Successful Places

A Guide to Sustainable Housing Layout and Design for:

- Bassetlaw District Council
- Bolsover District Council
- Chesterfield Borough Council
- North East Derbyshire District Council

Supplementary Planning Document

2013

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If you need help understanding this document or require a larger print, Braille, audio tape or translation, please contact us your local authority using one of the following methods:

**Bassetlaw District Council**

**Department:** Planning and Building

**Tel:**
01909 533533

**Text Message:**
07797 800573

**Fax:**
01909 501758

**Website:**
www.bassetlaw.gov.uk

**Bolsover District Council**

**Department:** Planning Department

**Tel:**
01246 242424

**Minicom:**
01246 242450

**Fax:**
01246 242423

**Website:**
www.bolsover.gov.uk
Successful Places: A Guide to Sustainable Housing Layout and Design

North East Derbyshire District Council
Department: Environment & Planning
Tel: 01246 217566
Text Message: 07800 00 24 25
Fax: 01246 217566
Website: www.ne-derbyshire.gov.uk

Chesterfield Borough Council
Department: Planning Services
Tel: 01246 345345
Text Message: 07960 910264
Fax: 01246 345252
Website: www.chesterfield.gov.uk
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• 1st December 2013 (Interim Planning Guidance)

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• 3rd December 2013 (Supplementary Planning Document)
Foreword:

The design of residential developments and the quality of the places we create for ourselves is a reflection of societies values and the importance we attach to improving our quality of life. It is also our legacy, whether good or bad, for future generations, who must inherit what we design and build today.

In an era where concerns are often expressed about identikit towns where one place looks much like another, celebrating the differences between places becomes increasingly important to their identity and distinctiveness. However, standardisation, the rigid interpretation of highway regulations and a lack of appreciation for the places where developments are proposed often leads to further homogenisation of the built environment. All too frequently the quality of residential development falls below that which should be expected.

Designing sustainable places that minimise their impact on the environment is an additional dimension that all those involved in the development process have a responsibility to tackle and one which is increasingly seen as integral to the design process itself, rather than separate from it. The task of resolving often complex and competing issues associated with a development site is challenging, but one to which we must rise if we are to create the types of places we know can be achieved.

This guide provides the building blocks to creating better designed places to live, which are also relevant to where they are built. It also brings together the ideas of place making and sustainability into one document so that what we build today not only delivers character and distinctiveness, but the foundations for a better quality of life and well-being in the longer term.

We attach great importance to the quality of the places where we live. It is therefore essential that the homes and places we design today add to the character, richness and livability of our settlements and ensure that the legacy we hand on to the next generation is one we can all be proud of.
04 Management and Maintenance:
Enduring quality....................................117

4.1 Adoption and Management...............118
4.2 Street Trees and Planting.................120
4.3 Managing Physical Assets...............121

Appendix........................................123

Local Planning Policy.......................124
National Planning Policy...............126
National Design Guidance..............126

List of Tables:

Table 1: Minimum garage dimensions..........................................................65
Table 2: Minimum garage set-back from edge of the highway....................65
Table 3: Minimum separation distances between neighbouring dwellings..75
Table 4: Minimum garden sizes/amenity spaces.........................................78
Table 5: Typical small retail/office dimensions.............................................104
Table 6: Bin storage requirements by Waste Collection Authority.............108
Table 7: Service vehicle dimensions by Waste Collection Authority...........112
How to use this guide

This guidance supports the design policies in the Bassetlaw Core Strategy, the Chesterfield Borough Council Local Plan: Core Strategy and the saved Local Plans of Bolsover and North East Derbyshire District Council’s.

It provides assistance to those involved in designing proposals for residential development, decision makers and other interested parties, by:

- Setting out the expected approach to the design process;
- Identifying and explaining the key design principles that should shape a design; and
- Identifying relevant considerations in respect of management and maintenance.

Please note that development proposals must also comply with all relevant Core Strategy or saved Local Plan policies and any other relevant Local Development Framework documents.

