

Chief Planning Officer's Advice Note:

Good Design in Cornwall

This is one of a series of notes issued by the Chief Planning Officer to guide greater consistency when making planning decisions. These notes may be updated from time-to-time in response to changing circumstances.

It provides guidance to help reach a decision only and should not be used as a reason for refusal. The note cannot be used as a substitute for the policies of the adopted Local Plan.

Cornwall Council is seeking to improve the places where people live, work and use for recreation. Safe and enjoyable places - particularly those that include access to nature and help everyone to be active, relax and engage with each other - improve wellbeing and reduce social isolation. We expect all new development proposals to contribute to this through high quality design.

The Council wishes to work with applicants to achieve the best outcomes by encouraging innovation in sustainable building construction and seeking good design solutions, but we do not wish to impose an artificial vernacular or aesthetic taste. There is evidence that well designed places not only benefit our quality of life but also make an improvement to the quality of places and their financial value¹ whether meeting open market or an affordable housing need. From our experience, we achieve good design when we work together at an early stage as part of the pre-application stage of the planning process. This should include engagement with the community and the planners. Applicants are urged to discuss schemes with their neighbours or consider Council facilitated community engagement using the Pre-Application Community Engagement (PACE) process.

The Local Plan: Strategic Policies sets out policies that will be used to judge the quality of design. The key policies are: Policy 2(1) Spatial Strategy – 'Respecting and enhancing quality of place', Policy 12 (Design), Policy 13 (Development standards), Policy 16 (Health and wellbeing), and Policy 25 (Green infrastructure). In our experience, there are eleven practical considerations that provide a good starting point for delivering good development in Cornwall which are set out below. All development proposals should take these into account, no matter how modest and larger schemes will invariably need to go further. Fundamentally all new development in Cornwall should feel Cornish and be shaped by its history, culture, landscape and, where relevant, its relationship to the sea. Development should not be stuck in the past or replicate poor quality development, it should respond creatively and positively to its surroundings.

This note should not be used too prescriptively, it is

not a toolkit, it is a broad guide that should be read in conjunction with the [Cornwall Council Design Guide](#) and Building for Life (BfL). BfL is advocated in the Local Plan and should be used for larger developments. It is a simple tool which contains twelve headline questions that are a useful starting point to the design process. These questions are under three key themes 'Integrating into the Neighbourhood', 'Creating a Place' and 'Street and Home', and we have structured our eleven considerations around the same headings.

Eleven practical considerations for good development in Cornwall

Integrating into the neighbourhood

1. Does the proposal suit its context?

We expect development to demonstrate a clear understanding of how it responds positively to the site and surroundings.

2. Does the proposal connect people, places and wildlife and encourage healthy lifestyles?

We expect development to create and exploit opportunities to make connections to nearby shops, services, green space and countryside by providing safe and legible footpaths, cycle routes and green corridors. For larger proposals multifunctional and intergenerational spaces for people to meet should be included.

For further advice please refer to the Cornwall Design Guide and BfL 12 questions: 1 connections, 2 facilities and services, 3 public transport and 4 meeting local housing requirements.

3. Does the proposal consider the people who will live in, work in and use the development in the future?

People spend around 90% of their time indoors, with 65% of this spent at home. Design of new places and buildings should aim to create healthier environments. How developments are managed and maintained is critical to their long term success. We believe that allowing the community to have the option to oversee or manage communal space often leads to better outcomes. At a smaller scale, buildings need maintenance to remain in good condition. Buildings should

¹ Development: The Value of Place making. Savills October 2016

not require excessive maintenance to keep them sound and healthy; choosing long lasting materials is recommended.

Creating a place

4. Does the proposal have a sense of place and would it add to local distinctiveness?

We believe new development should have a distinctive character and should not perpetuate low quality design. Materials choice is often important to this, for example, natural local materials such as granite, quarried stone or slate on pitched roofs are locally distinctive. The innovative use of materials can be inspiring.

For further advice please refer to the Cornwall Design Guide and BfL 12 questions: 5 character, 6 working with the site and its context, 7 creating well defined streets and spaces and 8 easy to find your way around.

5. Street and home

Are there usable and appropriate frontages and boundaries or hedges?

We recommend, in most circumstances, that an enclosed or well defined private space to the front of properties is provided. This can help to foster day to day interactions, a sense of ownership and natural surveillance. Enough space for landscaping is recommended. More generally, boundary treatments facing onto roads, footpaths and public space should be walls and railings or, where possible, particularly in rural areas, Cornish hedges and native planting (with space for roots etc). Wooden panel fencing should be avoided where they face onto public highways, footpaths and spaces.

6. Is the street a good quality design with integrated parking?

Creating safe and attractive environments that can be shared by people and slow moving traffic, make new developments feel more pleasant places to be. Parking on streets and roads can work best when using landscaping (street trees) and designated parking bays for residents and visitors, perhaps with informal places to sit / meet as design features for pedestrian friendly environments. Surfacing should be permeable to reduce flood risk.

7. Can you see the drainage systems above the ground as surface features?

We recommend that drainage should be included as part of the whole scheme design and mimic nature to manage surface water. They can include

swales (shallow ditches) and pools which create a valued greener feel and appearance, to a development incorporating innovative sewage solutions and preventing flood risk when part of open space and landscaping. Drainage features should not normally be hidden below ground but instead form surface features.

8. Does the proposal include energy efficient features or energy generation?

We recommend that managing energy demand, encouraging energy generation and water efficiency should be design considerations from the outset, rather than bolt on solutions. This might not reflect a traditional building's character but is a crucial element of future character, durability and sustainability. It is recognised that in the case of Listed Buildings and those in Conservation Areas and other designations, limitations may apply to alterations and additions.

9. Is the proposal wildlife friendly and does it safeguard and provide trees?

Landscaping, open spaces and gardens offer huge potential and are a much needed resource for people and wildlife. They should incorporate existing trees and hedges. New developments are strongly encouraged to include as many of the following features as possible: new bat boxes, bird boxes or bee bricks, badger or hedgehog friendly fences, green walls and roofs, wildlife friendly kerbside guttering, ponds, good quality topsoil, native plants and trees.

10. Does the proposal have usable gardens?

We believe gardens are important for the quality of our lives. We therefore discourage 'postage stamp' sized plots / gardens, but strongly encourage spaces large enough for drying washing, wildlife friendly planting and safe areas of play for children and, where practical, the growing of vegetables. A rule of thumb for private outdoor amenity space (communal if serving apartments) is that, as a minimum, this should equal or preferably exceed the footprint of the building it serves. However, all gardens should be appropriate to their context which in most instances will equate to a requirement for gardens sizes larger than this.

11. Is there adequate external storage for bins, recycling, cycles and other lifestyle equipment?

We expect all homes to include a covered bin store and secure convenient storage within the house and / or plot design for cycles and other lifestyle equipment.

For further advice please refer to the Cornwall

Design Guide and BfL 12 questions: 9 streets for all, 10 car parking, 11 public and private spaces and 12 external storage and amenity areas.

These eleven considerations do not cover everything but they will be our starting point for considering smaller proposals and a route into using BfL 12 for larger proposals.

Click on the Design Council's 'Building for Life 12' link to access and download the pdf.

<https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/building-life-12-third-edition>

Cornwall Council's [Environmental Growth Strategy](#) and [2017 Director of Public Health Annual report](#) also provide useful information.