

part 4
space around
buildings





space around buildings

4 SPACE AROUND THE BUILDINGS

4.1 The Art of Place Making

4.1.1 New development should be integrated into the local context and contribute to making places by giving equal importance to the design of buildings and the space around them.

4.1.2 The design of the spaces around dwellings and the streets that connect them should be considered as 'urban design' and 'street design' and not 'highway design'. In this way a balanced approach to designing a place where an attractive environment is the first priority can be achieved. Successful developments respond to the natural and built characteristics of the surrounding area with a design that is attractive and functional and that integrates the setting and buildings into their context.

4.2 Site Development Constraints

4.2.1 Proposals for new development should take into consideration a number of potential constraints that may affect the development of the site and the environment around it (refer to those listed in Appendix H).

4.2.2 Consideration should be given to potential contamination of the land, both on site and off site, and how it might be safely remedied as well as how future contamination should be mitigated. Residential developments can be particularly sensitive to the risks presented by land contamination. The possibility of land contamination affecting a development should be assessed prior to construction commencing. Where risks are identified a scheme of remediation will be required that will ensure the long term safety of the site, neighbouring properties and the wider environment. The City Council's *Contaminated Land Strategy* should be consulted for further information and advice.

4.2.3 The City Council is committed to improving air quality in the city and exceeding the *National Air Quality Strategy Standards*. It will only consider development in areas of poor air quality if sufficient mitigation is designed in. For further details refer to advice on the *Air Quality Management Areas* and *Action Plans*.

4.2.4 The pressure for development often places housing near to noise sources such as transportation, industry and commerce. Potential noisy impacts must be assessed in accordance with appropriate guidance and standards, which may require some change in design or mitigation of the development. Where design or mitigation cannot be carried out, the development may be deemed to be inappropriate for housing.



These town houses have no private soft landscape space in their front curtilage; instead an attractive boulevard of street trees has been planted - Harlow



The threshold space clearly defines the public realm from the private defensible space - Harlow



Balconies inset behind the building line offer a sheltered amenity space and sun catch - Basingstoke



4.3 Maximising Provision of Public and Private Space

4.3.1 An appropriate balance of high quality amenity space (both public and private) and streets to connect them should be provided.

4.3.2 An attractive well designed environment 'lifts the spirits' promoting good mental and physical health. Careful consideration should be given to the quality, amount and siting of land allocated for access roads and car parking so that land used for public and private amenity e.g. gardens and play space, can be maximised.

4.3.3 The public realm and private defensible space should be clearly distinguishable.

4.3.4 This should be implicit in the design of these spaces, associated soft landscape and access paths, as well as 'threshold' spaces and boundary treatment. Consideration should be given to changing paving materials to define thresholds and respond to the more intimate scale of private spaces such as front gardens. Boundaries should be clearly defined, using appropriate boundary markers, such as gates and gateways, hedges, fences and walls.

4.4 Private Amenity Space

4.4.1 All developments should provide an appropriate amount of private amenity space for each dwelling to use (see Part 2 for further guidance).

4.4.2 This space can be created in a variety of ways from front gardens and back gardens to roof gardens, balconies and communal courtyards.

4.4.3 Private amenity space should be fit for the purpose intended.

4.4.4 The provision of amenity space will be assessed for its quality and usability. All dwellings should have access to a private space that is not overlooked. For example, family homes should have some private space in rear gardens and a block of apartments should have private balconies and access to some private communal space. Rear gardens should have useable space with some privacy and therefore should not be steeply sloping, awkwardly shaped or very narrow. A balcony for an apartment should accommodate a table and chairs to allow residents to sit out comfortably. Proposals should include suitable locations for sitting outside in sun and in shade, planting beds, hanging out washing and barbecues.

