



South Staffordshire Council

A

South Staffordshire Design Guide

2018



Further information can be found at
www.sstaffs.gov.uk



Preface

This design guide was produced for South Staffordshire Council by LUC. Illustrations and architectural input by Tate Harmer Architects.



Environmental Planning
Design & Management

www.landuse.co.uk

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Himley Hall Registered Park and Garden was once owned by the National Coal Board before being sold to Dudley Council in 1966 following the decline of the coal mining industry in the area. The Hall's landscaped parkland reflects the character of the surrounding South Staffordshire countryside and fieldscapes.

1. Introduction



Littleton Green Community School, Huntington shows how modern design can enhance the local area.

Purpose of the guide

This District Design Guide has been produced to help you understand the Council's requirements for the design of new development in South Staffordshire.

The Council will only approve applications for new developments that give due consideration to good design. The core principles of good design that are most important to the Council are set out in this guide. The guide has been produced to amplify and illustrate the policies set out in the Council's Local Plan¹. It does not repeat all the policies relevant to every type of development; therefore, the relevant policy documents appropriate to your specific development should be consulted in addition to this guide to ensure that you have met all the requirements. Particular documents relevant to each of the principles set out in this guide are signposted at the end of each chapter and are listed in Chapter **7. References (p. 65)**.

The guide is for everyone involved in planning and designing new developments in South Staffordshire. It is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and therefore a material consideration in determining planning applications.

More detail on how the document sits within the framework of local and national planning policy is set out on the following pages.

¹ South Staffordshire Local Plan - including the Adopted Core Strategy, 2012

Good Design

"Achieving good design is about creating places, buildings or spaces that work well for everyone, look good, last well, and will adapt to the needs of future generations" ².

Well-designed new developments enhance our places, making them sustainable, safe and inclusive. Good design does not necessarily cost more. It is about:

- *understanding the site context, maximising opportunities for conservation and enhancement;*
- *carefully considering each element of the proposal in terms of how it will appear, how it will be used and how it will sit in its surroundings;*
- *having a clear vision and aspiring to create a design that will positively improve our environment.*

Well designed places:

- *are attractive places to live, work and visit;*
- *function well; supporting mixed uses, well-used public spaces and encourage ease of movement;*
- *help to establish a strong sense of place, valued by people;*
- *are safe, inclusive environments;*
- *are sustainable, adaptable and resilient.*

² National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance: Design, 2014

Contemporary design

Contemporary design and innovation will be encouraged in new developments.

South Staffordshire is a rural district and its identity is tied to its history, historic buildings, its landscape and settlements. Nevertheless, contemporary design and innovation are equally valued and can sit alongside the historic and rural characteristics of the district.

The key aspiration for all design, whether inspired by modern design or historic design, is that it is *good design*. New buildings can be sympathetic with their surroundings without needing to copy older buildings.

Some local examples of good design are illustrated opposite.

Avoid standard pattern-book designs

Standardised pattern-book style designs are rarely acceptable in South Staffordshire. Standard style houses and streets create 'anywhere' places, which are difficult to find your way around and do little to inspire or enrich the environment. The villages in South Staffordshire have grown up within the landscape, gradually, over time. Elements of history are still visible when we look around, making places interesting, meaningful and creating links between the built environment and the landscape.



College Farm Dovecote in Four Ashes uses a modern design with glass to create a new space between the refurbished original buildings.

Creating places with new character

There may be some areas which do not have noticeable or distinctive character. Such areas should not be viewed as an excuse for poor design, but an opportunity to create new character through good design.

Developers should take opportunities to create positive environments. The Council will encourage this approach; the creation of attractive, usable and connected places are important aspirations for new development.

Good design is not only for Conservation Areas or more sensitive sites. All applications for new development are expected to show consideration for good design.



The simple style and low height of the Highgate Common Visitor's Centre sits well in its surrounding landscape. An interesting roof style allows windows to be added into the stepped elevation without compromising the simplicity of form.



This barn conversion has retained old elements whilst adopting a contemporary style. Retaining the old walls provides character and is a reminder of its past farming history. The historic natural stone sits comfortably alongside more modern materials.

Local examples of good design



The form of these retirement flats in Kinver reflects almshouses, creating an historic link with the previous Victorian chapel on the site. The development maintains the scale of the traditional buildings in High Street, with the roof span a key element of this.



This college building responds to its context by adopting a similar overall height and eaves height to the existing building. This provides a sense of harmony and unity that ties the two buildings together.



This modern terrace is constructed from a local red brick and incorporates traditional construction details seen throughout South Staffordshire, including brick detailing and traditional timber window frames.



This sensitive conservatory has been designed to sit comfortably alongside the traditional stone construction house by incorporating traditional stone masonry and simple glazing and framing.



These dwellings in the grounds of Patshull Hall show sensitive attention to detail. The architectural style is traditional but not directly copied from the Hall. The brick elevations incorporate stone cills and cornices from Hollington Tearne Quarry. The scale of the new buildings is clearly subservient to the Hall itself.



This housing development in Burnhill Green uses local materials and expertise and modern green-energy technology. The development filled a gap in the hamlet and is sympathetic to the rural surroundings, with a similar character to the nearby buildings of the 19th century cottages on the Patshull estate. A village green is re-instated to promote a sense of community.

Planning policies

When determining planning applications the Council will consider national and local policies as well as other relevant supplementary documents, evidence base documents and guidance, including this design guide.

The key national and local policies and supporting guidance, and information relevant to the design of new development, are summarised on the following pages.

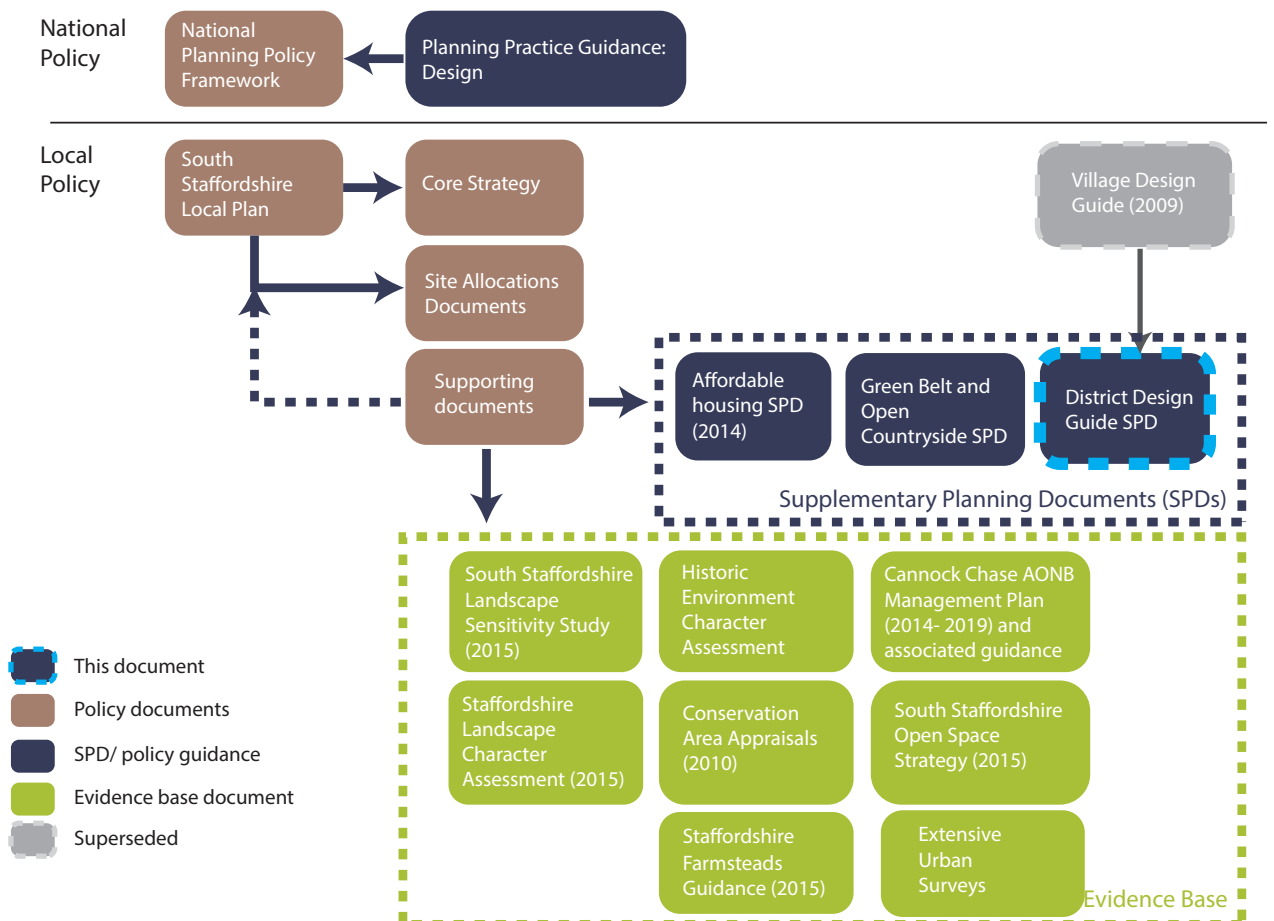
Some relevant documents are shown in the diagram below. Many of these documents contain useful guidance for siting and designing new development. For example, the Green Belt and Open Countryside SPD is relevant for developments in these areas (this is as defined on the Local Plan Policies Map, but includes most of the landscape outside villages). The SPD provides further details and illustration of the principles contained in the Local Plan including the use, size and positioning of new buildings or extensions. The Affordable Housing

and Housing Mix SPD provides guidance on the detailed policy requirements for the delivery of affordable housing and housing mix; it also includes reference to Lifetime Homes standards.

The Evidence Base documents were produced to inform the Local Plan and contain useful information on South Staffordshire's landscape and built environment, as well as guidance on how new developments may best be integrated. The Staffordshire Farmsteads Guidance contains guidance for proposed barn conversions based on the existing character of South Staffordshire's farmsteads. The Historic Environment Character Assessment provides detail on the historic character and heritage features around the settlements of South Staffordshire. The South Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment and Sensitivity Study describe and evaluate the character and sensitivities of the South Staffordshire landscape.

References to all documents can be found in Chapter 7. [References \(p. 65\)](#).

Relevant policy documents & how the District Design Guide sits within these



National Policy

Promoting high quality design in the National Planning Policy Framework

The Government has emphasised the role of good design of the built environment in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) as well as within the supporting national planning guidance:

“in determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area” (NPPF, para. 63)

“Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions” (NPPF, para. 64).



Summary box: the NPPF Planning Practice Guidance on Design, 2014

The NPPF Planning Practice Guidance on design identifies some key points to take into account:

- **Promoting local character and landscape setting:** *this means successfully integrating all forms of new development with the surrounding context, and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, local man-made and natural heritage and culture.*
- **Promoting safe connected and efficient streets:** *streets need to support the character and use of an area, be functional and accessible for all, to be safe and attractive public spaces and encourage a locally appropriate mix of movement (of vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians).*
- **Promoting a network of green spaces (including parks) and public places:** *These should be designed with a purpose in mind, and wherever possible deliver a range of social and environmental goals.*
- **Promote cohesive and vibrant neighbourhoods:** *The vitality of neighbourhoods is enhanced by creating variety, choice and a mix of uses to attract people to live, work and play in the same area.*
- **Address crime prevention:** *Designing out crime and designing in community safety should be central to the planning and delivery of new development.*
- **Promote efficient use of natural resources:** *The structure, layout and design of places can reduce energy and water use and mitigate against flooding, pollution and over heating as well as help to sustain natural ecosystems*
- **Promote access and inclusion:** *Places should be designed so that they can be accessed and used by everyone, recognising and accommodating differences in the way people use the built environment.*

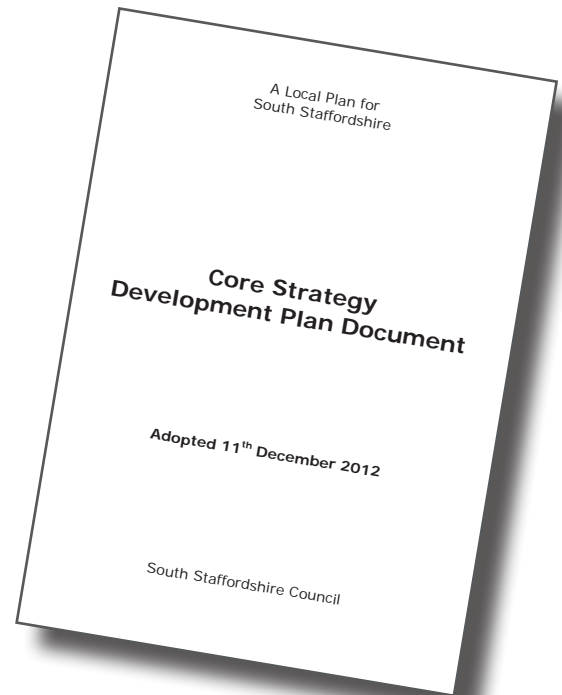
Promoting high quality design in South Staffordshire's Local Plan

The South Staffordshire Local Plan places great importance on promoting high quality design - refer in particular to Core Policy 4: Promoting High Quality Design and Policy EQ 11: Wider Design Considerations.

Policy EQ11 covers the themes of use (incorporating a mix of uses), movement (creating connections and safe, inclusive access), form (respecting local character and distinctiveness and creating a positive street scene) and space (creating pedestrian-friendly streets with a range of green and open spaces). These principles are also covered in this design guide.

"Development proposals must seek to achieve creative and sustainable designs that take into account local character and distinctiveness" (Policy EQ11)

"Good design in the creation of buildings, streets and spaces is an important component of enriching and improving the quality of life for the community" (para 7.53)



Summary box: some of the most relevant policies in the South Staffordshire Local Plan

- Core Policy 2: Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment
- Core Policy 3: Sustainable Development and Climate Change
- Core Policy 4: Promoting High Quality Design
- Policy EQ1: Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets
- Policy EQ3: Conservation, Preservation and Protection of Heritage Assets.
- Policy EQ4: Protecting and Enhancing the Character and Appearance of the Landscape
- Policy EQ5: Sustainable Resources and Energy Efficiency
- Policy EQ9: Protecting Residential Amenity
- Policy EQ12: Landscaping
- Core Policy 7: Employment and Economic Development
- Core Policy 8: Hierarchies of Centres
- Policy EV3: Canals and Canalside Development
- Policy EV6: Re-use of Redundant Rural Buildings
- Policy EV11: Sustainable Travel
- Policy EV12: Parking Provision
- Core Policy 13: Community Safety
- Policy CS1: Designing Out Crime
- Core Policy 14: Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- Policy HWB2: Green Infrastructure



The modern addition on the front of this college building respects the proportions of the original building whilst using glass to distinguish between old and new. The entrance is given a modern lighter feel while the original building retains its prominence.

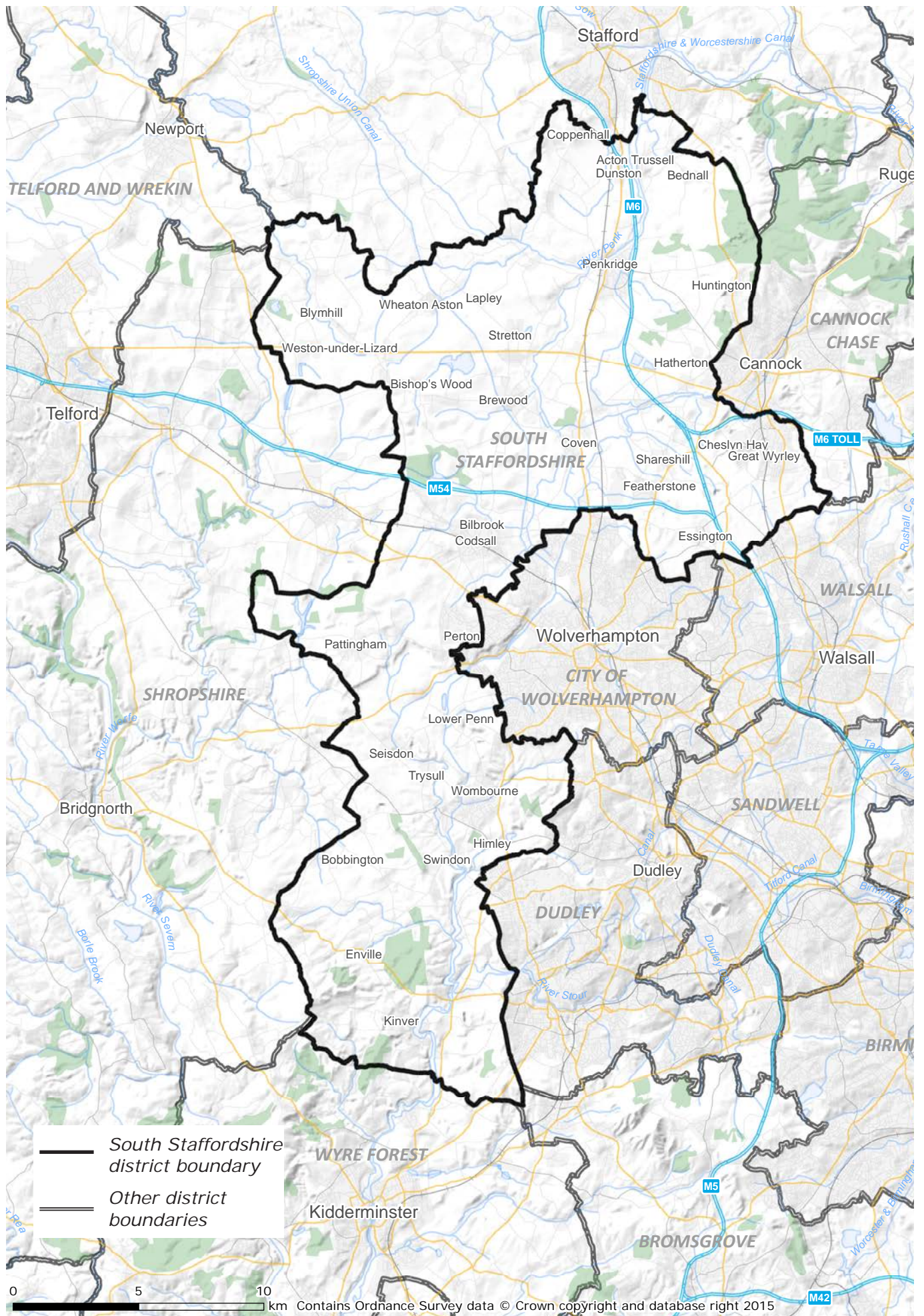


References for good design and planning policies

- + *Urban Design Compendium 1 & 2*
- + *By Design*
- + *Building for Life 12*
- + *NPPF Planning Practice Guidance: Design*
- + *South Staffordshire Local Plan, Core Strategy*
- + *Manual for Streets*
- + *Planning for Places (CABE)*
- + <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/>

(See [Chapter 7. References](#) for full details of these publications.)

