

Robust Street Furniture Limited

Urban Design

The following has been extracted from the public document of the Vale Royal Borough Council Website and it is with acknowledgement to www.valeroyal.gov.uk (last modified: 8 February 2007).

Definitions - What is Urban Design?

A government supported document states that it is:

"The art of making places for people",
and that the recipient of the service is the community at large.

In Planning Policy Guidance it is:

"The relationship between different buildings; the relationship between buildings and the streets, squares, parks, waterways, and other spaces that make up the public domain; the relationship of one part of a village, town or city with other parts; and the pattern of movement and activity which are thereby established: in short the complex relationships between all the elements of built and unbuilt space."

A personal preference is

"Creating the stage upon which people play out their lives."

Best practice advises that there are three scales or levels to the subject

- Urban Strategy, which deals with macro elements in and around the urban area, such as key views, major open spaces and circulation and movement patterns.
- Landscape and streetscape design, which addresses the makeup of individual locations or quarters and refines major component elements of the urban strategy through sub-strategies dealing with the provision and management of the elements.
- Building and detail design, which deals with smaller scale elements, not just individual building design but also the detail of the floorscape, street furniture (including works of public art) and general public urban open and green space.

The Development Framework

This is usually the 'Master Plan' that sets out the relationships of new developments to:
Surrounding built forms and uses
Public transport nodes and local facilities
The strategic movement network

More detailed advice and guidance is available in the following publications:

By Design Urban Design in the Planning System: towards better practice

Prepared by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
for the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

Urban Design Compendium

Prepared by Llewelyn-Davies
for English Partnerships and The Housing Corporation.

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In Summary

Seven Principles/Objectives – that should be promoted in any development

Character

A townscape and landscape that responds to local features/characteristics

A sense of place/local identity created by local landmarks, places, people, culture

Continuity/Enclosure

Continuity of street frontage

Buildings with clearly defined public fronts and private backs

Physical enclosure of the public realm

Quality of the Public Realm

Open spaces and routes that are safe and secure – having ‘eyes on the street’

Uncluttered

Active (plenty of windows and doors – not blank walls)

Easily identifiable

Ease of Movement

Places for walking, cycling, public transport and motorists with direct and well integrated connections

Legibility

Buildings and public realm elements as landmarks or clear routes - making places easy to understand by their users

Adaptability

Flexible and versatile buildings and open spaces that respond to changing conditions

Diversity

Fine-grained mix of uses to help with vitality and viability

Key Themes – that should be incorporated into development proposals

Sustainable Meet the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Quality Create places of beauty with a local and distinct identity

Local Distinctiveness

Build on existing strengths:

- Identify the locally distinct (unique) local characteristics of the area
- Retain, support and enhance the existing character elements
- Reflect character elements in new development form and detail

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Local Design Character and Materials

New developments should:

- Respond to local building form, siting, scale and materials
- Use local, natural materials – recycled if appropriate
- Respect rather than imitate – modern interpretations are encouraged
- Be of human scale, use taller buildings as landmarks, focal points and gateways
- Retain and re-use existing buildings of character
- Apply landscape principles of:

simple design

timeless palette of materials – indigenous species

Use bespoke street furniture and art work (sculpture and murals)

Other development considerations

- Integrate the site access with the surrounding street network
- Create pedestrian priority
- Favour cycles and public transport - calm traffic, reduce the need for car parking
- Create active street frontages - windows, doors and balconies
- Create a network of high quality, legible places - street, squares, focal points
- Focus on corners of blocks - face both ways
- Apply best practice on environmental design
- Apply solar design principles

Mixed-use Perimeter Blocks – mainly for urban townscapes

- Ideally use 90 x 90m approx development block modules
- Public face to public areas – back to private or service areas
- Buildings on back of pavement – allow flexible use of interior block space
- Existing (or future isolated large 'box' units can be 'wrapped round' by smaller units to create fine grain perimeter blocks with active frontages
- Design for change - units with sufficient flexibility to enable future changes of use

Transport - Transport Network Design Principles

Communities and Connections

- Movement within, between and through places is essential
- Frequent and clear connections will integrate and provide flexibility for future extension

Permeable Movement Networks

- Help minimise car dependency
- Make facilities/services easier to reach

Structured Street Network

- Hierarchy according to capacity and character,
- related to associated buildings and uses

Streets for People

Social places for residents and visitors where composing elements work together

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Safe and Attractive

- Contributing to personal and community safety
- Stimulating the senses through good design (buildings, street furniture, landscape)
- well-lit and free from traffic danger