Shearsby

Design Guidance and Codes

Final report

June 2024

Delivering a better world

Quality information

Prepared by	Check by	Approved by
Tiernan Drasdo Graduate Planner	Angus McNeill Peel Senior Planner	Ben Castell Director

Revision History

Issue no.	Issue date	Details	Issued by	Position
1	14.05.2024	Draft report	Angus McNeill Peel	Senior Planner
2	31.05.2024	Draft report following QB review	Tiernan Drasdo	Graduate Planner
3	13.06.2024	Final report following Locality review	Madeleine Gohin	Locality Neighbourhood Planning Officer

Contents

Introduction

01

1. Introduction

Through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Neighbourhood Planning Programme led by Locality, AECOM was commissioned to provide design support to Shearsby Parish Council as they seek to review the made Neighbourhood Plan, which was made on 15 January 2019. The support is intended to provide design guidance and codes based on the character and local qualities of the parish to help ensure future development, particularly housing, complements the Neighbourhood Area's existing character.

1.1 Purpose of this document

The design guidance and codes are intended to sit alongside the reviewed Neighbourhood Plan to provide guidance for applicants preparing proposals in the area and as a guide for Shearsby Parish Council and Harborough District Council when considering planning applications.

What is Guidance versus Codes?

Design guidance identifies how development can be carried out in accordance with good design practice. Mandatory requirements (or codes) are expressed by the use of the word "must". The terms "should", "could" and "may" are used for non-mandatory guidance. Proposals for development within the Neighbourhood Area should demonstrate how the design guidance has informed the design and how the design codes have been complied with. Where a proposal cannot comply with a code (or several) a justification should be provided.

1.2 Process

F.1
Figure 01: Steps undertaken to produce this document

1.3 How to use this document

This document sets out design guidance and codes based on the existing features of Shearsby. As well as providing certainty to the local community, the design guidance and codes in this document should give more certainty to applicants, as they will be able to design a scheme that is reflective of community aspirations, potentially speeding up the planning application process. It is recommended that the guidance and codes are embedded within the forthcoming revised plan as policy.

In addition to the guidance set out in this document, future applicants should also make sure that they have observed the guidance in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' National Design Guide. They should also note that housing developments of any size should strive to achieve carbon neutrality in line with the Government's future homes and building standards.

Further standards on residential developments should also be obtained from Building for a Healthy Life, a government-endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods.

Figure 02: Large tree in the churchyard.

Figure 03: The church tower.

1.4 Area of study

Shearsby is a civil parish and village in the district of Harborough in Leicestershire. It is located in a hollow, close to the A5199, approximately 9 miles south of Leicester city centre and 7 miles west of Market Harborough. The area has a strong rural vocation, surrounded by the hilly South Leicestershire countryside.

The Neighbourhood Area had a population of 229 at the time of the 2021 Census. The village contains several community facilities and amenities including a village hall, a Grade II* Listed church (Church of St Mary Magdalene), a pub (The Chandlers), a function venue (Shearsby Bath), a village green and play area, and employment facilities at a small business park close to the main A5199. The Harborough Local Plan (adopted 2019) Settlement Hierarchy classifies Shearsby within 'Other Villages and Rural Settlements' and it is therefore considered to be a suitable location for limited development.

The village features homes from many different periods, providing a rich mix and range of architectural styles and materials. A range of cottages, bungalows, more substantial houses and farmhouses, as well as several notable historic buildings of medieval origin (featuring timber frames and thatched roofs) can be found throughout Shearsby. Red brick, Welsh slate, or rendered materials are also relatively common and contribute to Shearsby's distinctive character whilst maintaining a diverse and interesting streetscape.

Figure 04: One of the larger buildings in Shearsby, Reads Farm.

Figure 05: The Chandlers Arms, the local pub in Shearsby.

1.5 Policy analysis

Policy documents can provide valuable guidance on bringing about good design and the benefits accompanying it. Some are there to ensure adequate planning regulations are in place to ensure development is both fit for purpose and able to build sustainable, thriving communities. Other documents are more technical and offer specific design guidance which can inform design codes and masterplanning activities.

Applicants should refer to these key documents when planning future development in the Shearsby Neighbourhood Area. The following documents have informed the design guidance and codes within this report.

NATIONAL LEVEL

2007 - Manual for Streets

Department for Transport

Development is expected to respond positively to the Manual for Streets, the Government's guidance on how to design, construct, adopt and maintain new and existing residential streets. It promotes streets and wider development that avoid car dominated layouts but that do place the needs of pedestrians and cyclists first.

2021 - National Design Guide

DLUHC

The National Design Guide (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2021) illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

2021 - National Model Design Code (Part 1 & Part 2)

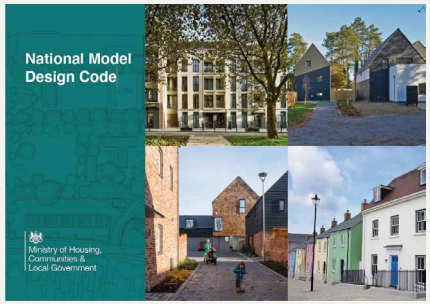
DLUHC

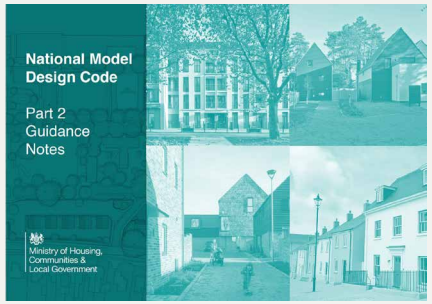
The purpose of the National Model Design Code is to provide detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. It expands on the ten characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide, which reflects the government's priorities and provides a common overarching framework for design.

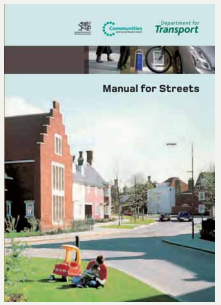
2023 - National Planning Policy Framework

DLUHC

Development needs to consider national level planning policy guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG). In particular, NPPF Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places stresses the creation of high-quality buildings and places.







NATIONAL LEVEL

2020 - Building for a Healthy Life

Homes England

Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) is the new (2020) name for Building for Life, the government-endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. The new name reflects the crucial role that the built environment has in promoting wellbeing. The BHL toolkit sets out principles to help guide discussions on planning applications and to help local planning authorities to assess the quality of proposed (and completed) developments, but can also provide useful prompts and questions for planning applicants to consider during the different stages of the design process.

DISTRICT LEVEL

2019 - Harborough Local Plan 2011 to 2031

Harborough District Council

The Harborough Local Plan provides an important strategy for Harborough District. It will play a significant role in delivering sustainable development in appropriate locations and in helping to protect the countryside, important green spaces, and the built and natural heritage from inappropriate or insensitive development, thus enhancing the quality of life for people and communities.

2021 - Development Management Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Harborough District Council

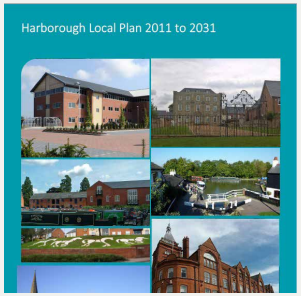
This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides additional guidance to assist with the interpretation and implementation of Harborough Local Plan Policies particularly:

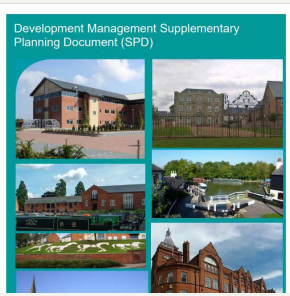
- GD1: Achieving sustainable development;
- GD3: Development in the countryside;
- GD8: Good design in development;
- BE1: Provision of new business development;
- CC1 to CC3: Climate change;
- HC1: Built heritage;
- H4 & H5: Specialist Housing, self build and custom housing;
- RT3: Shop fronts and advertisements.

