



Powys County Council

Residential Design Supplementary Planning Guidance

SUMMARY & QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Introduction

There is a need to ensure that new development results in good quality housing in sustainable places.

On receipt of a planning application to the Local Planning Authority, the Planning Department will need to assess how well the proposal meets the policies of the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) together with its compliance with other relevant policy and legislation.

A Planning Officer will consider the proposal against a range of LDP policies, looking at the impact of the development on issues such as the local environment, flood risk, transport implications, landscape and minerals, as well as the **Design and Resources Policy (LDP Policy DM13)**. Comments received from the public (e.g. neighbours) and other stakeholders (e.g. Town & Community Councils, Natural Resources Wales, campaign groups and representative bodies, water/sewerage companies etc) are other important considerations.

Policy DM13

In summary, Policy DM13 requires that new development:

- Demonstrates a good quality design
- Has regard to the qualities and amenity of the surrounding area
- Has regard to local infrastructure and resources
- Is designed to complement and/or enhance the character of the surrounding area in terms of:
 - siting
 - appearance
 - integration
 - scale
 - height
 - massing
 - design detailing
- Contributes towards the preservation of local distinctiveness and sense of place
- Incorporates adequate amenity land, together with appropriate landscaping and planting
- Creates a safe, attractive layout and an appropriate mix of homes to meet needs
- Enhances/integrates public rights of way or other recreation assets
- Provides for inclusive access including safe highways and transport provision with pedestrian and cycle-friendly routes
- Does not adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring properties (e.g. overlooking or any other planning matter).

Supplementary Planning Guidance

The Residential Design SPG sets out to provide, to both applicants and decision makers, a firmer understanding of meeting the design requirements of Policy DM13 in relation to the building of new homes. The SPG also contains householder guidance notes for the alteration and extension of existing homes.

The main points to be aware of in the Residential Design SPG are:

1. DESIGN OBJECTIVES

Policy DM13 in conjunction with other policies in the LDP takes account of the five key **national objectives** of good design (**Access, Character, Movement, Community Safety and Environmental Sustainability**) as published in Figure 7 of national guidance document Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 (PPW10). The Welsh Government stress that:

“meeting the objectives of good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and applied to all development at all scales”.

Design Objectives to Guide Developers

To meet Policy DM13, the Council expects developers and agents/architects/applicants to have regard to the following **10 main design objectives** set out in the SPG and use these to inform their residential development proposal.

| | | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Objective 1: | Natural Heritage | See Appendix 2 of the SPG which provides detail on achieving each of these objectives. |
| Objective 2: | Compactness | |
| Objective 3: | Accessibility & Ease of Movement | |
| Objective 4: | Legibility | |
| Objective 5: | Character and Context | |
| Objective 6: | Continuity and Enclosure | |
| Objective 7: | Public Realm | |
| Objective 8: | Variety and Diversity | |
| Objective 9: | Adaptability | |
| Objective 10: | Resource Efficiency | |

Whilst the objectives are quite broad, they provide sound national model guidance for residential design to enable the approval and construction of suitable, quality new housing and the creation of more sustainable communities. The objectives apply to all scales of housing scheme, although on a case-by-case basis some will be more relevant than others.

The Council also encourages the use of the **Building for Life 12 Wales** (BfL12) design principles (see Design Commission for Wales (DCFW) website). This guidance uses 12 questions to help developers to make the most of a residential site and create high quality residential areas that have lasting appeal.

2. EARLY CONSIDERATION OF DESIGN ISSUES AND INTER-RELATED ISSUES

Adequately considering the 10 SPG model objectives and the BfL12 questions at the early stages of the design process and integrating responses to them into the new proposal enables the new development to meet the test of good quality design set by Policy DM13.

The objectives are often inter-related and considering them as a whole ensures that important things are not overlooked.

Wherever possible, new housing schemes should take advantage of opportunities that the site can provide such as building in links to existing footways and cycle paths or creating new routes, protecting prominent trees or natural features, making space for water, reducing energy demand, creating new public open space, and incorporating measures for wildlife protection and enhancement. Many of these factors are linked intrinsically to well-being.

