

Chapter 10

Design



Introduction

10.1 Good design is a key element to achieving sustainable development and is fundamental to the successful delivery of the local plan. Good design is not just about aesthetic appearance. It is about how a building or place functions, how buildings or places can improve quality of life and how buildings and places can contribute to environmental sustainability as well as economic growth¹⁶⁹. The NPPF attaches great importance to creating better places in which to live and work by achieving high quality, inclusive and beautiful design and sets out how this can be achieved through both plan-making as well as through the evolution and assessment of individual proposals.

10.2 In 2019 the Government published its National Design Guide¹⁷⁰ which provides an expanded definition of a well-designed place. It sets out ten characteristics of a well-designed place under the three themes of character, climate and community. The ten characteristics reflect the Government's priorities and provide a common overarching national framework for design. This is shown below.

Picture 5 A Well Designed Place



169 CABE (N.D.G) The Value of Good Design. How Buildings and Spaces Create Economic and Social Value. Available at: www.designcouncil.org.uk/fileadmin/uploads/dc/Documents/the-value-of-good-design.pdf

170 Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (January 2021) National Design Guide Available at: assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962113/National_design_guide.pdf

10.3 At a local level, the Council adopted the Wealden Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in 2008¹⁷¹. The Design SPD covers a wide range of topic areas and is a reference to establish local design principles considered appropriate for use in the district. An updated Wealden Design Code will be prepared which will include more guidance on the requirements of the design principles and design related policies within this local plan. Until this is adopted, developers should use both the National Design Guide and our adopted Wealden Design Guide (2008).

10.4 Other sources of local design guidance are also relevant. These include design policies, design guides and codes provided within or as part of 'made' (adopted) Neighbourhood Plans, for example Herstmonceux have produced a Design Guide for the Parish. A number of other Neighbourhood Plans which are currently in production are also preparing design guides or codes such as Horam, Ninfield and Wadhurst.

10.5 The High Weald AONB partnership have produced a High Weald Housing Design Guide¹⁷² as well as guidance on the selection and use of colour in development within the AONB¹⁷³, with the aim of decreasing the sense of urbanisation in the countryside.

10.6 In recent years new development across the country has often tended towards the use of standard house and development types that do not reflect local context, for example in the use of materials, site layout or building design. The overall aim of our design policies is to facilitate the achievement of sustainable development and encourage high quality, attractive design, but also to create vibrant, safe and functional communities with a distinctive sense of place that respect their local context (including historic character), without resulting in 'pastiche' development¹⁷⁴. Mitigating and adapting to climate change is also an integral design consideration alongside planning for the natural environment.

What you have previously told us?

10.7 As part of the Direction of Travel Consultation¹⁷⁵ you told us that you felt that design was not provided sufficient prominence in planning decisions and that the existing Design Guide was not always applied. Many respondents felt that design quality should be insisted upon and applications should be refused if design quality is not met. You told us that planning applications should be refused where proposals do not comply with either the AONB or Wealden Design Guide. Thus, the issue was perceived to be not necessarily a lack of design guidance, but a failure of developers to use that guidance and the Council then not upholding design standards.

10.8 The issue of the use of generic designs in new housing developments was raised and it was argued that the Local Plan should address this, as well as the need to prevent coalescence of settlements. There was support for maintaining local design guidance (the need to update the Wealden Design Guide was mentioned) and the need for locally specific design guidance as opposed to more general national guidance was stressed. The desire to protect local identity through design was a common theme running through the responses. However, there were a number of responses from house builders and others who stressed the need for flexibility in

171 Wealden District Council (November 2008) Wealden Design Guide. Available at: www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/DGpart1.pdf

172 High Weald AONB JAC (November 2019) High Weald Housing Design Guide. Available at: highweald.org/~documents/publications/legislation-and-planning/high-weald-design-guide-final/?layout=default

