

**SWTC SEPC APPENDIX A2 – DESIGN GUIDANCE –
LAND SE OF GRIFFIN PLACE**

SWTC SEPC APPENDIX A2 – DESIGN GUIDANCE

- 1 Building for a Healthy Life Homes England 2020
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Building for a Healthy Life

A Design Toolkit for neighbourhoods, streets, homes and public spaces






Building for a Healthy Life is the **latest edition of - and new name for - Building for Life 12.**

Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) updates England's most widely known and most widely used design tool for creating places that are better for people and nature. The original 12 point structure and underlying principles within Building for Life 12 are at the heart of BHL. The new name reflects changes in legislation as well as refinements which we've made to the 12 considerations in response to good practice and user feedback.

The new name also recognises that this latest edition has been **written in partnership with Homes England, NHS England and NHS Improvement.** BHL integrates the findings of the three-year Healthy New Towns Programme led by NHS England and NHS Improvement (please see page 12 for more details about 'Putting Health into Place').

Many local authorities across the country have cited Building for Life 12 in their **Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents.** As BHL is the new name for Building for Life 12, local authorities can use BHL without having to rewrite existing policy documents.

As we approached the publication of BHL, Coronavirus (COVID-19) reached our country. The text had been agreed with Homes England, NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government before any restrictions were imposed. The need to be able to cycle or walk to essential services and work had been proposed to minimise traffic and mitigate climate change. The virus then made designing for active travel and access to green space vital. We began to think about the impact on the design of neighbourhoods, streets, homes and public spaces. It became obvious to us that design choices that help people feel disposed to walk or ride a bicycle in their streets and neighbourhoods were also critical to supporting a sense of wellbeing from outdoor exercise during the pandemic. These thoughts have been added – and are easily identified by the symbol 

Front cover image: A street at Trumpington Meadows, Cambridge reflects many of the qualities championed by BHL.

Building for a Healthy Life is a Design Code to help people improve the design of new and growing neighbourhoods.

BHL has been created to allow a broad range of people to use it easily – from members of a local community, local councillors, developers to local authorities – allowing those involved in a proposed new development to focus their thoughts, discussions and efforts on the things that matter most when creating good places to live.

Organised across three headings, 12 considerations are presented to help those involved in new developments to think about the qualities of successful places and how these can be best applied to the individual characteristics of a site and its wider context. These three headings will guide you from **macro through to micro scale considerations.**

Each consideration is **illustrated with clear written and visual prompts** helping you to identify good practice and avoid common pitfalls.

BHL can help local communities to set clear expectations of new developments by offering a series of easy to understand considerations that will also allow local communities to more easily identify the qualities (or deficiencies) of development proposals.

14 INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS
Natural connections
Walking, cycling and public transport
Facilities and services
Homes for everyone

38 DISTINCTIVE PLACES
Making the most of what's there
A memorable character
Well defined streets and spaces
Easy to find your way around

62 STREETS FOR ALL
Healthy streets
Cycle and car parking
Green and blue infrastructure
Back of pavement, front of home



Building for a Healthy Life's 12 considerations move away from the 12 questions in Building for Life 12. This is a tactical shift in emphasis. Questions demand a quick response whereas good design requires more time, analysis and thought.

BHL offers written and visual prompts directing you to the components of successful places. You will notice that photographs are free of annotations and descriptions to encourage you to think about why a particular image has been included and help you to better recognise well designed (and less well designed) places.

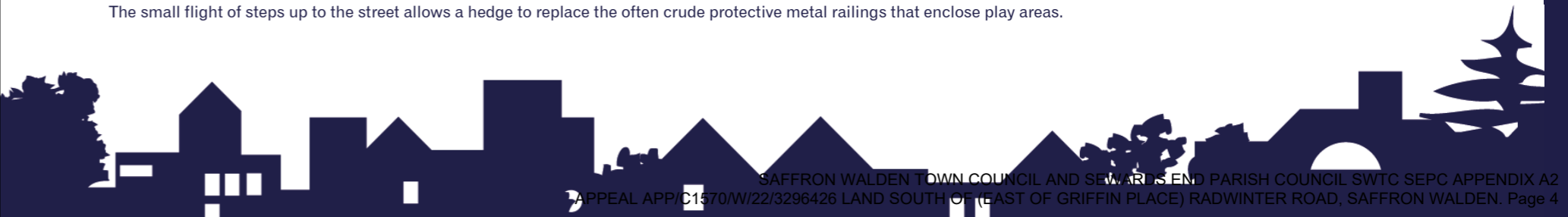
The 12 considerations capture the areas of design and placemaking that need most attention but are often the most overlooked.

If you already use or are familiar with Building for Life 12 you will recognise that the basic principles are the same. If you're a local authority and you've cited Building for Life 12 in your Local Plan or other policy documents a useful table¹ has been provided to allow you to understand where changes have been made and see that the basic principles are the same.

When using BHL it is important that local authorities and developers **discuss the 12 considerations at the very start of the design process**, agreeing what is required to achieve a green light against each consideration. It is also recommended that the considerations are also used to frame discussions with local communities and other stakeholders. This approach is much more effective than having these discussions later on when a site layout has been produced - and when a considerable amount of time and money will have been spent. It is simply more effective to use the 12 considerations as a basis for discussion and design exploration before progressing proposals too far - a tenet which distinguishes community engagement from community consultation.

¹See pages 86-88.

A play area at Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire is sunk 1m into the ground. The small flight of steps up to the street allows a hedge to replace the often crude protective metal railings that enclose play areas.



Using Building for a Healthy Life

BHL works best where it is used as a ‘golden strand’ running through the development and planning process. This involves:

- **Local authorities** embedding BHL considerations into Local Plans, Local Design Codes, Supplementary Planning Documents and site specific briefs. The 12 considerations are a very effective way of structuring pre-application discussions relating to design quality².
- **Highways Authorities** adopting the Manual for Streets principles and thinking.
- **Developers** adopting BHL, using it as a design tool for new developments from the inception of a scheme, rather than after (or towards the end of) the design process.
- **Local authorities, developers, local communities and other stakeholders** using BHL as a way to set expectations of new developments. The larger the scale of the development, the broader the engagement needs to be and to help develop a strong understanding of the site and its wider context alongside the needs of the local community.
- **Planning Committees** and local councillors using BHL to assist with decision making allowing them to more easily identify the design qualities (or weaknesses) of proposed new developments.
- **Strategic Planning Leads** within the 44 **Integrated Health System** organisations across England building relationships with local planning authorities with a view to participating in Local Plans, supplementary planning documents, site specific development briefs and pre-application discussions.

Developers, local authorities and local communities can also use BHL to review the quality of completed developments, helping them to understand areas of success alongside areas for improvement.

Homes England endorse Building for a Healthy Life. Homes England have used BFL12 since 2019 and are now using BHL. Homes England use the 12 considerations as part of its evaluation process for selecting bidders for its land disposal programme. Procurement panel partners whose designs ignore BHL considerations are marked down in the bidding process.

²BHL generally works for developments of around ten homes or more. For smaller developments, the considerations can be useful prompts although not all of them might be appropriate for the scale of the scheme.

Integrated Neighbourhoods	National Planning Policy Framework	National Design Guide
Natural connections	91a; 102c and e; 104d; 127b; 127f	B3; M1; M2; N1; R3
Walking, cycling and public transport	20c; 91a; 91c; 127e	B1; B3; M1; R3
Facilities and services	102; 103	B1; B3; N1; P3; U1; U3
Homes for everyone	60-62	B1; B2; U2; U3
Distinctive Places		
Making the most of what's there	122d; 127c; 127d; 153b; 184	C1; C2; I1; B2; R3
A memorable character	122d; 127c; 127d	C2; I1; I2; I3; B3
Well defined streets and spaces	91a	B2; M2; N2; N3; P1; P2; H2; L3
Easy to find your way around	91b; 127b	I1; M1; M2; U1
Streets for All		
Healthy streets	91b; 102c and e; 110a-d	M1; M2; N3; P1; P2; P3; H1; H2
Cycle and car parking	101e; 127f; 105d	B2; M1; M3
Green and blue infrastructure	20d; 91b; 91c; 127f; 155; 170d; 174	C1; B3; M1; N1; N2; N3; P1; P3; H1; R3; L1
Back of pavement, front of home	127a-b; d; f	M3; H3; L3
Generally	7; 8; 124; 125; 126; 127; 130	15; 16; 17; 20-29; 31-32
Using the tool as a discussion tool	39; 40-42; 125; 128; 129	

The relationship between Building for a Healthy Life, the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Design Guide.

Achieving the best outcome

BHL is foremost a **design process structure, not a scoring system**. For this reason we list and illustrate examples of good practice highlighted by a green light. Poor practice is highlighted with a red light.

Where an element of design is considered to fall between a green and a red traffic light, an amber light can be assigned to a particular consideration. An amber light does not mean that the design scores 'half a point'. Instead it cautions that an aspect of a scheme is not fully resolved. In many cases it is possible to rethink and redesign an aspect of a scheme to achieve a better outcome.

