

Design

Supplementary Planning Document

April 2016



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PREFACE

This Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been prepared to help deliver design quality in new development in Cannock Chase District to enhance the best of the District's buildings, townscapes and landscapes based on a clear understanding of local character and pressures. It promotes this through a series of local design and sustainable building guidelines and recognised good practice principles to set the context for consideration of development proposals.

'Supplementary Planning Documents should be used where they can help applicants make successful applications or aid infrastructure delivery, and should not be used to add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development' (National Planning Policy Framework(NPPF) 2012, Para. 153).

This SPD therefore seeks to build upon and provide more detailed advice and guidance on the policies in the Cannock Chase Local Plan (Part 1) 2014 and has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 11-16 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Cllr Gordon Alcott, the Council's Deputy Leader and Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Leader, says:

'I support the Design SPD in bringing together a range of guidance to help applicants make successful planning applications providing well designed and locally distinctive new development which benefits the District's urban and rural areas. When adopted it will form a material consideration in determining planning applications.'



1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Design Quality

1.1 Design includes not only the style of buildings but the spaces in and around them and the quality of the relationship between buildings and their surroundings – how places work as well as how they look. Good design which enhances the quality of the built and natural environment adds to the quality of life for the whole community and, by making areas more attractive, enhances the local economy too. It can revitalise and regenerate places by promoting a positive image and contribute to enhancement of health and wellbeing. The link between environment and health is well known as pointed out by Winston Churchill:

'We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us' (1943).'

1.2 The guidance focuses on principles for creating better places and applies to extensions and conversions of existing buildings as well as the design and layout of new buildings. The interaction between many of these principles supports several design objectives, reinforcing the overall message. The surroundings of buildings – green and rural or paved and urban – are also a key component of good design, helping development fit comfortably into its setting. Good design is about imaginative solutions so the guidance is not prescriptive and does not attempt to propose specific design solutions; its main purpose is to provide a practical tool, highlighting key principles to assist developers. The role of ongoing upkeep and maintenance, particularly in relation to landscape context for development, is highlighted. Innovative designs of buildings and/or landscapes are encouraged. The District has benefitted over a number of years



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from a strong Council commitment to good design of buildings and landscaping, however a recent Government focus on enhancing the local distinctiveness of places has allowed a more local emphasis to design to be adopted now.

- 1.3 One way of recognising this local emphasis is for new development to reflect the best existing qualities of a place to help ensure that, whilst it has its own identity; it helps retain the distinctive qualities that make this District different. Through a Design Profile and 20 Character Area Descriptions (Appendix A) the SPD identifies and defines in a systematic and objective way the key characteristics of built form and landscape which make different areas of the District special. From this key design guidelines are set out to contribute to conserving local distinctiveness as the District evolves into the future. Suggestions and general preferences emerging from informal early public consultation on the Design SPD/Characterisation Study have been incorporated.

Role of SPD

- 1.4 The guidance provides specific criteria for Development Management providing a basis for consistent decision making. It assists management of change and provision of long term, high quality solutions addressing past and current issues, particularly relating to degree of sympathy with site context to help new development to fit well into its surroundings. Particular issues/pressures include the need for developers to refer to local context, avoid over development in terms of size and footprint, acknowledge the contribution of existing trees and landscaping and avoid use of standard designs and low quality materials providing short term, high maintenance solutions and 'anywhere' design. Together with promoting detailed design



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appraisal of site and locality it will help developers to create designs which meet user's requirements and offers scope for innovative design whilst reflecting the District's special character. At the end of the day well designed development will better hold its value and be a more attractive product.

1.5 This SPD supports the District's Local Plan (Part 1) 2014, particularly Policy CP3: Chase Shaping: Design. Cannock Chase District has for many years provided local planning guidance to assist developers, some of which was in need of updating. In addition a number of new national policy considerations have increased in prominence, such as climate change and improving security through better design, which were not previously covered so by addressing such matters in a local context the Design SPD seeks to support national planning policy too. Development proposals designed to address these matters at the outset are likely to have better and speedier success in the decision making process.