173 The High Weald JAC (September 2017) High Weald AONB Guidance on the Selection and Use of Colour in Development. Available at: highweald.org/~documents/publications/legislation-and-planning/high-weald-aonb-colour-study/?layout=default

174 i.e., poor quality imitations of past styles

175 Direction of Travel Consultation Local Plan Sub Committee Report (11th March 2021). Available at: council.wealden.gov.uk/documents/s73242/Direction%20of%20Travel%20Consultation.pdf

design expectations to allow for variety across the district and fluctuations in market preferences. Thus, there is a fine balance to tread between providing locally specific design guidance to try and protect local identity and drive up the quality of design in the district and preventing variety and innovation in design, including the use of contemporary architecture.

10.9 There was a focus on how smaller scale development might deliver better design outcomes in Wealden, either through the use of SME house builders who, it was argued, could respond appropriately to sensitive sites or by using a self-build/ custom build model where the owner is highly motivated to ensure good design. The integration of new development into existing settlements was raised, in particular how new development can best be integrated into historic parts of towns and villages.

10.10 The role of the public in design decisions was a common theme running through responses and some respondents suggested a more collaborative approach on strategic housing sites using design codes and masterplans. Respondents highlighted the need for sustainable construction techniques and the need for policy options for climate change mitigation, including support for incorporating renewable energy generation. There was also a call for appropriate consideration to the topic of the Circular Economy and minimising waste within the sustainable design and sustainable construction policies as well as including reference to high quality landscape design within the design policies. Similarly, the protection of sensitive sites such as Ancient Woodland and the setting of the South Downs National Park was raised by other respondents.

10.11 We have addressed these issues in the draft policies set out in this chapter as well as other chapters, as relevant, where issues overlap with other key policy areas.

Achieving well-designed and high-quality places

10.12 Development in Wealden has been influenced over the years by the diverse character of the natural environment and the availability of local materials. For example, the use of timber framing in the High Weald, or the use of flint in parts of the Low Weald. The character of individual buildings, streets, the location, types and layout of settlements, which are characterised by Wealden's unique history are all elements that contribute to the 'local distinctiveness' which helps to differentiate Wealden's different character areas and settlements from those found elsewhere in the country. It is important that this distinctiveness is protected and maintained and is not diluted through new development. The National Planning Policy Framework requires that Local Plans set out a clear design vision and expectations, for design policies to reflect local aspirations and for these to be grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics.

10.13 The pattern and style of development varies across the district. In urban areas there is often a discernible pattern of development of modern estates often focused around a historic core. In rural villages there is often a much stronger historic pattern with some periphery modern development. Overall, the district has some well-designed and successfully designed buildings and places at a range of scales. A key objective of this plan is to ensure that all future development is designed in a way that responds to the character and distinctiveness of our towns and villages through high quality design.

10.14 Delivering high quality design is not just about how a building or development looks. It is about delivering places that provide social, economic and environmental benefits to the community. A well-designed place can provide social benefits, creating spaces where people can meet and interact whilst carrying out a wide range of activities. Well-designed places can

also benefit from lower crime rates. People experience the built environment in different ways according to different factors such as gender, age or mobility and inclusive design can make a big difference to people's lives, for example creating new developments that are easy to understand and navigate for all groups in society. Developments can promote healthier lifestyles by prioritising sustainable travel and providing public realm, encouraging play and physical activity. Well-designed places can also help to create a positive sense of place and reinforce local identity, giving residents a sense of pride and belonging.

10.15 The economic benefits of good design range from the benefits to the individual of a well-designed building such as reduced heating bills, to the economic benefits to the whole community of a well-designed redevelopment scheme or increased property values. In terms of the environment, good design will promote sustainable design and the use of sustainable materials thereby reducing the effects of climate change. It can also enhance the natural environment in many different ways, such as increasing biodiversity levels on site and beyond.

10.16 Policy DE1 sets out a set of design principles that must be considered as part of any new development. The design principles seek to ensure that development contributes positively to people, places, the natural environment and the economic vitality of the district.

