

Kent Design Guide Review: Interim Guidance Note 1
20 November 2008

QUALITY AUDITS

KENT DESIGN GUIDE REVIEW: INTERIM GUIDANCE NOTE 1



INTRODUCTION

Quality Audits are nothing new. But the title, as used in Manual for Streets (Department for Transport, Communities & Local Government and Welsh Assembly Government, March 2007), gives formal recognition to the process by which proposed developments are assessed for their overall potential to be 'good places to live'. They focus on the public realm, that is, the areas within a proposed development where people will move and meet. These areas are also important service corridors, above and below the surface.

The Kent Design Guide (Kent Design Initiative, December 2005) clearly embraces the Quality Audit concept. Vision for Kent (Kent Partnership, April 2006) seeks 'attractive, safe and friendly' developments. Intelligent application of Quality Audits will help to deliver good places to live.

The Quality Audit is carried out by the Development Team. This team is assembled by the Local Planning Authority and is made up of all relevant professionals. Its purpose is to work with the developer's Project Team to achieve a high quality development that is attractive, functional and safe. Within the Development Team there will normally be at least one Development Planning Engineer representing Kent Highway Services. All development proposals which involve the creation of new streets (as part of the public realm) should be subject to a Quality Audit, albeit the team size and detailed approach should reflect the scale of the proposal.

Development Planning Engineers are primarily responsible for assessing the public realm for functionality and safety, and for making the highway authority's recommendation to the Local Planning Authority. The recommendation should be discussed with the Development Team before it is formalised. Road Safety Audits will normally figure in the assessment, but they will not direct it.

Kent Highway Services, in liaison with Kent's District Councils, is undertaking surveys of recent developments. The results are to be used to produce case studies highlighting good (and bad) examples of new streets that have been subject to some form of Quality Audit approach. Appendices A, B and C show ratings for the three Vision for Kent criteria, along with parking. Parking is included because it can have a significant impact upon people's quality of life (- see also Interim Guidance Note 3: Residential Parking).



COLLEGE GARDENS, WESTGATE-ON-SEA
Good materials and landscaping combine with quality design to achieve high levels of occupiers' satisfaction.

ROAD SAFETY AUDITS

Before a development proposal which includes new streets is approved at the planning stage it is normal for Kent Highway Services to require that a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit should be submitted by the developer's Project Team. Before the scheme is built a Stage 2 Audit will normally be required, and before it is adopted (if such is appropriate) a Stage 3 Audit will usually be carried out.

Development Planning Engineers should have the skills and experience to carry out informal Stage 1 Audits. They should also have the ability to interpret formal submissions and report to the Development Team on the relevance of any issues raised. Similarly, the developer's Project Team is not bound to follow the recommendations of the Audits, but must issue a response to them.

Stage 2 Audits can affect the approved layout long after the Development Team has ceased to function on a formal basis. However, Kent Highway Services should report any significant recommendations to the planning Case Officer before a decision is made whether to accept them and change the design. It is important for all those involved in post-planning implementation to understand that some such changes may require planning consent.

Stage 3 Audits assess the completed development. Representatives of the original Development Team should be offered the opportunity to visit the site in the knowledge of the Stage 3 Audit. This will bring closure to the design process and inform future schemes. Increasingly, surveys will be conducted to ask what residents think of new developments. Development Team representatives should be encouraged to review the results.

There is scope for Stage 4 Audits to be conducted up to three years after Stage 3. Whilst these will normally relate to particular concerns identified at Stage 3, it will improve the evaluation and improvement process if some Stage 4 Audits are carried out routinely. The findings of a Stage 4 Audits will not normally require any involvement on the part of the developer.



MILTON LANE, LACUNA, KINGS HILL

An award-winning development which is seriously compromised by parking problems.

