



rhondda cynon taf
local development plan
cynllun datblygu lleol

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

Design and Placemaking

Creating new places to live and the regeneration of existing communities

Adopted March 2011



STRONG HERITAGE | STRONG FUTURE
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
TREFTADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Good design is a key aim of the planning system and Planning Policy Wales (PPW) requires that Development Plans provide clear policies setting out design expectations. Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2009) gives advice on how good design may be facilitated within the planning system.
- 1.2 This document has been designed as a practical tool to be used as supplementary planning guidance to meet the requirements of PPW and convey the design implications of TAN 12 to anyone proposing new residential development. It is a requirement that applications for residential development are accompanied by a 'Design and Access Statement'. This document therefore also clarifies the issues a Design and Access Statement for new residential development should address.
- 1.3 The document seeks to clarify the fundamental design issues and how to address them by: describing the key objectives of residential design and providing guidance on how they may be achieved; describing the design process which should be followed to adequately address each objective; and providing information on how to submit a planning application to demonstrate how the requirement of good design has been addressed.
- 1.4 Local authorities are also required to have due regard to crime and disorder prevention in the exercise of their functions under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and consider the issue of accessibility for all including the needs of those with visual and hearing impairments and those with limited mobility, at an early stage in the design process. This document addresses these issues and aims to promote safe inclusive environments through good design.
- 1.5 Design is only one consideration when making a decision to approve or refuse an application for planning permission. In addition to addressing the requirements of this guide development proposals will need to demonstrate compliance with the Local Development Plan (LDP) and other material considerations and in some cases be accompanied by a formal Environmental Impact Statement.
- 1.6 This document is adapted from the document “A Model Design Guide for Wales” which was prepared on behalf of the Planning Officers Society for Wales.
- 1.7 This document sets out placemaking and design guidance aimed at raising the standards of development to help deliver new sustainable communities and to ensure that new development makes a positive contribution to regenerating existing communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 1.8 The document has two main elements: design guidance for place making and a process manual for planning and designing places.
- 1.9 It is relevant to all those involved in the process of planning, building and maintaining new residential and mixed use areas in Rhondda Cynon Taf. This includes landowners, developers, house builders, housing associations and the many public and private agencies whose actions and operations influence the way that places look and function.
- 1.10 This document is not a manual of ‘standards’ to be applied rigidly, nor is it a substitute for using a skilled designer

Structure of the document

- 1.11 This document is set out in a similar way to the other SPGs produced by the Council. The document sets out the policy context for securing well-designed places, outlines the current issues within Rhondda Cynon Taf and then lists a set of guidance notes which are intended to provide developers and officers principles on which all development within the County Borough should be based.

2. Policy Context

2.1 Current Rhondda Cynon Taf issues

2.1.1 Legacy of community building

Rhondda Cynon Taf has a legacy of community building dating back to Victorian times. While the pits were being sunk, workman's clubs, chapels, shops, and schools were being constructed alongside terraced housing. The results were sustainable communities based around dense walkable neighbourhoods with all the necessary community provision. Although the pits have long vanished the strong communities, which related to these still exist. The aim is not to return to the Victorian age, but developments from this period do offer a number of useful lessons about designing for people, which are supported by current best practice.

2.2 Existing communities

It is acknowledged that Rhondda Cynon Taf has a number of deprived communities. There is a role for new development to help regenerate these areas through the construction of new dwellings, improving the existing stock and through the provision of new and improved facilities.

- 2.2.1 The LDP allocates land for the construction of 14,385 new homes in Rhondda Cynon Taf between 2006-2021. The LDP also commits to the maintenance and creation of sustainable communities throughout the County Borough.



Strategic issues

- 2.3 Local planning authorities are required to undertake their functions with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. It is widely acknowledged that the regeneration of existing communities and creation of new sustainable communities should be a key element of new LDPs.
- 2.3.1 In order to do this it is essential to deliver the right houses in the right places and these should be supported by the necessary social infrastructure and employment opportunities. The role of housing led regeneration must also be acknowledged to increase diversity and mix of accommodation in existing areas and to provide or make contributions to new or improved community facilities.
- 2.3.2 In order to meet the housing land requirements the LDP has identified 8 Strategic and 39 Non-strategic allocations throughout the County Borough. This document, along with others, provides guidance that is applicable to these strategic sites and the non-strategic housing allocations.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan Up to 2021

- 2.4 This document should be read in conjunction with the policies and guidance that are set out in the LDP.
- 2.4.1 The LDP recognises need for, and benefits of delivering sustainable communities:

‘In delivering the housing requirement identified, the strategy focuses opportunities for additional housing in sustainable locations as defined by Policy AW 2. The scale of proposals has been based on an appraisal of locations to determine their suitability to accommodate growth having regard to existing social and physical capacity, the presence of environmental constraints, and the extent to which development can provide, or compensate for necessary additional social or physical infrastructure. The strategy recognises the important role that the use of previously developed land can play in regenerating communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Where possible the development of brownfield land will take preference over the use of greenfield land. There are however, a number of factors that guide against the use of previously developed land in all instances; these include locational considerations, biodiversity, and flooding. The availability of ‘developable’ brownfield land in Rhondda Cynon Taf is a finite resource and it is clear that it cannot accommodate the growth requirements of the County Borough. The development of brownfield and greenfield land will therefore be necessary to the strategy of the Plan.’

(Paragraph 4.43, Adopted Local Development Plan up to 2021)

- 2.4.2 Community regeneration aims are important in the County Borough, and of particular significance in the Northern Strategy area, which has suffered from higher levels of deprivation and out-migration. There is a need to ensure development takes place in a way which is both sustainable and benefits the wider communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole.
- 2.4.3 An emphasis will be placed on maintaining and creating sustainable communities throughout the County Borough. In order to achieve this the LDP will provide a framework for the creation and enhancement of sustainable communities by:

- Ensuring that efficient use is made of land to meet anticipated needs and aspirations of existing and future communities;
- Achieving an improved sense of place and integrating into an existing community by basing the design philosophy on the best aspects of the local area to reflect future needs;
- Achieving provision of an appropriate mix of housing, employment, and leisure development in accessible locations, which will benefit wide sectors of the local community.

(Para 6.36 LDP 2006-2021 Preferred Strategy)

2.4.4 The following policy is set out in the LDP. This SPG is supplementary to the LDP and principally this policy:

Policy AW 6 – Design and Placemaking

Development Proposals will be supported where:-

1. They are of a high standard of design, which reinforces attractive qualities and local distinctiveness and improves areas of poor design and layout;
2. They are appropriate to the local context in terms of siting, appearance, scale, height, massing, elevational treatment, materials and detailing;
3. In the case of extensions to buildings, they reflect, complement or enhance the form, siting, materials, details and character of the original building, its curtilage and the wider area;
4. In the case of proposals for new and replacement shop fronts and signage, they make a positive contribution to the streetscene;
5. In the public realm and key locations such as town centres, major routes, junctions and public spaces, the character and quality of the built form is to a high standard of design;

6. They include public art;
7. Landscaping and planting are integral to the scheme and enhance the site and the wider context;
8. They include an integrated mixture of uses appropriate to the scale of the development;
9. They include the efficient use of land, especially higher-density residential development on sites in proximity to local amenities and public transport;
10. Open space is provided in accordance with the Fields in Trust Standards;
11. A high level of connectivity and accessibility to existing centres, by a wide range of modes of sustainable transport;
12. Schemes incorporate a flexibility in design to allow changes in use of buildings and spaces as requirements and circumstances change;
13. The development reflects and enhances the cultural heritage of Rhondda Cynon Taf;
14. The design protects and enhances the landscape and biodiversity;
15. The development promotes energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy; and
16. The design promotes good water management, including rainwater storage, sustainable urban drainage, porous paving etc.