The more green lights a proposed development secures, the better it will be.

The objective is to minimise the number of amber lights and avoid red lights. A red light suggests that one or more aspects of a scheme need to be reconsidered.

BHL offers a **process for collaborative working** between developers, local authorities, communities and other stakeholders by providing principles for creating better places and focusing attention on them. Successful placemaking comes from talking, discussing and exploring ideas, workshops, drawing and modelling.

The best way to use BHL is to use the **12 considerations as a starting point and for those involved to agree what is needed to secure a green light against each consideration**. It is particularly helpful if local authorities clearly explain what is expected to secure a green light against a particular consideration.



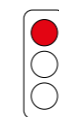
Myatt's Field, Lambeth.

There may be **circumstances where amber lights cannot be avoided** due to circumstances beyond the control of the local authority and/or the developer.

For instance, third-party land ownership may prevent optimal connectivity from being achieved (See Natural Connections, page 14). Here an amber light might be justified if the layout of streets and spaces does not prevent you from improving the scheme's connections in the future.

BHL reflects Manual for Streets (2007) in the Healthy Streets consideration (see page 62). It is recognised that a number of local highway authorities have not adopted (or have not fully adopted) the principles set out in Manual for Streets. This can make it very difficult for developers to secure a green light against Healthy Streets. Where this is the case, an amber light is considered justified. This means the developer should not be penalised for not being able to secure a green light against this particular consideration.

BHL promotes more innovative practices adopted by some Highway Authorities to encourage other authorities to reconsider current practice. In 2020, Homes England will publish a set of street details that meet the expectations of both urban designers and highways officers. These more innovative approaches to street design encourage slower vehicle speeds, higher levels of walking and cycling; improving levels of physical activity and local air quality.



 **red = stop & rethink**



 **amber = try & turn to green**



 **green = go ahead**

Who decides what is a green, amber or red light?

By using BHL you can better understand the qualities of well-designed developments. The written and visual guidance against each consideration will help you understand how a green light scheme looks and functions – and how a red light scheme looks and functions.

The more you use BHL, the more confident and knowledgeable you will become. References³ signpost you to other useful publications.

If you need help, advice or training this can be found from the authors of BHL and also the nationwide Design Network⁴ whose members are based locally.

Building for a Healthy Life Commendations

If a development secures at least nine green lights (and no red lights), you can apply for BHL Commendation. A Commendation will allow you to use BHL logo on the development and help you showcase its qualities to prospective home buyers.

Step One: Contact your local Design Network partner and request a BHL Review (fees apply).

If the BHL Review agree that you secure at least nine green lights (and no red lights), you will be issued with a short report confirming this. The local Design Network partner will send a copy of this report to Design for Homes.

If the BHL Review do not agree that your development merits at least nine green lights, you will still receive a report that will clearly explain where the issues are and how you can either resolve these issues or better consider these on a future development.

At least two people will conduct the BHL Review with more people on larger developments.

Step Two: Contact Design for Homes.

You will be issued with your BHL Commendation e-certificate and branding pack (fee applies).



³See page 89. ⁴designnetwork.org.uk.

BHL training at Houlton, Rugby with Homes England employees and local authority officers.



“Building for a Healthy Life is a process of designing in quality from the start, rather than trying to fix problems later which leads to delays. It’s our choice of design principles for the many different locations and markets we operate in”

Stephen Kinsella, Chief Land and Development Officer, Homes England

Putting Health into Place

Improving the health of local communities requires greater action, addressing the role that the built environment has on people's health and wellbeing as part of what is called a 'whole systems' approach.

'Putting Health into Place' is a series of publications that capture the findings of the Healthy New Towns Programme. Led by NHS England and NHS Improvement, Public Health England and partners, ten demonstrator sites across England explored the 'how to' of healthy Placemaking. The publications present ten principles that show how healthier places can be planned and designed creating new ways of providing integrated and health care services. The ten principles are also embedded within BHL.



england.nhs.uk/publications/putting-health-into-place

The 10 Putting Health into Place principles and Building for a Healthy Life

Plan, Assess and Involve

1. Plan ahead collectively ←
2. Assess local health and care needs and assets
3. Connect, involve and empower people and communities ←

Design, Deliver and Manage

4. Create compact neighbourhoods ←
5. Maximise active travel ←
6. Inspire and enable healthy eating
7. Foster health in homes and buildings ←
8. Enable healthy play and leisure ←

Develop and Provide Health Care Services

9. Develop health services that help people to stay well
10. Create integrated health and wellbeing centres



Create places that are well integrated into the site and their wider natural and built surroundings. Avoid creating isolated and disconnected places that are not easy places to move through and around.

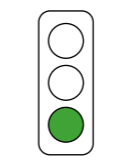
What's needed:

- Look beyond the red line that marks the extent of your site. Ordnance Survey maps along with satellite mapping software such as Google Earth are useful tools to help you understand the wider context and how you can best stitch a new development into a place.
- Identify the places, facilities and services you need to connect to.
- Draw points of connection into and through your site - creating a strong and direct street, path and open space network.
- Create well-connected street and path networks, providing opportunities for these to be extended beyond the site boundary in the future.
- Research and respond to how water flows and nature moves across your site and the wider surroundings.

Filtered permeability. Aura, Great Kneighton, Cambridge.

© Photo credit: Timothy Soar





What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Edge to edge connectivity.
- ✓ Respond to pedestrian and cyclist desire lines.
- ✓ Connected street patterns. These work best when they include straight or nearly straight streets to makes pedestrian routes as direct as possible.
- ✓ Filtered permeability. A useful technique that designs out 'rat running' and creates a pleasant low traffic environment around people's homes whilst still allowing pedestrian and cycle movement.
- ✓ Continuous streets (with public access) along the edges of a development. Private drives can frustrate pedestrian and cycle movement along the edges of a development.
- ✓ Connecting existing and new habitats; safeguarding existing or creating new movement corridors for nature.
- ✓ Where retained, keeping hedgerows within the public realm, safeguarding their future retention and management.
- ✓ Streets and routes that can be extended in the future.
- ✓ Adoption to site boundaries.


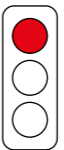
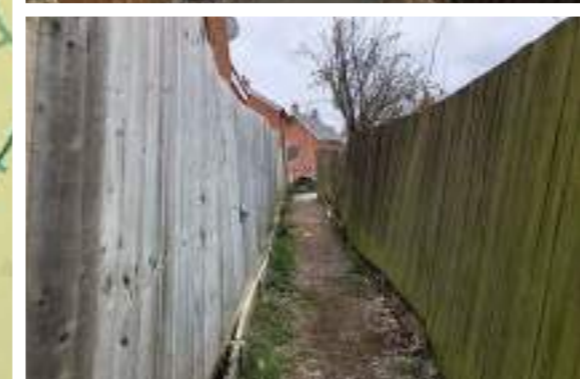
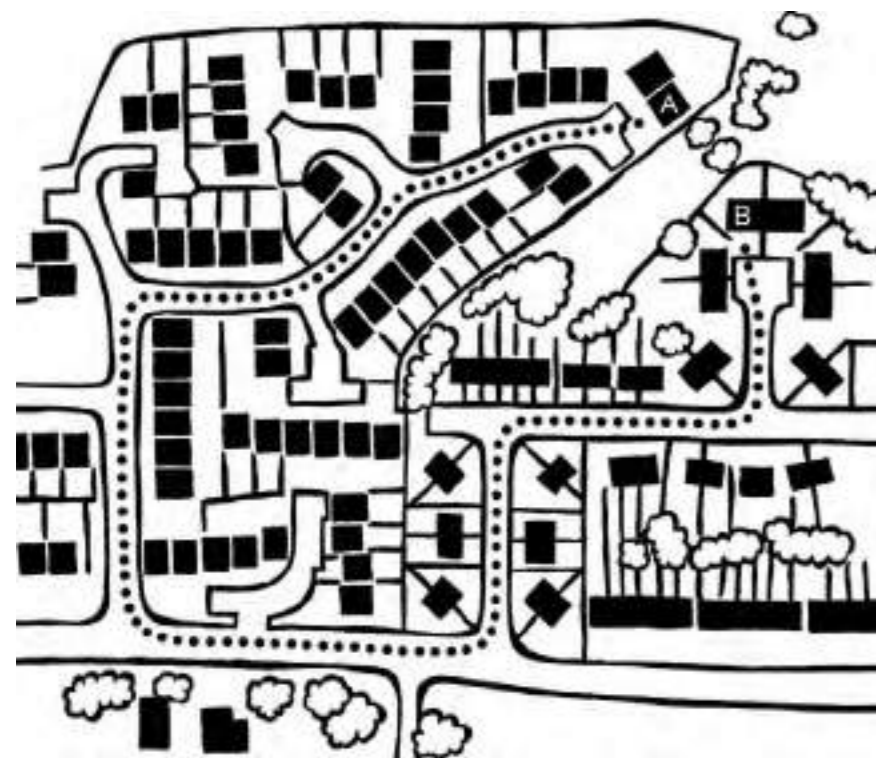
 **green = go ahead**









Photo credit: Rob Cowan

Photo credit: Andrew Cameron Associates

Photo credit: John Parry Associates



What 'red' looks like

-  Single or limited points of access for pedestrians and cyclists.
-  Extensive use of private drives.
-  Pedestrian or cycle routes that are not well overlooked and lit after dark.
-  Failing to respond to existing (or anticipate future) pedestrian and cycle desire lines.
-  No opportunities to connect or extend streets and paths if required by later development.
-  Internal streets and paths that are not well connected or are indirect.
-  Retaining existing hedgerows between the back gardens of individual homes.
-  Ransom strips.



red = stop & rethink

Short trips of up to three miles⁵ can be easily made on foot or bicycle if the right infrastructure is in place, helping to improve public health and air quality whilst also reducing local congestion and carbon emissions.

