

Quality Urban Design

- 4.21.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that all new development in Bristol achieves high standards of urban design. The policy sets out criteria for the assessment of design quality in new development and sets standards against the established national assessment methodology 'Building for Life'. Reference is also made to the role of community involvement in the design process.
- 4.21.2 The policy contributes to meeting objectives 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11 of the Core Strategy and responds to issues 7, 10, 11 and 15.

Context

- 4.21.3 Bristol has a rich and varied townscape. At the heart of the city centre lies the mediaeval walled city, which is bordered by later mediaeval and early Georgian expansion. Georgian development at St. Paul's, Kingsdown, Clifton and Hotwells forms an arc to the north of the city centre, while densely developed industrial communities lie to the south and east in Bedminster, Easton and the surrounding areas. Beyond these areas are a number of affluent Victorian and Edwardian neighbourhoods and inter-war suburbs, particularly to the north. As Bristol has expanded it has also subsumed a number of surrounding villages such as Westbury-on-Trym, Bishopsworth, Brislington, Henbury and Stapleton, many of which retain a distinct identity and character. Elsewhere, post-war housing estates predominate, along with suburban development from the late 20th Century. Large areas of industrial development can be found at Avonmouth and St. Philip's Marsh.
- 4.21.4 This varied townscape is set within a unique and dramatic natural landscape defined by the valleys of the Rivers Avon, Frome, Trym and Malago and the flood plain of the Severn Estuary. These attributes contribute towards the city's quality and local identity, creating many distinctive urban and natural landscape features and allowing significant views within and across the city.
- 4.21.5 The fabric of the city, particularly the city centre, has seen a number of interventions during the post-war years in the interests of redevelopment and road building. These have not always proven to be to the benefit of the city's social, economic or cultural wellbeing. More recent regeneration initiatives from the mid-1990s onwards have seen considerable investment and new development within the city centre, particularly at Broadmead, Harbourside and Temple Quay.
- 4.21.6 Quality urban design has a key role to play in place shaping and enhancing the city's positive features, as well as repairing the damage caused by insensitive development in the past. Through quality urban design, development can help to create distinctive, linked, sustainable places that support social inclusion and community cohesion. This in turn engenders a sense of ownership and belonging, and can help to promote social interaction and encourage healthy lifestyles.
- 4.21.7 Whilst considerable progress has been made in recent years in improving the design quality of development within the city, there is a recognised desire to further raise standards. National methodologies including Building For Life and Lifetime Homes can assist in raising and monitoring standards.

Policy BCS21

New development in Bristol should deliver high quality urban design. Development in Bristol will be expected to:

- Contribute positively to an area’s character and identity, creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness.
- Promote accessibility and permeability by creating places that connect with each other and are easy to move through.
- Promote legibility through the provision of recognisable and understandable places, routes, intersections and points of reference.
- Deliver a coherently structured, integrated and efficient built form that clearly defines public and private space.
- Deliver a safe, healthy, attractive, usable, durable and well-managed built environment comprising high quality inclusive buildings and spaces that integrate green infrastructure.
- Create a multi-functional, lively and well-maintained public realm that integrates different modes of transport, parking and servicing.
- Enable the delivery of permanent and temporary public art.
- Safeguard the amenity of existing development and create a high-quality environment for future occupiers.
- Promote diversity and choice through the delivery of a balanced mix of compatible buildings and uses.
- Create buildings and spaces that are adaptable to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions.

To demonstrate the delivery of high quality urban design, major development proposals with a residential component should be assessed against ‘Building For Life’ (or equivalent methodology). As a guide, development should aim to achieve the standards set out in the table below.

| | To 2012 | 2013-2015 | 2016 onwards |
|---|--|--|---|
| All major developments of 10+ dwellings | Building For Life Good standard (overall score 14/20) | Building For Life Good standard (overall score 15/20) | Building For Life Very Good standard (overall score 16/20) |

