PLACE MAKING PRINCIPLES

Good Urban Design Practice

“The delivery of a well-designed environment, by which one might mean simply one that is sustainable, livable and fulfilling, is dependent on getting the framework for the settlement right across all its scales.”

Matthew Carmona Professor of Planning and Urban Design at the Bartlett School of Planning, UCL

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How to use Part 03 of this guide

Part 03 of this guidance sets out the specific design guidelines, in the form of ‘place making principles’, that should be followed in order to achieve good quality ‘successful places’. This page outlines the general layout of each principle and indicates how this should be used to inform the design.

**Applicable scale** - this symbol highlights and identifies the scales of development at which the objective and best practice principle would be most likely to be applicable N/B it may apply at a number of scales

**Building for Life 12 (BfL12)** - relevant BfL12 questions are set out next to each Design Principle

**Margin** - includes helpful information including relevant quotes, references, good practice and steps that could enhance its sustainability

**Logos** - indicate the type of information within the margin

**Text** - expands the key issues and explains the requirements of the place making principle

**Images** - show examples of real places to demonstrate how the best practice principle has been implemented on the ground or occasionally to illustrate examples of poor practice to be avoided

**Bullet point criteria** - identify what measures relating to the best practice principle should be used to achieve better design and make successful places

**Drawings** - illustrate and support the key aspects of the best practice principle, providing indicative examples of how this can be implemented
3.1 Places for People

3.1.1 The quality of the place where we live has a major influence on our quality of life. The place making process is about creating great places where people will want to live, work, visit and enjoy.

3.1.2 This is not merely a matter of architecture (although this is one factor). Rather, it combines all the elements of the physical environment (streets, spaces, landscape and built form) in an integrated design. This requires a good understanding of the place, how it works and the ability to recognise and harness the opportunities available to make successful places.

3.1.3 However, it should also be recognised that successful places are not just built, but they develop and flourish over time. The actual process of creating the physical place is only one, albeit very important, aspect of the challenge. By making the right design choices from the outset, the creation of a good built form can provide the foundation on which vibrant and sustainable communities can grow.

3.1.4 Part 03 of this SPD establishes the key place making principles. These provide the basic ingredients needed for the creation of successful places. Each principle is accompanied by explanations and criteria that outline how successful places address or fulfil these requirements.

3.1.5 In order to meet the quality of development that is expected, proposals must show how they will create a successful place by meeting the requirements of the principles and their accompanying criteria.

3.1.6 The extent to which a development will need to apply these principles will vary according to the scale, complexity and sensitivity of the scheme. However, it will be expected that applicants must demonstrate how their proposals have had regard to the design process and responded to the relevant principles in this SPD. Our aim is to ensure all new developments are successful places.

"...we have simply lost the art of place making... We are good at putting up buildings but we are bad at making places."

Bernard Hunt, HTA Architects

Below and right: Examples of well designed recent contemporary residential schemes that create places for people and demonstrate what can be achieved with a considered design-led approach to development
3.2.2 The movement network provides the skeletal framework around which the development can be formed. The early design choices are therefore critical to putting in place a well reasoned and practical movement network that meets the needs of all its users. This means ensuring that one group’s requirements do not dominate to the extent that they constrain or are detrimental to needs of other groups.

3.2.3 Equitable access throughout a development means providing users with a real choice of movement, so they can choose their own route and mode of transport. Short local trips provide the best opportunities for journeys on foot or bicycle (active travel) so these routes should be more direct than those for cars.

3.2.4 Connected, integrated, permeable

Proposals should comprise a layout of permeable streets that connect to and integrate with the surrounding network of streets and paths

3.2.5 Connecting developments with the surrounding streets and neighbourhoods allows them to physically integrate with and function as part of the established settlement, both socially and economically.

3.2.6 Developments with poor connections to adjoining areas and movement networks designed around the car result in insular, disconnected places that fail to integrate with the settlement and which reduce the inclination to walk, cycle or use public transport.

3.2.7 Conversely, integrated permeable movement networks are beneficial to both communities and help reduce car dependency. They encourage active travel by being easier to navigate and minimising walking distances to nearby facilities, which increases their pedestrian and cycle catchments.

