

## 9 Design Guidance

New development of whatever scale cannot be viewed in isolation. The design of all new development should take into account the character of the building or site on which it is situated and the surroundings (the locally distinctive contextual features). This will help ensure that the design of new buildings evolves, where appropriate, from the qualities that make many parts of Snodland distinctive. It is important that new development creates a place that is valued and well related to local character. Where such distinctiveness is present and is ignored, new development can be bland, lose reference to essential local features and, as a result, erode local character and distinctiveness.

Whilst some minor development is permitted by Parliament without the need for a planning application (usually known as “permitted development”) home owners and developers who are considering such alterations should refer to the distinctive characteristics of their area as described in this SPD when considering even minor development to ensure an acceptable result. The Council’s planning staff will also use the SPD as a basis for giving advice to those who intend to exercise permitted development rights. Although the Council will not be in a position to *require* these good design principles in such cases, it will nevertheless encourage their use where possible.

There are four principles which the Council will apply in protecting, conserving and, where possible, enhancing the character and local distinctiveness of the area. The principles are consistent with, and supplement, the policies in the Core Strategy and the Managing Development and the Environment DPD. In applying these principles, regard must also be paid to the need to achieve sustainably designed properties that, where practicable, take advantage of local site conditions and incorporate materials, technologies and planting that help to reduce their energy requirements and therefore lower their carbon footprint. This is a key priority of the Council as well as being an objective of the Managing Development and the Environment DPD. Providing this objective is addressed early in the design process in a sensitive way that respects the local character as identified in the Character Area Appraisals, there is no reason why it should not be effectively delivered without compromising the principles set out below:

**Where validation provisions require it proposals should be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement that explains how the proposal:**

- **respects the locally distinctive positive features of the character area identified in the SPD. The positive features of an area such as building and roof lines, scale, massing, design characteristics, boundary treatments, landscape and layout should normally be reinforced by the proposal. Using local historic details and materials will also reinforce the character and local distinctiveness of the area.**
- **wherever possible, improves the character and design quality of the character area, and thus the town of Snodland, by reinstating or reinforcing locally distinctive positive features of the character area identified in the SPD and/or replacing, screening or otherwise mitigating negative features worthy of enhancement, or**
- **creates a new local character in areas where there are few locally distinctive positive features or on more extensive sites where there is a greater opportunity to create a new local character.**

**Proposals may come forward that can, exceptionally justify a departure from the local context. Such proposals will need to establish clear and overriding planning and design justification if they are to prove acceptable.**

Local analysis and consultation has been used to interpret these design principles and develop appropriate design guidance for assessing development proposals within each character area. This is set out below.

## **Respecting the locally distinctive positive features of the character areas identified in the SPD.**

**In order to respect the locally distinctive positive features of a character area, development will be expected to:**

### **(1) Protect or enhance the setting of the Conservation Area and listed buildings**

Snodland sits on the west bank of the River Medway. The eastern and central parts of the town are relatively flat and level. The north, western and southern areas of the town are set on undulating hills that result in panoramic views to the North Downs from most areas in Snodland.

Listed building controls apply to all works affecting a Listed Building. The design of new buildings in proximity to historic buildings and the Conservation Area also needs very careful consideration since the setting of a listed building is often an essential part of its character, especially if a garden or grounds have been laid out to complement its design or function. An important aspect of the design process in such situations will be to balance the impact on both the listed building and the character area.

### **(2) Respect the scale, height, form, alignment, space, layout and density, materials and character of the area**

For each character area there are identified locally distinctive contextual features and positive features which new development should respect. In considering new designs, visual clues are seen, at the large scale, in terms of the form, height and alignment of the buildings and the rhythms formed, for example, by chimneys, porches, brick details and fenestration and, at the small scale, in relation to details such as materials, colour and brick patterning, the shape and pattern of windows and doors and boundary treatment.

