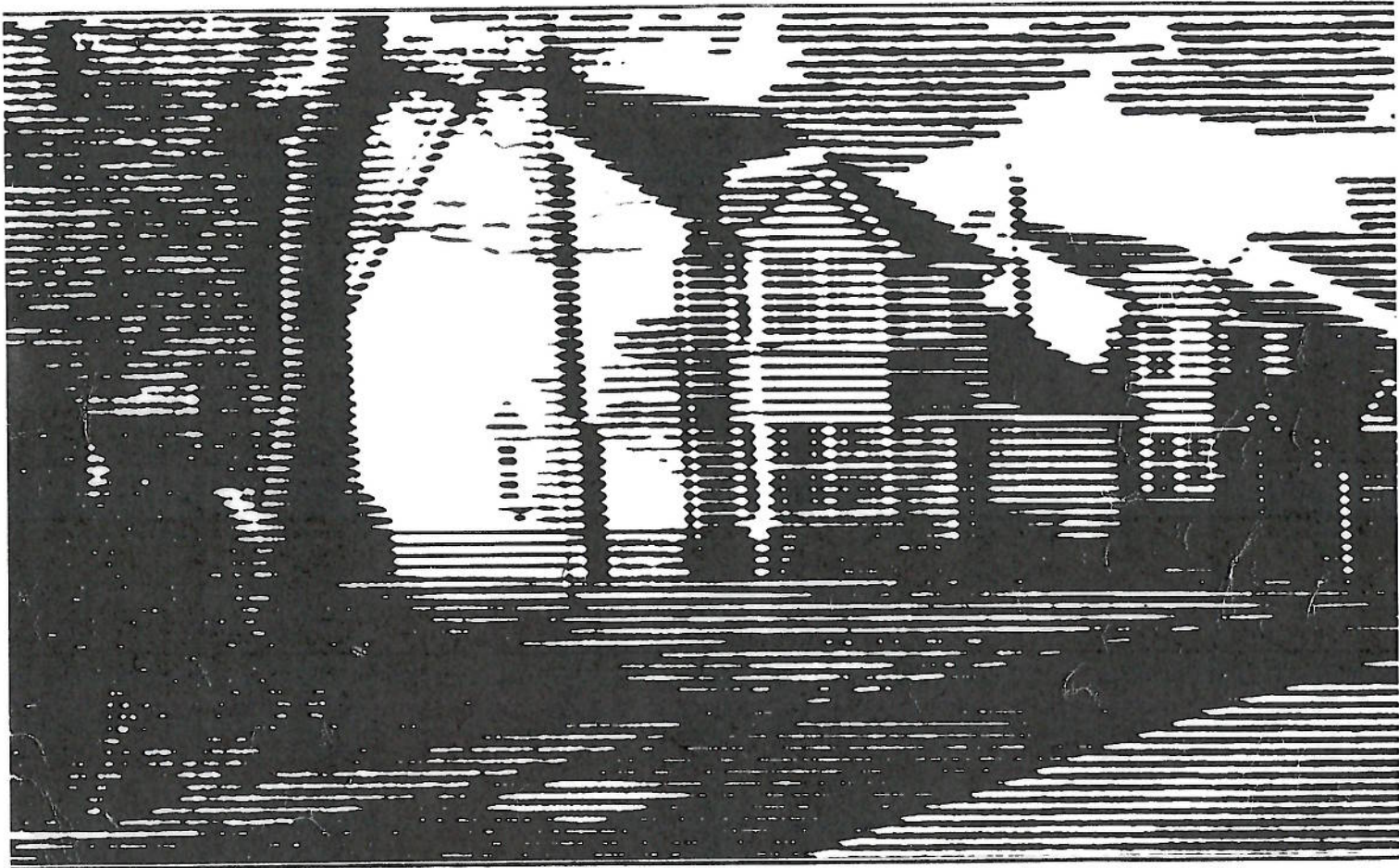




Solihull

METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL



PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF SOLIHULL

PLANNING GUIDELINES

FOR

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

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(as amended)**

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INTRODUCTION

Many people will normally be affected by the development of new houses or a new housing estate. For some it offer the opportunity of new homes to live in, and those residents will wish to see that their new environment will be attractive; increasingly too, they will wish to have confidence that the layout pays attention to personal and property security. For others who already live locally, the impact of new development will often be considerable, and their concern will be to ensure that the new development will blend quickly and satisfactorily into their neighbourhood.