Successful places:

- Recognise and accommodate the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and other vehicles.
- Provide movement networks that encourage walking and cycling as the primary modes of travel for local trips making it easy to choose active travel or access public transport.
- Locate bus stops within a reasonable walking distance (normally 400m), via safe routes and provide bus shelters to encourage their use.
- Provide for access by motor vehicles and accommodate the size and frequency of service vehicles without detracting from the quality of the environment.

A safe footpath provides a broad, overlooked and convenient route connecting with the adjoining area.
Successful Places: Place Making Principles

3.2 Movement

Sustainable?

How does the design influence how people choose to travel? Does it provide transport choices that reduce car dependence and encourage active travel? Active journeys have many benefits:

- Reduced energy use and emissions from transport.
- Increased interaction fostering social networks and a sense of community.
- Health benefits; and
- Making places feel safer - more people being out and about.

Successful places:

- Have internal permeability with interconnected streets that allow people to choose the most convenient and direct option for their journey.
- Make connections to the adjacent street and footpath network, including safe, direct pedestrian/cycle links.
- Design the movement network to connect easily to local destinations by following desire lines to where people want to go.

3.2.8 Legibility

Places should be easy to understand and navigate so people can find their way around without difficulty

3.2.9 Making places legible is to make them easy to understand and navigate, so that people have a clear mental image of the place. They should include recognisable features that help give them a sense of place and make them memorable.

3.2.10 Memorable spaces may contain a focal point such as a piece of public art or a mature tree. Key nodal points may comprise one or more main routes that coincide with the provision of a distinctive public space, containing a notable landmark building.

3.2.11 Often, two or more of these elements will need to be considered in combination to design effective legible environments e.g. designing a view towards a landmark or building that acts as a focal point or terminating feature, helps to create a sense of place.

3.2.12 Thresholds to private areas such as courtyards should use devices such as changes in surface, pillars, access through an archway etc. to define the extent of the defensible space. Psychologically, this gives the impression that the area beyond is private.

Useful References


...it is an instinctive and continuous habit of the body to relate itself to the environment, this sense of position cannot be ignored.

Gordon Cullen, Townscape

A mature tree, distinctive building and a public space create a memorable location giving legibility to this place

Public art can aid legibility, making places more memorable

A strong corner on a main route reinforce its legibility
3.2.13 Safer neighbourhoods

The movement network should be designed to create a safe and comfortable environment for users.

3.2.14 Routes should be clear, direct and attractive places where people feel comfortable. If they are cramped, poorly overlooked, indirect or unwelcoming they can attract crime or anti-social behaviour and discourage legitimate users.

3.2.15 Walkable neighbourhoods

Proposals should seek to create walkable neighbourhoods that provide for or are located within easy walking distance of local facilities.

3.2.16 A walkable neighbourhood is a residential or mixed area with a range of everyday facilities within an approximate 10 minute (800m) walking distance. Some facilities command greater catchments although these become less accessible on foot with increased distance.

Successful places:

- Create active streets that are easy for people to find their way around and that link to local destinations.
- Are well lit and overlooked by surrounding buildings and uses to provide a sense of natural surveillance and safety.
- Demonstrate clear definition between public and private spaces.
- Provide for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles within the same space, without them being segregated.
- Avoid networks of separate footpaths and unsupervised areas, including public footpaths that run to rear of and provide access to properties, for reasons of safety and security.

A Ped shed (pedestrian shed) is a walkable catchment and is the basic component of a walkable neighbourhood. They are often defined as the area that can be covered by 5 or 10-minute walk or 400-800m in distance.

True walkable catchments are irregular (not circles) because they cover the actual route not as the crow flies. The distance walked is often further than is suggested by the standard ped shed circle.
3.2.17 Catchment distances diagram shows typical desirable and possible maximum thresholds for walking to facilities at local, neighbourhood/village and settlement/town level.

3.2.18 It is reasonable to expect some types of facilities, such as a children’s playground, within a short walking distance of a residential area, whereas people are prepared to walk further to reach other key facilities such as a local centre or a school.