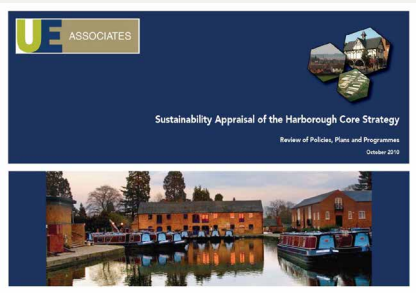
2010 - Sustainability Appraisal of the Harborough Core Strategy

Harborough District Council

This updated Policy Plan and Programme (PPP) review accompanies the Pre-Submission SA Report for the Harborough Core Strategy. The PPP review provides a summary of the key synergies between the Harborough Core Strategy and the sustainability objectives of international, national and local policies, plans and programs.







Neighbourhood analysis

02

2.1 Settlement pattern

Shearsby is a small, compact village distributed in a nucleated settlement pattern. Though the parish boundary is bifurcated by Welford Road/A5199, the large majority of the built-up area is located to the west of the road. This ensures the village is not used as a thoroughfare, maintaining its quiet and tranquil character. The settlement expanded during the early medieval period and the medieval street pattern is still evident today. Shearsby conforms to Natural England's description of rural villages in south Leicestershire whose settlement patterns formed in medieval times remain evident with "separate villages clustered around a tall church spire and having a long history of agricultural land use"[1].

Back Lane, Mill Lane and Church Lane form the primary spine of the built-up area, while a number of smaller lanes also aid with connectivity around the village. As indicated by historic maps and aerial photographs, there was very little change in the village's settlement pattern up until the mid-20th century. The rural setting and important open spaces, such as the village green, have long been fundamental to the village.

A great deal of historic homes of varied character exist around the village, though new housing started to be introduced into the village from 1951 onwards along the cul-de-sacs of Fenny Lane and Welford Road (the cul-de-sac, not the A-Road), resulting in a more suburban feel in these two areas of the village.

The large (~100m long) village green lies at the centre of Shearsby, which acts as an important open space within the village and key focal point of the settlement, as the centre of the village structure and life.

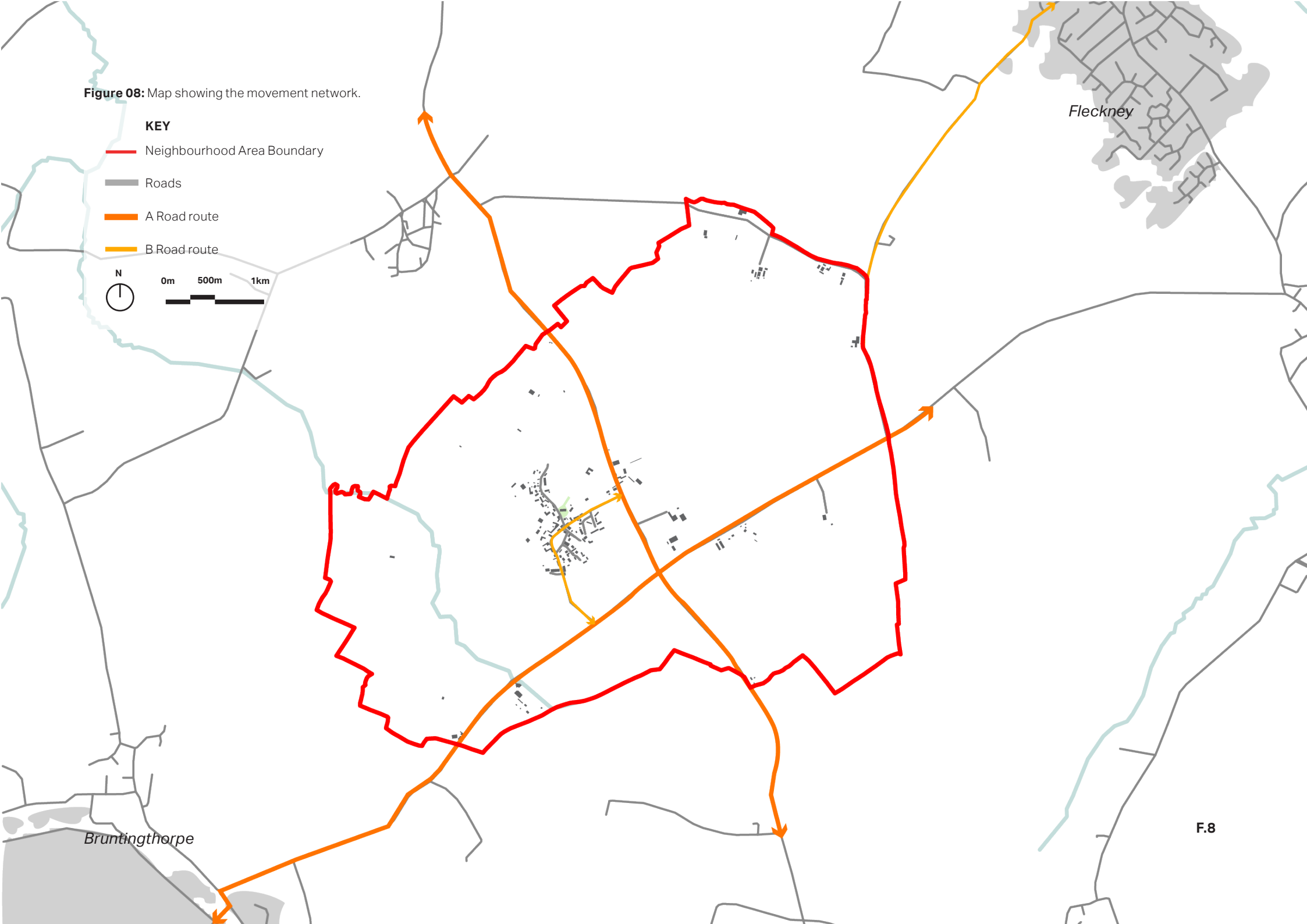
Beyond the built-up area, the parish also includes peripheral open areas of pastures which are important to the overall character and settlement.

1 Natural England, National Character Area Profile 94: Leicestershire Vales, (2014), p. 15. Available at: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4900422342934528

Figure 06: North along the A5199 Welford Road, which runs through the parish and sits to the east of the built-up area.

Figure 07: The village green, which sits at the centre of Shearsby's settlement pattern.

Figure 08: Map showing the movement network.



2.2 Conservation Area and heritage features

Shearsby as a settlement dates back to the pre-historic period, with archaeological evidence of Roman activity in the area and documentary evidence of the village in the Domesday Book of 1086. Buildings of medieval origin remain on Church Lane, which would have been at the heart of the medieval settlement. The undulating ridge and furrow in the surrounding fields are a visible reminder the early inhabitants that worked in Shearsby's former open and common fields from the days of its earliest settlement until the late 18th century.

As a result, Shearsby contains a large number of heritage features. Of those that are designated, eight buildings are identified as being of national importance, and legally protected through their Listed Building status. The Church of St Mary Magdalene is most of note, with some of the structure thought to date from the 15th century – though little of the original fabric remains with much of the church restored in the mid-19th century. A full list of all Listed Buildings are shown below:

- Church of St Mary Magdalene, Church Lane: Grade II*
- Bean Hill Farmhouse and Garden Wall, Church Lane: Grade II
- Cobblestones, Back Lane: Grade II
- Lime Tree Cottage, Church Lane: Grade II
- Rose Cottage, Mill Lane: Grade II
- Wheathill Farmhouse and Little Wheathill, Church Lane: Grade II
- Woodbine Cottage: Grade II
- Yeoman Cottage, Church Lane: Grade II