As a consequence, house builders strive to ensure that they are able to provide a high quality development, and the purpose of these Planning Guidelines is to help them. The aim is to offer advice and guidance rather than rigid rules, to encourage rather than stifle the creativity of the designer.

When devising a layout, early discussion should be held with the Development Control Officer who deals with the area concerned. Whilst such a discussion cannot bind the Council in considering a subsequent formal application, it may help to avoid some obvious problems. Talks should also be held with drainage and highways engineers and landscape officers - the planning officer will coordinate these matters. The ultimate layout may need to balance a number of competing constraints, not least of which will be the landscape context of the development.

A number of other leaflets are available to complement this guide, and are referred to in the various sections concerned. Additionally the Technical Services Department publishes a separate list of pamphlets, guidelines and other advice.

Your points of contact are:

(Phone No. 021 704 xxxx)
(Direct Dial)

Department Control	xxxx
North/East Area Team	6378
South/West Area Team	6372
Landscape Design	6390
Highways	6481
Drainage	6419
Adoption Officer : Highways	6421
Adoption Officer : Open Space	6429
Footpaths' Officer	6429




STRUCTURAL LANDSCAPING

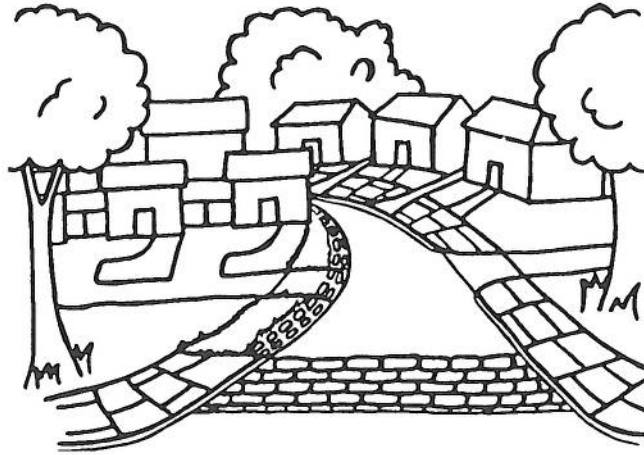
Landscaping is an important element in the planning of new housing developments since it can provide an overall framework into which new housing is placed, and within which further planting can take place by residents. Landscaping can greatly help to soften the somewhat hard environment created by new roads and buildings, and help integrate the new development into the locality.

The Council believes that the developer should develop a landscape strategy for each site that will help create an attractive environment and seek to retain and make best use of any landscape features that might already exist. The following guidelines are intended to help that process.

- (1) A detailed site survey must be submitted with every residential layout, indicating existing trees, hedges, site levels and other landscape features.
- (2) A landscape strategy must be developed for each site, which should normally enable existing landscape features to be retained and incorporated into the design.
- (3) To establish a proper landscape framework, a significant number of trees and shrubs will be required. As a guide, it is expected that, in addition to any peripheral screen which may already exist, around 1.5 trees per dwelling would be an appropriate ratio, although this will include existing trees within the site that are to be retained. Approximately 25% of newly planted trees should be heavy standards.
- (4) Heavy shrub planting should also take place at appropriate points to reinforce the landscape framework. Around communal areas this should be of low height to aid security.
- (5) Communal open space should be provided within the development area to a standard of 6 acres per thousand population. The open space should be designed as an integral part of the overall landscape strategy for the whole site.

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- (6) To establish an effective landscape strategy, trees should be grouped in combination with significant shrub planting at principal impact points to punctuate the development. The random placing of trees and shrubs is usually ineffective and should be avoided. Where possible, opportunities to build upon existing landscape features should be taken.
 - (7) Care must be taken to ensure that both new and existing trees are not damaged by construction works during the development, by changes in land levels, or by provision of sewers or services.
 - (8) Where existing trees are to be retained, houses should not be positioned in a way that will allow rooms and gardens to be greatly overshadowed. Trees should be an asset to residents, not a liability.

The Council's leaflet on Trees and Development sites gives further guidance on this subject, and also a Design Guideline and Specification for Adoptable Open Space is available separately.