At the large scale, the **height and form** of buildings are often relatively uniform within character areas, although some variation may be evident. Significant differences in height may not respect the local context. Roofscape patterns are often repeated through a street, bringing unity or a rhythm of repeated shapes (hipped or half-hipped roofs, gable ends facing the road, or unified, simple roof lines which front the street with no projections such as dormer windows). The unity or rhythm of rooflines should preferably not be compromised by inappropriate roof extensions.

In relation to **alignment** of the buildings, in some instances regular building lines are established. For example, groups of substantial detached properties set back along a common building line in large plots behind walled mature landscaped gardens giving a spacious, verdant

character. In other clusters, properties are situated on a straight building line with a minimal set back from the street providing a tight knit urban form. A distinctive unity is retained. It is important that new buildings respect the alignment of buildings in order to fit well within the local context. Where buildings are set back a consistent distance from the street along a common building line the visual integrity of a whole street should not be compromised by porches or front extensions.

These considerations apply to the front building line and also to the width of the development within the plot and the **space** that exists between and around buildings. There should be sufficient width within a plot to locate the building(s) and provide adequate separation between them in order to reflect the general spacing characteristics of an area. There are considerable pressures to maximise the use of sites but this should not be to the detriment or erosion of the distinctive character of the area.

Many of the character areas possess a strong unified palette of **materials**. For example, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century cottages or the 1920s and 30's public and semi-detached housing of red brick, brown tiles and white/ cream painted render. The choice and combination of materials is crucial to the success of a scheme. In creating a locally distinctive environment, the number of different materials used should generally be kept to a minimum. New buildings, or extensions, should be constructed of materials which respect those used in the character area within which they are proposed.

A richness of design and texture can be achieved through careful **detailing** e.g. brick detailing such as arches above windows and doors, string courses and quoins, decorative tile patterns and ridge tiles, finials, brick bonding, decorative chimneys and decorative barge boards, eaves and soffits, white painted pillars, porches and balustrade balconies. The following typologies of character areas contain significant examples of original and valuable detailing:

- Parts of the Main Road Frontages
- 19<sup>th</sup> Century cottages
- Early 1920's and 30's public and semi-detached housing

New buildings, or extensions, should, where appropriate, apply local detailing which reinforces the character of the area within which they are proposed.

Careful consideration should also be given to ensuring that good quality traditional detailing on buildings is retained. Where these have been removed, efforts should be made to restore them. Replacement doors, windows and roofs should closely match the design and materials of the original features. Where inappropriate new windows, doors and roofs are to be replaced, the opportunity should be taken to put them back in the original style.

The principles set out above should drive the design process in the vast majority of cases. However, they should not necessarily be regarded as a deterrent to the creation of imaginative high quality contemporary designs using appropriate contemporary materials in the right setting.

### **(3) Retain traditional boundary treatment and natural features**

Brick walls, hedges and mature trees, picket fences and black metal railings are prevalent features in different character areas. They help enclose the road space, define the boundary between public and private space and help reinforce the character of an area. Areas can be

distinctive by virtue of their well-treed appearance. Development should not erode such features through the loss of walls, hedges/ trees or the use of unsympathetic boundary treatment.

Parking areas have been created on some frontages leading to an erosion of the street enclosure, a loss of defensible space around the building and the link to the character of the area. Wherever possible, traditional boundary enclosure should be reinstated. Where the opportunity arises, new boundaries should use the prevailing materials and designs in the character area. So far as possible, some space should be allowed for planting or other features to soften the effect of parked vehicles upon the street scene.

#### **(4) Protect local landmarks**

Snodland contains a number of landmark buildings which help give historic and visual reference points, assist legibility of the area and help prevent a monotonous appearance. Such buildings can sometimes be somewhat unusual features in a particular character area. There are a number of local landmark buildings identified within the character areas shown on the Townscape Analysis Maps. These buildings are important in the street scene and, where appropriate in the context of the development proposed, there will be a strong presumption that they will be retained and incorporated in any new development. There are also important longer distant views of Snodland Clock Tower, the town's main landmark which is highly visible from most parts of the town.

