

Well-designed places

13.1 The character, distinctiveness and viability of successful places often lies in the quality of the built environment and public realm. Well-designed buildings, places and spaces help to create attractive environments, successful places, and sustainable, healthy communities. The NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It states that good design is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

13.2 Design is not just about how development looks, but also how it functions and meets the needs of users. The Council is committed to achieving high quality innovative and well-designed buildings and places that respond to the distinctive character of the borough, are inclusive, and enrich the quality of life for all those who live, work, and visit.

13.3 Good design facilitates and contributes to local distinctiveness, a sense of place, and civic pride. It improves and enhances the existing environment and helps to attract people, businesses, and investment. The quality of architecture and design inform the impact development will have on the character of the area. High quality development is designed to understand local context and the Council will support development that enhances the distinctive character of the towns and villages and ensure new development positively responds to the environment.

13.4 The policies in this Chapter support the delivery of Strategic Objective 10.

Design Principles

Policy 47 Design Principles

All development, including extensions and alterations to existing buildings, shall provide for high quality design that is sustainable, accessible to all users, safeguards residential amenity and contributes positively to the character and visual amenity of the borough's townscapes, landscapes and seascapes. To ensure the delivery of high quality design, development proposals will be expected to have regard to the following detailed matters:

1. Context and identity

- i) Be based on a sound understanding of the context, integrating into the surroundings and responding to natural and historic features, local history, culture and heritage;
- ii) Contribute positively to the sense of place, reflecting and enhancing existing character and distinctiveness;
- iii) Protect any important local views into, out of or through the site; and
- v) Reflect or improve on the original architectural style of the local surroundings or embrace opportunities for innovative design and new technologies which sympathetically complement or contrast with the local architectural style.

2. Built Form

- i) Be appropriate for its context in terms of its building types, street layout, development block type and size, siting, height, scale, massing, form, rhythm, plot widths, gaps between buildings, and the ratio of developed to undeveloped space both within a plot and within a scheme.
- ii) Use appropriate, high quality materials which reinforce or enhance local distinctiveness.

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3. Movement

- i) Incorporate safe and secure layouts which minimise conflict between traffic, cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians
- ii) Deliver well-considered parking that is sensitively integrated into the built form
- iii) Deliver suitable access solutions for servicing

4. Nature

- i) Prioritise opportunities to embed nature within design proposals to ensure high-quality natural environments and support nature based climate change mitigation and resilience.
- ii) Incorporate and retain as far as possible existing natural features including hedgerows, trees, and waterbodies particularly where these features offer a valuable habitat to support biodiversity, aligned with policies in the Natural Environment chapter of the Local Plan
- iii) Include new trees and landscape features which:
 - a) Enhance the landscape quality of the development site and the local area; and
 - b) Enhance biodiversity and improve connectivity with existing Wildlife Corridors.

- iv) Incorporate appropriate soft landscaping to ensure that the development can be satisfactorily assimilated into the surrounding area and provides opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and wildlife networks.

5. Public Spaces

- i) Ensure public spaces are accessible to all, are safe and secure by building in natural surveillance; and
- ii) Where relevant, form part of a hierarchy of spaces where relevant to offer a range of spaces available for the community and to support a variety of activities and encourage social interaction.

6. Homes and Buildings

- i) Provide homes with good quality internal environments with adequate space for users and good access to private, shared or public spaces;
- ii) Not result in harm to people's amenity either within the proposed development or neighbouring it through overlooking, overshadowing, loss of light or increase in artificial light or glare, visual intrusion or overdominance; and
- iii) Provide adequate storage, waste and servicing for the use proposed, ensuring they are unobtrusive and well-integrated into the development.

7. Lifespan

- i) Provide clarity from the outset as to who will be responsible for the long term maintenance of the various parts of the development with development layouts designed to facilitate such clarity through a clear demarcation between public and private space;
- ii) Promote durability in respect of built development features and landscaped areas through the use of appropriate materials and planting and the laying out of landscaped areas in a manner which facilitates ease of maintenance and appropriate use; and
- iii) Allow for the preservation of design quality by ensuring that between the granting of planning permission and completion of the development that such quality is not diminished by scheme amendments and, where appropriate, provide for the removal of permitted development rights to safeguard against inappropriate extensions and alterations by occupiers of the development.

Development proposals will be expected to satisfy requirements of any adopted local design guide or design code where relevant to the proposal.

