

8 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 Our “built environment” consists of all the man-made aspects of our surroundings. It includes not only buildings but the spaces between buildings such as parks and gardens, and social spaces such as squares, as well as the infrastructure that supports our daily activities such as streets, railways, utility networks and flood defences.
- 8.2 The way we develop our built environment has a direct impact on how successful and sustainable places and communities are. In South Oxfordshire we want to create places where people want to live, work and visit. Successful places allow us to carry out daily activities with ease and offer choice as to how to do them. These places should be designed for everyone and built to last.

High Quality Development

- 8.3 The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, which is an important component of sustainable development. New development should create a sense of place and enhance the lives of those who live, work and visit there.
- 8.4 We are committed to securing the highest quality of design in new development of all types and scales in South Oxfordshire. The South Oxfordshire Design Guide (2016) seeks to define high quality development, the principles to achieving it and raise the profile of high quality design throughout the district. It aims to address specific design issues that we have been experiencing within South Oxfordshire. We consider the Design Guide to be a vital tool that will help us create successful and sustainable places. The value and quality of the Design Guide has been demonstrated by it being shortlisted for two national awards. The Design Guide together with the policies in this Plan, will ensure that we can deliver our objectives for high quality developments.



Policy DES1: Delivering High Quality Development

1. All new development must be of a high quality design that:
 - i) uses land efficiently while respecting the existing landscape character;
 - ii) enhances biodiversity and, as a minimum, leads to no net loss of habitat;
 - iii) incorporates and/or links to a well-defined network of Green and Blue Infrastructure;
 - iv) is sustainable and resilient to climate change;
 - v) minimises energy consumption;
 - vi) mitigates water run-off and flood risks;
 - vii) takes into account landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping;
 - viii) provides a clear and permeable hierarchy of streets, routes and spaces to create safe and convenient ease of movement by all users;
 - ix) ensures that streets and spaces are well overlooked creating a positive relationship between fronts and backs of buildings;
 - x) clearly defines public and private spaces;
 - xi) provides access to local services and facilities and, where needed, incorporates mixed uses, facilities and co-locates services as appropriate with good access to public transport;
 - xii) provides a wide range of house types and tenures;
 - xiii) respects the local context working with and complementing the scale, height, density, grain, massing, type, and details of the surrounding area;
 - xiv) secures a high quality public realm that is interesting and aesthetically pleasing; and designed to support an active life for everyone with well managed and maintained public areas;
 - xv) does not differentiate between the design quality of market and affordable housing or the adjacent public realm;
 - xvi) is designed to take account of possible future development in the local area;
 - xvii) understands and addresses the needs of all potential users by ensuring that buildings and their surroundings can be accessed and used by everyone;
 - xviii) creates safe communities and reduces the likelihood of crime and antisocial behaviour as well as the fear of crime itself; and
 - xix) ensures a sufficient level of well-integrated and imaginative solutions for car and bicycle parking and external storage

including bins.

2. **Where development sites are located adjacent to sites that have a reasonable prospect of coming forward in the future, integration with the neighbouring site should form part of the proposal's design.**
3. **Where the Council is aware that adjacent or closely related sites with similar delivery timescales are coming forward together, a coordinated, integrated and comprehensive masterplan will be required to be prepared across all the sites.**

This policy contributes towards achieving objectives 5, 7 & 8.

- 8.5 Creating high quality buildings and places is fundamental. Policy DES1 sets out the key design objectives that we consider critical in delivering high quality development. These must be considered at the outset and throughout the design process. The Council will support development that meets these objectives. Developers should also have regard to the principles and design criteria set out in the South Oxfordshire Design Guide. New development should take account of all relevant guidance including the Government's priorities for well-designed places set out in the National Design Guide (2019), Oxfordshire County Council's Cycling Design Standards (2017), Walking Design Standards (2017) and Residential Road Design Guide 2nd Edition (2015) or updated versions of these documents. New development within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should meet the principles set out in the Chilterns Building Design Guide.
- 8.6 Securing high quality design is about more than just aesthetics. It is important that new development delivers sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities in order to create successful places where people want to live, work and play. New development should be designed to meet the needs of all users including the young and elderly, disabled, parents and carers. It is important that the places that we create are safe. To ensure that the development we deliver is designed to reduce the opportunity for crime, as well as the fear of crime itself, proposals must, wherever possible, incorporate the principles set out in the "Secured by Design" scheme.
- 8.7 The quality of the spaces between buildings is as important as the buildings themselves. They are the setting for most movement and should be designed to support an active life for everyone. These should include areas allocated to different users for different purposes, including movement, parking, hard and soft surfaces, street furniture, lighting, signage and public art.

- 8.8 In the right locations, public art can play an important part in the design and place making of new developments and can make a contribution to the creation of a high quality public realm. It can make places more interesting, exciting and aesthetically pleasing. The Council will support the provision of public art within new development schemes in accordance with the Arts Development Strategy. The Council will encourage and promote quality art within new developments by encouraging partnership working between professional artists and craftspeople and encouraging local participation to help establish an identity for an area. The Council will particularly support proposals that use public art to make a positive contribution to the character of an area and that is of benefit to the local community by establishing civic or corporate pride and identity, encouraging public enjoyment and engagement and/or promoting the renewal of social skills.
- 8.9 Past developments in the district have not always taken account of future development coming forward on adjacent sites, this has undermined the integration of new development with existing communities.

Policy DES2: Enhancing Local Character

1. **All new development must be designed to reflect the positive features that make up the character of the local area and should both physically and visually enhance and complement the surroundings.**
2. **All proposals for new development should be informed by a contextual analysis that demonstrates how the design:**
 - i) **has been informed by and responds positively to the site and its surroundings; and**
 - ii) **reinforces place-identity by enhancing local character.**
3. **Where a Character Assessment has been prepared as part of a made Neighbourhood Development Plan, a proposal must demonstrate that the positive features identified in the Assessment have been incorporated into the design of the development.**
4. **Where there is no local Character Assessment a comprehensive contextual analysis of the local character should be prepared as part of an application. This should identify the positive features that make up the character of the area. The proposal must demonstrate that these positive features have been incorporated into the design of the development.**