Policy DM13 links into separate LDP policy requirements which demand that new development addresses issues such as flood risk, biodiversity protection and enhancement, the Welsh language, sustainable travel and energy efficiency, green spaces and sustainable drainage (SuDs). **Table 3** in the SPG alerts developers/applicants to the type of supporting information that might be required for a planning application. The guidance summarises how the issues link together and reminds developers to look at design as a holistic process.

Developers will need to take separate advice on the issues of Building Regulations and other consenting regimes (e.g. SuDs approval by the Sustainable Drainage Approval Body or Species Licensing through Natural Resources Wales).

3. A RECOMMENDED DESIGN PROCESS

The SPG provides a framework for a design process.

The Council recommends that developers follow a five-step process involving:

- **Vision and Brief for the Development Proposal**
- **Site and Context Analysis**
- **Designing the Development**
- **Overview of the Development Proposal**
- **Submit Planning Application**

Within this process, the Council highlights the importance of developers undertaking site and context analysis at the early stages. This analysis identifies the opportunities and constraints provided by the site and the local area. Issues will include the natural heritage of the site including its landscape and biodiversity value, built form and heritage, movement, infrastructure, culture and community. The design of the new house or housing scheme can then take account of the findings.

Further guidance is contained in the Welsh Government practice guidance: - “*Site & Context Analysis Guide: Capturing the value of a site*”.

A detailed flowchart for the design process is in **Section 8** of the SPG.

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

The Council wishes to see new development that is locally distinctive. Character is a key design objective. When designing new homes, developers should ask themselves whether there any distinctive characteristics within the area, such as building shapes, styles, colours and materials or the character of streets and spaces, from which the new development can draw inspiration. Paying due regard to design that is traditional to the area, including building heights, layout and materials, does not stifle innovative or contemporary design. The BfL12 principles recognise that “*Distinctiveness can also be delivered through new designs that respond to local characteristics in a contemporary way*”.

In designing new development, the SPG requires developers to take account of the guidance on locally distinctive design and design detailing found in **Appendix 3** of the SPG.

In addition, where the proposed new development is situated within one of the 12 main towns for which the Council has an adopted **Town Character Appraisal**, these should be used to inform the new development proposal.

The Town Character Appraisals are published in a separate guide alongside the Residential Design SPG and cover:

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Builth Wells | Machynlleth |
| Knighton | Newtown |
| Llandrindod Wells | Presteigne |
| Llanfair Caereinion | Rhayader |
| Llanfyllin | Welshpool |
| Llanidloes | Ystradgynlais |

Built Heritage

The design of development in or near to a Conservation Area, or which affects a Listed Building or its setting, will need to take especial care to ensure that the historic environment is safeguarded. Development must be sensitively undertaken to take account of the importance of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area (or its setting) and/or ensuring the preservation or enhancement of the listed building and its setting. PPW10 guidance in paragraphs 6.1.8 to 6.1.17 is of note and the separate **SPGs on Conservation Areas and The Historic Environment** must be referred to.

5. THE DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Some planning applications are required to submit an accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS). In other cases, a DAS is optional (and may be called a Planning Statement instead). The SPG sets out the situations where a DAS is mandatory (required) and the benefits of undertaking one.

The advantage of setting out the proposal in the form of a DAS is that this document allows the applicant to demonstrate **why the scheme is what it is** including how the design meets the objectives of good design. More guidance can be found in the Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales publication ***Design and Access Statements in Wales*** (April 2017).

6. THE 10 HOUSEHOLDER DESIGN GUIDANCE NOTES

A variety of additions or extensions to existing houses (not flats) can often be made using permitted development rights. This means that certain types of development (subject to restrictions on size for example) may not need “express” planning permission. The Welsh Government have published guidance:

<https://gov.wales/planning-permission-permitted-development-rights-householders>

Unless the proposal falls under permitted development, other works or extensions to an existing dwelling will require a householder application for planning permission. These applicants should have regard to the Householder Design Guidance Notes contained in the Residential Design SPG on:

