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LPSPG1

Housing Development – Design & Layout

INTRODUCTION

This Supplementary Planning Guidance Note aims to clarify the situation with regard to the design policies used by the local planning authority as a basis for negotiation in proposals for residential development in accordance with Policy HP11(See Chapter 2, Housing).

POLICY BACKGROUND

The Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Use Areas (1997) has formally been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance for the District. Therefore it is this document that details the core design advice against which developments within the district will be assessed. Developers and designers will need to consult it in addition to this guidance note.

The following advice in addition to the Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Use Areas (1997) is based on local design policies

Car parking standards for housing development can be found in LPSPG2 Car Parking Standards.

Minimum Garden Areas

The Design Guide criteria for minimum garden areas has been adapted as a result of changing household sizes. The range of house types now required includes a considerable proportion of small dwellings. The resultant higher densities mean that garden sizes are likely to be below the 100 M² minimum recommended in the Design Guide.

The Local Planning Authority will pursue the following policy with regard to the provision of private garden areas:

**Houses, when built, shall have a minimum private zone garden area of 100 M².
Exceptions to this policy will be:**

(i) Single storey patio housing - a walled patio area of 50 M² minimum will be required, a substantial proportion of which shall be paved.

(ii) Dwellings adjacent to a substantial area of well landscaped and properly maintained communal open space.

(iii) One and two bedroom dwellings - a minimum private garden area of 50 M² will be required provided that the second bedroom is not of a size that would allow sub-division into two rooms.

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(iv) Three bed terraced dwellings - private gardens shall be a minimum depth of 2½ x the width of the house (except where the provision exceeds 100 M²) to a minimum private garden area of 50 M².

For flats, when built, the standard shall be:

(a) Minimum balcony area of 5 M², with the ground floor dwelling having a minimum patio garden of 50 M²; or

(b) The provision of a communal residents garden on the basis of a minimum area of 25 M² per flat.

These two methods for flats may also be combine

Landscaping

Landscaping is an important aspect of visual design. The lack of it can render an otherwise satisfactory scheme dull and uninteresting. Conversely, a mundane development can be transformed by an imaginative scheme. In this context regard will be had to the following policy:

(i) In considering planning applications for residential development, the Local planning Authority will wish to be satisfied that adequate provision is made within the site for hard and soft landscaping, including paving, grassed and planted areas. This landscaping should be an integral part of the overall development scheme.

(ii) Where full details of the landscaping of the sites are not included within the planning application, the Local Planning Authority will make any permission conditional upon a satisfactory landscaping scheme being agreed and implemented within a specified period.

(iii) In considering landscaping schemes the Local Planning Authority will have regard to the following points:

(a) All existing sound and healthy trees and hedgerows will be retained wherever possible, particularly in rural locations. Where a hedge must be removed to satisfy visibility requirements it should be replaced, set back if necessary to satisfy these requirements.

(b) In deciding upon the location of planting, proper consideration should be given to the mature size of the tree and its effect upon daylighting and underground services.

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(c) The provision of shrub planting will be encouraged so as to provide an instant impact in the new development.

(d) There should be sufficient planting which contributes to the development by:

- **preventing soil erosion or stabilizing slopes;**
- **providing a screen from wind, noise or view;**
- **softening the appearance of buildings; and/or**
- **providing a focal point in a space.**

(iv) Where existing healthy trees are protected by the conditions of a planning consent or where tree planting is required in a landscaping scheme, the Local Planning Authority will ensure their long-term preservation as an integral part of the housing development by serving Tree Preservation Orders as appropriate.

Infill Development

Housing development on small vacant frontage plots comprising infilling shall be subject to the following building design criteria:

Site frontages shall ordinarily be a minimum of 9.15 metres for detached properties or 15.24 metres for semi-detached pairs of properties or be of such frontage and form compatible with the existing form and character of the area within which they are to be sited.

Extensions to Existing Housing

In assessing planning applications for extensions to existing dwellings regard will be had to the following policy:

Extensions to existing dwellings shall ordinarily conform to the following standards:

(a) Be harmonious in character, scale, form, and materials used in external construction with the existing dwelling;

(b) Proposals for single-storey extensions shall be treated on their own merits having regard to;

- **the siting and orientation of the existing dwelling and proposed extension in relation to adjacent properties;**
- **the impact of the extension on the amenities of the adjoining residents;**

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- the visual impact of the proposed extension on the appearance of the streetscene;
- the impact on the main windows in the side elevations of adjacent properties; and
- the satisfactory positioning of rainwater goods.

