Thurrock Local Plan

Design Strategy SPD

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Contents

Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, Grays

1. Introduction

Setting a Design Standard for Thurrock

1.1   The importance of achieving good design, and the benefits this can bring in delivering sustainable development and communities, is of significant importance to Thurrock Council. Achieving good design outcomes must be an important component of delivering development proposals across Thurrock. They will also contribute significantly to achieving Thurrock Council's corporate and community priorities comprising:

» **Creating a great place for learning and opportunity**

» **Encouraging and promoting job creation and economic prosperity**

» **Building pride, responsibility and respect**

» **Improving health and wellbeing**

» **Promoting and protecting Thurrock's clean and green environment.**

1.2   In preparing a Design Strategy Thurrock Council aims to substantially raise design standards across the Borough. Thurrock Council recognises that there are many locations that have attractive, well designed environments that contribute much to the character of the Borough. Many are highly valued by the communities that live within them. Elsewhere there are examples of less attractive environments. Many feature standard layouts, house types and development forms that say very little about the character of Thurrock.

1.3   The Design Strategy has been informed by an understanding of the established character of towns and villages, landscape areas, the River Thames, and green infrastructure. Thurrock has a unique location benefiting from large areas of green belt land and riverfront whilst being in close proximity to London.

1.4   Thurrock's position by the River Thames has long since made it a strategic location and hub for industrial growth and the borough stands at the economic heart of the South East and Thames Gateway home to vital economic infrastructure of national and international importance.

1.5   The borough has often been described as a place of contrast and it is home to a number of paradoxes with Thurrock's network of busy towns and picturesque villages creating a thriving population. The area's riverside location and vast natural resources are the key to its past as well as its future development and success.

1.6   The Design Strategy is underpinned by six objectives:

1. **Improve the overall design quality standards of development in Thurrock, enhancing perceptions of place and reinforcing a strong sense of civic pride.**

2. **Innovate through design improvements in locations where the existing built environment requires regeneration**

3. **Enhance the best of the existing built and natural environments drawing on the heritage and identity of towns and villages in Thurrock**

4. **Provide clear guidance on the Council's expectations regarding the design approach to be adopted in Thurrock**

1.7   In order to achieve this the Council will:

5. **Work proactively with the development industry to bring forward proposals in a timely and effective way having regard to statutory policy requirements**

6. **Lead by example through the design and implementation of Council-led development projects in Thurrock**

1.8   The objectives will be implemented through the application of the Design Strategy to all projects coming forward within Thurrock.

1.9   In considering proposals the Council will not hesitate in refusing those schemes which do not reflect its design quality aspirations for the Borough. Both the National Planning Policy Framework and supporting National Planning Policy Guidance make clear the important role good design has in achieving sustainable development. This is further iterated through national design guidance which, in addition to this Design Strategy, forms a solid foundation from which to consider and assess proposals.

Landmark development, Grays Town Centre

Using the Design Strategy

1.10 The Design Strategy will be used as a tool to inform and assess proposals within existing locations, at all scales, from small infill sites through to larger regeneration and redevelopment schemes. It will also be used on new comprehensive development sites and masterplanning projects as and when they come forward within the Borough. It does not establish a rigid blueprint but a framework within which well-designed proposals can be shaped and assessed.

1.11 The Design Strategy focuses in particular on two main considerations:

1. **providing guidance on designing having regard to the context of a site, ensuring that proposals are embedded within an understanding of place and thereby avoiding anonymous, 'off-the-peg' schemes that have no design relevance to Thurrock; and**

2. **identifying five broad place typologies that exist within the Borough. These are representative of particular development types and uses. Guidance is provided on the special characteristics of each typology that are relevant to Thurrock as well and design considerations that must be taken into account as part of the design process.**

1.12 The Design Strategy is organised around four main Sections, in addition to the introduction:

Section 2 provides an overview of relevant national design policy and guidance which Thurrock Council will use in assessing and determining proposals.

Section 3 sets out Thurrock Council's requirements regarding assessing the context of a site, including a checklist of key questions that will need to be addressed as part of the design process. The section is illustrated with examples from within the Borough and elsewhere.

Section 4 gives details on the five broad place typologies. Again this section is illustrated with examples from within the Borough and elsewhere.

Section 5 provides a checklist of pre-submission, submission and post-submission design requirements that Thurrock Council will expect in support of planning application proposals.

1.13 A **technical appendix**, in lose-leaf format enabling it to be updated, will provide information on more detailed design standards.

1.14 The Design Strategy will be adopted by Thurrock Council as a Supplementary Planning Document. As such it will form part of the approved planning policy context against which proposals will be assessed. This gives it significant weight as part of the planning process.

2. The Importance of Good Design

Investing in Design Quality

2.1 Research by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) provide evidence that investing in design quality can add value to development and regeneration projects.

2.2 The HCA compared the different residential developments in terms of the quality of their designs and associated costs and benefits and found that a well-designed scheme does not need to cost more than others. A strong focus on design - how to relate buildings to streets, where to locate parking and how to include landscaping elements into the streetscape - can influence the quality of a development without a huge burden on cost (Urban Design Lessons: Housing Layout and Neighbourhood Quality HCA, 2014).

2.3 This view is supported by CABE which commissioned the redesign of a number of recent housing estate layouts judged to be poor under Building for Life criteria. The work, published in 2010 ('Simpler and Better: Housing design in everyone's interest'), found that designs can greatly – and very quickly – be improved without, for example, compromising on the use of standard house types. In some cases CABE found that it was possible to fit more homes on sites in better configurations. This suggests that sites can become better quality places without significant additional cost, delivering more product, more efficiently and/or more profitably, through the application of good design.

2.4 Where design requires additional investment, CABE argues that this generates greater value (Good Design: The Fundamentals, CABE 2009). Volume house builders can expect better designed developments to generate greater values and enjoy a greater competitive advantage (The Value of Good Design, CABE, 2002). Investment in the quality of streets is linked to retail and property prices (Paved with Gold: The Real Value of Street Design CABE, 2007). According to the Royal Institute of British Architects property agents believe that good design is an important consideration in the residential market (Good Design: It All Adds Up RIBA, 2011).

2.5 The potential value to be gained by investing in design quality should not be overlooked in how development can transform and alter the people's perception of place. It is no accident that attractive parts of Thurrock, areas such as the Avenues, Horndon on the Hill and Orsett for example benefit from higher property values. The quality of these types of locations can and will influence where people choose to live and invest.

Characterful housing that has stood the test of time, Orsett
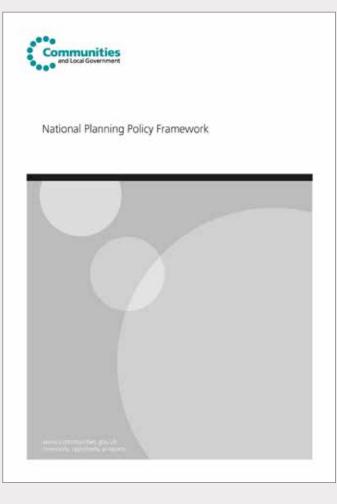
Planning and Design Policy

2.6 The Design Strategy has been produced within the context of the latest national and local planning policy and guidance. It supplements and expands upon the adopted Thurrock Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development. The Design Strategy does not seek to replicate policy rather expand and amplify, where necessary, in order to respond to the particular circumstances prevailing in Thurrock.

2.7 An overview of the key statutory policy context is set out on the next pages. These comprise:

» The National Planning Policy Framework;

» National Planning Practice Guidance: Design; and

» Thurrock Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development.

2.8 The review emphasises the policy requirement for careful consideration to be given to good design and design matters. Thurrock Council will use the support given by planning policy and guidance, and the guidance set out in this Design Strategy, to assess and scrutinise design issues with the aim of improving the overall quality of the built environment in the Borough.

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

2.9 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) includes design content relating to sustainable development, town centres, transport and highways, housing and residential environments and health. The importance of good design is expressed throughout the document and is one of the twelve Core Planning Principles that should underpin plan-making and decision-taking. Paragraph 17 states that planning should:

"Always seek to secure high quality design and good standards of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings."

2.10 The NPPF expands upon the issue of good design as part of Delivering Sustainable Development. Point 7, Requiring Good Design, is clear on the great importance the Government attaches to the design of the built environment. Paragraph 58 sets out how local planning policies should set out the quality of development that will be expected. (see Table 1: Policy Summary)

2.11 In accordance with paragraph 58 of the NPPF the Design Strategy, is not intended to be prescriptive in detail, or to impose particular forms or styles. It aims to stimulate the creation of proposals that are innovative, of high quality, inclusive and can be shown to respond well to context. The Design Strategy aims to encourage new development that can integrate well with the existing natural built, historic environment and landscape, not just in terms of how it looks but, importantly, how it will function.

National Planning Practice Guidance: Design (2014)

2.12 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), launched in March 2014, supports and expands on the design related content in the NPPF. Following recommendations of the Taylor Review (December 2012) the guidance rationalises content that was contained in a number of previous documents, including "By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System-Towards Better Practice" (2000), "Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention" (2004), and Going to Town: Improving Town Centre Access (2002). The guidance is intended to be a live resource that is continually updated.

