

Built Environment

Design

7.7 Maintaining and improving the quality of the built environment is of critical importance if the attractive character and identity of Hillingdon is to be retained. There is a need to reinforce the importance of ensuring that development is designed having regard to, and responding positively to its context, whilst contributing positively to the environment. This ensures that elements of local character and distinctiveness are reinforced that the environment is protected and enhanced and that design quality is a priority.

7.8 The quality, functionality and condition of the public realm have a direct bearing on the image of Hillingdon, how well neighbourhoods function, and how people interact and enjoy open spaces. The Council will seek to promote high-quality streets and public spaces and introduce public art to celebrate civic pride.

7.9 Although Hillingdon is committed to increase housing provision, quantity will not be provided at the expense of quality. The Council considers that any higher density development in the Borough should not compromise the ability to achieve a sustainable layout, high quality design and an attractive appearance. The Borough endorses the government's agenda for mixed communities and seeks to provide spatial guidance for its delivery. The Council's adopted 'Accessible Hillingdon' Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides guidance on design of new development to achieve integrated, sustainable developments of lifetime home standards. The 'Hillingdon Design and Accessibility Statement' (HDAS) SPD promotes good practice guidance on high quality design for all new developments in the Borough, as well as shopfronts, transport interchanges and the public realm.

7.10 The Hillingdon Local Plan is required to monitor the design performance of development through 'Building for Life', the national standard for well designed homes and neighbourhoods. The criteria have been designed so as to establish an objective set of principles by which the judgement of applications and the built quality of housing can be undertaken consistently. For residential schemes, all new developments of 10 dwellings or over should achieve a satisfactory Building for Life assessment rating.

7.11 The Code for Sustainable Homes (Communities and Local Government) is a new national standard for sustainable design and construction of new homes. It measures the sustainability against design categories, rating the 'whole home' as a complete package. The design categories included within the Code are energy/ carbon dioxide, surface water run-off, health and well-being, water, waste management, materials, pollution and ecology. The Council will encourage all new build residential development to meet Code level 4.

7.12 Large parts of the Borough are sensitive to the impact of taller buildings by virtue of the high environmental quality that currently exists, with heritage and open space constraints and their lower density character and development patterns in some parts of the boroughs. In general, a tall building is defined by CABI and English Heritage as one that is substantially taller than its neighbours or significantly changes the skyline. While tall buildings offer the opportunity for intensive use, their siting, design, effect on views, impact on local micro-climate and provision of communal and private amenity spaces should be carefully considered in order to not detract from the nature of surrounding places and the quality of life for those living and working around them.

7.13 Tall buildings may be acceptable in a limited number of suitable locations where the Council considers that they will not seriously harm the surrounding area and its heritage assets, and will also deliver wider benefits to the proposed Opportunity Area. Parts of Uxbridge and Hayes may be appropriate locations for tall buildings, subject to the Council preparing a characterisation study and tall buildings assessment together with such considerations as the Obstacle Limitation Surfaces for Heathrow Airport. The height of buildings should be appropriate to the surrounding townscape. All such proposals will require appropriate accompanying urban design assessments and will be assessed using the criteria for evaluation identified by CABI and English Heritage in 'Guidance on Tall Buildings' and local guidance. The Council will prepare a borough characterisation study and more detailed tall buildings study in order to identify appropriate strategic locations where tall buildings may be appropriate.

Accessibility

7.14 The Council will seek to provide robust neighbourhoods which are attractive and capable of being used for many purposes, by different people and with the potential for change and adaptation. The Borough recognises that 15% of the population have an impairment, mobility or otherwise, and provision should be made to allow equal, easy and dignified access to buildings, places and spaces. Furthermore, the Council recognises that neighbourhoods should ensure adequate accessibility to housing, employment and public amenities to permit equal opportunities for the whole community (see Policy T4).

7.15 Accessibility for disabled people is legislated under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 (amendment) Regulations 2003, and is included within the London Plan. The requirement is for new and existing buildings to be accessible. New housing should be designed to ensure that it can easily be modified to meet the needs of people with disabilities. It should also incorporate the principles of "Lifetime Homes" so that as people become less mobile it continues to meet their needs. All new housing proposals were required to meet Lifetime Home Standards in 2010/11. 10% of all housing units on major planning applications (10 units or more) were also required to be wheelchair accessible. Records show that out of the approval of a net total 1,353 units in 2010/11, approximately 98.5% were Lifetime Homes and 14% were Wheelchair Homes.

7.16 The Council will seek to encourage inclusive access at the neighbourhood level ensuring that places of work and leisure, streets, neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces are designed to meet the needs of the community at all stages of people's lives in line with the London Plan (2011).

