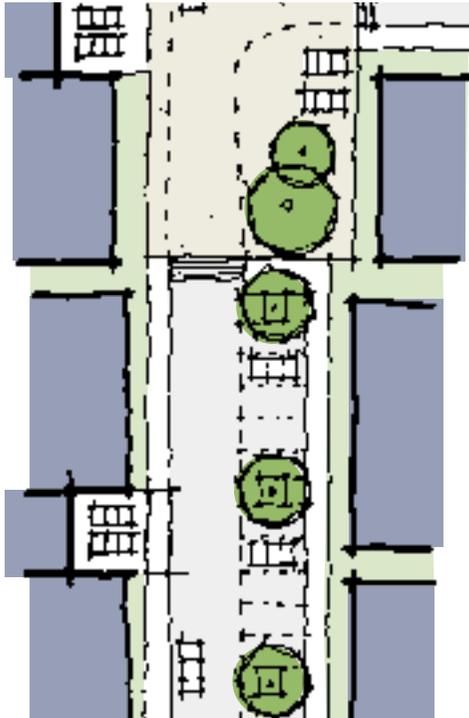
To communicate your design visually:

Prepare a parking strategy plan.

Additional useful and interesting resources:
- Oxfordshire County Council Parking Standards
- Car Parking: What works where (HCA, 2006)
- Rural car clubs (The Countryside Agency, 2004)

Examples of how the visual impact of parking can be softened (City Vizion, Newport and Thame, Oxfordshire)

Example of well-integrated visitor parking (Cheswick, Bristol)

Example of an attractive rear courtyard with integrated planting, paving and natural surveillance (Upton, Northampton)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

The new development should ensure:

		Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
6.1	a range of car parking solutions that relate to the order of street;	☐	
6.2	parking for both residents and visitors (including accessible parking bays) has been provided in accordance with the Local Plan policy;	☐	
6.3	parking areas are positioned to the front of properties, have a maximum of eight spaces in a row with a maximum of four/five adjacent spaces before an adequate planting break (a tree or low level planting). An adequate amount of enclosed front garden has been provided to separate the parking from the houses;	☐	
6.4	visitors' parking spaces have been provided on street and can be easily recognised. They are spread throughout the site and located where they will be needed;	☐	
6.5	other forms of on-street parking solutions have been considered before rows of perpendicular spaces in front of properties;	☐	
6.6	on-street parking has been designed as part of the street with a maximum of five bays separated by kerb build outs allowing adequate visibility for pedestrians crossing the road and space for tree planting;	☐	
6.7	rear parking courts have only been provided where all on-street and on-plot options have been exhausted. They are small scale and are overlooked by adjacent properties. They have been designed as part of the public realm and avoid single large expanses of tarmac (use of porous paving);	☐	
6.8	garages and car ports do not break up the enclosure and definition of the street or compromise the amount of private amenity space. Large groups of garages and car ports have been avoided;	☐	
6.9	electric charging points have been provided where possible.	☐	

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7 PLOTS AND BUILDINGS

FORM, CHARACTER, SCALE AND MASSING

GOAL: Respect the local context whilst striving for excellence in architectural quality

South Oxfordshire has a beautiful landscape character and a mix of towns and villages with locally distinctive buildings. However, many recent developments do not reflect that local distinctiveness and they could be anywhere in the UK. New development must create a positive character, with an identity that relates to the specific characteristic of the district.

The building forms used along a street should create rhythm and interest. Subtle variations in the height and width of buildings can add visual interest to the street making it more attractive and interesting.

The scale of new development should be appropriate and sensitive to its context. Heights of buildings should be informed by the contextual analysis. Variety of building height along the street frontage can also help the to achieve this.

The form and massing of development can have a significant contribution to the character of a neighbourhood. The majority of traditional buildings in South Oxfordshire, in both urban and rural areas, adopt a very consistent, simple form, with rectangular floor plans and pitched roofs. New development should adopt this simple form but good contemporary design that respects context will also be welcomed. Note that articulation of massing and roof line can help to present variety along the building frontage.