The following steps explain how the guide should be used.
**03 Place Making Principles:**

**Good Urban Design Practice**

Part 03 sets out good practice urban design principles. Many principles will apply to most housing proposals, whether urban or rural, but the relative importance of each is likely to vary according to the individual circumstances of the site. The principles are:

3.1 Places for People  
3.2 Movement  
3.3 Green and Blue Infrastructure  
3.4 Townscape  
3.5 Character  
3.6 Layout  
3.7 Block Structure  
3.8 Parking  
3.9 Street Design  
3.10 Public Realm Design  
3.11 Amenity  
3.12 Place Hierarchy  
3.13 Design for Corners  
3.14 Frontages  
3.15 Enclosure  
3.16 Building Design  
3.17 Adaptability  
3.18 Materials  
3.19 Servicing

Part 03 also introduces the notion of scale. This is the idea that place making principles will relate to differing levels within a place or a development. Each principle is accompanied by an indication of the scales at which it is most likely to be applicable. Some principles, such as Movement, will apply to all scales. Others, such as Frontages or Servicing arrangements are more localised at the street and home scale. Where a principle is unlikely to apply at a particular scale, only the relevant scales are illuminated (see below).

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**Step 3**

Develop your concept into a more detailed scheme. Use the design principles to inform and shape the proposals in line with good practice. You will need to demonstrate how a proposal has had regard to, and responded to, these principles in the design of your scheme.

**Step 4**

Consider how you intend the place to be managed and maintained following completion of the development.

Are the highways or public spaces intended to be adopted? Will commuted payments be necessary? Other agreements may need to be entered into.

These choices may affect the approach to aspects of the design which need to be considered as the scheme develops.
Introduction:

Challenge and Purpose

“We cannot afford not to invest in good design. Good design is not just about the aesthetic improvement of environment, it is as much about improved quality of life, equality of opportunity and economic growth.”

The value of good design, Cabe

1.1 Challenge and Purpose
1.2 Coverage and Status
1.3 Applying the Guidance
1.4 Policy Context
1.5 Objectives
1.1 Challenge and Purpose

1.1.1 The Challenge
This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) responds to a recognised weakness in the design quality of residential developments within the sub-region. A housing audit of the East Midlands undertaken by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE, 2006) revealed that the East Midlands Region was the worst performing in England for housing quality. Lack of character, poor quality layout and public realm were consistent themes.

1.1.2 Moreover, research in The Northern Way: Residential Futures (Vol.1 2009) identified an important link between the residential offer of a place and its economic competitiveness. It noted that the quality of housing influences the ability of a place to attract and retain businesses and employees, playing an important role supporting the local economy.

1.1.3 However, it is not just the calibre of housing that matters. The quality of places and the quality of life that they offer is just as important. This includes access to parks and green spaces, high environmental quality, a safe public realm, schools and a vibrant cultural offer. It comes down to whether somewhere is an attractive place to live. Quality of place therefore plays a central role in supporting local economic competitiveness.

1.1.4 The costs of poor design
Developments that have a negative impact on communities have an adverse long-term impact on society. They generate on-going costs in terms of increased maintenance burdens, policing, health care etc. that inflict social and financial costs on communities.

1.1.5 Sustainability
The built environment also has a major impact on the wider environment and greenhouse gas emissions from buildings contribute to climate change. It is therefore imperative that our new homes are more sustainable than those that have gone before. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises that to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system (paras. 7-9).

1.1.6 This SPD provides the basis for a dialogue between the development industry and local authorities to promote the development of successful places and avoid creating further costly and unsustainable forms of development.

1.1.7 The Purpose of the SPD
The purpose of this SPD is therefore to respond to these challenges and provide guidance on the interrelated issues of design quality and sustainability. Ultimately, it is about providing places that enhance our quality of life.

1.1.8 It also places emphasis on the design process itself and aims to ensure that designers think beyond the site boundary. This will ensure that proposals are based upon a good understanding of the place where it is to be built and create locally distinctive places that strengthen the character and role of our settlements.

1.1.9 The NPPF places great importance on good design and the quality of places, recognising design quality as a Core Planning Principle, stating that planning should:

“always seek high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings” (para. 17);

1.1.10 Section 7 of the NPPF is dedicated to Requiring Good Design. It states that:

“Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people”. (para. 56).

1.1.11 Good design should therefore be seen as the norm, rather than the exception. By clearly setting out the processes and principles that are expected to be addressed by proposals, the SPD will provide a benchmark for design quality against which schemes will be assessed. If followed, the guidance will result in consistently higher quality and more sustainable places.

Reference
1 The Northern Way initiative brought together partners across the North of England to work together to improve the economic competitiveness of the North and rebalance the UK. It undertook a range of research projects to further this objective and closed in 2010.
1.2 Coverage and Status

1.2.1 Coverage
The Councils of Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire have worked in partnership to prepare this SPD. Collectively these authorities form a contiguous geographical area. This is also identified as a distinct Housing Market Area located within the Sheffield City Region.