#### **(5) Protect and Enhance Landscape Features**

Some character areas have significant areas of public open space (shown on the Townscape Analysis Maps) as an integral part of their character. Important open spaces may already be protected for their recreational value by other policies in the LDF but they should also be retained, and their tranquil character respected, because of their importance to the amenity and character of the area.

A number of tree belts have also been identified, some of which may form an edge to the character area (sometimes representing an original field boundary), and some form a backdrop to development or act as a visual or environmental amenity (sometimes in an area where the buildings themselves may have little distinctive character). These features perform an important function within a character area(s) and should be protected and, so far as possible, retained in any new development.

Development should not erode landscape features through the loss of trees which are important to the character or the generation of substantial additional traffic that would cause the erosion of the boundary features.

#### **(6) Protect views of the open countryside and across the town**

The topography of the area and the disposition and scale of development allows long views of the North Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Greensand Ridge from some of the character areas (shown on the Townscape Analysis Maps). These views are important to the character of the area and should not be lost through future development.

There will be a presumption against development that unacceptably intrudes into important views or competes with recognised landmarks such as the Clock Tower.

## **(7) Respect the quiet residential character**

The cul de sac layout with no through traffic; distance from the main roads; proximity of the countryside and almost exclusively residential development has resulted in a quiet residential character within a large number of the Snodland character areas. This character should not be adversely affected by new development.

### **Improving the character and design quality of the character area, and as a result the town of Snodland**

## **(8) Residential areas**

Many parts of the town are likely to remain largely unchanged by substantial redevelopment over time but there may be opportunities for new development. For example, isolated properties or in some cases garage courts may be replaced (subject to there being satisfactory alternative parking provision). In such cases, the scale and form of the surrounding development as well as the locally distinctive positive features should be respected.



In some cases there may be opportunities to enhance the area through the creation of individual buildings of interest or additional landscape features. Landmark buildings can lift a design from the ordinary and may be justified on the basis of a sound urban design appraisal of their context and a perceived environmental uplift to the quality of the area.

In designing new development a high standard of intrinsic design quality is required. Interesting detailing such as created by brick patterning and the shape and pattern of roofs, windows and doors can enhance a design whether for new build or alteration to an existing building which can add to the character and distinctiveness of an area.



Over-generous road space should be avoided and streets should be defined by a coherent and well structured layout using different road widths which create a hierarchy of spaces with the buildings providing a strong sense of enclosure where the setting demands it (as in the example shown left). However, it would be inappropriate to seek to impose such a design solution in every case and where this would be inappropriate to the character of the area. (e.g. areas of open plan housing).



There is likely to be a demand to retrofit some buildings, not built to current energy efficiency standards, with new cladding, solar panels and added insulation (such as the example shown above). Whilst it would be desirable to minimise the impact of such changes on buildings of quality, it may be a virtue to use such improvements to uplift undistinguished, standardised architecture and add a new distinctiveness to an area. Likewise, new development built to a high sustainable standard can achieve similar benefits, providing the principles of passive design are addressed sensitively at the conception stage of the scheme having regard to the character of the area.

### **(b) Commercial Areas**

The industrial and commercial buildings in Snodland comprise cul-de-sac roads and enclosed front parking areas, standard low rise units and a wide range of materials which have tended to create places that are unattractive with very little sense of place.



Over time, as buildings become outworn, there may be opportunities for new development in these areas. Where this occurs, high quality designs, materials and landscaping should be used in order to uplift the quality of the commercial areas. In appropriate locations such as at road junctions, landmark buildings may be appropriate in adding interest and legibility to the Character Area. The use of high quality materials would help to firmly establish the character

and identity of place, in terms of both the public realm of streets and the built form of buildings and structures.



In particular the aim should be to make car parking a less dominant or obtrusive element within the public realm. In this respect, a significant landscaping component should be included within

any new development as a contrast to the built development, and enclosure to any parking areas, ultimately providing a continuous landscape belt along the strategic routes and to act as a buffer to the river or the countryside.