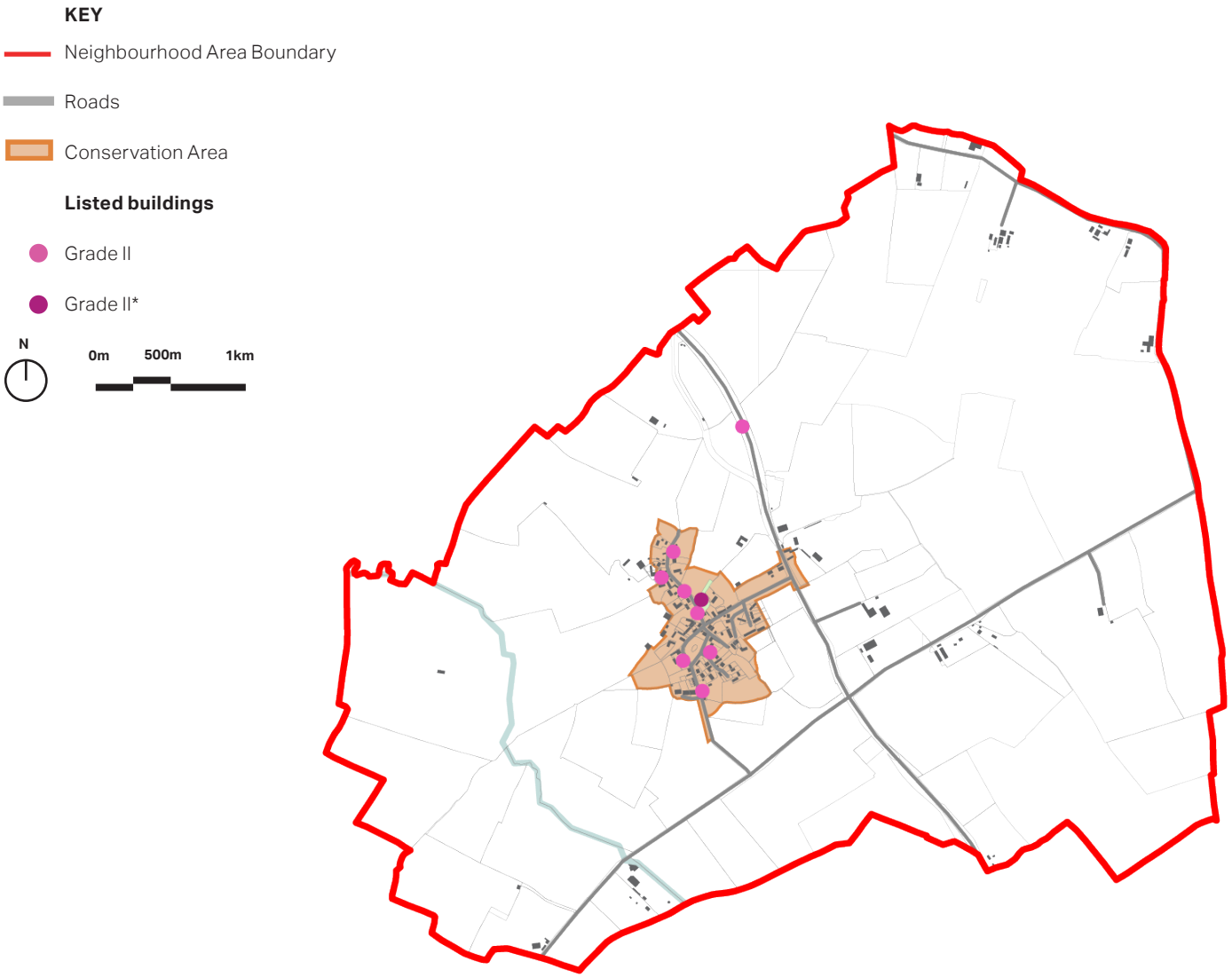
A milepost beside the A5199 is also Listed, but is believed to have been removed in the 1960s, and there is no trace of it today.

Given the historic nature of much of Shearsby, it is somewhat unsurprising that it has a Conservation Area which embraces the majority of the compact built-up area of the village, including Back Lane and the land either side of the junction on the A5199 where there are some older buildings.

Figure 09: The Grade II* Listed Church of St Mary Magdalene, from the churchyard.

Figure 10: Cobblestones, a Grade II Listed timber frame cottage that dates back to the 17th century.

Figure 11: Map showing heritage features.



2.3 Landscape character

Shearsby is a traditional farming village. Much of its historic character comes from the relationship of farms and fields that surround the settlement. It is characteristic of 'the more rural feel' attributed to the southern part of the Leicestershire Vales in Natural England's National Character Area 94[2]. The surrounding landscape is characterised by predominantly open, gently rolling pasture, with regular, medium sized fields divided by mature hedgerows. There are open views across the flatter expanses of the surrounding area. The surrounding landscape lacks any significant expanse of dense tree cover, with only a scattering of small woodlands across the district – and Shearsby is one of the least wooded parishes in this area of Leicestershire. Where trees are present, the predominant species is oak and ash.

Shearsby contains a relatively small number of wildlife sites and habitats, though they are nonetheless highly valued and important to the character of the area. Wildflower meadows can be found throughout the parish, as well as traditional orchards, deciduous woodland, and good quality semi-improved grassland BAP Priority Habitats.

Open spaces are an important characteristic of Shearsby, indicated by the fact that the village is centred around the large village green at its core. The green is enclosed, in part by the buildings adjacent to The Square, in part to the south by a red brick wall, and partly by a hedge, all of which reflect the character of Shearsby. Six other sites which reinforce the rural, open nature of the settlement have been designated as 'Local Open Areas' in the made Neighbourhood Plan, which are:

1. Thorpehill Farm Spinney west
2. Thorpehill Farm Spinney east
3. Back Lane verges and green areas
4. Fenny Lane – Bear's Hole and field
5. Welford Road bungalows triangle
6. Old Turnpike road

Figure 12: Footpath and view to the open countryside, to the west of the village.

Figure 13: Farmland to the east of Shearsby, with the Leicester city skyline beyond.

2 Natural England, National Character Area Profile 94: Leicestershire Vales, (2014), Available at: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4900422342934528

Figure 14: Map showing natural features.

F.14

Guidance and codes to promote good design in Shearsby

03

3.1 Introduction

This section sets out the design guidance and codes that support the Neighbourhood Plan. Development in the Neighbourhood Area should demonstrate how best practice design guidance contained in national and local policy and guidance documents, including this design guide, have been considered in the layout, architectural and landscape design.

Responding to the context means recognising existing positive design solutions or using existing cues as inspiration. Proposals for a new scheme could adopt a traditional approach or a contemporary design that is innovating with purpose, whilst still staying in harmony with the landscape.

It is acknowledged that there is not always agreement on aesthetic issues and architectural taste but using appropriate design precedents and a clear design process will give results that are less subjective and do represent good design.

Where possible, local images are used to exemplify the design guidelines and codes. Where these images are not available, best practice examples from elsewhere are used.

The design guidance and codes within this report are divided under three key themes that cover 9 codes that are relevant to Shearsby's design requirements.

These are:

Layout and buildings:
Guidance and codes relating to the built environment that seek to ensure that the character and features of Shearsby are enhanced and preserved through development.

- *DC.01. Settlement pattern*
- *DC.02. Built form and layout*
- *DC.03. Preserving and promoting local vernacular*
- *DC.04. Heritage and landmarks*
- *DC.05. Extension, conversion, and infill*

Surrounding landscape and biodiversity:
Guidance and codes relating to Shearsby's rural setting and how the surrounding landscape can be protected and best managed.

- *DC.06. Set in rural landscape and settlement edges*
- *DC.07. Landscaping, biodiversity and local wildlife*

Sustainable development:
Guidance and codes that intend to set out sustainable design practices that achieve less impactful development footprints, whilst future-proofing homes, settlements, and natural environments.

- *DC.08. Water management and SuDS*
- *DC.09. Eco-design and net zero principles*

This guidance has been generated based on discussions with members of the Parish Council, the site visit workshop, and good practice relevant to the physical context of the Neighbourhood Area. All codes will

be applicable parish-wide for all types of development.

The codes in the following sections are in **bold**. Mandatory requirements (codes) are also expressed by the use of the word “must”. The terms “should”, “could” and “may” are used for non-mandatory guidance. Where a proposal cannot comply with a code or piece of guidance, a justification should be provided.