Policy DE1: Achieving well designed and high quality places

- 1 All development must be beautiful, achieve a high quality of architectural design and contribute positively to user experience, sustainability and a sense of place. Innovative and contemporary architecture will be supported where it is of high quality design, responds to its context in the local area and does not negatively impact on the existing character, particularly where it delivers overall design excellence.
- 2 Design must be considered at the earliest opportunity having regard to national and local design guidance, relevant design guides and design codes.
- 3 Development proposals will be supported where they:

Context and identity

- a) Are locally distinctive, relate well to, and positively contribute to the character and topography of the surrounding built and natural environment (including its overall setting, townscape features, landscape, skyline, heritage, important views and green corridors). Proposals should create a positive sense of place by responding to the features of the site and the surrounding context;
- b) Relate sympathetically to the local landscape, retaining existing important landscape, historic and natural features and incorporating high quality landscape design, mitigating against any detrimental harm to the landscape and / or its features. This includes (where applicable) providing an appropriately sized and designed landscape buffer to the open countryside. As relevant to the site, the use of native hedges comprising native species is preferable to man-made boundary treatments;
- c) Provide a strong, attractive and positive identity contributing to health and well-being, inclusion and cohesion by ensuring that new developments integrate well, both physically and visually, with the existing built form and existing communities;
- d) Use high quality local materials, adopt traditional typical local building forms and use architectural detailing and planting that will ultimately complement the local area

and surroundings, helping to establish a strong sense of place. A consistent high level of design and material quality should be used across different tenures;

e) Enhance either the existing character or achieve a new positive character;

Built Form

f) Make efficient use of land and, where appropriate, prioritise the use of previously developed land and buildings whilst respecting any constraints that exist;

g) Ensure that the siting, scale, massing, density, orientation and appearance of the development will lead to a high standard of design and layout;

h) Ensure that all proposal elements relate well to each other;

i) Provide and incorporate a sufficient amount of accessible and unobtrusive areas for the storage of refuse and recycling bins without dominating the street scene;

j) Are designed to avoid unacceptable adverse impacts or harm to the amenities of neighbouring properties and their users / occupants, in terms of privacy, sunlight and daylight, overbearing, noise, odour, traffic, vibration or other microclimatic effects or result in a poor standard of amenity for the existing and future users of the development itself.

Movement

k) Deliver compact forms of development that prioritise safe and sustainable travel choices including delivering inclusive walkable neighbourhoods providing good and safe accessibility for all (including those with disabilities and people with particular access needs, such as the elderly or people with pushchairs) to public transport, employment, services and facilities and the rights of way network;

l) Are designed to encourage slower driving speeds;

m) Ensure a clear layout and hierarchy of streets that are of a width suitable for their function and purpose (including access for services) and will ensure that the development is easy to understand and navigate for all groups in society;

n) Achieve the site's vehicle and cycle parking requirements in an attractive and sensitively integrated way, including electric vehicle spaces and charging points and in accordance with East Sussex County Council standards;

Mixed and integrated uses as relevant to large major developments

o) Will provide an accessible, socially inclusive, integrated and suitable mix of uses that meet the housing, employment, service and facility needs of the local community to support daily life;

Lifespan

p) Are flexible in their design to provide acceptable living conditions and adapt to any changing needs of the user, such as health or mobility issues or to incorporate future technologies (such as high speed internet) to allow for remote working; and

q) Are designed to last, including a consideration of management and maintenance of both private and public spaces.

- 4 Applications will be expected to demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community on design issues, where appropriate.

Supporting Text

10.17 A high standard of design will be required in all new developments, whether it is an extension or alteration to an existing building, change of use of existing buildings, or new housing or business development. The NPPF is clear that ‘development that is not well-designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design’. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate how a high quality design has been achieved and how national and local design guidance has been considered.

