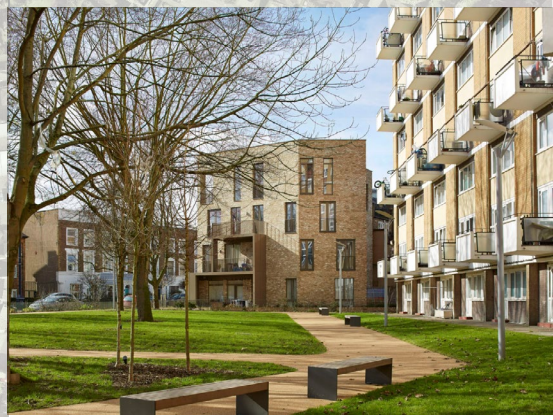
Brent

# BRENT Design Guide

SPD 1 Nov 2018



# Contents

# 1 Introduction

Brent Council aims to create places where people choose to live, learn, work and relax. It seeks to create vibrant communities with mixed uses, activities, house types and tenures. To meet housing needs over the coming years, thousands of homes will need to be provided across Brent. It is essential that these will be well designed.

> *"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments..are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and effective landscaping… Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions."* (NPPF 2018, paragraphs 127+130)

Good design can add environmental, economic, social and cultural value on a range of scales, from masterplanning to the detailed design of streets and buildings. Brent wants to balance the best of existing places with the benefits of change and new development, respecting the local character and the existing natural and built environment.

Buildings, streets and spaces should be of the highest quality. The principles in this guide should ensure that new development creates a positive sense of place and that they will work best for existing and new residents, businesses and visitors. The guide is illustrated with examples that show how to meet the relevant design principles and what to avoid. Each chapter has a checklist to facilitate assessment.

This Design Guide explains what is required to comply with various policies within the Local Plan and will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Planning applications in the Borough will be assessed against it to ensure the design principles have been met. Local Plan site allocations may provide specific design guidance or advice.

# 2 Context and Character

**Principle 2:**

**Development should respond to the local context and respect the existing character of the landscape, streetscape, architectural and historic environment.**

Good design shows:

- How the development relates to the local area in terms of scale, massing and materials
- An analysis of the local context, for example the historic environment
- The final appearance including the quality and durability of the materials
- Understanding the site characteristics, working with the constraints and making the most of key features such as topography, watercourses and views

For the majority of planning applications, including larger independent sites and sites where higher density development than existing may be appropriate, development will take appropriate cues from its surrounding area, including form, style and materials. Scale and height needs to positively respond to adjoining areas' character and distinctiveness. For larger scale planned regeneration of extensive areas, like the Wembley Park masterplan and parts of the Alperton masterplan, a new urban character can be created, while drawing on the existing context and historic character and ensuring it is coherent with the townscape surrounding it. Brent's upcoming Characterisation Study will assist with identifying character, but detailed local context and character analysis will still be required.

In order to create character or vitality within the streetscape, developers are encouraged to reuse existing buildings that would be deemed a historical asset regardless of designation.

a. Landscape

The existing landscape character should inform new development and positive landscape features, including trees, watercourses and views, should be retained.

b. Streetscape

New development should be integrated within the existing settlement and reflect the existing character, including building lines, front gardens, scale, massing and rhythm.

c. Architecture

Local architectural character and design should be protected and enhanced, including building typology and style, height, roofscape, materials, details and proportions.



d. Historic environment

Development should preserve and enhance the historic environment, including:

- Listed buildings and structures,
- Non-designated heritage buildings and features,
- Conservation Areas, and
- Townscape and landscape character.



## 3 Building Context

**Principle 3.1**

**New development height, massing and facade design should positively respond to the existing context and scale; facilitating good urban design.**

a. Sites appropriate for tall buildings

Tall buildings will only be encouraged in areas identified as appropriate for tall buildings and be of outstanding design, following best practice guidance.

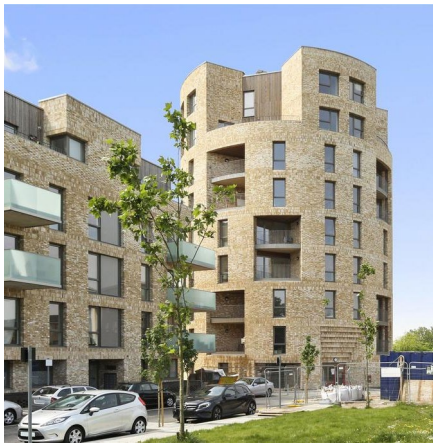
Tall buildings are defined as structures that are more than 6m taller than the local context or 30m and over. New development should optimise the potential of the site while respecting the existing context and character and make efficient use of land through good design. The emerging London Plan requires that particular consideration is given to site context, PTAL and infrastructure capacity. Appropriate density can often be achieved without tall buildings.