3.2 Layout and buildings

The design guidance and codes here relate to the built environment and seek to ensure that the character and features of Shearsby are enhanced and preserved through development.

DC.01. Settlement pattern

Shearsby's developed area is representative of a compact, nucleated settlement pattern, positioned west of Welford Road. **Any future development must represent a logical, compact extension from the built-up area in a way that does not significantly alter the medieval settlement pattern of Shearsby.** Densities should reflect the settlement's rural character whilst referencing the existing pattern.

Cul-de-sacs are typical of the village and may therefore be acceptable in new development. **Any new cul-de-sacs must however be of limited depth, maintain a simple, rural character and avoid being of an overly complex layout, whilst ensuring they do not significantly restrict the movement** network across the parish.

Figure 15: Historic map of Shearsby's settlement pattern, displayed in Shearsby Village Hall.

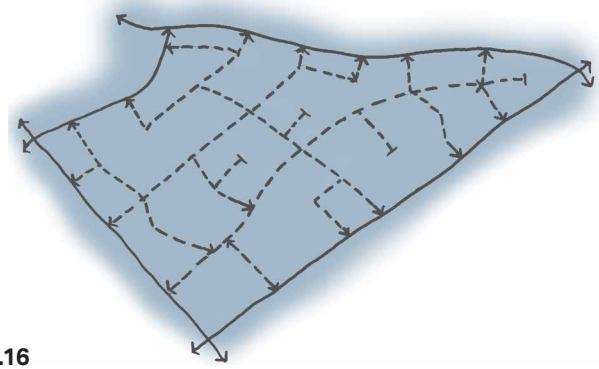


Figure 16: A connected layout, with some cul-de-sacs, balances sustainability and security aims in a walkable neighbourhood.

Figure 17: Nucleated settlement pattern in Shearsby
Source: Bing Maps satellite imagery

Figure 18: Cul-de-sac arrangement in Shearsby

DC.02. Built form and layout

The village has an informal, organic character where setbacks and orientation varies from building to building, providing subtle differences throughout. Many of the more historic buildings face right onto the street with no setback, whilst some of the newer homes, for example, are fronted by modestly sized gardens, and in some cases, driveways. **New development must reflect the immediately surrounding context with regards to setbacks and orientations,** which will generally consist of a great deal of variation between homes that aid in creating a visually interesting street scene.

As with setback and orientation, the plot shapes and frontage sizes vary greatly across the parish. New plots should be in keeping with this in line with the character present across the rest of the parish.

New developments should ensure they leave space for off-street parking, which where possible, is set behind the building line so that it does not create an unsympathetic car-dominated character. Mounted charging points and associated services should also be integrated into on-plot parking in any new developments, to promote more sustainable modes of transport. These should be unobtrusive and placed discretely to the rear and side of the plot and within garages or car ports where possible.

In keeping with the quaint and rural character of the village, the majority of homes are kept to a modest scale typical of rural cottages. Homes do not tend to rise above two storeys other than a handful of larger farmhouses historic to the area. **New development must be in keeping with the scale, massing, and height of homes in the immediately surrounding context** and should not exceed two storeys other than in exceptional circumstances.

Other than some of the newer homes along Fenny Lane and Welford Road, the majority of homes across Shearsby do not have substantial front gardens. Nonetheless, even if only in a small area, where possible

Figure 19: Varied orientations and setbacks of dwellings along Church Lane. *Source: Bing Maps satellite imagery*

physical green boundaries such as native hedgerows, bushes and flower beds should be used as a rural, soft landscaping technique to enclose the street and define a clear building line. **Tall fences or walls that create a sterile and monotonous street scene must be avoided.**

Where new homes have driveway space at the front of plots, **permeable paving finishes such as loose stones and gravel, or plastic grid systems, should be used to reduce extensive areas of hard surfacing.** This will reinforce the rural character of the village as well as aid in flood mitigation measures.

Verges are occasionally found along streets in the village, helping to break up the street to aid in pedestrian movement and provide some green areas to the street scene. Where possible, verges can be combined with native hedgerows, shrubs, and small trees to enhance local biodiversity, help absorb traffic noise and improve air quality. Verges and planting can also play a traffic calming role by creating a greater sense of enclosure and reducing the apparent width of the carriageway.

Figure 20: Modest sized dwellings typical of Shearsby.

Figure 21: Good example of boundary treatment in Shearsby where low-rise fencing is complemented by soft boundary techniques such as planting.

Figure 22: Example of permeable paving used on a driveway in Shearsby, coupled with grass to aid in flood management.

Figure 23: Grass verges within Shearsby, which can become worn down by cars.

DC.03. Preserving and promoting local vernacular

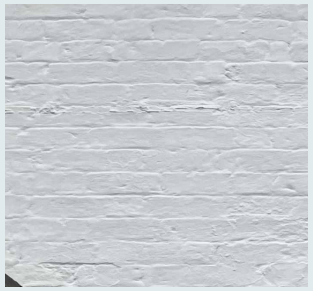
Shearsby has a variety of architectural styles spanning several historic periods dating from as far back as the medieval era. One of the biggest challenges facing the parish is allowing for the village to grow and evolve without compromising its distinct character; central to that is the vernacular architecture and features throughout. **Future developments must seek to reflect this character by adhering to the following guidance and codes, and must reflect the vernacular palette on Figure 24 on the following page.**

Ultimately, even if it is difficult to propose a single catch-all style across the village, what is most important is ensuring new development is consistent with the immediate surrounding context.

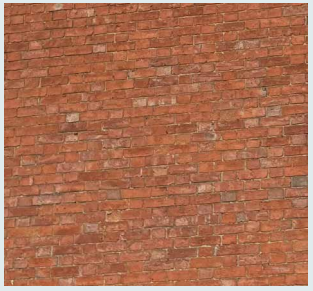
Feature	Guidance and Codes
Façades	Red brick is the dominant material used on the façades of buildings around Shearsby. This can be broken down into three further variations, which will be deemed acceptable in future development, which can be seen in **Figure 24.** The preferred variation of which red brick style is used is largely dependent on the immediate surrounding context and type of housing, and new development should therefore align with what would seem acceptable given the context. Other facades that can be found throughout the village and may therefore be acceptable in new development are brick painted in cream, white or light blue; rendered surfaces typically also in brighter neutral colours; or Tudor-style timber framed.
Fenestration	Where fenestration is street facing in new developments, timber fittings will be preferable, especially as replacements to existing windows. Plastic windows are discouraged, although where they are fitted, they should be reflective of the styles in the immediately surrounding context, generally with sash windows. Dormers are not typical of the village but are occasionally found throughout the parish in some of the newer buildings. Where they are used, they should therefore reflect the immediately surrounding context, such as with flat roof dormers along Mill Lane or gabled dormers on homes along Church Lane.
Roofing	Slate or concrete pantiles are most commonly used for roofing, as well as thatched roofing which is used on some historic buildings.

Façades

Lighter coloured red brick



Painted brick



Darker coloured red brick

Tudor-style timber beams

Detailed façade with mixed colours

Rendered façade

Fenestration

Timber frame windows

Flat dormer

Gable dormer

Roofing

Slate

Concrete pantiles

Thatched roofing

Colour palette

Lighter red

Terracotta

Brown

Black

White

Cream

F.24

Figure 24: Vernacular palette identifying an overview of positive examples of accepted materials, styles and colours in Shearsby.

DC.04. Heritage and landmarks

As noted in **Section 2.2**, Shearsby's historic character and its numerous heritage features lie at the heart of the village's identity. This is recognised by the Conservation Area that was designated in 1975 and is notable for its "relationship of farms and fields to the traditional housing and other buildings which form the settlement". The Conservation Area covers the majority of the built-up area within the parish.

In order to protect the historic character, **new development in close proximity to a heritage asset must respect its significance and demonstrate how local distinctiveness is reinforced.** For example, the new development could reference similar materials as the asset and be of a massing and scale that is sensible to the neighbouring structure. There are many examples of how more modern buildings have taken inspiration from the historic styles across Shearsby, and this should continue.