- 13.5 The National Design Guide (NDG) forms part of a revised suite of detailed planning practice guidance which should be referred to when drawing up development proposals. The NDG is effectively an urban design manual and sets out the principles and practice of creating well designed, responsive environment. It provides practical planning advice around the ten characteristics informing well-designed places: context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources, and lifespan. Both the Design Planning Policy Guidance and the National Design Guide are a material consideration in the planning process.
- 13.6 Securing good design is central to good planning and it is essential that new schemes are built to appropriate design and layout standards to protect and enhance the quality and value of the borough. Policy 47 covers all forms of development within the borough and is based around the ten characteristics set out in the NDG.
- 13.7 It is recognised that not all criteria will apply to all forms or scales of development. For example, development proposals for householder extensions will need to have particular regard to the impact of development on character and residential amenity but will not be capable of maximising connectivity or opportunities for pedestrian and cycle movement. As such, the application of Policy 47 should be proportionate to the development proposal.
- 13.8 Whilst it is important to respect local identity, innovation through design can generate new approaches to home design, construction and financing which can speed up the delivery of new homes and provide better options for the wider context of people's needs. It may not always be desirable to reflect locally distinct patterns of developments, but development must be designed to ensure cohesive and vibrant neighbourhoods.
- 13.9 If required, a Design and Access Statement should clearly show an analysis of the site context, indicating the opportunities and constraints, and justify the principles that have informed the design rationale. Development should be bespoke and respond positively to and be informed by local context and vernacular but without stifling innovation and new technologies which sympathetically complement or contrast with the local architectural style. 'Standard' house types or the repetition of layouts, development densities, and the use of construction materials mimicking schemes elsewhere (whether within or outside of South Tyneside) will seldom be acceptable.
- 13.10 South Tyneside Council intends to prepare a Design Code for the borough to support the Local Plan and provide clarity about design expectations for those wishing to carry out development proposals. The Design Code will be tailored to local conditions and priorities, which seek to support well-designed places by enhancing local character.

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13.11 Regard should be had to Supplementary Planning Document 9: Householder Developments, or any successor documents which provide guidance for anyone wishing to extend or alter their house or proposing to develop land within the boundaries of their property.

Neighbourhood Plans

13.12 Neighbourhood Plans provide an important resource in terms of assessing local character and distinctiveness and Design Codes describe and illustrate the principles guiding future development. Where development proposals fall within a neighbourhood plan area, regard should be had to design policies and any supporting Design Codes should be used to inform development proposals from the outset.

Shopfronts

Policy 48: Shopfronts

Proposals for new shopfronts or alterations to existing shopfronts shall:

1. Respect the character of the building on which they are located and their surroundings, as well as the wider street scene in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting, and location. Features that positively contribute to the character of the building and the street shall be retained and, where possible, restored

2. Where a shop occupies multiple units, ensure that shopfronts do not run in a continuous horizontal line across the different unit façades. The fascia and the shop windows should be broken up to ensure the features of each unit are not lost

3. Ensure that fascia boards are lower than any first floor windows and reflect the predominant height of existing fascia boards on surrounding buildings, where appropriate

4. Ensure canopies and blinds over windows and entrances are only for the shading of the shop and shall be retractable

5. Always present an active frontage to the street. The following principles will be applied when assessing planning applications for security shutters:

- i. External or internal Security shutters will not normally be supported on Listed Buildings
- ii. External security shutters will not normally be supported on buildings that are in a Conservation Area
- iii. In other locations external security shutters may be acceptable subject to these being of an open lattice type construction and where shutter boxes are recessed within the shopfront. Shutters should be colour coated to reflect the colour of materials used on the host shopfront or property.

External shutters of a solid or pin hole construction will not be supported unless there is an exceptional need for these on security grounds.

13.13 Shopfronts are usually the main advertisement for retailers and when designed well can attract shoppers and encourage them to stay and spend money. Individual shops form part of the wider street scene and a high quality environment can attract other businesses and encourage people to visit.

13.14 Responding to and reinforcing local context is important in all shopfront development proposals. The overall composition of multiple shopfronts is often of greatest importance and features such as stallrisers, pilasters and fascia boards can contribute to the character of the building as well as the wider streetscape and existing features should be retained. Fixed canopies can obscure features and are usually inappropriate. The merging of traditional shopfronts can negatively affect the pattern of the street, so it is important to maintain a gap in the fascia boards and a strong separation between the exterior of the two units by a pilaster or a column, where possible.