

North West Leicestershire Design Overview

The following aims and objectives apply to all forms of development throughout North West Leicestershire and should be referred to as basic principles to ensure that development positively contributes to our towns and villages.

Our natural and built environments need to support each other to create places within our towns and villages that look good, work well and lift our spirits.

Creating places that people and businesses are proud of

Creating high quality places is a key aspiration for the Council. The Council seeks to encourage and inspire people to expect and create places that work well for people, are environmentally sensitive, look good and promise to stand the test of time.

Environmental sensitivity applies to both the natural and built environment. Developments must also positively contribute to:

- enhancing and improving the setting of our heritage and distinctive townscapes,
- improving perceptions of the area,
- identifying and reinforcing existing local identity,
- develop a National Forest identity through the creation of sustainable buildings and landscapes, and;
- offer both existing and new residents and businesses the opportunity to adopt more sustainable, lower carbon lifestyles.

To achieve this, developers are required to adopt the Council's 'Six Stage Design Process' with Stage One focusing on the quality of design skills within development teams.

The Council expects developers to engage talented, multi-disciplinary design teams experienced in creating places that are socially, culturally, physically, environmentally and economically successful. Developments that permit the economic objectives of a scheme to dictate the location, form, layout, massing and detailed design of a proposal at the expense of wider place making objectives will not be accepted.

To fully explore options and understand final proposals applicants are required to offer high quality visual illustrations such as street schemes and axonometric illustrations showing the scheme within its wider context. With the exception of minor schemes, Sketch Up or equivalent modelling software should be used as a design tool, and communication tool with officers, public and Members.

The Council also expects all developments to be informed by robust and thorough site and contextual analysis, with proposals developed in response to the Council's Core Design Principles and site specific design objectives. Applicants must explore a series of options prior to developing a preferred design.

9 Core Design Principles

All developments will initially be considered against the following principles.

1. People First

- (i) Places should be designed primarily for people, not cars. The quality of our everyday lives needs to more than just a functional one, but one that lifts the spirits and enhances our everyday lives.
- (ii) The design of highways infrastructure should be designed sensitively and take a balanced view of risk versus community value,
- (iii) Highways infrastructure within towns, villages and neighbourhoods should prioritise pedestrian movement and access, recognising the importance of offering pedestrians easy, direct, convenient and safe routes,
- (iv) The requirements of highways should be balanced with the need to create spaces that function well socially and visually,
- (v) Highways infrastructure should not dictate the form of the landscape or existing and new urban fabric,
- (vi) Car parking of an appropriate scale and which is integrated in to, but does not dominate, the wider public realm;
- (vii) Car parking should be designed to be safe and in the case of residential environments, well located to people's homes.
- (viii) Local communities and stakeholder groups must be identified at the earliest possible stage of any proposed development to capture their relationship with the environment.

2. Enhancing existing communities, townscapes and landscapes

- (i) Development should seek to enhance the quality of life within existing communities, in addition to enhancing their townscape and landscape setting,
- (ii) Developments should seek to improve connectivity between places and offer facilities, services (including green infrastructure) that ensure that existing communities benefit from development.
- (iii) The relationship between new and existing communities will require careful consideration with the interrelationship between boundaries a critical factor in the future success of a community.
- (iv) Developments may be required to creatively explore the relationship between new and existing settlements by offering a combination of separators (such as woodland creation) and integrators (such as parkland, heathland, play space or fields and allotments).
- (v) A balance will need to be struck between safeguarding the existing identity of communities, the need to connect places to one another and encourage wider community cohesion.
- (vi) Developments should protect the amenity of the locality and prevent loss of privacy, access of daylight, sunlight and the wider community.
- (vii) Density should be applied flexibly and appropriately, with particular consideration afforded to the relationship between new and existing development and new development and the open countryside.

3. A forest inspired identity

- (i) Developments should creatively draw inspiration from the National Forest in the design of individual buildings in terms of their appearance and environmental performance,

(ii) Developments should also creatively draw inspiration from the National Forest in the relationship between people's homes and the use of green infrastructure, from the micro (streets and back gardens designed for recreation and home cultivation) to the mid (village greens, allotments, playing fields, parks and greenway connections) to the macro scale (country parks, greenways and National Forest managed land).