Crime and safety

7.17 The Council's 'Place Survey 2008/9' identified that the three top priority areas which residents felt were important to making a good place to live were the level of crime (63%), clean streets (47%) and health services (44%). 71% of residents felt very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live. In the Hillingdon Crime and Disorder Survey 2009, 70% of respondents felt safe in their local neighbourhood (compared with 75% in 2007) and 54% of respondents felt that crime/ anti-social behaviour did not restrict their lives.

7.18 Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour is an issue highlighted by Hillingdon residents and making Hillingdon safer is one of the Council's corporate priorities. The Safer Hillingdon Partnership Plan for 2009/ 10 identifies five priorities:

1. Reducing violence
2. Reducing serious acquisitive crime
3. Tackling anti-social behaviour
4. Reduce harm caused by fire and road accidents
5. Community engagement & increasing public confidence

7.19 The challenge we face is to make the borough a safer place while ensuring it maintains the vibrancy that makes it such a popular place to live, work in and visit. The Hillingdon Local Plan can contribute to these priorities by helping to reduce the opportunity for and incidence of crime and help to reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. Crime Prevention Design Advisors can provide advice on safe and secure environments and Secured by Design Standards.

7.20 In addition, the Borough is home to Heathrow Airport and with the on-going threat from international terrorism there is a need for the Council and developers to give appropriate weight to counter terrorism design measures in new development schemes which are likely to attract large numbers of people. The Council's forthcoming 'Crowded Places Supplementary Planning Document' will provide design principles and practical approaches on how to reduce the vulnerability of crowded places to terrorist attacks.

Health

7.21 The Council recognises the role of design of housing, the wider built environment and the public realm in promoting good mental and physical health. Depression and anxiety pose significant health problems in the UK and high quality and well thought out design can reduce the incidence of these problems. Key factors associated with poor mental well-being include a lack of 'escape facilities' such as green space and social infrastructure, a sense of overcrowding, fear of crime and dissatisfaction with existing living conditions and the local area (for example noise problems from neighbours, high rise buildings, poor quality housing and a lack of privacy).

7.22 Good physical health can be promoted by ensuring provision of adequate space for sport and recreation, and by designing environments to facilitate physical activity by walking and cycling (see Policy T4). This can reduce the incidence of obesity and cardiovascular disease. Additionally, any reduction in the use of the private car for transport would help to improve air quality in the borough thereby resulting in positive effects on the incidence of respiratory ailments. The Council seeks to ensure that new developments and regeneration schemes are designed to facilitate good mental health as well as good physical health.

Biodiversity

7.23 Biodiversity should be promoted and increased in urban as well as rural locations, in small scale as well as large-scale projects. Targeted green initiatives to enhance urban streets and places with, for example, pocket parks, the planting of street trees or green roof gardens, have a strong impact on the appearance of the area, and also contribute to a greener and healthier environment by removing some pollutants and greenhouse gases from the environment.

7.24 The Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2-Development Management Policies LDD will address issues in relation to the detailed application of Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 1- Strategic Policies on the quality of the built environment and public realm.

Strategic Objectives:

- SO1: Conserve and enhance the Borough's heritage and its setting by ensuring new development, including changes to the public realm, are of high quality design, appropriate to the significance of the heritage asset, and sensitive to the wider historic environment.
- SO2: Create neighbourhoods that are of a high quality sustainable design, that have regard for their historic context and use sustainability principles which are sensitive and responsive to the significance of the historic environment, are distinctive, safe, functional and accessible and which reinforce the identity and suburban qualities of the borough's streets and public places, introduce public art to celebrate civic pride and serve the long-term needs of all residents.
- SO3: Improve the quality of and accessibility to, the heritage value of the borough's open spaces, including rivers and canals as areas for sports, recreation, visual interest bio-diversity, education, health and well being. In addition, address open space needs by providing new spaces identified in Hillingdon's Open Space Strategy.
- SO4: Ensure that development contributes to a reduction in crime and disorder, is resilient to terrorism, and delivers safe and secure buildings, spaces and inclusive communities.
- SO6: Promote social inclusion through equality of opportunity and equality of access to social, educational, health, employment, recreational, green space and cultural facilities for all in the borough, particularly for residents living in areas of identified need.
- SO8: Protect and enhance biodiversity to support the necessary changes to adapt to climate change. Where possible, encourage the development of wildlife corridors.
- SO11: Address the impacts of climate change, minimise emissions of carbon and local air quality pollutants from new development and transport.

