Status of the SPD

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new system of Local Development Frameworks intended to replace Unitary Development Plans.

Local Development Frameworks are made up of a number of Local Development Documents including:
- Development Plan Documents
- Supplementary Planning Documents
- Other Documents (including the Statement of Community Involvement and the Local Development Scheme)

Development Plan Documents (such as a Core Strategy, Area Action Plan or site allocations document) are part of the statutory Development Plan and are subject to independent examination. These documents provide policies for assessing proposals against and may in some cases allocate land for development.

Supplementary Planning Documents are documents that expand upon policy or provide further detail to policies in contained in Development Plan Documents. These documents are not subject to independent examination and do not have development plan status, but are a material consideration in decision making.
WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Revised Draft Supplementary Planning Document

Landscape Design Guide for New Developments

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WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Adopted Supplementary Planning Document
The Provision and Enhancement of Landscaping in New Development
September 2007

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide advice and guidance to developers who are required to submit landscape schemes as part of detailed planning applications. It will highlight the various elements and processes that need to be considered when preparing a landscape scheme for submission and includes useful contacts for sources of further information and advice. Landscape design should be considered at the outset of any development and developers are encouraged to consult this document at the earliest opportunity and appoint Landscape Consultants to engage the Council in early discussions on their proposals.

1.2 This guidance embraces the general policy and principles of National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) and Planning Policy Statements (PPS). It also supplements the following adopted Unitary Development Plan policies:

- DCS4: Design Statements.
- GRN 3: Development Proposals in the Countryside.

1.3 Whilst the primary objective of the SPD is to facilitate decision making and introduce clarity in relation to adopted policies, recognition of the many wider benefits of landscaping in new developments have resulted in the additional key objectives.

- Ensure high quality environments in which to live and work through excellent landscape designs in new developments.
- Ensure the design of new landscapes feature at an early stage in the design process to ensure they are well integrated into new developments.
- Ensure biodiversity and geological features are conserved and enhanced through landscape improvements.
- Promote the health and wellbeing of the community through new landscape schemes
- Promote quality landscape schemes which are sensitive to the locality and provide local distinctiveness.
- Ensure that the design of new landscapes do not increase fear of crime or give rise to criminal behaviour.

2 Importance of Landscape Design

2.1 A well designed landscape scheme should enhance the appearance and setting of any new development and its location. A successful scheme will
have considered and correctly interpreted the landscape character of the location so as to produce the most appropriate design solution for the development. Landscape schemes should therefore:

- Integrate new development sympathetically with its surroundings
- Enhance the setting of new buildings
- Create a high quality environment in which to live and work
- Promote quality landscape schemes which are sensitive to the locality and provide local distinctiveness

2.2 Developers will normally be required to submit a landscape scheme to accompany all development proposals. In practice, landscape schemes will be mandatory for all major developments and for the majority of smaller developments, particularly those in sensitive locations such as Conservation Areas and sites in the Green Belt. Landscape schemes should also indicate its value to biodiversity. Section 9 provides further detail on the information required when submitting landscape schemes.
3 **Types of Development Landscapes**

Developments broadly fall into the following four categories:

- Residential Landscapes
- Industrial Estate, Retail and Business Park Landscapes
- Green Belt Landscapes
- Town Centre Landscapes

4 **Residential Landscapes**

4.1 Residential developments may comprise a solitary building or a number of buildings on one site. Landscape design solutions for each site will depend upon the scale and type of development in relation to its landscape context, and therefore the design of the development must be considered in terms of the landscape. This is achieved through assessment and appraisal of the existing landscape features, identifying constraints and solutions and the potential use of mitigation measures to ensure that the development is compatible with the local landscape character. Developers should not only consider how the site will function within itself but also how it relates to the surrounding landscape or townscape.

4.2 The WBC ‘Design Statements’ SPG provides guidance on addressing the design issues of residential developments as well as house extensions and alterations. It also considers the landscape context of developments as part of the design process. Planning policy will require developers to make provision for recreation, play areas and public open space using standards set out in UDP Policy HOU3 and supplemented by further SPD, Open Space and Recreation provisions.

5 **Industrial Estate, Retail and Business Park Landscapes**

5.1 The landscape design issues affecting these types of development are distinct from those of residential developments and will require different design solutions to integrate the development with its surroundings. Buildings on these developments tend to be large with associated extensive areas of car parking. The external layout together with the boundary treatment plays a significant part in the successful design of these sites.

5.2 A typical approach is to screen the development from view but this is often impractical since certain retail sites will want maximum visibility to attract the passing public. There is, therefore, potential conflict with landscape design solutions and under these circumstances high quality building design is more important and capable of making a positive contribution to the local environment. In such instances, landscape design should enhance the setting of the built form rather than screening the development from view.