Brent acknowledges the role tall buildings can play in increasing densities in certain locations. Brent's forthcoming Tall Building Strategy, Local Plan site allocations and local policies such as the Wembley Area Action Plan and Alperton Masterplan identify sites where tall buildings may be appropriate, provided they are of outstanding design quality and meet relevant design guidance.

In these large regeneration areas, development can create its own character that is different from the existing context. Buildings are expected to step down in scale towards the site boundaries and nearby lower buildings, to effectively limit the impact of the change in scale and respect the surrounding character.

Tall buildings on sites identified as appropriate for tall buildings will still need to be of a suitable height and design for the local area and take into account their visibility from further away. Proposals for tall buildings should have regard to good design as outlined in the London Plan, Brent's forthcoming Tall Building Strategy, Local Plan and other policies and guidance including 'Historic England Advice Note 4; Tall Buildings'

Tall building design should pay attention to how the building will be viewed from a range of locations, near views and from afar. CGIs and physical models should be provided at pre-application stage to aid officers' understanding. All rooftop plant and machinery should be screened with cladding and/or landscaping to avoid unsightly appearance.



Slender massing and exceptional design quality are required for tall buildings ✓

A cilyndrical shape and facade with depth, variety and interest ✓

A tall building in an inappropriate location, not respecting the existing context and character ✗

A tall building visible from afar and its negative impact on the existing character ✗

b. Heights on all other sites

Building heights should positively respond to existing character.

In all other areas, development should positively respond to its context and create attractive streets and spaces by respecting human scale in its ground floor treatment, height and massing. In the drive for efficient use of land, sensitive design should ensure new development respects the character of the wider surroundings. This includes carefully considering building heights and massing and designing blocks and buildings to minimise visual impact.

In the areas of Brent that are predominantly suburban in character, new tall buildings are unlikely to be appropriate.

The height of buildings, and their relation to the surrounding buildings, has a big impact on the experience from the street, in particular the relation of the building to the human scale. New development should positively respond to the height of the adjoining buildings and local area. Building heights that are out of context and do not respond positively to the local character are not acceptable.

Tall buildings can generally be seen from far away and have a wide visual impact on local character. Any 'landmark' buildings should make positive contributions through exceptional design and detailing, not necessarily through increased height. Wayfinding should not depend on building height.

Streets should generally have similar building heights on each side and height to width ratios should generally stay within 1:1.5 and 1:3, as outlined in the Urban Design Compendium. Developers need to thoroughly analyse context and the relationship to existing buildings. Further information on context and character will be provided in Brent's forthcoming Characterisation Study.

A big jump in height, without regard for the existing context ✗

High buildings along a narrow street, creating an oppressive atmosphere ✗

c. Bulk, scale and massing

Development massing should limit its visual impact by effectively breaking up facades, creating a varied roofscape and relating positively to existing surroundings.

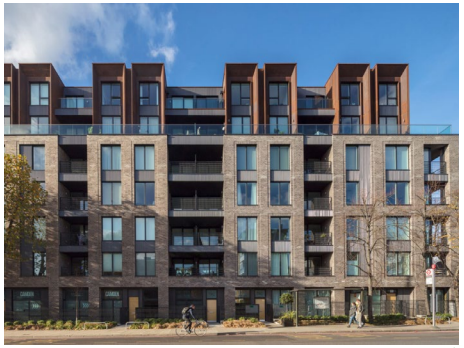
Large developments should effectively break facades and building mass into smaller components to fit in better with their surroundings and the human scale. Varied roofscape and facades can assist with this by introducing smaller elements, rhythm, depth and visual interest. Depth in facades can be created by bay windows, balconies and dormers.

Buildings should generally be divided into a clear base, a middle and a top section, usually the roof. All elements should be elegant in terms of materials and detailing. The form and design of a building should ensure it is not bulky or homogeneous. Tall buildings should be slender. A single storey base relates best to the human scale and double height glass facades should be avoided.