3.2.19 These distances are a starting point for discussion. In more rural settings greater distances to more significant facilities (e.g. leisure centre, FE College etc.) are to be expected.

3.2.20 Accessibility criteria should also have regard to a range of local factors:
- The catchment populations of different facilities.
- The degree of permeability/directness of walking/cycle routes.
- The general shape of the settlement.
- The propensity of users to walk to specific facilities.
- The influence of topography.
- The safety of the route (real or perceived fear of crime).
- The level of hostility in terms of traffic speed and volume and the quality of the pedestrian experience.

Shaping Neighbourhoods, Barton et al

Useful Reference
Shaping Neighbourhoods, Barton et al (2010)

Indicative catchments:

**Home/Street** 100-400m
- Toddlers play area (100-200m)
- Allotments (200-400m)
- Playgrounds and children’s play/kick about area (300-400m)
- Bus stop (400m - reasonable and most convenient distance)

**Neighbourhood** 400m 1000m
- Bus stop rural (400-800m - maximum less convenient/likely walking distance)
- Local park/natural green space (400-600m)
- Access to green network (600-800m)
- Local centre/shop (600-800m)
- Pub and village hall (600-800m)
- Primary school (800-1000m)
- GP Surgery (800-1000m)

**Small Town/Settlement** 1000m 2000m+
- Playing fields (1000-1500m)
- Secondary school (1500-2000m)
- Town district centre or supermarket (1500-2000m)
- Leisure centre (1500-2000m)
- Industrial estate (2000-3000m)
- Major natural green space (2000-3000m)
- FE College (3000-5000m)

Source: Adapted from Barton et al, Shaping Neighbourhoods, 2010
3.3 Green and Blue Infrastructure

3.3.1 Green and Blue Infrastructure

Proposals should integrate green and blue infrastructure into the development layout wherever possible.

3.3.2 Green and blue infrastructure refers to the network of existing or new, natural and managed green spaces and water bodies, together with the linkages that join up individual areas as part of a wider network of green spaces, such as footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways.

3.3.3 It provides many benefits, including:

- **Good Health** - Greenery promotes health, well-being and enhances quality of life.
- **Recreation** - Formal and informal spaces provide places for exercise and relaxation.
- **Livable places** - Green networks can add distinctiveness, a positive outlook or buffer negative features. They can also protect the setting of heritage assets and aid the interpretation of assets such as archaeology.
- **Movement** - Pleasant recreational routes that link to adjoining green spaces.
- **Environment** - Influence local micro climate and air quality, providing shade, shelter, absorbing C0₂, pollutants etc.
- **Water Management** - green networks able to form part of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS).
- **Ecological Value** - through the creation of habitats that support biodiversity.
- **Local Food Production** - through provision of allotments, fruit trees/orchards, community gardens etc.

3.3.4 Green and blue infrastructure should be an integral aspect of the layout planning and structuring of any housing development wherever opportunities allow. This means retaining and incorporating natural assets such as mature trees, hedgerows or watercourses, as key features of the layout, if appropriate, or create new ones.

3.3.5 Emphasis is also placed on spaces being multi-functional e.g. a SUDS with swales and ponds can enhance the character of a development, have biodiversity and landscape value and be part of a network of recreational routes.

3.3.6 In all cases proposals should forge links with the wider network of green spaces whenever opportunities allow.

Successful places:
- Integrate existing green and blue features into their design/layout or create new ones.
- Connect with the existing wider green and blue infrastructure network.
- Create multi-functional green and blue spaces and routes.

**Useful Reference**

- *Biodiversity by Design*, Town and Country Planning Association
- The Landscape Character of Derbyshire, Derbyshire County Council
- Landscape Character Assessment, Bassetlaw, Nottinghamshire (2009)
3.3.7 An edge of settlement development that fully integrates a network of green and blue infrastructure into its layout. Existing positive natural features have been retained and incorporated wherever possible. New green elements (swales/ponds, street trees, green spaces/corridors etc) are multifunctional features, forge links with the surrounding area and add value.

