

Management of the Built Environment

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The built environment of the region has a profound influence on the quality of life of residents of the South East. Our cities, towns and villages provide the main source of employment opportunities, access to essential services, leisure opportunities, and most importantly, a home to the vast majority of the citizens of the region. It is essential that they are managed and developed in way that reinforces and enhances all these roles.
- 1.2 The leadership of local authorities, town and parish councils, and where appropriate, local strategic partnerships will be essential in developing and delivering a shared vision for a town, city, village or neighbourhood. This will be most effectively achieved where local communities are closely involved.

2. Management for an Urban Renaissance

- 2.1 Government policy seeks a renaissance of urban areas, both because of the wider benefits and in order to make them places that people choose to live. This aim is clearly set out in the Urban White Paper, the Sustainable Communities Plan and national planning policy. The concept is also a fundamental building block for the South East Plan.
- 2.2 Urban renaissance is a multi-dimensional concept which goes far beyond the simple notion of concentrating the majority of development in urban areas. It is about making our towns and cities places where people will choose to live, work and spend their leisure time. Research undertaken for the Government Office for the South East identified five pillars of urban renaissance, all of which should reinforce each other within the overall objective of raising quality of life¹:
 - Good Governance
 - Achieving Built Excellence
 - Promoting Economic Strength
 - Environmental Responsibility
 - Social Inclusion
- 2.3 They apply equally to settlements of all sizes from small market towns to suburban neighbourhoods and large cities.

¹ Living Places: Urban Renaissance in the South East, URBED 2000

- 2.4 **Good Governance** – There are concerns in many parts of the South East about the impact of focusing developing in urban areas will have on local infrastructure and services, and the potentially adverse implications for quality of life. Maintaining and enhancing a high quality of life as settlements grow will require a more proactive approach to the management of the built environment to ensure that change to the physical environment is accompanied by the necessary investment in social infrastructure, including healthcare, education, public open space, public transport and affordable housing. This requires an integrated approach to urban management and change, to ensure that all service providers are working towards the same objectives
- 2.5 The starting point should be the establishment of a clear vision for an area, for example within a community strategy. The implementation of the vision requires an integrated approach to implementation and service delivery including:
- i) a clear spatial strategy set out within the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Local Transport Plan, identifying the role of urban areas and providing clear guidance on appropriate forms of development;
 - ii) working with key service providers (e.g. transport, education, health, utilities, etc) to ensure that social and physical infrastructure is phased in accordance with planned development and population growth;
 - iii) a proactive approach to development planning, working closely with the development industry to achieve stated objectives;
 - iv) developing the skills of elected representatives, professionals and communities;
 - v) ongoing and effective engagement with local communities.
- 2.6 **Built Excellence** –All too often in recent decades, our urban and suburban areas have been blighted by poor quality design which pays little or no attention to local character or context.
- 2.7 In many areas this will mean that new development will need to respect the historic character of the existing buildings, while in other towns redevelopment will provide an opportunity to improve upon existing urban design. Increasingly creative solutions should be pursued which:
- i) maximise the opportunities for renewal and intensification
 - ii) strive for a greater mix of building types, land uses and tenures
 - iii) seek to optimise development density in proximity to public transport hubs and facilitate access by foot and cycle

iv) incorporate high standards of sustainable construction (**Policy CC4**).