In some parts of the village, contemporary architecture features are a welcome addition to development, although they must be incorporated sensitively. These contemporary features could be something completely new to the context but should reference the historic context in an innovative and well-designed way such as through colours, materials, fenestration, and roofline.

It is also important that **new development proposals do not block key sightlines to and from heritage assets** (particularly for the Church of St Mary Magdalene). This should be achieved through proposing appropriate density and design including footpaths and green links.

Landmarks (such as the village hall, church, or green) can act as effective landmarks for navigation whilst adding to the quality of the built environment and therefore enhancing the setting of local landmarks with additional landscaping and public realm improvements should be sought. The creation of public 'gateway' spaces could prove useful in creating a landmark for any development, while also creating connections that invite people into the site.

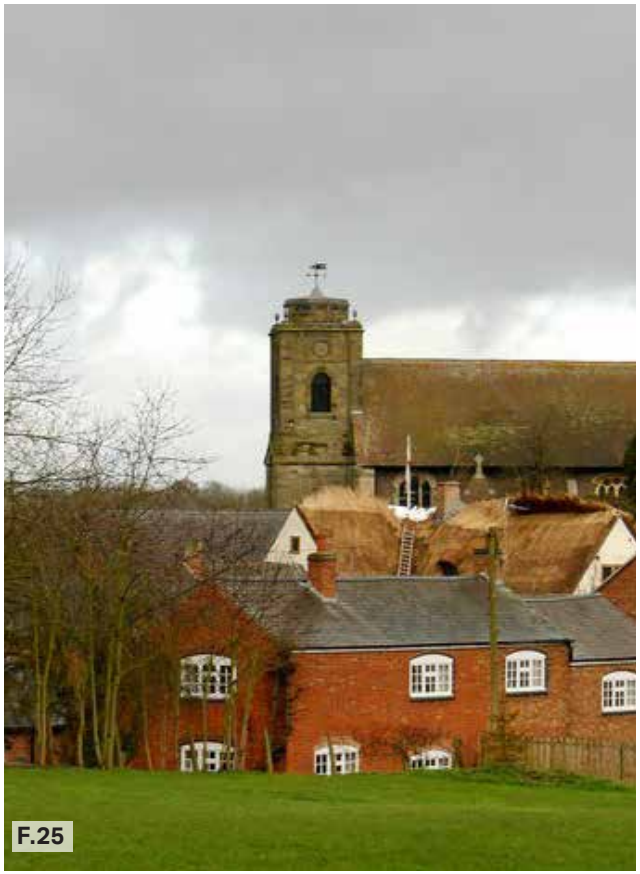


Figure 25: Key sightline across the village to the Church of St Mary Magdalene from the village green. Also note the work being done on the thatched roof, typical of many Listed Buildings in the parish.

DC.05. Extension, conversion and infill

It is important to note that many household extensions are covered by permitted development and thus do not require planning permission; however, because the majority of the built-up area is within the Shearsby Conservation Area, there are some additional planning controls (called 'Article 4 Directions') that help to ensure Shearsby retains its unique character and prevent permitted development rights from applying. Besides, consideration of the following guidance should nonetheless be prioritised in order to ensure good design is implemented throughout the parish.

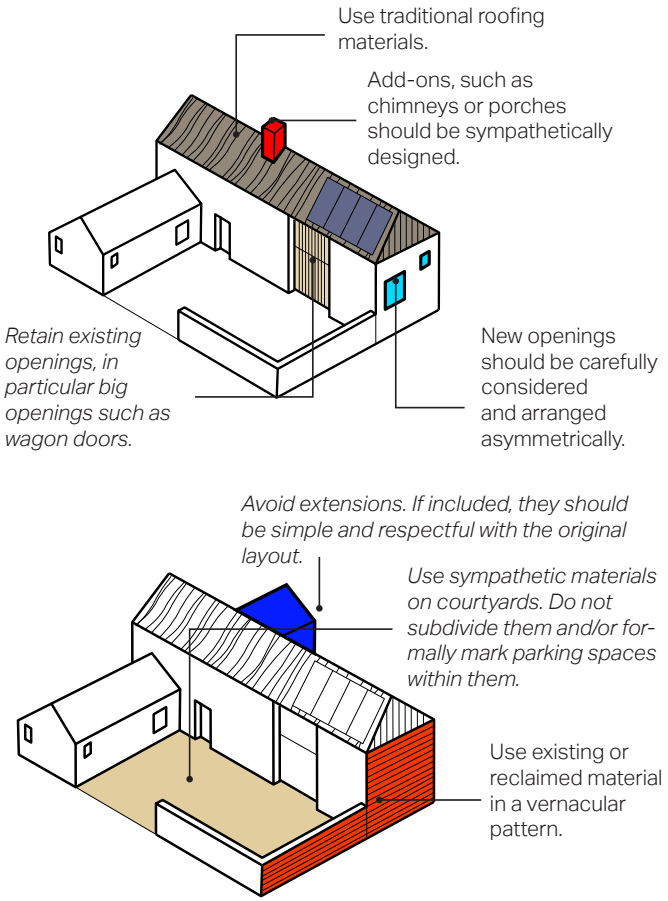
Extensions and conversions:

Housing extensions to dwellings can make a dwelling more suited to its occupant's space requirements. There are multiple ways to create extra space within a building using different types of extensions. However, it is important that any extensions, outbuildings and garages, modifications to existing buildings preserve and, if possible, enhance the existing building's architectural style.

Housing extensions must be of an appropriate scale and form in reference to the original building, which should remain as the dominant element of the property. Overly complicated extensions and associated roof forms that may overshadow the character of the original building should be avoided.

Extensions must also consider the materials, architectural features, window sizes and proportions of the existing building, and respect these elements to design an extension that matches and complements the existing building. If there is a dominant feature of strong historical character on the original building, the addition should be more modest and accentuate this feature.

Extensions should be set below any first-floor windows and designed to minimise any effects of neighbouring properties and should not result in a significant loss to the privacy and loss of amenity to neighbouring



F.26

Figure 26: Agricultural conversions should follow these principles.

properties or the streetscape.

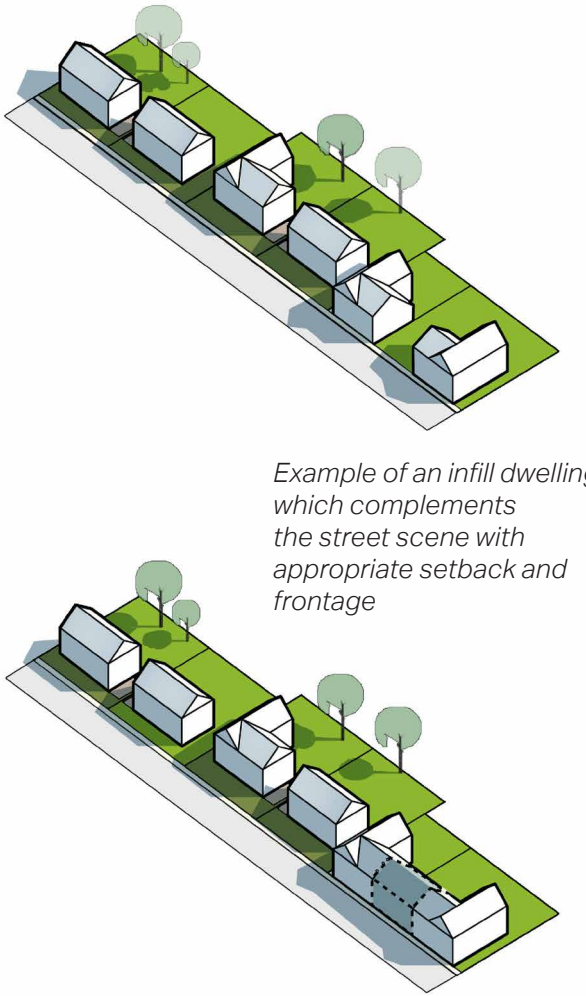
Shearsby's agricultural legacy is evident through the numerous historic farmhouses and barns spread across the parish area. Some of these structures could provide opportunities for modification and reuse. In such cases, the design integrity of original structures must be retained in the event of conversion or extension. The previous agricultural use of the building must also remain evident in its form and composition, as set out in **Figure 27.**

Infill:

Infill development must be responsive to surrounding context and not detract from the existing rhythm and pattern of development and views out to the wider countryside. The density of any new infill development should reflect the character of the immediate area and location within the village. Variation in building types is good design for new developments of multiple dwellings but **infill development must reference the overall height found in the existing context.** Plot infill should largely respect the existing setback if there is a standard street edge.