A retained mature tree has biodiversity value and provides a positive focal point

Balancing ponds slow water run-off and provide a positive outlook

A retained wood is a landscape buffer and shelter belt

Allotments potential/local food production

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Successful Places: Place Making Principles

Footpaths integrated into the layout connect to wider countryside and network of recreational routes.

SUDS swales in a green corridor

Swales integrated into the street layout

A characterful sunken lane is retained with new connections to form multi-user path
3.4 Townscape

3.4.1 Townscape

All schemes should create places that make a positive addition to the built environment in terms of its townscape and visual interest. Development should ‘give something back’ to the place in which it is being built.

3.4.2 Designing townscape is the art of relating buildings to each other and the spaces and other elements around them, such as landscape, paving etc. It is the skill of arranging all the elements of the environment to compose an urban scene in a way that creates a pleasing relationship between the built form and open spaces, that are also fit for purpose.

3.4.3 All new development will contribute to the townscape of the place in which it is built, simply by its presence in a street or neighbourhood. However, it is its design and how it is put into practice that will determine whether or not a development adds positively to the richness and interest of the townscape.

3.4.4 Often the places we find most interesting have developed incrementally providing layers of texture and form that while sometimes haphazard, combine to create attractive townscape. Occasionally, a carefully planned scheme may exhibit similar qualities. However, the art of townscape is frequently undermined by the standardisation of housing with an emphasis on utility, economy and function, limiting the potential for incidental occurrences to stimulate, surprise or delight. Often the result is monotonous and uninteresting.

3.4.5 It should be the aim of those involved in the development process to ensure that the design of their proposals creates new townscape that is a meaningful and worthy addition to the settlement.

Successful places:
- Contribute positively to the richness and interest of the settlement to foster a sense of place by applying the good urban design practice principles (places not estates).
- Respond to the individuality of places in respect of local characteristics such as building forms, materials, traditions, street patterns and spaces to inform the approach to the design.
- Establish a clear urban structure within the built form, streets and spaces.
- Use the relationship (juxtaposition) of buildings, streets and spaces to form varied and interesting townscape and a sense of identity.

Below: An example of a distinctive place where a mature tree and small green form a focal point. Elevations are well proportioned and homes are arranged to form a sense of enclosure, while materials and details combine to create a positive new area of townscape.
...there is an art of relationship just as there is an art of architecture, but bring half a dozen buildings together and an art other than architecture is made possible.

Gorden Cullen, Townscape

3.4.6 Considering the development as a three dimensional composition enables the designer to carefully integrate the different elements of the built environment as a coherent design. The example shows how:

- The entrance is narrowed to create a ‘pinch point’, signalling drivers to slow upon entering the site and encourages vehicles to emerge with caution.
- The buildings have been arranged to define the edges of a space, provide continuity and create a strong sense of enclosure.
- Buildings are outward looking with windows orientated to overlook the street, providing safety and security.
- A larger building is positioned deliberately on the axis of the street to provide a focal point and ‘terminate’ or ‘close’ the view from the entrance.
- Roof heights (eaves and ridge) and roof forms, together with chimneys and dormers add visual interest to the skyline.
- Street trees provide vertical division of the space, shading, soften its appearance and increase its visual appeal.
- Hard surfacing provides horizontal sub-division of the space, visually prompts drivers to slow down and delineate areas of on-street parking.
- The ‘cranked’ building uses the built form to deflect a view into to a rear courtyard, which itself incorporates a feature focal point tree.
3.5 Character

3.5.1 Character

Developments should create places of character based upon an appreciation of the site and surrounding area, responding positively to its natural and built context.

3.5.2 The concept of character relates to the qualities belonging to a place that together give it its own identity and help distinguish one place from another. This is often referred to as its sense of place; so when you get ‘there’, you have a sense of arrival or being ‘somewhere’.

3.5.3 Character is influenced by factors such as architectural style, materials and traditions, relationship of buildings to landscape, history and economy. These factors combine to create places that are distinctive and specific to their location, not the qualities of somewhere else.

3.5.4 New housing development is often seen as bland with little character, and unable to respond positively to its context. Many fail to create any sense of place and feel disconnected from their locality; essentially they could be ‘anywhere’.