What's needed:

- Cycle and walk the neighbourhood to understand where off-site interventions will be most useful⁶. Local residents and councillors can help you understand where investment in improvements to pedestrian and cycle infrastructure might have most impact.
- Invite people to cycle within the site and beyond to destinations within at least a three mile radius; with routes through green spaces, quiet streets alongside prioritised and protected routes on busy streets, junctions and roads.
- If there is an existing protected cycle network, connect to it. Alternatively, begin a new one by building or funding routes to key destinations.
- Ensure access for all and help make walking feel like an instinctive choice for everyone undertaking short journeys (such as the school run or older generations accessing local facilities and services).
- Streets and paths that connect people to places and public transport services in the most direct way, making car-free travel more attractive, safe and convenient.
- Make sure that all streets and routes pass in front of people's homes rather than to the back of them – creating a well overlooked public realm.
- Exploit existing (or planned) public transport hubs, such as train stations and bus interchanges, to build at higher densities and channel a higher percentage of journeys to public transport.

⁵National Travel Survey of (2018) identified the average number of cycle trips made per person was 17, with average total miles cycled per person 58. So the average journey is 3.4 miles.

⁶A local authority may have a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (see NPPF, paragraph 104d).

Great Kneighton, Cambridge offers a connected street network. Techniques such as filtered permeability have been used to encourage walking and cycling whilst also creating low traffic and low speed streets. Bus services are also routed through the development. Credit and copyright: Paul Eccleston, Arthouse.





What 'green' looks like

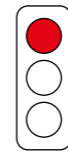
- ✔ Share street space fairly between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles.⁷
- ✔ Cycle friendly streets (see Local Transport Note 1/12) with pedestrian and cycle priority (and protection) with across junctions and side streets.
- ✔ Nudge people away from the car. Offer cycle (and cargo bike) parking closer to the entrance of commercial, leisure and community facilities than car parking spaces.
- ✔ Provide scooter and cycle parking at schools. Scooters can encourage younger children to get active on the way to school.
- ✔ Design out school runs dependent on cars.
- ✔ Demand Responsive Transport⁸, car clubs and car shares.
- ✔ Start or contribute to the delivery of a Local Cycle and Walking Strategy Infrastructure Plan.
- ✔ Short and direct walking and cycling connections that make public transport an easy choice to make.
- ✔ Zebra, parallel⁷ and signalised crossing.
- ✔ New or improved Park and Ride schemes.
- ✔ Tight corner radii (<3m) at street junctions and side streets.
- ✔ 20mph design speeds, designations and traffic calming.
- ✔ Concentrate new development around existing or new transport hubs.
- ✔ Protected cycle ways along busy streets.



green = go ahead

⁷See Department of Transport (2019) Traffic Signs Manual: Chapter 6 (Section 17, p.129) assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/851465/dft-traffic-signs-manual-chapter-6.pdf

⁸Also known as on demand transport.



What 'red' looks like

- ✗ Travel Packs that fail to influence people's travel choices.
- ✗ White line or undivided shared pavement/cycle ways.
- ✗ Pedestrians and cyclists losing priority at side junctions.
- ✗ Oversized radii corners on streets that are principally residential that allow motor vehicles to travel around corners at high speeds.
- ✗ Streets that twist and turn unnaturally in an effort to control vehicle speed but make walking and cycling routes longer than they need to be.
- ✗ Streets principally designed around waste collection vehicles.
- ✗ Overwide carriageways⁹ that reduce space for pedestrians and cyclists, making it more difficult for people to get around easily especially when social distancing restrictions are in place.👤
- ✗ Serviced parcel developments where pedestrian and cycle connections between different phases of development are frustrated.

⁹See Manual for Streets.

 **red = stop & rethink**

Places that offer social, leisure and recreational opportunities a short walk or cycle from their homes.

What's needed:

- Developments that provide community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, health facilities, co-working spaces, parks, play spaces, cafés and other meeting places that respond to local community needs.
- Locate any new facilities in the best location for those walking, cycling and using public transport.
- Consider whether improving existing facilities will add more value to the local community than adding new ones.
- Assess or identify what sport and leisure provision there is for people of all ages, paying particular attention to the needs of children, teenagers and older people.
- Create places where people can meet each other such as public spaces, leisure facilities, community buildings, cafes and restaurants to provide opportunities for social interaction – helping to improve public health by encouraging physical activity and helping to tackle those affected by loneliness and isolation.
- ‘Play on the way’ can make car-free trips more fun for children making them want to walk or cycle to school.
- Sustainable drainage schemes that contribute towards an attractive and accessible network of streets and public spaces.

The Tuning Fork cafe at Houlton, Rugby is next to the sales office and a multi-function building that is used for community activities such as yoga classes and a toddlers group.



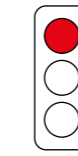


What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Intensifying development in locations that benefit from good public transport accessibility, in particularly around public transport hubs such as train stations and bus interchanges.
- ✓ Reserving land in the right locations for non-residential uses.
- ✓ Active frontages.
- ✓ Clear windows along the ground floor of non-residential buildings (avoid obscure windows).
- ✓ Mixing compatible uses vertically, such as placing supported accommodation at the heart of new developments above active ground floor uses.
- ✓ Giving places where routes meet a human scale and create public squares.
- ✓ Frequent benches can help those with mobility difficulties to walk more easily between places.



green = go ahead



What 'red' looks like

- ❌ Local centres that are not easily accessible and attractive to pedestrians and cyclists.
- ❌ Non-residential developments that are delivered as a series of individual parcels with their own surface level car parks set back from the street.
- ❌ Where routes converge, avoid creating places that are of an inhuman scale and that frustrate pedestrian and cycle movement.
- ❌ Inactive street edges, dead elevations, service yards next to the street and obscure ground floor windows.
- ❌ Play and other recreational facilities hidden away within developments rather than in located in more prominent locations that can help encourage new and existing residents to share a space.
- ❌ Not anticipating and responding to desire lines, such as between public transport stops and the entrances to buildings and other facilities.



red = stop & rethink

A range of homes¹⁰ that meet local community needs.

What's needed:

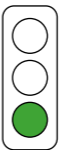
- A mix of housing types and tenures that suit the needs of the local community. This may include first time buyer homes, family homes, homes for those downsizing and supported living.
- Maximising the opportunities offered by supported accommodation, placing these homes at the heart of new developments above active ground floor uses such as shops, community facilities and pre-schools.¹¹
- Offering people access to at least some private outdoor space. This is particularly important for people's mental health and wellbeing especially when social distancing and travel restrictions are in place.¹²

¹⁰There are mental health benefits associated with older people living in their homes for longer and within a community setting.

¹¹Early research indicates that there may be social, physical and mental health benefits by providing opportunities for older generations to feel part of a broader community.

Senior housing development built as enabling project for new stand at Somerset County Cricket Club in Taunton.



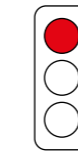


What 'green' looks like






- ✓ Designing homes and streets where it is difficult to determine the tenure of properties through architectural, landscape or other differences.
- ✓ Apartment buildings might separate tenure by core but each core must look exactly the same.
- ✓ A range of housing typologies supported by local housing needs and policies to help create a broad-based community.
- ✓ Homes with the flexibility to meet changing needs.
- ✓ Affordable homes that are distributed across a development.
- ✓ Access to some outdoor space suitable for drying clothes for apartments and maisonettes. ♿
- ✓ Consider providing apartments and maisonettes with some private outdoor amenity space such as semi-private garden spaces for ground floor homes; balconies and terraces for homes above ground floor. ♿



green = go ahead



What 'red' looks like

-  Grouping affordable homes in one place (except on smaller developments).
-  Dividing places and facilities such as play spaces by tenure.
-  Revealing the different tenure of homes through architecture, landscape, access, car parking, waste storage or other design features.
-  Not using the space around apartment buildings to best effect and where these could easily be used to create small, semi-private amenity spaces allocated to individual ground floor apartments. 



red = stop & rethink

Understand and respond.