1.6 *Applicants will be expected to have considered the contents of this SPD prior to submitting a planning application. Its adoption will ensure that it becomes a material consideration with considerable weight in decision making. Applicants should also refer to the Council's Validation Document which sets out the information requirements to accompany applications. This is available from the Council's website*

<http://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/development-control>

Contents and How to Use this SPD

1.7 The SPD expands and details policy, sets out quality standards and considerations required from development including specific criteria for Development Management (e.g. space about dwellings), provides the basis for consistent decision making and addresses social, sustainable, visual and functional issues to respond to local context. *The Council encourages all developers and householders to consider this guidance as a whole. Figure 2 under Section 4a of the Design SPD provides signposting to enable applicants to access and utilise the information within this SPD according to the type of development proposal.*

1.8 The SPD is split into the following sections:

- District Design profile – a summary of key characteristics of the area to be taken into account in development
- Policy Context – an overview of the key policy drivers and considerations for the SPD
- Principles for Design –
 - a) General Principles: for good urban design through the planning application process, links to generic national guidance and other local SPD

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- b) Topic specific advice: provides broad principles for consideration in designing development linked to the Design Profile and General Principles e.g. design aspects of climate change/biodiversity, green infrastructure/trees/landscaping, residential development criteria, Green Belt/AONB/equestrian, shopfront design/security, signage, frontages, historic areas etc.
- c) Area specific advice: guidance for particular areas of District warranting specific support to conserve or enhance e.g. A5 corridor, Hednesford Town Centre, mature suburbs at Etchinghill and New Penkrige Road and Existing Employment Areas in the Green Belt
- Cannock Chase Local List: associated with the character and appearance of the District are numerous undesignated heritage assets valued by the local community in contributing to the special qualities of the area. In response to local encouragement the Council therefore invites the local community to nominate buildings and features which merit inclusion on a Local List to be used to inform consideration of development proposals.

Early Consultation

1.9 Consultation was undertaken on preparatory work for this Design SPD in 2010-11 to support the development of Local Plan (Part 1), including consultation on a Characterisation Study (2011) which analysed the locally distinctive design features across the District. This analysis informed the identification of 20 'Character Areas' which were distinguishable by virtue of their design, such as density, historic development influencing architectural styles and key landscape features. Bespoke design principles for each of these character areas were developed in individual Character Area Descriptions, which then informed a wider District Design Profile. The Profile represents an amalgamation of prominent design features overall, such as the influence of the Cannock Chase AONB and green landscaping across the District.

1.10 Views were sought via the consultation on the appropriateness of the Study and its conclusions, particularly the Character Area Descriptions and District Design Profile content. Consultation was also undertaken on the potential Design SPD content and views were sought on what guidance should be developed in terms of topic areas. The draft Profile was updated following informal public consultation which showed the work was well supported and provided useful feedback on a number of points, including local design preferences and features of interest, as well as the proposed content of the SPD. A summary of the consultation process and how the responses informed the development of the SPD is available to download from the Council's website or on request

<http://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-policy-documents>

2. DISTRICT DESIGN PROFILE

2.1 Cannock Chase District lies within southern Staffordshire on the northern edge of the West Midlands conurbation. At the heart of the District lies the heathland and forest of Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and more than half of the District is designated as Green Belt. The District's historic focus was coal mining, but this has now diversified into manufacturing, transport and communications. To the north of the Chase is the built up area of Rugeley and Breerton. Rugeley is a historic market town with a variety of architecture and diverse townscape.



South of the Chase is the urban area of Cannock and Hednesford, Cannock still retains elements of its historic core and spreads north into Hednesford, a distinct small town, mainly developed since the 19th Century. On the south-western edge of Cannock is the small settlement of Bridgtown and in the south-east of the District is Norton Canes, a village mainly developed post-war. Other small settlements stand within the rural areas,

on the fringes of the Chase and southern farmlands. The District's medieval origins, mining legacy and industrial/agricultural heritage provide assets generating a range of recreation and tourism opportunities.

2.2 Green infrastructure forms a major element of the character and appearance of the District. It ranges from the rural areas where the soft green landscape predominates to the urban areas where buildings and hard surfacing are more common but are nevertheless softened by mature town centre trees and green spaces, suburban garden hedges and street trees, well landscaped modern business parks and residential areas and a multitude of green links throughout. The topography reinforces this impression of 'greenness' with characteristic views across the District from the high ground of Hednesford Hills and the Chase as well as between buildings and over rooftops towards the surrounding woodlands and heaths. Key highway routes focus on Cannock, Rugeley and Hednesford.