Developers will be required to submit comprehensive masterplans for residential proposals of 50 dwellings and over; for commercial developments of 10,000m² and over; and for schemes where the Council considers the issue of place making can only be fully considered through the submission of a masterplan. Masterplans must have regard to the need to create high quality, sustainable and locally distinct places.



3. Sustainable Placemaking Principles

2.5 Design and Access Statements

- 2.5.1 Since 1 June 2009 Design and Access Statements (DAS) have been a compulsory element of all residential planning applications. The Council will not be able to validate planning applications until a satisfactory DAS has been submitted. The Welsh Assembly Government has produced guidelines on what these documents should contain which can be found in Welsh Statutory Instrument 2009 No.1024 (W.87).
- 2.5.2 A DAS should show that the objectives of good design have been considered from the outset of the development process. The DAS will also assist the Council and local community by providing a clear understanding of the proposal. The DAS must consider the following aspects:
- Environment Sustainability
 - Movement
 - Character
 - Community Safety
 - Access
- 2.5.3 The DAS should clearly demonstrate how the proposed development has taken into account these themes and how this has been followed through to the concept and detailed design for the scheme. The context of a site must be appraised and the DAS must demonstrate how the design of the development has taken into account the appraisal of the context. Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's guidance in respect of design in all development in Wales.
- 2.5.4 The DAS is a living document and should tell a story. Design and access should not be seen as separate subjects.

- 3.1 This section sets out the key principles for sustainable place making based on existing guidance and best practice (Shaping Neighbourhoods' document, TAN12, By Design etc) and considers these with regard to local issues set out in this section. This guidance compliments that set out at a national level and relates the national guidance to the local context.
- 3.2 The overall aim is to create well connected, walkable neighbourhoods which contain an integrated mix of uses, make efficient use of land, are structured around a series of pedestrian orientated neighbourhoods and have a distinct sense of place.

3.3 Ensuring that all development is sustainable

- 3.3.1 New residential development should be as sustainable as possible. Occupiers of new residential units should be able to live comfortably, with easy access to jobs, shops and services by a choice means of transport, and access to open and natural greenspaces.
- 3.3.2 Sustainable developments should be resource efficient and future proof. Socially mixed development and walkable neighbourhoods offer a greater chance of social interaction and a variety of housing types allowing residents to stay in a community as their personal circumstances and lifestyle change.
- 3.3.3 The development of Strategic Sites also has potential to help address deficiencies in existing community facilities in the local area. This could be an injection of funding to an existing facility, generation of additional custom from the new development or a completely new facility on or off site.

3.3.4 The walkable neighbourhoods built today will still be standing in 100 years time just like the Victorian legacy which makes up much of Rhondda Cynon Taf. We cannot predict what future requirements will be, but we can build in flexibility to respond to future needs. For example, floorplates and storey heights of residential buildings close to local centres could be designed with possible future conversion in mind.

3.4 Respecting the traditional local character

3.4.1 The Valleys have a distinct urban character due to the rapid growth of the area in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Local materials were used in these buildings and the layout of communities was often determined by the steep hillsides and industry the settlements supported. It is considered important that new development respects and addresses this unique character. This does not mean that all new dwellings should mimic the typical Valleys terrace but should take inspiration from their design and the traditional materials used. For example in the Valleys, a building of any size can reflect the widespread characteristic of modest elevations with emphasis at openings, the positive relationship to the street and the use of bold colours in contrast to the natural colours of walls.

3.4.2 Within the County Borough there are differences in the character of the built environment. A survey of the location surrounding a site would establish the existing quality and value of the existing built up area and which features should influence the design of development.

3.4.3 There may be situations where there is a less defined character in existence in an area, which can be difficult to reflect in to a new development site. In this case, it may be necessary to examine historical information in order to identify any positive characteristics, which existed historically. If this proves unsuccessful then an opportunity exists to improve the quality of the area by establishing a new contemporary character using traditional materials.

3.5 Ensuring that the topography of Rhondda Cynon Taf is respected and that the best use of slopes is achieved

3.5.1 To a large extent the existing urban areas of the County Borough are defined by the topography of the area. The hilly character containing deep valleys with steep valley sides and plateaued hilltops create challenges for developers, however this landscape can help create distinctive neighbourhoods.

3.5.2 The greatest concern is achieving a quality neighbourhood without the use of large visible and intrusive retaining walls and left-over land. Many sites will be extremely visible from a number a viewpoints, often a few miles away, and therefore care will need to be taken in assessing the impact of any new development.



3.6 Providing a choice of housing types with access to open space and quality living environments

- 3.6.1 The history of Rhondda Cynon Taf has greatly influenced the type of residential development available for the local population. For many, especially in the Rhondda and Cynon Valleys, the terraced house is the standard house type. This house type helps create the character of the area and new houses should take their design inspiration from these, but this does not mean that all new houses have to be terraced.
- 3.6.2 To ensure mixed communities are accommodated and that the local population have a choice of appropriate housing, different housing needs such as family, student, retirement, elderly and sheltered accommodation need to be considered.
- 3.6.3 Occupiers should expect to live in areas which have quality, easily accessible and secure open and public spaces nearby. Dwellings should provide adequate space for people's living needs both inside and outside.
- 3.6.4 Open spaces should be focal areas in the overall structure and recognisable places in their own right. Open spaces within new developments can play a major role in creating a sense of place, especially on larger sites. Dwellings and other buildings must face onto them to provide supervision, surveillance, and a quality backdrop. In these instances, the emphasis should be on key frontages designed as a unified composition. Open spaces must not be leftover areas in the corner of the site, or hidden away behind back fences.
- 3.6.5 Occupiers should expect to be able to personalise the front of their properties to a degree and expect an adequate level of privacy. Residents have a greater expectation of privacy in rear gardens

3.7 Accommodating parking and highways appropriately and sensitively

- 3.7.1 There can often be a conflict with accommodating adequate parking, highway space, pedestrian only space and safe, walkable, sustainable development. Many post-war developments have been dominated by highways and the use of the car as the principle means of transport. In the past, highway requirements have had a significant impact upon the layout, appearance and functioning of residential developments. This is acknowledged by Manual for Streets.
- 3.7.2 However, Manual for Streets has introduced a step change and emphasises the need to create places primarily for people by:
- Dispersing traffic, safely and at slow speeds (20mph)
 - Firstly designing places and then accommodating vehicle movements
- 3.7.3 This means that once a connected network of streets and spaces has been established along with the place function of each area, the highway requirements can then be incorporated. Although highway safety is an important consideration, it is no longer acceptable for highway requirements to dominate a scheme.
- 3.7.4 As Manual for Streets indicates, streets are places primarily for people. Social life is concentrated on streets – they are places for meeting, playing and relaxing, not just the sole preserve of vehicles.
- 3.7.5 Given the scale of future development across Rhondda Cynon Taf, there may be opportunities to create new Home Zones. It may also be possible to create schemes based on Home Zone principles without formal designation.