Buildings that would not impact negatively on the local and wider area but are nevertheless taller than neighbouring buildings should minimise their visual impact, through appropriate roofscape and architectural design.

Development should not preclude or compromise future development nearby and should not normally rely on adjoining sites for light and outlook.

A double height glass facade at odds with the human scale is detrimental to street character ✗



Building facade and mass broken up to reduce its visual impact and create a base, middle and top ✓

**Principle 3.2**

**Development should ensure active frontage and maximise doors and windows to active ground floor rooms.**

Streets that are well overlooked and have active ground floors feel safer and more pleasant. A sense of supervision also deters potential crime and anti-social behaviour. Development should ensure animated facades towards public routes and spaces, avoid blank walls and inactive frontage and limit gaps in building lines. Buildings on street corners should be dual fronted, with active and attractive facades to both streets.

Inactive frontage which reduces the amount, size or visibility of windows of habitable rooms should be minimised as much as possible. This includes garage doors, ground floor bathroom windows and raised ground floors. Protruding building elements such as bin stores can limit the visibility of windows and should be avoided.

Where limited areas of inactive frontage are unavoidable, active frontage should be prioritised along primary routes, public spaces and pedestrian and cycle only routes and opposing inactive frontages should be avoided. Any inactive frontage (including ventilation and extraction grilles) must be treated with high quality detailing and materials.

Apartment buildings should be designed to provide private front doors onto the street for ground floor apartments, ideally with private front gardens, animating the streetscene and providing benefits to residents. Using maisonettes or private entrances (via staircase) to first floor apartments can provide similar benefits to more residents. Rear access and internal access to ground floor apartments should be avoided where possible.

Communal entrances should be designed as active frontages with direct access to the public realm on street frontages and public spaces.They should be clearly articulated within the elevation to provide a clear and visible entrance.

Where residential development is located above retail or commercial uses, main access should normally be provided from the front street. Retail frontages should be fully integrated with the architecture of the building and comply with Brent's SPD3 Shopfronts.

Apartment building turning the corner with genuine dual frontage ✓

Blank side gables are inappropriate ✗

Active ground floor with bay windows providing additional supervision ✓


Animated facades with bay windows ✓


Undercroft parking in inappropriate location creating inactive frontage ✗

Integral garages often create inactive frontage on the ground floor ✗

**Principle 3.3**

**New development should respect existing urban grain and human scale.**

a. Plot widths

Existing fine grain and narrow plot widths should be respected and maintained wherever possible.

Urban grain is the pattern of plot sizes that makes up the built environment. These plot sizes are reflected in the architecture, with each plot normally containing one building. Therefore, plot widths, and narrow plots (fine grain) in particular, influence the character of the area. The traditional development pattern is generally fine grain, which relates best to the human scale.


New development that expresses a fine grain through architectural treatment ✓

An overly course grain is apparent through monotonous height and facade design ✗

b. Direction and human scale

Large building blocks should be effectively broken up to limit the impact of bulk and massing and respect the human scale.

Modern development plots are often significantly larger than traditional plots. To create the visual advantages of a finer grain and to respect he human scale, the design of large building blocks should be broken up effectively.

Apartment blocks should be designed in a similar way to houses wherever possible. Individual entrances to ground floor apartments, as well as a vertical expression in the design of facades and windows will assist with giving the impression of a fine grain.

A development that emphasises vertical direction through depth, roofscape and materials ✓

A long and high block with horizontal emphasis does little to relate to the human scale ✗

**Principle 3.4**

**Building roofs should be designed to minimise the impact of height and positively respond to the character of the area**

a. Streetscene

Buildings should generally fit in with the existing character of roof types within the streetscene and minimise the visual impact from street level.

The majority of areas within the Borough are characterised by pitched roofs, which create a suitable end to the building.Typical roof types include gable roofs, hipped roofs and mansard roofs. Roof forms of new development should fit in with the established character of the street or area. Dormers are an efficient use of roofspace that maintain the advantages of pitched roofs and have less visible impact than an additional storey.

Buildings must have an uncluttered, simple roof profile with all elements such as plant enclosures, solar PVs, maintenance gantries, lift overruns, safety balustrades etc., forming an integral part of the overall building form and designed with minimal visual impact from street level.