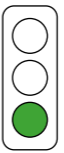
What's needed:

- Allow time for good design, walk the site and the surroundings with the local planning authority. Discuss, understand and agree opportunities and constraints building a shared vision that makes use of the topography and other existing assets on and beyond the site.
- Explore conceptual ideas before settling on an agreed way forward and producing a site layout. For instance, if there are existing site features explore how these might be best integrated into a place.
- Identify any visual connections into, out, through and beyond the site.
- Work with the contours of the land.
- Understand how water flows across and pools on the site. Explore how water can be used to enhance biodiversity, create character and improve people's sense of wellbeing.
- Draw all these considerations together to get the street, block and open space structure right from the start (a framework or concept plan).
- Consider opportunities for natural lighting, cooling and ventilation. Take care not to compromise important urban design principles such as perimeter block structure.
- Identify opportunities to integrate and reuse existing features of value, these might be natural or man-made, on or beyond the site.
- Be careful that hedges are not simply retained and prevent a sensible and practical new development layout. It may be more effective to create and plant new hedgerows and tree belts into development proposals than work around existing hedges. A well thought out approach may even increase habitat and biodiversity.
- Be sensitive to existing development but avoid creating buffer spaces between existing and new back gardens.
- Using the landform and ground conditions (soil) in a considered way. For instance, low-nutrient subsoils are ideal to put to one side if you wish to establish wildflower meadows rather than importing new topsoil.

Cook's Shipyard, Wivenhoe

📷 Photo credit: Mark Reeves Architects.



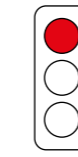


What 'green' looks like







- ✓ Taking a walk to really understand the place where a new development is proposed and understand how any distinctive characteristics can be incorporated as features.
- ✓ Using existing assets as anchor features, such as mature trees and other existing features.
- ✓ Positive characteristics such as street types, landscape character, urban grain, plot shapes and sizes, building forms and materials being used to reflect local character.
- ✓ Sensitive transitions between existing and new development so that building heights, typologies and tenures sit comfortably next to each other.
- ✓ Remember the 'four pillars'¹² of sustainable drainage systems.
- ✓ Protecting and enhancing existing habitats; creating new habitats.
- ✓ Interlocking back gardens between existing and new development (where existing back gardens adjoin a site boundary).

¹²These are water quantity, water quality, amenity and biodiversity.

 **green = go ahead**



What 'red' looks like

-  Designing without walking the site first.
-  Funnelling rainwater away in underground pipes as the default water management strategy.
-  Unmanaged gaps between development used as privacy buffers to existing residents.
-  Placing retained hedges between rear garden boundaries or into private ownership.
-  Building orientations and designs that fail to capitalise on features such as open views.
-  Not being sensitive to existing neighbouring properties by responding to layout arrangements, housing typologies and building heights.



red = stop & rethink

Create places that are memorable.

What's needed:

- Create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character.
- Review the wider area for sources of inspiration. If distinctive local characteristics exist, delve deeper than architectural style and details. Where the local context is poor or generic, do not use this as a justification for more of the same. Inspiration may be found in local history and culture.
- Understand where positive local character comes from: streets, blocks and plots (urban grain), green and blue infrastructure, land uses, building form, massing and materials often underpin the essence of the distinctive character of settlements rather than architectural style and details.
- Using a local materials palette (where appropriate) can be a particularly effective way to connect a development to a place. This is often more achievable and credible than mimicking traditional architectural detailing which can be dependent on lost crafts.
- Brownfield sites can offer sources of inspiration for new development. Greenfield and edge of settlement locations often require more creativity and inspiration to avoid creating places that lack a sense of local or otherwise distinctive character.
- Character can also be created through the social life of public spaces. Create the physical conditions for activity to happen and bring places to life.

Where there are no local sources of inspiration be creative and find ways to give a place a more distinctive and memorable character. A Dutch gable on an existing building inspired a more creative approach at Manor Kingsway, Derby.



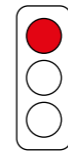


What 'green' looks like

- ✓ A strong, hand drawn design concept. To find the right solution a number of different ideas and options might need to be explored.
- ✓ Drawing inspiration from local architectural and/or landscape character.
- ✓ Reflecting character in either a traditional or contemporary style.
- ✓ Structural landscaping as a way to create places with a memorable character.
- ✓ Memorable spaces and building groupings.
- ✓ Place names that have a connection to the locality can help stimulate ideas and design thought. A place name like 'Valley View' will always be more helpful on larger, multi-developer developments than generic terms such as 'Parcel R5.1'.



green = go ahead



What 'red' looks like

- ✘ Using a predetermined sequence of house types to dictate a layout.
- ✘ Attempting to create character through poor replication of architectural features or details.
- ✘ Arranging buildings next to each other in a way that does not create a cohesive street scene.
- ✘ Referencing generic or forgettable development nearby to justify more of the same.

 **red = stop & rethink**

Create a network of streets and spaces that are well enclosed by buildings and/or structural landscaping, taking care to ensure that front doors and the principal facades of buildings face streets and public spaces.

What's needed:

- A strong framework of connected and well overlooked streets and spaces.
- Look beyond the plan and illustrative street scenes; what will you actually see and experience walking along the street?
- Perimeter blocks with clearly defined public fronts and private backs.
- Active frontages. Front doors, balconies, terraces, front gardens and bay windows are a good way to enliven and add interest to the street and create a more human scale to larger buildings such as apartments and supported living accommodation.
- Carefully considered street corners.
- Three dimensional models (physical or computer generated) and simple, hand drawn street cross sections can be particularly useful tools to understand and test the spatial qualities of a place.

Upton, Northampton.

📷 Photo credit: Garry Hall.





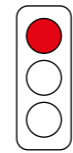
What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Streets with active frontages.
- ✓ Well defined streets and spaces, using buildings, landscaping and/or water to enclose and define spaces.*
- ✓ Cohesive building compositions and building lines.
- ✓ Front doors that face streets and public spaces.
- ✓ Apartments that offer frequent front doors to the street.
- ✓ Dual aspect homes on street corners with windows serving habitable rooms.
- ✓ Perimeter blocks.
- ✓ Well resolved internal vistas.
- ✓ Building typologies that are designed to straddle narrow depth blocks.

*Figure ground diagrams can be a useful way to test this.



green = go ahead



What 'red' looks like

- ❌ Distributor roads and restricted frontage access.
- ❌ Broken or fragmented perimeter block structure.
- ❌ Presenting blank or largely blank elevations to streets and public spaces.
- ❌ Lack of front boundaries, street planting and trees.
- ❌ Apartment buildings with single or limited points of access.
- ❌ Apartment buildings accessed away from the street.
- ❌ Staggered and haphazard building lines that are often created by placing homes with a mix of front and side parking arrangements next to each other.
- ❌ Street corners with blank or largely blank sided buildings and/or driveways. Street edges with garages, back garden spaces enclosed by long stretches of fencing or wall.
- ❌ Buffers between new and existing development that create channels of movement between back gardens whether access is permitted or not.
- ❌ Single aspect homes on street corners.
- ❌ Bits of left over land between the blank flank walls of buildings.



red = stop & rethink

Use legible features to help people find their way around a place.

What's needed:

- Streets that connect with one another.
- Streets that are as straight and as direct as possible.
- Use street types, buildings, spaces, non-residential uses, landscape, water and other features to help people create a 'mental map' of a place.
- Streets with clearly different characters are more effective than 'character areas' in helping people grasp whether they are on a principal or secondary street.
- For larger sites, it will be necessary to use streets and spaces with different characters to help people to find their way around.

An existing tree is the focal point of Southwell Square, Carlisle.





What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Designing for legibility when creating a concept plan for a place.
- ✓ Using streets as the main way to help people find their way around a place. For instance, principal streets can be made different to more minor streets through the use of different spatial characteristics, building typologies, building to street relationships, landscape strategies and boundary treatments.
- ✓ Navigable features for those with visual, mobility or other limitations.
- ✓ Frame views of features on or beyond a site.
- ✓ Create new legible elements or features on larger developments – further reinforce legible features where necessary through the landscape strategy, building and layout design, hard landscaping and boundaries.
- ✓ Simple street patterns based on formal or more relaxed grid patterns.



green = go ahead



What 'red' looks like

- ✘ No meaningful variation between street types.
- ✘ Disorientating curvilinear street patterns.
- ✘ Disconnected streets, paths and routes.
- ✘ Building typologies, uses, densities, landscaping or other physical features are not used to create places that are different to one another.
- ✘ Cul de sac based street patterns.



red = stop & rethink

Streets are different to roads. Streets are places where the need to accommodate the movement of motor vehicles is balanced alongside the need for people to move along and cross streets with ease. Activity in the street is an essential part of a successful public realm.