3.7.6 On and off-street parking can have a significant impact on the quality of residential development, and the desire to provide parking as close as possible to front doors without parked cars and driveways dominating the street scene is one that developers must adequately balance.

3.8 Creating walkable neighbourhoods with links to existing centres and an emphasis on sustainable modes of transport

3.8.1 Walkable neighbourhoods with good links to the existing built-up surroundings encourage residents to ditch the car in favour of walking and cycling to jobs, schools, shops and services. It increases social interaction in the street, reducing pollution from vehicles and traffic congestion and can help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour as more residents passively patrol their neighbourhood.

3.8.2 Walkable neighbourhoods can typically comprise up to 800 units or 2000 people, however the concept is equally applicable to smaller sites. For example, a small site could provide a new direct link between an existing community and local facilities, or provide local facilities in a central accessible location, which are lacking at present.

3.8.3 The importance of understanding and responding to the context of a site is a fundamental element of creating places. New development at any scale should not be viewed in isolation but looked at in terms of its wider surroundings and its impact on the County Borough as a whole.

3.8.4 The physical context of the site includes its relationship to local facilities, open space, public transport networks and established walking and cycling routes. These will have implications for the form and density of a development.

3.8.5 A good starting point is to examine the area within ten minutes walk (approximately 800m) from the site. The facilities in the local area should be mapped and the access to them be assessed.

3.8.6 Much of the guidance on creating places is based on tried and tested principles from which successful, attractive, pedestrian friendly places have evolved. The connected network of main routes underpins the walkable neighbourhood concept.

3.8.7 Pedestrian and cycling connections to railway stations and existing bus stops and stations will also increase the likelihood of residents using public transport over the private car, and on larger development sites possible new bus routes should be considered at the concept stage of development.

3.9 Respecting Natural Heritage

3.9.1 The character of an area can be reflected in new development through the pattern of built form and its relationship to topography; the form and materials used for building; and the approach to landscape design. What is important in terms of landscape character and how should the proposed development respond to it?

3.9.2 The biodiversity of a site for development must always be understood in detail and will require onsite survey. Biodiversity of site context can be ascertained by sourcing existing information such as the CCW Phase 1 Ecological Survey, by talking to local ecological and wildlife groups or through new ecological survey.

3.9.3 Refer to Appendix 6 for factors to consider in the appraisal of natural heritage.



4. Planning Requirements

4.1 Introduction

It is important that an integrated approach is taken to design so that the streets, open spaces and the buildings are designed as one and not treated in isolation or as an afterthought. This guidance does not seek to impose a particular architectural style. A well laid out scheme can accommodate a variety of different architectural styles.

4.2 Access and Movement

4.2.1 Streets and Spaces

Streets should be designed to be an integral part of the whole scheme, working with the buildings and open space to create a place that has a strong identity.

4.2.2 On larger sites a hierarchy of streets should be developed, each with different characteristics, for example:

- Avenues providing the main movement framework and public transport provision
- Streets providing the wider movement within the residential area
- Lanes providing access only environments
- Courtyards.

4.2.3 Within the street network, design emphasis should be given to the focal spaces. These will invariably be at junctions of streets and other routes. The importance of these spaces should be reinforced through form and density of development. On larger schemes these accessible locations are often logical places for non-residential uses, such as shops, schools, parks, and public facilities.

4.2.4 The primary guidance for highway design is outlined in the Department for Transport documents, Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2 – Wider Application of the Principles.

4.2.5 Highway Requirements

A connected network of streets should be designed around the buildings and open spaces, prioritising the needs of pedestrians rather than allowing the requirements of vehicle movements to dominate.

4.2.6 In order to reduce the visual dominance of highways (particularly within focal spaces), engineering requirements should be planned for but ‘lost’ in the overall treatment of the space.

4.2.7 The technique of ‘tracking’ establishes the amount of space required for various vehicle movements and this information can be used to inform the design of the street. For example, areas of the street needed for occasional vehicle movements such as turning can have a different surface treatment to the main carriageway, provided the materials are appropriate to the character of the area.

4.2.8 Walkable Neighbourhoods

Developments should discourage car-based travel to local facilities and encourage a reduction in the need to travel by car through the creation of mixed-use neighbourhoods with a connected pattern of streets and spaces, where daily needs are within walking distance of most residents.

4.2.9 The connected network of routes which underpins the walkable neighbourhood concept should be created by:

- Connecting existing access points
- Creation of new pedestrian access points to maximise connections to the existing community
- Formalising existing desire lines
- Providing direct routes to existing/ proposed facilities
- Aligning key routes with views to features/ marker buildings on or off site
- Running routes alongside retained landscape features
- Making allowance for future links to adjacent development areas.

4.2.10 In larger developments, the use of perimeter block forms allows frequent changes of direction over relatively short distances, helping to create a connected network.

4.2.11 The use of cul-de-sacs in new development is not an ideal form of layout because they restrict pedestrian and cycle movement. Where their use is unavoidable, they should be connected to the wider network through the provision of well designed and overlooked pedestrian and cycle only links.

4.2.12 Living Streets

Regardless of traffic volumes, all residential streets should be designed as places and be accessible for everyone. To help facilitate this, the speed limits should be 20mph or less. No roads within residential neighbourhoods should be so heavily trafficked that they cannot form part of a network of liveable streets and cannot have direct frontage access.

4.2.13 Public Areas

Dwellings must face onto public areas, with their windows, and front doors, generating a positive character and create a feeling of safety through overlooking. This also makes the entrances easy to find for visitors.

4.2.14 'Distributor' type roads without building frontages, which are lined by back fences, are not acceptable.

4.3 Accommodating Parking

4.3.1 The location of car parking needs to be well justified in accompanying Design and Access Statements. Developers are expected to refer to Manual for Streets and other good practice documents.

4.3.2 Parking on Plot and Integral Garages

Parking should not dominate the appearance of the front of dwellings and the preferred solution to on-plot parking is to locate cars behind or between dwellings.

4.3.3 Where integral garages are proposed, they must be in a dwelling with a frontage wide enough to accommodate a front door and habitable room with window onto the street at ground floor level. Dwellings with only a front door and garage door at ground floor level are not acceptable because they lack an active ground floor and detract from the character and quality of the public realm.



4.3.4 Dwellings with integral garages and parking forecourts should be limited to locations off the main streets where they can form part of a low-density character area. Low walls and trees between the parking forecourts can help screen cars, break up the areas and provide secondary enclosure.

4.3.5 Where garages are provided they should be 6 x 3m internally to accommodate a family car plus storage/ bicycles. Undersized garages (less than 5.5 metres x 2.8 metres) are unlikely to be used for parking and therefore will not be counted in the overall parking provision. If garages are used for storage then this displaces parking into areas where no formal provision has been made and could compromise highway safety and create visual clutter.

4.3.6 Where it is not possible to achieve direct vehicular access to frontages, an alternative solution is have service roads or private drives running parallel to the major road. Where this results in a wide street, taller buildings and/or avenue tree planting should be used to maintain adequate enclosure. Another solution is to minimise the number of access points by having a parking courtyard serving a number of dwellings.