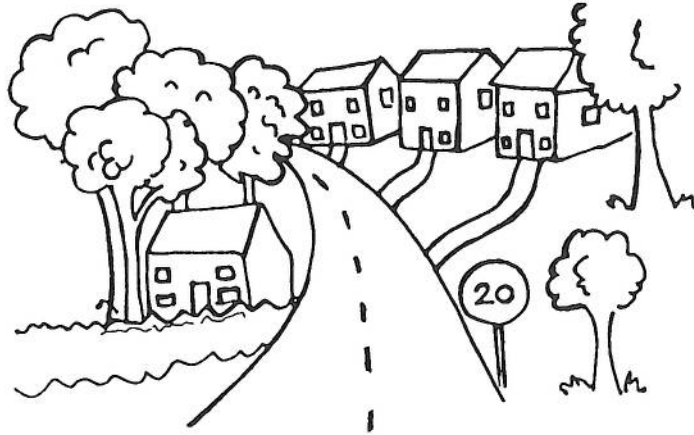


HIGHWAY MATTERS: General Principles

The provision for pedestrian and vehicular access and movement is an essential part of any housing development. For new highways, safety is the paramount consideration. They must be convenient for residents and users and be designed as part of the residential environment to exclude extraneous traffic as far as possible.

General Principles

- (1) The layout must conform with the general principles of Design Bulletin 32: Residential Roads and Footpaths, second edition published by HMSO.
- (2) Entrances into residential areas should be delineated by special treatment, such as "gateway" features.
- (3) Developers should consult with the Council at an early stage about the design and construction of all highways proposed for adoption.
- (4) Highway requirements for a site must take account of existing or proposed adjacent development and the characteristics of the surrounding highway network. In some cases it will be necessary for developers to modify existing highways both at the site access and remote from it to ensure a satisfactory and safe highway environment.




HIGHWAY MATTERS: The Carriageway

- (1) For safety the road layout should seek to limit average vehicle speeds to not more than 20mph by appropriate horizontal alignment. Bends with centre radius not exceeding 20 metres turning through at least 70 degrees, or other effective speed reducing measures, should be joined by straight sections of road no more than 70 metres long.
- (2) Only where site constraints dictate will vertical deflection for speed reduction be considered. In these circumstances table top junctions should be considered first, and conventional road humps only as a last resort.
- (3) The Council expects most new residential roads to have a 5.5 metre wide carriageway with 1.8 metre wide footways to either side, except where there is no frontage access or likely pedestrian demand, when an equivalent width of verge should be provided.
- (4) A wider carriageway may be required as appropriate where:-

- (a) More than about 150 houses are served;
- (b) The road is expected to become a bus route;
- (c) The road is expected to carry non-residential traffic;
- (d) The road is designated a local distributor.

Detailed guidance will be given in each case.

- (5) New direct residential frontage access will not be permitted to local distributor or higher category roads, or where two-way peak hour flows would exceed 300 vehicles per hour.

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- (6) Shared areas may be appropriate for up to 12 dwellings, though particular care will be required to minimise the likelihood of on-street parking and to make satisfactory provision for Statutory Undertakers plant and equipment.
 - (7) Private drives may be appropriate for accessing 3 or 4 dwellings, but never more than 5.
 - (8) The normal maximum cul-de-sac length is 180 metres.
 - (9) Adequate turning areas will be required within 20 metres of the end of all culs-de-sac.



HIGHWAY MATTERS: Adoption and Parking

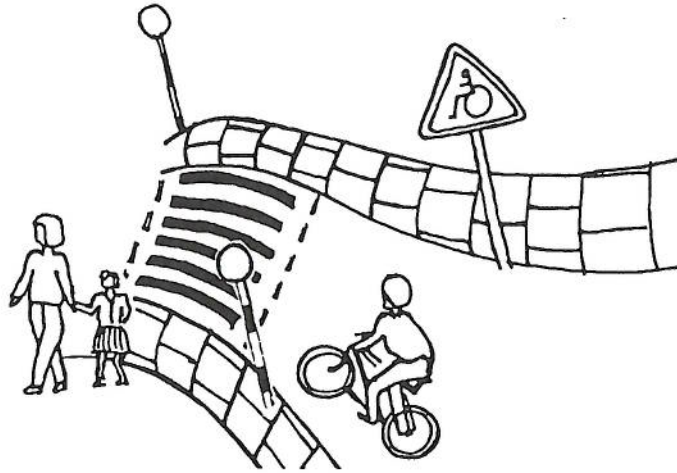
Adoption Requirements:

- (1) Footways should normally be provided to the back of visibility splays and all highway visibility splays will be adopted.
- (2) The normal minimum highway width for adoption, including any carriageway, footway, verge and service margin is 9.1 metres. Exceptionally an absolute minimum width of 8.0 metres might be considered.

