

- 5.4 Part of the overall strategy for the adopted Structure Plan is to seek sustainable development and improvement of the quality of life in Berkshire by, amongst other things, protecting and enhancing the character and quality of the landscape, environment and heritage; minimising the need to travel; conserving natural resources and minimising pollution.
- 5.5 This chapter therefore sets out a variety of environmental policies which can be divided into four sections. These are general design principles, policies dealing with urban conservation and the protection of the natural environment, and a series of policies addressing general environmental issues such as renewable energy, recycling and contaminated land.

GENERAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Good Design

- 5.6 PPG1 - General Policy and Principles (1997) states that the appearance of proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings are material considerations in determining planning applications and appeals. The recently produced "By Design – Urban Design in the Planning System: towards better practice" (2000) should be referred to, as it provides practical advice to help implement PPG1. In addition, useful design guidance on housing layouts can be found in "Places, Streets and Movement: a companion guide to Design Bulletin 32" (1998).
- 5.7 The purpose of the policies within the Local Plan are therefore to provide applicants with a clear indication of the planning authority's design expectations. PPG1 also indicates that good design can help promote sustainable development, improve the quality of the existing environment, attract business and investment, and reinforce civic pride and a sense of place.
- 5.8 All development proposals are required to take account of a range of design issues which are listed in Policy EN1. Developments should ideally be of comparable height and massing/bulk and in scale with surrounding buildings, including those which are to be retained on site. Proposals should also respect and enhance the appearance and use of spaces between and around buildings.
- 5.9 The layout and siting of buildings should make positive use of the intrinsic qualities and features of the site, including its topography and landscaping which also involves consideration of existing watercourses. Building form, design, architectural style and materials should respect and harmonise with surrounding properties, including those to remain on site. The street level interface of non-residential buildings should be of human scale and pedestrian friendly.
- 5.10 Access points must be satisfactorily incorporated within development proposals as a fundamental part of the design concept. All new development should be considered in terms of its visual impact on, and relationship to, nearby properties including over-shadowing and the loss of sunlight; and relationship to the surrounding area and to existing trees.
- 5.11 All these factors should be assessed in relation to the development site's context. Poorly designed buildings or those which are of good design but which do not have regard to the site's surroundings or result in over-development will be refused.
- 5.12 Regard should be given to the Borough Council's Development Control Guidelines in formulating design proposals and also the guidance on crime prevention set out in Policy EN5, landscaping set out in Policies EN3 and EN4 and housing densities in Policy H10

and supporting text. In addition, guidance on shop front designs and security grills and shutters is set out in Policies S17 and S18 respectively. It is planned to produce supplementary planning guidance on design.

Policy EN1 (Standard of Design)

Development proposals are required to reflect a high standard of design and must be compatible with and/or improve their surroundings in terms of:

- a) scale;**
- b) height;**
- c) massing/Bulk;**
- d) layout;**
- e) siting;**
- f) building form and design;**
- g) architectural style;**
- h) materials;**
- i) access points and servicing;**
- j) visual impact;**
- k) relationship to nearby properties;**
- l) relationship to mature trees; and**
- m) relationship to water courses.**

These factors will be assessed in the context of each site and their immediate surroundings. Poor designs which are not in keeping with their surroundings and schemes which result in over-development of a site will be refused.

- 5.13 A full planning application for a complex scheme or a sensitive or prominent site will require the submission of context and design concept details. Certain outline planning applications such as those for large development proposals or the use of a sensitive site, a gateway site or a site adjoining a sensitive location, such as a conservation area, may also warrant context and design concept details. PPG1 indicates that as a minimum, applicants should provide a short written statement setting out the design principles adopted as well as illustrative material in plan and elevation. This material should show the wider context and not just the development site and its immediate surroundings. Inclusion of relevant perspective views may also be of value. Small scale or straightforward proposals will not require this level of detail. Applicants are encouraged to discuss the design principles of proposed developments with the Local Planning Authority prior to the submission of a planning application.

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