4.3.7 **Courtyard Parking**

There are two ways to design parking courtyards:

- As private places with a single route in and out for vehicles. This removes the 'excuse' for intruders to enter and increases the 'right' of residents to challenge strangers. However, this approach required parking courts to be fairly small – typically serving not more than 6 units.
- As semi-public places with pedestrian routes passing through and possibly more than one vehicular access point. These areas should have dwellings in the form of houses or flats over garages within them to provide

supervision. This approach demands extremely careful attention to detail and design quality including materials. This aims to avoid these areas appearing functional and car dominated.

4.3.8 Whichever approach is used, parking courts must be safe and no less convenient than parking on the street. The design of the dwellings should allow for access from the rear through the garden.

4.3.9 Entrances to parking courtyards should have strong gateway treatments, and restricted widths to discourage casual intrusion and minimise vehicular speeds. Adjacent buildings should be located and designed to directly supervise the access point.

4.3.10 Parking courtyards should be separated from gardens by robust and attractive screen walls. These should provide privacy and security for the private garden areas, without blocking supervision from upper floor windows.

4.3.11 **Parking Structures**

Undercroft, basement or decked parking can often be an efficient means of accommodating parked cars within high density residential areas. In mixed-use schemes, such parking can often be shared between business users and residents.

4.3.12 It is important that parking structures such as undercroft, basement or decked parking, do not make street elevations 'dead' and lifeless. Often parking structures can be located behind offices or flats to provide a more appropriate frontage.

4.3.13 It is also essential that entrances, and pedestrian gates into such parking areas, be designed with adequate access controls to maintain security.

4.3.14 **On-Street Parking**

Parking on street should be kept small in scale, provided within defined bays and be designed to add to the character of the streetscene. Within squares, the parking should be positively incorporated into the overall design of the space, alongside pedestrian areas and planting.

4.3.15 In some instances, it may be acceptable to provide allocated parking spaces directly off the highway with the adopted footway running behind these spaces. In order for this arrangement to work it needs to be established who is going to take responsibility for these areas if it is not to be the highway authority.

4.3.16 **Cycle Parking**

Garages should be of sufficient size (6x3m) to accommodate cycle parking plus a family car.

4.3.17 Where there are no garages, cycle storage could be provided in rear gardens where there is a safe and secure means of access. Alternatively, cycle provision could be built into the design of front elevations along with refuse and recycling storage, provided this does not detract from the attractiveness of the building or the street.

4.3.18 In flat developments, a secure cycle store within the building or in an external structure must be provided.

4.4 **Built Form**

4.4.1 **Design Context**

Local distinctiveness and character should be addressed in the design of new development. Rhondda Cynon Taf's urban environment is primarily Victorian and later, and is intrinsically linked with the iron and coal industries which expanded in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Towns and villages have generally expanded in relation to the hilly topography of the area and have made use of local materials such as pennant stone and slate. The character of settlements within the County Borough should be appraised and respected by future development proposals.

4.4.2 **Buildings**

The design of buildings should address and be influenced by the traditional built environment of the area that makes a positive contribution to its character. The Design and Access Statement should clearly set out the local character and site context of a particular development and the design of any new buildings should be well justified in this statement. The features that define the character of the traditional built environment will include:

- Built form
- Proportion and scale of buildings
- Materials and colour
- Detailing
- Shape of roofs
- Fenestration
- Boundary treatments
- Degree of consistency or variation.



4.4.3 The aim should be to understand the character of an area to inform the design of a new place. This will encourage development which reinforces and/or complements the main elements of local distinctiveness. It is recognised that traditional materials can be used in contemporary design, especially where an area lacks local distinctiveness. Generally, the emphasis should be on well-designed streetscenes rather than individual buildings.

4.4.4 **Mixed Uses**

Where mixes of uses are required on a site they must be positively integrated:

- Local centres, mixed-use areas, and retail provision are best located in a central, accessible location such as cross roads or key junction located on main movement routes. Residential accommodation should be located on areas surrounding and above these uses in order to ensure efficient and economical land use. Integrating a mix of uses into a development also encourages the emergence of sustainable settlements, as it is possible to walk to them, and to provide natural surveillance.
- Community facilities and schools should be in a central location at the heart of a development as a focal point.
- Employment provision should be provided as part of the major strategic sites. B1 office provision can be closely integrated with residential development but B2 industrial development will require separation and screening.

4.4.5 Uses with a large footprint such as supermarkets that require 'big box' buildings should, where appropriate, be 'wrapped' and in some cases capped by development such as flats, offices and small scale retail units to ensure that they have active human scale edges on all sides.

4.4.6 In terms of residential development, a mix of house types and tenure will be expected, including dwellings that can be considered 'homes for life'. This mix of unit sizes can help to create a balanced community and meet people's needs at various stages in their lives, allowing them to stay in their home area if they wish.

4.4.7 The mixing of house types and sizes also allows a greater diversity of building forms to reinforce the place making process. For example, flats can be used to emphasise corners, three storey town houses can reinforce formal compositions, and large detached houses can be used in low-density areas on the edges of a development. In addition, the distribution of units can be used to create character areas.

4.4.8 Where affordable housing is provided, it should be integrated into the overall development, and should not be obviously segregated through location or design.

4.4.9 **Density of development**

The density and type of units should respond to the site character and accessibility. In line with national policy guidance (Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement 01/2006 – Housing), the aim should be to maximise densities in accessible locations and make the most efficient use of land:

- High density development comprising town houses and flats should be located around public transport routes and close to local centres/ mixed use areas
- Medium density development of family houses with reasonable gardens should be the general provision across sites

- Low-density development of detached units should be located towards the edge of developments where the spacious layout should allow for a positive transition to the countryside.

4.4.10 In the Northern Strategy Area of the plan, the expected net residential density level is a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare (see policy NSA 10). In the Southern Strategy Area of the plan, the expected net residential level is a minimum of 35 dwellings per hectare (see policy SSA 11).

4.4.11 Variation in density levels may be permitted where they can be demonstrated as meeting specific criteria outlined in the LDP.

4.4.12 The neighbourhoods should have an identifiable high-density core with non-residential uses/ open space at the centre and decreasing density moving away from this. On large sites there may be more than one walkable neighbourhood and focal area. The external appearance of units can be used to reinforce the character of each walkable neighbourhood.

4.4.13 **Arranging Buildings**

The arrangement of buildings should define and give character to the streets and spaces. Their arrangement should provide overlooking of public areas, emphasise the human scale, define public and private areas, create interest, aid navigation and minimise the visual impact of parked cars.

4.4.14 The orientation of buildings should also take into consideration the opportunity to make use of passive solar gain. To optimise passive solar gain, the main glazed elevation should be orientated within 30° of south. Wherever possible the rooms utilised as the main living areas should exploit the southerly aspect. 'Standardised' house plans should be sufficiently flexible to allow such considerations on different sides of the same street.

4.4.15 **Perimeter Blocks**

Perimeter blocks should be provided in all new residential development where appropriate. Perimeter blocks can accommodate all types of residential development including detached houses, terraces and flats. Their form allows building frontages to face the street with private gardens in the centre of the block, providing a clear distinction between public and private areas. This provides the basis of a safe environment with built in crime prevention where windows and doors face outwards onto the street, providing visual interest and a sense of safety and minimising the need for exposed fences and walls.