3.5.5 Designs should ‘ground’ development to their location, to help foster a sense of place, character and connection. This requires an approach that goes beyond the unthinking application of standard solutions, but instead seeks to understand and respond meaningfully to the context, site conditions, community values and needs.

3.5.6 Locations with a weak or negative character can provide few contextual clues or positive features to build on. In these instances designers should draw inspiration from positive aspects of the wider context to design proposals that are appropriate to the locality, rather than recreate an existing poor design.

3.5.7 In some circumstances the design of a proposal may depart from the local context and character (although it should not be ignored). For example a highly energy efficient design may have particular requirements. Such proposals must be explained and justified and will be assessed on their individual merits.

Successful Places: Place Making Principles

5. Character

Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?

6. Working with the site and its context

Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and micro-climates?

7. Creating well defined streets and spaces

Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?

8. Easy to find your way around

Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way round?

Most of us identify with a place… because we use it and get to know it… The only reason anyone does this much is that useful or interesting or convenient differences fairly nearby exert an attraction.

Almost nobody travels willingly from sameness to sameness and repetition to repetition, even if the physical effort required is trivial.

3.5 Character

3.5.8 Local distinctiveness

Developments should support local distinctiveness by taking the opportunities available to integrate the proposal into the site, its setting and the way it relates to the local area.

3.5.9 Local distinctiveness relates to places, their qualities and peoples attachments to them. It is both physical and cultural and can seem intangible yet we are able to recognise its appeal when we see it. However, the interest and richness of places is diluted with standardisation and the associated loss of the integrity and detail that people value.

3.5.10 Local distinctiveness has many layers, but it is about more than just variety. There is no single formula to define it, as by its nature it must be determined according to each site (hence the need to assess each site and its context). However, the organisation Common Ground has identified four indicators of distinctiveness which allow reinterpretation in each particular place. These are:

- **Detail** – Detail in everyday things is important. People respond to subtle signs that add layers of richness and meaning to a place. The folds in a local field, a window or door detail, a local building tradition stimulate our senses and develop meaning.

- **Authenticity** – The real and the genuine hold a strength of meaning for people, whereas the inauthentic appears one dimensional and unsatisfying. Local distinctiveness is not necessarily about beauty but it must be about integrity.

- **Particularity** – The special or rare aspects of a place may be important, but it is the qualities of the common place that define its identity. The focus should be on appropriateness to and expressiveness of the time and place, rather than simply being pre-occupied by difference.

- **Patina** – Age has to be recognised as having been gathered. With care, the remnants of the accumulation of activity, the layers or fragments of a place which can be read or experienced can be added to, without resorting to their loss, damage or crude interventions.

Common Ground (Losing Your Place, 1993)

3.5.11 When developers engage with the community about their proposals they should use this opportunity to explore local cultural attachments and what people value about their place.

Good Practice

Local distinctiveness: The features that contribute to a place being rooted in its setting. These include:

- Geological setting – relationship between materials, location and building function
- Landscape character and patterns of land husbandry
- Topography and its influence on the townscape
- Land use patterns associated with local needs, traditions and industries
- Architectural forms, traditions related to local sources of materials and craftsmanship
- Place names connected with local historic associations, land ownership, topography and trades

Barton et al, Shaping Neighbourhoods, 2010

Concerning places that lack character...

...when you get there, there’s no there there.

Gertrude Stein, American writer

A modern design incorporates a plinth of local stone and retains existing mature trees to provide a positive setting.

Successful places:

- Complement their context by making use of the landscape and topography of the site and the surrounding area to inform the approach to the layout of a scheme.
- Preserve and incorporate natural landscape features (such as mature trees, hedges, watercourses, ponds, rock outcrops, areas of ecological value etc) of interest or amenity value.
- Retain, reuse and enhance buildings, structures or features of historic, archaeological or local interest. Where appropriate the settings of such elements should be maintained.
- Utilise locally relevant materials associated with the landscape character area in which the site is located.
- Retain and utilise architectural features from existing buildings, structures or features if these are unable to be retained for structural or viability reasons (this must be justified).
- Recognise and retain important views.
3.5.12 Character Areas

Where appropriate to the scale of development, proposals should be sub-divided into areas of character the design of which is based upon clearly defined characteristics.