What's needed:

- Low-speed streets and neighbourhoods with pedestrian and cycle priority.
- The right balance between movement and place functions.
- Rethinking the way we distribute street space. At times of more relaxed social distancing, demand for better quality cycle provision is expected to increase as public transport capacity reduces. Congestion caused by motor vehicles will make it unattractive for people to switch from public transport to cars creating a unique opportunity to change the way we move around our cities, towns and villages.🚶
- Healthy streets improve people's physical and mental health. Encouraging walking, cycling, outdoor play and streets where it is safe for younger children to cycle (or scooter) to school can create opportunities for social interaction and street life bringing wider social benefits.
- Street trees.
- Avoid streets that are just designed as routes for motor vehicles to pass through and for cars to park within.
- Boulevards and streets with active edges rather than distributor roads and bypasses with no (or limited) frontage access.
- Streets that are easy to cross; providing priority for pedestrians and cyclists across junctions and accesses.
- Well overlooked streets with front doors facing streets and public spaces.
- Provide conditions for cycling appropriate to the speed and volume of motor traffic.
- Inclusive design: think about how people with visual, mobility or other limitations will be able to use the street confidently and safely.

Great Kneighton, Cambridge.

📷 Photo credit: Proctor and Matthews Architects.





What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Streets for people.
- ✓ 20mph (or lower) design speeds; 20mph designations.
- ✓ Tree lined streets. Make sure that trees have sufficient space to grow above and below ground, with long term management arrangements in place.
- ✓ Tight corner radii (3m or less).
- ✓ Places to sit, space to chat or play within the street.
- ✓ Pavements and cycleways that continue across side streets.
- ✓ Anticipating and responding to pedestrian and cycle 'desire lines' (the most direct routes between the places people will want to travel between).
- ✓ Landscape layers that add sensory richness to a place – visual, scent and sound.



green = go ahead



What 'red' looks like

- ❌ Roads for cars.
- ❌ Failure to adhere to the user hierarchy set out in Manual for Streets.
- ❌ Wide and sweeping corner radii (6m or more).
- ❌ 6m+ wide carriageways.
- ❌ Highways engineering details that make pedestrian and cycle movements more complex and difficult.
- ❌ Street trees conveyed to individual occupiers.
- ❌ Distributor roads with limited frontage access, served by private drives.
- ❌ Painted white line cycle routes on pavements or on carriageways.
- ❌ Speed control measures that rely on significant shifts in street alignment that contribute towards wasting land whilst also creating disorientating places.



red = stop & rethink

Well-designed developments will make it more attractive for people to choose to walk or cycle for short trips helping to improve levels of physical activity, air quality, local congestion and the quality of the street scene. Well-designed streets will also provide sufficient and well-integrated car parking.

What's needed:

- Provide secure cycle storage close to people's front doors so that cycles are as convenient to choose as a car for short trips.
- Integration of car parking into the street environment.
- Anticipate realistic levels of car parking demand, guarding against displaced and anti-social parking; thinking about the availability and frequency of public transport.
- Avoid confusing car ownership with car usage.
- Creative solutions for attractive, convenient and safe cycle parking or higher density developments (such as apartment buildings).
- Generous landscaping to settle frontage car parking into the street.
- Shared and unallocated parking.

The Dairy, Henlow.

Unallocated bays located away from individual properties creates efficient and flexible car parking capacity.

📷 Photo credit: Mark Reeves Architects.



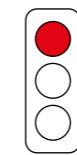


What 'green' looks like











- ✓ At least storage for one cycle where it is as easy to access as the car.
- ✓ Secure and overlooked cycle parking that is as close to (if not closer) than car parking spaces (or car drop off bays) to the entrances of schools, shops and other services and facilities.
- ✓ Shared and unallocated on street car parking.
- ✓ Landscaping to help settle parked cars into the street.
- ✓ Frontage parking where the space equivalent to a parking space is given over to green relief every four bays or so.
- ✓ Anticipating and designing out (or controlling) anti-social car parking.
- ✓ A range of parking solutions.
- ✓ Small and overlooked parking courtyards, with properties within courtyard spaces with ground floor habitable rooms.
- ✓ Staying up to date with rapidly advancing electric car technology.
- ✓ More creative cycle and car parking solutions.



green = go ahead



What 'red' looks like

-  Providing all cycle storage in garages and sheds.
-  Over reliance on integral garages with frontage driveways.
-  Frontage car parking with little or no softening landscaping.
-  Parking courtyards enclosed by fencing; poorly overlooked, poorly lit and poorly detailed.
-  Over-reliance on tandem parking arrangements.
-  Failing to anticipate and respond to displaced and other anti-social parking.
-  Views along streets that are dominated by parked cars, driveways or garages.
-  Car parking spaces that are too narrow making it difficult for people to use them.
-  Cycle parking that is located further away to the entrances to shops, schools and other facilities than car parking spaces and car drop off bays.
-  Relying on garages being used for everyday car parking.



red = stop & rethink

Creative surface water management such as rills, brooks and ponds enrich the public realm and help improve a sense of wellbeing and offer an interaction with nature. As the richest habitat for a range of flora and fauna, they are also a key play in achieving the net gain in biodiversity sought by the 2020 Environment Bill.

What's needed:

- Create a strong landscape strategy that has impact from 'day one'. Don't 'layer' landscape onto a scheme at the end of the process. Landscape changes can offer opportunities to reintroduce lost habitats and species.
- Create a network of different types of spaces.
- Weave opportunities for habitat creation throughout the development. Plan these as movement corridors to support biodiversity.
- Create food growing opportunities such as allotments and orchards on larger developments.
- Have a sustainable drainage 'treatment train' thinking about the 'four pillars'. Capture water as close as possible to where it falls. Be creative with rain gardens, ponds and swales and avoid steeply-sided or fenced holes in the ground.
- Well-designed multi-functional sustainable drainage will incorporate play and recreational opportunities.
- Well-overlooked public open spaces with strong levels of natural surveillance.
- Robust management and long term stewardship.

A multi-functional sustainable drainage scheme at Forest Way School, Coalville, Leicestershire.





Photo credit: Garry Hall.



What 'green' looks like

- ✓ Biodiversity net gain.
- ✓ Movement and feeding corridors for wildlife, such as hedgehog highways. Bird boxes, swift nesting bricks and bat bricks may be appropriate.
- ✓ Plans that identify the character of new spaces, such as 'parks', 'woodland', 'allotments', 'wildflower meadows' rather than 'P.O.S.'. Be more specific about the function and character of public open spaces.
- ✓ Create Park Run ready routes on larger developments and other ways to encourage physical activity and social interaction.
- ✓ Capturing and managing water creatively and close to where it falls using features such as rain gardens and permeable surfaces. Allow people to connect with water.
- ✓ Create a habitat network providing residents with opportunities to interact with nature on a day to day basis. Wildlife does not flourish within disconnected back gardens, artificial lawns and tightly mown grass.
- ✓ Provide natural surveillance opportunities.
- ✓ A connected and accessible network of public open spaces with paths and other routes into and through.
- ✓ Species rich grasslands.
- ✓ Well considered management arrangements whether public or privately managed.



green = go ahead



What 'red' looks like

- ❌ Surface water management by way of a large, steep sided and fenced holes in the ground.
- ❌ Small pieces of land (typically grassed over) that offer little or no public, private or biodiversity value that over time become neglected and forgotten.
- ❌ Large expanses of impervious surfaces.
- ❌ Not designing paths and routes through open spaces where it is difficult for people to create distance between themselves and other people when social distancing restrictions are in place. ♿
- ❌ Buildings that turn away from open spaces.
- ❌ Poor quality finishing, detailing and maintenance.



red = stop & rethink

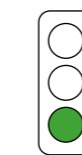
Garden cities, towns and suburbs used hedges to define public and private spaces, helping to create characterful and biodiverse places. The space between the back of the pavement and the face of buildings has a significant impact on the quality of a place. Clear demarcations between public and private spaces can encourage people to personalise the front of their homes whilst also offering opportunities to integrate level changes, utility boxes and waste storage.

What's needed:

- Clearly define private spaces through strong boundary treatments.
- Manage changes in level in a way that does not compromise the qualities of the street.
- Design the space between the back of the pavement and building façades carefully to integrate services, waste storage and utilities cabinets (meter boxes) so their impact is reduced.
- Avoid pieces of 'leftover' land that serve no useful public or private function. Homes with shallow street backs need careful thought as it is not uncommon to see these spaces poorly resolved with small pieces of grass turf or gravel.
- Outdoor amenity space for apartment buildings, such as a balcony for relaxing or the drying of clothes.

Upper Tuesley, Milford.





What 'green' looks like



Defensible space and strong boundary treatments.



Boundary treatments that add ecological value and/or reinforce distinctive local characteristics.



Well integrated waste storage and utility boxes. If relying on rear garden storage solutions for terraces and townhouses, provide direct access to these from the street.



Front garden spaces that create opportunities for social interaction.



Ground floor apartments with their own front doors and semi-private amenity spaces help to enliven the street whilst also reducing the amount of people using communal areas.★



Consider providing terraces or balconies to above ground floor apartments – these can also help to enliven the street, increase natural surveillance and provide residents with access to the open air.★



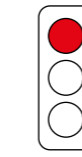
No left over spaces with no clear public or private function.