4.4.16 **Continuous Frontages**

In medium and high density residential development the aim should be to create what is known as continuous frontages. In order to achieve continuous frontages, a more appropriate and useful range of house types and linking elements is starting to emerge. Cranked buildings, garages, and screen walls allow the direction of continuous frontages to change.

4.4.17 Where it is necessary to have breaks in the continuous building frontages, screen walls can tie the buildings together and provide security. Such breaks must be kept short and be located in a non-prominent location so not as to detract from the public realm.

4.4.18 Where continuous frontages are provided, the detailed design of front garden areas could incorporate the storage of cycles and refuse/recycling storage. This removes the need for a rear access, but should not undermine the attractiveness of the buildings or the public realm.



4.4.19 Where buildings relate to important locations such as key public spaces and key movement routes such as avenues or edges of the development, the emphasis will be on creating key frontages. These should be unified compositions using high quality materials and may incorporate landmark buildings.

4.4.20 In areas of a site that are identified for lower density development, continuity can still be maintained.

4.4.21 **Corners**

In the County Borough key buildings are often traditionally located on prominent corner plots and in new developments they can be a suitable location for landmark buildings.

4.4.22 Corner plots in new developments must be well addressed and exploited. Blank elevations at corner locations are to be discouraged.

4.4.23 It is vital to enclose space at corners and create definition, as these are very important locations within the movement network. Corner buildings have at least two public elevations. Houses and flat blocks are required that can turn internal and external corners whilst maintaining continuity of building frontage. Flats are suited to corner locations because they can have two principal elevations and provide accommodation over three floors to add townscape emphasis at prominent points.

4.4.24 **Legibility**

New development should make use of landmark and marker buildings. Differing scale, materials and design can emphasise key locations and routes, helping people to find their way around as well as adding to the overall sense of place.

4.4.25 At the entrance to a development there is likely to be an opportunity for a formal gateway building or buildings to mark the entrance.

4.4.26 Marker and landmark buildings can be differentiated through:

- Scale – making a building taller makes it more prominent, but the scale must still be compatible with the overall character and adjacent buildings.
- Materials – changing materials can make a ‘standard’ building stand out, for example through the use of reconstituted pennant stone or the use of a bold colour.
- Design - changing the design to contrast with adjacent buildings also works well to emphasise buildings.

4.4.27 **Enclosed Streets and Spaces**

The siting of buildings and continuous frontages on either side of a street or space (known as enclosure) should emphasise the human scale. Achieving human scale of enclosure involves striking a balance between the height of buildings and the width of the street or space between the building frontages.

4.4.28 Secondary enclosure can be provided to large spaces or wide streets such as avenues by the integration of landscape design and planting such as trees and hedges. This will create a comfortable living environment, which encourages walking and cycling and reinforces 20mph design speeds.

4.4.29 In order to achieve effective human scale enclosure with two storey buildings it is necessary to minimise the set back of buildings. This means that cars should generally be parked on street in parallel bays or behind the building line. Frontage parking at right angles to the street does not allow a positive sense of enclosure to be achieved.

4.4.30 The degree of enclosure should reflect the status of the street or space in the overall movement network. Thus, important routes such as avenues should be wider with taller buildings, whilst access only lanes can be narrower with low buildings. Marginal increases in height along a street; narrowing and setbacks can also be used deliberately to add interest and variety. There is no need for new building frontages to be 21m apart. This is an outdated standard, which does not make best use of land, nor does it create quality places.

4.5 The Public and Private Realm

4.5.1 The public realm

Open space can take many forms from the street itself, small seating areas, squares, through to large areas of green space.

4.5.2 Buildings can create the structure of the public realm, but it is the quality of it that can transform it into a successful place.

4.5.3 Buildings should front onto public areas, with windows and doors contributing to an active frontage which will generate a feeling of safety through overlooking.

4.5.4 New open spaces must be focal points for new development and must be overlooked. Existing open spaces should be enhanced by new development. Open space can also be an opportunity for preserving and enhancing the natural heritage of the area and this should be considered where appropriate.

4.5.5 Public Art

The provision of public art will be sought on residential and commercial proposals on sites that the Council considers have significant impact on the public realm and / or sites with a high degree of public access.

4.5.6 Rhondda Cynon Taf has a strong cultural heritage and the Council are keen to ensure that new developments continue to add to the cultural fabric of the County Borough. In considering proposals for public art as part of development schemes, the Council will seek artist commissions that add cultural value to the architecture, landscape design, and sense of place. Public art may be integrated with the building or landscape as appropriate to the site. Where the Council has an adopted strategy incorporating public art, it may negotiate off-site installation of public art in public spaces to support wider initiatives.

4.5.7 Public art should not be an 'add on' to the planning and development process. Rather land owners, developers, designers, local communities and future occupiers should work together to deliver schemes that help create a sense of pride, place and contribute to the cultural fabric of a community. The Council will encourage developers to make a financial and design commitment to public art from the outset of the development process.

4.5.8 Private gardens

It is important to separate public from private space within residential neighbourhoods. Residents have a greater expectation of privacy within back gardens.

4.5.9 Where private rear gardens immediately abut public spaces, they are less secure and less private. The need to enclose private rear gardens with boundary walls detracts from the appearance, life, and security of public areas.



- 4.5.10 The best way to define, separate, and secure public from private spaces is to use the buildings themselves. Rear gardens should abut other rear gardens and parking courts and building fronts should face each other across the public realm.
- 4.5.11 Established rules of thumb for rear privacy distances between new dwellings need to be applied flexibly to create places and make best use of land. In many cases, privacy can be achieved through design rather than physical separation.
- 4.5.12 Private gardens should take into account orientation. North facing gardens may need to be longer to ensure that an unshaded area of garden is available.
- 4.5.13 Balconies should be provided wherever possible for flats above ground floor level. These provide useful amenity space and add visual interest to the elevation. They should be useable with enough space for two people to sit at a small table. Where balconies cannot be provided then full height glazing (possibly Juliet balconies) should be provided to the main living space
- 4.5.14 Where buildings are sited closer to the footway, a buffer strip will be required to provide separation between windows to habitable rooms and the public realm and to allow occupants to personalise the front of their properties. Depending on rear access and servicing arrangements, such buffer areas may also have to accommodate cycle and refuse/ recycling storage. A very modest set back of 1m can be sufficient to accommodate such storage, and provide privacy to front rooms.

- 4.5.15 A set back of 1 – 3 m can allow for small front gardens with planting enhancing the character of the public realm. Where new development has to integrate into an existing frontage, the established building line should be respected. Front boundary walls and/ or railings should protect the front garden area, but not block supervision of the street from ground floor windows. Minimising the frontage set back also has the advantage of allowing for larger usable back gardens.

4.5.16 **Communal space**

Communal or shared amenity spaces are often provided for use by residents of flats and apartments. In order to be successful, the layout and design of these areas must separate them from the public realm. As they are shared, careful attention to detail, and the use of high quality and robust materials are needed in communal areas. The privacy and security of ground floor units must not be compromised. This issue can be addressed by defining small private areas for the ground floor units as a buffer to the communal area. Alternatively the arrangement of internal rooms can control aspect.