5.3 Structure planting on industrial estates and business parks should be achieved wherever possible to reduce the scale of the built form and to help merge the development with its surroundings. Where the surroundings lack landscape merit, a new development can make a significant contribution to the area and stimulate environmental improvements in the vicinity.
5.4 Development proposals must be accompanied by a Design Statement setting out how the applicant has taken account of the need for good design, as set out in Policy DCS4 ‘Design Statements’ of the Adopted Unitary Development Plan. Successful development schemes will involve the integration of buildings and planting design to create a unified design which sits comfortably in the landscape.

6. **Green Belt Landscapes**

6.1 The rural areas of the borough are all designated as Green Belt. Green Belts have performed a strategic role for many years by checking the unrestricted sprawl of built-up areas, maintaining access to the countryside and assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging development on brownfield sites.

6.2 Policy GRN3 ‘Development Proposals in the Countryside’ of the Adopted Unitary Development Plan builds upon the general development guidance set out in policy GRN1 ‘The Green Belt’, by identifying forms of development which may be acceptable in the countryside whilst maintaining the character and appearance of the landscape and valued wildlife habitats.

6.3 Development proposals in the Green Belt must be compatible with the character of the surrounding countryside. Design solutions should protect and, where appropriate, enhance existing landscape features by incorporating the features into the development layout and ensuring that new tree planting mirrors the locally native species. Where the development results in the loss of existing features such as trees, hedgerows or ponds, replacement planting or pond construction will be required to maintain the character of the locality and enhance the visual quality of the new development and its local setting.

7 **Town Centre Landscapes**

7.1 Guidance in Planning Policy Statement 6 : Planning for Town Centres (PPS6) sets out the Government’s policy on planning for the future of our town centres to provide a high quality and safe environment through good urban design.

7.2 The treatment of hard and soft landscaping within a town centre development is of considerable importance and should be considered from the outset of the design process to ensure that it complements the building design and enhances the overall quality of the existing townscape.

7.3 The development of town centre sites usually entails a high degree of hard landscaping, with little opportunity for tree and shrub planting and grass areas for passive recreation. If the quality of the landscape design is to make a positive contribution to the streetscene, the developer should endeavour to strike a balance between hard and soft elements, creating an environment, which is both attractive to view and functional to use.

7.4 Particular attention should be paid to the design of public spaces adjacent to new buildings. All too often, the appearance of a well designed open space is nullified by the presence of extensive car parking. Minimising the visual
impact of parking can be achieved by designing the parking layout within the overall landscape proposals for the development to ensure that it is well integrated with its surroundings.

7.5 The selection and co-ordination of street furniture, signage and paving can cause visual clutter if not carefully sited. The developer should work in partnership with the landscape architect to ensure that these elements make a positive contribution to the streetscene and produce a high quality and coherent pedestrian environment.

8 Some Factors to Consider in the Design Process

8.1 Purpose of Planting – Planting design should be considered in relation to the following functions:
- Retention and enhancement of existing landscape character
- Protection and enhancement of existing ecological diversity, habitats and wildlife
- Creation of shelter and micro-climates
- Integration of new buildings with existing development and/or adjoining landscape.
- Increased planting will assist in improving sustainability and limiting the impacts of climate change.

Existing attractive or valuable natural features should be retained and protected on a site and be the starting point for the development of building design and landscaping proposals. This will help to ensure landscaping is locally distinctive.

New landscaping should be designed for easy maintenance to ensure that the visual amenity continues into the long term and that the plants will thrive. Hard landscaping should also be designed and constructed with thought to future maintenance and ensuring a long life. This includes considering the durability of materials, the ease and cost of providing and installing replacements and the route of underground services and access to repair and renewal. The use of locally distinctive and sustainable materials including recycled and reclaimed materials is particularly encouraged. Further guidance is provided in the Council’s Planning Advice Note, Sustainable Design and Construction.

8.2 Retention of Existing Features - Developers should make every effort to retain and protect existing landscape features so as to conserve the character of the locality and enhance the visual quality of new development.

The WBC guidance ‘The Protection of Trees on Development Sites’ provides information and advice on the protection and integration of existing vegetation in new development. The retention of trees and other landscape features is covered by policies GRN22, GRN23 and GRN25 of the Adopted Unitary Development Plan.

8.3 Ecological Principles – In many situations, the local landscape character will indicate that a more ecological approach to the design is appropriate for the scheme to enhance biodiversity. Good landscape design can play a pivotal role in conserving protected species and enhancing priority habitats. It will also provide a guide to suitable habitat types when including
new semi-natural features into the landscape. Special attention should be given to the enhancement of key Warrington biodiversity habitats, as set out in UDP Policy GRN18.