(iii) All developments should enhance the appearance of a place, creating or reinforcing its distinctive character, through high quality built design and landscaping.

(iv) Developments should also seek to draw inspiration from the positive built and natural characteristics of an area in terms of the layout of places, the relationship between buildings and the street, mix of uses, the form of buildings, density, and the use of landscaping, materials and details.

(v) Developments should seek to utilise local vernacular materials and maximise the potential to use new materials inspired by the rich geology of the district.

4. Buildings that relate well to their environment

(i) Buildings should successfully enclose and define buildings, with the use of varying building forms to add visual interest to the environment.

(ii) Development should have regard for local and long distance view both to and from a site.

(iii) Buildings should respect their surroundings in terms of layout, scale and form. However where development adjoins poor development the focus should be on achieving a successful and respectful transition between the existing and the new.

(iv) Buildings should relate positively to the streets and spaces around them, with vertical and horizontal mix of compatible uses encouraged.

(v) Buildings, their relationship to their surroundings and the use of hard and soft landscaping should clearly define public and private space.

5. Welcoming Public Spaces

(i) Public spaces should be designed to be inviting, safe and attractive to use, offering opportunities for informal social interaction.

(ii) Public spaces should be well overlooked and where desirable, fronted with active edges.

(iii) Public spaces should be flexible and allow a range of activities to take place within them.

(iv) Highways design should reinforce pedestrians as the priority user within public spaces.

(v) Public spaces should be well managed and located in optimum locations.

6. Connected Places

(i) Routes (streets, squares, greenways, alleyways, bridleways, waterways, railway lines, parks and open spaces) should be located to provide pedestrians and cyclists with direct, convenient, safe and attractive routes to and from facilities, services and employment locations.

(ii) Routes should be both physically and psychologically accessible, recognising the impact of urban, landscape, highways and architectural design on the creation of places that are and feel safe, without creating places that attract or could be conveyed by the user as attracting crime and anti-social behaviour.

7. Easy to get around

- (i) Well designed places enhance legibility by connecting development to existing legible features and adding to a community's legibility framework.
- (ii) Legible places use a variety of orientating features: nodes, edges, paths, landmarks and character areas.
- (iii) Developments should either create new, or help to reinforce existing, orientating features.

8. A greener footprint

- (i) New buildings should be energy efficient creating less energy intensive buildings including the use of renewable technologies, built with sustainable materials and located to reduce the need for people to travel by car. All development should complement the objectives and lifestyle principles encouraged through the Green Footprints Challenge.
- (ii) The layout and design of places and their wider connectivity should seek to ensure that local facilities and services are located within a five minute walking radius of people's homes. As such land uses, their location, distributions and mix should seek to encourage less carbon intensive lifestyles.
- (iii) New developments should seek to improve access of existing residents to facilities and services within a five minute walking radius of people's homes.
- (iv) Developments should be designed to prioritise pedestrian and cycling access with the design of highways and car parking carefully located to encourage more sustainable modes of transport.
- (v) Public spaces should enhance the natural environment by incorporating features such as tree planting, new wildlife habitats and urban drainage systems to reduce water run off.

9. Interesting

- (i) Developments should seek to mix compatible uses, in turn creating places that are socially and culturally rich and offer people the opportunity to live their daily lives with less reliance on the private car.
- (ii) Places should be designed to be visually interesting, encouraging people to walk to their destinations.

Design and Access Statements

Applicants will be required to structure Design and Access Statements according to the Council's Six Stage Process. Design and Access Statements should clearly describe the design led process followed and utilise graphical evidence to demonstrate options considered and final proposals. Sketch Up models should be submitted to accompany Design and Access Statements. Applicants are encouraged to submit pre-recorded model films of schemes for Planning Committee in liaison with the Development Control Manager.

Building for Life

For residential led schemes of 10 units or more, applicants will be required to supply a detailed Building for Life assessment, offering evidence for each of the Building for Life criteria they consider their scheme to meet. A minimum of 15/16 criteria must be positively evidenced to ensure that schemes meet at least 14 criteria post moderation by the Council's Building for Life assessor.