space around buildings

4.5 Movement & Connectivity

- 4.5.1 All streets and paths should connect to other streets and paths, creating smaller blocks of development of increasing activity closer to district centres (see Part 3 - 3.7.7 for further guidance).**
- 4.5.2 All streets and paths should be safe places, designed to an appropriate scale for the anticipated level of movement and overlooked by openings in the fronts and sides of dwellings and well lit at night.**
- 4.5.3 Care needs to be taken to avoid creating easy escape routes or hiding places for criminals. The location of public open spaces or pedestrian pathways should be avoided where possible to the rear of dwellings where they cannot be naturally surveilled. Dwellings that front onto these spaces should be provided with well defined private defensible space. Semiprivate communal service pathways that pass to the rear of dwellings should be securely gated on the building frontage line as well as on the entry points to individual gardens.**
- 4.5.4 Layouts should also ensure that 'rat runs' are not created. The design of spaces needs to enable a variety of uses to take place in a safe manner whilst responding to the anticipated levels of pedestrian and vehicle movements. Highway engineering standards should not be restrictive but should be used as a platform for imaginative and which are sought to add character to the surrounding area. Spaces must be inclusive to all users, including those with mobility and sight impairments.**
- 4.5.5 Large developments should prepare movement frameworks and travel plans that encourage occupiers to use alternatives to the private motor car. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to the diversion of bus routes through sites.**
- 4.5.6 Lighting design is an integral part of the design of spaces and should place emphasis on movement routes. Feature lighting should be used to place emphasis on public art and key landscaping features. Where possible lighting should be wall mounted to prevent clutter and designed to be robust, fit for purpose, accessible for maintenance and resistant to vandalism. Further guidance on lighting design is given in Chapter 7 of the City Centre Development Design Guide, and will be the subject of design guidance to be prepared in the future.**

Far left: Local parks can provide opportunities for communities to take ownership of public spaces by planning planting schemes, events and setting up management groups



This new street has no places for vehicles to park as parking is provided in rear courtyards. This will have the negative effect of reducing activity on the street and also natural surveillance - Hythe



This pathway is not overlooked - Hythe



This rear access alley is open to anyone and therefore a safety risk. Where it is not possible to design out rear access alleys they should be controlled and limited to only a few dwellings



Public space should be overlooked by adjacent housing - Hythe



A local neighbourhood play space at Northam Home Zone, Southampton



A new 'pocket park' has been created on previously derelict and under-used land - Northam Home Zone, Southampton

4.6 Public Open Space & Play Space Provision

4.6.1 New developments should provide an adequate amount of open space and play space (as appropriate), preferably on site, to meet the future needs of the occupants and the wider community.

4.6.2 The type and level of provision will vary, depending on the specific characteristics of the development, the site and its context. It will be necessary to assess the extent and quality of provision in the wider context (especially for large developments) and use this to inform the design of an open space hierarchy.

4.6.3 Where on site provision is not suitable or sought, off site provision or a financial contribution to enhance an existing open space or play space must be provided.

4.6.4 All public open spaces and play spaces should be overlooked by the fronts of buildings.

4.6.5 A high potential for natural arcs of surveillance from openings in adjacent buildings will help improve the safety of people using public open spaces and play spaces.

4.6.6 Access to green public open space should be within an easy walk of new housing development.

4.6.7 A variety of different types and size of green public open space giving opportunity for different uses should be available.

4.6.8 Play space should be fit for purpose, provide opportunity for learning through play and be adequately maintained.

4.6.9 With the exclusion of sheltered housing, student accommodation and one-bedroom units, new developments must provide adequate play space provision. This may take the form of on site provision in which case future maintenance methods will need to be stated. A method statement for the maintenance and inspection of the play area must be produced. The statement should be based on the relevant standard, currently BS EN 1176 and 1177.