2.3 A 'characterisation' of the District has been carried out dividing it into 20 Character Areas. These were based upon identification of key features of the urban structure, including periods of historic development, type of built form/density/uses/materials, landmarks, key views, gateways, green infrastructure etc. The condition of the Character Areas was also evaluated to identify where conservation and enhancement opportunities exist, having particular regard to key issues and pressures on the townscape, in order to develop local design principles. The Design Profile was updated following informal public consultation which showed the work was well supported and provided useful feedback on a number of points, including local design preferences and features of local interest, as well as the proposed contents of this SPD. Full descriptions of the Character Areas are included within Appendix A to this document. The map below provides an overview of the Districts defined character areas. The full Characterisation Study is available to view online at

<http://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-policy-documents>

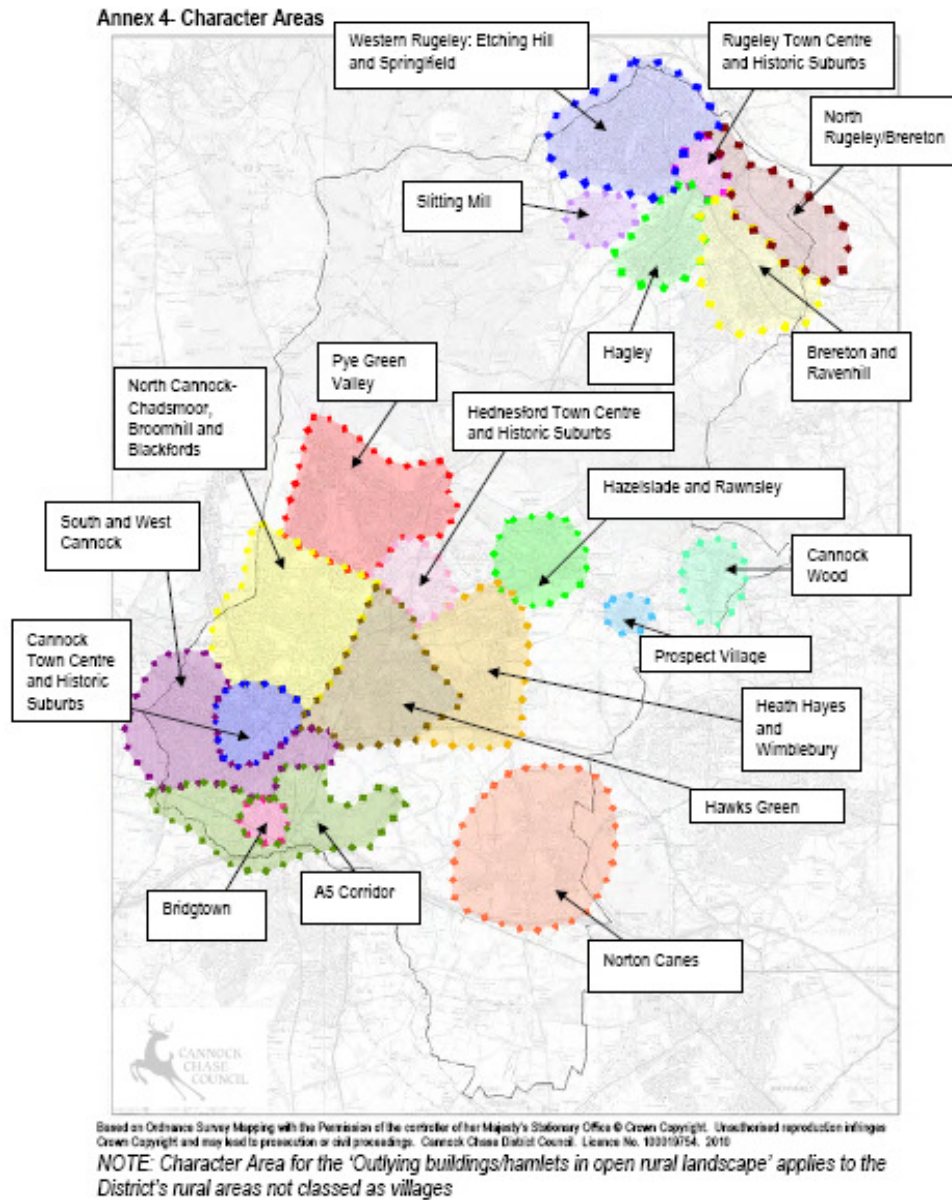


Figure 1. District Character Areas- extracted from Design SPD Technical Appendix (Jan 2011)