Explanation

- 4.21.8 Successful urban design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area's unique built, natural, cultural and socio-economic context. Development in Bristol should therefore be informed by context analysis such as that which will inform the Bristol Central Area Action Plan. Design can contribute positively to local character by responding to the underlying landscape structure, distinctive patterns and forms of development and local culture.
- 4.21.9 Creating an accessible and permeable public realm, connecting places and spaces, will help to ensure that many daily needs can be met within walking and cycling distance. The layout, form and mix of development should support walking, cycling and public transport provision. Opportunities should be taken to create or reinforce a logical and legible hierarchy of routes, intersections and public spaces, the design of which will vary dependent upon movement, activities and uses supported. Built form should be used to assist in this regard, with the inclusion of focal buildings and features where appropriate to act as visual points of reference.
- 4.21.10 Development should be arranged in a coherent manner that makes efficient use of land and infrastructure. This will be best achieved by integrating with existing streets, public spaces and development edges and by configuring buildings to create clearly defined public / active fronts and private / passive backs.
- 4.21.11 The built environment should be designed to deliver safe, secure, attractive, healthy, comfortable and convenient places in which to live, work, play and spend time. Development should take the opportunities available to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions. The built environment should be inclusive, respecting how people experience the city and addressing the needs of all in society.
- 4.21.12 Development should deliver a multi-functional public realm comprising streets and spaces that can accommodate a range of appropriate uses and activities both now and in the future, which will assist in providing animation, vitality and surveillance. The provision and enhancement of green infrastructure and delivery of a coherent landscape scheme should be planned as an integral part of any development. Major development schemes should also enable the delivery of permanent and temporary public art, promoting a multi-disciplinary approach to commissioning artists in the design process.
- 4.21.13 A high quality built environment should consider the amenity of both existing and future development. Consideration should be given to matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space. Development should also take account of local climatic conditions.
- 4.21.14 Quality development should be achieved through a robust and collaborative design process from inception to completion on the ground. The design process should go beyond the development construction phase and should also ensure that suitable management arrangements and maintenance regimes are put in place. The Design and Access Statement that accompanies a planning application should demonstrate how development proposals contribute to the criteria set out within this policy. The drafting of Design and

Access Statements should evolve under the design process, and both inform and be informed by the development proposals.

- 4.21.15 Building for Life is a nationally recognised methodology for assessing the design quality of residential development, led by CABE and the Home Builders' Federation, using 20 criteria. Whilst the policy does not imply conformity with specified standards is the sole guide to a decision, the Building for Life methodology offers a systematic way of demonstrating that the overall objective and criteria in Policy BCS21 have been addressed. Therefore, proposals for major development with a residential component should demonstrate, through the Design and Access Statement, how the development would deliver high quality design, with reference to the Building for Life assessment criteria. This statement will be reviewed by a CABE-accredited assessor who will prepare a formal report for the consideration of the decision maker. If Building for Life is discontinued in the future, the Council will identify an equivalent alternative methodology to guide decisions. Minor developments should also aim to achieve a similar standard of design.

Policy Delivery

This policy will be delivered through the development management process, including the use of Design and Access Statements.

A citywide urban context analysis will be undertaken which will inform the council and developers in the process of contextual appraisal and response. The analysis will be informed by community involvement. It will also draw on the evaluation work undertaken as part of the on-going programme of conservation area appraisals. The citywide urban context analysis will be produced in conjunction with the proposed supplementary planning document on urban design.

Where needed to manage and promote change, the council will seek to work with stakeholders as appropriate in the preparation of area design frameworks, masterplans, design codes and site-specific briefs.

Community engagement will be expected at the pre-application stage in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement. Where appropriate, support will be sought from national, regional and local bodies including CABE, South West Design Review Panel and Bristol Urban Design Forum.

Further detailed policies and guidance on urban design principles for Bristol will be set out in the Site Allocations & Development Management DPD and supplementary planning documents addressing housing mix and urban design. This DPD will include a policy on Development and Health which will set out the approach to Health Impact Assessments.

The following adopted supplementary planning documents and supplementary planning guidance will continue to be of relevance until they are reviewed:

- SPD1 "Tall Buildings" (January 2005)
- SPD2 "A Guide for Designing House Alterations and Extensions" (October 2005)
- PAN8 "Shopfront Guidelines" (1997)

- PAN15 “Responding to Local Character – A Design Guide” (1998)

Performance in delivering quality urban design will be monitored and assessed using national methodologies including Building For Life and Lifetime Homes. Both development proposals and completed developments will be assessed against the nationally agreed Building for Life criteria by CABE-accredited assessors.

Assessment of design proposals will draw upon CABE best practice guidance and government guidance set out in “Manual For Streets”.

Indicators

Housing Quality – Building for Life Assessments (Core Output Indicator H6)