4.6 **Community Safety**

- 4.6.1 Inherent to place making is the aim to create a safe living environment. This is underpinned by a connected street network, which generates high levels of passing surveillance, and continuous frontages whereby dwellings overlook the public realm and rear gardens are secure, reducing the opportunities for crime to be committed. Crime prevention objectives must not however be allowed to dominate the design of a place. Further guidance can be found on

the Secured by Design website – www.securedbydesign.com, which is a crime prevention initiative managed by ACPO CPI Limited on behalf of the UK Associated of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).

4.7 Resource Efficiency

- 4.7.1 Buildings play a key role in sustainable development, particularly as they account for up to half of our carbon emissions. The Welsh Government has an aspiration that in the future all new buildings will achieve a zero carbon standard. The Welsh Government has introduced new policy in the updated Planning Policy Wales and through new guidance in Technical Advice Note 22: Sustainable Buildings (2010) to help fulfill this aspiration.
- 4.7.2 The Council has followed this lead and requires that all schemes of 1 dwelling or more are expected to meet Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and obtain at least 1 Credit under category Ene1 (Dwelling Emission Rate). All non-residential schemes with 1000 square metres of floorspace or on sites of 1 hectare or more are expected to meet the BREEAM “Very Good” standard and obtain the mandatory credits for “Excellent” under category Ene1 (Reduction of CO2 Emissions).

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The above information and guidance is intended to secure quality and well-designed places for the benefit of all who live and work in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Many of the design choices will be determined by a site’s specific location and surroundings. The above is intended as a guide and should be followed wherever possible.



6. Appendices

6.1 Pre-application consultation & engagement

6.1.1 The Design Process

Without a logical, comprehensive and inclusive design process it will be virtually impossible to achieve good design. An effective design process consists of:

- Effective consultation and engagement throughout the project
- An inception phase
- Policy review
- Context and site appraisal
- Visioning
- Design development and refinement.

6.1.2 Planning authorities will expect anyone proposing residential development to describe the design process followed in a design and access statement, which should accompany every application. It is therefore advisable to agree the design process with the planning authority before developing plans for any site.

6.1.3 Consultation and Engagement

Designs should be developed in consultation and engagement with the planning authority, local stakeholders and the community. Consultation is essential to address key planning and design concerns before taking a design too far. The first consultee should be the planning authority to fully understand the issues that will need to be addressed in developing the design. This initial meeting may help to clarify which skills will be needed on the design team, other stakeholders to consult as well as confirming contacts and a programme for submitting the application. Key issues to consider in carrying out a programme of consultation and engagement are:

- Develop the consultation/engagement programme in agreement with the planning authority to reflect the local importance or scale of the project. In the simplest of cases this may involve little more than informing the neighbours and discussing concerns with them. For larger projects it may involve a more extensive series of events and meetings such as visioning events, enquiry by design or focus group meetings;
- Consider the use of experts who are experienced in the management and facilitation of consultation and engagement;
- Clearly set out the parameters of the consultation and engagement process to participants at the outset and spell out the fixes such as the number and density of houses allocated for the site. Avoid revisiting first principles such as whether the site should have been identified for development in the first place;
- Always hold pre-application discussions with the planning authority to confirm the vision for the site before plans have been resolved;
- Consult with relevant authorities including the police (through the local architectural liaison officer), Environment Agency, Countryside Council for Wales etc.;
- Provide opportunities for the community and stakeholders to provide input into the design process before plans have been prepared so that there is a genuine opportunity for ideas and suggestions to be responded to;
- Always let people know how their comments / input will be used at the outset and give them feedback on how/if comments have been taken into account;
- Consultation and engagement should be seen as part of a collaborative approach in which the design team, planning authority and stakeholders influence the final design solution.

6.1.4 Inception Phase

The easiest way to deliver well-designed, sustainable development is to employ a good design team. On the whole, good designers produce good design and quicker planning permission. In considering what consultants to appoint always:

- Use consultants with a proven track record and skills in the delivery of well designed sustainable development; and
- Select consultants on the basis of quality as well as price - in the long run a good designer will be cost effective and should be able to secure a planning permission efficiently.

6.1.5 Policy Review

Developers and designers must understand the planning policy context within which they are working.

In particular the following should be considered:

- National policy and guidance;
- Development Plan Policies;
- Other Supplementary Planning Guidance;
- Standards and regulations applying within the area;
- Advice from statutory consultees;
- Legal/planning constraints (eg Public Rights of Way, Listed Buildings, Tree Preservation Orders, easements etc.);
- Planning history including previous planning and appeal decisions and results of public consultations, particularly with respect to design issues;
- Non-statutory design guidance.

6.1.6 Context and Site Appraisal

To adequately address each design objective, certain characteristics of the context and site need to be identified, recorded and responded to by the designer. The attributes of context and site essential to an understanding of any place and to enable development are:

- Its history and pattern of growth;
- Its landscape and biodiversity;
- The social and economic profile;
- Patterns of movement and the location of local facilities and services;
- Site constraints and opportunities, (including topography and existing buildings).

6.1.7 Not all of these will be relevant to all projects. The local authority can advise on the main site and context issues to concentrate on.

6.1.8 Site and context appraisal should always be carried out by qualified professionals. These may include:

- Landscape architect
- Engineer
- Town planner
- Urban designer
- Ecologist
- Arboriculturist
- Architect
- Surveyor.



6.1.9 Where they have been completed Biodiversity Action Plans, Conservation Strategies, LANDMAP studies and others carried out by the Local Planning Authority should be referred to, as these may be useful sources of data relating to the site and context. LANDMAP studies normally include information on scenic, sensory, ecological, archaeological and cultural aspects of an area.

6.1.10 History and Pattern of Growth

The way in which a place has developed and evolved in the past can give clues as to how change should occur in the future. For example does the form of a place reflect a pattern of incremental linear growth? This may place special importance on street frontages and building setbacks along main roads. Analysis of growth patterns can give important clues as to how to deal with site characteristics such as steep slopes or poor microclimate; how did they deal with these factors in the past? How should we deal with them using modern techniques?

6.1.11 The best way to appraise history and patterns of growth is by looking at historic and present day plans, together with topographic and geological plans. Factors to consider in the appraisal of history and pattern of growth include:

- The origins and historical development of the settlement within its natural setting;
- Settlement form and surviving elements of historic street pattern or plot subdivisions;
- Areas of distinctive townscape character;
- Distinctive layout, form, scale and uses of buildings and spaces;
- Typical building plot characteristics (density, size, shape, ratio of building to space etc.);

- Typical treatment of building setbacks, frontages and boundaries;
- Local/regional building traditions (form and architectural style), materials and design details;
- Prevalent colours and textures or other special or distinctive features;
- Important buildings, landmarks, gateways and important views and vistas.