10.18 Proposals for innovative and contemporary architecture will be expected to demonstrate in their submission how a scheme responds to the context of the site, for example through contemporary use of form and materials, and that there is no negative impact on the existing character of the area.

10.19 Early consultation with Planning Officers (and specialists where appropriate) via the pre-application advice service is encouraged to establish requirements and expectations prior to the submission of a planning application.

10.20 Where appropriate, applications will be expected to demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community on issues including design, as required by the NPPF. Certain applications, as detailed in the Council’s validation criteria¹⁷⁶, will be required to provide a Statement of Community Involvement. This should demonstrate how the applicant has complied with the requirements for pre-application consultation advocated in the Council’s own adopted Statement of Community Involvement and demonstrate that the views of the local community have been sought and taken into account in the formulation of development proposals.

10.21 Design and Access Statements are required to accompany certain applications¹⁷⁷ for planning permission and applications for listed building consent. The Council expects applicants to use Design and Access Statements to explain how their proposals are a suitable response to the site and its setting (context appraisal) and to provide further information on how the design of development responds to both national and local policy and guidance. The assessment should be proportionate to the scale and context of the development. Where Design and Access Statements are not required, the design requirements as set out in the local plan and the national and local design guidance available should still inform the design of new developments and be visible in the finished drawings.

Question 68

Consultation Questions

- a Do you agree with the Council's draft Policy DE1 Achieving well designed and high quality places?

176 Wealden District Council (reviewed January 2023) Planning Validation Guide. Available at: www.wealden.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/Wealden-District-Council-Validation-Requirements-February-2023.pdf

177 DLUHC (2014) Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 14-030-20140306 Available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/making-an-application

- b Have we missed anything that we should include in this policy, if so, what have we missed?
- c Should we make changes to this policy? If so, what changes should we make?

Masterplans and Design Codes

10.22 New developments should create high quality environments in which residents can live and work and also deliver benefits for existing communities, where relevant. A well-designed scheme will result in sustainable places which help to meet the development needs of the area whilst integrating well with existing settlements and also helping to meet economic, social and environmental objectives. The requirement for a masterplan on sites that deliver 100 plus dwellings and on significant non-residential sites, will help to drive up design quality and ensure the creation of sustainable places. Masterplans will also provide further certainty about design expectations from an early stage. Design codes are also encouraged for developments of 100 or more dwellings. As the NPPF explains, 'design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places'¹⁷⁸.

10.23 Large scale strategic sites of over 500 dwellings will require the use of design codes, as well as masterplans, to provide a more detailed framework for creating high quality, sustainable and locally distinctive places. On these large sites there is more likely to be a number of different development phases and design codes will help to deliver consistency in design across the site (and where appropriate differentiation), from materials to building form. Design codes can also offer greater certainty to developers and communities over what is likely to be acceptable on a site. Where design codes are received and approved at the outline application stage, they can also help to speed up the subsequent reserved matters application.

10.24 Sometimes there can be a disconnect between existing local residents and developers over the design of new large-scale schemes and what the priorities are. The requirement for masterplans and design codes will require a more collaborative approach to the design of these sites from an early stage. Ultimately this may lead to less objections once a scheme is submitted but also a more integrated, inclusive scheme that better reflects the views and priorities of the local community.

Policy DE2: Masterplans and Design Codes

Masterplans

- 1 For all developments of 100 or more dwellings the Council will require the submission of a masterplan. The Council will also require masterplans for significant non-residential development or where there are site specific complexities or sensitivities that require a masterplan led approach. This will be considered on a

178 DLUHC (2023) NPPF, Paragraph 125. Available at: assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1182995/NPPF_Sept_23.pdf

case-by-case basis and discussed with the applicant as part of pre-application discussions.