2.13 The NPPG under the "Design" category, elaborates on the content expressed in the NPPF, expressing the importance of good design and how it can play a role in achieving wider planning objectives. It then goes on to set out what is a well-designed place, how development and spaces should be considered, planning processes and tools for good design and additional detail on types of development including residential development, town centres and streets, including a number of design principles. (see Table 1: Policy Summary).

Communities
and Local Government

National Planning Policy Framework

Thurrock Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development

2.14 The principal policy that the Design Strategy will supplement is Policy PMD2 which states:

"The Council requires all design proposals to respond to the sensitivity of the site and its surroundings, to fully investigate the magnitude of change that would result from the proposals, and mitigate against negative impacts.

All development proposals must satisfy the following criteria:

i.   ***Character*** *– Development must contribute positively to the character of the area in which it is proposed, and to surrounding areas that may be affected by it. It should seek to contribute positively to local views, townscape, heritage assets and natural features, and contribute to the creation of a positive sense of place.*

ii. ***Continuity*** *– Development proposals must promote continuity of street frontages and provide active ground floor frontages as far as reasonably possible.*

iii. ***Public Realm*** *– New development should contribute to improvements in the public realm by contributing sensitive planting, street furniture, appropriate lighting and public art where appropriate. The quality of the design and detailing of all development, including interfacing elements such as facades, steps and walls should be robust, engaging and contribute positively to the public realm.*

iv. ***Public and Private Amenity space*** *– Development proposals must provide adequate public and private amenity space in accordance with Thurrock's relevant adopted standards, particularly in areas with identified deficiencies. It should be attractive, safe, uncluttered, readily accessible and should promote play.*

v.   ***Accessibility*** *– Development proposals must allow easy and safe access for all members of the community. Development must also integrate land uses and all modes of transport but pedestrians and cyclists must be given priority over traffic in scheme design.*

vi. ***Permeability and Legibility*** *– Development should promote connections between places that people wish to use, including public transport links, community facilities and the Greengrid. Development should be designed to help people find their way and must be legible for all members of the community, providing recognisable routes using landmarks and signage where appropriate.*

vii. ***Safety and Security*** *– Development proposals must create safe and secure environments and reduce the scope for crime and fear of crime. Where appropriate, proposals should adopt the principles of Designing Out Crime set out in the Police Service's publication 'Secured by Design'.*

viii. ***Landscape*** *– Features contributing to the natural landscape in the Borough, such as woods, hedges, specimen trees, unimproved grassland, ponds and marshes, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced to maintain their landscape and wildlife value. Provision and enhancement of landscape features will also be required to contribute to multiple uses and/or eco-system services, including amenity, recreation, flood alleviation and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.*

ix. ***Diversity*** *– Development proposals must promote variety and choice through a mix of mutually compatible developments and uses.*

x.   ***Utilities*** *– Development proposals must accommodate public services and utilities without compromising design and layout. This includes providing suitable access to maintenance, waste and emergency service vehicles.*

xi. ***Energy and Resource use*** *– Development should be designed to minimise energy and resource use. This includes integrating sustainable construction techniques, siting and orientation of buildings to maximise energy and water efficiency.*

xii. ***Layout*** *– The layout of all development should optimise the assets of the site, while conforming to the appropriate standards for layout, design and access set out in the Layout and Standards SPD."*

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Other Key design Documents

2.15 In addition there are a number of non-statutory design documents that Thurrock Council will have regard to when assessing proposals. These include:

» The Urban Design Compendium (2000) and Compendium 2 (2007);

» Building for Life;

» Manual for Streets (2007) and Manual for Streets 2 (2010); and

» Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2013), Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

2.16 Thurrock Council will encourage applicants and developers to reference these documents setting out how and where best practice guidance has been incorporated as part of the design process.

2.17 In addition Thurrock Council will update and produce further guidance and background evidence documents to inform the design process. These will include:

» landscape characterisation for the Borough;

» conservation area appraisals and reviews of existing appraisals; and

» an active place strategy that will draw of work already published by Design Council CABE (Active by Design, 2014), Sport England and Public Health England (Active Design, October 2015) and the TCPA (Planning Healthy Weight Environments, December 2014).

2.18 Use of the full range of guidance and background evidence that is available will contribute to a thorough and rapid understanding of place in Thurrock. In turn this will readily facilitate a contextually sensitive response that will best meet the ambitions expressed by Thurrock Council through this Design Strategy.

Table 1: Policy Summary: *The relationship between design principles expressed in the NPPF, NPPG and this Design Strategy.*

National Planning Policy Framework	National Planning Practice Guidance	Thurrock Core Strategy	Thurrock Design Strategy
Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.	**A well designed public space is lively** – public spaces available for everyone to use, bring neighbourhoods together, provide space for social activities and civic life.	Policy CSTP22 - Thurrock Design: V Policy PMD2 – Design and Layout: ii, iii, v, vii	Making connections: C1, C3
Places are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.	**A well designed space has a distinctive character** – what makes a place special and valued reflecting the areas, function, history and potential need for change.	Policy CSTP22: Thurrock Design: I, VI Policy PMD2 – Design and Layout: I, iii, viii	Understanding the place: A1, A2 Working with site features: B5
Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.	**A well designed space promotes ease of movement** – being able to move safely, conveniently and efficiently on routes which are well connected.	Policy CSTP22 - Thurrock Design: I, III Policy PMD2 – Design and Layout: I, ii, iii, vi	Working with site features: B2 Making connections: C1, C2, C3
Respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.	**A well designed space is attractive** – how a place looks, feels and even smells.	Policy CSTP22- Thurrock Design: I, III Policy PMD2 – Design and Layout: I, iii, iv	Understanding the place: A1, A4, A5, A6 Working with site features: B1, B3 Building in sustainability: D1, D2
Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks.	**A well designed place supports mixed uses and tenures** – a good mix of uses and tenures makes a place economically and socially successful. **A well designed place is functional** – fit for purpose, delivering the intended function and achieves value for money.	Policy CSTP22 - Thurrock Design: I, VII Policy PMD2 – Design and Layout: iv, ix, x, xii	Understanding the place: A3, A7 Working with site features: B2, B3, B4, B5 Making connections: C1, C2, C3, C4 Building in sustainability: D3
Developments that function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development.	**A well designed place is adaptable and resilient** – is able to adapt to changing circumstances and demands.	Policy CSTP22 - Thurrock Design: II, VII, IV, VII Policy PMD2 – Design and Layout: xi	Understanding the place: A7 Working with site features: B3, B5 Making connections: C1, C2, C3 Building in sustainability: D1, D2, D3, D4

Understanding the Character of Thurrock

2.19 Character comprises many elements which make up the whole. In Thurrock this encompasses townscape, landscape and seascape. For any size of development, and at each stage in a project, an assessment can be made as to whether a decision is harming or benefiting the character of a development, the site or the surrounding area, see the accompanying diagram.

2.20 Thurrock has markedly contrasting landscapes; from open and relatively tranquil and undeveloped farmland in the rural parts of the Borough to the north, to the contrast of the densely developed urban areas and industrial development adjacent to windswept grazing marshes along the Thames riverside.

2.21 The level and expansive coastal grazing marsh landscapes within Thurrock stamp their identity on the Borough. These vast open spaces have a wild and windswept character that is accentuated by broad expanses of sky. The marshland grasses create a constantly moving and changing tapestry of vegetation the character of which is influenced by the seasons and daily by light.

2.22 Although marred in places by landfill sites and the clutter of pylons and power lines, the marshlands have an air of ancient permanence that contrasts sharply with the ever-changing urban forms adjacent to them. Of all the different landscapes within the Borough the intrinsic character of the marshland landscapes has remained essentially unchanged for centuries.

2.23 The Thames forms a distinctive 'riverscape' along the southern edge of the Borough. In the west near Aveley Marshes, the Thames is narrow, widening towards Holehaven Creek in the east. The banks of the river are penetrated by large creeks, smaller inlets and bays. Numerous jetties, wharfs and piers punctuate the northern bank, which is heavily industrialised for most of its length between Aveley Marshes and Tilbury, and again around Holehaven Creek.

The former State Cinema is an impressive landmark, Grays

Royal Opera House workshops, offices and facilities, Purfeet

Former Bata shoe factory

RSPB Visitor Centre, Rainham Marshes

Grand, listed house in Horndon on the Hill (Hill House)

2.24   The presence of industry creates a dramatic riverscape of angular machinery and buildings, dock activity, river traffic and changing light reflected on the constantly moving water of the Thames. This contrasts with adjacent open and low-lying marshes that accentuate the vertical features of the docks. DPWorld Settlement has sprawled along an east-west band to the north of the river and at South Ockendon. Road and rail infrastructure, pylons and power lines are prominent features within the urban fringe landscapes.

2.25   A successful approach to working with character is not necessarily about developing more of the same or screening what is different. Good design makes the most of what is already valued, and contributes to a sense of place by providing sustainable multiple benefits to the development and the surrounding area. Where a proposal cannot meet the expectations of character policies, a proposal may be refused or additional changes on site or off site, will be sought to reduce or compensate for the shortfall.

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Church of St Peter and St Paul, Horndon on the Hill

3. Designing in Context

Site Appraisal

3.1 The starting point for every development proposal must be a detailed study of the site and its physical context. This is of key importance to:

» gain a proper understanding of place; and

» establish locally distinctive and responsive designs.