Consider apartment buildings whose access is from a deck rather than a corridor, enabling cross ventilation of apartments while limiting shared common parts which are enclosed.★



green = go ahead



What 'red' looks like

- ✘ Poorly considered spaces between the back of the pavement and the face of buildings that erode the quality of the street environment.
- ✘ Narrow and small grass frontage strips for space between the back of the street and the façades of buildings that are impractical to maintain.
- ✘ Waste storage solutions for terraced homes that rely on residents storing bins and crates in rear garden spaces and instead often sees bins and crates placed next to front doors.
- ✘ Slab on edge.
- ✘ Concrete screed with pebbles.
- ✘ Prominent external pipes, flues and utility boxes.
- ✘ Pieces of left over land between or to the side of buildings with no clear public or private function.
- ✘ Poorly resolved changes in level.



red = stop & rethink

Moving from Building for Life 12 to Building for a Healthy Life

We recognise that many local planning authorities refer to BFL12 in their Local Plans and other policy documents. BFL12 and BHL share the same principles and structure. For this reason, we consider that local planning authorities will be able to switch from BFL12 to BHL providing that this is made clear at the start of pre-application discussions.

Local authorities may well choose to keep using the previous edition of BFL12 and this is a decision best made locally. If a local planning authority chooses to use BHL but a prospective planning applicant expresses reservations, we suggest using the previous edition of BFL12 as the next best alternative.

The differences between the editions (BFL12 and BHL) are set out and explained here.

Building for Life 12 (2018 edition)	Building for a Healthy Life (2020 edition)	The title change reflects the greater emphasis on healthier and more active lifestyles. NHS England and NHS Improvement have chosen to use the tool as an effective way to reach a broader audience and share the findings of the Healthy New Towns Programme.
Integrating into the neighbourhood	Integrated neighbourhoods	Remarks
1. Connections	1. Natural connections	Greater emphasis and advice relating to connecting places.
2. Facilities and services	2. Walking, cycling and public transport	Greater emphasis on active travel (walking and cycling) to reflect good practice (such as 'Putting Health into Place'); reinforcing efforts by government and the NHS to improve the nation's health and wellbeing through the way in which new developments are planned and designed.
3. Public transport	3. Facilities and services	Moved from being the second to the third consideration; improved written and visual guidance.
4. Meeting local housing requirements	4. Homes for everyone	No change; improved written and visual guidance.

Creating a place	Distinctive Places	
5. Character	5. Making the most of what's there	Moved from being the sixth to the fifth consideration. A distinctive or locally inspired identity will only be created when the time is taken to understand the site and its wider context.
6. Working with the site and its context	6. A memorable character	This consideration has been switched from position 5 to position 6.
7. Creating well defined streets and spaces	7. Well defined streets and spaces	No change; improved written and visual guidance.
8. Easy to find your way around	8. Easy to find your way around.	No change; improved written and visual guidance.
Street and home	Streets for All	
9. Streets for all	9. Healthy streets	Improved written and visual guidance. Renaming this consideration further highlights the importance of street design and the impact this has on people's travel choices, levels of physical activity and public health. Good street design prioritises pedestrians and cyclists, encouraging active travel modes; in turn improving people's health and wellbeing. Additional prompts encourage street space to be shared more fairly between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles allowing carriageway space to be redistributed; allowing protected cycle ways and wider pavements to be created. Pedestrians can then be offered more space to allow for social distancing whilst protected cycle ways will allow more people to cycle safely and confidently, ensuring that reduced public transport capacity (at times of social distancing) does not lead to greater private car usage (leading to further congestion, increased energy usage and reductions in air quality).
Street and home	Streets for All	
10. Car parking	10. Cycle and car parking	Emphasising the importance of thinking about cycle parking design as a key factor in encouraging people to choose to cycle rather than drive for shorter trips.

11. Public and private spaces	11. Green and blue infrastructure	Focuses on public space only with private space consideration being moved into the last consideration. The change in title to 'green and blue infrastructure' reflects forthcoming changes in legislation that place a greater emphasis on improved habitat creation and better water management.
12. External storage and amenity space	12. Back of pavement; front of home	<p>The emphasis of this consideration has been directed to focus more on the space between the back of the pavement and the façade of individual buildings. These spaces are very often poorly resolved and have a significant impact on the quality of the street environment.</p> <p>Developments that perform well against this consideration will also resolve storage issues relating to waste and recycling containers.</p> <p>The consideration also highlights the need to consider providing some amenity space for apartments and maisonettes. This is in direct response to the challenges experienced by those living in apartments and maisonettes during lockdown, recognising the importance of being able to sit outside in the open air to people's mental wellbeing.</p>

BHL is a free to use tool. We're keen to track which local planning authorities are using BHL. If you're a local planning authority and you are using (or planning to use) BHL (or BfL12) please email info@designforhomes.org

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David Birkbeck

Hons FRIBA

David is Chief Executive of Design for Homes, a social enterprise founded in 2000 to campaign for homes to be better designed and produced in greater volumes. David co-authored Building for Life 12 and is both the Housing Design Awards' director and a judge. An honorary fellow of RIBA, he has served as a design advisory board member at the Homes and Communities Agency, as an NHBC councillor and as 'ambassador' for Wood For Good. David sits on the Cambridge Quality Panel. Other work includes "Car Parking: What Works Where" and he had a hand in the 2009 HAPPI report recommendations to make developments designed for seniors at least as appealing as general market-sale homes.



Stefan Kruczkowski

BA (Hons) DipTP (Dist) PhD

Stefan is an urban designer and co-authored the original version of Building for a Healthy Life - Building for Life 12 with David Birkbeck. Stefan completed the first doctoral thesis on Building for Life 12 in 2018.

Stefan primarily offers face to face and remote urban design support to local planning authorities across England with over a decade of experience in development management and policy. Stefan also contributes to design review panels for Design:Midlands and Design:West and is a Design Council Built Environment Expert. Stefan regularly collaborates with Design for Homes delivering training and overseas study tours.



Phil Jones

BSc (Hons) CEng FCIHT FIHE MICE

Phil is a Chartered Engineer with over 35 years' experience in traffic engineering and transport planning. Phil specialises in achieving synergy between transport and urban design, with the aim of creating places and spaces that meet aesthetic, social and functional aims.

He founded Phil Jones Associates in 2003; the PJA group of companies now provides services in transport, engineering and placemaking and employs around 80 staff based in four UK offices and in Melbourne, Australia.



David Singleton

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David set up DSA Environment + Design to focus on bringing people and landscape together to make places. He believes this may be done through high quality, well-managed blue-green infrastructure.

His experience covers a wide range of landscape and urban design practice, from planning to detailed design, on projects as diverse as commercial and housing to minerals. He teaches at Nottingham Trent University and is a member of the Design:Midlands Design Review Panel.



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Sue is an independent urban design consultant with extensive experience of masterplanning and design coding for new settlements. Sue is wellknown as a presenter and is co-author of the seminal urban design book Responsive Environments: A manual for designers.

Sue contributes to design review panels for Design:West, Design: Midlands and is Design Council Built Environment Expert. Sue regularly delivers urban design training and recently contributed towards a nationwide programme for Homes England. Her contribution to urban design has been recognised by the Urban Design Group with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Building for a Healthy Life is the latest edition of and new name for Building for Life 12.

The original 12 point structure and underlying principles within Building for Life 12 are at the heart of Building for a Healthy Life.

Building for a Healthy Life is about how to assemble neighbourhoods and new settlements by thinking about and applying 12 key considerations. Designed to frame discussions between local authorities, developers, local communities and other stakeholders Building for a Healthy Life will help you to create better places for people and nature.

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Endorsed by:



Birkbeck, D., Kruczkowski, S. with Jones, P., McGlynn, S. and Singleton, D.

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Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Assessment is an approach to understanding the differences between landscapes. It is a way of understanding how the landscape and its particular elements contribute to a sense of place, and can serve as a framework for decision making that respects local distinctiveness.

There are two Landscape Character Assessments produced by Essex County Council which should be used as part of any context appraisal:

- The [Essex Landscape Character Assessment](#) contains information about the whole county.
- The Landscape Character Assessment of the Essex Coast is a far larger document which focuses on the coastline of Essex, its uniqueness and its history.

Landscape Character Assessments support work to maintain and conserve the landscape and its features. Communities, developers, farmers and land managers, landscape and planning professionals and others all have a role in identifying the characteristics that make a particular landscape unique. Using this understanding they can plan and manage landscape change.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Wildlife and biodiversity issues relate to the variety of plants and animals that exist within Essex. Essex contains several valuable and rare habitats, from coastal saltmarshes and mudflats to ancient woodlands, trees and wetlands.

All councils within Essex have a duty to ensure that these environments are managed and maintained, where it owns them or carries out activities that may affect them. It aims to ensure that the diverse array of plant and animal life across the county is protected, managed and recorded so that future generations will be able to enjoy them.

There are a number of countywide schemes and initiatives designed to protect and enhance the biodiversity of Essex. The following projects and initiatives target specific subjects and issues relating to wildlife and biodiversity and should be considered as part of the preparation of any development.

The Essex Biodiversity Validation Checklist

This checklist is required for all planning applications and offers guidance on how to submit the appropriate level of information about biodiversity when making a planning application. The document also includes a set of helpful FAQ's which provide useful guidance around further evidence that may be required.