### **9) Reinstate or reinforce positive features**

Through the development process there will be opportunities to reinstate or reinforce the positive features which contribute to the character of an area. This could mean reinforcing the verdant landscape character with substantial specimen trees and boundary hedges.



There are examples where open frontages are created to the road leaving no definition of the space, reducing security and in many cases a loss of pride in the maintenance of the space. Where appropriate to the character of an area, private space should be defined by a clear boundary. Front boundaries should be retained or restored to the prevailing feature in the character area: such as approximately 1 metre high red brick wall with a coping and entrance gate pillars; brick wall topped by hedge; hedge and railings or mature 2 metre high hedge.



### **10) Provide streetscape enhancements**

Opportunity should be taken as part of development proposals to ameliorate the negative features of an area identified in the Character Area Appraisals. Reduction in the street clutter of signs or improvements to street furniture or footway/road surfaces, would contribute to improving the character of the area.

### **11) Noise**

The main generator of noise in Snodland is traffic on the by-pass, the railway and from some of the commercial areas at certain times of day and only when the wind is blowing in a certain direction. The levels of noise are not matters that can be addressed by this SPD or in most cases by the Borough Council. However, where new development is proposed that might generate noise which could adversely affect the character of an area then the LDF contains a policy that aims to address the matter. However, the Council is not normally able to control noise disturbance during the construction period under planning legislation.

## Appendix 1

### **By Design – Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice** (DETR 2000)

The guide is intended as a companion to Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs) [and subsequent Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)] and aims to encourage better design and to stimulate thinking about urban design.

The guide states that understanding the local context should be the prelude to drawing up the planning 'toolkit'.

A range of techniques is available, but the guide states that carrying out an appraisal is more important than the specific technique used and a simple assessment is better than none. The guide provides pointers to understanding an area in terms of its urban design.

The guide sets out a series of checklists to act as a guide to the assessment of an area. They are not meant to be followed slavishly. Understanding the local context does not require every item on the checklists to be examined on every occasion and in every place or in the same depth. The checklists provide pointers to understanding an area in terms of its urban design and the following elements have been particularly relevant to appraisal of Snodland.

#### **Character**

*A place with its own identity*

Appraisals can include assessments of:

- the origins and development of the topography of the area, including surviving elements of historic street patterns, plot subdivisions, boundary treatments and the relationships between buildings and spaces;
- the architecture and historic quality, character and coherence of buildings, both listed and unlisted, and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area;
- the character and hierarchy of spaces and their townscape quality;
- prevalent and historic building materials;
- the contribution made to the character of the area by green spaces, trees, hedges and other cultivated elements;
- the area's prevailing (or former) uses, plan forms and building types;
- the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside, including significant landmarks, vistas and panoramas;
- features which have been lost, or which intrude on or detract from the character of the area.

#### **Continuity of building frontages and enclosure of public spaces**

*A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished*

Techniques include identifying and mapping:



- gap sites and abnormal setbacks which interrupt the common building line of the street;
- instances where the backs of buildings are exposed to public view and access (as in the case of back gardens on to roads, alleys and public spaces);
- active and dead frontages at ground floor level: positive factors such as entrances, shopfronts and windows; and negative factors such as long blank facades and high boundary walls, and service entrances and yards;
- active and dead frontages at upper floors: positive factors such as windows of habitable rooms overlooking public space; and negative factors such as blank gable walls and unused space over shops;
- places where buildings meet the public realm: boundary treatments such as gates, railings, fences and boundary walls; front gardens and in-curtilage parking; and servicing;
- spatial enclosure: the relationship between the heights of buildings and the spaces they define;
- planting (such as trees and hedges), natural features, land form, and retaining walls which define and enclose blocks and spaces.

## **Quality of the public realm**

*A place with attractive and successful outdoors*

Public realm audits can include assessments of:

- hard landscaping (paving materials, kerbs, walls, steps and ramps);
- planting (trees, planters, grassed areas, flowers and borders);
- street furniture (seats, bins, bollards and railings);
- lighting (pavement, pedestrian, highway, security, building and feature);
- shopfronts (thresholds, glazing, stall risers, signs, banners and shutters).
- advertisements (hoardings, kiosks and banners);
- traffic and highways installations (including highway markings, traffic signals and control boxes);
- public space use and management (informal use as well as formal, events, markets, graffiti removal, litter collection and street cleansing).