Map of South Staffordshire district in context



2. South Staffordshire's Character



Part of Enville village, seen from St Mary's Church

South Staffordshire is unique and special

South Staffordshire is unique and special. It is a predominantly rural district, there are no towns - rather, a collection of villages scattered across the landscape. The traditional South Staffordshire villages have expanded gradually over time, beginning as small farming communities and growing up around a church or market place.

The rural landscape has been, and remains, integral to the character of the district; and the settlements are closely tied to it.

Despite the changes within settlements and the landscape in the 20th century, the historic landscape remains prominent. Many of the settlements retain a medieval layout, populated with historic timber framed buildings whilst outside of the villages medieval field patterns and winding lanes enclosed by high hedgerows survive.

Evidence of Prehistoric and Roman land use is spread across the district³. This includes potential Iron and Bronze Age sites identified near Teddesley, Penkrudge, Pattingham and near Dunston. The Iron Age hillfort at Kinver includes large earthen ramparts and is a Scheduled Monument.

³ Further details can be found in *South Staffordshire's Historic Environment Assessment*

The legacy of two Roman forts and associated settlements at Pennocrucium and at Greensforge and associated roman roads is still legible within the landscape.

Watermill sites, some of which have Early Medieval origins, point to early industry in the district which used the power of the rivers to mill corn. The iron-working industry in the Stour and Smestow valleys also developed using water power, from the late 16th century.

Much of South Staffordshire's development was influenced by the interlocking large landed estates that historically formed around half of its area. These often originated as sites of medieval manor houses and grew into country estates with nearby workers' cottages in the 18th and 19th centuries. A number of landscape parks date from this period (such as Weston Park, Enville, Teddesley Park and Patshull Park). The areas around Kinver, Swindon, Brewood and Wombourne all lay within the cores of the medieval Royal Forests that covered much of the district into the early 14th century.

The woodlands were used for hunting and as a source of timber and minerals from the middle ages, although from the 11th century were subject to forest laws by the Crown. Below-ground mining of coal, clay and iron is known to have existed from the 13th century. Coal mining and quarrying in the 18th and 19th centuries

was concentrated in the north east of the district, and led to the expansion of industrial villages such as Featherstone, Great Wyrley and Huntington; the industry of the area was also closely associated with the development of the communications network of canals, tramways and later the railways.

The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal opened in 1772, completed by the legendary engineer James Brindley and the Shropshire Union Canal also opened in 1835, engineered by Thomas Telford. The canals include numerous locks and bridges and impart local character and distinctiveness.

Despite the urbanisation and sprawl of many surrounding areas (particularly the West Midlands conurbations of Wolverhampton,

Dudley and Birmingham to the east and north east), South Staffordshire has retained its rural identity.

The settlements consist of scattered farms, small hamlets and larger villages set in attractive countryside. Many of the settlements retain links to the surrounding countryside and to their history, with the historic village centres and historic buildings still present.



Canals add character and distinctiveness to the landscape of South Staffordshire



The historic character of the district is very important to retain. Many timber framed buildings dating from the medieval period are still present in and close to the historic cores of the district's villages, such as this house in Penkrige.

Traditional settlement patterns

The pattern of settlement in South Staffordshire is predominantly dispersed, with individual scattered farmsteads, small clusters of properties, historic houses, hamlets and larger villages linked with winding lanes. Summaries of many of the villages are provided in [Appendix 1](#).

Many farmsteads are associated with the 18th and 19th century estate landscapes, which grew from the medieval pattern of fields, routeways and woodlands.

The village summaries show that the villages which are particularly distinctive and attractive tend to have recurring elements and features that bring a sense of unity and consistency - for instance, buildings of the same or similar materials, scales or forms.

The traditional pattern of villages

Traditional villages of South Staffordshire often began as a cluster of individual farms which expanded gradually over time, often around

a community use such as a parish church or market place. Over time, the villages grew outwards, with smaller buildings such as farm workers' cottages lining smaller, winding streets. A number of villages (Penkridge, Brewood and Kinver) retain in the layout of regular building plots evidence for an initial phase of deliberate planning.

Today, the centre of traditional villages is often identifiable by the church or market place surrounded by larger, historic buildings. Further out from the centre, smaller scale winding streets lead you out of the village. This pattern is known as an informal hierarchy: there is a main focal point (such as a church spire) surrounded by a subtle mixture of scales, forms and rhythms of buildings, streets and spaces. This variety creates richness and texture in the environment.

New development should aim to reflect this subtle diversity and avoid a standardised approach.



Traditional villages such as Brewood grew around an historic core, often with a church. Brewood developed around an ancient market place. Surviving buildings date from the 17th Century.

A compact, nucleated village with a historic core



An illustration of the pattern of the village of Wheaton Aston, showing the approximate location of the historic village core (in red). Wheaton Aston is an example of a traditional rural compact village. It has medieval origins, having developed slowly from the 13th Century as the focus for a small farming community. The cluster of farmhouses and cottages around the parish church represents the historic core of the village surrounded by tight winding lanes, few buildings dating from the medieval period survive. In the 19th and 20th centuries it expanded to meet the canal to the north.



This building in Brewood village centre adopts similar materials, form and style to its neighbours, with particular attention to detail in elements such as windows and the door portico, adding richness and variety to the street scene.

A dispersed village with loose clusters of buildings



Dunston is an example of a traditional dispersed village. Scattered groups of buildings form evenly spaced loose clusters, many arranged in a courtyard form and connected by narrow lanes. Typical buildings are brick and modest in scale.



Typical red brick modest scale houses in Dunston, with landscaped planting used to define driveway entrances and street corners.

The traditional pattern of settlement in the countryside

The settlement outside of the villages tends to be scattered individual farmsteads and small clusters of properties.

Traditional farmsteads are usually either large isolated farmsteads, courtyard farmsteads - where the working buildings are arranged around one or more yards - or small and medium-scale farmsteads, which tend to be loosely clustered in and around the small villages and hamlets across the district.⁴

New development in the countryside could take inspiration from these traditional building groups when considering the scale of buildings and arrangement and orientation of elements on the site (such as service areas). Arranging new development in this way can help to reduce the perception of bulky units.



Horsebrook shows a typical arrangement of scattered individual dwellings, some of which are historic barns. Barns and farmhouses have a close connection to the surrounding landscape.

⁴ See the Staffordshire Historic Farmsteads Guidance - Farmsteads Character Statement



This successful barn conversion retains the original brick detailing whilst simple roof lights have been used to bring light into the building without compromising the traditional form.



This development on Himley Lane, Swindon, uses the traditional farmstead layout - common in South Staffordshire - whilst creating contemporary homes with high energy performance and modern materials.

Special character in South Staffordshire

The **character** of a place is created by special or distinctive features which recur across a particular area, giving it a sense of local identity.

It means that when you visit a certain area, you take away a memory of what that place was like. Character is important because it adds richness, variety and rhythm to our environments.

It means that places are distinctive, have a sense of identity and are not all the same.

The features, elements or patterns that are important to the character of one area may not be the same for another. One area may have a strong sense of identity as a result of its rolling landform and wide open views. There may be a particular type of brick used in the village which makes the buildings have a sense of unity or style. Timber-framed buildings, small, winding rural lanes, small scale river valleys and wide open fields, can all contribute to a sense of character.

Areas of different character

Character varies as you travel through South Staffordshire. The character of the landscape changes as a result of the changes in geology and landform - which cause differences in vegetation and the types of materials available to be used in the construction of buildings.

Broadly, the district is divided into three areas of different character. These areas are listed below and shown on the map overleaf: **'National Character Areas in South Staffordshire'**. They are described individually in more detail in the next section.

- *Staffordshire Plain*
- *Cannock Chase and Cank Wood*
- *Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau*

National Character Areas

National Character Areas are areas of different character across the whole of England. They have been drawn and described by Natural England, to inform our understanding of what makes places special.

The three areas listed above are parts of three of these National Character Areas.

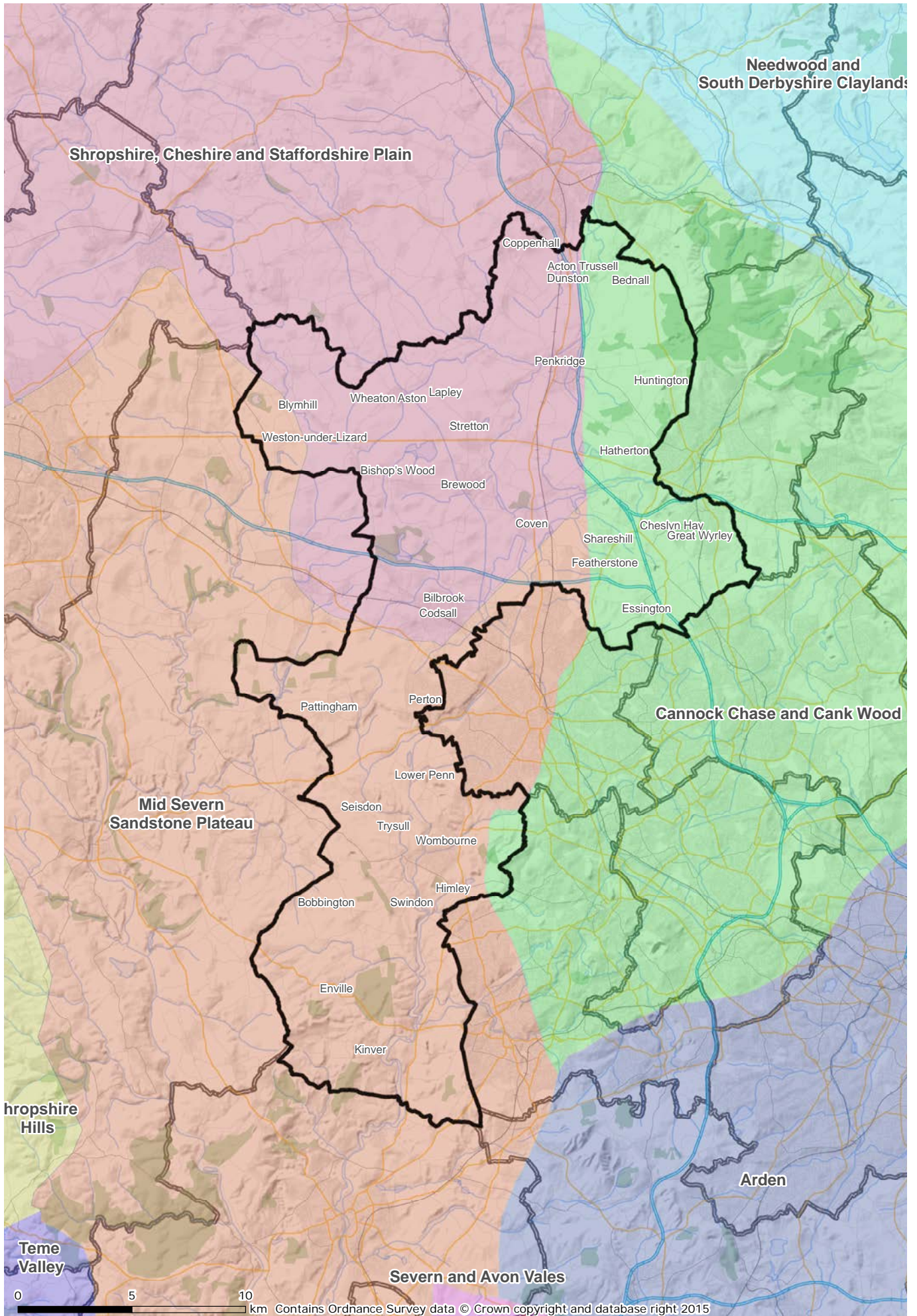
- Staffordshire Plain is part of National Character Area **61**
- Cannock Chase and Cank Wood is part of National Character Area **67** (Cannock Chase and Cankwood)
- Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau is part of National Character Area **66**.

Local Character Areas

At a more local level, there are of course many variations in character as you travel around. For example, the former coalfields area in the east of the district around Cheslyn Hay, Featherstone, Great Wyrley etc. is characterised by small scale villages with 19th century terraced cottages.

These local variations are represented as smaller 'local character areas', which have been drawn and described by South Staffordshire Council. More information on these local character areas can be found in the South Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment.

National Character Areas in South Staffordshire



Character areas in more detail



A farmstead in the South Staffordshire Plain, a typical sight when travelling through the district. Typical barns sit low in the landscape and farmsteads are formed of clusters of brick buildings.

Character of the Staffordshire Plain

Countryside

The countryside of the Staffordshire Plain is characterised by a broad, open, gently rolling agricultural landscape. On the whole, the limited woodland cover leads to wide-ranging views. Landscape features which contribute to the character include:

- Extensive gently undulating plain
- Historic parkland and agricultural estates e.g. at Weston and Chillington.
- Strong field patterns and generally well-maintained boundaries
- Diverse wetland habitats including meres, wet woodland and ponds are scattered across the landscape - the result of glacial deposits.

Settlement

Settlement and the built environment in the Staffordshire Plain is characterised by scattered large farmsteads and dispersed hamlets which are seen as part of the landscape. They are defined and enclosed by woodland groups. Villages are quite often sited on higher ground, and tall features such as churches are visible landmarks in the low lying landscape.

Features of the built environment important to the character of the area include:

- Dense, tightly formed villages with traditional village centres arranged around a church or market place
- Scattered large farmsteads, consisting of buildings orientated towards each other, forming tight clusters
- Historic farmhouses and villages of mellow red brick and tiled roofs.

Some specific guidance for new development in the area is included below. **This should be read alongside the design principles listed in Chapter 3. Design Principles (p. 21)** and further information on many of the individual villages is provided in the Village Summaries in **Appendix 1**.

Design guidelines for new development in the Staffordshire Plain

- **For new development in the countryside, consider how it will be seen in views across the landscape:** pay attention to the scale of the development, its form and colour of materials so that it is harmonious with other features in views.
- **For new larger developments in the countryside lower lying structures are likely to be less intrusive in views.** Use planting around larger buildings to blend them into the landscape.
- **Plant hedge boundaries**, especially where there is an opportunity to extend existing hedges.

- **Where new development abuts the countryside, pay particular attention to the design of the development boundaries.** Planting such as tree groups, grass margins or hedges is likely to be appropriate.
- **Avoid sprawling villages:** pay particular attention to sites on the edges of villages to make sure development does not disrupt the containment and pattern of the village.
- **Where development is within a village, pay attention to the scale of nearby buildings and spaces so that the natural pattern of the village is still recognisable.** This is particularly the case where villages are characterised by a hierarchy of scale, with larger buildings in the centre and smaller buildings at the edges.



A low lying farmstead bordered by tall trees, reducing its overall visual impact in the landscape

Villages within the Staffordshire Plain

<i>Bilbrook</i>	<i>Lapley</i>
<i>Bishops Wood</i>	<i>Penkridge</i>
<i>Brewood</i>	<i>Stretton</i>
<i>Codsall</i>	<i>Wheaton Aston</i>
<i>Coven</i>	
<i>Coppenhall</i>	
<i>Dunston</i>	

Refer to [Village Summaries - Appendix 1](#) for further information about these villages

Character of Cannock Chase and Cank Wood

Countryside

The countryside of Cannock Chase and Cank Wood is characterised by rolling plateaux with scattered woodlands and a peaceful, strongly rural character in the northern part of the area. In the far east of the area, previous coal and clay extraction has shaped the landscape and villages.

Landscape features particularly important to countryside character include:

- *Significant tracts of heathland exhibiting an unspoilt, almost wilderness character*
- *Extensive coniferous plantations, woodlands and historic parklands.*
- *Former industrial areas associated with colliery working characterise the eastern areas adjacent to Wolverhampton and Cannock.*
- *Historic parklands are present in pockets across the landscape. These are more formal areas with special character.*



Typical heathland of Sherbrook Valley within the Cannock Chase AONB

Settlement

Settlement and the built environment in Cannock Chase and Cank Wood is characterised by, in the northern part of the area, little development, mainly of groups of farmsteads and cottages connected by winding ancient lanes. The southern and eastern parts of the area have a more industrial character and saw substantial growth in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Features of the built environment important to the character of the area include:

- *Winding ancient lanes in the northern part of the area.*
- *Terraced housing and estates.*
- *Historic farmsteads.*

Some specific guidance for new development in the area is included below. **This should be read alongside the design principles listed in Chapter 3. [Design Principles](#) and further information on many of the individual villages is provided in the village summaries in [Appendix 1](#).**

Design guidelines for new development in Cannock Chase and Cank Wood

- ***For larger developments in the former-industrial areas of the countryside take opportunities for further landscape restoration such as tree and hedgerow replanting.***
- ***For new development in villages which have ex-industrial character,***

take opportunities to regenerate and enhance character, taking inspiration from industrial elements in new design, such as local building materials, retaining historic arrangements of farmsteads.