Gable roofs part of contemporary design ✓

A hipped roof with chimneys ✓

A varied roofscape and depth that breaks the building into smaller parts ✓

A large monotonous facade and roofscape do little to relate to the human scale ✗

A mansard roof with setback windows ✓

Dormers, adding rooms but not height ✓

b. Setback top floors

In areas where flat roofs are appropriate, buildings should minimise the visual impact from street level and respect human scale, i.e. through set back top floors.

Setting back upper floors can make the buildings look smaller from street level and therefore less overbearing or more acceptable. The setback floor(s) will still be visible from further away, but may act as a suitable top section, distinct from the middle part of the building. Setback floors should remain in character with the rest of the building and contemporary top floors on buildings of traditional style should be avoided.

Top floor setback sufficiently to reduce the visual impact from street level ✓

Top floors set back, reducing visual impact ✓

Overhanging flat roofs needlessly add to the bulk and mssing of the scheme ✗

An unattractive, dominant feature roof that increases visual impact of the building ✗

**Principle 3.5**

**Buildings, including window dimensions and void-mass ratio, should be well proportioned; respecting local character.**

a. Dimensions

Buildings should fit in with local character by using similar dimensions, especially for windows.

Window dimensions are an important part of character and using traditional dimensions assists in fitting in with local character. Traditional dimensions generally have a strong vertical emphasis, both the shape of the void in the wall and the sub-division of panes within this. In Conservation Areas multi-pane sash windows are generally most appropriate and PVC windows, which are considerably thicker, should be avoided.

Traditional window dimensions with multi-pane windows ✓

Window proportions and styles do not fit in with the local character ✗

b. Void-mass ratio

Buildings should normally fit in with local character by using a similar void-to-mass ratio; avoiding either too small windows or too much glass.

The proportion of windows to solid walls is called the void-mass ratio. This is usually quite constant within an area and forms part of the character. To fit in with this, new development should use a similar proportion and facade layout. Generally, overly large glazing or smaller than usual windows should be avoided, particularly on front elevations. This will also assist with providing sufficient daylight and reducing overheating. Windows should be sufficiently recessed from the facades.


Traditional void-mass ratios as part of the local character ✓


Using traditional void-mass ratios to fit in with the local context ✓

Too much glass and a horizontal direction does not fit in with the local character ✗

Poor void-mass ratio with too few and too small windows ✗

**Principle 3.6**

**Building materials should be durable, attractive and respect local character.**

The use of durable and attractive materials is essential in order to create development that is appealing, robust and sustainable and fits in with local character. Within Brent, the predominant building material used is brick, with smaller amounts of roughcast, pebbledash and render. Brick has over time proved to be a successful material, with strong aesthetic credentials to assist in creating high quality neighbourhoods. Brick and other natural materials and elements of small dimensions create visual interest through patterns and depth.

Natural materials such as brick and stone generally weather well and retain their beauty over time. Materials such as concrete are known to become unattractive because of weathering and should be avoided externally. Newer materials that have not yet shown how well they age should be minimised. Render has a risk of staining due to wet conditions and its use should be limited. Roof types should normally fit in with the surroundings whether that is flat or pitched and in slate or clay tile. The colour and texture of the brick should complement the local context.

Sustainable technologies, for example solar panels should be integrated into the design from the outset rather than retrofitted. Wherever possible the (re-)use of materials from sustainable sources will be encouraged.

Brick facade with tile roof ✓

Stone facade with slate roof ✓

A traditional streetscene with natural materials that have stood the test of time ✓

A new brick development is likely to wheather well and remain attractive ✓

A predominantly glass facade ✗


Metal cladding and non-recessed windows ✗


Concrete has proven not to wheather well and should be avoided in new buildings ✗

Render that has become unattractive due to staining ✗

## 3.7 Building Context: checklist

3.1 Density, height and massing – *New development height and massing should positively respond to the existing context; facilitating good urban design.*

a. Are tall buildings located in areas identified as appropriate for tall buildings and of outstanding design, following best practice guidance?
b. Do building heights positively respond to the existing character, sensitively consider height and step down effectively?
c. Does the development massing limit its visual impact by effectively breaking up facades, creating a varied roofscape and relating to positive existing surroundings?

3.2 Animated facades – *Development should ensure active frontage and maximise doors and windows to active ground floor rooms.*

a. Does the development ensure active ground floors along public spaces and routes by maximising doors and windows to active rooms on the ground floor?
b. Do buildings on street corners present dual frontage, with active and attractive facades to both streets?
c. Do apartment buildings provide active frontage, with private ground floor entrances from the street for ground floor apartments?