- 2 The scope and content of masterplans will depend on the scale and complexity of the proposed development and the site constraints.. As a minimum they should:
 - a) include a site context analysis;
 - b) include an analysis of the issues and constraints that need to be addressed;
 - c) provide a vision and development objectives;
 - d) provide a masterplan framework for new development e.g., in terms of built form, density, land use, public spaces, movement, transport, nature, landscaping, sustainability, safety. This should include an illustrative masterplan layout plan;
 - e) provide a phasing plan, where relevant; and
 - f) be informed by technical and design evidence.
- 3 Masterplans will be required to accompany either the outline or full planning application and adherence to the masterplan will be secured through planning conditions and / or a legal agreement, particularly on outline planning applications where subsequent reserved matters will be expected to adhere to the agreed masterplan vision.

Design Codes

- 4 On large scale strategic sites of 500 or more dwellings the council will require design codes (in addition to masterplans). Design codes are encouraged for developments of 100 or more dwellings or in relation to specific development types.. Design Codes will specifically be required for self-build or custom build projects.
- 5 When preparing a Design Code the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code should be used as a guide for how it should be developed and the coding process it needs to follow.
- 6 Design codes will be required to accompany either the outline or full planning application and adherence to the codes will be secured through planning conditions and / or a legal agreement, particularly on outline planning applications where subsequent reserved matters will be expected to demonstrate compliance to the agreed codes.

Pre-application discussions

- 7 Masterplans and Design Codes are encouraged to be submitted for the Council's consideration and agreement before the submission of a planning application and should be produced as early as possible to help inform pre-application discussions.

Supporting Text

Masterplans

10.25 Masterplans set out a framework for the development of large sites. It is not just one plan but a series of plans and supporting evidence (including written evidence, drawings and photographs) that describe the design concept and vision for the whole site and the rationale behind it. It is expected that it will provide site and context analysis as well as an analysis of the issues and constraints that need to be addressed on the site such as drainage, ecology,

archaeology, trees etc. The masterplan will ultimately provide a framework for new development on the site. The level of detail in the masterplan will depend on the complexity of the site and the proposed development.

10.26 It will be for the applicant/developer to provide the masterplan, but it is expected that a wide range of people will be involved in preparing a masterplan, from the local community to the District Council, as well as other organisations. The expectation is that there will be a pre-application advice meeting with the District Council to discuss the masterplan prior to an application being made and to agree the scope and contents.

10.27 The Council encourages applicants to discuss masterplans with the Council before submitting a planning application, however it will be crucial to have a masterplan submitted alongside the planning application, either at outline or full application stage. This will ensure the site is thought about as a whole and that there is continuity across the site, which will result in a more sustainable and cohesive development. This is particularly the case where sites are in multiple ownership, where they are being brought forward in different phases or where they are likely to be developed by different developers. If the scheme is a phased development that is developed over a number of years, we may require a more detailed and/or updated masterplan in the later phases.

Design Codes

10.28 Strategic sites are those sites which have been identified in this local plan for either housing and/ or other non-residential uses, for example, retail, employment or leisure uses. It is intended that only the largest of these residential sites of 500 or more dwellings will need to provide a design code for the site (although their use is encouraged on developments of 100 or more dwellings). A design code is 'a set of simple, concise, illustrated design requirements that are visual and numerical wherever possible to provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area'¹⁷⁹. The design codes for the strategic sites should use the the National Model Design Code as a guide for how they should be developed and the seven step coding process they need to follow.

10.29 The timing for providing design codes will be agreed with the Council as part of pre-application discussions. For example, it may be that design is not being considered at the outline stage therefore it may be agreed that the Design Code can be submitted post outline planning approval. The content and level of detail of the design code will also be agreed at pre application discussions.

10.30 As with the masterplanning process, public engagement and involvement in the creation of the design codes is critical and should take place throughout the process, as outlined in the National Model Design Code.