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Guidance Note 1: | Understanding your house and area |
| Guidance Note 2/2a: | Extensions and conservatories |
| Guidance Note 3: | Garages and outbuildings |
| Guidance Note 4: | Dormer windows and rooflights |
| Guidance Note 5: | Boundary Treatments |
| Guidance Note 6: | Planting |
| Guidance Note 7: | Providing for access and parking |
| Guidance Note 8: | Raised platforms |
| Guidance Note 9: | Resource efficiency |
| Guidance Note 10: | Crime prevention |

Useful Top Tips

- Check the SPG for cross references to other useful sources of design advice and guidance.
- To find out more about allocated housing sites – i.e. sites that the LDP has identified and earmarked for housing development – developers should refer to the table in Policy H2 of the Local Development Plan and the associated site details set out in **Appendix 1** of the SPG. Allocated sites appear on the Inset Maps provided for all Towns and Large Villages named in the LDP.
- Don't forget the importance of the early stages of a design process. The Pre-Application Advice Service is highly recommended at the outset of a scheme. This can save time and money and reduce the need for unexpected later changes or finding unwelcome surprises during the course of an application.

For example, ecological surveys may need to be conducted at certain times of the year before they can be accepted for consideration; desk-top research may establish that a flood risk assessment is required, a highways solution may need “thrashing out” well in advance of a planning application or other infrastructure improvements may be needed before development can be approved.

- Don't overlook the opportunities to encourage walking and cycling (enabling active travel rather than motorised transport).
- Remember that your development should address the sustainable transport hierarchy for planning and the energy hierarchy for planning found in PPW10.
- Don't forget to demonstrate how well your proposal complies with the national sustainable place making outcomes.
- Remember that the LDP has separate and more detailed policy on certain topics (e.g. biodiversity, landscape, land drainage). Your development must take account of all relevant policy. Check the LDP planning pages on the Council's website for other adopted SPG.
- Planning applications are expected to be compliant with the Plan's whole set of policies for the development to be found acceptable. Where proposals do not fully meet LDP policy, the Council often uses planning conditions to overcome issues that might otherwise mean a planning refusal. However, where an issue cannot be addressed by a suitable planning condition or planning obligation (a legal agreement between the Council and the developer) it will be necessary to refuse permission.
- If you intend to build and extension or make alterations under householder permitted development rights it is sensible to double check with the Council that planning permission is not required. Sometimes permitted development rights have been removed by a planning condition or restricted by a special legal order (e.g. in certain Conservation Areas).

Other Important Policy on Residential Design

Placemaking

A significant aspect of national policy in relation to the planning system and house building is the importance that the Welsh Government puts on **Placemaking**. Placemaking focusses on positive outcomes. The aim is to:

“draw upon an area’s potential to create high quality development and public spaces that promote people’s prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being in the widest sense”.

The SPG summarises the concept of placemaking within development plans and planning proposals.

In order to receive planning permission, new homes should make a positive contribution to successful placemaking. Planning Officers are tasked to use the set of **national sustainable placemaking outcomes** (PPW10) to judge how well a new development proposal complies. The Council must also use the outcomes when it develops its new or revised Local Development Plan.

The national sustainable placemaking outcomes are applied to ensure that new development does not miss the opportunity to promote wider well-being. PPW10 addresses the outcomes under five main themes of:

- **Creating and sustaining Communities**
- **Making Best Use of Resources**
- **Maximising Environmental Protection and Limiting Environmental Impact**
- **Growing our Economy in a Sustainable Manner**
- **Facilitating Accessible and Healthy Environments**

Each theme contains 5-10 factors which are considered to be the optimal outcome of development plans and individual developments. Not every development will be able to demonstrate they can meet all of the outcomes but by adequately considering them, there is scope to improve or enhance an initial proposal to achieve a more sustainable solution.

Chapter 2 and Figure 4 of PPW10 provides further information.

Place Plans In Powys

You should check with your local Town or Community Council to find out if work on a Place Plan is being, or has been, undertaken in your area and, if so, how this might influence new housing. For example, Place Plan work may include more detail on the design of a new housing scheme, e.g. layout, house type, protected features and desired materials/finishes (through a proposed Site Development Brief) or provide an updated character assessment for the locality which can be referred to in the detailed design process for the new build(s).

Over time the Council expects to adopt some Place Plans as Supplementary Planning Guidance, meaning their content will have an even stronger influence in the decision-making process.