3.2 An appraisal will need to cover many aspects of a site and its physical context. In Thurrock the diverse nature of settlements and landscapes mean that the need for a robust appraisal is critical to the success of the design process. Site appraisal should not be viewed simply as a means to an end. Appraisals that fail to be robust can undermine the potential design quality of a development proposal as will proposals that fail to respond to the key issues that arise from the appraisal process.

3.3 Appraisals should be seen as vital evidence that the site and its physical context has been well understood thereby underpinning the key design principles and objectives for development. Clearly the level of detail will respond to the size and complexity of the site – the appraisal of a small infill scheme, for example, will be more straightforward than that of a substantial regeneration or development site.

3.4 In preparing a site appraisal Thurrock Council will expect four main considerations to be taken into account:

A. Understanding the place

B. Working with site features

C. Making connections

D. Building in sustainability

3.5 Each of these considerations are discussed in more detail over the following pages.

A. Understanding the Place

3.6 A proper understanding of place is crucial to ensuring that design proposals respond positively to a given location. In order to ensure that new developments take account of the character of an existing place the Council will require proposals to demonstrate how the design and layout has responded to:

1. The strategic and local setting and key views

2. Strategic Green Infrastructure and landscape

3. Character, layout and local features

4. Site boundaries and adjacent land uses

A1) Appreciating the strategic and local setting and preserving key views

3.7 Where a site is located, and how that site relates to the strategic features of Borough, is a natural starting point. A robust site appraisal should begin with appreciating the site's location in relation to the key physical and geographical features within Thurrock, for example principal routes, the River Thames, the principal settlements, landform and rural areas. It will also include an analysis of the immediate setting, including local streets, spaces, land-uses and features.

3.8 The topography of the site and wider landform, in combination with natural and built features, all influence how development will affect views. Views of the site are important if development is likely to affect the setting of existing landmarks or the wider landscape. Retaining such views can contribute to the structure and legibility of a new development.

3.9 Thurrock Council will expect an analysis of views within and around a site and how these have been accounted for by the design process. Depending on the site, surrounding features, and the scale and type of development proposed, a robust landscape assessment may be required to establish existing conditions and assess the potential effects on the wider setting.

3.10 In addition the landscape character and setting, biodiversity interest and green infrastructure of a site also contributes significantly to quality of place. Thurrock Council wants to ensure that new development proposals:

» make the most of existing green spaces;

» create new spaces that are well integrated with wider greenspace and green infrastructure networks;

» sit comfortably within the varied landscapes Thurrock; and

» ensure that the Borough's biodiversity and habitats are protected and enhanced.

Street market in Grays town centre

Market time, Grays town centre

QE2 Dartford Crossing is a distinctive landmark in Thurrock

Thurrock Thameside nature park

Retained trees contribute to the character of new development, Orsett

3.11 Thurrock Council has commissioned a landscape characterisation study. When complete this will provide a detailed understanding about the diverse mosaic of different landscape elements that make up the Borough. Developers will be expected to demonstrate how sites relate to the wider landscape context.

A2) Incorporating strategic green infrastructure features as part of a landscape framework

3.12 Green infrastructure relates to the wide variety of landscape, vegetation and habitat features that exist within the Borough. Thurrock Council aims to establish a high quality, functional green and open space network that is well related to a wider network in the Thames corridor.

3.13 Thurrock's Green Infrastructure includes a wide variety of green and open scape and natural features, from the expanse of the marshes, fenland and farmed woodlands; parks, highways verges, and private gardens; ponds, trees and vegetation. The spaces provide multiple functions including recreation, cultural heritage, wildlife habitat, flood management and cleaner air and water.

3.14 To gain the most from these spaces they need to be designed and managed for multifunction benefits and to be connected to the wider network of spaces by recreational routes and wildlife corridors. Well designed development will contribute to Thurrock's Green Infrastructure and respond to the Green Grid network of green and open spaces. Thurrock Council will expect development proposals to:

» make the most of existing green spaces;

» create new spaces that are well integrated with wider greenspace and green infrastructure networks;

» sit comfortably within the varied landscapes Thurrock; and

» ensure that the Borough's biodiversity and habitats are protected and enhanced.

3.15 The site appraisal should inform how proposals can work with existing site features and incorporate them into the green infrastructure that forms part of a robust landscape framework. A place check of features should be incorporated into the appraisal and in turn proposals for the site to demonstrate how the proposal has considered key elements such as:

» The role and function of different locations and places

» Footpath and cycle linkages to wider network

» Accessibility for all users

» Healthy network of routes to promote exercise

» SUDs and water attenuation

» The mosaic of habitats and whether they comprise key designations of spaces or corridors

» Types of grassland, hedgerows, trees to inform the components of landscape proposals

» The potential for creating productive landscapes, with spaces including community orchards, allotments and creating, protecting and enhancing features such as hedgerows and trees with edible fruits

Thames footpath and cycleway, Rainham Marshes

Grays Park in Autumn

Structure and grain contributes to the character of a place

Larger scale development defines a key approach into Grays town centre

A3) Understanding and responding to the character of surrounding development

3.16 A well-designed scheme will be expected to interpret and respond to the character of surrounding development. This comprises the nature, combination and appearance of buildings, structures, streets, spaces together with landscape and natural features. It can be analysed having regard to structure, grain, scale, and density.

3.17 How the site and surrounding area has evolved and changed over time provides important context. It influences the basic **structure** of a place i.e. the pattern of development block, streets and spaces, and its **grain** – the composition of development blocks be that a few significant buildings or a large number of small buildings, or a combination of both.

3.18 Thurrock Council will expect an analysis of the prevailing structure and grain of a particular development location to show how the design has responded, where appropriate, to its context. OS mapping and figure ground analysis will reveal the structure and pattern of development including its grain as well as reference to historic map data.

3.19 **Scale** is used to describe the size of blocks and also the size of individual buildings. **Mass** relates to the overall volume. Analysing the scale and massing of existing development in the vicinity of a site, or in a comparable location, should inform the design of proposals and help integrate them with the existing context.

3.20 **Density** is a measure of the amount of development in a given area, usually expressed as dwellings per hectare. Understanding the prevailing density of an area will help reinforce an understanding of the site and how the design of new development should respond. Different densities within a development may be acceptable provided that the design response can relate well to the wider context.

3.21 In addition, architectural detail and materials also have a significant impact on the character and identity of a place. The site appraisal will record any key features that contribute to a place's identity with an audit of materials used. Good design uses this information to create a proposal that is distinctive yet locally relevant, without resorting to pastiche or to justify more of the same.

3.22 There are many parts of Thurrock which have a positive and attractive character. In areas that have a less distinct or attractive character Thurrock Council will expect proposals to establish a positive benchmark for change, with design quality that raises the bar.

3.23 In assessing character regard must also be had to the broad typology of the area taking account of those identified within this Strategy – ***Urban Centre and Transport Hubs; Residential Neighbourhood; Commerce and Industry; Thurrock Lakeside***; and **Village Locations** (see **Section 4**).

A rich palette of materials and historic building types, Horndon on the Hill

Attractive, contemporary design, Cory Environmental Trust visitor centre

Traditional housing in the Orsett conservation area

An acoustic fence has been carefully integrated for HS1

Open space provision incorporates noise bund, Brooklands, Milton Keynes

A4) Responding to site boundaries and adjacent land uses

3.24   The immediate boundaries and adjacent land uses of a site must be clearly identified and accounted for as part of the design process and will have a significant impact on the type of design response required. This will include issues of maintaining privacy and amenity where residential development edges a site; protecting against noise and disturbance where major infrastructure or industrial uses edge a site; or ensuring that development positively addresses edges that comprise an area of open space, waterbody, or riverside, notably the Thames.

3.25   Thurrock Council will expect an appraisal to demonstrate how the design relates to site edges, and how the proposal has appropriately responded. This will help to inform the composition of uses that the site should accommodate and where appropriate uses should be located relative to one another.

3.26   There are a large number of major industrial and commercial areas across Thurrock, much of it focussed on the River Thames corridor clustered around Purfleet, West Thurrock, Tilbury Docks, and Coryton. Major transport routes and corridors also cross parts of the Borough including the M25, A13, A1089 and A1014 as well as local, national and international rail routes.

3.27   Sites within or close to these areas have a challenging context to work with and in most cases the design response will need to consider the proximity and scale of these uses and how their impacts could affect new development. Site layout and orientation away from the bad neighbour must be carefully considered, as well as opportunities for physical interventions such as landscaped bunds. In addition, the positioning of less noise sensitive uses within the site can minimise impacts.

B. Working with Site Features

3.28 As well as green infrastructure and landscape considerations there are other site features that must inform the appraisal process and eventual design proposal. These can have a positive impact, heritage assets and water features for example, or must be addressed in order for a safe environment to be established, dealing with issues of contamination for example.

3.29 In appraising a site's features and immediate context the Council will expect proposals to demonstrate how the design and layout has responded to:

1. Heritage assets

2. Topography

3. Water features

4. Physical and hidden constraints

5. Green Infrastructure Open space and landscape framework

B1) Identifies, preserves and enhances heritage assets

3.30 Heritage assets include formally designated listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments. There are other buildings, structures or other features that could be of historic or cultural interest even though they aren't formally listed.

3.31 Within the area there may also be wider historical cultural references that could be exploited to create a place that is distinctive and locally grounded. Such features must be carefully considered as part of the design process, not only to preserve or enhance their character and setting but also as features around which proposals can be shaped. This will contribute towards establishing local character and place identity.