Special Verges Initiative

Special verges provide an invaluable habitat for wild flowers and other native species across the county with over 100 sites across the county have been designated as Special Roadside Verges Essex County Council works with a range of partners to maintain and improve these important resources.

Local Wildlife Sites

The Essex local wildlife sites website (www.essexwtrecords.org.uk/lowsfinder) provides information and advice for the 1600 local wildlife sites (LoWS) within the county. Working in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust and a range of organisations, the LoWS project identifies and surveys sites, provides advice on available grants and assists in carrying out essential works on these vital ecological resources.

Essex Biodiversity Project

As part of its commitment to wildlife and biodiversity, Essex County Council plays an active role in the Essex Biodiversity project. The Project brings together a range of organisations to protect and enhance wildlife, improving the variety of life in the Essex area by implementing the Essex.

Biodiversity Action Plan

The Project publishes information leaflets on species, provides educational resources, assists with planning and community strategies and works with volunteers, alongside a range of other activities. Through the Essex Biodiversity Project website, you can access the full range of services on offer.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The planning applicant should also establish whether the development would require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

An EIA ensures that the environmental consequences of a development are understood and taken into account before planning consent is granted. Typically, only major urban developments or proposals in sensitive areas will have the potential for significant environmental effects and will thereby require an EIA. The local planning authority should be able to advise on whether an EIA is appropriate.

What legislation covers Environmental Impact Assessment?

The process of Environmental Impact Assessment in the context of town and country planning in England is governed by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the '2017 Regulations'). These regulations apply to development given planning permission under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The regulations apply the amended EU directive 'on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment' (usually referred to as the 'Environmental Impact Assessment Directive') to the planning system in England. All further references to regulations in this guidance are to the 2017 Regulations unless otherwise stated. Subject to certain transitional arrangements set out in regulation 76 of the 2017 Regulations, the 2017 Regulations revoke the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (referred to in this guidance as 'the 2011 Regulations'). {Read about the transitional provisions}.

The regulations only apply to certain types of development – though it is worth noting that they can apply to 'permitted development', which is development for which planning permission is not typically required. They do not apply to development given consent under other regimes; these are subject to separate Environmental Impact Assessment regulations.

Influences Upon Sustainability

The purpose of this guidance is to help deliver high-quality sustainable development which integrates innovation in design. It establishes a methodology for the process which identifies appropriate development densities, how places are designed and how they should respond to community needs. These requirements are set out in a series of development criteria:

- Spatial criteria
- Building and site criteria
- Community criteria

Development Criteria	Sustainability objectives
Spatial Criteria	Walkable neighbourhoods and good access to public transport
	Resource efficiency in use of land density
	Improving local services and job opportunities
	Mixed-use development
Buildings and site criteria	Minimising waste
	Reducing pollution
	Sustainable construction, sustainable drainage and energy efficiency
	Water conservation
	Conserving and enhancing biodiversity
	Smart infrastructure and connectivity
Community criteria	Mixed communities
	Social cohesion
	Neighbourly urban design
	Safe public places

	Green spaces
	Digitally connected communities

Spatial Criteria

Development opportunities offer urban areas the chance to support a more sustainable future. The built environment can be made more accessible to the ageing population, the adaptability of homes and spaces can be enhanced and assistive technology options can be incorporated into designs. And while many elements of sustainable design – such as closely integrated mixed-use developments or environments that promote walking and the use of public transport – benefit the entire population, it’s also true that they almost always promote activity and wellbeing in older people.

In fact, predicted changes in the demographic profile will have land-use and planning impacts beyond catering for the needs of an increasing number of older people. As older cohorts increase, the proportion of some age groups will contract as a proportion of the total population. This results in a proportional reduction in demand for certain land uses and facilities. The use of land previously developed to serve demographic groups that are now shrinking will need to be reconsidered (and possibly adapted) to meet the needs and demands of groups that are expanding.

Preserving the hierarchy of densities within different types of urban place (such as urban centres, neighbourhoods and urban extensions) is fundamental to ensuring that they perform to their social, economic and environmental potential. In a similar manner, the preservation of relevant densities helps to ensure that areas not as well-connected to public transport and local services do not become ‘over-developed’ in regard to their local context.

The most compact developments should therefore occur in the most sustainable locations – those which benefit from a high degree of physical and digital connectivity. The design of such compact developments is critical to their success.

Individual dwellings aimed at those requiring care should be located towards the quieter areas of a development site, with clear focal points such as trees, bird tables or views of street life. Dwellings and principal communal spaces should be orientated to ensure sunlight for part of the day, creating a balance of natural and artificial light. Ensuring green amenities are orientated to make best use of the sun will encourage residents to venture out and use outside spaces.

Buildings and Site Criteria

Improved life expectancies have resulted in a smaller proportion of the elderly being widowed. Consequently, an increasing number of older people are projected to remain married and living in couples than were able to do so in the past. While this may serve to reduce the requirement for state-administered care in some instances, as married couples are able to manage their care needs in their home, it may also increase the need for larger, care-led housing that allows couples to remain living together. It is worth noting, however, that the elderly are relatively immobile in terms of moving house. The longer the elderly can remain in couples, the more likely it is that they will be motivated and financially able to stay in the ‘family home’.

As much as 95% of the national housing stock is not fully accessible – and it is considerably challenging to retrofit existing stock so as to allow people to live independently as they age. Good design inside the home is therefore of extreme importance, irrespective of whether the primary use is as a family home or one with a care-package specifically attached or delivered. Small changes are

often enough to help vulnerable groups feel more independent, providing an environment that is clearly defined, easy to navigate and feels safe.

Community Criteria

As previously stated, the ageing population is fast becoming a key consideration in community planning. Irrespective of the forecasted trend for more elderly married couples as a proportion of the population, the growth in size of the elderly population as a whole means that more elderly people are projected to be living in one-person households. It is this cohort that is particularly susceptible to relocation to communal establishments when support (health-related or otherwise) is required.

Land use may have to be reconsidered in light of such changes. Where land may previously have served a function for a narrow age-band – for example, schools, universities, sports and recreation facilities designed to serve children or young adults – adaptation may be required to allow it to serve a wider range of ages and uses.

Planning should respect projected demographics while also promoting the concept of the ‘lifetime neighbourhood’, where development provision (including both housing and community facilities) are capable of supporting all stages in the life cycle.

In rural communities, particular emphasis should be placed on accessibility through appropriate public transport provision and inclusively designed pedestrian routes, while development should include local convenience stores and other important amenities that can help to foster a sense of community. The population of rural England is ageing faster than that of urban areas and poor access to services is a key cause of socio-economic exclusion, which has strong negative impacts on the wellbeing of older people.

What follows are summary descriptions of generic urban place types, characterising and expressing their potential for sustainable development.

Urban Centres

Urban centres reflect the investment in their success that has occurred over generations. Services and employment have been located there alongside cultural facilities and transport infrastructure.

The fact that some urban areas now perform less well than is desirable makes decisions on where to locate new compact development even more sensitive – and potentially vital to future rejuvenation.

Neighbourhoods

Most traditional towns in Essex developed in an outward pattern along the main radial streets. Suburbs were laid out with walking in mind and frequently combined good access to public transport with close proximity to important services such as schools and shops, with an accompanying compact residential catchment. They offered (and typically still offer) a unit of liveability that provides a good model of sustainable community living.

A neighbourhood unit is considered to be around 50 hectares within an area scribed by a circle of 400m radius. This represents a comfortable, 5-minute walking distance for most able-bodied people and is referred to in this guide as a ‘unit of sustainability’. Such a unit should ideally contain compact and varied housing stock, a variety of green space from parks to small squares and a community hub containing shops, health and learning facilities, employment opportunities and communal workspaces. Although radii of 400m and 800m represent a 5-minute and 10-minute walk

respectively for most people, in practice the street system is likely to make the journey from perimeter to centre longer and more convoluted. Nevertheless, the use of a measured radius has the benefit of simplicity and includes all land with the potential for enhancing the sustainability of the location.

Neighbourhoods such as these exist in abundance in every town, although the degree to which they match the ideal model is dependent upon a number of influences – such as decisions to rationalise school and service provision or the loss of a major employer. They also represent a past investment that is capable of being exploited and enhanced in preference to abandonment and re-provision elsewhere. Most neighbourhoods contain deficiencies of one sort or another and new development provides an opportunity to help remedy this, renewing their viability and making them more sustainable in the process.

Neighbourhood Design

Neighbourhoods are places where people live, work, play and develop a sense of belonging. The design of a neighbourhood can contribute to the health and well-being of the people living there. Several aspects of neighbourhood design (such as walkability and mixed land use) can also maximise opportunities for social engagement and active travel. Neighbourhood design can impact on our day-to-day decisions and therefore have a significant role in shaping our health behaviours.

Principles for building healthy neighbourhoods:

- Enhance neighbourhood walkability.
- Build complete and compact neighbourhoods.
- Enhance connectivity with safe and efficient infrastructure.