New infill development must display regard for visual integration with neighbouring buildings by using a complimentary material palette; examples can be found on **Figure 24.**

Backland development should be resisted in all but exceptional circumstances to prevent disruption to the well-defined, historic nucleated settlement pattern and the creation of urban levels of density.



Example of an infill dwelling which complements the street scene with appropriate setback and frontage

F.27
Figure 27: Indicative diagram of infill site.

3.3 Surrounding landscape and biodiversity

The design guidance and codes here relate to the landscape and biodiversity within and around Shearsby. They aim to promote an attractive and safe environment, as well as promoting local biodiversity by protecting local green spaces, the movement of wildlife and traditional flora throughout the parish.

DC.06. Set in rural landscape and settlement edges

Set within the Leicestershire Vales NCA and Lutterworth Lowlands LCA, central to Shearsby's identity is the strong agricultural character of the village and the relationship of the fields and farms to the traditional housing and other building. **Development must therefore be done with sensitive consideration of its siting within the landscape, particularly in areas around the settlement edge,** such as towards the end of the various cul-de-sacs around the village or at the settlement boundary edge along Mill Lane.

Edge of settlement development should gradually transition to the surrounding landscape context by utilising comprehensive landscape buffering, or 'green curtains', implemented along the edge of new developments. Abrupt edges with little vegetation or landscape on the edge of the development should be avoided; long rear gardens with native hedging will be preferable in these areas.

The scale and design of landscaping and boundary treatment, including landscape screening, must not be visually intrusive to the surrounding landscape, such as by blocking views out of the village or by having hedgerow boundary treatments that infringe on the public realm and pose an issue for accessible active travel.

In areas where detached buildings with large gaps between them are present, the gaps should be retained to preserve existing visual connections to the surrounding landscape and long views out of the settlement. Side extensions should be limited to a single storey to preserve gaps

Figure 28: Views out at the settlement edge on Mill Lane.

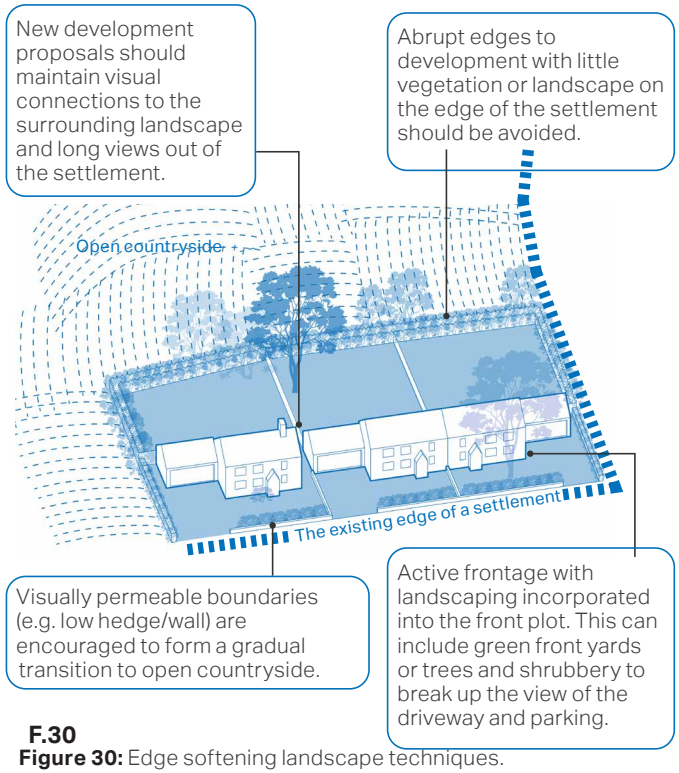
Figure 29: Gaps maintained between buildings to provide visual connections to wider landscape.

between buildings and infill development must be responsive to surrounding context as to not detract from views out to the wider countryside.

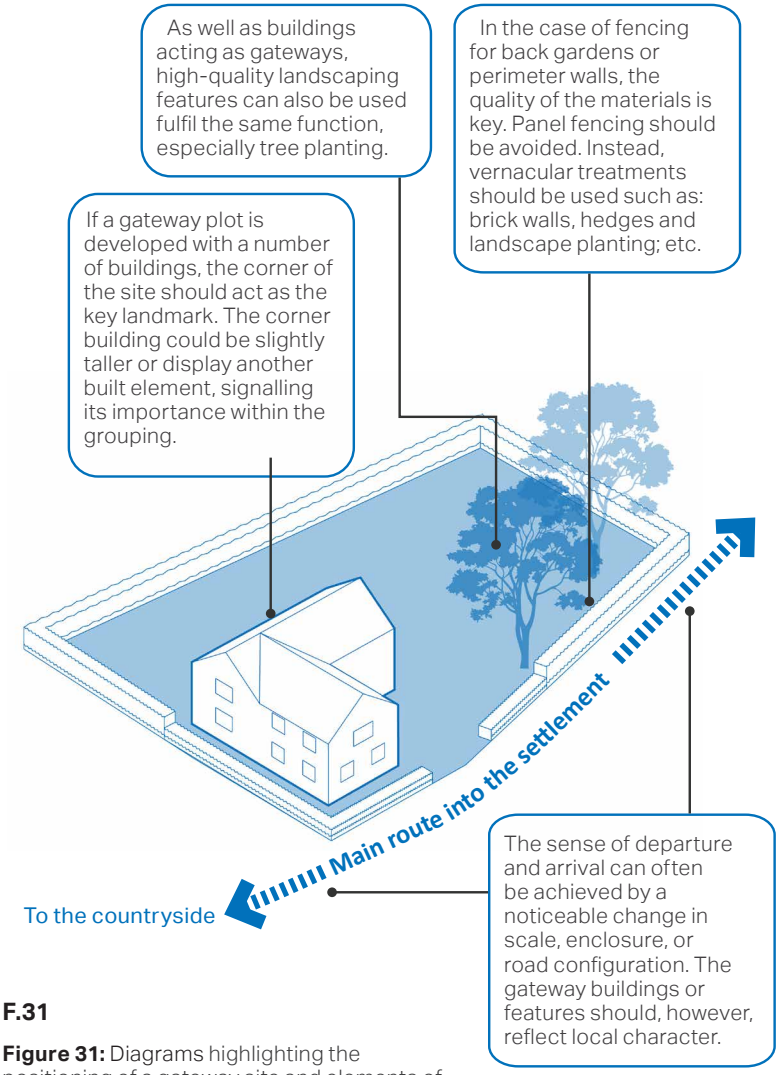
A gateway site is one situated at the edge of a settlement, near to a main route into the settlement – in Shearsby this is at the ends of Mill Lane and Back Lane. It marks the transition from one space to another and is a point of arrival into (and departure from) a settlement. Any development should preserve and enhance existing landscape gateways by implementing landscaping guidance outlined in **Figures 30 and 31.**

Active connections out of the settlement are also very important, and any opportunities to connect new or existing developments to surrounding path networks should be taken. This could include the creation of new streets or roads that direct, safe, and attractive routes for pedestrians and cyclists. New development should also consider wayfinding elements such as signage and legibility to improve pedestrian mobility.

A low light environment is central to the rural character of Shearsby and should be preserved as much as possible. **Any new development must minimise impact of lighting within the built-up area and countryside and reduce light pollution that disrupts the natural habitat and human health.**



F.30
Figure 30: Edge softening landscape techniques.