A Design and Specification for Adoptable Roads is available separately from the Engineering Design Unit, Technical Services Department.

Parking Guidance:

- (1) The Council's published parking guidelines should be followed. Spaces should be located conveniently between the highway and the entrance to the property, and preferably be over-looked.
- (2) The parking spaces within a single curtilage should be equally accessible to promote off-street parking and minimise manoeuvring.
- (3) The normal minimum drive length within the curtilage is 6 metres.
- (4) For houses fronting wider carriageways - see Carriageway Note 4 - a turning area and/or additional parking provision may be required in conjunction with a longer drive.
- (5) Communal parking areas should be overlooked, separate from the public highway, and not obviously associated with any single dwelling.



HIGHWAY MATTERS: Special Needs

Provision for Pedestrians and Cyclists:

- (1) Separate footpaths may be provided as pedestrian routes to schools, shops, bus stops, open spaces etc. and where appropriate, will be adopted. They might also be used as alternative emergency access routes to long culs-de-sac. They must be designed with through visibility and no concealed areas to minimise security risk.
- (2) 3 metres wide combined footway/cycle ways may provide a separate network within larger developments. They may also be appropriate alongside local distributor or other roads with restricted frontage access.

Provision for Special Needs Groups:

Highway details should bear in mind the needs of the elderly, disabled and young children.

- (1) Footways should be continuous and have a minimum width of 1.8 metres.
- (2) Pedestrian crossing points in the form of 'pram ramps' should be provided only where there is good visibility in both directions and at narrowing or tangent points near road junctions.
- (3) Uneven carriageway surfaces such as sets and rumble strips will not be permitted at pedestrian crossing points.
- (4) Parking spaces must be conveniently located near the main entrances to dwellings without intervening steps.
- (5) Parking bays individually designed for use by the physically disabled should be 3.6m wide, reducing to a minimum of 3.0m for side by side bays with shared 'unloading spaces'.
- (6) Where driveways cross footways, pedestrian visibility splays will be required at a height of 0.6 metres above the footway to allow children to be seen clearly.



LAYOUT

It is in the layout of new housing development where the skill of the designer is of particular importance. The relationship of buildings one to another, or of groups of buildings, and the spaces between them contributes much to the "character" of the completed development and can help to provide interesting and attractive views or street scenes.

A successful layout cannot simply be produced by adhering to a set of golden rules, but the following advice is offered.

- (1) Interesting, varied and attractive layouts will be encouraged.
- (2) Innovation will be welcomed.
- (3) Judicious use of walls, hedges and fences can enhance a layout. Enclosure of front garden will be welcomed.
- (4) Varied or staggered building lines can add interest.
- (5) Think about designing in defensible open space to assist security.
- (6) Think about safety for occupiers and welcome visitors.
- (7) Any play areas should also be sensitively sited to allow for watchful control whilst minimising nuisance.



DESIGN AND INTEGRATION

Many developers have a standard range of house types which they seek to use within their own developments. Whilst the design of houses is a matter for developers, an over-repetitive use of standard designs can create uniformity so that one new housing development often looks much like the next.

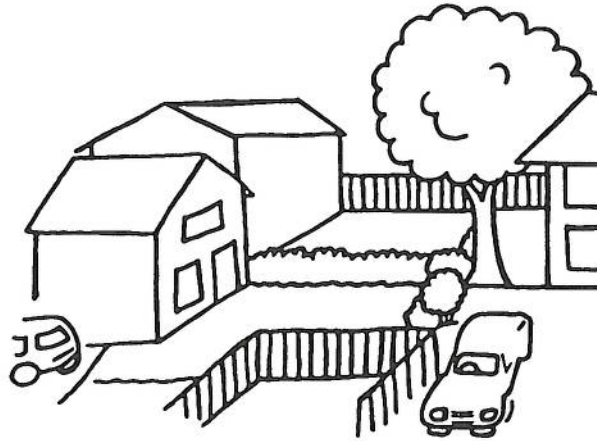
In order to create a separate identity and an individual character for each development, the design of houses should be varied and interesting and pay due regard to the local vernacular architecture, particularly in the choice of facing materials. The Council will always be pleased to consider innovative design proposals.