QUALITY AUDITS

Quality Audits bring together the various assessments of public realm. The Development Team, and not individual professionals, decides on the balance to be struck between the outcomes. As such, Road Safety Audits have no superior status. Many Development

Planning Engineers have been making value judgements on attractiveness, functionality and safety for years. Increasingly, their role will be one of 'placemakers', hence they will become adept at interpreting Road Safety Audits and understanding the risks to which the findings direct the Project Team's attention. They will also develop the skills necessary to contribute positively and creatively to the placemaking agenda, not restricting themselves to the application of standards.

The Local Planning Authority's Case Officer will keep a record of the Quality Audit inputs and decisions. This will be sufficient to deal with enquiries in the very unlikely event of an incident being attributed to the design of the public realm. A copy of the Quality Audit should be kept on the planning file(s) and any subsequent adoption agreement file.

The following information should be included in the Quality Audit, preferably in a standard format:

- Site
- Developer
- Case Officer
- Development Team members
- Key meeting dates and venues
- Main issues discussed and decisions made at the meetings
- Dates of Road Safety Audits, and summaries of issues raised and responses made to them
- Date of Development Team "approval" of scheme
- "Approved" drawing numbers
- Date of planning consent
- Kent Highway Services' Agreement Engineer, where appropriate (if not a member of the Development Team)
- Record of construction phase issues affecting consented scheme
- Record of construction phase and completed scheme site visits
- Date of commencement and closure of Quality Audit process

An enhancement of the service offered to the occupiers of new developments would be for the developer to give them a copy of, or a web link to, the Design and Access Statement in the Welcome Pack, explaining the background to where they live. Such a package could also include a summary of, or link to, the Quality Audit.

THE BUILDING FOR LIFE STANDARD

The Building for Life standard (see www.buildingforlife.org) includes 20 criteria which “embody (the) vision of functional, attractive and sustainable housing” (Building for Life website). The four headings for these criteria are:

- Character
- Roads, Parking and Pedestrianisation
- Design and Construction
- Environment and Community

The majority of the criteria are relevant to Quality Audits.

The Building for Life standard has been endorsed by government, with the aim of helping to meet housing quality aspirations in Planning Policy Statement PPS3: Housing. As such, it is recommended for use as a Quality Audit framework.



MILLER CLOSE, WINGHAM

A housing association scheme on the edge of an historic village that is very much appreciated by the residents.

COMMUTED PAYMENTS

The long term costs of the maintenance at the public expense (and sometimes replacing at the end of the design life) of non-standard materials, special street furniture, traffic signals, non-standard drainage solutions and structures are usually passed on to the developer in the form of “commuted payments”. In the case of materials and street furniture, there is a strong argument against requiring such payments if the items in question can be shown to be as durable as ‘standard’ materials (or even have a longer design life), and if there is no doubt about their ongoing availability. This is based on the premise that higher quality materials will normally cost more, and because they are required rather than being optional it is unreasonable to ‘charge’ for their maintenance if they are installed properly. The best way of offering certainty to developers over whether commuted payments will be required is to agree a ‘standard (locally appropriate) palette’ of high quality materials which are expected to be available for many years and which will be checked for proper installation during the construction phase. Such items will not normally be subject to extra payments.



ORLESTONE VIEW, HAM STREET

What appears to be a well designed development scores badly among residents on attractiveness, safety and parking.

CONCLUSIONS

Quality Audits are not new. If the Kent Design Guide is followed, Quality Audits will be carried out. Manual for Streets confirms that Road Safety Audits will inform Quality Audits, but they are only one aspect that should be considered.

Development Planning Engineers, and, where appropriate, Agreement Engineers, will be part of the Development Team that undertakes the Quality Audit. These engineers will have a responsibility to ensure that the Quality Audit process is not undermined when the development is constructed.

Many planners and engineers already possess the experience and skills needed to participate in Quality Audits. However, training and skills sharing will be required to help raise standards and bring about consistency of approach. In time, some form of placemaking accreditation should be developed.

A positive approach to Quality Audits will help to deliver attractive, safe and friendly developments that are good places to live. The Checklists that follow will help those involved in the Quality Audit process to identify relevant steps and to ensure that they understand their responsibilities.



MUSCOVY WAY, STILLWATER PARK, HERNE BAY
The use of ponds for drainage and as landscaping features creates a very attractive setting for the houses.