- ***For larger industrial and commercial developments in the countryside, arrange units in logical groupings such as along transport corridors.***
- ***Ensure new development respects the character of the AONB and its setting.***
- ***For larger industrial and commercial developments in the countryside, blend development into the surrounding environment with planting, materials which blend in harmoniously and with signage which is sympathetic to the surrounding environment.***
- ***Avoid sprawling villages: pay particular attention to sites on the edges of villages to make sure they do not disrupt the containment and pattern of the village.***

Villages within Cannock Chase and Cank Wood

<i>Acton Trussell</i>	<i>Hatherton</i>
<i>Bednall</i>	<i>Hilton</i>
<i>Cheslyn Hay</i>	<i>Huntington</i>
<i>Essington</i>	<i>Shareshill</i>
<i>Featherstone</i>	<i>Teddesley Hay</i>
<i>Great Wyrley</i>	

Refer to [Village Summaries - Appendix 1](#) for further information about these villages



View across the South Staffordshire landscape from a winding ancient lane.



The Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau

Character of Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau

Countryside

The countryside of the Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau is characterised by broad, open, rolling landform allowing wide views. The south west part of the area is deeply rural and is particularly influenced by parkland estates. A wooded character is created by prominent woodlands on higher ground. There is a long history of occupation with evidence of activity in prehistoric and Roman times. Landscape features particularly important to countryside character include:

- *Undulating landscape with tree-lined ridges.*
- *Kinver Edge, the pronounced ridge with distant views from the ridge across the flat landscape to the west.*
- *Woodlands on higher ground are important in giving a well-wooded impression of the landscape.*
- *The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, and the Stourbridge Canal.*
- *Parklands and estates e.g. Enville, Weston Park - with 18th century landscape gardens.*
- *Sunken rural lanes known as 'holloways'*
- *Small wooded stream-side dells, known locally as dingles, for example along the valley of Smestow Brook. Trees include lines of alder, willow and poplar and the occasional native black poplar.*

Settlement

Settlement and the built environment in the Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau is characterised by a mixed pattern but generally there are scattered hamlets, farmsteads and medieval agricultural villages linked by frequent roads. Larger villages include Kinver and Wombourne. Estate villages including Shareshill and Enville impart a cohesive character and distinctive style to the area whilst Victorian villas within village cores (e.g. Trysull and Seisdon) add diversity to the built fabric.

Features of the built environment important to the character of the area include:

- *Soft mid-red brick.*
- *Kinver Forest influenced the buildings nearby - especially Kinver - there is a resulting variety of timber-framed buildings.*
- *Estate villages and country estates including the 18th century Patshull Hall and Park.*

Some specific guidance for new development in the area is included below. **This should be read alongside the design principles listed in Chapter 3. *Design Principles* and further information on many of the individual villages is provided in the village summaries in *Appendix 1*.**

Design guidelines for new development in Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau

- ***Consider the design of roofs and the form of buildings*** where developments are located in the open agricultural landscape, particularly where they may be seen from high vantage points. Avoid sprawling developments and contain new development within existing boundaries where possible.
- ***Integrate larger units into the landscape.*** For example, by designing the shapes of buildings so that they fit within the environment, using materials which blend in and softening boundaries with planting.
- ***Respect and enhance historical features*** in the landscape and villages.



Enville Manor is typical example of historic building in South Staffordshire, with red brick, clay roof tiles and timber framed windows. New development should respect and respond to these historic design features.

Villages within the Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau

<i>Bobbington</i>	<i>Pattingham</i>
<i>Enville</i>	<i>Perton</i>
<i>Hilton</i>	<i>Seisdon</i>
<i>Himley</i>	<i>Swindon</i>
<i>Kinver</i>	<i>Trysull</i>
<i>Lower Penn</i>	<i>Weston-under-</i>
<i>Patshull</i>	<i>Lizard</i>
	<i>Wombourne</i>

Refer to ***Village Summaries - Appendix 1*** for further information about these villages

References for Character

- + ***Village Summaries - Appendix 1***
- + ***South Staffordshire District Council website: <<<http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/>>>***
- + ***Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2015)***
- + ***South Staffordshire Conservation Area Appraisals***
- + ***South Staffordshire Local Plan***
see Policies EQ11: Wider Design Considerations; EQ1: Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets

(See ***Chapter 7. References*** for full details of the publications).

3. Design Principles

Design principles

This section sets out the principles for the design of new development in South Staffordshire. The Council wishes to see evidence that applications for new development have considered these principles.

Further guidance on the information to include in planning applications is provided in **Chapter 6. Process (p. 57)**. In addition to these design principles, also refer to the area-specific guidance on **Character areas in more detail (p. 16)** and the **Village Summaries in Appendix 1; Chapters 4. Major developments (p. 47)** and **5. Minor developments (p. 53)**.

Good design is not only about how a development looks, but how it works for the people who live, visit and work there.

Urban design principles

For larger developments where a number of buildings and streets are proposed, refer to the **urban design principles of place-making**. Urban design principles apply to rural contexts as well as urban areas.

It is recommended that a suitably qualified professional (such as a landscape architect, urban designer or architect) is engaged at the early stages of developing a proposal. All schemes for masterplans or larger sites should start with a clear vision for the future of the place.

The principles of good urban design are explained in detail within a broad catalogue of references, some of which are listed on **p. 7**. They are not repeated in this design guide, however, some key terms are listed below:

- **legibility** (*making it easy for people to find their way around and understand a place*);
- **permeability** (*making it easy for people to enter and move through a place and into other places*);
- **landmarks, views and focal points** (*which help create legible places and give a sense of identity*);
- **gateways** (*creating strong entrances and sense of arrival*);
- **hierarchy of connected streets and spaces** (*varying the width of buildings and streets in proportion to each other and in relation to the function of the street*);
- **inclusive access** *with emphasis on pedestrians (considering ease of access for elderly, young and disabled people)*.

Design Principles

A Landscape & Open Space

B The Site & its Context

C Layout & Connectivity

D Building Scale & Form

E Materials & Details

The design principles listed here have been divided into sections for ease of use, however they do overlap with each other and some elements are relevant to more than one principle. They are presented here roughly in the order they might apply during the design process.



Landscape & Open Space

Landscape and open space (the natural landscape as well as streets or public squares) should be the starting point for new development. This should be the framework within which the design evolves. New development should sit well in relation to its surrounding landscape and major developments should incorporate a number of different types of open spaces.

Landscape and open space as an integral part of the development

Landscape and open space should be an integral part of the scheme's design, complementing and enhancing the development and the wider area. **For larger developments landscape and open space should be considered first, and will form a framework within which the design evolves.** This helps to settle the development into its surroundings and should encourage links outside the development to the surrounding countryside or public realm, even where new development is located within a village.

Good quality landscape not only creates richer and more attractive environments, it is also highly **cost effective**.



Designing buildings around a strong landscape framework helps to articulate the design, providing a sense of character and place. Tree-lined avenues, formal gardens and woodlands provide strong settings & links to the surroundings.

Engaging professionals

It is important that a suitably qualified professional such as a landscape architect is engaged early on in the process of designing larger schemes.

Creating attractive, safe and lively spaces

Well-designed spaces are those which are carefully considered in terms of who will use them, how they are accessed, whether the boundaries create suitable enclosure whilst maintaining physical and visual links to the surroundings and whether they look attractive, with features such as trees and planting that thrive and attract wildlife.

Providing attractive, high quality landscapes requires careful consideration of the size and shape of spaces including entrances and boundaries, planting, types of materials, colours, textures and shapes which could reflect or contrast with the patterns of surrounding features, trees, buildings and other structures.

Natural surveillance of open spaces is created by designing building frontages to look out onto them, helping to build safe environments.



A mixture of trees, hard and soft landscape create a strong setting for the contemporary architectural buildings at Oxford Brookes University, and visual links along footpaths to the green surroundings. Carefully chosen materials create texture and unity and complement the architecture of the development.

A. Landscape & Open Space

Public art, street furniture and lighting can enliven the public realm - also see [Street design & inclusive access \(p. 35\)](#) for further guidance on designing the public realm.

New planting

New planting should be used to create an attractive environment and enhance biodiversity. It can also be used to frame views and screen elements such as services or parking. Specifying appropriate plant species includes plants which will enhance biodiversity, provide seasonal change and will be able to be managed and maintained properly.

Trees proposed in streets or public spaces are more likely to be delivered and maintained (by the Council or a management company) than those proposed in private front or back gardens - this should be a consideration when reviewing larger schemes with large areas of planting proposed on private land.

Native trees and plants provide good opportunities for biodiversity. Ornamental planting provides seasonal/colour benefits and can enhance local character. Looking at good examples of plant combinations near the site may help - including which species are present, how they are grouped and how they relate to site conditions such as soil types and drainage.

Consult the Council's Landscape Character Assessment and Chapter [2. South Staffordshire's Character \(p. 9\)](#) to see what may be appropriate for the area in question.



Riverside Court in Kinver has been planned around a central courtyard, setting the building back from the road and creating a community space with natural surveillance from overlooking windows.

Retain existing natural features and habitats

For all types of development, whether large or small, conserving and enhancing the existing natural features on site will help to blend the development in with its surrounding environment. It will provide immediate impact, where new planting may otherwise take years to establish and is also beneficial for biodiversity, retaining important established habitats. Opportunities should be taken to protect and enhance key natural features where possible.



The planted courtyard creates an attractive view from the cafeteria of this new building. Retaining the mature tree softens the view of other buildings behind. Benches and lighting create a comfortable and functional space.



Informal planting of meadow flowers and trees attracts wildlife and allows views to the landscape beyond.

Different types of landscape and open space

There are many different types of landscape and open space, both natural and man made, from the rural open countryside to natural green spaces such as Kinver Edge, Shoal Hill Common, Baggeridge Country Park, Highgate Common and Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - as well as urban parks and market squares.

It is vital that a variety of publicly accessible spaces is included within larger developments, and that they link with each other and link the development to its surrounding environment. Links can be made with features such as footpaths, street trees, planters, permeable verges and green roofs.

Examples of different types of landscape and open space

- Sports pitches*
- Back gardens*
- Street trees*
- Green roofs*
- Nature reserves*
- Allotments*
- Village greens*
- Market squares*
- Swales (areas of planting for flood storage and drainage)*
- Playgrounds*
- Roadside verges*
- Canals and rivers*
- Native woodlands*

For larger developments, hierarchies can be a useful way of arranging different types of spaces linked together. Larger more formal spaces around areas of community use might form a focal point, incorporating new features such as trees, sculptures and planting, whilst smaller areas of planting line minor streets.

The Triangle in Swindon, Wiltshire, is a development of 42 homes around a central shared garden. Landscaped green space is integral to the design.

Green infrastructure

Where different types of landscape and open spaces are linked together, it is also known as **green infrastructure**. This is particularly effective where links are created between residential areas, recreational sites and open countryside. Designing in green infrastructure to a scheme from the beginning can also replace some of the need for conventional 'grey' infrastructure by acting as flood storage and natural drainage.

Landscape and open spaces can have many different uses. Not only can they make developments look attractive but soft landscaping can provide drainage, mitigate effects of climate change and provide habitats for wildlife; new public spaces provide room to play, socialise and enliven places which contribute positive health benefits..

Sustainable solutions & biodiversity

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Development proposals should respond to potential climate change, considering aspects such as shade (tree planting or canopies) and flooding.

SuDS mimic nature by managing rainwater close to where it falls. They include features such as swales, rain gardens, retaining ponds, permeable paving and green roofs to reduce surface water runoff rates, allow rainwater to infiltrate and reduce reliance on sewer systems. Incorporating features such as these forms cost efficient and attractive solutions.



Swales and other sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) can be incorporated to reduce the potential impact of new and existing developments with respect to surface water drainage discharge.

A. Landscape & Open Space

Contributing to the surrounding character

Creating links between natural areas (green infrastructure such as hedgerows, trees and planting), can connect habitats, enable water to drain across a larger area and improve the quality of our environment. New development should work with the surrounding landscape structure where possible, fitting with existing patterns such as field boundaries and hedgerows and responding to the character of the surrounding area (also see Section **B. Context & Local Distinctiveness** (p. 28)).

Take opportunities to create connections between new development and treasured open spaces, footpaths, canals or rivers, and the wider landscape, and to add character through new landscape features, particularly to landscapes which have been degraded.

Creating views to natural elements outside the development enhances experiences of nature and can help to fit development into its surrounding environment. A particular view to a 'landscape landmark' can provide focal points within a development and can be used to aid orientation. For example, views of a village green, canal, hill, farmstead or group of mature trees could be used as landmarks.

Settlement boundaries and interfaces

The rural landscape setting is the context for almost all development in South Staffordshire. This means that development at village edges can be widely visible and can affect how we see the character of both the villages and the countryside. Consideration of village edges and interfaces with the rural surroundings is therefore vitally important.



Particular views to 'landscape landmarks' should be retained and provide focal points around which to plan a development.

Pay close attention to the treatment of the boundaries of a new development where it adjoins the countryside. Where there is the opportunity for a developer to blend the development into its surrounding environment, these opportunities should be taken. For example, areas of woodland planting adjacent to the development edge, or integrating an existing village green can help to 'soften' the edges and make a smooth transition between the development and the wider countryside. Also see p. 50 for examples of good boundary treatment, and an example of riverside setting on p. 47.

Development within or adjacent to a waterway corridor should take advantage of the waterside setting. This should include a green corridor of native plants appropriate to the context, and other green infrastructure links such as signed walkways or cycleways that connect to other recreational areas or facilities.

Impacts on landscape and views

Can the wider landscape be used to mitigate certain aspects of the new development? For example, siting the development on the lower valley slopes may have less of a visual impact in longer views.



This building at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park is set into the hillside and below the tree canopy of the surrounding woodland. The green roof of the building in combination with carefully placed hedge and grassed areas blends the building seamlessly into the surrounding landscape from elevated viewpoints.

SOURCE: LUC



This artificial swale and channel has been designed to manage surface water run-off and provides an attractive and functional addition to the street.

Summary

- Create a landscape framework early in the design process, responding to existing features within and surrounding the site.
- Good quality landscape not only creates richer and more attractive environments, it is also highly cost effective. Attractive settings encourage investment.
- Take opportunities to retain and enhance existing landscape features and biodiversity elements such as retaining existing mature trees.
- For larger developments, include a variety of different types of green and open spaces.
- Where possible, create connections (via footpaths, views or natural features) with canals, rivers, trees and green spaces.
- Respond to potential climate change by considering issues of shade and flooding.
- Incorporate features to attract wildlife, create biodiversity and create links to existing habitats.
- Pay close attention to the village edge and interface with the rural countryside.
- Consider how the new development can contribute or work within the wider environment.

References for Landscape & Open Space

- + *South Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment and Supplementary documents on Landscape Character and Biodiversity*
- + **Chapter 2. South Staffordshire's Character (p. 9)**
- + *'Why Invest in Landscape' and 'Profitable Places: Why housebuilders invest in landscape'* - Landscape Institute
- + *South Staffordshire Local Plan* > see Policies EQ12 Landscaping; EV3 Canals and Canalside Development; HWB2 Green Infrastructure; EQ11 Wider Design Considerations; Core Policy 14 Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- + *For Space About Dwellings Standards: Appendix 6 of the Local Plan*
- + *South Staffordshire Open Space Strategy*
- + *Local Green Infrastructure Initiatives* (e.g. Forest of Mercia, Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan, Staffordshire BAP, West Midlands GI Prospectus)
- + *Green Belt and Open Countryside Planning Document (SPD)*
- + *For further guidance on SUDs, see the Landscape Institute website and CIRIA Susdrain network*

(See **Chapter 7. References** for full details of the publications).

B. Context & Local Distinctiveness

The site and its context

All developments should be designed for their specific sites: developers should consider the characteristics of a site and its context (the surrounding environment) when deciding where to locate the landscape and open spaces and buildings within plots, considering views to and from the surrounding environment. New development should achieve a harmonious relationship with the surrounding village or landscape context.

Understand the character and key features of the place

What a particular site, place or area is like, and how it feels, is described as its 'character' (see Chapter 2. [South Staffordshire's Character \(p. 9\)](#)). Character is the result of certain distinctive features, elements or patterns which combine and re-occur across an area. Character is important because it adds richness, variety and rhythm to our environments. It means that places are distinctive, have a sense of identity and are not all the same.

Establish what the character is through an appraisal of the site and its surrounding landscape or village - see Chapter 6. [Process \(p. 57\)](#). This includes identifying important features or characteristics within the site and in the surrounding area. The characteristics of a site or area may include particular materials, building styles, colours, natural features, landform and street patterns, etc.

Respect and reinforce local character and distinctiveness

Good design will take inspiration from existing features or characteristics. This includes retaining key features on site such as a mature tree or a view to the surrounding countryside or taking inspiration from certain architectural details or roof shapes. Whatever the characteristics are, new development does not need to replicate features from the surrounding environment, but can take inspiration from it. **The most appropriate design solutions are as often to be found in contemporary design as traditional design.**

Safeguard and enhance the setting of valued features

Where there are valued features that are particularly important for local distinctiveness, opportunities should be taken to retain and enhance these within the design of new development. This may include taking advantage of a waterside setting by creating footpaths with signage and natural planting (see [p. 47](#) for an example); safeguarding key views to a church spire; respecting the shapes and forms of nearby roofscapes of distinctive buildings and creating new views to landscape features.