1.2.2 Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire County Council Highway Authorities have also assisted in its preparation to ensure it is compatible with their requirements.

1.2.3 The guidance applies to all four adjoining local planning authorities and will therefore provide consistency and certainty to developers working in these areas.

1.2.4 The Peak District National Park (PDNP) is the planning authority for development within the PDNP, which includes part of the North East Derbyshire District Council area. This guidance does not apply to proposals inside the PDNP.

1.2.5 Status of the Guide
This document supports the adopted Core Strategy policies of Bassetlaw District Council and Chesterfield Borough Council and the saved Local Plans of Bolsover District Council and North East Derbyshire District Council. It is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for new housing development. Where this document has Interim status it will be reviewed and adopted as a full SPD following adoption of the relevant new Local Plans. It currently has the following status within each authority:

**Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Chesterfield Borough Council

**Interim SPD** - Bolsover District Council

**Interim Planning Guidance** - North East Derbyshire District Council
1.3 Applying the Guide

1.3.1 Who is the guide for?
The Councils have prepared this guide as a tool to support developers, their design professionals and agents in preparing proposals for residential development or mixed use comprising both commercial uses and housing.

1.3.2 It is also intended for use by local authority officers, councillors and communities to facilitate and inform the design discussions and assist them in the delivery of high quality, sustainable places to live.

1.3.3 What type of development does this guidance apply to?
The guidance covers all forms of residential development including mixed use schemes that incorporate commercial activities and residential accommodation.

1.3.4 Most residential development will take place within or on the edge of an existing settlement and this will form the context within which it must be considered.

1.3.5 The range of development scenarios likely within the area covered by this SPD are:

Urban Centres – proposals within or adjacent to existing town/district or village centres with potential for intensification or redevelopment of existing sites.

Infill – proposals for infilling gaps or redeveloping existing sites within existing urban or rural settlements.

The Edge – proposals for town or village expansions, whether large or small.

1.3.7 It also identifies a number of benchmarks that will be used to assist in the assessment of residential proposals, including design review and Building for Life12 (BfL12) criteria associated with each place making principle (see 2.9).

1.3.8 Part 03 of this guidance sets out the place making principles that will be used for assessing proposals for residential development. Depending on the design issues the principles will apply at a range of scales. Some principles will only be relevant to larger scale schemes, while others are appropriate at all scales of development, including proposals of less than 10 dwellings. Whatever the scale of the proposal many of the principles will be applicable whether urban or rural.

1.3.9 Part 04 outlines issues in relation to management and maintenance to ensure that long term quality is achieved.

NOTE: The drawings in this guide have been prepared to support the design principles and illustrate how they can be implemented. They show generic built form and do not imply a standard stylistic preference.

1.3.6 Part 02 of this guidance sets out the design process which is expected to be followed in order to demonstrate that the development proposal is based upon a clear appreciation of the site and its wider context.
1.4 Policy Context

1.4.1 Design Policy Context
The guide supplements the requirements of national and local planning policy with the aim of producing consistently high quality outcomes.

1.4.2 Proposals that follow the guidance are more likely to move through the planning process quickly and successfully.

1.4.3 The Planning Act 2008 (s.183) requires local authorities to have regard to the desirability of achieving good design. This SPD contributes to meeting the duty placed on local authorities by the Act.

1.4.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the importance and value of good design as an essential component of sustainable development. The relevant references to design in the NPPF are set out below (1.4.14). In addition national good practice design guidance is set out in the Appendix.

1.4.5 The SPD in the Local Policy Context
The Local Plans of each Partner Council are at varying stages of completion. These will set out the strategy and proposals for future development in each area. For Chesterfield Borough Council and Bassetlaw District Council the SPD will supplement their adopted Core Strategy design and other related policies. For Bolsover and North East Derbyshire District Council’s the SPD will supplement the relevant policies from their saved local plans, until each has an up to date replacement Local Plan is in place.

1.4.6 In the future, the partners will revise and update the SPD when each has an adopted local plan in place.

1.4.7 The following provides an overview of the key policies as they relate to residential design at the time of writing. Other design related policies are set out in the Appendix.

1.4.8 Bassetlaw District Council
Bassetlaw has an up to date Core Strategy which was adopted in December 2011. Policy DM4: Design & Character is the key policy regarding residential development.