4.6.10 Details about the contents and other design issues for play spaces can be obtained from the City Council's adopted *Play and Play Area Policies and Strategies*.

space around buildings

4.7 Landscape Design

- 4.7.1 All developments will be required to submit a landscape appraisal together with detailed plan, hard and soft landscape details for the site, including a tree survey and details of tree protection.**
- 4.7.2 Southampton City Council's *Landscape Checklist for New Development* should be consulted when preparing a planning application (see Appendix G). This clarifies the submission requirements in relation to survey, analysis, layout, hard and soft landscape details.
- 4.7.3 Developers will be expected to demonstrate how their schemes have been shaped by the site and its context. Equal weight should be given to the design of the public realm, landscape, the spaces and streets as to the buildings themselves.
- 4.7.4 The landscape design should follow current sustainability good practice. Use of compost and mulch derived from decaying green matter enriches the soil, protects against weeds and reduces the need for removing waste from the site. Consideration should be given to storing rainwater in water butts from hard surfaces, such as roofs and driveways, for irrigating container plants and lawns in periods of hot weather. However care must be taken to ensure these are safe from children and secured to prevent toppling over. The use of permeable paving is also encouraged to reduce water run off from driveways.
- 4.7.5 Trees and shrubs should be include in all new residential development, including extensions to dwellings, in order to improve visual amenity and 'green' the city. Trees are particularly encouraged, where appropriate, trees on street footpaths, verges and front gardens.**
- 4.7.6 Trees and shrubs make an important contribution to enhancing the appearance of a development and improving the character of the local environment. Trees add visual interest, give seasonal variety, structure and form to public and private space, and can be useful markers to improve the legibility of a place. However, care should be taken when planning and positioning trees so that conflicts between foliage and column mounted illuminaires do not occur in later years. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, and provide a haven for wildlife and increase biodiversity. Native trees and shrubs are encouraged and care should be taken to ensure that species chosen will not to cause damage to foundations, block light and take water from nearby shrubs.
- 4.7.7 Proposals for new buildings or structures should be located so as not to damage the root systems of existing trees and shrubs on and in the vicinity of the site. Adequate protection should also be provided for them during construction to avoid damage.



A high quality landscape scheme. Trees should have a girth of 14-16 cm and should be adequately staked to prevent vandalism - Southampton



Small planting beds should be of sufficient size to allow shrubs to establish. The use of shrubs that have variety in colour all year and colours that complement building materials is encouraged - Harlow



The use of a green roof provides a place for biodiversity and habitat creation



4.8 Biodiversity and Habitat Creation

- 4.8.1 All new developments should protect and enhance biodiversity by improving the character of the natural landscape, and making space for habitat creation.**
- 4.8.2** The mild and sheltered coastal climate in Southampton supports a great number of species in a range of wildlife habitats across the city; many of these habitats are of national and international importance. Back gardens and amenity space also have an important role in connecting these spaces, creating wildlife corridors that form an intricate network for the movement and migration of species. Existing natural features, such as trees, hedges, ponds and streams could be home to rare species such as bats, lizards or badgers. These natural features and wildlife corridors should be protected and the creation of new natural features, creating potential natural habitats, is also encouraged.
- 4.8.3** An ecological assessment should be carried out for all developments of five units and above, but may also be required on developments with less units. This should be submitted as part of the planning application (or as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment where appropriate). It must examine elements to be retained, consider habitat creation and look to link existing habitats in the locality. The results of the assessment will shape the development and its landscape setting. Retaining features of value and creating additional space for nature also leads to more attractive and desirable developments which in turn improves the quality of life for the local community.
- 4.8.4** Southampton City Council's Ecologist should be consulted at the earliest stages of design, prior to preparing a planning application. The City Council's *Biodiversity Action Plan* should also be consulted.
- 4.8.5** Landscape schemes should create space for nature through careful design and planting, using native species, variety of species and features to sustain and encourage biodiversity. These could include dry stone walling, log piles, rock piles, hedges, wild flower meadows, wild corners, bird tables, nest boxes, compost heaps, ponds and bog gardens.

Left: Biodiversity provides opportunities for native species to thrive (above: large skipper, and below: St. John's Wort)

space around buildings

4.8.6 Innovative designs that encourage habitat creation are encouraged. A green roof, planted with sedum, grasses and other alpines makes a rich habitat from an otherwise 'dead' flat roof. Living walls can be created using similar techniques. Nest boxes for birds, bats and bees can be installed in the eaves of buildings and in trees. Integral roosting sites can be created within the roof spaces of cycle and bin stores and even for larger birds such as owls, and bats.