Protect and enhance landscape/village character

The siting and location of new development should take account of the characteristics and sensitivity of the landscape and its surroundings. Where development may have an impact on landscape character or views, an appropriate assessment should be undertaken with reference to the Landscape Character Assessment.

The siting, scale and design of development is particularly important, giving consideration to how the development will appear in distant views and how it relates to features such as woodlands, field boundaries, hilltops or canals as well as other buildings. Developments should be sensitively designed for their location, aiming to achieve a sense of harmony and balance.



Wooded slopes provide an important landscape setting to Kinver

B. Context & Local Distinctiveness



Traditional details can be incorporated into contemporary designs: the above left image shows the success of making reference to historical design details (above right) without directly copying the historic architectural style.



Contemporary design should respond to the context by responding to existing structures and using complimentary materials whilst avoiding standardisation. The image above shows a timber shingle clad extension to a listed former inn.



Modern refurbishment can benefit from responding to the agricultural context of South Staffordshire. This example takes on the traditional structure of an agricultural barn, with traditional window sizes and clay tiles.

B. Context & Local Distinctiveness

Richness in historic features

Evidence of human occupation dating back to prehistoric times has been found in South Staffordshire. Whether in the villages or countryside, this presence of history within the environment adds richness and meaning to our experiences. Historic villages have grown organically over time, with new development following on from what was there before creating strong local identities.

It is important that new development is conceived in harmony with the past, and that opportunities for drawing on the contribution made by the historic environment including the Historic Landscape Character are taken into account. The historic context of the site, including plot patterns or street layout should be respected.

There are many ways in which references to the history of a place might be incorporated within new development. For example, the line of a historic route might be used as the main thoroughfare within a new development, a view to a landmark feature could be framed, or different materials could be used to mark out where historic features once stood.



At Himley Lane, Swindon, the architects and developer worked closely with Council Officers to reflect the local context by taking inspiration from local buildings such as the pub. References to the village vernacular include traditional brickwork, timber windows, maximising open countryside views, small front gardens with sensitively designed boundaries and patterns of roof lines.

Creating character and identity

Some places may have no distinctive character, or features may have been removed as part of more recent development. Here is an opportunity to **create** character through new development! Developers should use opportunities to create character, where this is possible, thereby adding to the sense of local identity and creating pleasant environments. New development can bring cohesion to the wider area.

Usually where new character is being created, it will be appropriate to draw inspiration for design from the surrounding context, whether the local area or from further afield.

No place for standardisation

Developments consisting of standardised pattern-book building and layout designs are not appropriate in South Staffordshire. They bear no, or little, relationship with the character of the places in the district. In fact, they can disrupt the harmonious balance, variety and rhythm that makes these environments so pleasant to live in.

Look at patterns of development when siting developments and consider how it fits in within existing patterns of settlement or the character of the landscape (refer to Chapter 2. [South Staffordshire's Character](#) (p. 9)).



This scheme pays less attention to the local context. Buff coloured materials are not common in the district, and this development therefore looks out of place. The large scale of the buildings have little variety in height or roof line and the overall identity of the development could place it anywhere .

B. Context & Local Distinctiveness



The parish church (top), historic mill buildings and the river (above) in Penkridge provide a distinctive landscape setting to the village. The hedge alongside the road (top image) provides a strong boundary to the settlement



Burnhill Green is a high quality development in a rural context. Red bricks, traditional lime mortar and reclaimed roof tiles tie the development to its local context. Consideration of the appearance of the design and consultation with the local community result in a development which maintains the character of the local area.

Summary

- A site appraisal will establish the key features and character of the site.
- Retain and use existing features on the site to keep a sense of character and local identity.
- Take opportunities to reinforce local character and distinctiveness, for example by creating new views to key features.
- Protect and enhance local landscape or village character by ensuring the development is sited and located in harmony with the surroundings - fit in and relate to the surrounding buildings, features and context.
- Take into account historic features and character - new design can be conceived in harmony with the past.
- Create character where none exists, taking opportunities to give new developments a strong sense of place.

References for Context & Local Distinctiveness

+ Village summaries - [Appendix 1](#)

+ [Chapter 2. South Staffordshire's Character \(p. 9\)](#)

+ [South Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment](#)

+ [South Staffordshire Conservation Area Appraisals](#)

+ [By Design](#)

+ [Urban Design Compendium](#)

+ [South Staffordshire Local Plan](#) > see Core Policy 4 Promoting High Quality Design; Policies EQ4 Protecting and Enhancing the Character and Appearance of the Landscape; EQ1 Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets; EQ11 Wider Design Considerations; EQ3 Conservation, Preservation and Protection of Historic Assets

(See [Chapter 7. References](#) for full details of the publications).

C. Layout & Connectivity

Layout and connectivity

Developers should carefully plan the layout (the arrangement and position of buildings, streets and open spaces) and connectivity (links between streets, footpaths and spaces). The layout of a new development should fit within the existing landscape or street scene, so that the new development relates to its environment and streets are connected.

*This is of greatest importance to **major developments** when planning the location of buildings, streets and spaces within a site. It is also relevant for **minor developments** to ensure that connections are made to the surroundings and to inform where a building is positioned within its plot.*

Urban design principles

For larger developments where a number of buildings and streets are proposed, it is always necessary to follow good urban design principles of place-making when planning the layout of buildings, streets and spaces.

Urban design principles apply to both urban and rural contexts. Further information is available in published guidance - see [References for Layout & Connectivity \(p. 37\)](#). Also refer to [Chapter 4. Major developments \(p. 47\)](#) for further design guidance on larger developments.

It is recommended that an appropriate design professional (such as a landscape architect, urban designer or architect) is engaged early on in the process who can develop masterplans for schemes that are cost efficient, functional and will enhance existing places.

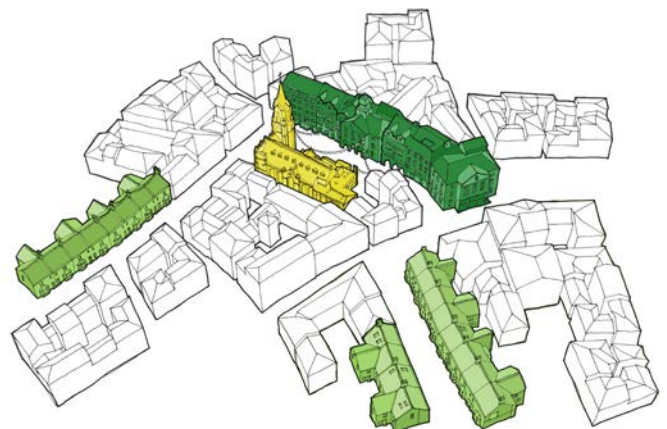
Density & mixed uses

Density describes the amount of development in a space. Good design will establish densities which are appropriate for each particular location taking into account existing character and heritage assets. Traditional villages in South Staffordshire have higher densities in the centre and become less dense towards the edges. Higher densities are more appropriate within local and village centres.

Non-traditional villages may have different patterns of density. To establish the appropriate density for new developments, look at surrounding buildings and consider the different types of housing.

Vary densities within larger sites (over half a hectare). This can follow a hierarchical pattern, based on arranging a higher density of development along principal routes, around crossroads or community centres or public spaces and lower densities along tertiary or minor routes (see the diagram below for an example).

Mixed use developments will be encouraged. The mixture of uses should be appropriate for the area and the existing uses in the community, helping to enhance the vitality of village centres. Developments should help support a range of services and public transport where appropriate.



■ Primary focal building

■ Higher density, larger scale buildings

■ Lower density, smaller scale village edge buildings

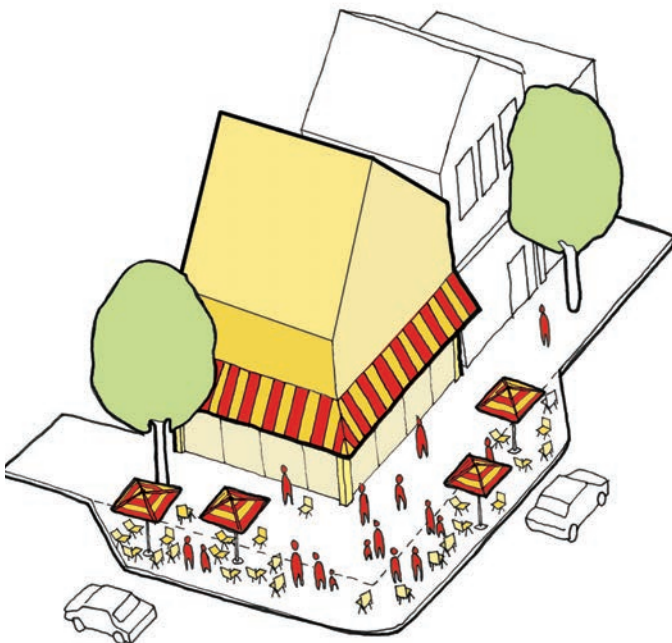
Example of a hierarchy layout - see [p. 48](#) for further details

Safe, secure & navigable layouts

Arrangement of buildings

The positioning of buildings helps to define the edges of streets. Developers should ensure that buildings face the street to create an 'active frontage', avoiding blank elevations to the street and public spaces. Private spaces and gardens are usually more secure when located facing inwards. One type of arrangement that may be appropriate is 'perimeter blocks' - see [p. 47](#) where buildings form the edge and space is in the middle.

Where buildings overlook streets and spaces this encourages natural surveillance, increasing safety and encouraging people to look after their local areas.



The positioning of buildings can help to define the edges of streets. Developers should ensure that buildings face the street to create an 'active frontage', avoiding blank elevations to the street and public spaces.

The arrangement of new buildings should take account of the position and orientation of existing and new buildings. There should be careful consideration of how existing views within the area might be affected, or where new interesting views can be created. It will usually be appropriate to follow the pattern of existing building lines.

Within larger schemes opportunities for achieving enclosure through the arrangement, placement and treatment of buildings should be incorporated. This may include inclusion of buildings to terminate views, limit street width or create views and visual links to other spaces.



Larger structures and landmark buildings can be used to reduce the perceived length of village streets and to aid orientation, acting as local landmarks and retaining the intimate environment of shorter, clustered streets.



Varying the alignment of streets to incorporate corners, and additional features such as trees, planting, street furniture, pedestrian crossings or parallel parking can be an effective means of controlling traffic speeds and can help to create vibrant and active streets.

C. Layout & Connectivity

Open spaces

Existing or new open spaces should be integrated into the layout of new development, and can create links between focal points as well as habitats and other functions (see Chapter **A. Landscape & Open Space (p. 23)**). Open spaces should be overlooked by building frontages and be located at prominent locations within the street network. Provision of open spaces also provides opportunities for incorporating sustainable solutions such as Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) - see **p. 25**.

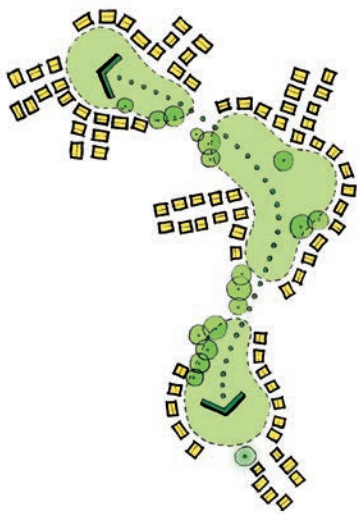
Landmarks and views

Developments should consider and respect key views and landmarks. Local landmarks such as churches, spires and bridges add interest, a sense of history and local identity. Creating new views to landmarks or framing existing views of them can help people navigate new areas as well as creating a focal point.

There may be **opportunities for creating new local landmarks or focal points at village entrances or corner sites**. Landmarks can be used to aid orientation in places.

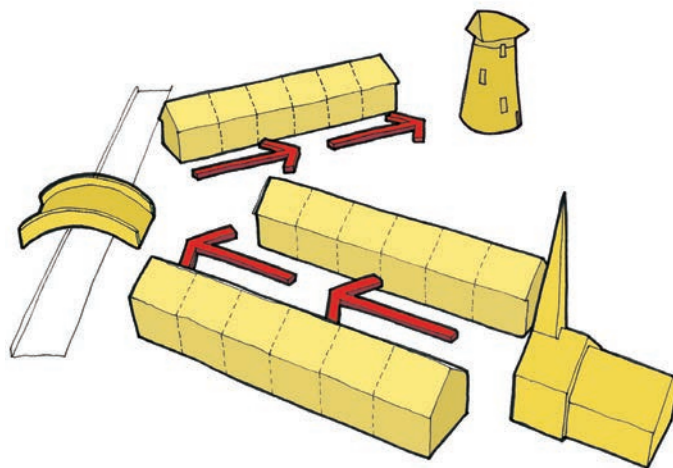
Accommodating parking and servicing

Parking should be integrated into the design discreetly and used as an opportunity to accommodate landscaping and planting. Servicing and other functions should likewise be integrated into the design so that they do not compromise the design quality of elements such as building elevations.



New developments should respond to and link existing landscaped areas and green spaces. Landscape architects can help to integrate landscape frameworks into development proposals.

On-street parallel parking can be an effective method of controlling traffic speeds. There may be a range of different types of parking in a new development. For example, parking spaces integrated at the side of properties, encouraging natural surveillance and active use of streets. Rear parking courts can create unsupervised areas vulnerable to car crime and reduce social interactions on streets, as people tend to access their homes via the back doors. Parking in front gardens should also be avoided if possible, as it reduces permeable surfaces.



Views to local landmarks should be retained, acting as visual links to aid orientation and retain area characteristics.



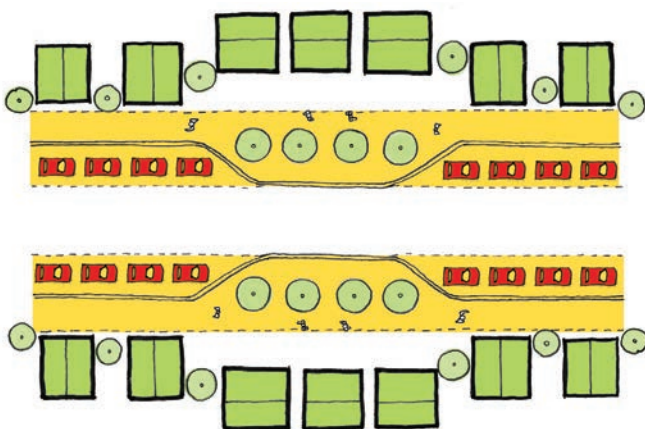
This development effectively incorporates the entrance to its parking area within the line of building frontage. Breaks and features such as this help to add interest and variety to the street.



Bespoke street furniture in Kinver High Street helps to create a vibrant and active street scene.



This parking in Kinver has been sensitively designed around mature trees with permeable surfacing to minimise damage to the existing retained trees.



On-street parking can be designed to provide safe places for pedestrians to walk and cross, whilst the layout may be used to reduce vehicle speeds to create 'Home Zones' incorporating green landscape design. See [p. 49](#) for more guidance on Home Zones.

Connections & network of routes

Both new and existing streets should be well connected. This may involve creating new links and logical through routes between existing streets or to an existing footpath or open space, taking account of existing desire lines. Routes should be provided to connect key destinations such as bus stops, shops and open spaces, and provide for safe use by pedestrians and cyclists as well as vehicles. Appropriate facilities such as cycle parking should be provided at key destinations. New development should be encouraged to enhance the network of routes in line with the County Council 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan.'

Pedestrian links, such as from the new development to the village centre or nearby footpaths and to long distance trails such as the Staffordshire Way, Monarch's Way and Sustrans cycle network will be important elements of a well-connected scheme. These should form safe and attractive links, especially where they are near houses, and make links to green infrastructure corridors such as signposted footpaths/cycle paths alongside canals.

Characteristic street patterns should be retained or created where possible, in order to create legible places that make it easy for people to find their way around. Hierarchies of streets, routes and spaces can help to achieve a logical pattern to the layout of new developments.

Street design & inclusive access

How streets and public corridors will work for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people should be a key consideration during their design. Access for all, from streets to houses to public buildings, should be incorporated.

A street or space is formed by the buildings that surround it. Buildings which have front doors and windows facing streets and spaces create lively and well-supervised streets. Avoid large gaps between buildings, blank walls and garden fences facing the street.

Varying the alignment of streets, from straight to curved and incorporating additional features such as trees, planting, street furniture, pedestrian crossings or parallel parking can be an effective means of controlling traffic speeds and can help to create vibrant and active streets.

C. Layout & Connectivity

New development in the countryside

Within the countryside, the arrangement of buildings should relate well to the landform. It may be appropriate to take inspiration from traditional patterns of settlement in the countryside (see ***Traditional settlement patterns (p. 11)***) in the layout of built elements. Particularly the typical farmstead groupings, where building clusters are oriented towards each other and form well-defined groups.



A typical South Staffordshire farmstead. Using typical farmstead arrangements as a reference for the layout of new development can be an effective way of responding to the rural context of the area.



This new development in Himley Lane, Swindon, references typical barn forms within the scheme by including long, narrow buildings with pitched roofs. These building types are at the edges of the development, creating a sensitive edge with the adjacent landscape and a recognisable pattern in building heights which become lower towards the edges.