- 2.8 Design Quality - The importance of high quality design is emphasised in national planning policy (PPS 1), which encourages local authorities to establish clear design policies and principles. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) plays a key role in raising design standards by raising awareness, disseminating good practice and developing professional skills in relation to design. The Assembly is working closely with them. Further sources of guidance and good practice are listed in Box BE1 overleaf.
- 2.9 Good design will become increasingly important as more opportunities are taken to increase densities and intensify development. Densities have gradually increased in recent years, but there is still considerable scope within the South East for accommodating development in ways which save land and create viable catchments for local services and public transport in accordance with national planning guidance and **Policy H5** of this Plan (Housing Density and Design).
- 2.10 It will be important that higher density forms of development are accompanied by an increasing mix of different land uses throughout urban areas, in order to provide an enhanced range of employment, leisure and residential opportunities for an increasingly diverse population. Significant progress has been made in promoting mixed use development in many of the region's larger town centres, and it will be important for local authorities to seek opportunities to encourage this good practice to spread to smaller centres and suburban areas. On large residential schemes, developers may need to support community facilities and services to ensure they are available to the new occupants before the entire scheme is fully completed and occupied.
- 2.11 Historic Character, Distinctiveness and Sense of Place. There is widespread and growing recognition of the importance of the historic environment that contributes so much to regional and local character and distinctiveness. The Government recognises² the importance of the historic environment in contributing to sustainable development in terms of its potential to support regeneration, tourism and social inclusion as well as conservation. The revitalisation of the historic dockyards at Chatham and Portsmouth are just two examples of this in action within the region.
- 2.12 Sustainable management of the historic environment through the planning system should be based upon an understanding of its significance and vulnerability to change. This is critical given the pace and scale of change faced by the region. The standardisation of some new development can lead to a dilution of local character, and should be discouraged.

² A Force for Our Future (December 2001)

2.13 National planning guidance for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains and other elements of the historic environment is set out in PPG15 and PPG16. However, the South East Plan has been prepared at a time of reform of the heritage protection system³. This seeks to establish a legislative framework that provides for more positive management and enabling of change, rather than its prevention.

BOX BE1

Policy and Guidance

PPS1 – Creating Sustainable Communities, ODPM

Achieving Quality of Design in Local Plans, RIBA

Protecting Design Quality in Planning, CABE

By Design, better places to live. A Companion Guide to PPG3, DTLR/CABE

By Design, urban design in the planning system, towards better practice, DETR/CABE

Councillor's Toolbox: making the best use of land, South East England Regional Assembly

Buildings in Context, English Heritage/CABE

Urban Design Compendium, English Partnerships and Housing Corporation

Creating Successful Masterplans, CABE

Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention, Home Office/ODPM

Green Space Strategies: a good practice guide, CABESpace

2.14 **Promoting Economic Strength** - Economic strength underpins successful cities, towns and villages. Economic decline or weakness is usually accompanied by increasing social exclusion and a decline in physical quality as industrial, commercial and retail vacancies grow with a sense of decline. Town and local centres play a key role in the economic fortunes of urban areas. (Further guidance is provided in **Section D8**). Regeneration strategies should play a key role in promoting more diverse economies in many of our towns and cities assisting the theme of urban renaissance.

2.15 **Environmental Responsibility** - An improved quality of life in towns and cities needs to be fostered by a more environmentally sustainable form of development. Local authorities, service providers, the local community and developers should pay particular attention to:

- i) the contribution which high quality public realm, private gardens, open spaces, streets, squares and green corridors can make to urban areas;
- ii) ways to further promote the management of traffic to achieve a better urban environment, including measures which improve road safety, give priority to pedestrians, cyclists, buses and essential business users and opportunities to improve transport integration;

³ Review of Heritage Protection: The Way Forward (June 2004)

- iii) incorporating crime prevention considerations into the design of new development;
- iv) encouragement of environmentally sustainable design and construction techniques.

2.16 **Social Inclusion.** Despite recent improvements to the physical environment of the region's larger urban areas, many continue to experience some of the most intense concentrations of deprivation and exclusion within the South East (See Map SI, Section D9). This is a characteristic of larger urban areas across the region, particularly along the coast as well as some of the larger towns and cities in the most economically prosperous sub-regions. Further guidance on promoting social inclusion is set out in Section D9.

2.17 To promote social inclusion through urban renaissance local authorities and other service providers should:

- Identify opportunities to empower communities by enabling them to engage with, influence and manage the delivery of local services;
- Identify opportunities to improve access to local education, health and other key public services;
- Plan for a mix of housing types and tenures and tackle problems of existing unfit housing stock.