6.1.12 Natural Heritage

An understanding of the natural heritage of an area is important in deciding how to develop a site. Factors to consider in the appraisal of natural heritage include:

- Visibility of site;
- Role/prominence of the site in important views within the area from which the site is visible;
- The character of the landscape surrounding the site and important features that contribute to it;
- The role of the site, if any, in contributing to the character of the surrounding landscape;
- How the site relates to the surrounding landscape (e.g. position in relation to topography,
- Aspect,
- Character of edges, visual prominence etc.);
- The features that define its natural setting and natural edges (e.g. ridge-lines, valleys, blocks of vegetation);
- The role, if any, of the site in relation to the setting of any adjacent settlement;
- Important landmarks, views and skylines to be respected;

- Green spaces, corridors, trees, hedges, other cultivated elements and natural features (e.g. semi natural vegetation, watercourses and wetlands etc.);
- The character and condition of the site boundaries and the relationship between the site and contiguous areas of landscape and townscape;
- Positive characteristics of the local landscape and vegetation immediately adjacent to the site, including its quality, condition, scale, enclosure, and important links to be maintained (e.g. green corridors);
- Features or intrusive influences that detract from the character and quality of the site and need to be mitigated as part of the development proposals;
- Ecological survey of site;
- Review of ecological data related to site context, for example Phase 1 ecological survey.

For further information in this respect, please consult the Nature Conservation SPG.

6.1.13 **Social and economic profile**

An understanding of the social and economic profile of an area can be useful for large or complex sites but may not be necessary for smaller allocated sites. It can help a developer deliver a mix and tenure of properties that meet the identified needs of the local area. It is particularly important for mixed use development in which a good understanding of the local market is essential to be able to plan effectively for employment and retail uses. An understanding of issues related to crime and disorder can also be very important at the outset of the project and can help the designer to ensure that the development contributes to a safe and secure community.

6.1.14 Factors to consider in the appraisal of social and economic profile include: population of area;

- Social and economic needs - how can the proposed development contribute;
- Issues related to crime and disorder;
- Market demands and deficiencies.

6.1.15 **Patterns of Movement and Use**

Development proposals need to be taken forward from a position of having a clear understanding of the surrounding movement network so that they can be positively designed to complement it.

Factors to consider in the appraisal of patterns of use and movement include:

- Existing patterns of movement and opportunities for linkage;
- Pattern and distribution of uses including parks, schools, shops and other facilities including public transport;
- Barriers to movement (roads, watercourses etc.);
- Rights of way and other paths and evidence of recreational or other use of the site;
- Potential main access points and other potential access links (e.g. footpath and bridleway) from adjacent areas into the site;
- Potential linkages to subsequent stages of development.

6.1.16 **Site constraints and opportunities**

The physical characteristics of a site need to be identified and recorded to allow a development to proceed in the full knowledge of all site features, archaeology, infrastructure, services and ground conditions. Factors to consider in the appraisal of site constraints and opportunities include:



rhondda cynon taf

local development plan

cynllun datblygu lleol

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- The physical characteristics of the site (e.g. slope, aspect, soils, ground conditions, drainage, microclimate etc.) which may influence development capacity;
- Archaeology; the location and condition of features to be retained (e.g. trees, shrubs, hedges, ponds, watercourses, buildings, structures, walls etc.);
- The presence and location of services (e.g. drains, sewers, ducts, utilities, way leaves, power cables etc.);
- The siting of neighbouring buildings, especially housing, in order to ensure development protects existing amenities.

6.1.17 Visioning

All projects should be supported by a Design and Access Statement including a 'vision' describing clearly the special role and distinctive character that the development is seeking to achieve.

6.1.18 A vision is not the same as a design; it is the idea behind the design, for example whether a site will be developed as a 'loose leafy suburb' or a 'tight urban village'. Vision does not necessarily mean something exciting or out of the ordinary. In fact a vision could be simply 'to create an attractive bit of town in keeping with the local area'. The vision for the site will inform all elements of the design. For example if a development is 'tight and urban' it is likely to be high density with well-enclosed streets and spaces. If 'loose, leafy and suburban' it may be spacious, with a lot of trees and low density.

6.1.19 The development of the vision should precede design development. The process of vision development is an excellent time to engage the planning authority, community and other stakeholders in the design process. Anyone proposing new residential development should have a vision for the site, which answers the following questions:

- What sort of place should this site become taking into account its natural heritage characteristics and context?
- What key words or phrases describe the qualities that it is hoped development will achieve?
- What character and uses would achieve these qualities?

Sometimes it is necessary to think big and be bold. Strong and simple ideas are usually the best.

6.1.20 Design Development and Refinement

Design development will involve considering how each design and sustainability objective can be achieved on a particular site.

6.1.21 Developers and designers should always talk to the local authority before detailed proposals have been developed. A pre-application discussion can help the authority give an opinion on a development proposal at an early stage. At a pre-application discussion the designer or developer should be able to convey:

- The policy background;
- The results of the site and context appraisal;
- Reports of any relevant consultations.

6.1.22 The initial 'vision' for the site's development should be in response to the policy background, the site and its settings, the purpose of development and the desire to create a high quality of life for residents; and, an initial indication of how each of the design and sustainability objectives will be achieved.

6.1.23 This information can be set out in a pre-application statement.

6.1.24 Ideally the developer and the local authority should work together to produce an agreed

vision statement and approach to the design principles before detailed design development proceeds. This will ensure that all parties are clear about the aims and objectives of the project at the outset.

6.1.24 **Design Commission for Wales (DCfW)**

For major applications, those important to the local community or likely to set a precedent, anyone proposing development may wish the DCfW to review the proposals. The DCfW is a national organisation established and core funded by the National Assembly for Wales. DCfW's mission is to champion high standards of architecture, landscape and urban design in Wales, promoting wider understanding of the importance of good quality in the built environment, supporting skill building, encouraging social inclusion and sustainable development. DCfW has its own design review process which can be found on its website at www.dcfw.org. Contact details are: DCfW, 4th Floor Building, Two Caspian Point, Caspian Way, Cardiff Bay CF10 4DQ.



6.2 Glossary of Terms

Accessibility -

The ability of people to move round an area and to reach places and facilities, including elderly and disabled people, those with young children and those encumbered with luggage or shopping.

Adaptability -

The capacity of a building or space to be changed so as to respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.

Area appraisal -

An assessment of an area's land uses, built and natural environment, and social and physical characteristics.

Brief -

This guide refers to site-specific briefs as development briefs. Site-specific briefs are also called a variety of other names, including design briefs, planning briefs and development frameworks.

Building line -

The line formed by the frontages of buildings along a street. The building line can be shown on a plan or section.

Bulk -

The combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings. Also called massing.

Character assessment -

An area appraisal identifying distinguishing physical features and emphasizing historical and cultural associations.

Charrette -

An event (ranging from a couple of hours to several days), which brings together a range of people to discuss design issues. A charrette may or may not use techniques of collaborative design. Also known as a design workshop.

Conservation area appraisal -

A published document defining the special architectural or historic interest, which warranted the area being designated.

Context -

The setting of a site or area, including factors such as traffic, activities and land uses as well as landscape and built form.

Context (or site and area) appraisal -

A detailed analysis of the features of a site or area (including land uses, built and natural environment, and social and physical characteristics) which serves as the basis for an urban design framework, development brief, design guide or other policy or guidance.

Density -

The floorspace of a building or buildings or some other unit measure in relation to a given area of land.

Built density -

can be expressed in terms of plot ratio (for commercial development); number of units or habitable rooms per hectare (for residential development); site coverage plus the number of floors or a maximum building height; or a combination of these.

Design advisory panel -

A group of people (often architects) with specialist knowledge, which advises a local authority on the design merits of planning applications or other design issues. Also known as an architect's panel.