‘Biodiversity by Design’ published TCPA Report 2004 and Warrington’s adopted Biodiversity Strategy, Nature Matters 2005 provide excellent reviews of the principles of best practice linkage between green infrastructure landscaping and urban biodiversity and are recommended reading. Other useful documents include, The Mersey Forest Plan and Warrington’s Trees and Woodlands Strategy Further advice can be sought from the Council’s Ecologist.

8.4 **Invasive Weed Species** - Developers should ensure that all invasive weed species such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed are eradicated prior to development commencing on site. Where these species are present, a detailed method statement should be provided to demonstrate how they will be dealt with. Policy GRN26 ‘Control of Invasive Plants provides further information.
8.5 **Canals, River Corridors and Streams** – Development adjoining or near to watercourses is covered by policy GRN13 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan. Canal, river and stream corridors are important elements of landscape character and should be integral to any design proposal for developments in which they occur. These features may also form the boundary of a development site and in some cases provide an opportunity to enhance the wider natural habitat value of the design.

8.6 **Sequence of Road Views** – In more rural parts of Warrington the planting of new hedgerows and trees on road verges can make a significant contribution to the landscape character of the countryside. However, this design approach would be inappropriate where such planting is not a characteristic feature of the local landscape.

8.7 **Existing Developments / Approach Views** – Where a new development impacts on an existing site, consideration must be given to the likely impact of the proposal on the site and on the wider landscape. The design of the landscape scheme should produce a strong framework of planting to balance the scale of the development with the character of the surrounding landscape.

8.8 **Constricted Development Sites** – Where landscaping opportunities are constrained by available space within the development site, the developer may be required to make a financial contribution in an off site location related to the proposal. Any obligation sought will be in accordance with the tests set out in Circular 05/2005.

8.9 **Vistas** - If a site has features or focal points of merit, every effort should be made to retain these elements as an integral part of the landscape design. However, where there is little of merit on the site and the development is visually intrusive, screening using woodland planting, if appropriate, may be the desired solution.

8.10 **Crime** – Crime Prevention Officers can advise on ways of designing out crime in new developments. However, this should always be balanced against the need to achieve an attractive environment. Guidance contained within PPS1 seeks to create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. The Home Office document ‘Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention can also provide some useful information on designing safe landscaped areas.

Typical points to consider:

- Make entrances visible from main roads
- Consider the layout of the planting design and the selection of tree and shrub species so that the planting does not compromise the safety of pedestrian routes or prevent surveillance.
- Select shrubs with prickles and spines to deter unauthorised access.
- Provide lighting along footpaths to and through open spaces.

8.11 **Landscape Maintenance and Management Plans** - Planting near watercourses should consist of native species. Appropriate species should be
chosen to provide an acceptable landscaping scheme whilst ensuring minimum maintenance. The use of chemicals for maintenance purposes should be kept to a minimum.

9 Landscape Information

9.1 Planning Applications and Landscape Statements

Landscape schemes must be submitted for all major developments. The definition of major development is in accordance with the Town and Country Planning General Development Procedure (England) Order 1995 as amended.

For all other developments, including minor developments, a landscaping scheme may be requested as the discretion of the Council’s Landscape Architecture. A landscaping scheme may be necessary depending on the location of the development. For example those in sensitive areas, including the Green Belt and Conservation Areas.

In the case of outline planning applications, if landscaping is reserved at outline stage, the outline application does not need to provide any specific landscaping information, but the design and access statement should explain and justify the principles that will inform any future landscaping scheme.

For full applications and outline applications which do not reserve landscaping, the design and access statement should explain and justify the proposed landscaping scheme, explaining the purpose of landscaping private and public spaces and its relationship to the surrounding area. It is recommended that where possible a schedule of planting and proposed hard landscaping materials to be used is also included.

The information below should be included in all landscape schemes submitted for major developments (and other minor developments where applicable) as part of a planning application:

The landscape statement shall include:

- Analysis of the landscape character
- Design philosophy
- Management aims and objectives
- Sustainable principles and local distinctiveness
- Schematic plans

9.2 Site Survey and Analysis

a) The Site Survey shall include information on:

- Land form
- Geology, soils and drainage
- Ecology
- Existing vegetation (on development sites with mature trees and hedgerows, a survey is the responsibility of the applicant as advised in DoE Circular 36/78).
- Features for retention/removal
- Underground and overhead services
- Views
- Site boundaries
- Site constraints

b) The Site Analysis shall consider the following factors:

- Existing landscape character and its conservation
- Surrounding landscape pattern
- Views into/out of the site
- Links to existing/new developments
- Footpath/access potential
- Sustainable urban drainage
- Existing habitat value, especially semi-natural habitats
- Floodplains
- Status and value of farmland, especially on the urban fringe

9.3 Master Plan

The Master Plan will utilise the site appraisal information and take account of the opportunities and constraints of the development within its landscape setting whilst achieving the development brief. It will show the general layout of the landscape scheme and use annotated notes to identify and explain the rationale for the hard and soft landscape proposals including boundary treatments.