POLICY BE1: MANAGEMENT FOR AN URBAN RENAISSANCE

~~Local authorities, public agencies and private sector partners should initiate active programmes of urban management linked to appropriate development, in order to raise standards, promote urban renaissance throughout the region, make better use of land and resources and encourage the use of public transport. In particular local authorities should:~~

- ~~i support higher density and mixed use development schemes~~
- ~~ii seek greater intensity of development in places with good transport accessibility~~
- ~~iii identify key sites for which briefs and masterplans need to be developed~~
- ~~iv establish innovative management arrangements to mobilise resources, gain community support and raise standards~~

The concentration of development in the region's urban areas will require (and present opportunities for) significant improvements to the urban environment of many cities, towns and suburbs making them more attractive places to live, work, shop, spend leisure time and invest. Local authorities and their partners should:

Establish a shared vision:

- **Through their Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks, set out an overall strategy for enhancing the quality of life**

in each urban area which reflects a vision developed in consultation with local communities.

Initiate active management programmes:

- Work closely with key service providers to ensure that physical, community, cultural and green infrastructure is planned and phased in accordance with planned development.
- In partnership with other public agencies, the private sector and the local community, establish innovative management arrangements for town centres, business parks, and residential neighbourhoods.
- Develop and implement public realm and open space strategies

Promote and support built excellence:

- Promote and support design solutions relevant to context and which build upon local character and distinctiveness and sense of place, including the sensitive reuse of redundant or under-used historic buildings.
- Support and identify opportunities for appropriate higher density and mixed-use development schemes, in accordance with agreed development frameworks and guidance.
- Draw up development briefs and master plans for key sites.

3. Managing Neighbourhood Change

- 3.1 The South East is especially characterised by its suburban settlement structure. However, these suburbs vary widely in terms of their physical, social and environmental make up. They range from the most affluent to some of the most deprived neighbourhoods and vary in character from mixed use inner suburbs to executive residential areas on the urban-rural fringe. Although traditionally considered inherently stable, economic, social and behavioural change has placed very different pressures on many of these areas. Some are experiencing the loss of their original purpose, to support industries that no longer exist. Others are experiencing considerable pressures for development which threatens to change their character, but which may also present opportunities for more sustainable forms of development. To capitalise on the opportunities presented by strong housing markets and high land values, a more creative approach to neighbourhood planning will be needed.

- 3.2 **Suburban Intensification-** Many suburban areas in the South East are facing considerable pressure for new development. The scale of the pressures for development and intensification over the foreseeable future and their impact on quality of life is a strategic issue for the region. New development should be treated as an opportunity to improve the sustainability and quality of life in our suburbs.
- 3.3 At present much of the infill and intensification taking place in suburban neighbourhoods is viewed in a negative way, and dealt with on an incremental and piecemeal basis, thereby placing undue pressure on local infrastructure and services. The result is often characterised by:
- i) ad-hoc, incremental (and often poorly designed) intensification and backland development often resulting in loss of larger attractive residential buildings which threatens to adversely affect suburban character
 - ii) a failure to provide adequate housing choice for all sections of the community
 - iii) increasingly unsustainable patterns of travel leading to increasing congestion and pollution, and in many cases a decline of local centres
 - iv) a loss of employment land and a lack of developer interest in non-residential (particularly mixed-use) development.
- 3.4 There is a need for a positive and planned approach to intensification, with clear guidance set out in Local Development Documents and/or Supplementary Planning Documents, based upon neighbourhood assessments of character and capacity with the full involvement of the local community and key service providers. A quick and simple 'healthcheck' of social and physical capital can be a useful starting point for identifying priorities⁴. Some useful criteria for assessing proposals for intensification might include:
- The need for and potential impacts associated with different types, tenure and occupancy of new development
 - Impact on the availability or potential availability of community resources (e.g. schools, health centres etc)
 - Enhanced accessibility of the neighbourhood by means of transport other than the car (e.g. cycle, bus, train)
 - Maximise potential to reinforce sense of place / character
 - Maximise positive impact on open space / biodiversity.
 - Most acceptable way to accommodate increased car usage and parking requirements.