Small Urban Infill

Opportunities exist within every town to build within small urban gaps that are not required for other purposes. At best, such development completes the continuity of frontage of a street and removes a local eyesore. The physical limitation of available site area imposes particular challenges for the designer but the advice contained within this guidance still applies. For instance, it is still possible for a single building to contain a non-residential use on the ground floor, to incorporate a rainwater harvesting system with underground storage, to have an excellent environmental performance and to accommodate biodiversity within the structure.

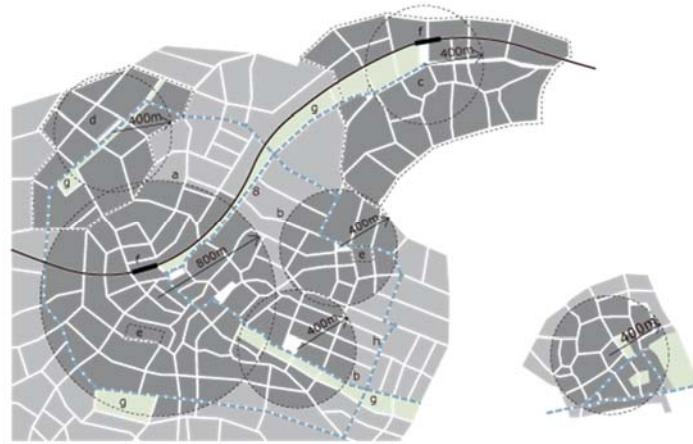
Large Urban Infill

Occasionally, development opportunities arise on large urban sites. These may once have been in institutional use and, provided they are at least 50 hectares in size, are capable of being developed as sustainable urban infill containing a mixed-use centre and community hub, space for employment, shared community workspaces, services, schools and a compact residential community. If a site contains buildings, their potential for retention and re-use should be examined within any Context Appraisal; there should always be a presumption towards retaining the better buildings that exist.

If less than 50 hectares in area, the development type will be determined by the 'fit' of the site. As with all spatial criteria scenarios, it is essential that a large urban infill site can be connected to its surroundings via a network of streets, footpaths, cycleways and green links, and that its centre is well-served by public transport.

Sites Beyond These Locations

It is important not to seek high-density development on land that is poorly connected to other places by public transport. Doing so increases the number of unnecessary journeys made by car, adding to local traffic congestion, pollution and carbon emissions. Such developments are the parts of an urban area that are least likely to become sustainable communities; in these situations it is preferable to keep densities below 50 dwellings per hectare.



Assembled town diagram and small urban centre

- a. Urban centre
- b. Neighbourhoods/small urban centre
- c. Sustainable urban extension
- d. Large urban infill
- e. Small urban infill
- f. Railway station
- g. Green space
- h. Bus route

Page updated: 29/07/2019

[Feedback on this page](#)

Related topics

- [Spatial Planning for Health, PHE 2017](#)

Layout Details

Key Messages

- Design permeable layouts that connect well with the existing walking and cycle networks within and outside of the development.
- Community facilities and strategic open spaces should be co-located within the layouts of new developments.
- Residential layouts should encourage walking and cycling through the creation of direct routes.
- Covered and secured cycle storage should be located in prominent and accessible locations as part of the design of new homes.
- High-quality communal spaces should be provided with supporting facilities which encourage activity by all users.
- Designing-in flexibility helps to futureproof streets and spaces, enabling technological innovation and adaptation over time.
- All new developments, including homes and shared communal spaces, should be well-connected to digital infrastructure (including high-speed internet) from the outset.
- Nodal points and the core should provide flexible community amenities including workspaces, community centres and pick-up and drop-off locations for online orders, reflecting changing shopping and working habits.
- Sustainable energy systems and supplies should be designed into the layout of developments and homes.
- All dwellings should be designed to cater for all ages and a range of physical and mental abilities, and should be capable of accommodating changes in circumstances over a lifetime.

Key Questions

- Does the layout promote a coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive network of walking and cycling routes suitable for all users, both within and outside the development?
- Does the layout promote the co-location and concentration of key retail, community and open-space uses?
- Are the walking and cycling routes within the layouts safe, well-lit, overlooked, welcoming and attractive, well-maintained, durable and clearly signposted?
- Is secure and covered residential cycle storage provided in a prominent location which encourages cycle use over car use?
- Have private communal spaces been designed to encourage a range of activities to allow all to take part, including activities for all genders, ages and cultures?
- Does the layout enable flexibility and adaptation to allow for future innovation in technological design and changing habits?

- Does the layout of the dwelling enable flexibility and adaption to allow for changes in personal circumstances?

Page updated: 17/02/2020

External resources

- [Building Regulations](#)

Movement

A well-connected urban environment consists of shared, multi-functional spaces which have convenient and integrated routes for pedestrians, cyclists, cars and public transport – and which are therefore more able to support a range of viable travel options.

Cars are likely to be used less often if the journey to the local shops or school is direct, safe and attractive and streets are well-maintained. This promotes sustainable, healthy ways of living via walking and cycling instead of driving.

Though other factors may impact upon the final design, new developments should be planned so as to reduce demand for road space and provide the community with sustainable and realistic alternative transport options.

In addition, the importance of the changing digital landscape and the increasing integration of GPS and navigational apps should not be underestimated when considering how the site is used and by whom. This is a constantly evolving field and one which requires consideration throughout the design process, particularly when considering the legibility and permeability of a layout and how the site will be interpreted by users.

A close-knit pattern of connected urban streets and spaces produces a variety of benefits:

- Travel distance between origin and destination for local journeys is minimised.
- Encourages the establishment of fine-grain mixed-use.
- Creates a more sociable and safer public realm.
- Supports the use of cycling and walking.
- Supports the formation and use of a central hub at the core of larger developments.

An analysis of existing movement patterns and future development sites should determine approximate desire lines and identify the potential for improving existing routes and creating new ones. A more rigorous prediction of traffic behaviour within the network may be required by the Highway Authority, who will make this requirement known at an early stage. Pedestrian behaviour can be accurately predicted using a spatial syntax model, making it possible to design the alignment and shape of the public realm to ensure maximum flows are captured along preferred routes.

Off-street footways must be designed to maximise personal safety using adequate lighting and natural surveillance from surrounding buildings. The integration of smart street furniture to facilitate and increase the perception of safety on all footways should also be considered.

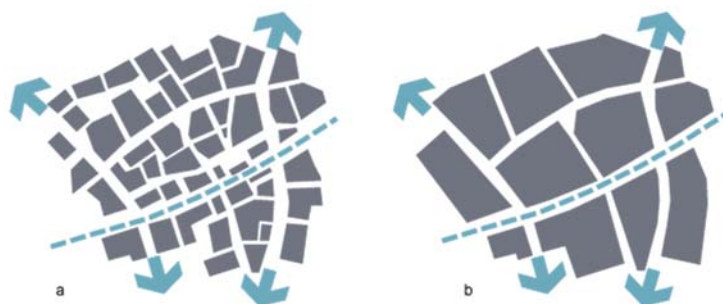
[See Poynton Case Study.](#)

Urban Grain

In most towns, the pattern of streets and paths (how people move between places) has evolved over a very long period of time. Even for newer urban areas in Essex, the layout of routes and public spaces and the disposition of uses was conceived for the convenience and accessibility of pedestrians and cyclists.

Redevelopment and roadbuilding has invariably altered this pattern, to the point that some places are now severed from their surroundings. Commercial and service uses have been placed away from where people live and the quality of public space has been compromised by the need to accommodate the car.

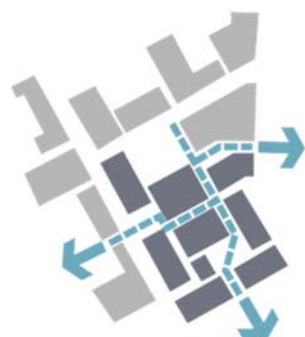
This has altered what once may have been a fine-grained pattern of streets and paths into a coarse-grained pattern. Despite these changes, the urban grain is likely to be (and needs to be) finest near the centre of a town or neighbourhood. This is where the greatest intensity of movement occurs and where the richest pattern of uses can usually be found. Away from the commercial heart of the town or neighbourhood the grain can be coarser, which reflects the less intense demands on movement and agglomeration.



a. Fine-grain street pattern

b. Coarse-grain street pattern

It is vital that new, more compact development occurs in such a way that its introduction does not alter the fine urban grain of these central locations. In these areas, new development should be designed to imitate the existing pattern. As a minimum, the main streets should be connected to their hinterlands by side streets that occur at approximately 90m intervals. More frequent connections are often desirable and should be accommodated if at all possible.



New development extending an existing fine-grain street pattern

In those rare circumstances where a town centre or neighbourhood environment is coarse-grained (either by original design or because of alteration), new development built in accordance with the principles laid out in this guide will introduce a finer pattern that produces enhanced environmental sustainability.

An overriding objective will be to create patterns of movement to form a connected grid. This can have either a regular or a deformed shape but, importantly, each end of a street or path must be connected to others. Systems that lead nowhere else are not appropriate.