

2.30 Urban design and local character

What is the aim of this policy?

- 2.225** This policy sets out the detailed principles to support good urban design in the borough. High quality urban design is central to the Core Strategy vision for Lewisham in 2026. Development that is well designed, safe, provides or promotes a sense of place and good access to facilities is central to achieving sustainable development and in developing healthy communities.

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General principles

1. The Council will require all development proposals to attain a high standard of design. This applies to new buildings and for alterations and extensions to existing buildings. The requirements of Core Strategy Policy 15 which sets out the aims for each Core Strategy spatial area will need to be met.
2. Where relevant, development proposals will need to be compatible with and/or complement the urban typologies and address the design and environmental issues identified in Table 2.1 Urban typologies in Lewisham.
3. The retention and refurbishment of existing buildings that make a positive contribution to the environment will be encouraged and should influence the character of new development and the development of a sense of place. Their value and significance as a heritage asset will be assessed as part of any development proposal.
4. Other elements such as open spaces, rivers and topographical features that make a positive contribution to the environment should influence the future character of an area and be treated as key elements in the development of a sense of place.

Detailed design issues

5. An adequate response to the following detailed matters will be required in planning applications to demonstrate the required site specific design response:
 - a. the creation of a positive relationship to the existing townscape, natural landscape, open spaces and topography to preserve and / or create an urban form which contributes to local distinctiveness such as plot widths, building features and uses, roofscape, open space and views, panoramas and vistas including those identified in the London Plan, taking all available opportunities for enhancement
 - b. height, scale and mass which should relate to the urban typology of the area as identified in Table 2.1 Urban typologies in Lewisham
 - c. layout and access arrangements. Large areas of parking and servicing must be avoided
 - d. how the scheme relates to the scale and alignment of the existing street including its building frontages

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- e. the clear delineation of public routes by new building frontages, with convenient, safe and welcoming pedestrian routes to local facilities and the public transport network, including meeting the needs of less mobile people and people with young children
- f. the quality and durability of building materials and their sensitive use in relation to the context of the development. Materials used should be high quality and either match or complement existing development, and the reasons for the choice of materials should be clearly justified in relation to the existing built context
- g. details of the degree of ornamentation, use of materials, brick walls and fences, or other boundary treatment which should reflect the context by using high quality matching or complementary materials
- h. how the development at ground floor level will provide activity and visual interest for the public including the pedestrian environment, and provide passive surveillance with the incorporation of doors and windows to provide physical and visual links between buildings and the public domain
- i. new development must be sustainably designed and constructed in compliance with Core Strategy Policies 7 and 8
- j. where there is an impact on a heritage asset a statement will be required that describes the significance of the asset, including its setting, and an assessment of the impact of the proposals upon that significance.

Justification

- 2.226** The Core Strategy requires new development in the borough to achieve a high standard of design (Core Strategy Policy 15 High Quality design for Lewisham). The policies in the Core Strategy set out a positive framework for achieving high quality and inclusive design for all development and are based on an understanding of the character of the borough and an evaluation of its characteristics. The Lewisham Core Strategy identifies four spatial policy areas (see Core Strategy Spatial Policies 2, 3, 4 and 5) which set out the general design aims for the regeneration of these areas and which provide a general framework for the type of development that will be appropriate in these areas of the borough. DM Policy 30 implements the policies in the Core Strategy which are supported by various Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 2.227** The London Plan has a suite of policies relating to place shaping and urban design. The Core Strategy Policies deliver the approach in the following London Plan Policies: Policies 7.1 (Building London's neighbourhoods and communities), 7.2 (An inclusive environment), 7.3 (Designing out crime), 7.4 (Local character), 7.5 (Public realm), 7.6 (Architecture), 7.7 (Location and design of tall and large buildings), 7.8 (Heritage assets) and 7.9 (Heritage-led regeneration).
- 2.228** The policy is consistent with the NPPF which requires new development to have a high design quality (paragraph 11, Core planning principles and Section 7, Requiring good design).