179 MHCLG (June 2021) National Model Design Code Part 1: The Coding Process. Available at: assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1009793/NMDC_Part_1_The_Coding_Process.pdf

Question 69

Consultation Questions

- a Do you agree with the Council's draft Policy DE1 Achieving well designed and high quality places?
- b Do you agree with the size of development on which we are requiring the use of Design Codes and Masterplans?
- c Have we missed anything that we should include in this policy, if so, what have we missed?
- d Should we make changes to this policy? If so, what changes should we make?

Spaces for people, nature and the public realm

10.31 Public space is defined in the National Design Guide as 'streets, squares, and other spaces that are open to all'. Providing attractive spaces is an important part of this policy and the attractiveness of the public realm in towns and villages is a key factor in their appeal to residents and visitors, creating spaces where people want to spend time interacting and relaxing.

But these spaces can and should also fulfil a number of other functions. Other policies within the plan deal with the amount of public space and play space that needs to be provided on new developments, however, there is a danger that public space is provided because it has to be provided, with little thought given to its use or function. There is also a danger that the design of the public realm occurs in a piecemeal fashion and that streets and other public spaces become cluttered and difficult to navigate for pedestrians. As the Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE) have highlighted 'having access to space is not all that matters- just as important are the planning, design and management of that space'.

10.32 The key purpose of this policy is to promote the public realm as well-designed, multi-functional spaces for use by everyone, to highlight the different uses to which they can be put and to maximise the benefits that a successful public realm can provide. The safety of the users of public realm also needs to be considered when designing public space. Well-designed public space should feel safe and secure for the people that use it, helping to overcome crime and the fear of crime.

10.33 The value of public space to residents' well-being and physical and mental health has been highlighted during the recent pandemic. Well-designed public spaces are designed to be used by everyone and should therefore be accessible to all and meet the needs of all, young and old, and regardless of gender or physical ability. The space should be used to promote social interaction and inclusion. This could include spaces that encourage physical activity, such as play, sport, walking and cycling, thus promoting health and well-being. Public space is precious and should be designed to benefit the maximum number of people, hence the requirement to deliver versatile, multi-functional public realm.

10.34 Public spaces can also be used to tackle climate change, both by providing climate change mitigation and resilience measures but also by encouraging the incorporation of existing natural features and delivering new ones. The NPPF requires policies to ensure that new streets

are tree lined and that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments. Trees and other planting in public spaces and along roads not only provide shading and help to improve air quality but also play a part in climate change mitigation, helping to combat the heat island effect¹⁸⁰.

Policy DE3: Spaces for people, nature and the public realm

- 1 Public spaces and the public realm must be considered as an integral part of design. Public spaces should be available for use by all members of society and designed in a way to promote nature, health and well-being.
- 2 Development proposals will be supported where they:
 - a) Incorporate existing natural features and high-quality landscape design;
 - b) Deliver new natural features that support and enhance the quality of place, local distinctiveness, biodiversity, water management and climate change mitigation and resilience;
 - c) Deliver tree-lined streets and incorporate trees and other planting into the public realm;
 - d) Take a coordinated approach to design, the siting of street furniture, public toilets where applicable, art work, boundary treatments, lighting and signage including providing a clear distinction between public and private spaces, avoiding unnecessary street clutter;
 - e) Deliver safe and attractive, open and versatile public and green spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities to:
 - i. encourage physical activity and promote health and well-being;
 - ii. promote social interaction and inclusion;
 - iii. be accessible by and meet the needs of all including the most vulnerable users, both young and old and those with disabilities;
 - iv. encourage the active use of public spaces at different times of the day.
 - f) Will incorporate measures to ensure that people feel safe by:
 - i. considering safety and security early in the design process;
 - ii. reducing any actual or perceived opportunities for crime or antisocial behaviour, in accordance with 'Secured by Design' principles of designing out crime;
 - iii. ensuring active frontages face public streets and public spaces to provide natural surveillance;
 - iv. avoiding the creation of dark or secluded areas;
 - v. the use of appropriate lighting, whilst minimising light pollution;
 - vi. providing clear, unobstructed sightlines where possible; and

¹⁸⁰ The heat island effect describes the way an urban or built up area has a higher temperature than that of the surrounding rural land. It is caused by dense concentrations of hard surfaces and buildings that absorb and retain heat.

vii. ensuring safety and opportunity for crime prevention is considered when considering the position and design of public transport interchanges and cycle and pedestrian routes.

