

Guidelines to control residential intensification



April 2008

Adopted as a material consideration for development control purposes on 29th April 2008

Guidelines to control residential intensification

1.0 Introduction

1.1 There are a numbers of pressures that affect the character and distinctiveness of the residential areas in the Canterbury District. The Government is encouraging the development of housing on previously developed land (brownfield land). The housing market in the district is relatively buoyant and together with demographic changes there is an increasing demand for smaller dwellings. All these pressures are pronounced in the district's low-density suburbs where infilling and intensification is becoming common.

1.2 The City Council has prepared design guidance for residential development and intensification in New Dover Road (Canterbury), Joy Lane (Whitstable) and Marine Parade (Tankerton). All of these areas are wholly or partially within conservation areas. There are however a number of localities in the district which have a high quality environment and character, but which are not conservation areas. The character and identity of these areas character could be harmed by inappropriate residential development. This guidance sets out the key planning issues concerning residential intensification. It explains and amplifies the Local Plan policies, and supplementary guidance already in place.

2.0 Background

2.1 This guidance relates to residential areas that have their own distinctive character. This character derives from the style of architecture of the houses, their mature landscape and their local historic associations. These areas display some or all of the following characteristics:

- Housing characterised by similar building sizes, styles, densities and relationships. Substantial detached houses, or bungalows, with some semi-detached properties all of which front onto the street.
- Large dwellings, often with eclectic detailing that adds charm and distinctiveness.
- Houses generally two storeys with some larger 2½ storey buildings
- Roofs pitched tiled or slate, with hipped roofs and gables, the more substantial houses often having large elaborate chimneys
- Walls in brick, rough cast render, pebbledash, tile hanging and half timbering
- Doors made a feature of the front elevation, with porches, canopies or decorative surrounds
- Windows – timber casements sometimes with leaded lights and/or stained glass, two storey bay windows. Some properties with elaborate window joinery including the use of diamond leaded lights
- Large mature gardens with well-defined garden features (mature specimen trees, gravel drives, out houses). Trees within private gardens are often visible between buildings and from the street giving an area a particular well vegetated character.
- Large front gardens with the house set well back. The space between buildings is often as important in creating character as the actual houses.
- Regular building line and consistent boundary treatments (hedges, low walls or fences)
- Roads with tree planted grass verges
- Off street parking



2.2 It is not considered appropriate to define specific areas that this guidance refers to by delineating lines on maps. Such boundaries create the problem of houses and areas being included or excluded from the effect of the policy. The intensification of residential development is an issue in many different localities across the district and it is considered that the guidance should be applied generically. The purpose of this guidance is to: emphasise design principles; to encourage contextual analysis; and to encourage a higher standard of planning application. Local character and distinctiveness are crucial elements in why people choose to live where they do. Piecemeal and incremental changes can adversely affect these areas. Change is of course inevitable and it is necessary to allow people to adapt to their changing circumstances. Decisions on what is appropriate should be informed by an analysis of the character of the locality and the value placed on that area by the local community.

2.3 The issues that these areas are facing include:

- Intensification of use – demolition and redevelopment of original house.
- Scale and appearance of new *infill* development not in keeping with context
- Loss of building line, street pattern and roofscape
- Side extensions that tend to create a terraced effect in the street
- Acquisition of rear gardens for *backland* development
- *Tandem* development proposals
- Cumulative changes damaging character
- Loss of planting and specimen trees
- Oversized and overbearing redevelopment proposals for apartments/flats with parking areas dominant
- Demand for on street parking
- Front gardens surfaced to provide off street parking

(For definitions of infill, backland and tandem developments please see Appendix One)

3.0 Guidance - Site and layout

3.1 The principle of intensification may be acceptable if; the site is in an existing residential area, the site has been allocated for housing, and the development would not conflict with other policies in the Local Plan. All planning applications must include a design and access statement including an appraisal of the site context, which describes how the development relates to the identified character of the area.

3.2 Site layout and the orientation of the development should follow the character of the area, particularly in well-established residential areas where houses fronting the road

with an established building line are the norm. If a new cul-de-sac is to be created the houses at the entrance should front the main road in order to retain the appearance of the street frontage.