Thames waterfront is an important asset in Thurrock

Preserved dovecote provides a focal point, Purfleet

Renovated farm buildings support a mix of uses, High House, Purfleet

Housing responds to sloping site, Purfleet

Housing at The Garrison turns its back on the river

Development at Grays waterfront positively addresses the Thames

B2) Works with the existing topography of the site

3.32 The landform of a site can constrain development if it includes steep slopes or highly visible areas with a sensitive natural or built setting. Prominent areas create opportunities for new viewpoints and locations for landmark buildings. Developments that work with the contours of a site will help to create a logical structure. They can also address matters of local drainage, micro-climate and aspect. The latter can contribute towards maximising solar gain.

B3) Positively addresses water bodies and courses in and around the site including the River Thames

3.33 Thurrock has a variety of water features that include rivers, lakes and water courses with The Thames being the most significant asset. The Thames provides an historic focus for Thurrock as well as supporting a diverse range of major employment sites and centres for local and national economic activity including the ports. Significant marsh and grassland habitats adjoining the river also support a diverse range of species, particularly birds.

3.34 Where water features are included at the edge of or within a site, development must be designed to have a positive relationship including with active frontages and a well-integrated public realm. Water features can also be used to create focal points in new developments, within public spaces or wider greenspace networks for example, contributing to the character of a place and enhancing biodiversity.

B4) Identifies and mitigates physical constraints.

3.35 Physical constraints can include redundant buildings, access roads, hard standings and overhead transmission lines. Hidden constraints include underground services and areas of former landfill or potential contamination. Whilst some of these constraints can be moved others will need to be integrated into the development design and layout.

Typical residential neighbourhood addressing a waterside location

B5) Identifies and incorporates green infrastructure, existing open spaces and wider networks as part of a robust landscape framework

3.36   Well-designed developments must carefully integrate open space into the layout as part of a landscape and open space framework. Opportunities to create focal points with spaces should be exploited to help create a logical structure and enhance a sense of place. More informal spaces can also be valuable for linking wider green corridors and protecting and enhancing biodiversity and their habitats.

3.37   Thurrock Council will reject proposals that have not fully considered the importance of open space as an integral part of the development layout.

3.38   In some parts of the Borough the Council have identified a requirement for additional open space to meet local need over and above that required as part of development proposals. Developers should discuss opportunities to help address shortfall with the Council including enhancing existing open spaces enabling them to be used more intensively.

Open space overlooked by adjoining houses, Orsett

The Beach at Grays is an attractive amenity

Playspace in Grays Park

C. Making Connections

3.39 A key consideration in the design process is establishing safe and effective connections for all modes between development sites and their surroundings. This contributes towards integrating development into existing settlement patterns as well as encouraging sustainable and healthier patterns of movement. Connected places also assist in establishing integrated communities, particularly where the co-location of shared facilities can benefit existing as well as future residents e.g. new schools.

3.40 Thurrock Council will expect development proposals to build on guidance offered through documents including 'Manual for Streets' and 'Manual for Streets 2' to ensure that schemes consider quality of place as well as movement and safety. Key considerations must include:

1. Opportunities to integrate development with existing movement networks

2. Establishing a clear and legible hierarchy of streets

3. Encouraging active lifestyles and supporting public transport through design and connections

4. Providing for car parking that does not dominate the street-scene

C1) Integrating the site to the local movement networks

3.41 In Thurrock there are a wide variety of movement networks that have been established over time. These including strategic networks of major roads and rail corridors which provide access across the Borough and beyond, but can provide a barrier to local movement patterns. It also includes a finer network of local streets, footpaths and cycleways ranging in character from busy high streets, tree lined residential streets, terraced streets, and rural lanes.

3.42 Thurrock Council will expect a careful assessment of existing movement networks ensuring that proposals are designed to be integrated with existing routes. This is particularly critical to enable access existing local facilities, including shops, schools, open spaces and local play and sports pitchess, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. This will ensure that existing and new communities can benefit from as wide a range of facilities as possible.

3.43 In areas with a more traditional and finer pattern of streets, existing connections will more readily inform the pattern of connections within the site. The site appraisal should also consider whether there are any existing footpaths, public rights of way or bridleways around or across the site and in creating a design response. The design of development could include footpath routes through the site which will incorporate or connect to these existing routes. Again this ensures that different neighbourhoods and communities are linked together.

3.44 In locations where the existing context is dominated by cul-de-sac layout, it will be important to make the most of the fewer opportunities that exist to integrate connections to and through the site. This may also create opportunities to change the character of peripheral distributor roads identifying place where frontage development can be introduced together with space for pedestrian and cyclists.

C2) Establishes a clear and legible pattern of streets

3.45 The context of existing development and movement patterns will influence the design of a logical network and hierarchy of streets. An effective pattern of streets can include primary, secondary and tertiary streets, depending on the size of the site, around which development is structured.

3.46 Streets must link together key locations, uses, and public spaces within and around the site providing access for all modes but giving priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Thurrock Council also wants to establish healthy places that encourage and facilitate activity (see C3). Clearly access for emergency services is also a key design consideration.

New street linking into existing street pattern, Grays

3.47 In design terms all streets must be fronted by development, with principal entrances, doors and windows addressed the public realm. This provides a sense of enclosure as well as opportunities for passive surveillance.

3.48 Thurrock Council will also require street trees to be incorporated as part of the hierarchy of streets in all developments. Street trees already contribute significantly to the character and identity of different locations in Thurrock. Elements of on-street parking should also be accommodated as part of the street network.

3.49 The hierarchy of streets is not meant to be rigidly applied and does not necessarily mean that it is always more important to provide for pedestrians than it is for other modes. However, they should at least be considered first ensuring that the street will serve all of its users in a balanced way.

3.50 Primary streets form the main points of access capable of integrating public transport routes and also providing an attractive environment for pedestrian and cyclists. Primary streets should be defined by development that is greater in form, scale and density with a focal points for schools, shops and community facilities.

3.51 Secondary streets will generally be narrower, with clear residential frontages. The street should be designed with alignments, building lines or other public realm features that establish a traffic calmed environment. Junctions with primary streets must be emphasised through provision of a building corner, differentiated public realm, and tree planting. This aids legibility by highlighting the change from one type of street to another.

3.52 Tertiary streets will comprise a variety of lanes, mews, and courts providing local connections between secondary streets. This contributes towards the overall permeability of the development. Shared surfaces could be incorporated together with home zones.

Secondary street with parking, Purfleet

Defined corner at junction of streets, Grays

'The Avenues' provide exemplar residential streets, Grays

Shared surface tertiary street, Grays

On-street parking provision overlooked by houses, Purfleet

Parking square defined by street trees, Purfleet

C3) Promotes active and healthy lifestyles and public transport

3.53 Streets that are well connected to existing movement networks, public transport services and local facilities have the potential to increase travel choice. They can in turn make walking and cycling more attractive as a mode of choice for local journeys or simply for recreation and therefore encourage "active travel". Local connections to existing schools or for new education facilities in the new development in particular will offer the opportunities for walking to school.

3.54 Integrating walking and cycling routes with a network of open spaces, green corridors and recreational routes within and outside developments will also promote active recreational lifestyles including walking and cycling for leisure and sport activities and play. Reference should be made to Sport England and Public Health England publication '**Active Design**' (2015) and CABE Design Council '**Active by Design**' (2014). The TCPA publication '**Planning Healthy Weight Environments**' (December 2014) also provides useful guidance.

C4) Integrates car parking and provides for cycle parking

3.55 Parking is a critical design consideration. Adequate space must be provided to serve the proposed development, assessed within the context of proximity to public transport. A mix of both on-street and on-plot car parking should be provided, with designs allowing for discrete groups to reduce overall visual impact within the street-scene.

3.56 Tree and landscape planting should be provided to further reduce visual impact particularly for on-street parking provision or where substantial areas of car parking are required for a particular use or mix of uses.

3.57 Provision should also be made for cycle parking and storage, together with an allowance for electric charging points.

D. Building in Sustainability

3.58 Sustainable design encompasses wider considerations of site orientation, topography and local micro-climate as well as more detailed design matters or resource minimisation and efficiency. In appraising a site's features and immediate context Thurrock Council will expect proposals to demonstrate how the design and layout has responded to:

1. Local micro-climates

2. Opportunities to integrate local and sustainable energy generation

3. Integrating SUDs

4. Adaptability over time

D1. Designs for local micro-climates

3.59 A robust site appraisal will assess how the site is oriented in relation to the local topography and weather pattern, including the sun, prevailing wind conditions and take into account other site features that will have an effect on local micro-climates. An important related consideration will be topography and aspect and how this can be used to inform design and layout and contribute towards passive solar gain, for example.

D2. Identifies opportunities local and sustainable energy generation

3.60 A site appraisal should identify opportunities for integrating on site energy generation including renewable energy. There may be sites that are located close to industrial activities that could take advantage of waste heat. Sites may have the potential to be developed with their own combined heat and power system.

3.61 At a more detailed level principles for building design at the master planning stage should able to guide the detailed design of new buildings with key objectives to maximise resource efficiency through, for example, designing for solar gain and minimising heat loss through insulation and thermal mass of building fabrics.