3.5.13 In larger scale developments character areas may be devised to differentiate between different parts of the site, assist legibility and avoid large areas of repetitive housing.

3.5.14 Proposals should assess whether the site relates to an existing area of particular character and determine how the scheme can introduce areas that strengthen character and reinforce local distinctiveness. This may influence the mix of uses, density and pattern of development, views to existing landmarks, the network of routes and open spaces, urban form, materials or other factors.

3.5.15 There may be opportunities to introduce new elements or character areas, particularly if a place has a weak, unremarkable character. However, the context (immediate or wider) should normally provide the starting point to developing the principles that will define a character area, with the aim of strengthening the distinctiveness of the settlement and being appropriate to the place.

3.5.16 Character areas should not be artificial creations or based upon alien designs or features from elsewhere, otherwise they will appear 'forced' and inauthentic. Instead they should be a genuine response to the place, its characteristics, constraints and the distinctive qualities of the area. This will provide integrity and reinforce local identity.

3.5.17 The basis of each character area should be informed by a street and place hierarchy (see sections 3.6 and 3.12) and each area should have a genuine role to play in the creation of a movement network and the character of the place. The street hierarchy itself should be informed by the context and what is appropriate in any given setting. This can be determined through the site context appraisal process (see Part 2).

Successful Places:
- Respond to the landform and natural features of the site
- Are sensitive to the characteristics of the local area, including building forms, details, layouts, edges, boundary treatments
- Vary or grade densities (influenced by factors such as location within the site, land uses and access to transport etc)
- Are influenced by prevailing land uses (existing and proposed)
- Incorporate local materials, details and building methods
- Are appropriate in scale, height and massing with regard to adjoining buildings and general heights in the area, views and local landmarks and topography and visual impact
- Provide a positive relationship with the edges of the site including any areas of open countryside

Left: Three distinct streets within the same development demonstrate that areas of differing character can be formed without resorting to large areas of monoculture housing.
3.5.18 Establishing the place and street hierarchy will begin to inform the characteristics of each character area.

3.5.19 Using more than one developer or employing more than one architect to design different aspects of a scheme will also support the creation of character areas.

Parameters to define character areas should include:

- Street type and width;
- Building use/house types and street continuity (density/intensity of development);
- Building set-backs;
- Building height and enclosure;
- Front boundary treatments;
- Topography and landscape;
- Materials and architectural attributes.

Bespoke railings inspired by historic details

Public art has the ability to enhance the character of a place and connect with its past

Above: A large development site subdivided into a number of ‘character areas’. The defining qualities of each area will vary to create a number of places within the scheme which exhibit their own distinct characteristics.
3.6 Layout

3.6.1 Layout

**Layouts should provide a linked network of routes and spaces within the development and connect to adjoining areas.**

3.6.2 The layout provides the basic plan around which the development is structured.

3.6.3 The pattern of routes, densities, uses, development blocks and individual plots influence the character and dynamics of a place. How it connects to its surroundings can also influence wider movement patterns.

3.6.4 Layouts based upon an interconnected network of streets and spaces encourage walking and cycling as realistic alternatives to the motor car and distribute vehicle flows more evenly, helping to disperse traffic.

3.6.5 Variable Density

**A development, depending on its scale and context, should provide variable densities to support areas of character, the viability of local services, facilities and the landscape setting of the area.**

3.6.6 Density is an important aspect of character and designing sustainable places. The layout, density and pattern of the built environment is called its ‘grain’. In general terms, the central parts of settlements have a more compact, fine ‘grain’ with higher densities around key locations, public spaces or where the mix and intensity of land uses is high. These often provide the main focus of a place or follow important arterial corridors.

3.6.7 Densities tend to decrease with distance from the centre, becoming less dense with a looser knit urban grain towards the settlement edges.

3.6.8 Rather than applying a uniform density, densities should be varied across the site area, where the scale of development allows and having regard to its particular circumstances and context.