1.4.9 Bolsover District Council
The Bolsover District Local Plan (2000) contains a number of general design and housing policies that provide the criteria for assessing new residential development, including the requirements for open space, parking and road design. The key policy is GEN 2: Impact of Development on the Environment that aims to ensure that residential development respects the immediate locality by utilising appropriate materials and considering landscape and setting.

1.4.10 Chesterfield Borough Council
The council’s policies are contained within the adopted Local Plan: Core Strategy (2011-2031). The key policy is CS18: Design which recognises that good design is fundamental to sustainable development and that raising the quality of the environment is one of the Core Strategies main challenges.

1.4.11 The council has also adopted a other Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that provide more detailed guidance to assist proposals for new development. The most applicable of these SPDs to housing proposals is:

1.4.12 North East Derbyshire District Council
The North East Derbyshire Local Plan (2001 – 2011) contains a number of policies relating to the built and natural environment which are relevant to new housing proposals. Policy H12: Design and Layout of New Housing is the key policy. This stipulates standards for details of design, materials, scale, form and access. Policy BE1: General Design Principles also requires that proposals recognise the character of the surrounding area and create safe places to live.

1.4.13 The council has also adopted a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which provide more detailed guidance in relation to new development, including housing. These are the following:

- **Access for All SPD (2007)** – highlights the most important principles in designing inclusive buildings and provides advice on the preparation of Design and Access Statements.

- **Affordable Housing SPD (2008)** – provides a clear framework for affordable housing provision and ensures an appropriate mix of sizes and types of affordable housing is integrated into the district’s towns and villages to create sustainable communities.

- **Recreation and Open Space SPD (2007)** – provides guidance on the local recreation standard and explains the council’s requirements for the provision of open space and recreation facilities in new developments.

- **Developer Contributions SPD (2007)** – sets out the council’s approach to securing developer contributions.

1.4.14 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
The NPPF puts a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the planning system (para. 15) and states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development which is indivisible from good planning (para. 56).

1.4.15 Twelve ‘core planning principles’ are at the heart of the NPPF. These include:

- Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

- Support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate... encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example by the development of renewable energy).

- Promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production - para. 17).

1.4.16 The NPPF acknowledges that it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness (para. 60) and that designs should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural and built environment (para. 61).

1.4.17 Poorly designed development or that which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions should be refused (para. 64).

1.4.18 The NPPF also emphasises the importance of the communities developing their own neighbourhood plans to provide a framework to influence the design issues and shape the character and quality of development for their areas. Where neighbourhood plans are proposed these must support sustainable growth including through the conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings (para. 28).
1.5 Objectives

1.5.1 Fundamentally, the purpose of this guide is about creating sustainable places that deliver a good quality of life for the people that will live there and preventing costly poor design. This demands that our neighbourhoods are designed around the linked concepts of good place making and sustainability.

1.5.2 The built environment is responsible for 43% of the UK’s carbon dioxide emissions. The design and layout of our settlements has a major influence on our patterns of behaviour, movement and transport choices. The design and construction of the buildings themselves, also has a direct impact on the environment, in terms of their energy efficiency, water consumption/management, health and well being etc. The right design choices at the outset can help create more sustainable successful places.

1.5.3 The Government places great importance on the design quality of the built environment, recognising that the planning system should promote good design that ensures attractive, usable and durable places and this is a key element in achieving sustainable development.

1.5.4 The following objectives underpin this guidance and complement the policy objectives set out in the NPPF. They embrace the principle of sustainable development, not as a separate ‘add on’ but as integral to this guidance.

1. Design Quality:
To improve the quality of design and attractiveness of residential development.

2. Low Impact:
To promote design that is adapted to climate change and contributes to reducing the impacts of construction, maintenance and running of residential buildings on both the immediate and wider environment and on climate change.

3. Local Distinctiveness:
To ensure that the design of new residential development recognises and enhances the townscape, landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area including the setting of historic buildings and biodiversity.

4. Context:
To ensure that new residential development is designed on the basis of an understanding of its context and the site conditions so as to enhance the quality of existing settlements and townscapes.

5. Quality of Life:
To promote the design of residential development that provides a safe and secure environment and meets the practical and social needs of residents, creating places where people will want to live.

6. Accessibility:
To ensure that the design of residential development facilitates safe, sustainable and convenient access for all users, are well integrated with their surroundings with good access to local facilities and that layouts and buildings are legible and designed to be inclusive.

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* 2009 final UK greenhouse gas emissions (data tables), Department of Energy and Climate Change, UK Greenhouse Gas and Statistics Inventory