Design assessment -

An independent assessment of a design usually carried out for a local authority by consultants, another local authority or some other agency.

Design guide -

A document providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with the design policies of a local authority or other organisation often with a view to retaining local distinctiveness.

Design principle -

An expression of one of the basic design ideas at the heart of an urban design framework, design guide, development brief or a development.

Design standards -

Specific, usually quantifiable measures of amenity and safety in residential areas.

Design statement -

- (a) A pre-application design statement is made by a developer to indicate the design principles on which a development proposal in progress is based. It enables the local authority to give an initial response to the main issues raised by the proposal.
- (b) A planning application - design and access statement sets out the design and access principles that the planning applicant has adopted in relation to the site and its wider context.

Design workshop -

see 'charrette'.

Desire line -

An imaginary line linking facilities or places, which people would find it convenient to travel between easily.

Development brief -

A document, prepared by a local planning authority, a developer, or jointly, providing guidance on how a site of significant size or sensitivity should be developed. Site-specific briefs are sometimes known as planning briefs, design briefs and development frameworks.

Elevation -

The facade of a building, or the drawing of a facade.

Enclosure -

The use of buildings to create a sense of defined space.

Energy efficiency -

The extent to which the use of energy is reduced through the way in which buildings are constructed and arranged on site.

Feasibility -

The viability of development in relation to economic and market conditions.

Fenestration -

The arrangement of windows on a facade.



Figure and ground (or figure/ground, or Nolli diagram) -

A plan showing the relationship between built form and publicly accessible space (including streets) by presenting the former in black and the latter as a white background (or the other way round).

Form -

The layout (structure and urban grain), density, scale (height and massing), appearance (materials and details) and landscape of development.

Height -

The height of a building can be expressed in terms of a maximum number of floors; a maximum height of parapet or ridge; a maximum overall height; any of these maximum heights in combination with a maximum number of floors; a ratio of building height to street or space width; height relative to particular landmarks or background buildings; or strategic views.

Human scale -

The use within development of elements, which relate well in size to an individual human being and their assembly in a way, which makes people, feel comfortable rather than overwhelmed.

Indicative sketch -

A drawing of building forms and spaces, which is intended to convey the basic elements of a possible design.

Landmark -

A building or structure that stands out from its background by virtue of height, size or some other aspect of design.

Landscape -

The character and appearance of land, including its shape, form, ecology, natural features, colours and elements and the way these components combine. Landscape character can be expressed through landscape appraisal, and maps or plans. In towns 'townscape' describes the same concept.

Layout -

The way buildings, routes and open spaces are placed in relation to each other.

Layout structure -

The framework or hierarchy of routes that connect in the local area and at wider scales.

Legibility -

The degree to which a place can be easily understood and traversed.

Local distinctiveness -

The positive features of a place and its communities, which contribute to its special character and sense of place.

Massing -

The combined effect of the height, bulk and silhouette of a building or group of buildings.

Mixed uses -

A mix of uses within a building, on a site or within a particular area. 'Horizontal' mixed uses are side by side, usually in different buildings. 'Vertical' mixed uses are on different floors of the same building.

Movement -

People and vehicles going to and passing through buildings, places and spaces. The movement network can be shown on plans, by space syntax analysis, by highway designations, by figure and ground diagrams, through data on origins and destinations or pedestrian flows, by desire lines, by details of public transport services, by walk bands or by details of cycle routes

Natural surveillance (or supervision) -

The discouragement to wrong-doing by the presence of passers-by or the ability of people to be seen out of surrounding windows. Also known as passive surveillance (or supervision).

Node -

A place where activity and routes are concentrated often used as a synonym for junction.

Passive surveillance -

See 'natural surveillance'.

Permeability -

The degree to which an area has a variety of pleasant, convenient and safe routes through it.

Planning brief -

This guide refers to site-specific briefs as development briefs. Other names, including planning briefs, design briefs and development frameworks are also used.

Technical Advice Notes (TANs) -

Documents embodying Welsh Government guidance on general and specific aspects of planning policy to be taken into account in formulating development plan policies and in making planning decisions.

Plot ratio -

A measurement of density generally expressed as gross floor area divided by the net site area

Proactive development control -

Any process by which a local authority works with potential planning applicants to improve the quality of development proposals as early as possible before a planning application is submitted.

Public art -

Permanent or temporary physical works of art visible to the general public, whether part of the building or freestanding: can include sculpture, lighting effects, street furniture, paving, railings and signs.

Public domain -

The parts of a village, town or city (whether publicly or privately owned) that are available, without charge, for everyone to use or see, including streets, squares and parks. Also called public realm.

Public realm -

See 'public domain'.

Scale -

The impression of a building when seen in relation to its surroundings, or the size of parts of a building or its details, particularly as experienced in relation to the size of a person. Sometimes it is the total dimensions of a building, which give it its sense of scale: at other times it is the size of the elements and the way they are combined. The concept is a difficult and ambiguous one: often the word is used simply as a synonym for 'size'. See 'Human scale'.



Section -

Drawing showing a slice through a building or site.

Settlement pattern -

The distinctive way that the roads, paths and buildings are laid out in a particular place.

Sight line -

The line of sight from a traveling vehicle or person. Sight lines will help to determine how fast vehicles are likely to move and how safe other road users are likely to be.

Street furniture -

Structures in and adjacent to the highway which contribute to the street scene, such as bus shelters, litter bins, seating, lighting, railings and signs.

Surveillance -

The discouragement to wrong-doing by the presence of passers-by or the ability of people to be seen from surrounding windows.

Tissue study -

Comparison of scale and layout of different settlements. This technique makes use of overprinting or tracing maps of successful places over the proposed development site or area, at the same scale. It gives the designer a clue to the capacity of a place and how it may be structured.

Topography -

A description or representation of artificial or natural features on or of the ground.

Urban design -

The art of making places. Urban design involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, and the establishment of frameworks and processes, which facilitate successful development.

Urban design framework -

A document which informs the preparation of development plan policies, or sets out in detail how they are to be implemented in a particular area where there is a need to control, guide and promote change. Area development frameworks are also called a variety of other names, including urban design strategies, area development frameworks, spatial masterplans, and planning and urban design frameworks.

Urban grain -

The pattern of the arrangement and size of buildings and their plots in a settlement; and the degree to which an area's pattern of street-blocks and street junctions is respectively small and frequent, or large and infrequent.

Vernacular -

The way in which ordinary buildings were built in a particular place, making use of local styles, techniques and materials and responding to local economic and social conditions.

View -

What is visible from a particular point. Compare 'Vista'.

Vista -

An enclosed view, usually a long and narrow one.

6.3 Key References

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6.4 Contact Us

Spatial Development Team

Sardis House, Sardis Road, Pontypridd CF37 1DU
01443 494735

Development Control

Sardis House, Sardis Road, Pontypridd CF37 1DU
01443 494700

Copies of the SPG and related documents are available from the Spatial Development Team. Alternatively; a reference copy can be viewed at the reception at Council offices at, Sardis House, Rock Grounds, and Bronwydd House. A reference copy can be viewed at all main Libraries.

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Regeneration and Planning Division
Spatial Development Team
Sardis House
Sardis Road
Pontypridd
CF37 1DU

 01443 494735

 LDP@rctcbc.gov.uk

 www.rctcbc.gov.uk