

1. LANDSCAPE AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

1.1 One of the primary aims of the Oadby and Wigston Local Plan is “to guide new development so that it will contribute to, and help to enhance the environmental quality of the Local Plan Area,” while a second is “to conserve what is good in the existing urban and rural landscapes”. To this end the Local Plan includes a number of proposals designed to control new development and reference should be made back to the Local Plan when using this guidance.

1.2 **Landscape Proposal 1 of the Local Plan sets out the general principles that will apply to all new development in the Borough.** All new development throughout the Borough should make a contribution to the preservation or enhancement of its appearance either by the retention of existing features of value or the design and appearance of new ones and the following notes provide additional guidance on how this may be achieved.

1.3 Trees and Hedgerows

Trees form a major visual amenity both within the built up area and in the open countryside. Where trees can be widely seen and enjoyed it may be appropriate to afford them the statutory protection of a Tree Preservation Order and a number of such orders has been made in the Borough. Further areas are protected by virtue of their inclusion in a Conservation Area where notice must be given before trees are topped, lopped or felled. Trees which make a significant contribution to the environment will be afforded statutory protection by the Borough Council.

Where new development is permitted, it may not be possible to retain every tree but the protection afforded by a Preservation Order will ensure that any trees lost will be replaced by others of suitable native species. Replacement trees are afforded protection by the original Preservation Order. Hedgerows and other vegetation also can contribute significantly to the character of the landscape and where possible existing features should be retained in new developments because of the contribution which they can make to softening the impact of the new development. The retention of existing vegetation in the landscaping scheme for a new development helps to provide continuity in the physical environment but it is also important that features to be retained should be adequately protected during the development works. The Local Planning Authority will have regard to the relevant British Standards for trees and landscaping works in order to ensure that schemes are implemented satisfactorily. On suitable sites it may be appropriate for new tree planting, particularly of native species, to be incorporated in the development.

1.4 Treatment of Open Spaces and Landscaping

Within a new development the form, surface treatment and detailing of open spaces and their relationship to buildings and to the footpath network should be seen as an integral part of the design of the scheme. Levels, surfacing and planting should be designed to avoid wear and tear and to allow easy maintenance. Where local open space and planting are to be provided in new development, schemes should be designed as part of the site layout and it is not considered satisfactory to use left over and inconvenient corners of land. The Borough Council may not wish to adopt open space areas which have not been designed satisfactorily because of the additional maintenance costs which can occur.

1.5 **Building Design and Appearance**

- **Access for People with Disabilities**

Under the provisions of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, incorporated into the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, most new, non-residential, buildings have to provide suitable means of access and parking provision for people with disabilities. To meet the needs of people with disabilities all new buildings open to the public or used for employment or education should normally include a level or ramped entrance suitable for use in all weathers and, where appropriate, handrails, external direction signs and reserved parking to the required standard design. Similar provision should be made when the change of use, or extensive alteration, of buildings is undertaken. The Local Planning Authority regularly consults with the Borough Access group in order to ensure local needs are addressed. However, it is important that applicants have regard to this issue at an early stage in the preparation of their scheme in order to avoid features such as ramps having a detrimental impact on the visual appearance of a development.

- **The Context of the Development**

New building should be a design, scale and materials that contribute to the overall quality of the environment and are carefully related to nearby existing and proposed development. New built development should not be considered in isolation from its surroundings since even self-contained sites will have an impact on the wider environment. Extensions should be designed to complement the existing structure and to avoid giving the appearance of a separate entity. Large expanses of brickwork should be given interest by the inclusion of brick detailing.

- **Materials**

The choice of materials for a development can have a very significant impact on the final appearance of the building or structure. Materials should be chosen to give a pleasant appearance and identity to the scheme. They should be of a permanent texture and colour, with through colours selected where possible, and should be designed for external use. It will be inappropriate to use uncoloured asbestos and other claddings and galvanised steel should not be used externally in new work even if buildings to be extended are constructed in them. For example security shutters and metal fencing will always have a much less damaging impact on the visual environment if they are coloured. Common brickwork will only be appropriate in the most exceptional circumstances, where a rear or upper storey extension is proposed to a dwelling which is constructed of common brickwork, and where a suitable quality facing brick cannot be found. In this case the Local Planning Authority exceptionally may agree to the use of a good quality common brick in order to avoid the new work appearing incongruous.

1.6 **Crime Prevention**

There is an increasing awareness of the need for security to be considered at an early stage in the design of a new development in order to minimise risks to personal safety and to property. This can be particularly relevant to the design of roads and footpaths and landscaping schemes.

It is widely acknowledged that the built environment can influence criminal behaviour with many of the offences committed being actively aided or occurring through designs which create opportunities for crime. By carefully planning a building or its physical environment at an early state in its creation, the potential for unlawful activity can be reduced. Planning applications will be assessed in order to determine a scheme's ability to reduce the risk of criminal activity, trespass, vandalism and litter through the adoption of appropriate measures at the design stage. New development should be designed to maximise this potential through appropriate layout design, boundary features and means of enclosure and to minimise detrimental effects on adjoining land or existing developments.

Applicants are also encouraged to consult with the Force Architectural Liaison Officer at Leicestershire Constabulary Headquarters.