Summary

- Larger developments should follow good urban design principles including legibility, permeability, landmarks, views, gateways, hierarchies and inclusive access.
- Development density should be appropriate to the location of the development - higher densities will be more appropriate within local and village centres.
- Layout should fit within the existing landscape or street scene - consider the grain and density of immediately surrounding areas.
- Safe, secure and navigable layouts, incorporating natural surveillance and active frontages of buildings.
- Incorporating well connected open spaces, parking and servicing as well as sustainable solutions into the scheme layout.
- Creating and enhancing views to new or existing focal points can aid navigation and create a sense of place.
- Create connections between new and existing routes.
- Create accessible streets that work for all types of users including cycling, pedestrians and parking.
- Development in the countryside could respond to typical farmstead arrangements to organise buildings together.



Create green links between settlements and waterways, taking opportunities to provide footpaths, cycle paths and visual links to key features such as bridges

References for Layout & Connectivity

+ Chapter 2. *South Staffordshire's Character* (p. 9) and p. 11 On traditional settlement pattern

+ *Building for Life*

+ *Urban Design Compendium*

+ *By Design*

+ *Manual for Streets*

+ *Building Regulations Part M*

+ *Secured by Design*

+ *South Staffordshire Local Plan*
> see Policies EQ11 Wider Design Considerations; CS1 Designing Out Crime

+ For parking standards: **Appendix 5 of the Local Plan**

(See [Chapter 7. References](#) for full details of the publications).

D. Building Scale and Form

Building scale and form

Developers should consider the scale (the height and size relative to surrounding features) and form (shape) of proposed buildings. The aim should be for buildings that fit harmoniously into their surrounding environment; preserving, enhancing or creating the rhythms and patterns of the buildings, street scene or landscape in the surrounding area.

This is important for **minor developments** (and individual buildings) as well as **major developments**.

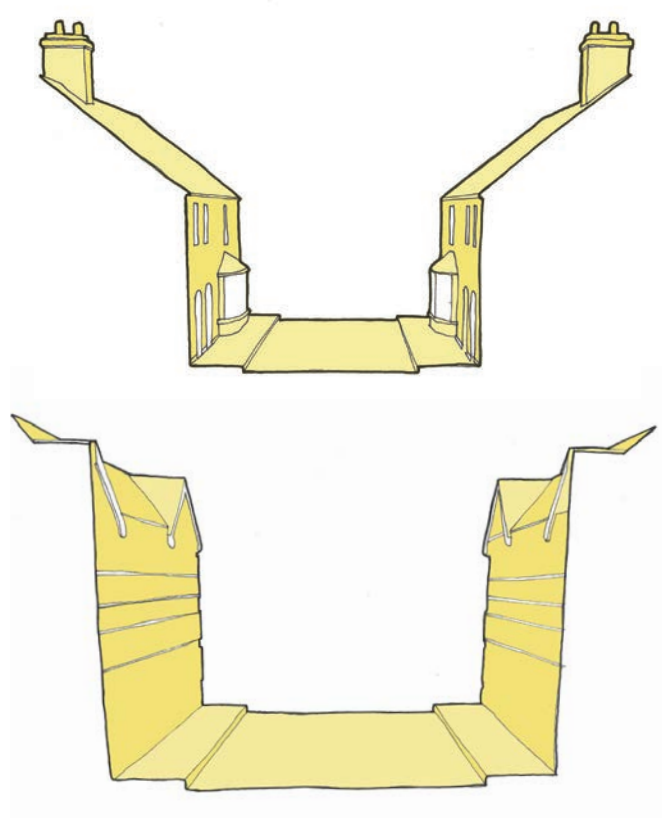
Scale and proportion

The scale, volume and massing of development should contribute positively to the street scene and surrounding buildings, respecting the scale of spaces and buildings in the local area.

Buildings, streets and spaces should be in proportion and balance with each other. Where a new building or buildings are too large and bulky in comparison to the open spaces and streets around them, places feel cramped and oppressive. Extensions to existing buildings should usually be in proportion to the original building to ensure that additions do not look disjointed or out of place. The scale of buildings should be attractive when viewed from neighbouring areas.

Overshadowing and overlooking

New buildings should consider their potential effects on neighbouring buildings and avoid overshadowing and overlooking.



Keeping building height and massing in proportion with the existing street: lower building heights are more appropriate in narrower streets (top) whilst wider streets can accommodate larger buildings



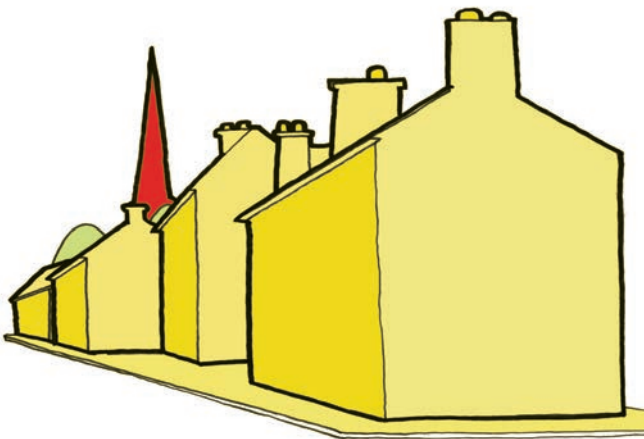
This barn conversion incorporates both modern and original features, with careful attention to maintaining a rhythm in the window openings, and retaining the hierarchy of scale between the original house and the later extensions.



This photo shows typical variation of scale, form and mass in a South Staffordshire village, giving the built environment a human scale.



The modest scale of the buildings in Enville means that the landscape and wooded skyline remains prominent beyond, emphasising the rural character of the settlement.



New developments should respect the existing shape and rhythm of skylines and designers should make sure that new buildings do not obstruct views to local landmarks.

Form, rhythm and variety

Buildings should take account of the scale and form of neighbouring buildings and key features, ensuring that they respond positively to the street scene.

New buildings should take opportunities to preserve and enhance existing rhythms in the street scene for example by incorporating subtle changes in height, size and form between buildings. Within larger developments, subtle variety in building form and scale can add interest and vitality. However, new buildings should avoid stark or sudden changes in scale.

Skylines

The pattern that buildings make en-mass when viewed from further away, should be considered. This means respecting the shape of skylines, so that new buildings do not disrupt the existing pattern of development, and especially in cases where skylines are particularly distinctive.

The design of roofs should be considered carefully, so that they fit within the wider context.



An example of an historic church steeple in Brewood remains clearly visible in the village street scene.

D. Building Scale and form

Landmarks and views

Developers should make sure that new buildings do not detract from local landmarks or views.

New buildings can act as focal points and landmarks where they are located in a prominent location such as a corner site or next to a public open space. In these cases, increasing the height of buildings can enforce their importance as focal points.

The shape of buildings might also consider the way in which they interact with neighbouring buildings, the pattern of sunlight and whether they overlook spaces or streets, such as looking out onto green spaces and continuing the established building line. Consider how buildings are accessed and how it works with the internal layout and orientation to achieve maximum daylight.

High quality design and sustainable development

High architectural design quality adds richness, individuality and diversity to our environments.

Developers should take care to ensure that the form of buildings fit well into their surrounding environment. The shape of buildings could take inspiration from surrounding buildings or features, or the landscape, and this can improve the appearance of places. Incorporating traditional designs and construction techniques alongside modern developments can help to tie buildings to their local place.

Sustainable developments

Building designs should look to incorporate sustainable solutions such as energy efficient layouts and orientation to maximise solar gain for passive solar heating, sustainable drainage (see [p. 25](#)), renewable energy, minimising waste production and providing opportunities for recycling and minimising pollution. Developments should seek to minimise water use and incorporate water recycling and rainwater harvesting.

Buildings in villages

Within historic village cores, properties face the street. The buildings often have vertical emphasis with steep, narrow roof pitches, commonly set in narrow plan plots ('burgage' plots) - e.g. [p. 46](#) shows typical narrow plots in the village of Kinver.

Buildings in the countryside

The broad scale of much of South Staffordshire's landscape means that development is often visible from quite long distances. New buildings should fit in well with the surrounding landscape. For example, buildings might be low and wide, with the shape of the building mimicking the slope of the land.

Large farmsteads and farm houses are typical of the types of building forms traditionally found in the South Staffordshire landscape.



Barns are typical of South Staffordshire landscapes. Their long narrow dimensions and simple forms mean that they sit comfortably in large, flat fields.

Summary

- *Make sure the scale, proportion and mass of new development is harmonious with surrounding buildings, spaces and streets.*
- *Variety in scale, form and mass creates richness in the streetscape. For larger developments, diversity rather than a standardised approach is imperative.*
- *Modern and innovative solutions in building form are encouraged. Designs could take inspiration from existing patterns.*
- *A high quality design. Development should take every opportunity to create good design which seeks to be creative and sustainable. The Council will encourage innovative design solutions.*



The award winning Foster Centre at South Staffordshire College responds to the existing college buildings through its similarity of scale and proportions. Both the overall height and eaves heights are matched- this successfully ties the building to its surrounding context.



A successful example of how larger buildings can be used as local landmarks, useful for people orientating themselves, and help to limit long streets in villages, creating more intimate streets and passageways.

References for Building Scale and Form

- + *Village summaries in [Appendix 1](#)*
- + *Conservation Area Appraisals in [South Staffordshire](#) to establish whether there is a special characteristic vernacular form in the village.*
- + *Urban Design Compendium*
- + *By Design*
- + *Building Regulations Part M*
- + *South Staffordshire Local Plan - see Policies EQ11 Wider Design Considerations*

(See [Chapter 7. References](#) for full details of the publications).

Materials & Details

Materials and details used in a new development are very important, in terms of fitting into the surroundings and enhancing the sense of local distinctiveness through locally sourced materials and craftsmanship.

Existing materials and details

Take note of what materials and details are in the surrounding area - early methods of building construction drew on a ready supply of good local materials and local craftsmanship, and this has resulted in buildings having a sense of unity and distinctive character.

Materials and details in settlements are not all the same - for example, there are subtle differences in the types or arrangements of bricks used, which adds texture and variety.

The village summaries in [Appendix 1](#) point out notable elements and details that occur in particular areas - for instance the well-detailed chimneys and fish scale banding of roof tiles in Penkrige, gable-end details in Wheaton Aston or the terracotta string-course details in Cheslyn Hay, reflecting the local brick and tile making industries. See [Traditional settlement patterns \(p. 11\)](#) for more examples of local vernacular.

Conservation Areas

The Council has produced Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans to guide the preservation and enhancement of these areas. New developments proposed in these areas may be subject to stricter requirements for materials or appearance. Developers should contact the Council in the pre-application stage to discuss this.

However, attention to details and sensitive consideration of materials is not just for Conservation Areas and sensitive sites; this applies to all areas.



Interesting gable end detail on a building in Kinver adds distinctiveness and character to the street scene



Both of these modern developments show a sensitivity towards historical architectural design in and around South Staffordshire. The developments incorporate traditional details in a contemporary way without directly copying the existing buildings.

Materials

Texture and colour

The palette of colours found across the district is based on mellow, earthy reds and reddish-brown colours. Where historic villages survive, the overriding quality is soft, earthy coloured buildings that blend into the landscape.

New development does not have to copy existing materials and details, but development should reflect and respond to the surrounding context enough to create a sense of harmony and balance with the surroundings.

Innovative and new materials can add character to a new development, especially in areas with fewer existing features of local identity.

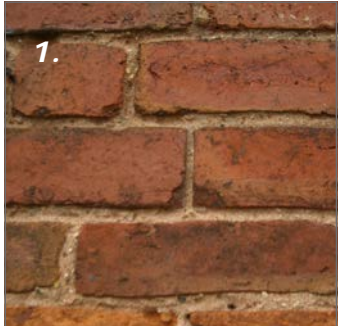
Sustainability

Consideration of where materials will be sourced from, their longevity, and whether they are fit for purpose, is also very important. Reclaimed materials from the local area can be a sustainable option as well as adding character to a new development.

Consider how the quality of materials used for streets and public spaces will be maintained - will they be easy to maintain, provide durability and be of a high standard and quality in the long term.



The use of yellow stock and sandstone is not common in the District, in contrast to other parts of the county, and is largely confined to the construction of key civic or church buildings.



1. The locally occurring Keuper Marl Clay was historically accessible and is widely used in many of the estates and larger villages. The distinctive local brick is red-brown in colour, soft in construction and weathers to produce a rough texture.



2. The most common roofing material is the red-brown clay tiles made from local Keuper Marl Clay. The clay tiles - called plain tiles - are of small scale, typically 265mm x 165mm, with a fine sand texture.



3. Rendered surfaces on the District's historic buildings were painted in a limewash, limited to a range of colours including cream, near white or stone. Brighter and pastel colours are not widely found.



4. Blue-grey Welsh slate is also common across the district. Slate is lighter, more durable and weatherproof than clay. The colour can vary subtly from dark blue/grey to purple/grey.

E. Materials & Details



Successful new developments consider the local historical context in terms of roof pitches, construction, materials and detail. The character of South Staffordshire is defined by these features and their incorporation into contemporary design helps to visually connect new developments with the area.



This modern extension uses timber shingle cladding to visually connect the two buildings through colour. By matching the existing roof pitch the original building is respected in terms of ridge height and overall scale. A visual break between the two has been used to define the division between the old and new.



This barn conversion retains existing details such as the ventilation holes and the building and roof is left intact and uncluttered without being broken up with features such as roof lights /dormers.

Details

Much of the beauty and character of the villages in South Staffordshire lies in the details of buildings - features such as the roof tiles, roof pitch angle, simple brick cornice or string course, create the rhythm and texture that makes attractive environments.

Responding to local characteristics

New development will be most successful where it takes inspirations from the surrounding environment. Use details to enhance local distinctiveness and identity through reflecting existing patterns from the surrounding area, or incorporating local craftsmanship.

Details in a new development should give particular attention to:

- how patterns, styles and finishes of windows and doors reflect or respond to those occurring locally;
- how walls are constructed, such as the style of brickwork used;
- whether features such as chimney stacks and porches are appropriate;
- which roof type, structure and pitch is most appropriate to the local context - for example in most settlements complex roof structures are best avoided and eaves and verges are best kept simple;
- how storage structures and security measures can be inbuilt and designed to reduce clutter.
- lighting designs and light sources, ensuring they are in keeping with the character of the area.

Avoid the use of inappropriate details: aim for simplicity, remembering the agricultural origins of the majority of places in the district - the use of a large palette of materials for buildings or streets and complicated or fussy designs should be avoided.

Elements that relate to a property's previous function create interest, character and can educate people in the history of the area.

Larger developments

Using consistent details in a larger development helps to create an individual identity and sense of unity. This may be achieved through features such as repeating the use of a darker red brick detail above doors or windows.

Well-designed boundaries to development

Well-designed boundaries to development can achieve visual coherence and clearly distinguish between public and private spaces. Long sections of blank facades should be avoided, particularly adjacent to public spaces.

The method of enclosure, particularly for minor developments should be an opportunity to unify the street frontage - for example, continuing the adjacent walling detail in the choice of the brickwork, bonding or coping.

Shop frontages

Shop frontages should be carefully considered: see South Staffordshire's Shop Front Design Guide. Shop signage should not create stark contrasts or be over-dominant.



This modern development on a corner plot in Brewwood shows consideration of details of the surrounding context. It reflects the pattern of surrounding buildings in its similarity of scale, roof pitch and form. The simple detailing of the windows has shown consideration to local styles such as those on opposite buildings. The brick boundary wall continues the line of the existing wall to the right.

Summary

- *Select materials which reflect the location and context of the development - how the space or building will be used, where it lies in relation to existing buildings, settlements, and rural landscapes as well as what the practical requirements are.*
- *Use materials and details to enhance local distinctiveness and identity through reflecting existing patterns or local craftsmanship.*
- *Innovation in the type of materials used and the design and finish of buildings and spaces is encouraged, but should reference the existing context.*
- *Avoid the use of inappropriate details: aim for simplicity.*
- *Retain and re-use elements that relate to a property's previous function.*
- *Ensure that lighting designs and light sources are in keeping with the character of the area.*

References for Materials & Details

- + *South Staffordshire Local Plan - see Policy EQ11 Wider Design Considerations*
- + *South Staffordshire Shop Front Design Guide*
- + *Staffordshire Farmsteads Guidance*
- + *Conservation Area Appraisals*
- + *Village summaries - Appendix 1*
- + *Chapter 2. South Staffordshire's Character (p. 9) and p. 11 onwards for examples of local vernacular.*

(See [Chapter 7. References](#) for full details of the publications).



Aerial view of Kinver village

4. Major developments

This section brings together some of the design principles that are most relevant to major developments. Also refer to the design principles in Chapter 3. [Design Principles \(p. 21\)](#) for further information.

Major residential developments

Developments which work with their context

Major developments where a number of units and streets are planned, can transform street scenes and create new character in places.

The design process for these types of developments should follow good urban design principles of place-making (see [Urban design principles \(p. 21\)](#)).

It is recommended that an appropriate design professional (such as a landscape architect, urban designer or architect) is engaged early on in the process to develop a masterplan for the scheme.

Developments should sit easily within their surrounding environment, taking account of the surrounding character, whether rural or urban, and building the proposal's layout around existing features (such as waterside locations, trees, landmarks, views or historic elements).

Good example



Perimeter blocks: In this example, the development responds to its context of the adjacent village junction on one side and river on the other. At the junction, the development creates a continuous frontage, where terraced houses face onto both streets. This provides continuity with the existing pattern of built form.

On the river side of the development, detached villas face the river. They overlook the footpath alongside the river, creating natural surveillance.

A variety of scales and building forms are used to create richness across the site and in response to surrounding character. Private space including gardens and parking areas are arranged in the middle of the block so that the outer parts of the development are active and outward-facing.