⁴ See Neighbourhood Revival: towards more sustainable suburbs in the South East, URBED 2004.

- 3.5 **Areas of Opportunity** - There is a strategic requirement to make the best use of all urban land in the region, including suburban land. To this end sub-regional strategies and local development frameworks should seek to identify neighbourhoods at risk or which may present significant development opportunities, and take action to develop clear policy frameworks for maximising the opportunities they may present for more sustainable forms of development.
- 3.6 For neighbourhoods that are highly accessible by public transport, local authorities should seek to strengthen the range of facilities and services at and around existing or potential transport nodes. In addition potential opportunities for planned intensification may exist on highly accessible but under-utilised industrial estates or retail parks in suburban areas. In some cases, particularly where an increased mix of uses is a policy objective, this may require local authorities to take a more proactive approach to land assembly or enter into joint ventures with development institutions to achieve their planning objectives⁵. Area Action Plans could provide a useful framework for taking forward this approach. It will be essential that these establish clear mechanisms for securing funding for local community infrastructure through land value capture, and that the funds accrued are reinvested within the neighbourhood in accordance with clearly identified priorities.

POLICY BE23: URBAN AND SUBURBAN INTENSIFICATION

Local Development Frameworks should incorporate clear planning and design guidance in relation to the intensification of predominantly residential neighbourhoods. This guidance, which may take the form of LDD policies or Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), should be based on local character appraisal and clearly set out the basis on which proposals for the intensification of existing residential areas will be assessed.

- 3.7 **Neighbourhoods at Risk** - The Government has announced its intention to promote and support community engagement in neighbourhood management through a proposed Neighbourhoods Charter. Active neighbourhood management will be particularly important in those neighbourhoods, including those in suburban areas, that are experiencing pressures associated with social and economic deprivation. Many suburbs are experiencing a different kind of pressure from physical decline and social and economic deprivation. In many of these suburbs local retail, health and education facilities may be of poor quality or absent. Such neighbourhoods demonstrate characteristics more commonly associated with inner urban areas. Where this is the case there is a need for a more integrated approach to neighbourhood management, whereby local service providers (e.g. health, education, housing etc) work together to maximise opportunities to provide co-ordinated services in ways which meet local needs and assist regeneration. In specific areas local authorities, in partnership with

⁵ Suburban Property Markets (FPD Savills, 2004)

other service providers, could lead the production of Neighbourhood Management Frameworks to facilitate this process. In areas experiencing associated physical decline, for example some poorly designed housing estates, redevelopment and planned intensification could significantly help transform the image of a neighbourhood, support mixed communities and contribute towards meeting housing need.

POLICY BE23: SUBURBAN RENEWAL

Local authorities should identify neighbourhoods, especially in suburban areas, in need of renewal, which would benefit from a proactive and integrated approach to ~~land-use planning and/or~~ area management.

~~**Area Action Plans. Based on extensive community engagement, AAPs should set out a clear and coherent development framework and guidelines for a neighbourhood informed by character appraisal. This may include, where appropriate, design guidance, development briefs, or masterplans for key sites. Delivery and funding mechanisms should be clearly identified alongside key infrastructure requirements.**~~

For those neighbourhoods identified local authorities should work with their partners to develop Neighbourhood Management Plans.

~~**An NMP-NMPs** should set out a clear framework for the integrated development, management and delivery of **key** community services, environmental quality and infrastructure provision (e.g. **public transport, open space, health and education**). ~~They~~ **It** should be developed through partnership working with residents, service providers, employers and developers.~~

4. Managing the Urban Rural Fringe

- 4.1 Research⁶ has shown that the urban rural fringe serves an important role both functionally and structurally in the South East. It is a fulcrum of the relationship between urban and rural areas. The Countryside in and Around Towns Vision⁷ identifies ten key functions which should be pursued through greater interaction and integration between the functions (see box BE2).
- 4.2 For the purposes of this Plan the urban rural fringe can be best considered as those areas that geographically lie around urban areas. Given the large number and complex pattern of settlements in the South East, the fringe is a particularly

⁶ Unlocking the potential of the rural urban fringe. Groundwork and the Countryside Agency. 2004

⁷ The countryside in and around towns, Groundwork and the Countryside Agency. 2005.

important asset and serves functions for both urban and rural areas. It is often an area of mixed land use, rapid change and, particularly in some parts of the South East, many competing pressures for land. In some places it is subject to poor maintenance, neglect and vandalism. There is potential to make better use of these areas in order to meet the wider objectives of the Plan.