3.62 Developers should consider including or at least ensuring that developments are designed to be adaptable to the integration of new energy and heating technologies as they become more viable in future.

D3. Incorporates sustainable drainage measures into the design and layout

3.63 Assessing the hydrology of the site, along with landform, geology, drainage and flood risk should reveal the scope for integrating SUDs into development with appropriate measures that will work best for the site. An important related consideration will be the green infrastructure across and around the site, presence of existing watercourses and features, and how these can all be integrated into a comprehensive landscape framework.

D4. Includes space for storage and adaptability over time

3.64 A critical but frequently overlooked part of the design process is the inclusion of adequate space for servicing and storage. This must include provision for wheeled bin and recycling provision, utilities meters, cycle and more general storage space e.g. for pushchairs and lawnmowers, and for the servicing of commercial and business premises. As a general rule such features must be seamlessly integrated as part of the overall design and built envelope of the building, be unobtrusive from the public realm and readily accessible. In addition design proposals must have reference to Building for Life principles covering use and adaptability over time.

Space for parking, cycle, and wheeled bin storage integral to the design, Newhall, Harlow

SUDs incorporated into open space provision, Brooklands, Milton Keynes

Summary Appraisal Checklist

3.65 A summary of the key questions to consider for the site appraisal is set out below. Thurrock Council will expect these questions to be addressed as part of the overall site appraisal process.

| Key Design Considerations	
A. Understanding the Place	
Where is the site located and how does it relate to Thurrock and key strategic features?	
What is the defined landscape character of the surrounding area?	
Are there any key views that should be preserved?	
Are there any green infrastructure features within the site and surroundings biodiversity assets and habitats?	
What is the structure and grain of development around the site?	
What is the scale and massing of buildings like in the locality?	
What is the prevailing density of the surrounding area?	
What land uses are within the site and surrounding area?	
Are there any noteworthy elements of built form detail?	
B. Working with Site Features	
Are there any heritage asset features in or around the site?	
What is the topography like across the site?	
Does the site include any water bodies, water courses, or lie adjacent to the River Thames?	
Does the site contain any physical constraints and how will these be accounted for as part of the potential development layout?	
Does the site include any existing publically accessible open space?	
How does the site relate to any adjoining open space networks?	
C. Establishing Connections	
Does the local movement network provide opportunities to integrate development with its surroundings?	
What is the proposed site street hierarchy and how does it function?	
How can the movement network within the site encourage active lifestyles?	
What is the potential demand for car parking and how can this best be managed?	
Are public transport services available and how could they be accessed from and through the development?	
D. Building in Sustainability	
What are the micro-climatic conditions?	
Are there opportunities for local and sustainable energy generation?	
What is the scope for integrating SUDs into the site?	
Is provision made for wheeled bins, recycling and storage?	
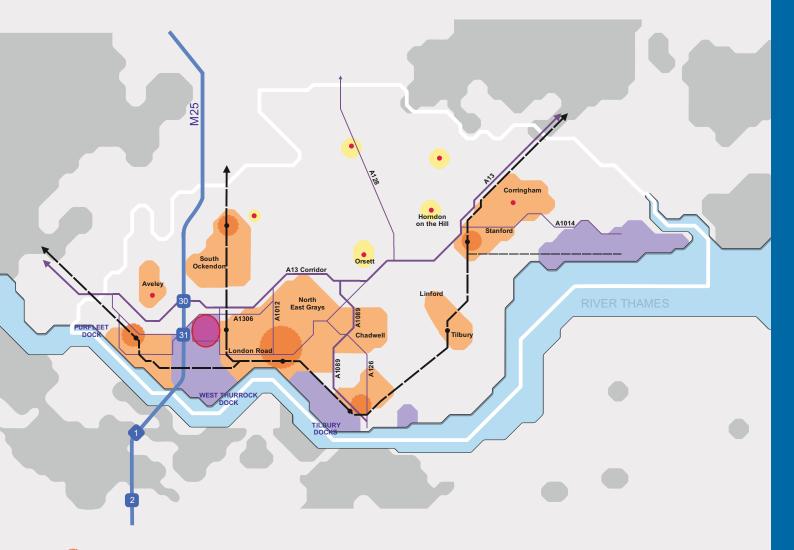
	How Addressed?

4. Place Typologies in Thurrock

Identifying Place Typologies

4.1 From an understanding of different locations and places in Thurrock, as well as the types of development proposal likely to come forward within the Borough, five broad 'place typologies' can be identified. Each is representative of typical locations within the Borough, representing a mix of different land uses at different scales and intensities. They draw on the best place examples in Thurrock as well as other best practice examples from elsewhere.

Legend:

- Urban Centres and Transport Hubs
- Residential Neighbourhoods
- Village Locations
- Thurrock Lakeside
- Commerce and Industry

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4.2   The Place Typologies comprise:

One. Urban Centres and Transport Hubs

This typology encompasses town, neighbourhood and local centres and the built environment around the immediate edges of those centres. Urban centres will be characterised as mixed-use locations, the focus for retail, commercial, community and education uses, with good accessibility particularly by foot, cycle and public transport.

Locations that immediately adjoin the Urban Centres are also characterised as mixed-use locations but with secondary commercial, retail or community development together with a significant proportion of residential development, the proportion reflecting the status and size of the centre.

The typology also includes transport hubs within existing urban centres, around which more intensive forms of mixed-use development will be encouraged.

Two. Residential Neighbourhoods

This typology will form a substantial proportion of development coming forward within Thurrock. It comprises the bulk of residential-led development within which different character areas should be defined depending on context. Residential Neighbourhoods will also be supported by provision of mixed use neighbourhood and local centres, depending on the size of the scheme and location relative to existing centres (see guidance in Typology One).

Residential Neighbourhoods must provide a range of different housing reflecting local need, include a range of tenures and affordable homes, and be constructed at a range of densities depending on accessibility and location.

As a general rule higher density development will be acceptable around locations with good public transport accessibility and a mix of commercial and community uses close by, whilst lower density development will be appropriate to provide the interface between urban and rural locations.

High Street, Grays

Established residential neighbourhood, Grays

New residential neighbourhood, Orsett

Port facilities, Tilbury

Village centre, Horndon on the Hill

Infill development, Horndon on the Hill

Three: Commerce and Industry

This typology includes large format retail and industrial facilities which are an important characteristic of Thurrock, particularly associated with the port activities at Tilbury, London Gateway and Purfleet. It also encompasses smaller scale commercial and employment uses where these form part of a more comprehensive, residential led mixed-use development.

Four: Thurrock Lakeside

As part of the broader Commerce and Industry typology it is important to recognise the significance of Thurrock Lakeside as an economic driver and attractor within the Borough. Specific guidance is highlighted for the Lakeside area.

Five: Village Locations

This typology captures the variety of villages that exist outside the main urban areas in Thurrock. Many have historic cores and have experienced some relatively modest expansion. Although the potential for change is likely to be limited, the ability to integrate development in a way that relates well to character of these villages and the landscapes in which they sit will be important considerations.

Typology One:
Urban Centres and Transport Hubs

4.3 Urban Centres, and the areas that edge onto them, are key locations within Thurrock. They provide a focus for a mix of different uses including commercial, retail, employment community and civic functions, and also include residential development. They are also characterised by being highly accessible for a variety of modes including public transport. As such the typology includes Transport Hubs particularly where they are well related to existing urban centres.

4.4 Urban Centres will also include principal streets and public spaces as well as important notable buildings. This will traditionally have been a church for example, but also includes other grand civic and commercial buildings that will often contribute significantly to the character and identity of a particular town, village or neighbourhood.

4.5 It is critical that Urban Centres are distinguished within the overall pattern of development in order to provide a clear hierarchy, ensuring that the legibility of existing and proposed places is maintained and enhanced making them easy to navigate and move around.

4.6 The transition between the Urban Centre and surrounding neighbourhoods is also an important consideration. Development around the edges of a town centre or large neighbourhood centre could include a larger proportion of other uses that complement the function of the centre as well as higher density forms of residential development. Development around smaller neighbourhood or local centres might only contain a smaller proportion of other uses or be entirely residential in nature with higher density forms appropriate.

4.7 Thurrock Council places a great deal of importance on ensuring that Urban Centres, including Transport Hubs, are well designed, accessible mixed-use places that naturally form a focus for existing and future communities. This will apply to proposals coming forward within established town and neighbourhood locations as well as the design and layout of new town, neighbourhood and local centres.

Community and retail space with residential above, Newhall, Harlow

Typical Local centre providing a mixed use focal point in an accessible location

Residential development above a mix of ground floor uses

Typical neighbourhood centre with primary school, community and retail space co-located and a square providing a focal point

Typology One:
Urban Centre and Transport Hubs

Key Design Requirements

1. Thurrock Council will require the focus for mixed-use facilities that generate the highest levels of activity to be located in the most accessible locations. This will typically on the primary street network and particularly streets that are well served by public transport services.

2. Proposals for Urban Centres must form part of the overall hierarchy of centres across the Borough. On major development sites a number of neighbourhood and local centres will be required to serve the needs of the development and adjoining communities.

3. Attractive, clearly defined and convenient links between new and existing mixed-use centres, edge of centre locations and residential neighbourhoods must be provided in order will make them easy to access. Linkages must be designed to encourage walking and cycling through use of lighting, signage, layout, and passive surveillance from adjoining development.