(c) Single-storey rear extensions to semi-detached and terraced properties shall not exceed 3.05 metres from the original rear wall of the dwelling;

(d) First floor rear extensions to classes (b) and (c) above and all other first floor extensions shall be decided on their merits having regard to the protection of the amenities of the adjacent properties. In order to prevent excessive overshadowing of neighbouring properties extensions at first floor level shall be sited to ensure that their projection does not form a horizontal angle greater than 45° with the nearest habitable room window of any adjacent property;

(e) Side extensions will be decided on their merits, but shall be located a minimum of 1 metre from the plot boundaries at first floor level to prevent the coalescence of adjacent properties and the roof design should be compatible with the original dwelling.

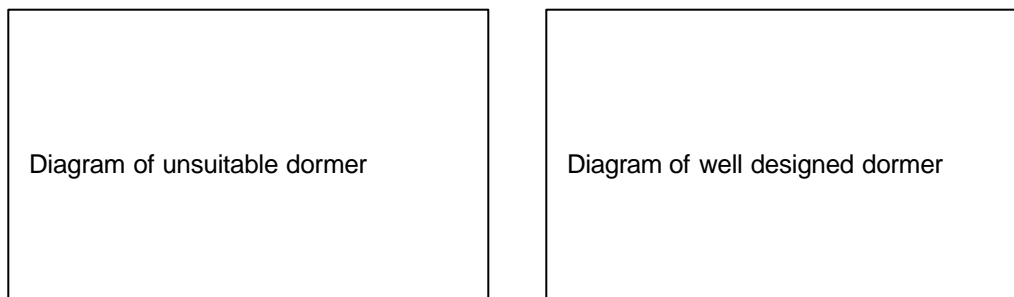
Separation of Dwellings

The relationship between new dwellings and existing dwellings in the case of infill developments is considered to be of particular importance to the maintenance of the appearance and character of residential areas and to the overall appearance of new estates. The Local planning Authority will apply the following policy to ensure the adequate separation of new dwellings.

In assessing planning applications for housing schemes, including the development of new estates and infill plots within existing residential areas, the Local Planning Authority will normally require that a minimum separation of one metre is achieved in all cases between the side boundaries of the hereditament and the dwelling house, including single storey side projections such as garages. This policy will apply to the spaces between detached dwelling houses, pairs of semi-detached dwellings and blocks of terraced houses, flats or maisonettes, to provide a total separation of two metres between the sides of the buildings. It is accepted that a total side to side separation of two metres may not be achievable in all cases relating to infill applications.

Rooms in the Roof/Dormer Windows

Utilising the roof space to provide additional living accommodation has proved to be an attractive proposition to householders in recent years because it offers economy in space requirements and costs. It must, however, be recognised that many dwellings were never designed to accept this form of extension and that to attempt to add a further floor by extending the lower walls vertically through the roof will produce massive dormers which can never look satisfactory.



In proposals involving rooms in the roof of dwellings, any projecting walls or windows shall respect the scale, form, and character of the existing or proposed dwelling and shall ensure that substantial roof verges are maintained at the sides and below any projecting dormer. Where possible, front and side dormers shall have pitched roofs. Dormers projecting above the ridge line or beyond a roof/hip will normally be refused.

Balconies

Under current planning legislation (the Town and Country General Development Order) the formation of a balcony can in many instances be carried out without the need to obtain planning permission. Balconies can, however, give rise to overlooking and loss of privacy to neighbouring curtilages. The following policy will, therefore, be applied:

In order to safeguard the privacy of neighbouring curtilages, the Local Planning Authority will, in appropriate cases, impose suitable conditions in any planning permission for new dwellings and extensions to existing properties restricting or prohibiting as the case may be the provision of balconies.

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Other Design Aspects Related to Windows

The Fire Brigade is concerned about the use of high level windows, particularly where these were the sole windows in rooms, since these cannot be used as a means of escape. This type of window should, therefore, be avoided wherever possible in the design of new buildings.

Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

In assessing planning applications for new housing development, extensions and alterations to existing housing within designated conservation areas and/or proposed works to buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest, regard will be had to the additional design policies and advice contained in Chapter 7 Building Conservation and Archaeology and LPSPG6 Design Guidance for Conservation Areas

**ADDITIONAL DESIGN POLICIES PRIMARILY RELATING TO ESTATE
DEVELOPMENT**

In accordance with Policy HP11 (see Chapter 2 Housing), design policies on estate developments should comply with the Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Use Areas (1997), together with the following additional policies.