- 4.3 Integrated policies, implementation plans and delivery mechanisms therefore need to be brought together to secure the benefits available to the people of the South East region from the urban rural fringe. Policies that support both careful management, positive planning and co-ordinated action can enable the realisation of the many opportunities available in the urban rural fringe and minimise the problems of deterioration to which it might otherwise be subject.

Box. BE2

Ten key functions of the urban rural fringe⁷

1. A bridge to the country

Networks of new and improved parks, woodlands and other green spaces are linked to the urban centre and wider countryside by footpaths, bridleways and cycle ways. Urban parks, country parks and other green spaces are joined up to form continuous green corridors between town and country.

2. A gateway to the town

The quality of the countryside in and around towns is an indicator and advertisement of the quality of a town or city. As a gateway to the urban area it creates a powerful first impression to visitors and possible investors.

3. A health centre

A more accessible and attractive countryside and green space infrastructure close to where most people live and work provides an invaluable recreational resource.

4. A classroom

The countryside in and around towns provides hands-on learning opportunities in a variety of 'outdoor classrooms'. This supports all parts of the national curriculum with a particular relevance to environmental education and rural studies.

5. Recycling and Renewable Energy Centre

The countryside in and around towns is recognised as playing an important part in the sustainable management of the waste, water and pollution generated in urban areas.

6. A productive landscape

Farmers operating close to urban areas take full advantage of their proximity to large urban markets, supplying consumers with high quality local produce through direct marketing as well as supermarkets.

7. A cultural legacy

The countryside in and around towns contains many imprints of the history of our towns and communities, their development and expansion or sometimes even their disappearance.

8. A place for sustainable living

Careful decisions have been taken about where to accommodate the need for new

development, especially for affordable homes. Those decisions have followed an examination of the pros and cons of increasing housing densities in existing urban areas, expanding market towns and villages, allowing the selective expansion of cities, and creating new settlements.

9. An engine for regeneration

Strategies for local regeneration use the countryside on the urban edge to help communities develop their own confidence, skills and prospects.

10. A nature reserve

The countryside in and around towns contains historic and newly established woodlands, wetlands, meadows and a broad array of other natural habitats.

POLICY BE34:

MANAGING THE URBAN RURAL FRINGE

Local Development Documents (LDDs) should identify:

- i) boundaries of the urban rural fringe around settlements in their authority, including areas currently or potentially subject to dereliction; and
- ii) Identify issues and opportunities that require action specific attention to assist in delivering to deliver a sustainable multi-functional urban rural fringe, using the key functions set out in Box BE2 as a checklist.

~~Local authorities should work with neighbouring planning authorities and with partners including the private sector, agencies and county wildlife and other trusts in formulating and implementing strategies and action plans for urban rural fringe areas.~~

To ensure action will be taken Local Authorities should:

- i) ensure better management of the urban rural fringe, including where applicable Green Belt, by working with neighbouring planning authorities and partners in developing and implementing strategies and action plans for urban rural fringe areas. ~~those areas currently or potentially subject to dereliction due to under-use~~
- ii) ~~be~~ proactive in identifying appropriate opportunities in the urban rural fringe for ~~appropriate~~ sustainable developments, including urban extensions. ~~in the urban rural fringe. Plans should positively encourage patterns that preserve pockets of quality countryside, interlacing of built environments with quality greenspace and easy access for inhabitants to the greenspace and~~ countryside.