F.31

Figure 31: Diagrams highlighting the positioning of a gateway site and elements of design codes for a gateway site.

DC.07. Landscaping, biodiversity and local wildlife

New development should seek to maximise gains for wildlife and biodiversity. **The retention and management of existing traditional flora must be encouraged and incorporated into new development where possible, and new flora typical of the area should be introduced wherever possible as part of new development.** New development is strongly encouraged to go beyond the mandatory 10% increase of biodiversity on or near new development sites in alignment with the national legislation on Biodiversity Net Gain[3].

In Shearsby, trees help define the public realm, creating an intimate rural character. **New developments must justify the loss of trees and replace each affected tree starting at a 2:1 ratio**, especially TPO trees, mature trees and other trees as illustrated in **Figure 32.** Otherwise, loss of trees is only justifiable if they constitute a hazard or are causing structural issues.

F.32

Figure 32: A collection of some of the most valued trees in the Neighbourhood Area. Those surrounding the churchyard are particularly valued.

3 Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain

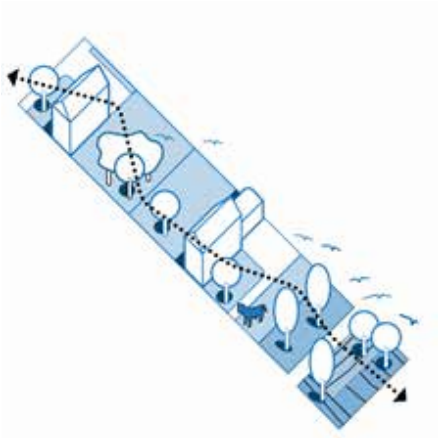
Green areas, such as the village green, are highly valued and play an important role in Shearsby that is central to the village's medieval settlement pattern and rural character, so they should continue to be kept well maintained. Moreover, any new development nearby to the green must seek to complement it by **ensuring that any buildings and access routes relate well to the space.** Surrounding buildings should overlook the space to encourage movement, activity, and natural surveillance, without overshadowing or detrimentally impacting the quality of the space.

Urban greening should be maximised by encouraging green roofs or vertical green walls in new and existing developments. This can also be a good way to improve the energy efficiency of homes by providing an additional thermal layer whilst also adding to the rural character of the area.

It is also important that fauna are protected in new developments. Open space and gardens should be planted and designed with nature in mind, incorporating a range of small-scale biodiversity improvements which may include: nest boxes, bird feeders, bug hotels, hedgehog houses, bat boxes, log piles, pollinator nest sites and wildflower planting. A range of these features should be standard for all development, especially for the preservation of local species.

Gardens and boundary treatments should be designed to allow the movement of wildlife and provide habitat for local species, as well as to retain the rural character of the parish. For that reason, rich vegetation and plantation is suggested, whilst the use of less permeable boundaries like brick walls and timber fencing should be limited and where used, allow for regular gaps to facilitate movement for species. Timber fencing with no gaps between panels should be discouraged.

Figure 33: Good example of direct greening of walls in Shearsby, allowing wall shrubs and climbers to grow vertically along buildings.



F.34

Figure 34: Diagram demonstrating how connected front and back gardens can enhance ecological connectivity and movement for wildlife.

3.4 Sustainable development

The theme of these codes is to promote sustainability practices with new development and existing dwellings in relation to water/flood management and eco-design. Reducing the use of limited natural resources whilst increasing the utilisation of local resources and sustainable natural resources can help to achieve this.

DC.08. Water management and SuDS

Surface water flooding and lack of effective drainage can be an issue in the neighbourhood area, particularly around the crossroads of The Square, Back Lane, and Church Lane. This should therefore be a consideration of key importance for any new development and flood mitigation should be as effective as possible.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can act as an important tool in tackling these issues whilst aiming to make the most efficient use of natural water resources. Typically, the most sustainable solutions incorporate surface water and rainwater harvesting systems, as these can reduce the pressure on the available water sources. SuDS should be designed sensitively to augment the landscape and provide biodiversity benefits.

SuDS should be used to reduce runoff rates by facilitating infiltration into the ground or by providing attenuation that stores water to help slow its flow so that it does not overwhelm the sewer network.

SuDS can also be used to improve water quality and minimise the risk of environmental contamination. Vegetated SuDS / green drains are very effective at this by using natural processes whilst increasing biodiversity.

Shearsby contains many small areas of impervious surfaces that could be replaced with permeable paving to mitigate surface water flooding. These include driveways (often where front gardens have been tarmacked over), parking areas and hardstanding elements of front gardens. Collectively, they reduce the capacity of the ground to absorb runoff water and increase the risks of surface water flooding. Permeable paving offers a solution to maintain soil permeability while performing the function of conventional paving, so permeable hard surfaces must be imperative on all new developments. These should stay as permeable surfaces in perpetuity, which may be reflected in restrictive covenants in new developments.

Figure 35: Crossroads of The Square, Back Lane, and Church Lane, following rainfall. Water can build up here.

DC.09. Eco-design and net zero principles

The five principles central to Passive House design and construction are based on determining the energy efficiency of the buildings, and include:
- highly insulated envelopes;
- airtight construction;
- high performance glazing;
- thermal-bridge-free detailing; and
- heat recovery ventilation.

These principles must be incorporated at the early design stages of development and considered for future modifications to existing buildings.

For example, minimal passive design actions that can be utilised to achieve energy efficiency include increasing glazing thickness, controlling daylight through louvres, blinds or porches, and utilising natural shading and cooling such as through trees and shrubbery. These provide eco-design opportunities that can be utilised, even in the historical part of the village, with minimal impact on the visual street scene.

The aspect and orientation of a building is crucial to eco-design techniques as it helps maximise solar gain. For that reason, one of the main glazed elevations should be within 30° due south to benefit from solar heat gain. Any north-facing façades might have a proportion of window to wall area that minimises heat loss on this cooler side. A recommended window to wall ratio is between 15 and 40 percent, although this should be adjusted so as to remain fitting within the surrounding context.

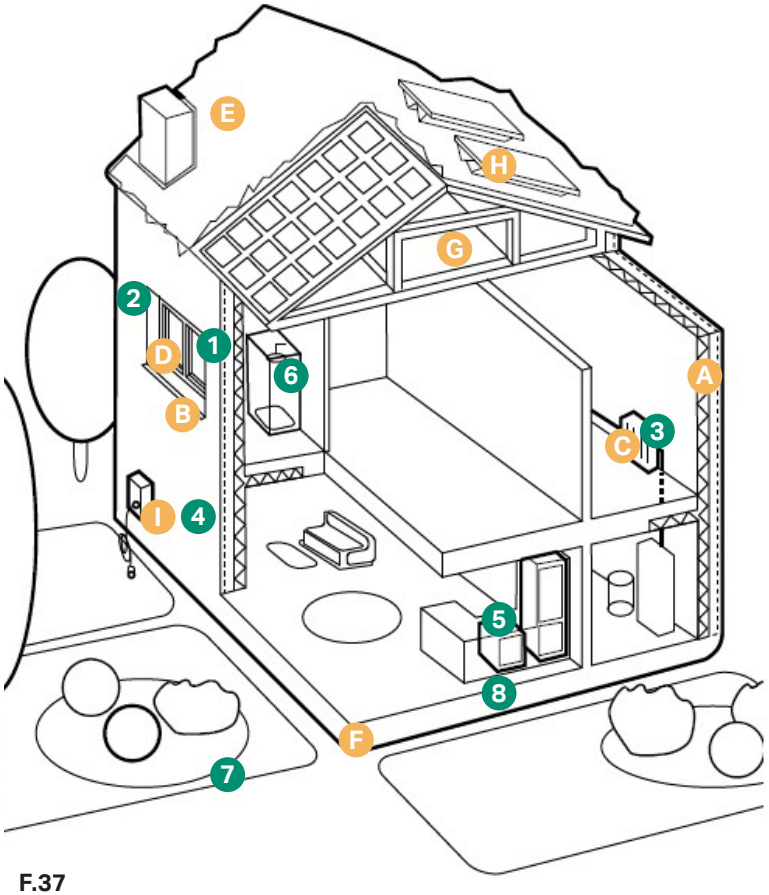
By default, **any new development must adopt a 'fabric first' approach, in line with the government's emerging Future Homes and Buildings Standard**, to attain higher standards of insulation and energy conservation. Ventilation with heat recovery, solar panels and ground and air source heat pumps must also be considered alongside smart meters at the early design stages of all new development.