Poor example



This is an example of a poor design response to context. It is a standardised response, which is inward-looking, where buildings are arranged around a cul-de-sac and rear gardens oriented to the street. The development turns its back on the surrounding streets, and the streets and spaces are not well enclosed. The surroundings are ignored and become detached.

Creating logical patterns in the layout

Within the site itself, the pattern and arrangement of spaces, buildings and streets should work well and look good, so that places are easy for people to find their way around.

Hierarchies of spaces, buildings and streets

Hierarchies are one way of creating a logical pattern in a new place. This is the traditional pattern of South Staffordshire villages - see [The traditional pattern of villages \(p. 11\)](#) where larger or more formal elements are grouped together around focal points. The scale of buildings, streets and spaces tends to increase in size towards the centre of the village. At the top of the hierarchy is often a parish church or market place with larger houses, farmhouses and barns, and smaller vernacular buildings grouped around a variety of street widths.

Towards the edges of the settlement, a lower density of development can help make for a smoother transition between built up areas and the natural landscape.

Richness and variety

Hierarchies are also one way in which to create **subtle variation** in scales and forms as well as a logical sense of rhythm and pattern. As buildings and spaces gradually become larger towards the centre and around focal points, it provides interest, emphasis and richness within the street scene. Large or abrupt differences in scale are rarely appropriate, but small or gradual step changes can add character to a development.

Masterplans for housing schemes should incorporate an appropriate mix of uses, including a mix of housing types, affordable housing, employment and community uses.

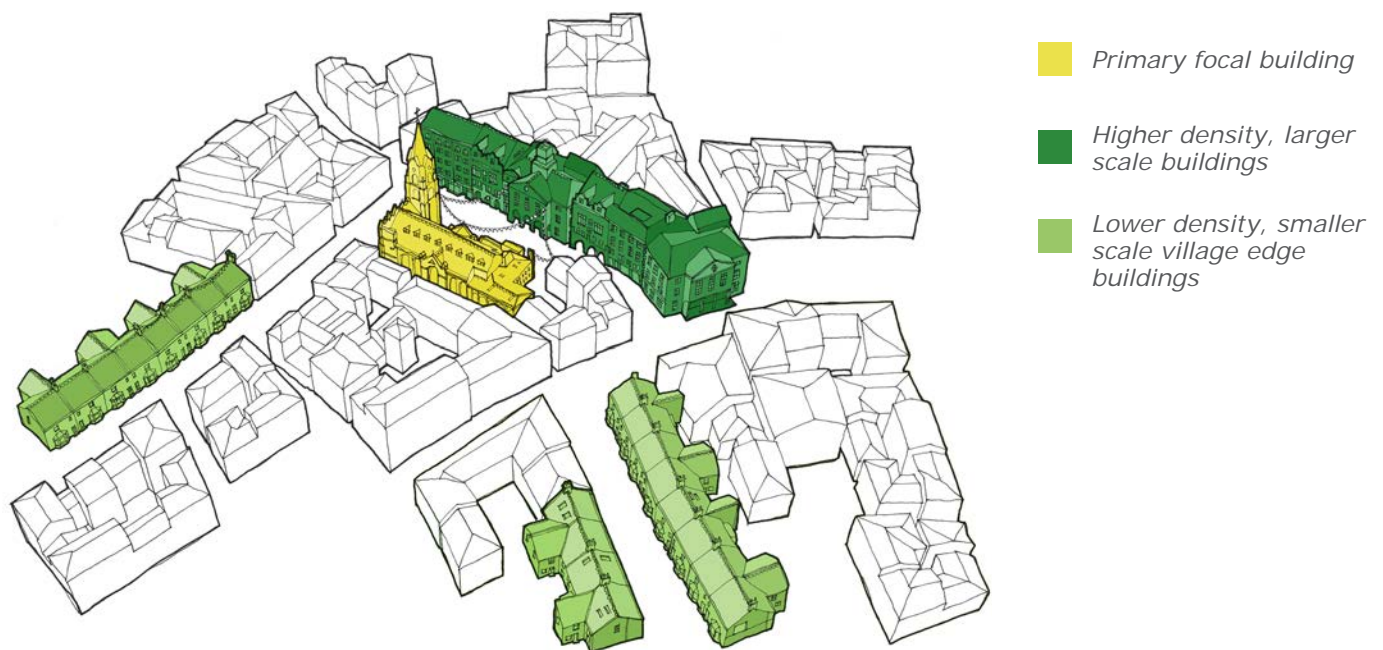


Diagram showing the hierarchy of the building in a settlement related to their proximity to the centre of the settlement.

Making new places easy to find your way around

Making places easy for people to find their way around can be achieved with design features such as incorporation of:

- Links
- Landmarks and focal points
- Gateways

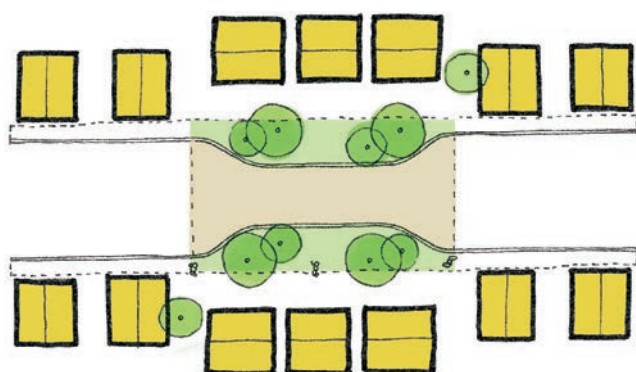
See [Safe, secure & navigable layouts \(p. 33\)](#) for more explanation of these.

Streets as places

Well-designed developments will have links between streets and spaces from within and outside the development so that it is easy for people to access the buildings and spaces within and around it.

Well-designed streets are multi-functional spaces - not just for cars to move through or park on. Depending on the location and role of the street, it can also be for socialising, shopping or informal play.

The needs of pedestrians are as important as those of other road users. For the majority of minor streets it will be appropriate to ensure that pedestrians are given priority and in some areas **“home zones”** could be used to reduce traffic speed and create a sense of place.



'Home Zones' and 'Living Streets' can be introduced to meet the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, reducing the dominance of cars and lowering speeds whilst providing opportunities for green space

There are many excellent examples of how street design has influenced responsive driver behaviour and has increased social interaction. Lessons learned from successful case studies should be applied. In particular, thought should be given to whether shared spaces would be appropriate in residential streets, and how streets can creatively accommodate trees, vegetation and public space.

The use of quality paving materials such as block paving rather than tarmac can improve the kerb appeal of a scheme and can be cheaper due to reduced costs of drainage systems.

Parking

There are many different approaches to providing parking, but it should be considered from the outset and integrated with landscaping and other potential uses. Shared surface treatments could be an effective way of approaching on-street parking. Refer to [Accommodating parking and servicing \(p. 34\)](#) for further guidance on parking.



A successful 'Home Zone' achieved with an implied gateway established with local brickwork and a change in surface treatment to identify the shared surface zone.

Commercial developments

Siting

For larger buildings, carefully consider where the development is located in relation to surrounding hills and slopes, screening vegetation and views. Can the wider landscape be used to mitigate certain aspects of the new development? For example, siting the development at the lower valley slopes may have less of a visual impact in longer views (also see [p. 26](#), [p. 28](#) (setting of valued features) and [p. 36](#)). A group of trees might be used to screen the development from certain views.

Building layout

Group buildings together to form a logical arrangement in the landscape for example, relating buildings to each other could adopt the form of typical farmstead-style arrangements which are traditional to South Staffordshire. Consider the views towards the development and how the buildings will appear on the skyline.

Integrate the design of parking, landscaping and signage to create a cohesive layout.



Building layout may take inspiration from agricultural-style arrangements such as this conversion of a former agricultural complex at Dunston Business Park.

Landscape and boundaries

Attention to the landscape and boundaries will be particularly important to ensure large commercial developments are not over-dominant in the landscape - also see [Settlement boundaries and interfaces \(p. 26\)](#) and [Well-designed boundaries to development \(p. 45\)](#).

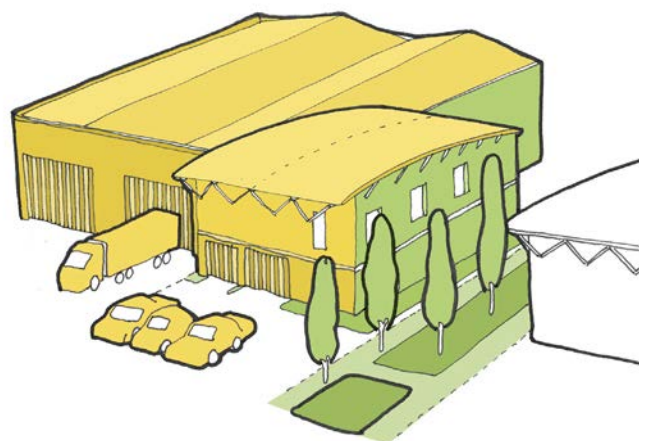
Colours and materials

Refer to [E. Materials & Details \(p. 42\)](#).

Colours and materials on larger buildings should be sensitively considered so that buildings relate well to their surroundings. The visual impact of buildings in the wider landscape and in key views should be considered. Darker colours of materials usually help these types of buildings to blend into the surrounding landscape when viewed against a wooded backdrop but other colours may be appropriate depending on the specific context. Planting can help to soften interfaces.

Frontages

Public frontages should be considered and contribute positively to the public realm.



Reduce "clutter" or screen bulky developments from views by carefully considering layouts. Integrating the landscaping, signage and car parking into overall layout helps to create a logical and visually acceptable arrangement.



Modern commercial developments should respond to the context both materially and in terms of an integrated, design led landscape scheme



Here, neat hedgerows and grass verges provide natural landscape boundaries to developments, retaining visual connections to the wider countryside.

Summary

- Where appropriate, use existing landscape features to inform the overarching structure and layout of the development.
- Hierarchies can create logical patterns in new developments, where gradients of building scale and form are grouped around focal points.
- Well-designed developments will have links between streets and spaces from within and outside the development.
- Integrate the design of parking, landscaping and signage to create a cohesive layout.
- Take account of the surrounding landscape and context when siting larger developments.
- Attention to materials and details and boundaries is very important to ensure larger developments fit well into their surroundings.

References for Major Developments

+ **Also refer to the design principles in Section 3 of this Design Guide**

+ **Chapter 2. South Staffordshire's Character (p. 9)**

+ **By Design**

+ **Urban Design Compendium**

+ **Manual for Streets**

+ **Urban Design Lessons - Housing Layout and Neighbourhood Quality**

+ **Affordable Housing SPD**

+ *Design professionals should be employed to advise on these types of schemes.*

(See **Chapter 7. References** for full details of the publications).



Landscape view towards Sharesill

5. Minor developments

Minor developments

This section brings together some of the design principles that are most relevant to minor developments.

Respecting the surrounding village scene

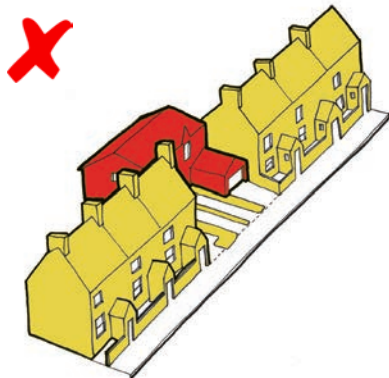
South Staffordshire's villages usually have a loose hierarchy, where larger buildings and streets are found in the centre of villages, and other parts of the village have a more irregular mix of scales and forms. The variations of scale and form in buildings and streets can be quite subtle. Minor developments should fit in with the general pattern of the surrounding environment, taking account of the subtle variations in scale and form, and contribute to a sense of cohesion and unity.

Infill

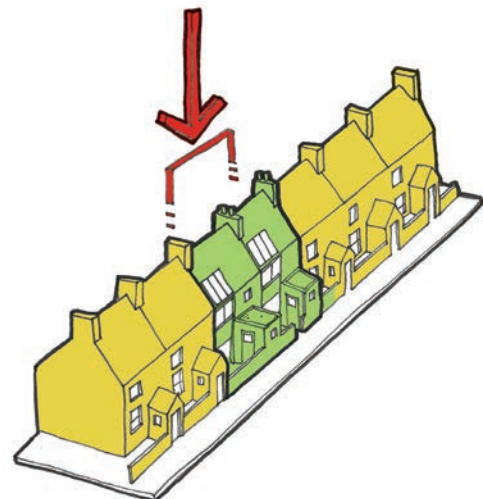
For infill developments where a particular street has an established pattern of building heights, developments should aim to continue the established pattern, without creating a sharp or sudden change in height or building scale.



This modern infill development respects and continues the rhythm of the existing street.



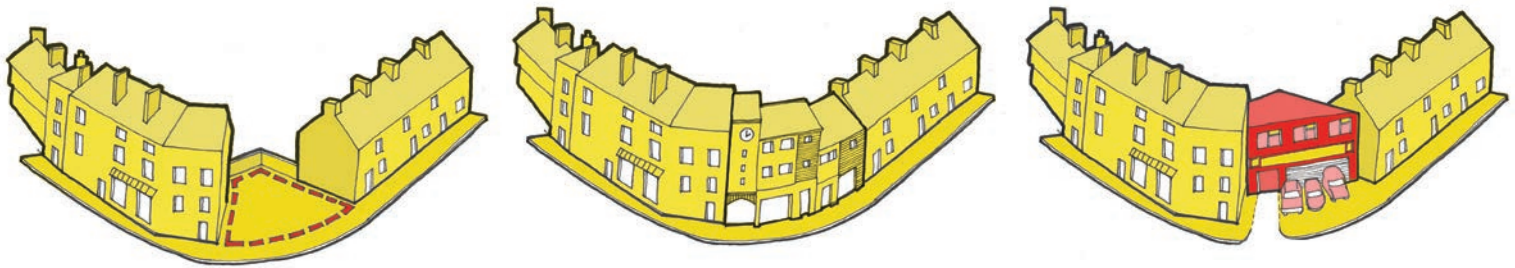
Here, the new infill development is not sympathetic with the surrounding pattern of buildings. The lower roof pitch and lower ridge of the roof breaks up the continuity of the street, the building materials are unrelated and stand out starkly, and the set-back disrupts the building line.



Along this street, the repetition of certain building elements such as the chimneys, porches and windows, creates a visual rhythm. Infill proposals should aim to reflect the rhythm in the proposed building. Some variation is acceptable—for example larger windows, roof lights to an attic room, and similar materials but with subtly different detailing. This creates individuality and interest, whilst still fitting in well with the surrounding buildings.

Infill in a village centre

Infill development on prominent village centre plots should be given particular attention in the form and detail of buildings. These are opportunities for new buildings to be landmarks, but they should also relate well to the neighbouring buildings and features.



This illustration shows an infill site at a junction of two streets between two and three storey terraces. New development on the site will need to mediate between the scale and character of the two streets as well as create a suitable landmark on the prominent corner location.

This development steps up in height from one side to the other, by subdividing the site into different units. It incorporates a clock tower, forming a focal feature above the entrance to emphasise the prominent landmark location. The design of the development has subtle variations in scale so that the block of buildings has a visual cohesion and interest.

This is a poor example, as it relates poorly to surrounding buildings. The building line is set back and car parking is visually disruptive. The poor detailing, signage and glazing all contribute to a building which is not appropriate for its infill context.

Extensions

Generally, extensions should be subservient to the main building. The extension should respect the scale and form of the main building and its relationship to adjacent buildings, including the gaps in between them. Developers should consider the overall effect of the extension on the appearance of the building as a whole, and extensions should not detract from the original building or nearby buildings by overshadowing.

For extensions, additions should fit in with the character and form of the existing building. Special attention to detail should be paid to the design of extensions where they form an addition to a building with historic or architectural merit.

It is generally not appropriate for extensions (other than small porches or canopies) to project forward of the existing front facade of a building.



An example of a successful extension, showing careful detailing and sensitively responding to the stone construction of the house. The extension is subservient to the main house in terms of scale, mass and height.

Barn conversions

Conversion of existing rural and agricultural buildings should retain as many of the original building's qualities as possible. They should be legible as former agricultural buildings. It will usually be appropriate to retain the original internal spaces where there are full height spaces and roof structures exposed.

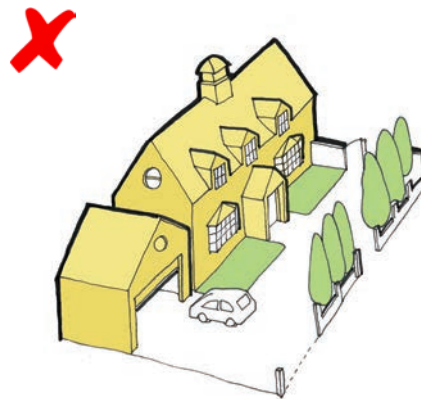
New elements should preferably be designed so that they are distinguishable from the original building. For example, there may be a change in materials.

Many traditional buildings form part of a larger group, with other outbuildings. These buildings provide a history and context for how older buildings were used historically. The other buildings in the group should usually be retained. New additions such as garages should be set back from the main building and use similar materials or style to create overall unity.

The simple qualities of barns and agricultural buildings should be retained, with minimal fussy adornments as this tends to create a generic suburban character that disguises the building's history and interest. Restoring original features such as boundary walls can enhance the character of the existing site.



This successful barn conversion retains the original brick detailing whilst simple roof lights have been used to bring light into the building without compromising the traditional form.