3.6.9 Where appropriate, densities should be graded so that higher-density development supports the viability of facilities (local shops/high streets etc) and services (such as bus stops/public transport corridors/stations) where there is good pedestrian accessibility. This can also reduce reliance on private vehicles and the number of short trips taken by car.

3.6.10 Densities should normally be reduced towards areas of lesser activity with lower-densities along green corridors, towards settlement edges and against the countryside to assist with a graduated transition between town and country.

**Successful Places:**

- Avoid uniform densities across the development.
- Arrange the layout and density of the development in a way that supports the viability of existing or proposed local shops, amenities and public transport by providing good connections to facilities that encourage walking and cycling and reduce the number of journeys and distance travelled by car.
- Incorporate areas of differing density according to the location and character area of the site.

**Successful Places:**

- Place Making Principles

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**Good Practice**

**Where proposals are situated near to commercial activities and possible bad neighbour uses, it is advisable to seek advice from the Environmental Health Department at an early stage to identify potential nuisance issues and whether these should or can be mitigated in order to facilitate a scheme.**
Density and urban grain will vary according to the location of the site within the settlement and the type of settlement, whether town or village. Generally this will decrease with distance from the centre of the settlement.

Above: Density and urban grain will vary according to the location of the site within the settlement and the type of settlement, whether town or village. Generally this will decrease with distance from the centre of the settlement.

Left: Varying the density across a site in response to topography and in support of the creation of areas of distinct character, while achieving an acceptable overall average density across the site.
3.6.11 Street Hierarchy

Developments should provide a hierarchy of street types that contributes to the creation of a sense of place and facilitate movement, rather than a hierarchy that is determined primarily by traffic capacity.

3.6.12 The relationship between streets and the adjacent buildings strongly influences the safety, appearance and movement function of a development. The layout should accommodate traffic and allow for access by service vehicles, but it should also contribute positively to the character of the development.

3.6.13 Residential streets should not be seen simply as a conduit for traffic, but as places in their own right. Designs where parking and highway space are dominant should be avoided.

Successful places:

- Comprise a hierarchy of different street types that are appropriate to the place.
- Comprise streets where the character of the street and its movement function are given equal consideration (i.e. traffic needs are not assumed to take precedence).
- Ensure a considered relationship between the streets, spaces and adjacent buildings that provide their setting.

Street sections show a hierarchy of street types (Drawings courtesy of the Borough Council of Wellingborough and Matrix Partnership Ltd)

3.6.14 Crime Prevention

Layouts should be designed to help reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour.

3.6.15 The design of the development layout can help to deter anti-social behaviour and reduce opportunities for crime. Ensuring clear distinction between public and private spaces, good overlooking from adjoining buildings, lighting and avoiding the creation of potential problem areas can all minimise the likelihood for future problems.

Successful places:

- Design and orientate buildings to overlook streets/spaces and provide active edges.
- Ensure any pedestrian and cycle paths are short in length, sufficient width to feel safe and comfortable, overlooked and lit.
- Routes should be direct and follow desire lines to places where people want to go.
- Normally avoid rear lanes and direct access to the rear of properties.
- On-plot and off-plot parking areas should be overlooked by adjacent buildings, with an association between the building and the parking spaces wherever possible.
- Use boundary treatments to distinguish clearly between public and private space.
- Avoid potential problem areas such as awkward or poorly located public space.
3.6.16 Passive Solar Design

*Developments should be orientated to benefit from passive solar energy*

3.6.17 Homes that benefit from passive solar gain use less energy for lighting and heating and generally provide a brighter and more pleasant living environment.

3.6.18 Where practicable, the design and layout of developments should seek to take advantage of passive solar energy. Orientating dwellings within 30 degrees of south is sufficient for them to benefit from year round solar gain.

3.6.19 However, developments should avoid layouts that are designed entirely around achieving passive solar gain at the expense of other urban design considerations. Proposals comprising of largely south facing parallel streets will be unlikely to satisfy other important design requirements.

3.6.20 Larger south facing windows will absorb heat into the building while small north facing windows will help minimise heat loss. Shading may be required to prevent overheating in the summer. However, obstructions to south facing elevations should be limited in order to maximise the benefits from solar gain during the winter. Deciduous trees can be valuable by providing summer shade while allowing through low-winter sunlight.