Defining key buildings within the scheme

Additional useful and interesting resources:
- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 5. Character/7. Creating well defined streets and spaces
- Urban Design Compendium (3rd ed., HCA and Studio REAL, 2013) – 5.3.3 Corners
- Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - code of practice (BSI Standards Publication, 2010)

To inform your design:
A robust assessment of the form and design of the buildings in the local area. This should focus on buildings of high quality design in the wider context of the site and not solely on nearest buildings to the site.

To communicate your design visually:
- Demonstrate how the form of the buildings and their design relate to existing buildings in the local area by showing what cues have been translated into the design;
- Prepare a plan indicating how corner situations have been addressed.

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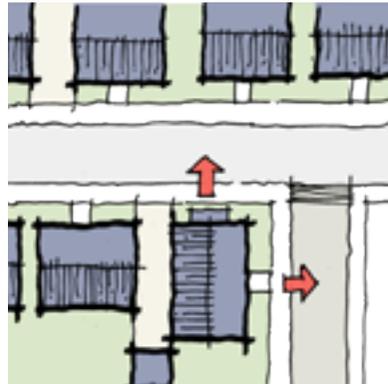
Examples of how corner situations can be resolved with two-fronted properties, providing surveillance and active frontages in both directions (Great Western Park, Didcot)

Buildings that present visual interest created by attractive detailing, high quality materials, changes to texture and colour and imaginative uses of fenestration (Upton, Northamptonshire)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

The new development should ensure:

		Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
7.1	that it respects the character of the area or has its own distinctive, but complementary character;	☐	
7.2	the buildings work with and respond positively to existing topography, for example views in and out of the site or natural features;	☐	
7.3	landmark/feature buildings with high quality materials have been used to define prominent points in a layout such as corner plots;	☐	
7.4	the scale of new development should be sensitive to its context. An uplift in scale can be appropriate for landmark buildings in a key location (see 4.2);	☐	
7.5	buildings have visual interest created by attractive detailing, high quality materials, depth and shadow lines and fenestration. Changes to texture and colour should be encouraged to complement the façade articulation in order to provide visual interest;	☐	
7.6	buildings can be adapted for existing and future users and changing circumstances (e.g. level access or ramps / live-work units);	☐	
7.7	green and/ or brown roofs have been explored on flat roofs.	☐	

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INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AMENITY SPACES

GOAL: Provide usable internal and external amenity spaces for all residents

Internal amenity space

In drawing up proposals, developers and applicants should have regard to the space standards set out in the Government's Planning Practice Guidance.

External amenity space

Providing private amenity space in the form of garden space, balconies or communal gardens is important to achieve a successful and attractive development. All dwellings should seek to provide private outdoor amenity space. This should be appropriate to both the location of the proposal and the type and size of dwelling. Every dwelling should have convenient access to outdoor amenity space. By providing an outdoor amenity space, you will be contributing to the well-being of the occupants. Amenity space can be provided in the form of a private garden, patio or balcony. Where balconies are provided, these should be generous to encourage use (e.g. enough space for a table and chairs/ food and plant growing).

Awkward size gardens should be avoided in order for them to be usable and enjoyed. Think about the orientation of these spaces. Make sure that gardens are not overshadowed by outbuildings or garages, making the most of the light available. Where no private individual gardens are proposed for apartments, private communal gardens should be provided, normally to the rear of blocks.

Neighbouring amenity

Developers and applicants should be mindful of the impact of the proposals on the amenity of future and existing adjacent occupiers. Proposals should not give rise to any unacceptable harm.
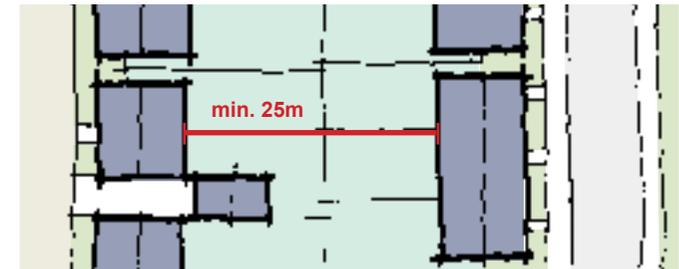