This is an inappropriate barn conversion. Architectural additions such as dormer windows, bay windows and a porch conceal the original building. The ornately adorned boundary adds a 'suburban' character. The new garage is too large and prominent in relation to the main building.



This barn conversion retains the original building outline using flush fitting conservation roof lights. The original barn openings have been retained, and therefore the windows and doors retain their original proportions as much as possible. The new windows have been created in the less visible end gable by opening (but not enlarging) the blocked window and creating a new window alongside. The ventilation holes have been retained with internal glazing.

Overlooking and overshadowing

Development should not create overshadowing, overlooking or reduce the existing scale of the street.

Boundaries

Ensure boundaries are not visually intrusive and note that planning consent is required for any boundary structure adjacent to the highway if over 1m in height.

It is especially important to pay attention to detail at the development boundaries of minor developments in order to create a unified street scene. Usually it will be appropriate to continue the pattern of adjacent boundaries (such as low walls, fences or hedges) as well as matching the building line and degree of set back from the pavement.

For sites near or adjacent to the wider countryside, landscape design should be kept simple, reflecting the simple, informal rural setting. Include native planting rather than 'suburban' borders.

Garages

Garages should be positioned and designed so that they do not stand out abruptly from their surroundings, especially when they are located in more rural locations. One idea to help garages fit in to their surrounding environment is to take inspiration from small, historic out buildings typical of the rural areas of South Staffordshire.



This barn conversion retains the arrangement of buildings looking inward to a central courtyard.



An example of a refurbished mill in Penkrige. Important qualities which have been retained include the simple building form and brickwork detailing.

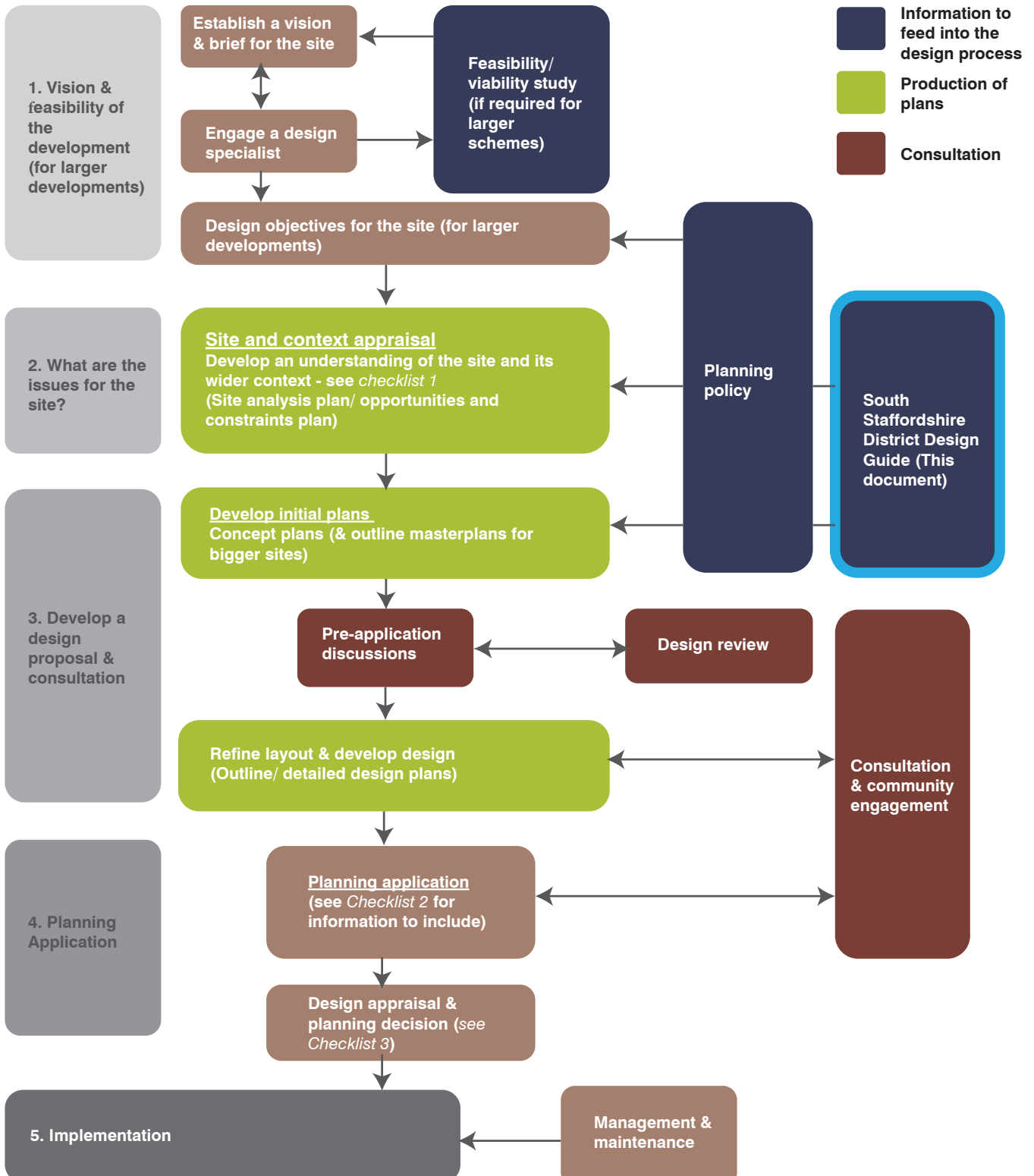
References for Minor Developments

- + **Chapter 3 Design Principles (p.25)**
- + **Chapter 2. South Staffordshire's Character (p. 9)**
- + **Staffordshire Farmsteads Guidance**
- + **Conservation Area Appraisals - see Council website <http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/>**
- + **Listed buildings - see Council website or Historic England -<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/>**
- + **Appendix 6 of the Local Plan - Space About Dwellings Standards**
- + **Green Belt and Open Countryside SPD**

(See **Chapter 7. References** for full details of the publications).

6. Process

This chapter sets out the main steps applicants should take when planning and designing new development, and then goes on to set out the process for submitting an application and the information required by the Council.



6. Process

Site and context appraisal

The design of a high quality new development must be based on a good understanding of the site, and the opportunities and constraints each site presents. It is also important to understand the wider surroundings of the site (its context). A context and site appraisal must be carried out before designing the scheme.

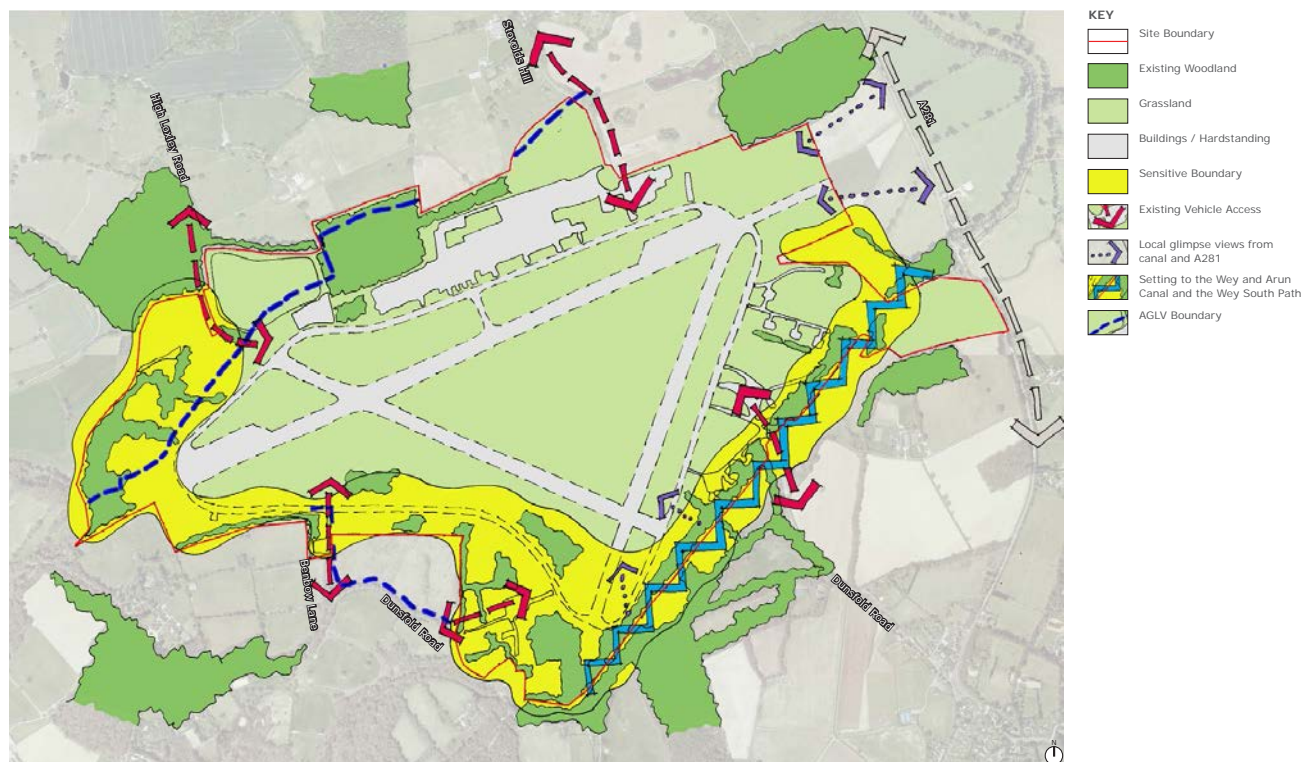
Each site and context appraisal will vary according to the particular location of the site and the type and size of development being proposed.

Checklist 1 overleaf shows the aspects should be covered in a site and context appraisal.

Evidence of the site appraisal should be submitted with the planning application to show how it has influenced the development's design. This should include annotated plans, photographs and/or sketches.

For larger sites, the site appraisal plan may be used to inform a site opportunities and constraints plan as illustrated below.

Landscape Design Appraisal - Site Analysis /Constraints



Example of a site appraisal plan

Checklist 1: Information that may inform site and context appraisal

<p>Site & adjacent area - overview</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site history • Character of the site & surroundings • Key natural features • Key heritage assets or structures • Layout & form of existing buildings or built elements • Relationship of the site to the village or landscape context
<p>Physical & natural features</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape & vegetation: green spaces; trees & their spread, height & condition; hedges • Boundary features & whether they are to be retained • Wildlife habitats and whether they are to be preserved • Topography & levels; ground conditions • Microclimate: orientation, wind shelter, overshadowing
<p>Built & human features</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing buildings & structures on & adjacent to the site & whether they are to be retained <i>Note: for conversion of existing barns, the qualities of the existing building should be established through survey of the fabric, consideration of its original use and study of its history.</i> • The height, scale & skyline the buildings create • Building materials
<p>Visual character</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual character of the site • Views into & out of the site; key views & vistas • Landmarks in the site & surrounding area
<p>Connections & movement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing routes - footpaths/desire lines across & around the site • Barriers to movement • Proximity to public transport routes, stops & the frequency of service • Access points to the site • Existing & potential nodal points within or near the site
<p>Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant local and national planning policies • Natural designations - e.g. protected trees and habitats. <i>Note: It may be necessary to carry out an ecological survey for protected species such as bats and owls as it is an offence to damage or disturb their habitat.</i> • Historic/ heritage designations - e.g. Conservation Area/listed buildings
<p>Feasibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of filled ground and potential sources of contamination • Water courses, ponds, opportunities for sustainable drainage. • Location of utilities • Land ownerships and tenures

Consultation

Consulting with the local community

The process should also include consultation with the local community who may be affected by the new development.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

The SCI sets out the Council's vision, standards and approach for community and stakeholder involvement in planning matters.

Applicants will always be encouraged to consider the benefits of involving the community in developing their proposals, whether it is legally required or not. Methods that may be suggested include:

- Questionnaires and surveys
- Public exhibitions or meetings
- Development briefs
- Use of websites
- Site notices

Applicants for householder and other minor schemes should discuss their proposals with neighbours.

Pre-application discussions with the Council

Early consultation with the Council is recommended, as this can highlight any major constraints on the scale or type of development proposed at an early stage.

Pre-application discussions can confirm whether the principle of development is acceptable and clarify the format, type and level of detail required to enable an application to be determined. These discussions can remain confidential where necessary.

The benefits of pre-application discussions are:

- *Advice can be sought on the principle of development before the brief and design are finalised*
- *Site, location and design options can be discussed*
- *Good quality information at an early stage means issues or concerns can be addressed before the application is submitted*
- *Getting the right advice can avoid the need to change the plans later which can be costly*
- *The necessary information to support an application can be identified and agreed*
- *The subsequent planning application may be registered more quickly*
- *Clear and complete applications are easier to process through the planning system*

Further information about the pre-application process is available on the Council's website.

Design Review

Design review allows developers, designers and the Council to make and receive constructive, impartial feedback on the design proposals as they develop, to ensure high standards of design.

It can range from informal discussions or take a more formal format such as a design workshop, involving the design team, the client and the Council. Formal pre-application discussions with the Council will form one part of design review.

Planning Officers will undertake design review when a planning application is submitted for determination, based on this Guide, utilising the **Design Appraisal Framework** provided in **Checklist 3**.

Information to include in planning applications

The following pages provide information to applicants on what information is expected to be provided in a planning application. The main aspects are:

- *A design and access statement*
- *Other supporting information*
- *Design proposals*

Householder / Other minor applications

Householder and other minor applications which don't need to provide a Design and Access Statement should ensure they consider the site context and design issues set out in this guide, and be ready to explain how their chosen approach meets the relevant requirements of Policy EQ11. This could be done as part of a covering letter to accompany the application.

Checklist 2: Information to include in Planning Applications

1. *Design and Access Statement*

A Design and Access Statement is a short structured report that supports applications for planning and listed building consent. It explains and justifies the design of the development. It should be proportionate to the complexity of the application, but need not be long. It should explain:

- *the design process used including incorporating comments from consultation or design reviews**
- *the design principles that have been applied - showing consideration for good design principles outlined in this Design Guide*
- *evidence of site appraisal (plans, photographs, sketch and written description and analysis)*
- *the alternative options considered and the reasons for the chosen site (where relevant), layout, form and detailed design*
- *how the development responds to its context*
- *how the design addresses the other requirements of Core Policy 4 and Policy EQ11 and this Design Guide*
- *how issues related to access to the development have been addressed (pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access and parking)*
- *retention and creation of green spaces and landscaping including the type and size of trees and shrubs to be provided, root protection zones*

(continued on following page)

* Recording design reviews, particularly where this has involved the Council, and writing this up concisely as part of the Design and Access Statement for a planning application is encouraged. This can help explain why certain aspects of a development have been designed in a particular way.

Checklist 2 (continued): Information to include in Planning Applications

2. Other Supporting Information

- Evidence of pre-application consultation /engagement
- Details of environmental performance:
 - *Non-residential – equivalent of Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) and meet minimum 'very good' standard.*
- For developments affecting a Heritage Asset a Statement of Significance (including Historical, Archaeological features, setting and Scheduled Ancient Monuments)
 - *Management and maintenance plan*

This guide focuses on design. See the current Guidance Notes for Validation of Planning Applications for other requirements.

See **p. 65** for references.

3. Proposals

Applications should include clear drawings with adequate detail (visually and in words) so that planning officers can gain a realistic impression of what the scheme will be like.

Drawings should include a key, scale, labels and specification of materials and comprise plans, sections, and street scene views, photographs/ photomontages. 3D models may be required.

For more detail on the information required to accompany applications see:

- Guidance Notes for Validation of Planning Applications and other submissions for consideration by the Local Planning Authority

Design Appraisal Framework

The Design Appraisal Framework in **Checklist 3** indicates how applications will be reviewed by the Council with regard to design. The criteria in the checklist can be applied to the application using the scores 1-5 in the table opposite, as well as using this design guide and the relevant policies.

However, it should be noted that the scores will only give an *indication* of design quality and do not add up to give an answer on whether the development is acceptable or not in terms of design. This is because not all elements in the table are given equal weight, and professional judgement on the merits of each individual application will be applied.

The criteria in the appraisal framework relate to each of the design principles in this design guide and relevant policies. Examples of evidence that should be provided with applications to help the review process, and the standards of design expected, is provided in the right hand column.