The following policies relating to vehicular movement are local policies.

The Local Planning Authority recognises that all surface finishes and access treatments are material considerations to the environment of residential estates and will, in all cases, require full details of these in advance of commencement of the development, to be implemented before occupation of the dwellings.

One adoptable road type set out in the Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Uses Areas is the mews court (type 8, page 56 and 62).

The Local planning Authority will not automatically seek the use of mews courts and private drives in layouts where the character of the existing neighbourhood justifies a density and type of development where other alternatives can be considered.

Where mews courts are incorporated into new housing schemes, these should normally be closed courts serving a maximum of 12 units.

The provision of square mews with central parking areas will be resisted in housing schemes.

Children's Play Space

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Children's play spaces are not usually considered to be necessary because of the reasonable garden sizes which are required by the Local Planning Authority, and taking into account that adequate public open space provision is located within a reasonable walking distance of the proposed housing development. The provision of play spaces generally causes problems of maintenance and supervision, whilst play in gardens allows for greater parental control.

The need for the provision of children's play spaces in new residential developments will, therefore, be assessed by the Local Planning Authority using the following criteria:

- **the adequacy of private garden space for each dwelling, having regard to the Local Planning Authority's minimum garden areas (see previous policy in this Guidance note); and**
- **the provision of public open space facilities in relation to the proposed housing development (see Sport Recreation Chapter).**

Where it is considered that the provision of a children's play space is required in a new development scheme, the Local Planning Authority will require it to be located:

- **so as to minimise annoyance to adjoining occupiers;**
- **to maximise children's safety; and**
- **to ensure that it is visible from neighbouring properties.**

The spaces must also be properly prepared for adoption and maintenance by the District Council or by some other agency as may be agreed.

BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT

Policy HP20 highlights the important criteria against which any intensification proposals, using long back gardens, often referred to as 'backland development' will be assessed. This section provides detailed guidelines to complement the criteria in Policy HP20.

Access

It is essential that an adequate and satisfactory means of access is provided to the proposed development site. Means of access will be assessed as follows:

- (a) In the case of backland development accessed from an estate road - as set out in the Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Use Areas;
- (b) In the case of backland development accessed from a classified road - as advised by the Essex County Highways department;

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(c) In all cases - any access to a backland site which is in close proximity to existing dwellings and would affect the visual and residential amenity of those dwellings by virtue of noise, dust or fumes or create road safety problems will normally be refused.

Tandem Relationship

Any development which produces a 'tandem relationship' between dwellings with one dwelling directly facing the rear of another will not be considered acceptable. Such a relationship will result in overlooking and privacy problems to the detriment to the amenity of existing residents.

Scale of the Development

The scale and form of the proposed development will be crucial in the design of a successful scheme. A development which is out of scale and unduly obtrusive to the outlook of surrounding development will normally be refused. In this respect for example a bungalow may be acceptable in a backland situation where a house is not.

SUB-DIVISION OF SINGLE DWELLINGHOUSES WITHIN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

As explained in Chapter 2 (Housing) of the Local Plan, the Local Planning Authority is keen to encourage wherever possible the sub-division of single dwellings into smaller units of accommodation, but not at the expense of the residential amenity of surrounding properties. The section provides detailed guidelines to complement the criteria included in Policy HP23. Car parking standards can be found in LPSPG2.

Car Parking

See LPSPG2. The spaces must be sited so as not to adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring residents or the character and appearance of the street.

Gardens

The standard for minimum garden areas is set out previously in this Guidance note. Garden areas should be sited to allow convenient access from all flats in the scheme.

Appearance of the Scheme

It is expected that all conversion proposals will preserve, as far as possible, the appearance of the property as a single dwelling house. Where an extension or loft conversion is proposed this will be considered against the detailed design policies in The Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Use Areas and elsewhere in this note.

Overlooking and Privacy

Proposals must not give rise to overlooking and unreasonable loss of privacy to adjoining properties. In this respect, the location of living rooms on any upper floor must not directly overlook the private garden areas of adjoining properties. The inclusion of an external staircase which would be visually intrusive and create daylighting and overlooking problems will not be considered as acceptable.

Internal Layout

The internal layout must be carefully arranged to prevent noise disturbance to adjoining properties. This will be particularly important in conversions involving semi-detached or terraced dwellings. The provision of noise insulation materials may be a pre-requisite to the grant of planning consent.