+ Additional useful and interesting resources:
- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 11. Public and private spaces
- Building Regulations Part M: Access to and use of buildings (2015)
- A good practice guide to disabled people's access in the countryside (1997)

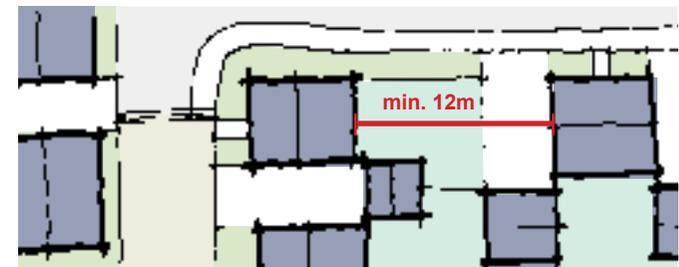---

BACK TO BACK

min. 25m

between habitable rooms of properties, also to existing buildings

min. 25m
Not to scale
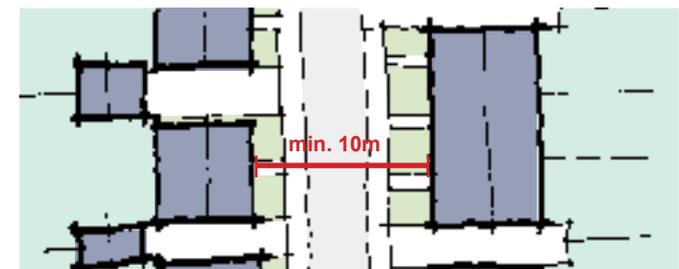

BACK TO SIDE

min. 12m

between habitable rooms and side gable of adjacent property

min. 12m
Not to scale

FRONT TO FRONT

min. 10m

between habitable rooms of properties facing each other

min. 10m
Not to scale

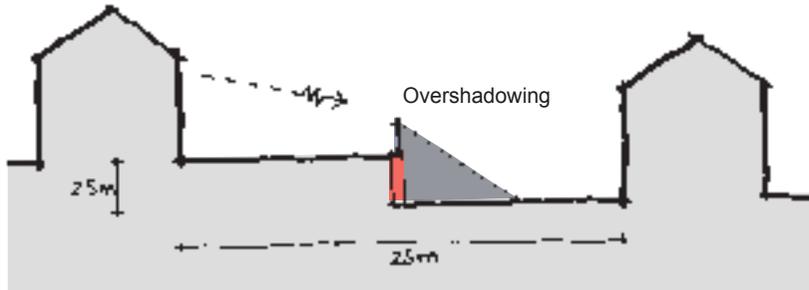---

BACK TO BOUNDARY

min. 10m

between habitable rooms and site boundary to existing landscape
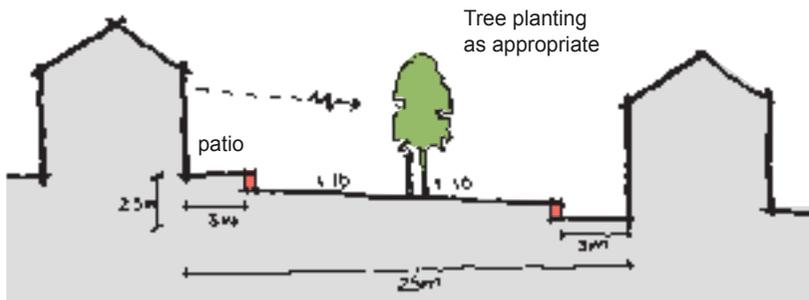

min. 10m
Not to scale

Common solution of one high retaining wall between the plots leads to overshadowing issues

Overshadowing

25m

25m

Specific solution of two small retaining walls and a 1:10 gradient across the rear garden

Tree planting as appropriate

patio

25m

3m

1:10

1:10

3m

25m

Strategy to avoid overshadowing and overlooking issues when dealing with a steep site topography

To inform your design:

Local plan policies and page 46 of this guide setting out parameters for distances between properties and the development edge.