## **Legibility**

*A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand*

Appraisals of:

- gateways and points of transition (at main entry points, between different areas and at transitions between different uses);
- nodes (important junctions and points of interaction);
- landmarks and features (important buildings, corners);
- views and vistas (seen from within the area and from the outside);
- edges, seams and barriers (including the boundaries between different zones and areas, and streets which integrate or sever).

### Glossary

<b>Amenity Green Space</b>	Informal recreational open space most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas, other incidental landscaped areas including private greenspace that has visual or other value, even if no physical public access is possible.
<b>Arcadian</b>	Areas where the landscape dominates the buildings, creating a verdant almost rural character. Mature trees rather than buildings contain the public space.
<b>Areas of Landscape Significance</b>	Substantial areas of landscaping which provide an extensive landscape framework.
<b>Balustrade</b>	Series of short posts supporting a handrail.
<b>Bargeboards</b>	Exterior visible board placed against the incline of the gable roof.
<b>Bond</b>	The type of bond is the pattern in which bricks are laid.
<b>Cladding</b>	External covering or skin applied to a structure usually timber or tile.
<b>Cohesive Character</b>	Areas that share common features which combine to create a unified character.
<b>Conservation Area</b>	An area of special architectural and/or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.
<b>Coping or Coping Stone</b>	Protective course of masonry or brickwork capping a wall.
<b>Core Strategy</b>	The main Development Plan Document which sets out the long-term spatial vision for the Borough and the main strategic policies and proposals to deliver that strategy.
<b>Course</b>	Continuous layer of brick or stone, etc in a wall.
<b>Dentil Course</b>	The alternation of projecting brick headers or stone blocks along cornices or string courses at regular intervals.

<b>Development Plan Document (DPD)</b>	A document containing planning policies guiding the spatial development of the Borough. The <i>Local Development Framework</i> comprises a set of DPDs including the Core Strategy, the Development Land Allocations DPD, Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan and the Managing Development and the Environment DPD. The policies in DPDs can be amplified by <i>Supplementary Planning Documents</i> .
<b>Eaves</b>	Underpart of a sloping roof overhanging a wall.
<b>Façade</b>	The face of a building (generally the front).
<b>Fenestration</b>	The arrangement of windows in a façade.
<b>Flat Porch Canopies</b>	Small flat roofed opening above the principal entrance.
<b>Frontages</b>	The full length of a plot of land or a building measured alongside the road onto which the plot or building fronts.
<b>Gable</b>	The triangular upper portion of a wall at the end of a pitched roof
<b>Header</b>	The short side of a brick laid so that it appears on the face of the wall
<b>Jettied Upper Storey</b>	Upper storey of a building that projects out above the lower storey.
<b>Lintel</b>	Horizontal beam or stone bridging an opening, usually above a window or door.
<b>Local Development Documents (LDD)</b>	The collective term for the <i>Development Plan Documents</i> and <i>Supplementary Planning Documents</i> in the <i>Local Development Framework</i>
<b>Local Development Framework (LDF)</b>	A portfolio of <i>Local Development Documents</i> forming the planning framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy.
<b>Managing Development and the Environment DPD</b>	The <i>Development Plan Document</i> that sets out policies and proposals to manage development and protect the environment of the Borough.
<b>Massing</b>	The overall volume of a building.
<b>Metropolitan Green Belt</b>	Defined area of open countryside where there is a strong presumption against inappropriate development.
<b>Panel Fence</b>	Fence consisting of metal or wooden vertical panels.
<b>Panoramic</b>	Wide view of a surrounding area.