5. Rural Communities and Management

- 5.1 Whilst it is recognised that the majority of the development needs of the South East will be met in urban areas, there is a need to ensure the development necessary to maintain and develop thriving and socially inclusive rural communities and economies is appropriate, balancing development with environmental constraints. In particular, this means ensuring rural communities have access to a good range of affordable housing, key services and employment.
- 5.2 Positive planning and design in rural areas are also encouraged, in order to foster vibrant communities which have the capacity and knowledge to plan for their future through community-led initiatives. e.g. Parish Plans, Village Design Statements, Market Town Healthchecks, Local Community Strategies.

6. The Role of Small Rural Towns ('Market' Towns)

- 6.1 Small rural or 'market' towns therefore play a key part in the economic and social functioning of the region, and in contributing to its character and built form. In this Plan they are defined as between 3,000 and 10,000 population. They often act as a focal point for trade and services for a rural hinterland, and such towns can have a variety of backgrounds – they are not just limited to those which have a traditional agricultural market or strong historic character.
- 6.2 In recent years small rural towns have been relatively successful in economic and social terms. They have seen substantial economic and housing growth. Under the strategy of the South East Plan they will not be a main focus for development, but they will still need to foster economic vitality and appropriate development including the provision of affordable housing. This local character and identity should be reinforced and enhanced. Individuality is the key to the success of market towns, which will depend on their appeal as a commercial business and retail centre, an attractive residential location and visitor destination.
- 6.3 Some small rural towns also have social problems and here community engagement and capacity building, and the management and resourcing of community initiatives (such as SEEDA's Market Town programmes) can help address disadvantage and social isolation, linked with LDFs, Local Transport Plans and Community Strategies. Consideration should also be given to extending the role of small rural towns as centres for education and training, and to a more innovative approach to the multiple use of existing infrastructure, such as schools and libraries to develop this role.

POLICY BE45: **THE ROLE OF SMALL RURAL TOWNS ('MARKET' TOWNS)**

Local planning authorities should encourage and initiate schemes and proposals that help strengthen the viability of small rural towns, recognising their social, economic and cultural importance to ~~the~~ wider rural areas and the region as a whole. Local planning authorities, through their LDDs and other means, should:

- i) support and reinforce the role of small rural market towns as local hubs for employment, retailing and community facilities and services;
- ii) encourage community-led local assessments of need and action planning;
- iii) provide for small scale housing development (especially for affordable housing) in market-small rural towns ~~especially for affordable housing~~ where this would reinforce and develop the distinctive character and role of the town, and meet identified appropriate needs;
- iv) ~~protect~~ and enhance the character and appearance of individual market-small rural towns;
- v) ~~develop~~ public transport networks which meet the needs of both the market towns and their surrounding rural area.

7. Village Management

- 7.1 Villages form an important part of the network of settlements in the region, and are often the subject of pressures arising from their location in a highly dynamic region, but also from stagnation or exclusion, in some cases resulting from a loss of services or changing community structure. Villages are defined in this Plan as settlements with populations less than 3,000. Limited small scale development can help meet the specific local housing, business and service needs of individual rural settlements, preferably through community led mechanisms such as Parish Plans. Development must be guided by strong design requirements which respect the character of the settlement. Community and service needs may be partially met through joint services, co-location and information technology. In some cases, development may serve a group of villages.

POLICY BE65: VILLAGE MANAGEMENT

In preparing their Local Development Documents, local planning authorities should positively plan for limited small scale affordable housing, business and service development in villages to meet defined local needs (e.g. affordable housing) and protect or extend key local services in accordance with rigorous design and sustainability criteria.

To assist this, Local Planning Authorities should encourage community-led local assessments of need and action planning to inform decision making processes.

**~~POLICY BE6:
MANAGEMENT OF THE BUILT AND HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT~~**

~~Local Development Frameworks should adopt policies and proposals which support the conservation and, where possible, the enhancement of the historic environment and the contribution it makes to local and regional distinctiveness and sense of place. Proposals that make sensitive use of historic assets through regeneration, particularly where these bring redundant or under-used buildings and areas into appropriate use should be encouraged.~~