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

National Policy

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (2012) places a strong emphasis on good design in development. The Ministerial Foreword considers that ‘confidence in development itself has been eroded by the too frequent experience of mediocrity’ and consequently ‘our standards of design can be so much higher’.



National Planning Policy Framework



3.2 One of the 12 core principles of the NPPF at paragraph 17 sets out how planning should ‘always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings’.

3.3 The NPPF seeks to drive up standards of design primarily through a specific chapter on ‘Requiring Good Design’ highlighting the key role it has to play in delivering overall sustainable development. The following key extracts are of most relevance to the purpose and content of this Design SPD:

- Design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally (Para. 59);
- Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative (Para. 60);
- Securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment (Para. 61);
- In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area (Para. 63);

- Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions (Para. 64);
- Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community (Para. 66).

3.4 *Paragraph 58 is also especially important as it refers to the key elements of good design that local authorities should seek to address in their planning policies and guidance. These elements include ensuring that a development functions well and adds quality to the local area in the short and longer term; establishes a strong sense of place, which is attractive and comfortable for people; optimises the potential of the site to accommodate sustainable development, taking account of all land use needs e.g. open space; responds to existing local character, whilst not stifling innovation; creates a safe environment i.e. 'designing out crime'; and creates a visually attractive place through good architecture and landscaping.* The NPPF encourages local authorities to have local design review arrangements in place to help ensure these high quality design principles and related standards are being implemented (Para. 62).

3.5 National Policy is elaborated in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for design produced in March 2014. The PPG restates that 'Local planning authorities are required to take design into consideration and should refuse permission for development of poor design. Local planning authorities should give great weight to outstanding or innovative designs which help to raise the standard of design more generally in the area. This could include the use of innovative construction materials and techniques. Planning permission should not be refused for buildings and infrastructure that promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape, if those concerns have been mitigated by good design'.

3.6 In making planning policies and decisions the following issues should be considered:

- local character (including landscape setting)
- safe, connected and efficient streets
- a network of greenspaces (including parks) and public places
- crime prevention
- security measures
- access and inclusion
- efficient use of natural resources
- cohesive & vibrant neighbourhoods

Well designed new or changing places should:

- be functional;
- support mixed uses and tenures;
- include successful public spaces;
- be adaptable and resilient;
- have a distinctive character;
- be attractive; and
- encourage ease of movement.

Where appropriate the following should be considered:

- layout – the way in which buildings and spaces relate to each other
- form – the shape of buildings
- scale – the size of buildings
- detailing – the important smaller elements of building and spaces
- materials – what a building is made from

3.7 The PPG refers to the planning processes and tools that we can use to help achieve good design. In development plans the promotion of good design should be sought at all stages in the planning process through:

- careful plan and policy formulation
- the use of proper consultative and participatory techniques
- where appropriate the preparation of masterplans, briefs and site specific policies.
- employment/use of appropriately qualified professionals

3.8 In the evolution of planning applications and proposals there are established ways in which good design can be achieved. These include:

- pre-application discussions
- design and access statements
- design review
- design codes
- decisions on applications
- the use and implementation of planning conditions and agreements

3.9 The qualities of well designed places are similar across most developments. However it is useful to consider what they can mean in practice for particular places or development types:

- housing design
- town centre design
- street design and transport corridors

3.10 The PPG has recently (2015) been updated to include new housing standards ('Housing- Optional Technical Standards') reflecting updated building regulations and the associated streamlining of a number of former

