

Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent

Urban Design Guidance

Supplementary Planning Document
Summary Document

December 2010





This Urban Design Guidance was commissioned by: RENEW; Stoke-on-Trent City Council; Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council; The North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership and Advantage West Midlands. The North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership was dissolved during 2010.



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Introduction

Form of this guide

This brochure introduces the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It identifies the contribution that good design makes to quality of life and economic success and sets out the strategic urban design vision principles that underpin the SPD. The detailed urban design guidance, provided in electronic form on the accompanying CD, is based on these strategic principles.

Its status

It has been adopted by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council as a Supplementary Planning Document. It is intended to inform the preparation of development proposals and will be used to assess them.

It is another example of best practice joint working between the two local planning authorities, which was established for the Joint Core Spatial Strategy.

Background

The area covered by this guidance consists of a single conurbation with a rural hinterland on its western side.

The conurbation has a complex physical structure:

- Newcastle-under-Lyme is a typical historic market town with radial routes converging on its centre;
- Immediately to the east lies Stoke-on-Trent, a polycentric industrial city comprising six towns aligned on a north west to south east axis.
- The town of Kidsgrove lies to the north of Stoke-on-Trent, but is within the Newcastle-under-Lyme local authority area.
- The local authority areas are separated by the valley of the Fowlea Brook, which contains the West Coast Inter City railway line, the A500, and the Trent and Mersey Canal.

Since the 1970s major highway construction and out-of-town developments have eroded the quality and economic viability of these traditional town centres and, in Stoke-on-Trent in particular, the collapse of traditional industries has created many redundant sites and vacant buildings.

Consequently parts of the urban area have problems of environmental degradation, legibility, and access, with knock on effects for the identity and image of the area.

The determination to address this led to the commissioning of this Urban Design guidance, which seeks to build on the area's special historic character to transform the quality of life of people living and working in the region and encourage economic success.



The importance of good design

In recent years, the successful regeneration of cities such as Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield has demonstrated the value of good design, in promoting a positive image and sense of identity, raising investor confidence, and creating attractive places for people to live and work in and to visit.

This has been achieved through recognising and enhancing the distinctive assets of each place, and by insisting upon good design both where there is public sector investment, and for private sector development proposals. It has also required an investment in design skills and training.

North Staffordshire is now benefiting from a focused approach to regeneration, aiming to transform the economic base, renew the housing market, and provide the facilities to support a sustainable, post-industrial 21st century city.

The regeneration agencies and local authorities are working closely in partnership to coordinate their approaches and make sure that their interventions have the maximum benefit.

The value of place-making, and the benefits of good design, are recognised and there is already a strong local commitment to raising design awareness and design quality.

Regeneration will bring major public and private investment in physical change.

The success of this investment will depend upon how well new developments, both individually and collectively, transform the area's physical environment; how effectively it functions; whether it is truly sustainable; and how positively it is regarded in the future by investors, visitors and residents.

Quality of design and, in particular, quality of urban design, will be critical to transforming quality of life and to bringing new prosperity to the sub-region.



Urban Vision, the architecture centre for North Staffordshire, promotes a range of educational, training and support activities, including a Design Review service

The 'North Staffordshire Conurbation – Assessment of Historical Significance (Dec 2006)' pioneered the technique of urban characterisation

The Joint Core Spatial Strategy, the key strategy to guide how regeneration will be achieved through the planning system, including Design Quality as a key strategic policy

Examples of design awareness and design quality initiatives in the sub-region

The importance of good design

Good design is recognised as a priority in planning legislation and national planning policy. Local planning authorities are required to exercise their functions: “with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development” and in doing so: “must, in particular, have regard to the desirability of achieving good design”.

Sustainable development aims to create places that meet environmental, social and economic objectives in a balanced and holistic manner. In particular, the government has identified adapting to climate change as the greatest long term challenge facing us today.

It also makes clear that sustainable development involves design that is high quality and inclusive, so community involvement is vitally important to achieving sustainable development.

The local government white paper, Strong and prosperous communities, promoted place-making as a key driver for economic prosperity and highlighted the responsibilities of local authorities as ‘place shapers’.

Key objectives for design include responding to the local context and creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness.

This applies both to new development, but also to the historic environment, which already creates and sustains a sense of local distinctiveness that is important to the character of places.

The government’s view is that the conservation of the historic environment and economic prosperity are complementary objectives and can successfully support one another.