An over provision of large detached dwellings can lead to monotonous design and uninteresting layouts. Catering for the needs of smaller households and elderly persons within the development will therefore be encouraged in the interests of achieving good design and a socially mixed community.

In some cases the Council will set out their desire for affordable housing and for a broad mix of dwelling types in development briefs. Sometimes these will be reinforced by planning obligations.

In rural areas where housing is permitted, the Council's Rural Design Guide, obtainable separately, underlines the need to design buildings in a manner more sensitive to their setting than normal suburban locations. Developers should show that they are designing dwellings with an external appearance that respects the surroundings rather than 'off the peg' standard house types.

New development often has to adapt to its surroundings, and to fit in, in a pleasing and appropriate way, into an already established environment and community. A new housing development can effect a dramatic change in the local scene, and it is important that this impact is recognised and proper account taken in the design of the new development of the way in which it can be successfully integrated into the surrounding area. Particular attention should be paid to the appearance of the new development from outside, and to the views that will be available into it so that they can enhance the visual quality of the whole neighbourhood.



HOUSES AND THE SPACES AROUND THEM

The size and shape of gardens and the degree of privacy are important considerations in the selection of a particular house to live in. However, whilst their choice of garden size may vary, almost all residents will normally wish to ensure that they can retain a reasonable degree of privacy. One way, but not necessarily the only way, in which this can be achieved is to ensure that sufficient space is provided around the dwelling.

- (1) Generally, individual layout proposals will be considered on their merits. The Council will wish to ensure that reasonable standards of privacy and amenity are provided, and that a choice of garden sizes is available. Not everyone wishes to have a "standard" size garden.
- (2) Normally, an individual house should not occupy more than one third of its plot.
- (3) The length of back garden should not normally be less than 11 metres or 5 metres for every storey of the dwellings to which they relate, whichever is the greater.
- (4) A distance of 1 metre should normally be left free of building between the side of a dwelling or block of dwellings and the site boundary.
- (5) In the case of sheltered/retirement or communal housing where individual gardens are not provided, the buildings should not normally occupy more than one third of the total site area, with the open spaces provided in the most appropriate locations. Separate guidance is available on sheltered housing schemes.
- (6) It is emphasised that the above guidelines will be flexibly, rather than rigidly, applied. It is not the intention that they should discourage or inhibit innovative design approaches since the creative designer will be capable of finding several ways in which to provide a high degree of amenity, privacy and choice. The Council would welcome such approaches.




SECURITY

The Council will take crime prevention into account when considering planning applications for new housing layouts.

"Secured by Design" is a major police initiative aimed at actively encouraging the adoption of house builders of important guidelines to increase security against crime and the safety of new houses.

Some principles of estate design which may help to combat crime are:-

- (1) Compact layouts with few hiding places, means of entry and potential targets.
- (2) Create a community in which people consider the estate to be their neighbourhood.
- (3) Encourage a mix of dwelling types so that there are likely to be people at home through the day.
- (4) Create boundaries by use of different road surfaces - defined areas by walls and fences.
- (5) Small clusters of dwellings with unobstructed views of neighbours.
- (6) Avoid narrow unnecessary paths or alley ways.
- (7) Careful landscaping and coordinated external lighting.
- (8) Avoid unsecured rear gardens backing onto open spaces or footpaths.
- (9) Ensure car parking areas can be kept under surveillance.
- (10) Ensure open space is overlooked and well lit.

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- (11) Secure fencing to deter access to rear gardens.
 - (12) Keep the number of access points to the development to a minimum.
 - (13) Ensure that landscaping does not create hiding places - low level planting with prickly species can often be safe as well as attractive.

Leaflets on this initiative are available separately.

Further advice can be obtained from:

The Police Architectural Liaison Officer
West Midlands Police
Lloyd House
Colmore Circus
Queensway
BIRMINGHAM
B4 6NQ

Tel: 021-626-5000