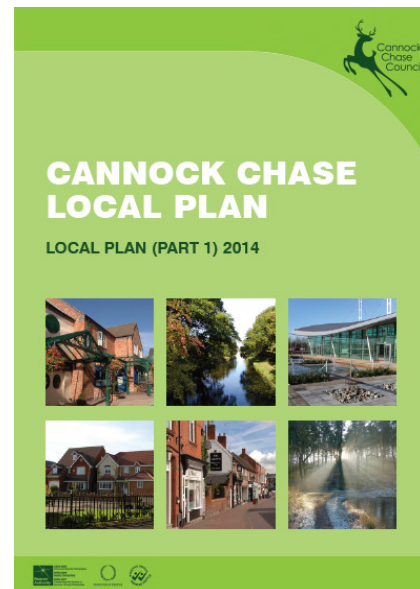
Policy Context

housing assessment standards, namely the Code for Sustainable Homes, Lifetime Homes and Secured by Design. These updated standards have been considered and the Design SPD has been amended accordingly to reflect these recent changes. A key change arising from the updated PPG is that Local Authorities can no longer set construction standards for housing beyond that stipulated in the guidance. The PPG provides for a limited number of 'optional' standards which go beyond building regulation requirements e.g. for higher water efficiency that a Local Authority can adopt in their Local Plan policies, where there is evidence to support this. The PPG also provides a national space standard for new dwellings, which again Local Authorities can choose to adopt. They cannot however set any locally prescribed space standards.

Local Policy

3.11 The Cannock Chase Local Plan (Part 1) was adopted in June 2014. The principle of producing a Design SPD (alongside other potential design-related SPD) is set out in **Policy CP3 - Chase Shaping**. This policy sets out a number of key design principles to guide planning proposals and the decision making process. The supporting text to this policy, within Objective 1, outlines how the characteristics of the area have been analysed and then reflected in the District Design Profile. This SPD supports the implementation of this policy (alongside others in the Local Plan (Part 1)) by providing practical advice and guidance to applicants and decision makers. Other Local Plan (Part 1) policies which refer to the need for design guidance are:

- **Policy CP12 Biodiversity and Geodiversity** (to provide guidance on how to implement policy requirements related to important and protected habitats and species across the District);
- **Policy CP14 Landscape Character and Cannock Chase AONB** (to provide guidance on how to implement policy requirements to take into account the special and protected landscape value of the AONB and other non-protected landscape character across the District);
- **Policy CP15 Historic Environment** (to provide guidance on how to implement policy requirements to take into account the heritage value of designated and non-designated assets across the District);
- **Policy CP16 Climate Change and Sustainable Resource Use** (to provide guidance on how to implement policy requirements to take into



account general sustainability issues e.g. energy efficiency measures or hazards related to the coal mining legacy of the District).

- 3.12 Elements of Local Plan (Part 1) Policies CP7 and CP16 have recently been superseded by the changes brought about by the updates to the PPG regarding 'Housing-Optional Standards'. These changes are reflected within the SPD- for further information please refer to the 'Policy Position Statement' on housing standards available on the Council's planning policy web pages.
- 3.13 Policy CP3 of the Local Plan (Part 1) makes reference to the potential need for bespoke guidance on specific issues, including the upgrading of existing employment areas in the Green Belt and the reuse of rural buildings. This SPD has therefore incorporated guidance on these topics.
- 3.14 The Design SPD also links to other SPD's produced by the Council, namely an SPD on Developer Contributions and Housing Choices (2015) which contains details of local Open Space, Sport and Recreation (OSSR) standards.
- 3.15 A number of existing local guidance documents have been reviewed and will be superseded upon final adoption of this Design SPD. These are the Trees, Landscape and Development Supplementary Planning Guidance (1999) and the House Extensions Guide (2003). The Staffordshire Residential Design Guide (2001) is also largely superseded by this Design SPD, however Staffordshire County Council Highways may still utilise the 'Access layout' aspects of the Guide in relation to residential road layouts.
- 3.16 There are a number of Neighbourhood Plans currently in production within the District, namely for the Brereton and Ravenhill neighbourhood area and Hednesford Town neighbourhood area. It is expected that these plans will look to include further locally distinctive design policies and guidance for their respective areas, which will draw upon, complement and take forward the guidance within the Local Plan (Part 1) and this SPD.