<b>Parapets</b>	Low wall for protection at any sudden drop. Also used to conceal a roof.
<b>Pebble Dash</b>	Render of cement mortar and pebbles.
<b>Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1)</b>	Document that sets out the Government's national planning policies and guidance on creating sustainable communities.
<b>Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3)</b>	Document that sets out the Government's national planning policies and guidance on Housing.
<b>Quoins</b>	Dressed stones at the corners of a building. Sometimes all the stones are of the same size; more often they are alternately large and small.
<b>Render</b>	A coat of exterior cement or plaster applied to a masonry wall.
<b>Ribbon Development</b>	Development one property deep that strings along a road.
<b>Roof - Cat Slide</b>	A pitched roof, one side of which is much longer than the other.
<b>Roof – Half-Hipped</b>	A roof which has a half gable with the upper ends of the roof being sloped rather than vertical.
<b>Roof - Hipped</b>	A roof which has sloped rather than vertical <i>gable</i> ends.
<b>Roof - Monopitch</b>	A roof which slopes in one direction only.
<b>Roof - Pitched</b>	Double pitched roof with vertical <i>gable</i> ends.
<b>Rural Service Centres</b>	Larger villages in the Borough that provide a range of shops, services and facilities.
<b>Rusticated</b>	A bold textured look, often by bevelling the edges of brick, stonework or render to form deep-set joints while leaving the central face rough-hewn or carved with various pointed or channelled patterns.
<b>Sill</b>	Horizontal member at the bottom of a window or door frame.
<b>Soffit</b>	underside of an arch or <i>lintel</i> , etc.
<b>Streetscape</b>	the appearance of the entire street.
<b>Stringcourse</b>	Horizontal brick or stone course or moulding projecting from the surface of a wall often using a different coloured material and sometimes patterned.

<b>Stucco</b>	A durable finish for exterior walls, usually composed of cement, sand, and lime, and applied while wet.
<b>Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)</b>	A document that sets out further detail on certain policies in <i>Development Plan Documents</i> .
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
<b>Tile - Hung</b>	Tiles that are hung on the façade of a building.
<b>Tile - Kent Peg</b>	Tiles traditionally made from clay and "pegged" onto the roof or fascia and overlap each other.
<b>Tile - Ridge</b>	A tile that is bent in cross section; used to cover the ridge of a roof.
<b>Tile - Scalloped</b>	Tiles that have curved edges on the bottom side.
<b>Tile - Pantile</b>	Roof tile of 'S'-shaped section.
<b>Tree Preservation Order (TPO)</b>	Special protection afforded to individual trees and groups of trees that seek to retain and protect them.
<b>Verdant</b>	Green with vegetation.
<b>Vernacular</b>	Methods of construction which use locally available resources and traditions to address local needs and circumstances. Vernacular architecture tends to evolve over time to reflect the environmental, cultural and historical context in which it exist.
<b>Vista</b>	A short view, often through an avenue of trees or row of buildings, etc. normally terminated by a building or group of trees, etc
<b>Weatherboarding</b>	Wall cladding of overlapping horizontal boards.
<b>Window - Bay</b>	Three-sided window of one of more storeys that projects from the face of a building.
<b>Window - Bow</b>	Curved window of one of more storeys projecting from the face of a building.
<b>Window – Canted Bay</b>	Three-sided window of one of more storeys projecting from the face of a building with angled sides.
<b>Window - Casement</b>	Side hinged window.
<b>Window - Dormer</b>	Window placed vertically in the sloping plane of a roof with a roof of its own.
<b>Window - Glazing Bars</b>	Wooden, sometimes metal, bars that separate and support window panes.

<b>Window - Leaded</b>	Small glass panels, often diamond shaped, joined by lead strips.
<b>Window - Mullion</b>	Vertical post or upright dividing a window into two or more window panes.
<b>Window - Oriel</b>	Window of one of more storeys projecting from the face of a building resting on corbels or brackets and starting above ground level.
<b>Window - Sash</b>	A window with sashes sliding glazed frames running in vertical grooves.
<b>Window - Transom</b>	Horizontal bar across the openings of a window dividing it into two or more window panes.







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