Supporting Text

10.35 The opportunity should be taken when planning public space to use elements of the public realm such as street furniture or natural features such as planting, to reflect local distinctiveness and character. The Policy requires a coordinated approach to the design of the public realm e.g., the siting of street furniture, public toilets where applicable, artwork, boundary treatments, lighting and signage. The consideration of these elements should take place early in the design process and information demonstrating that this has been carried out should be submitted with any planning application which includes an element of public realm.

10.36 The Policy explains the simple measures that can be incorporated into the public realm to reduce crime and ensure that people feel safe using it. One of the key factors is ensuring that safety is considered early in the design process, when it is easier to make changes. Other factors include the use of active frontages, natural surveillance and providing clear sightlines. Secured by Design is a police security initiative that attempts to improve the security of buildings and their surroundings. As well as providing an accreditation scheme for products they provide advice and an array of guides. They also run a certification scheme for developments which recognises the crime prevention measures that have been put into place. When designing new developments, including the public realm, applicants should make every endeavour to reach secure by design standards and use the advice available from Secured by Design to reduce opportunities for crime.

10.37 Applicants will be expected to use a Design and Access Statement, when required, to demonstrate that the design considerations in policy DE3, including the safety measures in part f have been considered and designed into the new proposal. Even where a Design and Access Statement is not required, the design requirements in the policy should inform the design process and should be demonstrable in the landscaping and layout plans submitted with the application from the outset.

Question 70

Consultation Questions

- a Do you agree with draft Policy DE3: Spaces for people, nature and the public realm?
- b Is there anything we have missed that we should include in this policy? If so, what have we missed?
- c Should we make changes to this policy? If so, what changes should we make?

Shop Fronts and Advertisements

10.38 Shopfronts and their associated signage are an important feature of many of Wealden's towns and villages and help to contribute to their individual characters. This relates not only to commercial shops but also buildings such as Banks, Estate Agents, Public Houses and Restaurants i.e., any building that has a window display and/or signage. Shopfront design therefore has the potential to have a big impact on the visual character of the townscape and village centres. Many of Wealden's settlements are historic in character, especially those with Conservation Areas and/or a high number of Listed Buildings and there is a danger of a loss of historic character and fabric through the installation of inappropriate shopfronts.

10.39 Advertisements, by their very nature, are expected to be visible and attract attention. However, if poorly designed, with no thought given to the context or siting, they can result in over-dominant signage that is detrimental to the built environment and in particular the historic environment. A proliferation of signage can also appear out of place in rural settings.

10.40 Policy DE4 sets out the policy approach in design terms for shopfronts and advertisements, particularly within Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings. There is an economic benefit from having town centres and villages of positive local character and distinctiveness, creating places people want to visit. This policy provides guidance on how to conserve and enhance this local character with respect to shop fronts and advertisements. Further guidance will be provided within an updated Design Code for the district which will support the policies contained in the local plan.

Policy DE4: Shop Fronts and Advertisements

- 1 Applications for new, replacement and temporary shop fronts, including fascias, will be supported where the proposal:
 - a) Is based on an approach to shop front design that respects the architectural style, character and form of the buildings or location to which they relate, including appropriate use of architectural style, materials, colours and illuminations and having regard to upper floors in terms of scale, proportion, and vertical alignment;
 - b) Within Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings, retains and restores existing traditional shop fronts and/or features of architectural or historic interest. This will include the use of traditional materials, traditionally painted fascias and hanging signs with muted colours. Where two shop frontages are to be combined into a single unit, the design should reflect the original divisions that existed and employ correct historic shop front architectural detailing. There will be a presumption against the loss of traditional and historic shop fronts;
 - c) Within Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings, new and replacement shop fronts should take account of the traditional architectural detailing of adjacent and nearby historic shop fronts to ensure that the character and appearance of the heritage asset is conserved and enhanced;
 - d) Within Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings, where new canopies or blinds are proposed as part of a shop front, these should normally have historic precedent so as not to detract from the heritage significance of the building or Conservation