CHECKLISTS

1 PRIOR TO PLANNING APPROVAL

- Has the Local Planning Authority Case Officer been identified?
- Has the Development Team been formed? If not, is it clear who is involved in assessing the proposal?
- Are relevant documents, such as the Kent Design Guide, Manual for Streets and the Building for Life standard, understood by and accessible to all those involved?
- Has the developer's Project Team submitted enough information for the Development Team to begin its work?
- If a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit is required, has it been requested?
- Unless the proposal is straightforward, has a 'brainstorming session' been arranged for the Development Team, possibly with the developer's Project Team, to discuss the scheme at an early stage?
- Are the details of street materials and furniture being discussed by the Development Team, with a clear understanding of what items may attract additional maintenance payments should they be offered for adoption?
- Are members of the Development Team clear of their responsibilities, including the programme for assessments to be made and reported?
- Is the Development Control recommendation and decision making procedure clear to all?
- Is the recommendation of the Development Team, and its individual members, properly documented?

2 CONSTRUCTION AND OCCUPATION

- If the streets are being offered for adoption, was the Kent Highway Services Agreement Engineer in question part of the Development Team? If not, has she/he been fully appraised of the approved design and how it was arrived at?
- Is the developer's consultant fully aware of the details of the approved scheme? As above, if she/he has not previously engaged with the Development Team there needs to be a thorough briefing.
- Is the planning Case Officer aware of her/his continuing role when Stage 2 and 3 Road Safety Audits are submitted? Are other members of the Development Team to be involved?
- Is the Agreement Engineer clear that all significant changes recommended during checking and construction must be referred to the planning Case Officer, preferably through the Development Planning Engineer?
- When the Stage 3 Road Safety Audit report is available, has the Case Officer (and other Development Team members) been appraised of its findings?
- If further monitoring, and/or a Stage 4 Road Safety Audit, is proposed, has the Case Officer been advised?
- Are all post-planning stages of the Quality Audit process properly documented?

APPENDIX A - RESIDENTS' SURVEYS: PARKING & VISION FOR KENT RATINGS

Ashford - Canterbury

DISTRICT Development	PARKING	SAFETY	ATTRACTIVENESS	FRIENDLINESS	TOTAL	RETURN
ASHFORD						
Highland Park (part)	-76%	+5%	+48%	+16%	127	58
Mill Court	-26%	+34%	+46%	+43%	105	35
Miller Close	+50%	+20%	+50%	+70%	22	10
Orlestone View	-57%	-19%	-14%	+29%	46	21
Sir John Fogge Avenue	-43%	+13%	+13%	+26%	56	23
CANTERBURY						
Aurelie Way	+15%	+85%	+85%	+69%	18	13
Barnes Way (part)	-40%	+44%	+60%	+56%	49	25
Blackberry Way	+60%	+85%	+85%	+80%	28	20
Canterbury Fields	+15%	+73%	+85%	+55%	123	40
Charollais Close	+17%	+33%	+25%	+42%	148	50
Chartham Heights (SE)	+14%	+64%	+79%	+79%	35	14
Chartham Heights (V Core)	+12%	+46%	+50%	+44%	28	12
Cordingham Close	0%	0%	-11%	-44%	41	9
Dextor Close	-13%	+38%	-13%	0%	20	8
Eider Close	-18%	+82%	+100%	+100%	17	11
Eversleigh Rise	+16%	+31%	+53%	+72%	73	32
Gilbert Way	+10%	+24%	+57%	+29%	72	21
Great Stour Place	+18%	+82%	+45%	+18%	31	11
Mallard Cl/Muscovy Way	+60%	+80%	+93%	+69%	30	15
Pochard Crescent	-13%	+43%	+60%	+53%	89	30
Quinneys Place	-50%	+38%	0%	+13%	16	8
Ruskins View	-22%	+67%	+89%	+56%	20	9
Scott Ave & Birch Rd	+45%	+50%	+55%	+41%	78	22
Speedwell Road	+56%	+70%	+33%	+81%	59	27
Walden Court	+31%	+46%	+77%	+31%	39	13
Wallis Court	-63%	-25%	+25%	+38%	12	8
West of Hersden	-21%	+32%	+34%	+47%	207	73
Willow Farm Way	+9%	+42%	+55%	+33%	69	33