Solar panels are present on a handful of homes throughout Shearsby and this should be encouraged in new development. **Solar panel integration must be designed from the outset on all new builds,** with every attempt made to design and orientate the roof so that it is of an alignment that allows for the fitting of solar panels. This applies to all future dwellings whether solar panels are initially proposed or not to allow for retrospective implementation.

The retrofitting of existing buildings with eco-design solutions should also be encouraged, particularly those which can be incorporated into traditional dwellings

Figure 36: Solar panels on a home along Mill Lane.

without altering or disrupting the exterior of the buildings, and thus retaining their character. Refer to **Figure 37** for illustrated eco-design principles.



F.37
Figure 37: Diagram showing eco-housing strategies for both existing homes and new builds.

Additional features for new build homes

- A **High levels of airtightness**
- B **Triple glazed windows and external shading** especially on south and west faces
- C **Low-carbon heating** and no new homes on the gas grid by 2025 at the latest
- D **More fresh air** with mechanical ventilation and heat recovery, and passive cooling
- E **Water management and cooling** green roofs, rainwater harvesting and reflective walls
- F **Flood resilience and resistance** e.g. raised floors and greening your garden
- G **Construction and site planning** timber frames, sustainable transport options (such as cycling)
- H **Solar panel**
- I **Electric car charging point**

Existing home retrofits

1. **Insulation** in lofts and walls (cavity and solid)
2. **Double or triple glazing with shading** (e.g. tinted window film, blinds, curtains and trees outside)
3. **Low- carbon heating** with heat pumps or connections to district heat network
4. **Draught proofing** of floors, windows and doors
5. **Highly energy-efficient appliances** (e.g. A++ and A+++ rating)
6. **Highly water-efficient devices** with low-flow showers and taps, insulated tanks and hot water thermostats
7. **Green space (e.g. gardens and trees)** to help reduce the risks and impacts of flooding and overheating
8. **Flood resilience and resistance** with removable air back covers, relocated appliances (e.g. installing washing machines upstairs), treated wooden floors

Checklist for new development

04

4. Checklist

Because the design guidelines and codes in this chapter cannot cover all design eventualities, this section provides a number of questions based on established good practice against which design proposals in Shearsby should be evaluated. The aim is to assess all proposals by objectively answering the questions below. Not all the questions will apply to every development.

The relevant ones, however, should provide an assessment as to whether the design proposal has taken into account the context and provided an adequate design solution. In the first section under 'General design guidelines for new development', there are a number of ideas or principles that may be present in most proposals for new development; though there may be some elements which are not relevant to minor householder applications such as modifications and extensions.

Following these ideas and principles are a number of questions relating to more specific topics.

1

General design guidelines for new development:

- Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity;
- Reinforce or enhance the established settlement character of streets, greens, and other spaces;
- Harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form, architecture and land use;
- Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long-distance views;
- Reflect, respect, and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness;
- Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development;
- Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;
- Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details;
- Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality;
- Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features;
- Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other;
- Positively integrate energy efficient technologies;

1 (continued)

General design guidelines for new development:

- Make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation, and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours;
- Ensure that places are designed with management, maintenance and the upkeep of utilities in mind; and
- Seek to implement passive environmental design principles by, firstly, considering how the site layout can optimise beneficial solar gain and reduce energy demands (e.g. insulation), before specification of energy efficient building services and finally incorporate renewable energy sources.

2

Green spaces, views & character:

- Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
- Will any communal amenity space be created? If so, how this will be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?
- Is there opportunity to increase the local area biodiversity?
- Has the proposal been considered within its wider physical context?
- Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken into account?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area and how are these views incorporated in the design?

3

Building line, access and boundary treatment:

- What are the characteristics of the building line?
- How has the building line been respected in the proposals?
- Has the appropriateness of the boundary treatments been considered in the context of the site?
- What is the arrival point, how is it designed?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing gaps between settlements?
- Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?
- Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?

4

Street grid and layout:

- Does it favour accessibility and connectivity? If not, why?
- Do the new points of access and street layout have regard for all users of the development; in particular pedestrians, cyclists and those with disabilities?
- What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern; are these reflected in the proposal?
- How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing street arrangement?
- Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
- Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?

5

Building heights and roofline:

- What are the characteristics of the roofline?
- Have the proposals paid careful attention to height, form, massing and scale?
- If a higher than average building(s) is proposed, what would be the reason for making the development higher?
- Will the roof structure be capable of supporting a photovoltaic or solar thermal array either now, or in the future?
- Will the inclusion of roof mounted renewable technologies be an issue from a visual or planning perspective? If so, can they be screened from view, being careful not to cause over shading?

6

Building materials & surface treatment:

- What is the distinctive material in the area?
- Does the proposed material harmonise with the local materials?
- Does the proposal use high-quality materials?
- Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves and roof details been addressed in the context of the overall design?
- Does the new proposed materials respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?
- Are recycled materials, or those with high recycled content proposed?
- Has the embodied carbon of the materials been considered and are there options which can reduce the embodied carbon of the design? For example, wood structures and concrete alternatives.

6 (continued)

Building materials & surface treatment:

- Can the proposed materials be locally and/or responsibly sourced? E.g. FSC timber, or certified under BES 6001, ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems?
- Has the embodied carbon of the materials been considered and are there options which can reduce the embodied carbon of the design? For example, wood structures and concrete alternatives.
- Can the proposed materials be locally and/or responsibly sourced? E.g. FSC timber, or certified under BES 6001, ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems?

7

Buildings layout and grouping:

- Subject to topography and the clustering of existing buildings, are new buildings oriented to incorporate passive solar design principles, with, for example, one of the main glazed elevations within 30° due south, whilst also minimising overheating risk?
- Can buildings with complementary energy profiles be clustered together such that a communal low carbon energy source could be used to supply multiple buildings that might require energy at different times of day or night? This is to reduce peak loads. And/or can waste heat from one building be extracted to provide cooling to that building as well as heat to another building?
- What are the typical groupings of buildings?
- How have the existing groupings been reflected in the proposal?
- Are proposed groups of buildings offering variety and texture to the townscape?
- What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
- Does the proposal maintain the character of dwelling clusters stemming from the main road?
- Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens? How is this mitigated?

8

Household extensions:

- Does the proposed design respect the character of the area and the immediate neighbourhood, and does it have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties in relation to privacy, overbearing or overshadowing impact?
- Is the roof form of the extension appropriate to the original dwelling (considering angle of pitch)?
- Do the proposed materials match those of the existing dwelling?
- In case of side extensions, does it retain important gaps within the street scene and avoid a 'terracing effect'?
- Are there any proposed dormer roof extensions set within the roof slope?
- Does the proposed extension respond to the existing pattern of window and door openings?
- Is the side extension set back from the front of the house?
- Does the extension offer the opportunity to retrofit energy efficiency measures to the existing building?
- Can any materials be re-used in situ to reduce waste and embodied carbon?

9

Car parking:

- What parking solutions have been considered?
- Are the car spaces located and arranged in a way that is not dominant or detrimental to the sense of place?
- Has planting been considered to soften the presence of cars?
- Does the proposed car parking compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?
- Have the needs of wheelchair users been considered?
- Can electric vehicle charging points be provided and integrated within the design?
- Can secure cycle storage be provided at individual building level or through a central facility where appropriate?
- If covered car ports or cycle storage is included, can it incorporate roof mounted photovoltaic panels or a biodiverse roof in its design?

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