4.8.7 **Consideration should be given to the impact of existing Tree Preservation Orders on and in the vicinity of the site.**

4.8.8 Existing trees make a significant contribution to the biodiversity of our city so advice should be sought from the Tree Officer regarding trees and hedges covered by Tree Preservation Orders. These are normally only allowed to be removed if they are dead, dying or diseased, and should be replaced by trees of similar species on a two for one basis.



Nesting boxes for Swifts have been fitted under the eaves of this house to encourage swift numbers to try to prevent further decline of the species (25% in the UK since 1994)



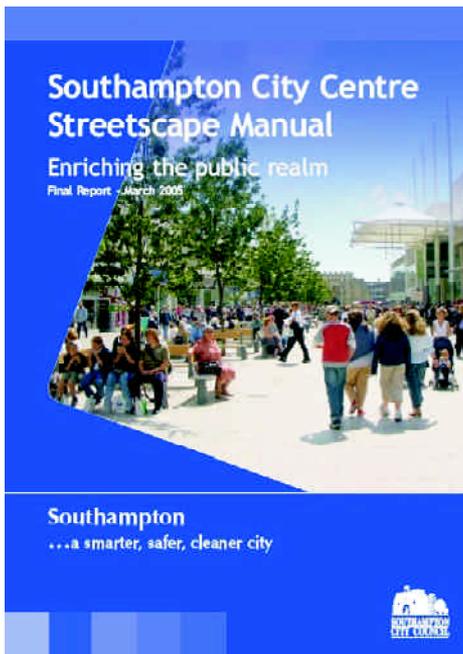
Bat boxes, in this case for the brown long-eared species, should be provided as compensation for the loss of existing bat roosts on a development site



Suitable protection, such as this chain link fencing, should be installed on a site to protect existing habitats, such as badger setts and 'badger corridors' to facilitate movement



A 'badger orchard' has been provided on this site as a source of food for the badgers and rotting fallen fruit to encourage earthworms and insect larvae, which also form part of the badger's diet



Streetscape Manual - March 2005



A public art feature provides a focal point in a courtyard at Northlands Road, Southampton



Access covers and manholes should be laid level with surrounding ground levels to facilitate easy maintenance of lawns

4.9 Enriching the Public Realm

4.9.1 New paving and street furniture should enhance local character, and provide clean, safe, accessible, well designed and attractive streets and public spaces.

4.9.2 *Southampton City Centre Streetscape Manual* was approved in March 2005. The general principles set out in this document are just as applicable to the city wide context, and it is intended that a City Wide Streetscape Manual will be produced in the future.

4.9.3 New paving and street furniture should be consistent with existing styles colours and materials, whilst taking the opportunity to enhance existing provision and quality where this is poor. However, where new paving and street furniture is to be provided by the developer then advice should be sought from the Planning Officer to ensure that specifications are consistent with those currently used.

4.9.4 'Special places' such as district centres or local shopping parades should have their own unique design for the public realm, of the highest quality, individually designed to enhance their 'special' role in the city.

4.10 Public Art

4.10.1 Public art should form an accessible and integral part of new developments be of an appropriate size, and contribute to enhancing a sense of identity and local distinctiveness.

4.10.2 Artists should be appointed to work as part of the design team from inception of the scheme. Art should be permanent, however temporary installations are also encouraged on sites taking many years to develop. Art should be integral to the fabric of the development, its buildings and/or landscape, forming a new reference point or memorable space for residents and the local community. Public art should be robustly designed to withstand vandalism and require low levels of maintenance. The City Council's Public Art Officer and Public Art Strategy - *ArtPeoplePlaces* should be consulted at the earliest stages of design, prior to making a planning application.

4.11 Maintenance and Management

4.11.1 A management plan will be required for all spaces, public or private around the building, including landscape, public realm, public art and habitat creation proposals.

4.11.2 This should include design concept and objectives, provision for long term management, a specification for the maintenance regime (frequency and type of maintenance operation) and identification of the management agency.