4. All Urban Centres at all scales must provide for the co-location of different land uses to form mixed-use 'hubs'. This can be achieved by clustering community, education, small scale employment and commercial uses together in a single, accessible location. Co-location of different uses can help support the function of the Urban Centre by encouraging linked trips. This also has the benefit of providing a focus for new and existing communities.

5. Thurrock Council will expect vertical mixed use development to be incorporated into Urban Centres providing alternative ground floor uses below upper floors of residential development. Ground level floor to ceiling heights should be a height that is capable of accommodating a range of uses including retail. In these locations there may be opportunities for taller buildings subject to a wider consideration of site context. Such proposals will be considered on their own merits having regard to the advice on tall buildings at point 11 below.

6. Key facilities including retail units, schools, community buildings and other uses must be carefully integrated as part of the over design of the centre with main frontages that clearly address principal street and key spaces. Car parking must be discretely accommodated away from the streetscene, or as part of a well-designed focal square or space. Servicing access must be away from principal areas of public real and well screened.

7. Principle streets and key spaces must be well overlooked by the main frontages and entrance points of principal land uses that generate activity. Buildings designs will be expected to emphasise ground level uses with floor to ceiling heights and are adaptable to changes in use over time.

8. Thurrock Council will expect a focal point to be provided as part of the design and layout of Urban Centres of a scale appropriate to that centre. This should comprise a 'high street', square, park or garden around which all principal land uses are grouped.

9. It will be appropriate to consider the character of established town centres within the Borough to identify design references that can influence the design of local and neighbourhood centres. This will provide a contemporary interpretation of existing mixed-use environments that are locally distinctive and 'of their time'.

10. Within Urban Centres proposals for small residential infill development must pay careful regard to context but Thurrock Council will also encourage more innovative and contemporary architectural styles and layouts in order to demonstrate how places develop over time.

11. Tall buildings are not a common feature of existing Urban Centres in Thurrock. Where proposals come forward they must be focused in the largest centres in the Borough where these are highly accessible by a variety of modes. Thurrock Council will assess proposals on their merits having particular regard to accommodating parking and servicing requirements, pedestrian entrances, the mix of ground floor uses and their relationship with the public realm; issues of daylight, sunlight and overshadowing; and wind and micro climate around the base of the building. Reference will be made to the Historic England Advice Note 4 'Tall Buildings' (December 2015), and any subsequent guidance.

Small business 'Enterprise Centre', Priors Hall, Corby

New square provides a focal point, Telford

Local centre with retail space below resiedential accommodation overlooking a central square

12. The treatment of boundaries and edges of developments in Urban Centres must carefully relate to the public realm both visually and functionally. Blank walls or elevations and extensive use of fences will not be appropriate or acceptable design responses. Security measures must be carefully integrated into the design and landscape layout to be functional but without being visually intrusive. The design of boundary treatments should allow for future growth including reconfiguration to increase connectivity where required.

13. The **frontages** of the development (buildings and landscape) border the public realm serving a transport hub should join seamlessly with it. Highest design standards should be applied to the primary frontages that define the public realm outside the hub.

14. Higher **density** and more compact development forms will be encouraged to support transport services. Appropriate design strategies should be used to **mitigate the noise, privacy** and the other challenges associated with proximity to transport hubs.

15. Large-scale developments near transport hubs should pay special attention to the **permeability** and **walkability** in site layout in order to maximize the advantage of the adjacency to transport facilities. If there are opportunities to create direct pedestrian routes through the development to the transport hubs or town centre destinations, these will be encouraged.

16. If the edge of the development fringes the primary route to the transport hub, alternative **security measures** should be implemented so inactive features such as long fences/blank walls do not dominate the public realm.

Typology Two:
Residential Neighbourhoods

4.8   Residential Neighbourhoods are a key typology, and will continue to represent the most substantial development opportunity within Thurrock. Creating attractive, healthy, safe and sustainable places for existing and future residents to live is a key priority for Thurrock Council.

4.9   Within the Borough Residential Neighbourhoods encompass a significant proportion of the existing housing stock, much of which was constructed inter-War and post-War. It provides a mix of residential development and other facilities but in places lacks a strong place identity, including the use of standard house types and cul-de-sac layouts that are not particular to Thurrock.

4.10   Thurrock Council wishes to raise the quality and design standards of proposed residential neighbourhoods within Borough, be that infill development or more comprehensive development proposals, a major urban extension for example. The Design Strategy will be an important part of achieving this aim.

4.11   In assessing proposals for new residential neighbourhoods, at all scales, Thurrock Council will expect to see how the design proposals have responded to context and the how the key considerations set out in Section 3 of this Strategy have been taken into account.

Typical Primary Street with corners defined by development, street tree planting and space to accommodate public transport

Street trees and high quality material help derive the character of the development in Corby

Typical Secondary Street with on-street parking provision, street tree planting and overlooked by frontage development

Typology Two:
Residential Neighbourhoods

Key Design Requirements

1. A clear hierarchy of streets and spaces integrated with a robust landscape framework must form part of the basic layout of Residential Neighbourhoods. Thurrock Council will require proposed development to have a permeable layout and integrate with existing development through providing connections to existing local roads, footpaths and open space networks.

2. Development proposals that adjoin existing streets and spaces must positively address and front onto them. The relationship of new developments with existing highways must be appropriate to their role in terms of 'movement' and 'place'. Developments edges adjacent to main urban highways must be considered carefully to consider the impacts of noise and air quality on new developments.

3. Proximity to substantial rail and road infrastructure is a critical part of the design and layout of development as part of a residential neighbourhood. Thurrock Council will require design measures necessary to mitigate any adverse impacts arising from noise, air quality and visual amenity. These will include the positioning of habitable rooms relative to infrastructure, location of sensitive land uses, and physical measures such as landscape bunds or acoustic fences.

4. Existing green infrastructure assets must be integrated into a landscape framework. Streets and squares will have a role as part of the landscape framework which will include opportunities for multi-purpose spaces that are well overlooked by new residential development.

5. Thurrock Council will expect proposals for Residential Neighbourhoods to incorporate a number of character areas differentiating one location from another. This can be achieved through different densities depending on context or location relative to Urban Centres for example, or rural edges. Here lower density development will be expected with buildings that are lower in height and reduced in scale and massing. The number of character areas will depend on context and the size of the scheme being proposed.

6. Where smaller scale residential neighbourhoods are proposed, which do not require the inclusion of a new local or neighbourhood centre, Thurrock Council will expect the design and layout to enable access to existing facilities. This will help integrate development with its surroundings.

7. Consideration must be given to the character of the most positive residential areas within the Borough to identify design references that can influence the design of new residential development. A contemporary interpretation of the local vernacular styles can create developments that create a more unique sense of place.

Typical tertiary street with a shared surface defined and overlooked by housing

Modern design with traditional materials define this scheme in Safron Walden

Housing fronts on to the street and informal, multi-use space at Priors Hall

Typology Three:
Gateways, Commerce and Industry

4.12 One of the more striking and defining characteristics of Thurrock is the historic relationship of the Borough with the River Thames. This has resulted in a legacy of significant commerce and industrial land uses, infrastructure and associated structures, many of which are monolithic in scale and therefore highly visible.

4.13 Ports at Tilbury, London Gateway and Purfleet are a focus for commerce, employment and activity, with cranes, silos and vessels providing striking features within the landscape. Associated warehouses, refineries and industrial complexes, and administrative blocks are also part of overall pattern of development associated with the typology.

4.14 The ports, bridges and intersections are also gateways into the Thurrock. Although some, notably The QE2 Bridge, are significant landmarks, others, particularly major motorway and trunk road intersections and junctions, have little to recommend them in terms of design and appearance as major points of arrival.

4.15 Given the prominence and economic importance of these land uses and structures, and the significant potential for expansion, Thurrock Council is keen to ensure that consideration is given to the design, layout and appearance of developments. This is particularly important around gateways in order to communicate a positive impression upon arrival into Thurrock.

Key Design Requirements

1. Thurrock Council will expect proposals to demonstrate how issues of grouping and massing have been considered as part of the design process within the context of the wider landscape. Views towards new developments, particularly those that will be prominent features within the landscape, will need to be fully assessed with consideration given to the need for a visual impact assessment.

2. For large scale storage, distribution and warehouse schemes Thurrock Council will require design interventions including the use of coloured cladding, substantial landscape planting, layout and grouping to be employed in order to break up the potential bulk and massing of proposed buildings.

3. At riverside and port facilities use of colour, repetition in the design and appearance of large scale plant and machinery and plant, and grouping of open air storage can mitigate the massive scale of such facilities. Thurrock Council will expect proposals to carefully consider how facilities can be simplified ensuring that only the minimum development is proposed in order to ensure operational requirements are met.

4. Where major development proposals come forward adjoining key gateways, including major roads, Thurrock Council will require particular attention to be paid to the design of key elevations addressing the gateway together with a comprehensive hard and soft landscape strategy to ensure a positive environment is created.

5. Within commercial, employment and industrial development opportunities to group entrance points as well as supporting facilities around a focal point or 'hub' must be considered. Here mixed-use facilities to support the working population can be provided together with public transport stops, and other shared uses.

6. A hierarchy of street and spaces must be included as part of the layout of new development making effective linkages to adjoining areas where necessary and providing a structure around which large scale proposals can come forward.