Related Policy: BE1

Policy BE1: Built Environment

The Council will require all new development to improve and maintain the quality of the built environment in order to create successful and sustainable neighbourhoods, where people enjoy living and working and that serve the long-term needs of all residents. All new developments should:

1. Achieve a high quality of design in all new buildings, alterations, extensions and the public realm which enhances the local distinctiveness of the area, contributes to community cohesion and a sense of place;
2. Be designed to be appropriate to the identity and context of Hillingdon's buildings, townscapes, landscapes and views, and make a positive contribution to the local area in terms of layout, form, scale and materials and seek to protect the amenity of surrounding land and buildings, particularly residential properties;
3. Be designed to include "Lifetime Homes" principles so that they can be readily adapted to meet the needs of those with disabilities and the elderly, 10% of these should be wheelchair accessible or easily adaptable to wheelchair accessibility encouraging places of work and leisure, streets, neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces to be designed to meet the needs of the community at all stages of people's lives;
4. In the case of 10 dwellings or over, achieve a satisfactory assessment rating in terms of the latest Building for Life standards (as amended or replaced from time to time);
5. Improve areas of poorer environmental quality, including within the areas of relative disadvantage of Hayes, Yiewsley and West Drayton. All regeneration schemes should ensure that they are appropriate to their historic context, make use of heritage assets and reinforce their significance;
6. Incorporate a clear network of routes that are easy to understand, inclusive, safe, secure and connect positively with interchanges, public transport, community facilities and services;
7. Improve the quality of the public realm and provide for public and private spaces that are attractive, safe, functional, diverse, sustainable, accessible to all, respect the local character and landscape, integrate with the development, enhance and protect biodiversity through the inclusion of living walls, roofs and areas for wildlife, encourage physical activity and where appropriate introduce public art;
8. Create safe and secure environments that reduce crime and fear of crime, anti-social behaviour and risks from fire and arson having regard to Secure by Design standards and address resilience to terrorism in major development proposals.
9. Not result in the inappropriate development of gardens and green spaces that erode the character and biodiversity of suburban areas and increase the risk of flooding through the loss of permeable areas;

10. Maximise the opportunities for all new homes to contribute to tackling and adapting to climate change and reducing emissions of local air quality pollutants. The Council will require all new development to achieve reductions in carbon dioxide emission in line with the London Plan targets through energy efficient design and effective use of low and zero carbon technologies. Where the required reduction from on-site renewable energy is not feasible within major developments, contributions off-site will be sought. The Council will seek to merge a suite of sustainable design goals, such as the use of SUDS, water efficiency, lifetime homes, and energy efficiency into a requirement measured against the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM. These will be set out within the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2- Development Management Policies LDD. All developments should be designed to make the most efficient use of natural resources whilst safeguarding historic assets, their settings and local amenity and include sustainable design and construction techniques to increase the re-use and recycling of construction, demolition and excavation waste and reduce the amount disposed to landfill;
11. In the case of tall buildings, not adversely affect their surroundings including the local character, cause harm to the significance of heritage assets or impact on important views. Appropriate locations for tall buildings will be defined on a Character Study and may include parts of Uxbridge and Hayes subject to considering the Obstacle Limitation Surfaces for Heathrow Airport. Outside of Uxbridge and Hayes town centres, tall buildings will not be supported. The height of all buildings should be based upon an understanding of the local character and be appropriate to the positive qualities of the surrounding townscape.

Support will be given for proposals that are consistent with local strategies, guidelines, supplementary planning documents and Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2- Development Management Policies.

Implementation of Policy BE1- how we will achieve this

This policy will be operated through the Council's and Hillingdon Partners development programmes in relation to both buildings and the public realm. The Council will:

- Identify in the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part 2- Site Specific Allocations LDD, Local Plan sites where redevelopment would provide an opportunity to improve the local environment;
- Adopt the Draft Public Realm SPD to ensure that all works within the public realm contribute to maintaining and improving the quality of the local environment.
- Produce a borough-wide Character Study to inform the parameters for appropriate residential and non-residential densities including defining inappropriate locations for tall buildings.

In relation to new development, developers will have to justify their design decisions within a Design and Access Statement for each application. For residential schemes of over 10 units, developers will need to demonstrate how the 'Building for Life' criteria are met and how the proposal will meet a satisfactory standard. There will be more detailed policies within the Development Management Policies Local Development Document and Supplementary Planning Documents on specific design and public realm issues.

This policy will be implemented, in conjunction with the other policies in the plan, through the determination of planning applications and the preparation of the Development Management Policies and Site Specific Allocations LDDs and Supplementary Planning Documents which could include Design Briefs.

Monitoring of Policy BE1- how we will measure success

1. Public satisfaction with visual character of the built environment (Local);
2. Amenity space standards (Local);
3. Public art provision (Local): and
4. The Annual Monitoring Report (Core Indicator H6 on Housing Quality) will monitor the number and proportion of total new build completions on housing sites reaching a satisfactory rating against the Building for Life Criteria.
5. All new housing proposals are required to meet Lifetime Home Standards and 10% of all housing units on major planning applications (10 units or more) are also required to be wheelchair accessible and these will be monitored under BVPI 156.