So, good design is vitally important, not only for our well being today, but also for the well being of future generations.

What is good design? It goes far beyond how places look, to include how they function, or work, including the built form, the linkages, the quality of the public realm and the mix of uses.



New housing, Wrinch Hill

“At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations”

PPS1

“Good design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning”

PPS1

“Sustainable design is an integral part of good design.....Conversely no building, space or place can be considered sustainable if it is not well designed”

CABE



Strategic vision

Purpose of the vision

To begin to address the historic problems we need to take a strategic approach (macro) to urban design, as well as one at street level (micro). The Strategic Vision deals with the macro level, it is concerned with the relationship between the City and town centres and rural areas, and working towards a new distinctive and sustainable settlement hierarchy, whilst still respecting the area's special historic character.

At the heart of the Strategic Vision is the need for a more distinct settlement pattern.

The aim is to create new sense of place and more immediate and positive image for the conurbation as a whole. Within this will be a more legible and more distinct pattern of settlements and a well connected network of high quality places, each with its own distinctive character. Ultimately we want to transform the quality of life of people living and working in the area and particularly the urban core and to encourage economic success.

Creating a more sustainable place

To meet the challenges of sustainable development and, in particular, adapting in preparation for future climate change means creating places that perform well in terms of:

- the economy, with a stable and prosperous economy that provides jobs for the local workforce;
- social inclusion, creating mixed and inclusive communities with good access to a range of facilities and opportunities, where people are healthy, active, feel a sense of belonging and will continue to want to live into the future; and
- the environment, where impacts on the environment are minimised and well adapted to meet the challenge of climate change.

Each of these aspects of sustainability needs to be in balance with and support the others.

The distinctive settlement pattern of the North Staffordshire conurbation can now be considered as a potential asset rather than as a liability.

It can provide local shopping and other facilities within walking or cycling distance of homes; green spaces within the conurbation can be harnessed into a network with a variety of functions and ecologies, from open space to local food production; development opportunities at the heart of the conurbation offer the potential to create new kinds of places to live and work, tailored to the needs of the future.

In the future, a sense of place and the quality of environment will be a key influence on people's choice of where to live, where to work, where to shop.



Queen's Gardens, Newcastle

The best of both in North Staffordshire: prosperity and quality of life by design. A place with:

A series of successful and thriving centres, each with its own role and character;

High quality places for living and working that people aspire to occupy;

Better quality connections between places, particularly for non car users;

A high quality green space network, easy for all to access;

A positive and memorable image based on valuing townscape assets;

A legible and more distinct pattern of settlements in attractive settings;

A high quality of life into the future through sustainable, well designed development to create places;

Good practice that supports the making of sustainable places.

**Strategic urban design vision statement:
The key urban design themes**

Successful and thriving centres, each with its own role and character

One of the most distinctive features of the sub-region is that the conurbation is polycentric – it has developed as a series of distinct places with many centres.

To maintain this characteristic pattern it is important that centres do not compete directly with one another, but rather that they develop into a strong and complementary network, each with a thriving role that meets local needs and contributes to the overall offer.

Each centre needs a high quality, well designed environment, with a form and character of development, public realm and balanced mix of uses appropriate to its distinctive townscape, the role identified for it and its future sustainability.

Centres represent the image of a place in the outside world. The vitality and quality of the City Centre influences the sub-region's performance as a whole.

A well designed, vibrant network of centres will contribute towards sustainable development by:

- providing shopping and local services within easy reach of residents in different parts of the conurbation, so highly accessible to local people;
- reducing the need to travel by vehicle to local services and making it possible to walk or cycle instead;
- reinforcing a strong sense of local identity, so contributing towards a sense of local belonging.



Strategic principles

1. Define a distinctive and complementary character and form of development to support the roles and identity for each of the:

- Strategic centres, City Centre and Newcastle;
- Significant urban centres, with a specialist role that needs to be considered together with the City Centre: Burslem, Stoke;
- Significant urban centres with more of a district centre role: Tunstall, Longton, Kidsgrove;
- Other significant urban centres: Fenton; and
- Rural service centres: (not included in the character area guidance).

2. Expand, diversify and reinforce the strategic centres, the City Centre and Newcastle, in a form appropriate to their character.

3. Provide a mix and local concentration of use and activity within each centre, including housing.

4. Create a high quality public realm with at least one space, somewhere new or existing, which provides a real sense of place and a focus of activity for each centre.