- 2.229** DM Policy 30 sets out the detailed considerations and issues that need to be considered and addressed by development applications in order to achieve the high standards of development required. New development needs to respond to its context, local character and history and, while not preventing or discouraging innovative design, should promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.
- 2.230** The potential of sites for development needs also to be optimised. Table 2.1 sets out the urban typologies from the Lewisham Borough Wide Character Study 2010 (Lewisham Character Study), relates them to the densities set out for London Plan character areas and Public Transport Accessibility levels (PTAL) and summarises the specific problems and issues which development schemes will be required to address.
- 2.231** The assignment of a housing density to a particular site is a complex issue. Table 2.2 Sustainable Residential Quality, has been included from the London Plan for information purposes⁽¹⁶⁾. If this table is revised in future versions of the London Plan the Council will use the up-dated version as appropriate. Housing densities need not be identical to that of the surrounding housing context in order to be successful and therefore the density ranges can be indicative only. Successful development will depend on thoughtful and innovative design in order to achieve an integrated result with the surrounding built context.
- 2.232** The Lewisham Tall Buildings Study (2010) identifies Strategic Site Allocations (see Core Strategy Strategic Site Allocations 2 to 6) and Lewisham and Catford Town Centres as places where, subject to further examination and assessment, tall buildings may be considered suitable. The Lewisham Character Study indicates that tall buildings may be suitable in these locations but that they should not be located where they may disrupt the flow of the topography of the borough. For reference the Local Views and Landmarks identified on the Policies Map and referred to by Core Strategy Policy 17 and which are discussed in the Lewisham Tall Buildings Study are included in Appendix 6. Core Strategy Policy 17 also refers to the protected vistas, and the London Panorama identified in the London Plan. These will be managed in accordance with the London Plan policies and the London Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance View Management Framework.
- 2.233** In line with the principles of sustainable development building materials should be obtained from sustainable sources as locally as possible while recognising that in a heavily urbanised area there will always be transport costs associated with building materials to a site. The reuse/recycling of building materials will be encouraged where appropriate.
- 2.234** Living roofs and walls will be encouraged in all appropriate circumstances (see Core Strategy Policy 7 and the London Plan).

16 London Plan Policy 3.4 Optimising housing potential, and Table 3.2 Sustainable residential quality

Table 2.1 Urban typologies in Lewisham

Note: The assignment of a London Plan density to each character area is indicative only. The final assessment of the density of a residential area will be assessed on an individual basis as part of the development management process.

Note: Many of these areas are designated as Conservation Areas and have been the subject of Conservation Area Appraisals where more detail in the character and issues discussed below can be found.

Note: For definitions of various types of garden and amenity areas refer to DM Policy 33

Lewisham Character Study typologies	London Plan density	Examples of the streets/areas within each urban typology	Lewisham Character Study identified issues
Housing - Perimeter Blocks			
Urban Terrace	Urban	Corbett Estate Catford (e.g. Braidwood Road, Killearn Road, Glenfarg Road); streets in the Hatcham Conservation Area at New Cross Gate; terraces to the west of the railway lines between Brockley and Honor Oak Park stations and east of Brockley Road	New development should not disrupt the regularity of the street form and the unity of the architecture. New separate dwellings in rear gardens in this urban typology will not be acceptable because of the disruption to its tight urban design form, usually with smaller sized gardens, and the difficulty in achieving a good standard of amenity for neighbouring occupiers. Opportunities should be taken wherever possible to remedy alterations to the existing terraces which have weakened the coherence of this urban form by mixes of boundary treatments, loss of front gardens, the introduction of modern doors and windows and unsympathetic infill development.
Suburban Terrace	Suburban	Estates at Bellingham and Downham, Milborough Crescent, Further Green Road, South Park Crescent	The major issues facing these areas are the sensitive management of change, the consistency of building facades where relevant and the maintenance of scale of development and the spaces between the short terraces. New development should be sensitive to this context. New separate residential dwellings in the rear gardens of this urban typology will not be considered acceptable due to the difficulty of achieving a good design fit with neighbouring developments, and disruption to the urban form which consists largely of short terraces.
Suburban Housing	Suburban	Tewkesbury Avenue, Westwood Park,	While building design and configurations vary there is often a relatively consistent approach to the styles and fashion of the period which establishes a

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Suburban housing - issues		Liphook Crescent, Forest Hill; Crantock Road, and Newquay Road, Catford; Exford Road and Jevington Way, Grove Park	<p>reasonably cohesive feel, and building line. Buildings are most likely to be two storeys although three storey examples can be found. New development in these areas should respond to this context.</p> <p>Development of new separate dwellings in the rear gardens of this urban typology will not generally be acceptable due to the difficulty of maintaining the established character of these areas as identified in the Lewisham Character Study.</p>
Villa	Suburban	Streets in Lee Manor Conservation Area, large areas of residential development in Blackheath, Brockley, Forest Hill and Telegraph Hill Conservation Areas	<p>These areas have the lowest density of the Perimeter block type. These buildings are generally set within a plot with a clear break between buildings. Buildings are generally larger than later suburban housing, both in size and in the proportion of the buildings with more generous floor to ceiling heights.</p> <p>Modern development has had a significant impact on villa types in terms of the conversion of dwellings, and replacement by modern blocks of flats which although usually maintaining the layout and spacing characteristic of this typology, do not maintain the spacious proportions of the buildings themselves, which has an impact on the character and quality of these areas. New development in these areas should respond to this context both by preserving the proportions of the buildings themselves and the spaces between the buildings.</p> <p>New separate residential developments in the side or rear gardens of this urban typology will not generally be acceptable in order maintain the characteristic residential quality of this urban typology.</p>