3.6.21 Care is required to avoid overheating and building designs need to consider the occupants comfort. Homes with a high thermal mass (constructed from dense materials that can absorb heat) absorb solar energy and then slowly release it at night resulting in low temperature fluctuations within a dwelling. Buildings constructed from materials with a low thermal mass are susceptible to rapid extremes of heating and cooling, creating uncomfortable living conditions.

**Successful Places:**
- Orientate dwellings within 30 degrees of south, where practicable.
- Seek to provide habitable rooms with a south facing aspect.
- Design to prevent summer overheating.
- Minimise obstructions to winter solar gain.

A large window for solar gain and a deep overhang and canopy for shade

Solar panels reduce energy demand and lower running costs but need to face close to south and lie at 45° for maximum efficiency
3.6 Layout

3.6.22 Settlement Edges

Developments that form a new long term settlement edge should create a positive relationship with the adjoining countryside, providing an appropriate transition between the built up area and the adjoining landscape.

3.6.23 Development on the outskirts of towns and villages will have the effect of creating a new edge to the settlement. New edges require careful treatment to mitigate any visual intrusion and integrate schemes successfully into their setting.

3.6.24 A development’s relationship with the adjoining landscape is critical to achieving an appropriate transition between town/village and country and should be an integral consideration of the design layout.

3.6.25 A combination of careful building design, orientation and provision of effective landscaped areas will normally be required. This does not mean simply hiding the development with screen planting (although landscape buffer planting may sometimes be appropriate). It is about creating new edges that have a positive interface with the countryside. Depending on the scale of the development, a range of measures to ease the transition between urban and rural may be required.

3.6.26 Grading the density of development by reducing its scale and intensity towards its edges with the countryside, allows for planting within and between plots to create a featheredge to the settlement.

3.6.27 Wherever possible, layouts should be arranged so dwellings are orientated to be outward facing to address the countryside, rather than turning their back.

3.6.28 Where plot boundaries are located against the countryside they should normally comprise soft planting and reinforce the transitional qualities of the edge. Hard boundaries comprising only walls or fences will normally be inappropriate unless they are designed to reflect the rural character. They may also need to be combined with planting.

3.6.29 Developments may require substantial landscape buffer areas. These should normally be outside any residential curtilage/ownership with suitable long-term management arrangements put in place to ensure their future retention. Where existing trees and hedges are present these should be retained and reinforced by new planting, if necessary.

3.6.30 The extent of a landscape buffer area should be proportionate to the scale of the development and impact of the development and may vary according to the prominence and sensitivity of the settlement edge, but may need to be substantial (e.g. 10 - 20m or greater) and should comprise suitable native species that reflect the landscape character area in which the scheme is located.

Successful places:

• Have regard to views towards the site from outside and mitigate any adverse visual impacts.

• Grade the scale and density of development to reduce towards the edges of the settlement.

• Orientate dwellings to be outward facing and address the countryside.

• Ensure the nature of any boundary treatment is appropriate to its rural character, avoiding abrupt walls or fences.

• Retain existing trees and hedges and incorporate new landscape planting within and on the edges of the development, utilising native species.

• Incorporate landscape buffer areas that are proportionate to the scale of the development and prominence or sensitivity of the settlement edge.

• Carefully consider the design of lighting schemes on settlement edges to minimise light pollution on local amenity and dark landscapes.
**3.6 Layout**

**Successful Places: Place Making Principles**

**Below left:** Houses set back and orientated to face towards the countryside. Their built form and siting create an interesting rooftscape and a hedge and trees define the new settlement edge and assist in providing a soft transition to the countryside.

**Above:** Outward facing houses positively address the adjoining spaces and have been considered as a group to create an interesting composition and rooftscape.

**Below right:** Houses turning their back on the countryside create a negative relationship with the adjoining landscape and standard suburban style boundary fences form an abrupt and inappropriate new edge to the settlement.

**Above:** Standard houses and layout result in a mundane rooftscape and poorly maintained fencing creates an incongruous and abrupt edge treatment.