For derivation of RATINGS and COLOUR KEY see Appendix C

APPENDIX B - RESIDENTS' SURVEYS: PARKING & VISION FOR KENT RATINGS

Dartford – Swale

DISTRICT Development	PARKING	SAFETY	ATTRACTIVENESS	FRIENDLINESS	TOTAL	RETURN
DARTFORD						
Bexley Park (part)	-21%	+34%	+39%	+55%	90	38
Palladian Circus	-29%	+52%	+90%	+67%	44	21
Stonechat Mews	-67%	+78%	+100%	+67%	23	9
Waterstone Park (part)	-39%	+20%	+48%	+20%	120	44
DOVER						
Miller Close	+54%	+54%	+100%	+77%	25	13
Sandwich Road	-44%	+31%	+78%	+47%	69	32
GRAVESHAM						
Fenners Marsh	+13%	+3%	+23%	+17%	109	30
Kendall Gardens	+7%	+36%	+50%	+57%	57	14
Rosherville Way (part)	+9%	+60%	+77%	+58%	96	43
MAIDSTONE						
Edelin Road	-85%	+8%	+38%	+62%	32	13
Shaw Close	-76%	+6%	+52%	+52%	55	33
SEVENOAKS						
Bentleys Meadow (H Zone)	-18%	+9%	+27%	0%	31	11
Parsonage Bank	0%	+88%	+63%	+88%	14	8
The Beeches	+18%	+72%	+80%	+70%	107	50
The Sidings	-31%	-6%	+13%	-13%	42	16
SHEPWAY						
Terlingham Village Ph.1	+67%	+69%	+89%	+89%	81	45
SWALE						
Finch Close	-83%	-26%	+31%	+45%	78	42
Hilton Close	-28%	+9%	+47%	+66%	56	32
Mallard Crescent	-45%	+28%	+59%	+45%	50	29
Orchard Edge	-75%	-12%	+54%	+62%	114	52
Sanderling Way	-23%	+3%	+46%	+38%	84	39

For derivation of RATINGS and COLOUR KEY see Appendix C

APPENDIX C - RESIDENTS' SURVEYS: PARKING & VISION FOR KENT RATINGS

Thanet – Tunbridge Wells

DISTRICT Development	PARKING	SAFETY	ATTRACTIVENESS	FRIENDLINESS	TOTAL	RETURN
THANET						
Brindle Grove	+14%	+78%	+71%	+50%	35	14
Chantry Park	-44%	+44%	+78%	+78%	23	9
College Gardens	0%	+82%	+100%	+100%	19	11
TONBRIDGE & MALLING						
Abbey Brewery Court	+14%	-29%	+71%	+29%	16	7
Anisa Close	-50%	-10%	+60%	+40%	17	10
Busbridge Close	+17%	+42%	+75%	+50%	22	12
Friars View	-50%	+45%	+40%	+25%	38	20
Lacuna (part) (1) & (2)	-67%	+7%	+37%	+28%	109	53
Milton Lane	-81%	-24%	+24%	+19%	48	21
McArthur Drive	-23%	+69%	+74%	+66%	58	35
Perch Close	-39%	+34%	+70%	+43%	56	23
The Gables, Friars View	-89%	-11%	+44%	+11%	18	9
Upper Mill	0%	+28%	+39%	+39%	40	18
TUNBRIDGE WELLS						
Blackberry Way	+22%	+61%	+72%	+67%	48	18
Green Lane	+50%	+43%	+100%	+63%	65	40

RATINGS are [(“Very Good” + “Good”) – (“Poor” + “Very Poor”)] expressed as a percentage

COLOUR KEY		< 0%		>49%
		0% to +24%		+25% to +49%

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