To communicate your design visually:

- Prepare a plan indicating what type and size of amenity space has been provided for each residential unit.

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

The new development should ensure:

	Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
7.8 adequate amount of amenity space has been provided for each residential unit, including apartments, or a robust justification why private amenity space cannot be provided to these standards; 1 bed = 35 sqm 2 bed = 50 sqm 3 bed + = 100 sqm	☐	
7.9 external access to rear gardens has been provided, where needed, that avoids long, narrow alleyways;	☐	
7.10 The amenity spaces have not been compromised by the location of parking areas and garages. Orientation has been considered. Gardens are not overshadowed by outbuildings or garages, making the most of the light available;	☐	
7.11 Awkward shape gardens should be avoided in order to be usable;	☐	
7.12 Where balconies are provided, these should be able to accommodate a table and chairs and space for planting/ food growing;	☐	
7.13 Topography is taken into account and imaginative solutions are used to respond to it;	☐	
7.14 Back to back distances are a minimum of 25 metres; back to side are a minimum of 12 metres; front to front a minimum of 10 metres and back to boundary a minimum of 10 metres. Where these distances are not met, demonstrate how the design proposals ensure that privacy is maintained;	☐	
7.15 Green space incorporates pathways suitable for wheelchair users and pushchairs (e.g. bound gravel pathways).	☐	

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8 ENSURING QUALITY

SECURING QUALITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: New development should be informed and inspired by the local distinctiveness of the area and guided through a collaborative design process

New development must respond positively to the character of an existing area. A contextual analysis of the local area should be undertaken to inform and inspire the design of new buildings and spaces. This is important to ensure that new development respects the local distinctiveness of South Oxfordshire and does not result in standardised house types and development that could be found anywhere.

We believe that there are at least five steps that can be taken to help secure the design quality of new developments:

1. New development should be rooted in a good understanding of the context. This is the contextual analysis;

2. The development should be supported by meaningful public consultation and engagement with relevant stakeholders to inform the design;

3. The design of the development should be tested against the design principles and criteria in this guide. It could also benefit from a design review process;

4. Tools such as a design code and phasing plan can be written be help secure design quality after permission is granted;

5. The choice of good quality materials, details and early landscaping.

We consider good quality materials to mean materials that will stand the test of time by being robust, durable, visually attractive and interesting, sustainable and that complement the local vernacular (e.g. the use of stone in a contemporary building). Contemporary design is encouraged where it respects the character and appearance of the local context and uses high quality materials and detailing. Contemporary design must still be informed by a contextual analysis. Having said that, designers should aspire to create something positively distinctive, architecturally rich and creating a legacy of excellent architecture for South Oxfordshire.

Using local materials in a traditional way

Natural Welsh slate
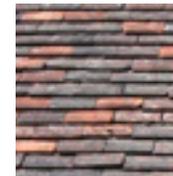
Brown/red handmade clay tiles

Pantiles (mottled colour)

Combed wheat straw or long straw

Light framing (studs) with brick

Light framing (studs) with render

Using local materials in a contemporary way

Brick-laying

Multi cladding

Brickwork details

Horizontal wood cladding
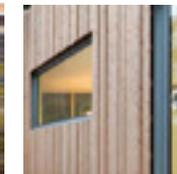
Vertical wood cladding
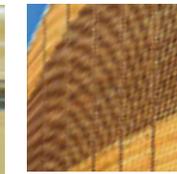
Decorative wood cladding

Stone

Flint detail

Brick and render

+ Additional useful and interesting resources:
- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 5. Character
- South Oxfordshire Conservation Area Appraisals

Terms for glossary:

Design Code – a set of illustrated design rules and requirements, which instruct and advise on the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code are detailed and precise, and build upon a design vision such as a master plan or other design and development framework for a site or area.