1.7 Highway Safety

All new development has to be accessed from the existing road system and will have a traffic impact outside the confines of the development site itself, while larger developments will also extend the road system. Therefore, in designing new development, regard needs to be paid not only to the needs of the occupiers of the site but also to the needs of all potentially affected road users. Consequently new development should not have an adverse impact on highway safety either for the occupiers or for other road users. In assessing the issue of highway safety the Local Planning Authority will have regard to issues such as traffic speeds near the development, the visibility into and out of a new access, the likelihood of on street car parking occurring and the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. **Reference should also be made to the following Transport Proposals which cover specific highway safety issues:**

Transport Proposal 6 provision of needs for cyclists;
Transport Proposal 12 highway impact of new development;
Transport Proposal 13 conflict with Structure Plan Transport Policy 4;
Transport Proposal 15 accessibility of facilities to mobility impaired people;
Transport Proposal 16 safe highway environment for pedestrians and cyclists;
Transport Proposal 18 access for service and emergency vehicles;
Transport Proposal 19 parking provision for new development.

- **Further information**

The Local Planning Authority will also refer to the detailed guidance set out in Design Bulletin 32 “Residential Roads and Footpaths” (edition 2) and to the standards set out in the Leicestershire County Council “Highway Requirements for Development” when considering issues which relate to highway safety.

- **Access to Residential Development**

Where new residential development is proposed, access will be required to the existing highway network. The Highway Authority will wish to ensure that such accesses do not lead to a decrease in highway safety or result in an unacceptable standard of amenity for adjoining properties. It is desirable to ensure that emergency vehicles can access all dwellings and that travel distances within estates are minimised. Extensive development off a single point of access can conflict with these needs as the access will be vulnerable to being blocked. In order to minimise this risk new development which results in more than 150 dwellings being served by a single access is unlikely to be acceptable.

- **Highway Impact of Commercial Development**

The Local Planning Authority will wish to ensure that wherever possible loading and unloading takes place within a site and that highway congestion does not result from on-street parking caused by the development. This will ensure that access to other premises is not jeopardised, that emergency and service vehicles are not delayed and that there is not an increased danger to pedestrians and cyclists. Applications for a Business Use within which a range of commercial activities can take place, including offices and light industry, will normally be expected to provide sufficient parking for the most intensive activity in order to avoid the need to limit the potential users of a building.

- **Access for Services and Emergency Vehicles**

Design Bulletin 32 "Residential Roads and Footpaths" provides guidance on service and emergency vehicle access. In new residential developments the maximum carry distance recommended for refuse collection is 25 metres (BS 5906, 1980). However, where there are commercial containers or community dustbins, a distance of 9 metres is more appropriate. These distances should be measured from the nearest accessible point on the public highway unless adequate turning facilities and drive construction are provided within the site. Emergency vehicles and particularly fire-fighting appliances need to have assured access to within 45 metres of the front or back doors of dwellings and other premises.

- **Pedestrians and Cyclists**

Because of their vulnerability, the needs of pedestrians and cyclists should be given priority in the design of the access layout. Footpaths and cycle tracks will need to be safe, convenient and pleasant to use. They should be well lit and exposed to natural surveillance in order to minimise opportunities for crime. In all new developments which generate more than occasional traffic, access and routes for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles should normally be segregated; where these routes cross one another at the same level, safe and easy arrangements should be made for pedestrians and cyclists to cross vehicular flows. Where necessary slopes should be provided on footpaths as an alternative to steps, in order to assist those people who have difficulty getting about, and these slopes normally should not exceed a gradient of 1 in 20. In some awkward or exposed locations it may be appropriate for handrails to be provided.

1.8 **Conflict with an Adjoining Land Use**

The Local Planning Authority is anxious to ensure that the potential for conflict between adjoining land uses is minimised. This can work in two different ways. On the one hand it would not, for example, be appropriate to permit a new noisy or polluting use next to existing dwellings unless the new use could be controlled satisfactorily by conditions. Conversely where a noisy or polluting use already exists it may not be appropriate to permit new residential development close by. **Employment Proposal 4 of the Local Plan refers to impact of development on adjoining areas.**

- **Noise**

New building which will be affected by an existing source of noise should be designed to protect the occupants from it. This objective may be achieved by the design of buildings intended to act as noise barriers, by siting buildings not affected by the noise adjacent to its source, by earth mounding and landscaping or by structural design of the buildings which would be affected. Special care should be taken in the design and siting of new activities which are likely to cause a nuisance. Very noisy activities may need to be isolated from property which would be affected adversely. Matters such as the pitch, frequency, pulse and volume of a sound may all contribute to the level of nuisance which is created.

Proposals for new development should be designed to ensure that noise generated by the uses carried out within the buildings or site will be attenuated adequately within the buildings or site, and that new development on sites close to an existing or proposed noise source should be designed to protect the occupants from it.

- **Fumes and Other Discharges**

The Local Planning Authority will liaise closely with the Borough Environmental Health Officers both in respect of noise and other forms of emissions. **Shopping Proposal 9 of the Local Plan refers to the impact of A3 uses on residential amenity.**

1.9 **Backland and Piecemeal Development**

Landscape Proposal 2 covers the issue of Backland development. Backland and piecemeal forms of development can make a useful contribution to the needs of the Borough particularly to the provision of housing land, but by their nature are more difficult to develop and pose particular problems. Development of such sites or their accesses should not have an unduly adverse effects on the amenities of adjoining properties. Means of access should not be substandard and a substandard access will not be accepted solely in order to allow a development to take place. Reference should also be made to other relevant development control proposals in the Local Plan and advice contained in this document.

Development on sites which adjoin other land with potential for development should not impede the future development of the adjoining land. In these circumstances a comprehensive approach to the development of the whole area will be encouraged.