

SG LSD2: Layout, siting and design of new development

We will approve the design of new development, subject to other policies, if:

- 1) it conforms with the approved masterplan, development brief, design statement or design code prepared for the site in accord with the supplementary guidance on masterplanning; AND**
- 2) it successfully combines responses to the following design issues:**
 - a) optimising its response to the site's context, including consideration of:**
 - (i) the local climate (its response to cold winds, rain, snow and solar gain); and**
 - (ii) respect for its setting (its relationship to the existing landscape, townscape and neighbouring features); AND**
 - b) optimising the resource-efficiency and appropriate use of materials, including consideration of embodied energy, reuse of construction materials, compactness of built form, and how well the materials relate to each other; AND**
 - c) ensuring it performs the functions expected of it, including consideration of:**
 - (i) its basic functions (provision of privacy, security, warmth, homeliness etc); and**
 - (ii) support systems (sustainability of heating, lighting, water and waste systems over the design's lifetime, including the use of water-saving technology); and**
 - (iii) connectivity (practicality and environment-friendliness of its access and servicing arrangements); and**
 - (iv) flexibility to adapt to the changing circumstances of its occupants; AND**
 - d) the creation of identity, including consideration of:**
 - (i) the balance of the development (mixture of house types and land-uses); and**
 - (ii) the creation of a sense of place (the quality of urban and landscape design, incorporation of public art or craftwork, biodiversity etc); and**
 - (iii) aesthetics (the unity and rhythm of all the design elements and features); and**
 - (iv) visual appeal (the design's "feel-good" quality, style etc).**

We will publish further more detailed planning advice on how these issues should be interpreted and the process by which they will be assessed, as necessary.

Reasoned justification

The purpose of this policy is to improve the standard of layout, siting and design of developments in Aberdeenshire, to achieve the highest standards of urban and rural

design. The most immediately obvious impact that development has on the environment is in the way it looks, but its permeability and connectivity – how easy it is to get around – and the other issues identified are just as important, along with the emergent requirements of sustainability.

Drawing these strands together the policy identifies the issues which require attention, if development is to receive planning permission. Their assessment will be carried out in the light of more detailed planning advice, which will be based on the Urban Design Tool Kit (as contained in Planning Advice Note 67), the Scottish Government's "Designing Streets: a policy statement for Scotland", and "Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative", and on other assessment tools as appropriate, for example, "Index21". Index 21 is an ongoing project between Aberdeenshire Council and the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture at The Robert Gordon University to promote environment-friendly housing layouts and designs.

The process by which these issues will be assessed will be set out separately in planning advice. However, the key to that advice is that it will be based on asking questions about the full range of design issues, rather than on determining a particular set of answers (as design guides have done in the past). In this way it is intended that the door is opened to innovative design answers, while ensuring a rigorous assessment is applied to every aspect of design, whether it is innovative or not.

However, the process of dealing with planning applications is just one end of the design process. For it to succeed, it is essential for the Council to generate development frameworks, masterplans and development briefs, as appropriate, for each development site, in accord with the supplementary guidance on masterplanning. We intend to do this in a collaborative process with the development industry. We will also expect developers to submit design statements and design codes applicable to each site for approval by the Council, in addition to incorporating art or craftwork projects in accordance with the Council's Adopted Public Art Strategy. In addition we will encourage developers to co-operate in generating agreed "pattern books", to ease the process of planning approval. Finally, in order to encourage the highest standard of design, we will continue to promote a biannual series of design awards, but will now also pursue the introduction of a Design Panel of distinguished practitioners to advise on the merits of particularly important design cases.

In some areas, such as the regeneration priority areas and the area covered by the "Energetica" framework, particular emphasis will be placed on achieving design solutions that reflect these areas' special needs and characteristics.

Finally, the importance of engagement between developers and the community must not be underestimated and we expect developers to involve communities from the outset. In this context the Prince's Trust Foundation have carried out an award winning exercise at Ellon, which can be used as a model for other developers. The appropriateness of the engagement of developers and the communities will be an important factor in assessing development proposals.