7. Extensive use of hard and soft landscaping and tree planting must be included as an integral part of new proposals in order to break-up the scale of many commercial and industrial buildings as well as providing a robust visual framework.

8. Care must be taken when designing hard and soft landscape features to account for the prevailing character of the area – this is particularly important in locations near the Thames where marshland and grasslands predominate.

9. Boundary treatments and security features must also be designed to have a minimal visual impact whilst remaining effective.

10. Proposals must consider how plant equipment, areas for machinery and lighting are integrated into the design from the outset to form a 'composition' of elements.

London Gateway Port

B8 development screened by landscape planting with colour cladding used to break up scale and massing
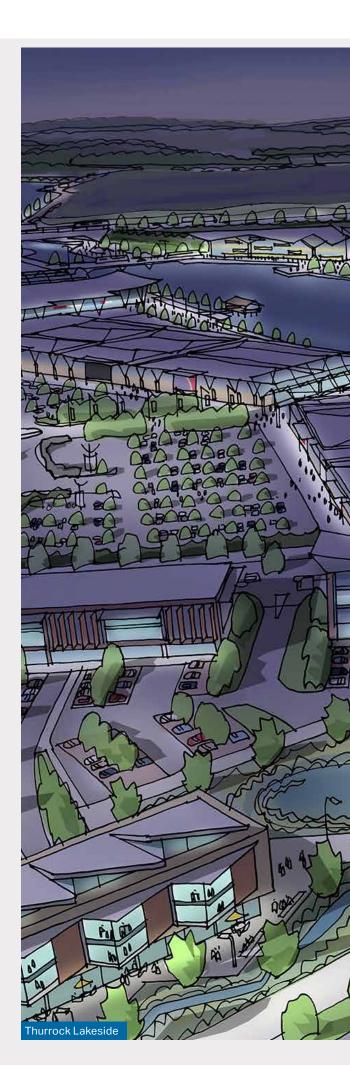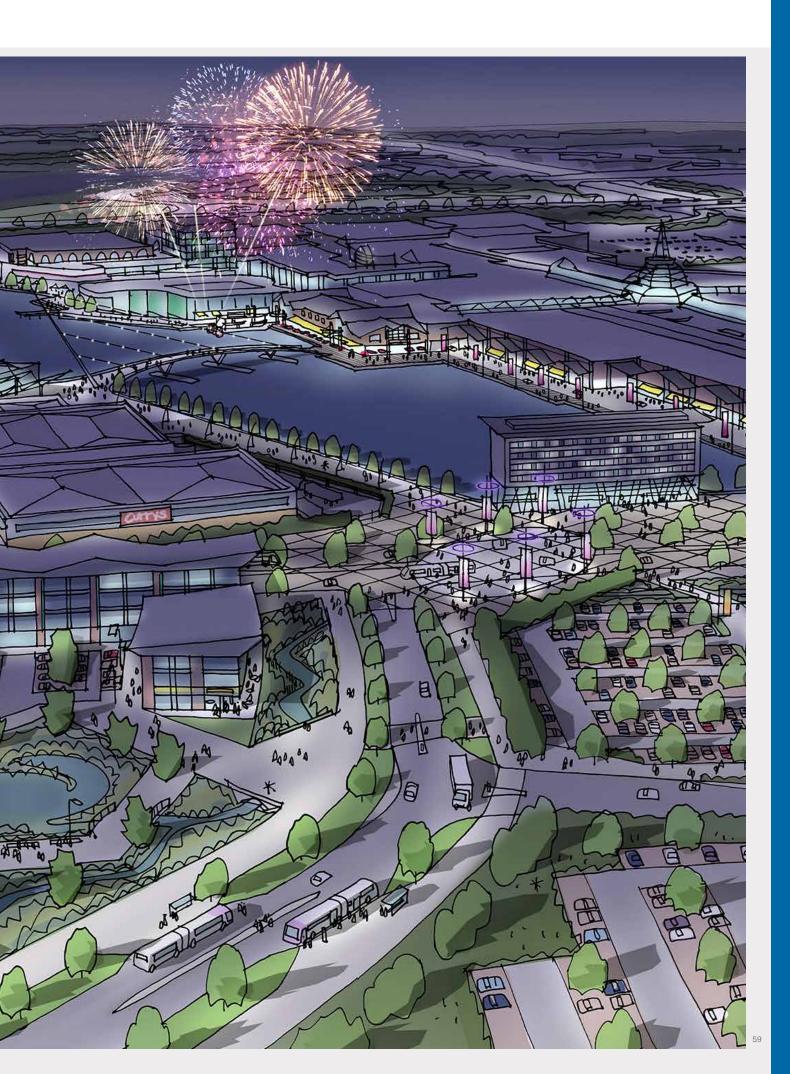
Business Premises grouped around a central space

Typology Four:
Thurrock Lakeside

4.16   A further significant location is the mixed commercial, retail parks and shopping centre at Thurrock Lakeside, focused around Alexandra Lake and adjoining junction 30 the M25. Intu Lakeside is a regional shopping centre attracting on average around 500,000 visitors per week. Thurrock Council recognise the economic significance of the Lakeside area which has substantial growth and development potential.

Key Design Requirements

1. Development at Lakeside must contribute to achieving a mix of uses that are appropriate to a strategic commercial and retail centre.

2. Proposals must enhance a sense of place focusing on key streets and spaces, including Alexandra Lake, through the positioning of active ground floor uses and entrances.

3. The public realm must be of a high quality to improve the overall character and appearance of Thurrock Lakeside and establish a cohesive and unified appearance.

4. Selective redevelopment will be encouraged in order to promote a finer grain of development in Lakeside whilst supporting the economic and commercial character of the area.

5. Car parking should be designed to make efficient use of available land, with surface parking complemented by multi-storey structures which are sleeved by single aspect development. This will promote a wider mix of uses and increase development density.

6. Public transport gateways for bus and rail must be fully integrated providing attractive, safe and convenient onward pedestrian linkages to key locations.

Thurrock Lakeside

Typology Five:
Village Locations

4.17   The villages and rural locations within the Borough have a strong identity and contribute much to the overall character of Thurrock. Traditional Village Centres can be an important focal point for the community including a mix of uses. They can also contain landmark and historic buildings often at the convergence of key, historic routes.

4.18   Proposals coming forward within these locations are likely to be more limited to include small scale infill and redevelopment proposals within the defined development boundaries of existing settlements.

Traditional street scene, Orsett

New development integrated into village location, Saffron Walden

An informal layout around shared streets abd spaces establish a strong character, Kings Hill

Typology Five:
Village Locations

Key Design Requirements

1. With infill sites, new development must be able to relate successfully to the existing grain and reflect patterns and rhythms, considering where relevant, building lines, set-backs and spacings.

2. Development layouts will be expected to be formed to a pattern, character and appearance that is well related to the existing settlement. Design references in terms of the relationship between uses and spaces and the treatment of the public realm are key considerations, public realm and mix of uses that characterise village centres in Thurrock.

3. A contemporary interpretation of character is encouraged to create successful designs that are locally distinctive but 'of their time'. For example, the use of mews style developments close to established village centres could be a way of increasing density without impact on the rural character of the area.

4. Self-build development plots will be governed by a robust design framework or design code establishing broad parameters within which individual design responses can be drawn up. The framework or code must be robustly informed by the design context of the wider settlement.

5. Residential streets and access to individual plots / dwellings must be sensitively designed with an emphasis on place to prevent highway design standards undermining local development character.

6. New development edges addressing the countryside must be laid out to include with generous landscaping to create a development that is appropriate to the setting of the settlement and the character of the rural landscape.

7. The site boundary should be sensitive to the surround landscape. The boundary and edge of the development should feel a part of the rural setting. Lower density development that fronts onto the surrounding landscape and features appropriate planting will be expected. Close boarded fences, and exposed rear elevations and blank flank walls will not be acceptable design responses.

Informal open space that is fronted and overlooked by residential development

5. The Development Process

Planning Application Design Requirements

5.1 Good design is an integral part of the development process and must be considered from the outset to ensure a positive outcome. The best outcome is achieved when all parties (developer, designer, community, statutory advisers and local planning authority) work together to solve problems and identify the best solutions.

5.2 Applicants are encouraged to consult with Thurrock Council at the earliest opportunity before formulating development proposals and submitting a planning application.

Pre-Application Stage

5.3 Pre-application discussions provide the opportunity for the applicant to understand Thurrock Council's design expectations and tackle key design issues which are considered to be important. It also provides an opportunity for applicants to set out their objectives and aspirations of a proposed development. Discussions about the design of a development early in the process with initial design ideas and concepts is more efficient, avoiding unnecessary delays trying to incorporate revisions at a later stage, particularly with larger proposals where changes needed may become significant. Thurrock Council offers a pre-application service takes a multi-disciplinary approach in advising on the design quality of emerging proposals.

5.4 Large scale strategic developments may require a number of meetings and the provision of extensive information. In these circumstances Thurrock Council will expect developers to enter into a planning performance agreement that will set out fees and other arrangements as necessary.

5.5 Thurrock Council may also require larger scale projects to be assessed by a Design Review. Design Review is an independent and impartial process for evaluating the quality of major developments. The aim is to ensure the highest possible quality of development. It is a valid and effective approach that is specifically referenced in the government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

5.6 Major projects that are considered to play a key role in contributing to the development and regeneration of Thurrock will be referred to the Design Review Panel. These are expected to include urban extensions and major urban redevelopment proposals.