3.3 Possible development plots should be of a similar size to those prevailing in the adjoining area – i.e. wide enough to locate the building(s) with adequate separation between them. The depth of frontage (i.e. front garden) should be maintained especially where front gardens contribute to the character of the area. Where depths of frontages vary greatly the minimum depth of frontage should be an average size and not be reduced to the shallowest plot.



3.4 New dwellings should be spaced to prevent any direct overlooking of habitable rooms of the existing neighbouring houses. New dwellings should be positioned away from common boundaries to ensure that windows do not overlook principal elevations.

3.5 Proposals should retain important trees and landscape features and should not disturb wildlife corridors. Large gardens that make a significant contribution to the character of the area and its biodiversity should not be lost.

4.0 Guidance - design

4.1 New development proposals when considered acceptable in principle will need to fit in with existing built form in terms of density, appearance, proportion, scale, and massing. Proposals to develop at a scale and massing that is considered to be out of

character with the adjoining area, and would harm the surrounding context will be resisted.



4.2 Backland development will only be allowed where it does not affect the amenities of surrounding properties. The new development should avoid the overlooking of existing private amenity space.

4.3 The height form and footprint of the proposed building, particularly in respect of infill developments, should be similar to that prevailing along the road frontage. The width of building plots and the width of the proposed infill dwelling should be similar to that prevailing in the street frontage.



4.4 There should be adequate side boundary separation of buildings in the street frontage, appropriate separation will be required between houses depending on the location's streetscape.

4.5 All developments should have a frontage onto the street, or driveway, with an active frontage (front door, windows). The front door could be given emphasis by including a porch or canopy.

4.6 Windows should have the appearance of side hung casements or sashes. Inclusion of one and two storey bay windows are a traditional suburban feature.

4.7 Sufficient parking shall be provided on site. A limited amount of parking can be provided to the front of the house in the garden if the space is well landscaped and designed in such a way that the hard surfacing does not dominate and cover the whole of the front garden. The drainage of such hard surfaced areas should be via a sustainable drainage system. Vehicular access points should be designed in accordance with the standards set out in Kent Design.

4.8 The loss of healthy mature areas of established planting, including trees and hedgerows which have a general amenity value, will be resisted where it is considered that these form an intrinsic part of the area's character and appeal.

4.9 All dwellings designed as family houses should provide private garden space suitable for family needs. Shared open spaces for flats and elderly persons accommodation may be acceptable. The over development of individual plots will be resisted.

4.10 Apartment designs and developments of flats will be resisted in locations where they are considered to be out of scale and context with the surrounding area. They will also be resisted where the site's location is considered to be unsustainable in terms of convenient, easy and safe pedestrian links to local facilities and public transport links. Intensive housing or apartment developments should be avoided unless they are of an appropriate scale and the footprint of the new building is similar to that of the existing dwelling.

4.11 Apartment designs and developments of flats will be expected to provide appropriate levels of private usable amenity space for residents. The provision and type of private amenity space provided must be well designed, meaningful and useable for residents. It must not be made up of left over space or landscaped buffer areas within the site. In certain locations the creative use of space will be considered, such as a balcony, decking and roof gardens.

4.12 External layouts for apartments must clearly define public and private space around buildings. Adequate defensible space must be provided at ground floor level between built form, road frontages, car parking layouts and amenity space. Additional car parking must also be incorporated without detracting from the character of the area. External storage areas must be provided for waste management and for cycles, which satisfy the Council's standards for storage and collection and are ideally positioned discretely.

4.13 Pedestrian entrance points into flats and apartments must be legible from primary street frontages and pedestrian connections into the building designed so that they are safe and convenient.

4.14 Where it is proposed to increase the internal capacity of dwellings to provide additional bedroom spaces, there should be scope within the plot to cater for increased off street car parking demand without resulting in visually unacceptable front garden areas, impacting on safe pedestrian movement on public footways, and increasing surface water run off.