Area, be of the traditional retractable type and be located within the architecturally appropriate location on the shop front. If historic blinds survive in situ, they should be refurbished, and their mechanisms restored to full functionality where/if feasible;

e) Where there is an evidenced security need, within Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings, the use of modern external security shutters will not normally be supported, nor the retrofitting of roller shutters requiring the introduction of large projecting boxes above a shop window. Consideration should be given to the provision of openwork shutters to the inside of the window. Where external shutters are unavoidable, open mesh is preferable to solid variants;

Advertisements

- 2 Applications for advertisements, including hoardings, fascia signs and illumination will be supported where the proposal is sensitively designed and not detrimental to the visual amenity of the buildings or area by reason of its scale, location, detail, character, design or illumination, impair on pedestrian or highway safety or result in, or compound, the perception of clutter on the street scene.
- 3 Applications for advertisements, including hoardings and fascia signs in Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings should respect the character and design of the building on which it is displayed and the identified significance of the historic street scene and use traditional materials and techniques.
- 4 Within Conservation Areas, or where there is an effect on a heritage asset, there will be a presumption against internally illuminated signage / logos. In some cases, discreet externally illuminated signs may be acceptable but will generally only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.
- 5 The cumulative impact of advertisements on the character and appearance of the surrounding townscape and landscape, and impact on any heritage asset, will be considered as part of any application.

Supporting Text

10.41 The Council will seek to ensure that proposals for new and replacement shopfronts are based on an approach to shop front design that respects the architectural style, heritage, character and form of the buildings or location to which they relate. The Policy lists some of the important considerations that will be assessed when an application is submitted. All proposals for new, replacement or temporary shop fronts will be expected to demonstrate that they have considered and met these criteria within their submissions.

10.42 The policy sets out that within Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings emphasis should be put on retaining and restoring existing traditional shopfronts and features of architectural or historic interest rather than replacement. Applications in these areas for new and replacement shop fronts will have to provide robust justification due to the presumption against the loss of historic shopfronts. When justified, proposals for new and replacement shopfronts in Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings will need to demonstrate that they have taken account of the traditional architectural detailing of adjacent and nearby historic shop fronts to ensure that the character and appearance of heritage assets are conserved and enhanced.

10.43 The use of canopies and blinds will only normally be accepted on those heritage assets where a historic precedent exists, they are on the shopfront, and they are of the traditional retractable type. Any application would need to demonstrate that it meets these criteria. As part e outlines, the use of modern external security shutters, nor the retrofitting of roller shutters requiring the introduction of large projecting boxes above a shop window will not normally be supported in Conservation Areas or on Listed Buildings. Some possible alternatives are provided at the end of part e.

10.44 Any application for advertisements would need to demonstrate that it meets the criteria in policy DE4. Within Conservation Areas or where there is an effect on a Heritage Asset, discreet externally illuminated signs may be acceptable but will generally only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, such as dispensing pharmacies for example.

10.45 Where there are already existing signs or more than one sign is proposed, then the cumulative impact of advertisements on the surrounding landscape and any heritage assets will also be considered as part of any determination. The applicant will be required to demonstrate as part of their submission that they have considered the individual and cumulative impact of the proposed signage, and that design meets the policy requirements.

Question 71

Consultation Questions

- a Do you agree with draft Policy DE4 Shop Fronts and Advertisements?
- b Have we missed anything that we should include in this policy? If so, what have we missed?
- c Should we make changes to this policy? If so, what changes should we make?