Supporting Material

5.7   The Council's Validation Checklist provides a starting point setting out the details that will be required to be submitted as part of a planning application. Pre-application discussions will also determine any additional material that will be required to support to support formal planning applications.

5.8   The Council will also require Design and Access Statements to support major development proposals or smaller developments in conservation areas (in accordance with the requirements set out in article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015). Design and access statements will be required to:

»   Explain the principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development

»   Demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes that context into account

»   Explain the approach to access

»   To set out how relevant Local Plan policies and guidance, including this Design Strategy have been taken into account.

5.9   Further guidance for preparing Design and Access Statement is offered by Design Council CABE in "Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them" (CABE, 2006). For major development proposals applicants will be expected to demonstrate that a comprehensive master planning process has been undertaken.

5.10   For outline proposals, Thurrock Council will expect applicants to submit sufficient information that shows the proposed development extent, land uses, scale and heights of buildings, access plots and provide an indicative layout of development. Further information with regard to movement, density, streetscapes open space and landscaping and appearance will be encouraged to provide guidance to developers wishing to bring forward subsequent schemes. For larger schemes design codes may be requested to reinforce key design requirements for subsequent reserved matters proposals.

5.11   For reserved matters proposals, applicants will also be expected to provide further details relating to layout, scale, access, movement open spaces, landscaping and appearance, including building materials, streetscapes and boundary treatments.

Post Application, Conditions and Monitoring

5.12   When development proposals are granted planning permission Thurrock Council will use appropriate planning conditions to ensure that the design quality of development is achieved.

5.13   For outline proposals, Thurrock Council will seek to agree certain development 'fixes' which may take the form of a development framework or a more comprehensive master plan. In this context a condition will require subsequent reserved matters proposals to relate to key master planning design principles and parameter drawings.

5.14   There will also be circumstances, particularly for large sites where Thurrock Council will through an appropriate condition require further details to be submitted in the form of a design code to provide greater control on the design quality of reserved matters applications. Design codes are important for expressing the design requirements of development frameworks and master plans in greater detail especially for sites that are likely to be delivered by more than one developer over a long timescale.

5.15   For detailed applications conditions will require further details to ensure a quality outcome on aspects such as materials and cladding and landscape specifications.

5.16   Thurrock Council will resist subsequent proposals for minor amendments or to vary extant permissions or conditions that are likely to undermine their design quality.

5.17   Thurrock Council will also ensure that the design quality of schemes is met by monitoring the compliance of development with approved plans, conditions and details. Monitoring of developments will also provide valuable feedback on the quality of new developments across the Borough.

Glossary of Terms

Accessibility

The ease with which a building, place or facility can be reached by people and/or goods and services. Accessibility can be shown on a plan or described in terms of pedestrian and vehicle movements, walking distance from public transport, travel time or population distribution.

Adaptability

The ability of a building or space to be changed in response to changing social, economic and technological conditions.

Amenity

Relates to the immediate environment around new development. Safeguarding residential amenity means that existing levels of privacy; degree of overlooking, and quality of environment are not compromised by adjacent or surrounding development.

Building Line

The extent of the built component of a development (external walls/arcades). Usually refers to the front elevation of a building.

Built Form

The shape of developments including buildings and other structures, not only individually but as a collective.

Continuity of Street Frontages

Refers to the use of continuous or "joined up" building frontages and built forms to reinforce the perceived degree of enclosure. This can be achieved by the use of buildings, boundary treatments (e.g. walls/fences/railings) or landscaping.

Connectivity

The degree to which a place, street or series of buildings is connected to it surroundings. Connections may be visual or physical, and usually relate to sight lines or movement (vehicular/cycle/pedestrian).

Context

The setting of a site or area.

Context Appraisal

A detailed analysis of the features of a site or area (including land uses, built and natural environment, and social and physical characteristics) which serves as the basis for an urban design framework, development brief, design guide, or other policy or guidance.

Cul De Sac

A street closed at one end, often having a curvilinear form where the closed end of the street is not visible from the junction.

Density

A measure of the average number of persons, households or units of accommodation per area of land.

Design Code

A document providing detailed guidance on aspects of design which developers of individual parts of the site will be expected to adhere. Guidance is usually provided on highway design, open space, public realm and landscape design, and the layout of new housing/employment development. Guidance on architectural detailing and materials is sometimes also provided. It typically includes details of dimensions and street cross-sections.

Design Guidance

A generic term for documents providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with the planning and design policies of a local authority or other organisation.

Design Guide

Design guidance on a specific topic such as shopfronts or house extensions, or relating to all kinds of development in a specific area.

Design Policy

Relates to the form and appearance of development, rather than the land use.

Design Reference

Refers to a built or natural feature (existing or proposed) which, by virtue of its location or prominence, is a reference point which should govern the design of subsequent development.

Design Principle

An expression of one of the basic design ideas at the heart of an urban design framework, design guide, development brief or design code. Each such planning tool should have its own set of design principles.

Design Standards

Produced by districts and unitary authorities, usually to quantify measures of health and safety in residential areas.

Enclosure

The use of buildings to create a sense of defined space. Enclosure is achieved where the buildings form a strong continuous edge and where the ratio of the width of the space or street to the height of the buildings enclosing it is sufficient for the observer to feel that they are in an enclosed rather than an open space.

Façade

The face of a building, especially its principal front.

Figure Ground

A plan showing the relationship between built form and publicly accessible space (including streets and the interiors of public buildings such as churches) by presenting the former in black and the latter as a white background, or the other way round.

Frontage

That part of a building/group of buildings which significantly contributes to the character of an area and defines the street.

Gateway

Refers to a point on a key route which creates a sense of arrival, often through the enclosure of existing buildings, or through techniques such as changes in surfacing or tree planting.

Grain

The pattern of the arrangement and size of buildings and their plots in a settlement; and the degree to which an area 's pattern of street-blocks and street junctions is respectively small and frequent, or large and infrequent.

Landmark

A memorable building or structure which stands out from its background by virtue of its height, size or some other aspect of design. Often significantly contributes to the character of an area. Landmarks are often used as orientation points within the local environment, and aid legibility (see below).

Landscape

The appearance of land, including its shape, form, colours and elements, the way these (including those of streets) components combine in a way that is distinctive to particular localities, the way they are perceived, and an area 's cultural and historical associations.

Landscaping

Refers to the use of materials for landscaping purposes. Usually incorporates the use of paving, street furniture, public art, trees, shrubs, and water features.

Legibility

The degree to which a place (its structure, form and function) can be easily understood and communicated.

Massing

The combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings. This is also called bulk.

Master Plan

A plan or illustration which sets out the overall structure or layout of new development. Often used to convey a development concept or image of the development rather than specify elements of detailed design.

Mixed Use Development

Development which encompasses a variety of different land uses within close proximity. Can refer to adjacent buildings which accommodate different land uses, or different land uses which are accommodated within a single building or group of buildings.

On-Plot

Refers to activities located within the curtilage of a building, usually in private ownership (e.g. on-plot parking, on-plot landscaping).

On-Street

Refers to activities located within the public highway, usually in public ownership (e.g. on-street parking).

Open Space and Green Space

Refers to locations that that can used for a multiplicity of functions including formal and informal recreation, community focal points, biodiversity and nature conservation.

Permeability

The degree to which an area has a variety of pleasant, convenient and safe routes through it.

Primary Street/Avenue

A street which by its design can be identified as the most important and connected route through an area. Often accommodating public transport, street planting and higher levels of public activity, primary streets can define and contribute greatly to the character of an area.

Public Realm

Streets and spaces available for use by everyone without charge - shaped by buildings, landscaping, structures and activities alongside or within them.

Secondary Street

A street which by its design can be identified as a lower key route than the primary street (see above), whilst still providing important connections through the development. Secondary streets have lower levels of public activity, and tend to provide a second (alternative) route between destinations. Secondary streets can also contribute greatly to the character of an area, particularly in creating a sense of enclosure and human scale.

Sense of Place

A person's perception of a location's indigenous characteristics, based on the mix of uses, appearance and context hat which makes a place memorable.

Settlement Pattern

The distinctive way that the roads, paths and buildings are laid out in a particular place.

Scale

The size of a building in relation to its surroundings, or the size of parts of a building or its details, particularly in relation to the size of a person.

Shared Surface

These are streets within which a single surface treatment is employed. Vehicular movement, parking and pedestrian areas are integrated with no segregation of movement/space.

Street Furniture

Objects desired or required as part of the laying out of a street. Includes seating, lighting, bins, cycle storage, signage, boundary treatments and planters). Street furniture can also incorporate public art.

Streetscape

The term used to describe the visual impact and composition of a street, usually comprising building frontages, boundary treatments, spaces, views and vistas, landscaping, street furniture and materials.

Storey Height

Can be expressed as the number of floors of a building (e.g. 3 storey), or as a specific measurement (e.g. storey height equating to a minimum of 7.5 metres façade height). Specifying minimum storey height can assist in creating a sense of enclosure.

Topography

The arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area.

View

The direct, prominent and unobstructed lines of sight within the public realm visible from a particular point and contributing to the legibility of the area.

Vista

An enclosed/framed view.