4.15 Proposals for domestic extensions that are considered to have a detrimental affect on the character of existing streets in terms of, building lines, roof design, proportion and established architectural detailing will be resisted. For example:

- Alterations to existing roof designs particularly where it is proposed to change hipped designs to full gables to enable the development of the roof space. This is a particular issue where proposals have an impact on the symmetrical relationship to neighbouring semi-detached house styles.
- Two storey side extensions and first floor extensions over garages that have a significant effect on the street scene and result in a 'terracing' appearance by closing the gap between properties. Roof heights should be designed to step down from the main ridgeline and built frontages set back so that the extension looks subservient to the existing dwelling.
- New extensions should fit in with the character of the area and appearance of the existing dwelling house. The size of proposed extensions should be smaller than the existing dwelling to avoid an over dominating effect. The appearance and proportions of windows and doors must be carefully considered.
- Proposals for rear extensions must not impact on neighbouring properties in terms of their size, potential overlooking or loss of daylight or sunlight.

5 Consultation and adoption

A copy of the draft Guidance was sent to local developers, architects and agents, amenity societies and Parish Councils. The formal period for consultation was from 17th December 2007 to the 22nd February 2008. The document was available via the City Council's web pages and as a hard copy on request. Eleven responses were received and a summary of them was reported to the Development Control Committee. As part of the consultation the Guidance was taken to the four City Council Area Member Panels in January 2008 where the guidance was endorsed.

The Development Control Committee adopted the guidance as a material consideration for development control purposes on 29th April 2008.

Appendix One

Definitions

For the purposes of clarity the City Council following types of development can be defined as follows:

Infill development is where new housing is proposed between of established residential frontages. This is normally achieved through the removal of existing dwellings. This is usually considered a better form of development, as new development layouts are better able to integrate with their surroundings and existing street frontage

Backland development is where a new access is created between existing dwellings on a road frontage. Access is usually achieved through the removal of one or two existing properties. Concerns usually relate to the fact that new built form has little or no visual connection to the existing area, achieving pedestrian linkage and vehicle access is also often difficult. Backland development that creates a number of new access points onto an existing road will be resisted. Access points need to be rationalised to avoid disruption to the street scene.

Tandem development can be defined as one or more houses placed directly behind an existing dwelling on a road frontage and sharing the same plot and access as the original building.



Tandem development

Appendix two

Policy background

National policy on this issue is best summarised by the following extracts from the PPS3: Housing published in November 2006.

“12. Good design is fundamental to the development of high quality new housing, which contributes to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities.

13. Reflecting policy in PPS1, good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted.

14. Local Planning Authorities should develop a shared vision with their local communities of the type(s) of residential environments they wish to see and develop design policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the local area, aimed at:

- Creating places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, are visually attractive, safe, accessible, functional, inclusive, have their own distinctive identity and maintain and improve local character.
- Promoting designs and layouts which make efficient and effective use of land, including encouraging innovative approaches to help deliver high quality outcomes.

15. Local Planning Authorities should encourage applicants to bring forward sustainable and environmentally friendly new housing developments, including affordable housing developments, and in doing so should reflect the approach set out in the forthcoming PPS on climate change, including on the Code for Sustainable Homes.

16. Matters to consider when assessing design quality include the extent to which the proposed development:

- Is easily accessible and well-connected to public transport and community facilities and services, and is well laid out so that all the space is used efficiently, is safe, accessible and user-friendly.
- Provides, or enables good access to, community and green and open amenity and recreational space (including play space) as well as private outdoor space such as residential gardens, patios and balconies.
- Is well integrated with, and complements, the neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally in terms of scale, density, layout and access.
- Facilitates the efficient use of resources, during construction and in use, and seeks to adapt to and reduce the impact of, and on, climate change.
- Takes a design-led approach to the provision of car-parking space, that is well-integrated with a high quality public realm and streets that are pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly.
- Creates, or enhances, a distinctive character that relates well to the surroundings and supports a sense of local pride and civic identity.
- Provides for the retention or re-establishment of the biodiversity within residential environments.

17. Particularly where family housing is proposed, it will be important to ensure that the needs of children are taken into account and that there is good provision of recreational areas, including private gardens, play areas and informal play space. These should be well designed, safe, secure and stimulating areas with safe pedestrian access.

