

## 14. TOWNSCAPE AND DESIGN

### Introduction

- 14.1 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 that set a positive context for the development of successful places and sustainable, healthy communities. Design is not just about how development looks, but also how it works and how well it meets the needs of users. The Council is committed to achieving high quality buildings and places that respond to the distinctive character of the Borough.
- 14.2 The environment of the built-up areas and villages in Waverley is attractive and varied and is valued by the community. The character ranges from the historic centres of the main settlements to the distinctive but varied character of the villages. There exists a strong link between the historic landscape and settlement and this relationship has had a clear impact on shaping the character of all the settlements throughout the Borough. Topography and tree cover also play an important role in contributing to the distinctive character of different parts of the Borough, both within settlements and in the wider countryside.
- 14.3 Within the main built up areas there is a wide variety of densities and areas of different character. Some of the residential areas are of quite a high density, whilst the towns also have extensive areas of low density residential development.
- 14.2 There are already parts of the built-up areas that have been designated in the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 as having a distinctive character that merits particular protection. As a result, there are specific saved policies giving added protection to the hillsides in Godalming and Haslemere, (Policies BE2, BE4 and BE5). There are also large parts of south Farnham that are within the developed area, but that have a distinctive semi-rural character and Local Plan saved Policy BE3 is in place to protect that character. There is also saved Policy BE6 that seeks to protect some particular areas throughout the Borough where the established low density layout gives the area a distinctive character which is worthy of protection.
- 14.3 A number of the towns and villages have produced village or town design statements which the Council has adopted as material considerations when considering planning applications in these areas. As at December 2015, the following town and village design statements had been produced:-
- Elstead Village Design Statement (1995)
  - Dunsfold Village Design Statement (2001)
  - Blackheath, Shamley Green and Wonersh Village Design Statement (2007)
  - Frensham Village Design Statement (2008)
  - Cranleigh Design Statement (2008)

- Thursley Village Design Statement (2009)
  - Farnham Design Statement (2010)
  - Churt Village Design Statement (2010)
  - Haslemere Design Statement (2012)
- 14.4 It is envisaged that local issues will continue to be addressed both through further town or village design statements and neighbourhood plans.
- 14.5 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 are both relevant to the impact that development will have on the character of the area. High quality development is designed so as to understand the context within which it is located. It is critical, both environmentally and economically, that Waverley continues to enhance the distinctive character of the towns and villages and ensures that new development positively responds to the environment rather than detracts from it.

### **Policy Context**

- 14.6 In relation to design, the National Planning Policy Framework (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. It also states that local plans, including neighbourhood plans, should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. It adds that such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics.
- 14.7 In relation to density and character, there is a limit to what can reasonably be included in a high level policy in a Local Plan Part 1. However, Policy TD1 sets out the Council's overall approach on these matters and indicates what future work is needed through more detailed documents such as Local Plan Part 2 and/or Supplementary Planning Documents, as well as locally produced town or village design statements and neighbourhood plans.
- 14.8 The Local Plan policy on townscape and design is not unduly prescriptive, but ensures that proper regard is given to local character and distinctiveness. This overarching policy leaves scope to produce more specific local design guidelines based on assessments of local character, if necessary. This is the approach that is already being taken in areas where there is a locally produced assessment of character through the town and village design statements that the Council has adopted as material considerations.
- 14.9 Existing 'character areas' and their associated saved policies in the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 will be retained until such time as they are reviewed through Local Plan Part 2.

### **Policy TD1: Townscape and Design**

The Council will ensure that the character and amenity of the Borough are protected by:

1. Requiring new development to be of a high quality and inclusive design that responds to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is located. Account will be taken of design guidance adopted by the Council including design and development briefs, Conservation Area Appraisals and associated Management Plans, town and village design statements and other design policies and guidance produced within subsequent Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, as well as locally produced neighbourhood plans.
2. Ensuring that new development is designed so that it creates safe and attractive environments that meet the needs of users and incorporate the principles of sustainable development.
3. The preparation of local town and village design statements and neighbourhood plans will be encouraged and supported.
4. Promoting a high quality public realm including landscaping, works to streets and public spaces.
5. Maximising opportunities to improve the quality of life of current and future residents, for example the provision of:
  - private, communal and public amenity space;
  - appropriate internal space standards for new dwellings;
  - on site playspace provision (for all ages);
  - appropriate facilities for the storage of waste (including general refuse, garden, food and recycling);
  - private clothes drying facilities.

## **Delivery**

The Policy will be delivered by:

- The determination of planning applications, ensuring that new development meets an appropriate standard for approval.
- Requiring sufficient detail to be included within Design and Access Statements.
- More detailed policy on design and townscape set out in Local Plan Part 2, including the review of existing designated character areas.
- Supporting locally produced town and village design statements and, where appropriate adopting them as a material planning considerations.
- Neighbourhood Plans.
- The adoption of relevant Supplementary Planning Documents.
- The promotion of outstanding design through the biennial Waverley Design Awards.
- Delivery of ongoing design training within Planning Services.

## **Evidence**

- Surrey Design
- Urban Design Compendium 1 & 2

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