An example of how local materials can be used in a contemporary way (Goring-on-Thames)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

The new development should ensure:

	Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting
8.1 the design, materials and detailing of the streets and spaces have been inspired by the contextual analysis;	☐	
8.2 materials will be used which have been proven to be robust and to weather well. Explore case studies/examples of where the materials have been used elsewhere to support your choice;	☐	
8.3 a palette of high quality materials has been used for streets and spaces to create a calm background for the buildings that is easier to maintain;	☐	
8.4 utilities share conduits or trenches so that the amount of street or pavement that needs to be excavated for future maintenance of the utilities is limited;	☐	
8.5 landscape design has been co-ordinated with the location of utilities;	☐	
8.6 front gardens and planting areas will be easy to maintain so that they contribute positively to the street scene;	☐	
8.7 boundaries to rear and side of gardens are robust and where they face a public space, they are durable materials such as railings/ brick or stone walls inspired by local character and distinctiveness rather than timber fences.	☐	

To inform your design:

A robust assessment of the material palette of the existing buildings in the local area. This should focus on buildings of high quality design in the wider context of the site and not solely on nearest buildings to the site.

To communicate your design visually:

- Prepare a material palette with contextual references;
- Prepare a phasing plan;
- Prepare a Design Code if appropriate.

MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

GOAL: A place that works well for everyone and will continue to work well in the future

The way the building and the space between buildings will be used once the development is completed must form a critical part of the evaluation of a proposed design. This is to ensure that buildings and spaces are used appropriately, that they do not break down, the materials and landscaping do not fail and that potential issues through the use of a management or maintenance programme can be resolved by ensuring that the quality of the development as planned is protected.

Good design is only successful if it is built to last. Spaces and buildings that are difficult or expensive to maintain will not achieve good, long-lasting quality in their design. Proper consideration must be given at the design stage to the effects of ageing, weather and climate conditions, normal wear and tear on buildings, streets and spaces, and landscape. Inadequate maintenance can lead to an environment just as poor as one that is badly designed in the first place. You should design for easy maintenance.

Designing for easy maintenance takes creativity and careful thought. It is not acceptable to use a cheap material like tarmac just because it is easy to replace. Equally, think carefully about how a particular material like paving will be replaced should it need to be. Developers/applicants may be expected to make financial contributions to maintenance as necessary.

Using robust materials that are long-lasting and require little maintenance (Thame)

To inform your design:

It could be helpful to compile a list of all those who will be involved in the maintenance when drawing up the brief for the development and on-going design reviews.

To communicate your design:

- Prepare a management and maintenance plan;
- Prepare a tree management plan.

Additional useful and interesting resources:

- Building for Life 12 (2015) – 5. Character

Semi-permanent protection whilst tree matures (Malmö, Sweden)

☑ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

The new development should ensure:

	Meets criteria	If not, reason for not meeting

8.8 the approach to maintenance is clearly set out and identifies who is responsible for all the various parts of the scheme. The list is likely to include the following:

- Buildings;

- Trees and soft landscaping;

- Streets and open spaces;

- Public art;

- Sustainable drainage sytems;

8.9 hard surface materials are appropriate for their intended purpose and technical requirements;

8.10 there is sufficient space to allow landscaping and planting to establish and thrive;

8.11 enough space has been provided so that existing trees will not be damaged and to avoid pressure from future residents to remove them in the future;

HIGH QUALITY AT EVERY SCALE

GOAL: A place of high quality that is well integrated with its context and works well on all scales regardless of the size of the development

The design principles and best practice outlined in this guide are transferable to all scales of development and context.

Scale and context

The principles apply to all scales and types of development, be it for a single dwelling, for a scheme of 500 dwellings, for a school or for an office block. This transferability is achieved by the consistent, logical order of morphological layers which start with an assessment of the site and its context, be this is a rural, urban or suburban area. Each layer informs the next and builds up to create a final plan which will have been tested against the criteria in every section.

