

Chapter 5 Delivering High Quality Places



Impington, South Cambridgeshire

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- 5.1 The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) establishes that Planning should “always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings”.
- 5.2 South Cambridgeshire has been voted amongst the top 10 places in the country to live in a number of national surveys over recent years. The Local Plan seeks to shape development of all scales, be that small scale rural housing to major new communities, to create sustainable and successful places that protect the special qualities of the district’s rural character, whilst using the opportunities presented by development to enhance the built and natural environment.
- 5.3 The District Council has signed up to the [Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth](#), which is a clear policy statement of the aspiration to create new developments that offer communities a fulfilling, visually pleasing and environmentally sensitive way of life.

Key Facts:

- The district has settlements of varied and distinct local character, ranging from compact hamlets through larger villages with linear street patterns to new settlements and extensions to the urban fabric of Cambridge.
- The Council has signed up to the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth, which sets out core principles for the level of quality expected in new developments.
- South Cambridgeshire has adopted a District Design Guide to provide additional guidance on how developments can ensure they are sustainable and achieve a high quality of design in a way that respects the local context.

Securing High Quality Design

Policy HQ/1: Design Principles

1. All new development must be of high quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context. As appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals must:

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- a. Preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape;
- b. Conserve or enhance important natural and historic assets of the site;
- c. Include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness;
- d. Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;
- e. Deliver a strong visual relationship between buildings that comfortably define and enclose streets, squares and public places, creating interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and landmarks along routes and around spaces;
- f. Achieve a permeable development with ease of movement and access for all users and abilities, with user friendly and conveniently accessible streets both within the development and linking with its surroundings and existing and proposed facilities and services, focusing on delivering attractive and safe opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport;
- g. Provide safe and convenient access for all users and abilities to public buildings and spaces, including those with limited mobility or those with other impairment such as of sight or hearing;
- h. Ensure that car parking is integrated into the development in a convenient, accessible manner and does not dominate the development and its surroundings or cause safety issues;
- i. Provide safe, secure, convenient and accessible provision for cycle parking and storage, facilities for waste management, recycling and collection in a manner that is appropriately integrated within the overall development;
- j. Provide a harmonious integrated mix of uses both within the site and with its surroundings that contributes to the creation of inclusive communities providing the facilities and services to meet the needs of the community;
- k. Ensure developments deliver flexibility that allows for future changes in needs and lifestyles, and adaptation to climate change;
- l. Mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on development through location, form, orientation, materials and design of buildings and spaces;

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- m. Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation;
 - n. Protect the health and amenity of occupiers and surrounding uses from development that is overlooking, overbearing or results in a loss of daylight which avoids unacceptable impacts such as noise, vibration, odour, emissions and dust;
 - o. Design-out crime and create an environment that is created for people that is and feels safe, and has a strong community focus.
2. Larger and more complex developments will be required to submit Masterplans and Design Codes to agree an overall vision and strategy for a development as a whole that demonstrates a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

- 5.4 The [NPPF](#) sets out a clear national policy framework for promoting good design as a key element to achieving sustainable development and emphasises the indivisible link between good design and good planning (paragraphs 56-68).
- 5.5 All new development will have an impact on its surroundings. Development needs to be of an appropriate scale, design and materials for its location and conform to the design principles set out in the policy above. The aim must be that any development from a major urban extension to Cambridge to an extension to an existing home respects, preserves and enhances the special character of South Cambridgeshire generally and the locality specifically. Any development must also take proper care to respond to its surroundings, and create sustainable, inclusive and healthy environments where people would wish to live, work, shop, study or spend their leisure time. Well designed buildings and places contribute to the quality of life, increase economic vitality, achieve high environmental standards, reduce emissions and deliver a high quality public realm.
- 5.6 A fully integrated and responsive design-led approach to development is needed rather than design being approached as a simple checklist or as an optional extra. Policy HQ/1 establishes a set of fundamental design principles that should be applied to all development to ensure it contributes to social, economic and environmental sustainability and makes a positive difference to people's lives to help provide homes, jobs and better opportunities for everyone, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural environment, and conserving the countryside and open spaces that are important to everyone.
- 5.7 The Government requires Design and Access Statements to be submitted with most planning applications, intended to demonstrate how a proposal is functional,

attractive and accessible to all. Comprehensive guidance on their format and content is provided in the Council's [Design & Access Statements Briefing Note](#).

- 5.8 Developments should be planned comprehensively in an integrated manner, not piecemeal. Some larger scale developments or complex sites can take a number of years to complete and are often delivered and planned in stages. In order to ensure developments take place in a coherent and structured way, Masterplans and Design Codes should be produced to agree an overall vision and strategy for a development as a whole at the outset. Guidance on what should be covered in Masterplans and Design Codes is provided in the [District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#).
- 5.9 Further guidance to support Policy HQ/1 will be provided in the review of the [District Design Guide SPD](#). Other detailed local context information can be found in Conservation Area Appraisals. Some parish councils have prepared Village Design Guides, or are considering neighbourhood plans, which also provide local context. Other useful guidance on design includes: [By Design](#) (DETR, 2000); [Urban Design Compendium](#) (Llewelyn-Davies for English Partnerships, The Housing Corporation and Urban Design Alliance); and [Car parking what works where](#) (English Partnerships).

Public Art

Policy HQ/2: Public Art and New Development

1. The Council will encourage the provision or commissioning of public art that is integrated into the design of development as a means of enhancing the quality of development proposals, in particular from:
 - a. Residential developments comprising 10 or more dwellings; and
 - b. Other developments where the floor area to be built is 1,000 m² gross or more, including office, manufacturing, warehousing and retail developments.
2. The provision of public art must involve the local community and could be community-led and have regard to the local circumstances of the site and/or local aspirations.
3. Where public art is provided, contributions and commuted maintenance sums for up to 10 years will be required and include the cost of decommissioning where appropriate.

- 5.10 The provision of quality visual arts and crafts as part of new developments can bring social, cultural, environmental, educational and economic benefits, both to new development and the local community. Done well, public art that is designed to reflect and enhance its surroundings will help to raise the visual quality of

developments, create a sense of place and through community involvement help with community development.

- 5.11 Public art can encompass a wide range of approaches. Integrated into the design to give a new development a sense of place and individuality. Public art could include designing a development so that functional elements such as lighting, seating, fencing, landscape, fountains and water features, and signage are bespoke or it could be a landmark work such as a sculpture. Alternatively, it could include provision of funding and/or space and facilities to enable performing arts which can help build new communities.
- 5.12 Public art will be sought through negotiation. An appropriate balance needs to be struck between all the competing demands on development and the benefits of public art. It is also important that public art is supported by the local community therefore proposals should be community-led to understand what is appropriate in their locality, having regard to the circumstances of the site.
- 5.13 Further guidance to support Policy HQ/2 will be provided in a [Public Art SPD](#) and Making Places: Delivering Public Art in South Cambridgeshire.