18. To facilitate efficient delivery of high quality development, Local Planning Authorities should draw on relevant guidance and standards¹⁵ and promote the use of appropriate tools and techniques, such as Design Coding¹⁶ alongside urban design guidelines, detailed masterplans, village design statements, site briefs and community participation techniques...

48. Good design is fundamental to using land efficiently. Local Planning Authorities should facilitate good design by identifying the distinctive features that define the character of a particular local area.

49. Careful attention to design is particularly important where the chosen local strategy involves intensification of the existing urban fabric. More intensive development is not always appropriate. However, when well designed and built in the right location, it can enhance the character and quality of an area. Successful intensification need not mean high rise development or low quality accommodation with inappropriate space. Similarly, in Conservation Areas and other local areas of special character where, if proper attention is paid to achieving good design, new development opportunities can be taken without adverse impacts on their character and appearance.

50. Density is a measure of the number of dwellings which can be accommodated on a site or in an area. The density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment.

51. Local Planning Authorities should, with stakeholders and communities, develop residential parking policies for their areas, taking account of expected levels of car ownership, the importance of promoting good design and the need to use land efficiently.”

The Canterbury District Local Plan (July 2006) states that the City Council is committed to the principles set out by Central Government guidance, which are to maximise the residential development of land that has previously been developed, is derelict or underused; and to promote and improve the quality of life in our City, coastal towns and existing urban and suburban areas. There is and has been growing pressure to build residential development on land outside our urban areas; however, the Council believes that the future of our City and coastal towns and built up areas depends on making the best use of land within them through recycling, reuse and making the most efficient use of existing land.

In the City Council’s view, the built up areas provide better options for new homes as these are sustainable, accessible and make the best use of the urban fabric by changing the nature and quality of places. In essence, location, quality and intensity of development are the three critical components in new housing development in our built up areas.

The design and layout of new residential development should be of a high quality and should seek to make the most efficient and best use of the land. The City Council's objectives for residential development are set out in Local Plan policies H7 and BE1.

Policy H7 The City Council will grant planning permission for otherwise acceptable proposals to bring empty residential property into more efficient residential use and vacant properties, including underused spaces above shops, into residential use, unless:

- a) The intensity of the proposed residential use is such that it will have an adverse impact on the amenity of nearby properties and/or lead to a significant increase in on-street parking prejudicial to highway safety;**
- b) There will be an adverse impact upon the character or appearance of an area, or a statutory listed building; and**
- c) There will be conflict with other Local Plan policies or there is a conflict with nearby uses in locations unsuitable for residential use.**

The starting point for all good design is the context of the specific site in question (the character and setting of an area within which a projected scheme will be situated). Understanding context involves understanding and responding to the pattern of the built and natural environment and the social and physical characteristics of the locality in order to be able to produce locally distinctive design. The City Council believes that development in the City or coastal towns should reflect their context in terms of design, layout and space.

The character of settlements and small groups of buildings arises from the layout pattern of buildings, streets and spaces, density, grain, scale (height and massing), details and materials. The characteristic relationship between built form and its landscape setting and the character of the spaces between buildings (their scale and materials) are key features of distinctive local character.

Policy BE1: The City Council will expect proposals of high quality design which respond to the objectives of sustainable development. When considering any application for development the Council will have regard to the following considerations:

- a) The need for the development**
- b) Accessibility and safe movement within the proposed development**
- c) The landscape character of the locality and the way the development is integrated into the landscape**
- d) The conservation and integration of natural features including trees and hedgerows to strengthen local distinctiveness, character and biodiversity**
- e) The visual impact and impact on local townscape character**

- f) The form of the development: the efficient use of land, layout, landscape, density and mix, scale, massing, materials, finish and architectural details;**
- g) The reduction in energy consumption by means of layout, design, construction and alternative technology**
- h) Safety and security;**
- i) The privacy and amenity of the existing environment;**
- j) The compatibility of the use with adjacent uses;**
- k) The need to keep the building in use and fit for purpose; and**
- l) Appropriate supplementary planning guidance adopted by the Council.**