It is accepted that it will not always be possible for a development to satisfy every point in the criteria. For example, a development of three new houses in a small hamlet may not be able to provide a perimeter block arrangement or be located near to public transport or local facilities. Furthermore, it might not be possible, nor would it be appropriate, for particular sites to accommodate all design requirements and therefore the design team will need to use judgement and justification as to which of the criteria are relevant to the specific context of a site.

The site and its context

Development blocks in context

Buildings in context

1 Context analysis

School
Nursery
School
Farmland
Supermarket
Main road into the town
Potential access
Existing residential
Allotments
Hospital
Local Park
Sunpath
Not to scale

4   Landscape

Existing trees and hedgerow retained and integrated along new public footpath connection

Existing trees and vegetation used as buffer between existing property and new development

Existing woodland and pond integrated into POS

New informal tree planting to enhance the rural character of the site

buffer to existing woodland

Not to scale

2 Site Issues & Opportunities

Potential to front onto existing road

Potential site access

Existing footpath

Existing hedgerow and trees worthy of retention

Main road

Existing Woodland and pond

Shared boundary with existing development

View out into AONB

Not to scale

3 Development Concept

Corner turning properties

Existing trees and hedgerow retained

New continuation of existing footpath

Site access

Properties fronting onto main road

Development Area

Properties looking out over AONB

Woodland and pond integrated into POS

buffer to existing woodland

Not to scale

5 Movement

Private drives with properties fronting onto main road to create positive frontage

Public footpath continued through the site improves pedestrian safety and experience

Existing main road

Informal private drives serving up to 5 units

Shared surface access road with integrated turning facility

Not to scale

6 Development Layout

Existing trees and hedgerow retained

New pedestrian route through the site

Site access

Properties fronting onto the main road

Existing woodland and pond integrated into POS with buffer to adjacent properties

Informal private drives with properties looking out over AONB

Not to scale

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DELIVERING A HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT
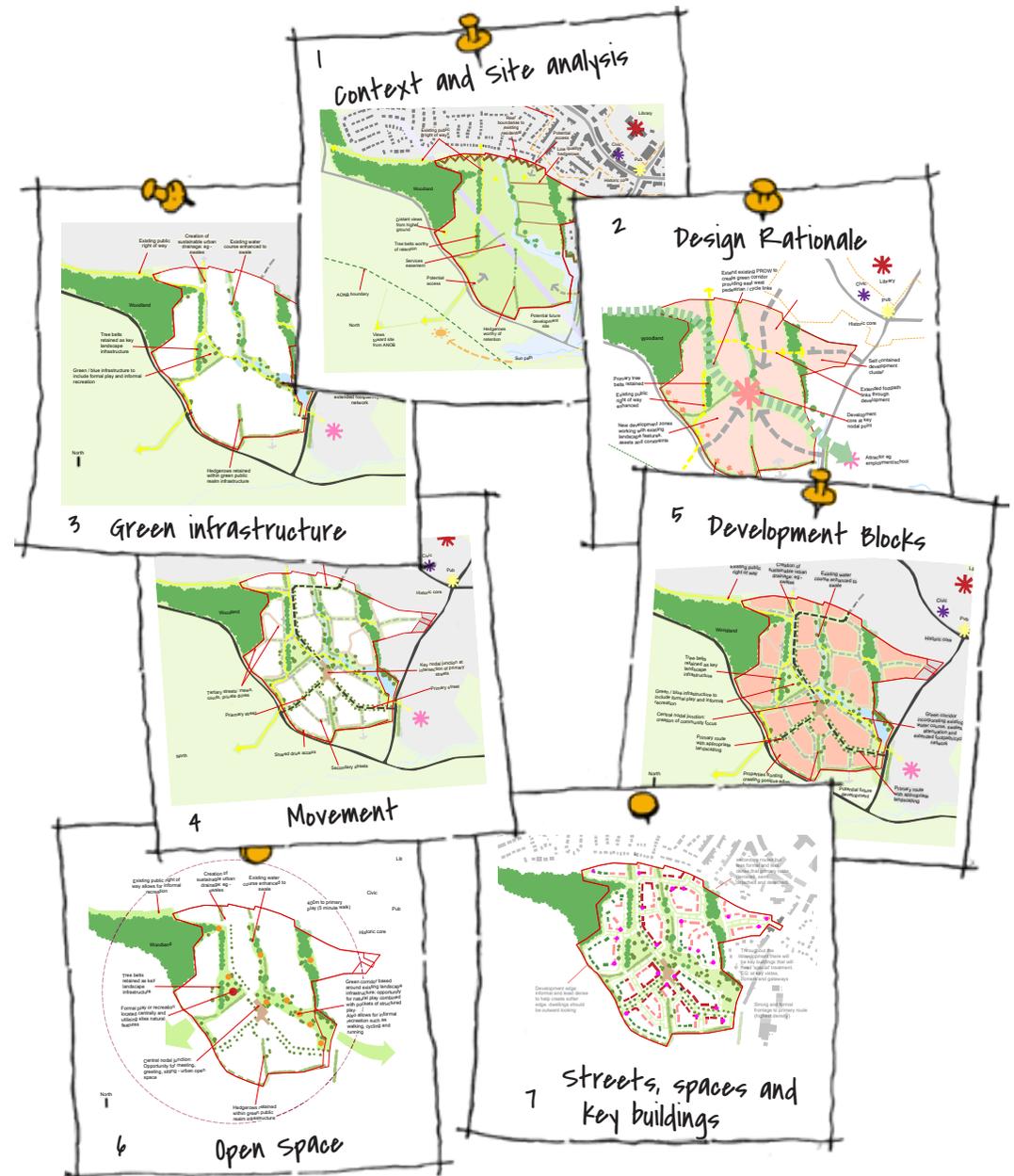
GOAL: A place of high quality that is integrated with its context, works on all scales and provides for a variety of users whilst taking into account future development

