SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT 6

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR CONSERVATION AREAS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conservation areas have been designated ~~in order~~ to preserve and enhance the character of a whole area. The special architectural or historical interest of a conservation area lies in the unique combination ~~of a number~~ of elements such as building style, street pattern and open space.

1.2 The special nature of conservation areas means that they are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of insensitive development. ~~Therefore a~~Any development, including new buildings and extensions or other alterations should be carried out in a way that does not harm the character they possess.

1.3 However it should be remembered that conservation areas are not museums; they need to change and evolve over time just as they have always done. Carefully designed new buildings can make a positive contribution to character and there are situations where the sensitive redevelopment of an eyesore can enhance the quality of an area.

1.4 The advice contained in this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is not intended to be prescriptive. There is little value in modern architecture ~~acting as a pastiche of~~ simply reproducing all the building styles that have gone before. Good design in conservation areas leans towards a "traditional" approach to development; ~~whereby~~ appropriate materials and building forms are used to create a modern reflection of the vernacular architecture rather than a slavish copy.

1.5 When considering particular sites, it is important to note that the application of this guidance will often be improved by the knowledge and skilful interpretation of a designer. The application of rigid, quantitative standards can~~often~~ result~~s~~ in stilted development in terms of imagination and designs of a mediocre standard. The selection of a suitable designer is a vital initial step and ~~it is suggested that~~ advice can be sought from relevant professional bodies such as the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

1.6 There must be ~~E~~early contact with the Planning Department ~~prior to the~~ before submission of applications ~~is strongly advised~~.

2. POLICY BACKGROUND

2.1 This Supplementary Planning Document provides further detail on the design policies set out in the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan and the emerging Development Plan Documents of the Local Development Framework. Policy BC1 of the Replacement Local Plan in particular, gives ~~detail on~~ the criteria by which applications for development within conservation areas will be considered.

2.2 The guidance builds on provisions within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to preserve and enhance conservation areas. Account has been taken of PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development (2004) and PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment (1994).

2.3 Proposals for the development of land adjacent to conservation areas and other sensitive areas will ~~also~~ be considered with reference to the design advice in this

SPD. It should ~~also~~ be noted that where the proposed development relates to listed buildings, higher standards of design will ~~normally~~ be required.

3. DESIGN GUIDANCE – GENERAL

3.1 ~~In order f~~For new development to fit within the overall framework of a conservation area it should reflect the local characteristics of the neighbourhood. When designing a new building the starting point should be to consider the context of the site and the existing built environment. It is ~~often desirable~~ essential to make an assessment not only of the built form, materials and detailing, but also of the character of the spaces between the buildings and the appearance of the street scene. The following section outlines the principle points of consideration.

Scale and Form

3.2 Scale must reflect that of the surrounding buildings and be proportional to the setting of the area. In some areas uniform building height is the character of the street and it would not be appropriate to introduce variations in the general roofline or eaves line, while in other locations irregular building height might be ~~norm~~ accepted.

~~POLICY~~ STATEMENT CA1

Scale

The mass of a new building should not dominate or conflict with the adjoining properties. Within the settlement areas of Rochford District the scale is primarily that of two-storey domestic architecture.

Traditionally the horizontal scale of urban frontages is long and narrow and therefore the amalgamation of more than one plot to form larger sites is not desirable.

The height of new buildings should be in keeping with the existing character of the area~~; also vernacular architecture was closely related to the size of a person~~.

Form

The individual elements of a new development should be related proportionally to each other. In addition the form should be appropriate to its immediate neighbours and any important features on surrounding buildings.

The traditional building form in the District is that of two-storey pitched roofs with the roof generally spanning a width of 5 to 6 metres. Additionally there is the limited occurrence of three storey buildings in town centres that are more commercial/public building in character.

Where extension are carried out they should produce additive rather than subtractive forms.

Materials

3.3 ~~Prior to~~ Before transport improvements in the nineteenth century builders were largely restricted to the range of materials found in their locality. This has resulted in the creation of buildings that have a ~~certain~~ local distinctiveness and ~~level of~~ cohesiveness. Often new development is disappointing because although the overall design is suitable it is poorly detailed and the choice of materials inappropriate. Ensuring that the correct detail and materials are specified requires time and care. Advice can be obtained from Planning Policy on 01702 318002 or planning.policy@rochford.gov.uk

~~POLICY~~ STATEMENT CA2

In the district a wide range of traditional building materials has been employed. For walls brick (both red and stock), smooth plaster render and featheredged weatherboarding on timber frames have all been used. Traditional roofing materials include clay plain tiles and pantiles, natural slate and on occasion thatch.

The width of buildings and the resulting roof pitch dictates the type of covering that should be used. Peg tile roofs are steeply pitched normally between 35° and 45°, while slate and pantiles have a lower pitch of between 25°and 35°. It should be noted that pantiles are rarely used for the main roofs of buildings, they are usually found as subordinate roofs, or on single storey agricultural buildings or other outbuildings.