5. Ensure centres project outwardly a positive and welcoming image that encourages people to use them, for example through outward looking development and high quality gateway spaces or developments.

High quality places for living and working that people aspire to occupy

The pattern of housing and business is highly dispersed. Many of the more attractive environments are in suburban, peripheral or rural locations, so the existing pattern does not support the hierarchy of centres strongly at present.

A key element of the Work Foundation's strategy is to promote clusters of knowledge based industries, and create new housing environments to appeal to their employers and workforces.

New housing and business and regeneration activity will be targeted into more sustainable locations at the heart of the conurbation.

A key urban design priority is that development should support the hierarchy of settlements and centres

and strengthen their roles, by being located in or close to centres where possible to improve their balance of uses, and in an urban form.

Urban forms of business and housing, well located in relation to centres will:

- support the economic sustainability of centres;
- promote walking and cycling to access shops and other facilities;
- be highly accessible by public transport, so reducing the need to travel by car;
- provide opportunities to implement area-wide sustainable infrastructure;
- promote the intensification of uses and compact forms of development.



Strategic principles

1. Create (and reinforce existing) high quality, urban forms of housing development within and close to centres, in particular those in the Inner Urban Core and in Newcastle. It is particularly important for those centres where housing is currently lacking, such as in and around the City Centre and around Burslem centre.
2. Create high quality, urban, forms of knowledge based business development in:
 - The City Centre Business District in the south west of the City Centre;
 - The mixed use Commercial Quarter to the west side of the City Centre;
 - The University Quarter in Stoke; and
 - Newcastle town centre.
3. Keele and the University Hospital of North Staffordshire, will continue to be the focus of knowledge-based business and medical and healthcare technologies.
4. Integrate new housing and business environments into their wider context, in locations where sustainable transport can be provided.
5. Create a sense of place for each development, based on a clear and appropriate design concept that is responsive to its context.

Better quality connections between places for non-car users

There are fast road and rail links into the conurbation and effectively two road networks by which to move throughout the conurbation. The strategic roads provide more efficient routes between centres by car than the historic routes that directly link centres, which generally run through built up areas.

The sub-region feels car dominated, although it has relatively low levels of car ownership. So, it is important to promote a quality of environment that encourages walking, cycling and public transport, and more sustainable travel patterns.

A successful network of centres will be reliant on excellent connections between them, which should be well designed to prioritise sustainable modes of transport. However, centres will also require well designed approaches from the strategic route network if they are to be successful in attracting investment.

Creating a high quality urban environment of streets that helps to promote walking, cycling and public transport, and links together centres with public transport, will:

- reduce the need to travel by car;
- promote accessibility for all; and
- help to promote healthy lifestyles.

Strategic principles

1. Improve walking, cycling and public transport connections between different residential areas, and residential and employment areas.
2. Ensure that centres are well integrated and linked into their surroundings, especially residential areas, for cycling, public transport and in particular walking - creating 'walkable' centres.
3. Create attractive and civilised streets for all users to enjoy using 'Manual for Streets' principles, and manage the impact of traffic, particularly along ring roads around centres and upon transport corridors between centres.
4. Strengthen and enhance the existing and any proposed main approaches into centres from the A500 and Stoke-on-Trent railway station, to create a network of attractive city streets, as follows:
 - A direct and high quality vehicular route from the A500 to the City Centre and between the two main centres for business, the City Centre and Newcastle, - the Etruria Road corridor.
 - The University Boulevard, a direct link between the station and the City Centre, particularly for public transport access;
 - A link from the railway station (west side) to Stoke centre.
5. Improve facilities and the experience of walking, cycling and public transport, and create a better quality of environment along local transport corridors between centres and ring roads.



High quality green space network easy for all to access

Green spaces are dispersed throughout the conurbation and on its edges, often occupying land that was historically used for industry or extraction.

The level of provision is relatively high, although the quality of environment is mixed in terms of landscapes, facilities and perceptions of safety and security, in particular.

There is also an established recreational network of greenways along former rail lines and the canal and river corridors, although the potential to create attractive and well designed waterfront destinations has not yet been fully exploited.

To reinforce green space as an asset to the settlement pattern, there is

a need to diversify and raise the quality of green spaces and link them together into a fully joined up network that is well connected to and easily accessible from centres, housing and employment areas.