This guide has taken you through a logical design process which starts from the site and its setting and builds up through layers of relevant design matters. The final plan, sometimes the masterplan or development framework, is the culmination and output of that process.

If you followed the previous steps, the new development should:

- demonstrate clearly how the proposed scheme reflects the character of its context of South Oxfordshire and what makes the district special;

- take account of all features identified in the opportunities and constraints plan;

- have a clear design rationale that follows from the opportunities and constraints plan;

- be well integrated with the existing landscape structure and enhance biodiversity;

- have a clear, connected hierarchy of streets and integrate parking well to support attractive streets and spaces;

- use an appropriate scale and density to create a place of a human scale;

- have an attractive public realm which is defined by buildings and designed for everyone to rest, gather and socialise;

- have a range of open spaces with a clear purpose that are accessible and can be used by all whilst providing robust and durable street furniture that contributes to the character and sense of place;

- respect the local context whilst striving for excellence in architectural quality;

- provide usable internal and external amenity spaces for all residents;

- be a place that works well for everyone and will continue to work well in the future;

- be of high quality and well integrated with its context, working on all scales and providing for a variety of users whilst taking into account future development.

1 Context and site analysis

2 Design Rationale

3 Green infrastructure

4 Movement

5 Development Blocks

6 Open Space

7 Streets, spaces and key buildings

8   The Masterplan

Creation of sustainable drainage systems

Existing watercourse enhanced to swale

Existing public right of way

Historic Core

Woodland

Woodland buffer

Tree belts retained as key landscape infrastructure

Central focal square: opportunity for meeting, greeting, sitting

Green/blue infrastructure to include formal play and informal recreation

Green corridor incorporating existing watercourse, swales, attenuation and extended footpath/cycle network

Primary route with appropriate landscaping

Primary route with appropriate landscaping

Properties fronting outwards create a positive edge to the development

Hedgerows retained within green public realm

Not to scale

1:500

5　10 m　15　20　30　40　50　60　70　80　90　100　100　120　130　140

1:1000

290　280　270　260　250　240　230　220　210　200　190　180　170　160　150　140　130　120　110　100　90　80　70　60　50　40　30　20　10 m