9.4 Design Details

Details are required for each of the following design elements:

- Proposed finished levels, earthworks and drainage with sections showing areas of excavation, mounding and ‘cut & fill’. Details should also include the location and height of retaining walls, topsoil stripping, storage and spreading and any contamination control measures.
- Site furniture
- Play areas in accordance with design guidance notes (Appendix 2) Draft SPD ‘Open Space and Recreation’.
- Arboricultural method statement to BS 5837 ‘Trees in relation to Construction’ Developers should also refer to the Council’s SPG ‘The Protection of Trees on Development Sites’.
- Outline planting specification including preparatory works, plant species, sizes, provenance, plant handling, planting operations, plant establishment and planting maintenance programme. Construction materials and methods of construction for roads, footpaths, railings, fences, walls, gates and steps.
- Planting plan including a schedule of plant material.
- Phasing Plan showing any advance works, features to be removed/retained, protective fencing, construction phases, planting details and a programme of works.
9.5 **Management Plan**

If future maintenance of the landscape remains the responsibility of the developer or is to be transferred to a Trust, the developer will be required to submit a management plan for approval. The management plan should be discussed and agreed in conjunction with the landscape proposals to save time and expense later in the process.

10 **Maintenance and Adoption**

10.1 **Maintenance**

To meet the requirements of planning approval, developers must:

- Complete landscape schemes in accordance with the proposals submitted and approved for implementation.
- Notify the Council in writing when landscape schemes have been completed.
- Maintain the landscape scheme to a satisfactory standard and in accordance with best practice for a period of at least two years after completion of the development, rectifying all losses and defects. The developer is also responsible for any plant failures for up to five years after completion of the landscape scheme.

10.2 **Adoption**

The policy of the Council for adopting landscape for future maintenance requires:

- A pre-handover meeting to determine whether the landscape scheme is at an adoptable standard.
- Ownership of the land to be transferred to the Council.
- Payment for future maintenance of the landscape to be made to the Council by a commuted sum.

However the adoption of landscape by the Council may not always be necessary and it is acceptable for the developer to set up a management company for the future maintenance requirements.
11 The Importance of Professional Advice

11.1 There are many issues which need to be considered in the design process for a landscape scheme such as landscape character, landform, layout, planting plans, plant establishment and maintenance. Developers are therefore strongly advised to seek professional assistance at the earliest opportunity.

11.2 Information on landscape character assessment and the role it plays in helping to achieve environmentally sensitive and sustainable development is contained in ‘Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland’, published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage in April 2002.

11.3 Information on Landscape Architects and the services they can offer and on registered landscape practices in the North West is available from:

The Landscape Institute
6-8 Barnard Mews
London SW11 1QU

Tel: 020 7350 5200

11.4 Information on Ecological Consultants and the services they can offer is available from:

The Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
45 Southgate Street
Winchester
Hampshire SO23 9EH

Tel: 01962 868626

11.5 Advice and information of Landscape Contractors and the services they can offer and on registered landscape practices in the North West is available from:

British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI)
Landscape House
9 Henry Street
Keighley
West Yorkshire BD21 3DZ

Tel: 01535 606139

11.6 Advice and information on a number of issues including planting schemes near water courses can be obtained from the Environment Agency and is available from:

The Environment Agency Regional Office
P O Box 12
Richard Fairclough House
Knutsford Road
Warrington WA4 1HG
11.7 Advice and information on the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project can also provide useful information to guide new design. This is available from:

Cheshire County Council  
Delamere House  
Delamere St  
Crewe  
Cheshire CW1 2LL  
Tel: 01270 505100

11.8 The benefits of professional advice are:

- It will save you time and expense in the production of the most appropriate design solution and cost effective scheme.
- It will help you discharge your duties and responsibilities under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (CDM Regulations).
- It will reduce delay in the consideration of your planning application and help to avoid a lengthy exchange of revised plans before the development can proceed.
- It will ensure that the landscape scheme is successfully implemented and correctly maintained with the approved proposals.

12 Further Advice from the Council

For further information, contact:  
Roger Haigh, Principal Landscape Architect (442838)  
Norman Ellis, Technical Projects Officer (442718)

Contact Address: Environment Services Directorate  
Regeneration and Development Planning Policy  
New Town House  
Buttermarket Street  
Warrington WA1 2NH  
Tel: 01925 444400

13 Monitoring & Review

The implementation of new landscaping schemes in new developments is monitored by the council’s landscape architect. There is however no quantitative monitoring of information and it is unlikely to become available in the future.

The SPD will be reviewed as and when any new good practice guidance or legislation relating to landscaping is published.