A high quality, diverse and well connected green space network will:

- support biodiversity;
- enhance the quality of environment and so social well being;
- promote healthier lifestyles;
- help to mitigate against the warming effects of climate change;
- help to promote the image of the conurbation and so its economic sustainability.

Strategic principles

1. Create a hierarchy of safe, attractive and varied open spaces and parks complemented by semi natural landscape corridors, with a variety of landscapes, ecological diversity and informal access throughout the conurbation.

2. Reinforce the green space network so that it is fully joined up, creating strategic green space linkages where necessary to complete it, made up of:

- A variety of urban open spaces and parks of different scales and character;
- Green corridors and greenways; and
- Semi natural open spaces/ landscapes.

Within the conurbation, link these together into a continuous network, by routes with a 'green' character (potentially on-street in certain places).

3. Create clear connections from all town centres and residential areas into the green space network.

4. Complete the recreational route network along canals, rivers, and other greenways, creating and improving access and integrating them into the wider green space network.

5. Reinforce the canal network as a tourism destination, providing nodes of activity for the enjoyment of both local visitors and tourists.



A positive and memorable image based on valuing townscape assets

There is a rich and diverse heritage of townscape characteristics that are distinctive to the sub-region, which help to establish the character and identity of different places within it.

This comes from historical development - historic landscapes, townscapes, buildings and industrial archaeology, and also derives from the natural geography, for instance the topography, which creates opportunities for distinctive views and landmarks, and the geology, which has influenced the use of materials.

In particular, the area is renowned for its ceramic products, which include a wide range of building and surfacing material - red brick, Staffordshire blue brick, clay roof tiles, Staffordshire blue paving bricks, terracotta,

encaustic and geometric floor tiles and decorative wall tiles.

To respect the character and identity of the unique townscape of the area, these assets need to be enhanced by well designed development and public realm and considered as part of the living fabric of the place today.

Creating a positive and memorable image by valuing existing townscape assets will:

- reduce resource consumption;
- help to maintain a sense of local belonging, so promoting social inclusion; and
- reinforce local distinctiveness and so the identity of the area, by utilising ceramic materials in the external surfaces of buildings and in the public realm.

Strategic principles

1. Ensure that development proposals are responsive to and enhance the local and wider context, being sensitive to it where that context is identified as having a positive value, and improving or transforming it where it is currently assessed as being neutral or negative.

2. Celebrate what is distinctive and unique in terms of the historic environment, the built and industrial heritage of the area, retaining, reusing and revitalising elements identified as having statutory or definite historical significance.

3. Take advantage of potential assets such as the topography, and the views it creates, both outwards and inwards, particularly those towards the central valley from the settlements and vice versa. In particular, enhance the image of the sub-region through improvements to the landscape and townscape when viewed from the A500.

4. Use materials that are characteristic of the sub-region or locality, particularly those produced locally.

5. Vary the character of development, for instance, the density, mix, and type, according to the location and context rather than adopting a one size fits all approach.



A legible and more distinct pattern of settlements

There are two fundamentally different types of settlement pattern in the sub-region, the conurbation and rural areas. In each, the relationship between the settlements and the areas around them (or their setting) has a significant influence upon their character and identity.

In the conurbation, the settlements are very close to one another so the area around each individual settlement is likely to be in-between the settlements as a group. These in-between areas are generally occupied by:

- green spaces, including open spaces;
- 'out of town' forms of development,
- vacant sites.

There is a strategic urban design opportunity to make the settlement hierarchy more distinct, by developing so as to strengthen the urban or suburban character of settlements and create a new, coherent character for their setting.

Creating a more positive 'green' character through the development in the setting of the settlements within the conurbation will:

- enhance the image of the entire conurbation as a whole, so helping to promoting economic sustainability;
- help to mitigate the warming effects of climate change through planting, and
- improve legibility, by differentiating centres and settings more clearly.

Strategic principles

1. Maintain, reinforce or create a positive urban, or suburban character, as appropriate to the context, within the different settlements in the conurbation;

2. Create a positive, 'green' character for the setting for the different settlements in the conurbation, extending the influence of the green space network beyond the boundaries of green spaces themselves to form a:

"Network of vibrant, complementary centres within a spacious and green urban environment"

(Core Spatial Strategy para 3.20).

3. To maintain, reinforce or create a positive rural character for the settlements and their landscape settings within the rural areas.