The plain tiles or pantiles found on older buildings are traditionally hand-made, resulting in a roof that exhibits a particularly attractive uneven appearance due to the small differences between individual tiles. New hand-made tiles are available and are preferable in many situations to the uniformity of those that have been machine-made. The re-use of appropriate traditional building materials provides an alternative option which can enhance the delivery of sustainable development.

The richness of a building lies in the texture, colour and durability of its materials and the way they have been used. It is often forgotten that time and the elements are important effects. The weathering of natural materials results in an appearance that improves with age and therefore modern artificial alternatives are not generally acceptable.

Within areas of flood risk, as defined on the Replacement Local Plan proposals map, consideration must be given to the materials and design of schemes to ensure that they are appropriate to the area.

Siting and Townscape

3.4 The importance of the setting of a building is often forgotten. It is derived not only from the relationship to other buildings, but also by the spaces created between buildings.

~~POLICY~~ STATEMENT CA3

The siting of a new building in an existing settlement must take account of the impact it makes on existing spaces: whether this is enclosed or open. A tightly knitted townscape should be sought, although in rural locations a more open character is ~~may be~~ appropriate. The scale and height of existing buildings will influence the townscape character and in certain commercial areas a more significant scale for a new building may be appropriate.

When considering the streetscape and siting of buildings it is important that adequate consideration is given in the design to the permeability and connectivity of the proposed development. The streetscape must be designed with consideration for crime prevention and the principles of 'Secured by Design' – www.securedbydesign.com (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2004).

Development must ~~should~~ respect the alignment of the street of which it is part. This ~~usually~~ means building to the same frontage as the existing and keeping any angles, which may reflect earlier subdivisions. Extensions may be set back from the main building line to allow a clear visual break between existing and new work.

3.5 The siting of new development within flood risk areas will have design implications. Any proposed development within areas at risk of flooding must follow the guidance set out in Chapter 8 (Natural Resources) of the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan. Policy NR11 (Development within Flood Risk Areas) sets out how applications for development in flood risk areas will be assessed.

4. DESIGN GUIDANCE – SPECIFIC DESIGN DETAILS

General

4.1 Successful development depends on the quality of the detailing. A great deal of the development that has taken place in the last 50 years ~~five decades~~ has been disappointing and architecturally unconvincing due to incorrect usage or lack of attention. Standard pattern book "styles" tend to devalue the merits of genuine historic buildings and to blur the local identity of an area. The following notes highlight some specific areas that should be considered.

Roof

4.2 The roof is nearly always a dominant architectural feature; style, covering, ridge detailing, chimneys, eaves detailing, rainwater goods and verge details are all-important visual and decorative elements.

4.3 Raised ridge tiles used to provide extra ventilation should be avoided. It is possible to obtain hand-made ridge tiles capable of providing ventilation, but still maintaining an unbroken ridge height along the length of the roof.

4.4 On occasion thatch is considered to be an appropriate roofing material in a rural situation.

~~POLICY~~ STATEMENT CA4

Roof design should follow local tradition and relate to the best of existing roof details.

On tiled roofs simple verges with undercloaks will normally be appropriate. Verges formed by the use of bargeboards should be generally avoided unless the building is rendered or weatherboarded. Where barges are used "*boots*" at the base should be avoided. Verges that are finish against a protective parapet are sometimes appropriate in higher status buildings.

There is wide range of decorative features found on historic roofs. The use of red ridge tiles, crested ridges and terminal features will be encouraged. Ridges may be protected with half or third round clay ridge tiles or, as is usual on lower pitched slate roofs, a lead roll ridge. Raised ridge tiles used to provide extra ventilation are to be avoided.

The form of the eaves gives the opportunity for a variety of detailed design elements. Both open eaves with exposed rafter feet and closed eaves with overhangs are appropriate. Overhangs supported on brick corbels and the use of dentil courses are suitable types of finishing.

Bonnet hips are not appropriate in Rochford District.

The traditional thatch material is long-straw, not reed and the detailing should be simple and in keeping with the local vernacular.

Chimneys

4.5 Chimneystacks are both formal and functional features of the roofspace and will be encouraged.

~~POLICY~~ STATEMENT CA5

The construction of stacks will be encouraged. The use of corbel courses and decorative pots can enliven the silhouette and roofscape. Modern stacks tend to have a squat appearance and this is not appropriate in the conservation area situation, where a more imposing presence is desirable.

Plumbing and Rainwater Goods

4.6 External plumbing must ~~should~~ be avoided for both ~~aesthetic~~ visual and practical reasons. Every opportunity should be taken to —rationalize and simplify the design of disposal pipes. Moulded or ogee gutters are generally more decorative and should be used in conservation areas when half round gutters would be inappropriate.

~~POLICY~~ STATEMENT CA6

External plumbing should always be avoided and should not disturb or break through any mouldings or decorative features.