Score descriptions for the Design Appraisal Framework

Score	
1	<i>Does not meet expectations</i>
2	<i>Some expectations have been met</i>
3	<i>Satisfactory but could be improved</i>
4	<i>Expectations have been met to a good level</i>
5	<i>Excellent design quality</i>

Checklist 3: Design Appraisal Framework

Ref. page	Criteria (How has the development considered and responded to the design principles)	Evidence	Score
27-31	A. Landscape & Open Space (Policy references Core Policy 4 Promoting High Quality Design and c), d), h); EQ11 Wider Design Considerations m), p), q), s)); (EQ12 Landscaping a), b), c), d), e), f); EQ4 Protecting and Enhancing the Character and Appearance of the Landscape); HWB2 Green Infrastructure; EQ1 Protecting, Enhancing and Expanding Natural Assets).		
p. 27-29	Has the landscape been designed as an integral part of the scheme, with an appropriate range of types of open space including green infrastructure links provided where possible?	Design process shows that the landscape has influenced the design of the development. Landscape and open spaces form a strong framework to the development's design and respond well to the surrounding environment. Open space provision is policy compliant in terms of quantity standards. Appropriate range of types of landscape and publicly accessible open space, including green infrastructure links, with appropriate functions, including consideration of how spaces will be used and accessed.	
p. 27	Are landscape and open spaces designed to be attractive, safe and lively?	A well-considered palette of materials for hard and soft landscape that is appropriate to the village/rural location. An appropriate maintenance plan for planted areas. Consideration of natural surveillance and access to open spaces.	
p. 28	Have existing natural features and habitats been retained and enhanced where possible?	Plan of existing features on the site including tree survey/habitats and strategies for retaining trees (e.g. tree constraints plan). Key natural features have been retained. Strategies for maintenance or additional features for enhancement.	
p. 29	Does the scheme incorporate sustainable solutions and does it provide opportunities for biodiversity?	Sustainable drainage (SuDS) and other solutions such as green roofs, swales, planted areas and permeable paving have been incorporated where possible. Habitats including native planting have been included where possible.	
p. 30	Does the design of the landscape and open space contribute to surrounding landscape character with appropriate consideration of development boundaries?	The character of the area and the landscape setting has been reviewed (e.g. with reference to the Landscape Character Assessment or relevant character guides). Key views of and from the surrounding landscape have been retained or designed in. Appropriate boundaries have been designed to fit the development into its surroundings with well-designed interfaces between adjacent features such as canals and footpaths. Opportunities have been taken to add character and distinctiveness through the creation of new landscape features, particularly to landscapes which have been degraded.	
Subtotal			/25
32-35	B. Context & Local Distinctiveness (Policy references Core Policy 4 Promoting High Quality Design and b); EQ11 Wider Design Considerations e), f), g), h), i); EQ4 Protecting and Enhancing the Character and Appearance of the Landscape)		
p. 32-34	Does the design show understanding of the character and key features of the place and is local distinctiveness respected and reinforced?	Evidence of a robust site and context appraisal supported with illustrations and plans. Including landscape, historic features (Conservation Areas/ listed buildings), key views etc. as appropriate. Explanation of how context has informed design strategy (e.g. Design and Access Statement shows how it has influenced layout, density, building scale, form, materials, details). Opportunities have been taken to create new character if appropriate.	
p. 32	Does the scheme protect and enhance local landscape/ village character?	Evidence that appropriate assessments on landscape and visual impact have been carried out if appropriate. The siting and location of development is appropriate to the local landscape context. The development has respected and enhanced local views and surrounding landscape features.	
p. 34	Does the scheme protect and enhance historic character?	Evidence that relevant historic features have been retained and respected where possible. Opportunities have been taken to enhance historic features, setting, views or associations. Evidence that appropriate assessments on heritage assets have been carried out if appropriate including reference to relevant Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments.	
Subtotal			/15

36-41 C. Layout & Connectivity (Policy references Core Policy 4 Promoting High Quality Design and a), f), g); EQ11 Wider Design Considerations a), c), d), i), l), n), o), r), m); EV11 Sustainable Travel)			
p. 36	Does the scheme provide appropriate densities and mix of uses?	Density and mixture of uses is appropriate to the location and context of the site and community, and enhances vitality of village centres.	
p. 37	Does the layout of the development (buildings, streets and spaces) provide safe, secure and navigable places that function well?	The layout of buildings incorporates active frontage and natural surveillance of pedestrian areas, an integrated network of open spaces and pedestrian friendly places. The design of the development is in accordance with place-making or urban design principles including legibility, permeability, landmarks views and focal points, gateways, (hierarchies of connected streets and spaces and inclusive access -see below). Parking and servicing is integrated into the overall design layout.	
p. 39	Is the development well-connected and integrated to existing routes?	The layout of the development connects with existing streets logically, retains characteristic street patterns and has routes that connect key destinations or amenities, including footpaths and cycle paths.	
p. 39	Does the scheme provide an appropriate hierarchy and network of legible routes with provision for pedestrians and cycling?	Hierarchy of routes integrated into the design with appropriate attention to vehicular/cycle/pedestrian use - e.g. evidence in Design and Access Statement. Provision of cycle parking; footpaths/ cycleways link logically to bus stops and shops. Connections are made to long distance footpaths or Sustrans routes where possible.	
p. 39	Is the development pedestrian friendly, accessible and inclusive in design?	Pedestrian friendly places that have safe provision for walking and cycling as well as vehicles e.g. shared surfaces, pedestrian crossings. Meets inclusive access standards (e.g. Building Regulations Part M). Design of streets has considered safety and social interaction.	
Subtotal			/25
42-45 D. Building Scale and Form (Policy references Core Policy 4 Promoting High Quality Design; EQ11 Wider Design Considerations f), g), j), k), m)			
p. 42	Are buildings of appropriate scale and proportion?	Building scale, volume and massing achieves proportion and balance, contributing positively to the street scene. Development respects the scale of local buildings and spaces, including plot patterns. Building heights do not detract from local landmarks or overshadow neighbouring buildings or spaces.	
p. 43	Does the development incorporate appropriate building forms, rhythm and variety?	Building forms and rhythms contribute positively to the street scene and respect neighbouring buildings or key features. Larger development schemes show subtle variety in building forms and heights without sudden changes in scale. Developments respect distinctive skylines and key views e.g. through sensitive design of roofs.	
p. 44	Does the development provide high quality design and sustainable development?	The design of buildings is of high quality, including attention to detail in appearance and materials - explanations to approach provided in a Design and Access Statement. Innovation in building design, re-use of existing buildings where possible and incorporating sustainable solutions has been integral to the design. Sustainability standards (e.g. BREEAM) reached or exceeded. Schemes include SuDS; energy efficient layout/orientation/ renewable energy and adaptability.	
Subtotal			/15
46-49 E. Materials and Details (Policy references Core Policy 4 Promoting High Quality Design and e); EQ11 Wider Design Considerations e), f), j), k), m)			
p. 46-49	Are materials and details carefully considered and appropriate to the local context?	Sensitive consideration of materials and details in buildings and boundaries which reflect local context. Use of materials and detailing respects and enhances local distinctiveness and identity e.g. incorporate local craftsmanship or patterns, or innovative use of materials. Sensitive interpretation of traditional building form in modern materials. Sustainability of materials has been considered. High quality detailing of buildings (including elements such as roof pitch) and ancillary features or structures such as boundaries, lighting, storage and shop frontages.	
Subtotal			/5
			Total /85

7. References

Affordable Housing and Housing Mix Supplementary Planning Document, South Staffordshire Council, 2014 – see <http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/>

Building for Life 12, CABE, 2015 – see <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/>

Building Regulations – Part M – see <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/>

By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System: towards better practice. Detr/CABE, 2000. (now replaced by the planning practice guidance but still a useful document)

Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan (2014-2019), DEFRA, 2014 – see <http://www.cannock-chase.co.uk>

CIRIA: Susdrain network - <http://www.susdrain.org/>

Conservation Area Appraisals, South Staffordshire Council – see website <http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/>

Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them: CABE, 2006 - This guidance is not current and is now archived but may still be a useful reference

Extensive Urban Surveys, Staffordshire County Council.

Farm Buildings and Traditional Farmsteads - see website <http://historicengland.org.uk>

Green Belt and Open Countryside Planning Document (SPD), South Staffordshire Council, 2014 – see <http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/>

Historic Environment Character Assessment, South Staffordshire Council, 2011 – see <http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/>

Manual for Streets, DfL, 2007 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/manual-for-streets>

National Planning Policy Framework, DCLG, 2012 – see <https://www.gov.uk>

National Planning Practice Guidance: Design - <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/design/>

Planning for Places, CABE, 2009 <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/>

Secured by Design - <http://www.securedbydesign.com/>

South Staffordshire Landscape Sensitivity Study, 2015

Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment, 2015

South Staffordshire Local Plan – see <https://www.gov.uk>

South Staffordshire Open Space Strategy – see <https://www.gov.uk>

South Staffordshire Reviewed – A South Staffordshire Publication by Paul Collins & Craig Walker, 2004

Staffordshire Farmsteads Guidance – see <http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/home.aspx>

Streets for All. Historic England 2017 - <http://www.historicengland.org.uk>

The Setting of Heritage Assets. Historic England, 2017 - <http://www.historicengland.org.uk>

Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments, Historic England - <http://www.historicengland.org.uk>

Urban Design Compendium 1 & 2, HCA – see www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/urban-design-compendium

Urban Design Lessons - Housing Layout and Neighbourhood Quality, Homes and Communities Agency, 2014

'Why Invest in Landscape', Landscape Institute, 2014

'Profitable Places: Why housebuilders invest in landscape', Landscape Institute, 2014

Useful websites

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/>

The government website for planning and building regulations for England and Wales

<http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/>

Design Council cabé (CABE is now part of the design council)

www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/urban-design-compendium

The urban design compendium online

<http://www.landscapeinstitute.co.uk/>

The website for the Landscape Institute

<http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/>

South Staffordshire Council website – see the Planning Policy pages

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/>

Historic England website

References for Design and Access Statements

What to submit in a planning application: see planning applications - 'what to submit' at

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/>

Writing Design and Access Statements:

+ *Design and Access Statements, 'How to write, read and use them', CABE 2006*

+ *South Staffordshire Council website - <http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/>*

8. Glossary

Active Edges

Building frontages containing features which include activities e.g. building entrances, shop fronts, etc.

Adopted Core Strategy

The Core Strategy sets out the long-term vision for our communities, objectives and policies to guide the future development of the District. It sets out how much development will take place locally and how it will be delivered. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2012.

Adopted Local Plan

The South Staffordshire Local Plan will be made up of a number of separate documents including the Adopted Core Strategy, which collectively will guide development in the District. As and when the Council adopts documents in the Local Plan, they will supersede policies in the currently adopted Local Plan.

Biodiversity

The ecological richness of an area represented by the number of plant and animal species present; which development should enhance rather than harm.

BREEAM

The Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method - a set of environmental standards. Attainment of a particular level is often encouraged and for some developments required.

Buildings of Special Local Interest (Local List)

South Staffordshire Council's list of Buildings of Special Local Interest – this identifies local buildings and structures important in their archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic terms which the Council will take action to preserve as far as possible.

Connectivity

Links between streets, footpaths and spaces.

Conservation Areas

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest designated by the council to help preserve and enhance its character and appearance. Appraisals of the conservation areas have been undertaken and further information on these is available on the Council's website.

Contemporary Design

Design particular to a specific point in time. It can be used in the context of the past, but is usually used to mean design particular to the present time period.

Context

In terms of design and architecture, the characteristics of the area in which a place, building or site sits. These include vernacular and period styles, street pattern, topography urban form, legibility, landscape and views.

Continuity

The quality of an unbroken street frontage which creates enclosure and defines the shape of the space thus formed. It is the most important element in creating unity of the street picture together with the street's architecture whether as a formal design or an informal common theme of style, scale, materials and building heights.

Enclosure

Enfolding of a space by its surrounding buildings, walls or landscape. The relationship between the size of the space and the height of its "walls" can give feelings ranging from confinement to spaciousness; creating these variations in forms of space is one of the major accomplishments of the site planning.

Evidence Base

To support the formulation of options for future development, the development of planning policies and to ensure a sound evidence base there are a number of studies, assessments and background documents that underpin the Local Plan for South Staffordshire. These studies maybe updated as and when necessary. The most up to date version will be included in the Evidence Base and may differ from the studies submitted for the Core Strategy in 2011.

Farmsteads Guidance

Staffordshire County Council have been involved in a series of projects aimed at better understanding and managing historic farmsteads within Staffordshire and the wider West Midlands region. This work has included: A survey of Staffordshire's historic farmsteads; An assessment of farmsteads across the West Midlands region; The production of guidance to inform the sustainable development of farmsteads.

Green Roof

A low pitch or flat roof on which plants are grown in a 'soil' layer in order to soften its appearance when seen from above as well as other benefits including for biodiversity, flooding and climate change.

Historic Environment Record (HER)

A detailed database held and maintained by Staffordshire County Council containing information about the history and archaeology of areas and places.

Historic Environment Character Assessment (HEA)

A study by South Staffordshire Council on the historic character of South Staffordshire, looking at 13 project areas around settlements.

Infill Development

Development which fills a small site sandwiched between existing buildings; or larger sites which fill a 'hole' in the urban fabric. The closeness of adjacent buildings makes it important to respect the context.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

A standard methodology for identifying, describing, classifying and mapping what is distinctive about our landscapes. It shows us their variety, and helps us to understand what makes one landscape different from another.

Layout

The arrangement and position of buildings, streets and open spaces.

Legibility

The layout and design of development so as to help people form a mental map and easily identify routes through the area and their relationship to landmark features and destinations, e.g. the local centre. This implies distinctiveness in the design of each street picture and distinction between 'through' routes and intimate localised and detailed building groupings. It may also require an appreciable build-up to, and of, the neighbourhood centre.

Listed Buildings

A building or other structure officially designated as being of special architectural, historical or cultural significance. Listing a building imposes restrictions on what an owner might wish to change or modify in the structure or its fittings.

'Local Service Village'

Within South Staffordshire, smaller villages or settlements with essential facilities used by the local population.

'Main Service Village'

Within South Staffordshire, larger villages or settlements that have a good range of facilities and services.

Massing

A common phrase used by professionals to refer to the height, bulk and volume of buildings, the density of their distribution and physical closeness of their relationship. With 'scale' these are important qualities which need determining at an early design stage.

Natural Surveillance

The overlooking of public spaces from windows of nearby buildings or busier adjacent areas in order to deter crime or anti-social behaviour.

'Other Villages'

Within South Staffordshire, settlements that have a restricted range of facilities and services, such as a church, pub or playing field.

Permeability

A quality which provides a choice of convenient and self-evident routes along which to traverse an area.

Public Realm

The area which is freely accessible to the public. This includes streets, footpaths, parks, car parks, open land as well as the inside of some public buildings. In a wider sense it may refer to open areas which are private but comprise part of the publicly-visible scene, e.g. cricket pitches, building forecourts, etc.

Robust Design

Design which has stature and implied strength or development which can withstand the test of time and changing demands and uses. It implies that evanescent or fleeting design fashions should be avoided, or only accommodated when they respond to the acknowledged local design context.

Roofscape (also referred to as 'skyline')

The roof scenery of a street or urban area including roof shapes, materials and detailing, chimney stacks, tall structures and trees – the skyline and its silhouette. Especially when viewed from a distance or elevated position the roofscape can become an important defining feature of the townscape. Conscious roofscape design assumes an important role in new housing areas which commonly lack variety of building sizes and shapes and vertical features such as chimneys or gables, spires and turrets.

Scale

The relationship of a building and its features to human size. Small sizes of the building elements – windows, doors etc – as well as the building itself can achieve domesticity; larger building elements represent grandeur and self-importance. Scale is of overriding importance where new buildings are introduced into the context of small-scale village groupings, whilst small-scale cottage designs may be incongruous in larger-scale formal settings.

Scheduled Monuments

Monuments scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. This supports a formal system of Scheduled Monument Consent for any work to a designated monument. Scheduling is the only legal protection specifically for archaeological sites.

Setback

The distance between the front of a building and the back of the pavement. The judicious use of setbacks to achieve considered effects can have a distinctive effect on enclosure and visual richness of a street.

'Small Service Village'

Within South Staffordshire, small villages or settlements with a modest level of facilities, such as a school or Post Office, used by the local population.

SPD

Supplementary Planning Document.

Staffordshire Farmsteads Guidance

Staffordshire County Council in conjunction with English Heritage (now Historic England) have produced guidance to help inform and achieve the sustainable development of historic farmsteads in Staffordshire, including their conservation and enhancement.

Stakeholders

People and organisations, such as service providers and highways, heritage and other authorities, with a vested or statutory interest in a development. This includes the developer, adjoining landowners, residents, local businesses, local community and business groups, the local authority and statutory consultees.

Street Frontage

The physical boundary between the street and the adjacent buildings. A street frontage can be 'live' or 'active' when it contains access points to a building or public open space, 'dead' when it is a blank wall or glass façade, and 'absent' when there is no boundary, for example when the land use is a car park.

Street scape

The picture presented by the view along a street. This is, importantly, formed by the shape of the area enclosed by the street facades; the design and relationship of its defining buildings, walls, structures and vegetation; the surface of the street, wall-to-wall, and street furniture.

SUDS

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (also may be referred to as Water Sensitive Urban Design) are drainage systems, often combined with green space, allowing surface water to drain away seeping naturally and gradually into the ground. This can economise on costs and reduce flooding surges.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

SPDs give more detailed guidance on policies or proposals.

Sustainability

The ability to sustain a level of building or other economic activity without adverse effects on future generations; a phrase often extended incorrectly to embrace social inclusion, economic growth and environmental friendliness within its aims.

Village scape

The pattern of topography, streets, spaces and buildings particular to that village; the view; locations of landmarks; feelings of enclosure and exposure; and of continuity and breakage of street frontages created by the layout of the buildings.

Urban Grain

The urban grain is the complexity and scale of the pattern of buildings and spaces of an urban area. The fine urban grain of many old villages and neighbourhoods is characterised by small blocks with a large number of streets, lanes and passageways and considerable variations in the spacing of, largely, small-scale buildings. Modern town centre redevelopment with large development blocks and subservient minor open space features would be examples of a coarse urban grain.

Vernacular

The traditional, local building style and materials which evolved through functional needs, without the input of professional architects.

Vista

A distant view; in the urban design sense a view towards a single point such as a landmark building channelled along an avenue or by valley sides.

CONTACTS

South Staffordshire Council

Council Offices

Wolverhampton Road, Codsall WV8 1PX

01902 696000

www.sstaffs.gov.uk; info@sstaffs.gov.uk

Conservation Team: conservation@sstaffs.gov.uk

www.sstaffs.gov.uk

Development Control:

planning@sstaffs.gov.uk

Local Plan: localplans@sstaffs.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Village Summaries



South Staffordshire Council

www.sstaffs.gov.uk

Council Offices
Codsall
South Staffordshire
WV8 1PX

Tel: **01902 696000**