A future quality of life through sustainable, well designed development

Developments built today need to be fit for purpose into the future. That means they must address the implications of climate change, to create a well adapted place where people will continue to want to live and work. Sustainable urban design and place-making principles are essential.

There is a need to conserve resources and to use them wisely, in forms of development that will last. All places need to be looked after and this needs to be considered during the design process, so that it is not an onerous burden.

Developments that are built today will become the tomorrow's historic environment. It is appropriate for buildings to be an expression of our times.

It is also important that their quality will contribute to an area's heritage and identity. This requires good place-making.

Sustainable design does not stop at urban design but needs to be carried through architectural design into the detail and specification.

Sustainable urban design principles will:

- help reduce and mitigate the environmental impact of development;
- promote attractive places to live and help create sustainable communities;
- encourage walking and cycling rather than car use by promoting compact, urban forms of development;

Strategic principles

1. Create high quality, well designed and detailed developments, buildings, public realm and open spaces that will be robust and fit for purpose into the future.
2. Ensure that developments, buildings, public realm and open spaces have urban design quality, resulting from an appropriate role, function and response to their context, and thereby help to create safe and attractive places.
3. Consider the future implications of climate change and incorporate measures to conserve resources and mitigate potential impacts.
4. Make sure that developments, buildings, public realm and open spaces are designed with management and maintenance implications in mind and then manage and maintain them accordingly.



Good practice

Well designed development tends to be the result of good practice ways of working between the different parties, both public and private sector, involved in the development process.

The Core Spatial Strategy prioritises partnership working towards delivering high quality development. Delivering design quality will require the commitment of all partners, throughout all the steps in the design process relative to planning, from initial strategy formulation, through to implementation.

The challenge of climate change means that everyday practice has to evolve to address the increasingly important issues of sustainable urban design.

New ways of working are needed that are inclusive and take the right factors into account at the outset, so that solutions address the issues adequately.

These will require 'joined up' thinking, not only between the different parties, but to include new partners and the wider community. Strong leadership and inspired designers are needed to create sustainable developments that achieve everything that is being asked of them.

This is particularly important at the masterplanning level of design where the future of whole areas is being considered and the opportunities for sustainable design are at their greatest, but must also apply to site specific design proposals.

Key pointers for good practice include:

1. Recognition that good design is essential to the delivery of sustainable development.
2. An inclusive, coordinated and cooperative approach is required, between the various parties, including between the design team and local planning authority, within the local authority itself, with other public sector partners and with the wider community.
3. Draw upon external sources of specialist design advice, for instance Urban Vision's design review service, or specialist local authority offices, eg conservation or urban design officers.
4. Follow a good practice approach to the design process, and record it succinctly in the Design and Access Statement to accompany planning applications.
5. Consider implementation at all stages of the design process, to ensure that design proposals are realistic and the desired design quality achievable.



LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME
AND
STOKE-ON-TRENT
CORE SPATIAL STRATEGY
2006 - 2026

Adopted





Design guidance

Detailed guidance

The detailed urban design guidance is mainly intended for use on screen, rather than in print format, as it contains navigation links. An electronic version is enclosed on the CD provided opposite.

It takes the form of an interactive pdf document. Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to view it. This software is often already installed on your computer or can be downloaded for free from: get.adobe.com/reader/

The electronic pdf format allows you to view cross-references between sections throughout the document, and also highlights certain specific cross references between different sections.

Also provided are the following background and supporting documents:

- Baseline Report;
- Consultation Summary; and the
- Sustainability Appraisal.

Its purpose

The main purpose is to provide a practical tool to help to:

- Promote good, sustainable, urban design in the sub-region as a whole;
- Explain how spatial principles and design policies in the Core Spatial Strategy will be applied in relation to different places and topics.
- Provide guidance in relation to planning applications: to applicants when formulating proposals; to planning officers when assessing them; and to politicians when making decisions, on what constitutes good, sustainable urban design in this sub-region.
- Provide guidance to public sector commissioning bodies when strategies and proposals are being formulated either directly by themselves, or by others on their behalf.

Scope of the guide

Four types of urban design guidance are provided in this document:

- Strategic urban design vision and key principles for sustainable urban design for the whole area;
- Guidance on processes to follow that will help to support and to demonstrate design quality as now required by the planning system;
- Guidance for selected character areas, these being the main centres, local transport corridors and the waterways network;
- A range of detailed urban design guidance for selected topics, these being residential, employment, historic environment, rural environment and the public realm.