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Housing - Complex Blocks			
Urban Complex Block	Urban	Armoury Road Lewisham; Pincott Place Crofton Park; Southerngate Way, Myers Lane, John Williams Close, New Cross	<p>These areas feature a mix of flats and houses and tend to follow the traditional street grid system. The streets are however designed to accommodate sufficient parking for all residents which enlarges the amount of street space with hard standing and with larger frontage to frontage distances than older areas. Internal parking courts and mews tend to break up the clarity of public and private space.</p> <p>New development on amenity areas, and non-garden areas within this typology should not seek to replicate this layout but should aim to re-introduce the positive elements of the urban terrace typology in ensuring clear legible routes, and well defined private and public spaces.</p>
Suburban Complex Block	Suburban	Pennington Way, Edward Tyler Road Grove Park; Foxborough Gardens, Rushey Mead, Dressington Avenue, Ladywell	<p>These represent the trend for cul-de-sacs in later twentieth century development. They feature low densities of housing and have generally poor permeability and legibility.</p> <p>Plot configurations vary enormously in this typology as most are grouped in an irregular way around a curving street layout. A common feature is that houses in this form rarely feature gardens deeper than 10 metres creating a minimum back-to-back relationship with a basic level of privacy. Private rear gardens in this urban typology will therefore not be suitable for development.</p> <p>New development in amenity and non garden areas within this typology should not seek to replicate this layout but should aim to re-introduce the positive elements of the urban terrace typology in ensuring clear legible routes, and well defined private and public spaces.</p>

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Housing - Free Form			
Towers and Slabs	Central Urban or Suburban dependent on context	<p>Towers - Examples: Lewisham Park; Tower Blocks on Pepys Estate</p> <p>Slab Blocks - Examples: Lovelinch Close, Sharrat Street, Winslade Estate; St Norbert Road; Pepys Estate; Wood Vale Estate</p>	<p>The Lewisham Character Study identifies these areas as failing to establish a clear structure of routes and private spaces, and lacking a sense of ownership and surveillance necessary for a safe street through the lack of a clear definition of public and private areas, as there are usually very few private gardens in this style of development. The provision of amenity space is generally in the form of open grassed spaces and play areas which do not define public and private space or provide a coherent street scene.</p> <p>A replication of this style of development will not be considered appropriate in future development schemes. Any new or replacement development would need to meet the design aims and policies for new development in the Core Strategy and Development Management Local Plan and aim to re-introduce the positive elements of the urban terrace typology in ensuring clear legible routes, and well defined private and public spaces.</p>
Houses (Free Form low rise)	Urban or Suburban	Aldersgrove and Lambcroft Avenue, Grove Park; Ewart Road and Dalmain Road, Forest Hill; Wild Goose Drive and Denner's Road New Cross	<p>This form of development features low rise terraces and detached buildings which have a fragmented urban layout. This typically offers a poor relationship between building frontages and public spaces. The layouts provide a fragmented structure in which car movement and pedestrian movement are separate with parking typically provided in parking courts. The boundaries of rear gardens are often exposed to the public realm, creating areas of dead frontage. Individual plots in this typology are often shallow with small private gardens where provided, which would not be capable of redevelopment. Any development on open amenity areas, or non garden areas in this urban typology should not seek to</p>

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Table 2.2 Sustainable Residential Quality Matrix from the London Plan

Note: This table is provided for ease of reference. The Council will consider using up-dated versions of this table in future revisions of the London Plan.

Setting	Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL)		
	0 to 1	2 to 3	4 to 6
Suburban	150 - 200 hr/ha	150 - 250 hr/ha	200 - 350 hr/ha
3.8 - 4.6 hr/unit	35 - 55 u/ha	35 - 65 u/ha	45 - 90 u/ha
3.1 - 3.7 hr/unit	40 - 65 u/ha	40 - 80 u/ha	55 - 115 u/ha
2.7 - 3.0 hr/unit	50 - 75 u/ha	50 - 95 u/ha	70 - 130 u/ha
Urban	150 - 250 hr/ha	200 - 450 hr/ha	200 - 700 hr/ha
3.8 - 4.6 hr/unit	35 - 65 u/ha	45 - 120 u/ha	45 - 185 u/ha
3.1 - 3.7 hr/unit	40 - 80 u/ha	55 - 145 u/ha	55 - 125 u/ha
2.7 - 3.0 hr/unit	50 - 95 u/ha	70 - 170 u/ha	70 - 260 u/ha
Central	150 - 300 hr/ha	300 - 650 hr/ha	650 - 1100 hr/ha
3.8 - 4.6 hr/unit	35 - 80 u/ha	65 - 170 u/ha	140 - 290 u/ha
3.1 - 3.7 hr/unit	40 - 100 u/ha	80 - 210 u/ha	175 - 355 u/ha
2.7 - 3.0 hr/unit	50 - 110 u/ha	100 - 240 u/ha	215 - 405 u/ha