Density

The Local Planning Authority is conscious of the need to ensure the best use is made of land within the urban area to help ameliorate the pressure for development in the Green Belt. Nevertheless, a careful assessment will be made of the density of conversion proposals in relation to surrounding properties. Proposals which will result in over-development or unreasonably high density compared to the surrounding area will not be acceptable.

ENCLOSURE OF GRASS VERGES

Grass verges and amenity areas do contribute to the character and appearance of housing estates and were usually intended for public benefit. The Local Planning Authority considers that such areas are better retained as open areas with soft landscaping, but there may be occasions when enclosure in an adjacent private garden is acceptable, particularly where there is a history of neglect. This section provides detailed guidelines to complement the criteria included in Policy HP26

Visual Appearance

Grass verges and open amenity areas were usually intended to be an integral part of estate design and layout. Where such areas continue to make an important contribution in this respect and where neglect is not a problem the Local Planning Authority will prefer to see their retention rather than enclosure into an adjacent private garden. Enclosure in these cases can result in a significant change in the overall design, layout and symmetry of an estate or locality to the detriment of the amenity of all the residents.

Highway Safety

Many grass verges or open areas were provided specifically to ensure adequate vision at junctions for motorists and pedestrians alike. The Local Planning Authority will resist proposals for the enclosure of verges originally intended for this purpose. Where enclosure is contemplated it may be desirable to require walls and fences to be set slightly back from the highway edge, for their maximum height to be restricted to 600mm and for construction to be in non-solid materials.

Walls and Fences

Where enclosure involves the provision of a screening wall or fence the Local Planning Authority will expect the structure to be provided to a high standard design. Too often,

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boundary walls and fences are of poor quality and within a short space of time they deteriorate with a resultant impact on the visual appearance of a residential estate or locality.

Trees

In cases where important street trees exist on grass verges, the Local Planning Authority will require those trees to be retained and Tree Preservation Orders will be served in appropriate cases.

SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEMES

Setting

Where the proposed sheltered accommodation will be within an area of single family dwellings, it will be important to ensure that the new building is compatible in height and bulk with the surrounding dwellings and where the surroundings are particularly open and spacious the new development must reflect this same character. In town centre locations there will be more opportunity to vary the density, form and character of the development.

Traffic and Noise

In a predominantly residential area the additional traffic travelling to and from a sheltered scheme can have an impact on the amenity of the area and it is essential that areas set aside for parking, garaging and for access roads suitably reflect this sensitive issue. In particular, car parking areas should be kept away from private amenity space and fences and screening walls provided in appropriate locations.

Private Amenity Space

Many of the people living in sheltered accommodation are no longer concerned about tending their own garden, but do still enjoy the opportunity to sit and enjoy a private garden area. The Local Planning Authority considers therefore that it is appropriate to identify an area within any sheltered scheme of 25 square metres of private amenity space per unit including warden accommodation. In town centre locations there may be scope to vary this figure.

Other considerations

All category 2 sheltered type schemes i.e. with a resident warden must be provided with appropriate communal facilities. Furthermore all schemes will be designed with appropriate facilities for elderly people and include adequate warden accommodation.

Refuse storage facilities and any external drying areas will be expected to be screened and located where they will not be detrimental to the appearance and amenities of the locality.

PURPOSE BUILT FLATS

Location

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Within areas comprising predominantly single family dwellings, purpose built flatted schemes have the potential to detract from the amenities of the area if they do not respect the height, bulk and general spaciousness of their surroundings. For example, three or four storey accommodation will usually be entirely inappropriate in an area of single family dwellinghouses, but fit well into the skyline in a town centre location. Furthermore, a town centre location will often be more suitable in terms of accommodating traffic and parking and offer more scope for interesting and innovative design. The Local Planning Authority will wish to be satisfied therefore that any proposed scheme adequately reflects the character and appearance of its surroundings.

Garaging and Parking

It will be expected that garaging and parking provision will not give rise to unduly large areas of hard surfacing or be sited so as to adversely affect the visual amenities of the area or adjoining residents or give rise to nuisance from lights, noise or fumes.

Overlooking

No scheme should give rise to overlooking of private garden areas or unreasonable loss of privacy or daylighting to adjoining properties especially due to the location of living rooms on upper floors.

Refuse Storage

Refuse storage facilities and external drying areas will be adequately screened and located where they will not be detrimental to the appearance and amenities of the location.