3.3 Urban grain – *Development should respect existing urban grain and human scale.*

a. Are existing fine grain and narrow plot widths respected wherever possible?
b. Are large building blocks effectively broken up to limit the impact of bulk and massing and respect the human scale?

3.4 Roofscape – *Roofs should be designed to minimise the impact of height and positively respond to the character of the area.*

a. Do buildings reflect the positive existing character of roof types within the streetscene and minimise the visual impact from street level?
b. Where pitched roofs are not appropriate, do buildings set back top floors, minimise the visual impact from street level and respect human scale?

3.5 Proportions – *Building designs, including window dimensions and void-mass ratio, should be well proportioned; respecting local character.*

a. Do buildings fit in with local character by using similar dimensions?
b. Do buildings fit in with local character by using a similar void-to-mass ratio, avoiding either too small windows or too much glass?

3.6 Building materials – *Materials should be durable, attractive and respect local character.*

a. Do buildings fit in with local character by using similar materials?
b. Do buildings use sustainable, natural materials that are durable, weather well and remain attractive over time?

## 4 Urban Design

**Principle 4.1**

**New development should create well-dimensioned perimeter blocks wherever possible, providing active frontage and maximising sunlight into amenity space.**

a. Perimeter blocks and dual aspect flats

Development should consist of buildings fronting onto streets in the form of perimeter blocks, avoiding single aspect dwellings.

Perimeter blocks comprise of buildings facing the public streets, with private backs (such as rear gardens) against the rear boundary of other properties. They provide the basis for well-overlooked and active streets and more quiet and secure rear gardens or service yards. Development blocks should be dimensioned to facilitate continuous frontage to all sides whilst avoiding deep buildings with central corridors and single-aspect dwellings.

Dual frontage allowing cross-ventilation is essential to avoid overheating, damp and poor air quality. It also enables living rooms to face towards the best side, whether to make use of good views or southern orientation, or to avoid noise or poor views, including car parks or service yards. Development forms that will result in a large proportion of single-aspect dwellings are generally not acceptable.

A dual aspect apartment block integrated into a perimeter block ✓

The same apartments and perimeter block seen from above ✓


Direct access from the street to ground floor apartments with private front gardens ✓

A lack of ground floor entrances and private front gardens creates an inactive street ✗


A connected network of perimeter blocks ✓

Perimeter blocks providing active frontage to all streets and spaces ✓


A long perimeter block providing a good length of continuous frontage ✓

Perimeter blocks creating frontage and a legible street layout ✓

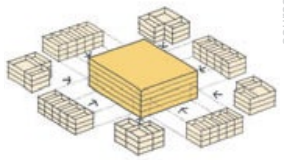
b. Non-residential uses

Non-residential uses should be treated the same as residential uses; incorporated into the streetscene and wrapped with other uses as necessary to provide active frontage.

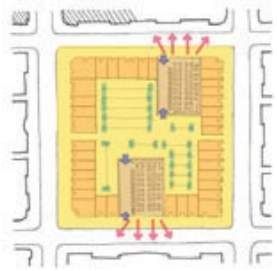
Uses such as 'big box' retail generally have a small proportion of active frontage. They should be designed to have other active uses, like smaller shops or homes, around them to maximise active frontage towards public streets and spaces. Setting back buildings significantly, for instance to provide car parking areas to the front, should be avoided.

New development, and offices in particular, should be designed to avoid overheating and use natural ventilation wherever possible. Large areas of glazing, particularly south-facing, should generally be avoided. Windows should be openable wherever possible and external shading used appropriately, while taking care to fit in with local character.

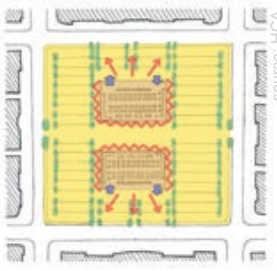
Routes and spaces intended for the public should be designed as open, public and fully accessible.




The principle of wrapping big box uses ✓




Big box uses integrated into a perimeter block ✓




A big box creating poorly fronted streets ✗

High streets are true public spaces that allow for a mix of uses and activities ✓


Public space attracting public activities ✓


A poor example of a covered privatised space that is not public and accessible ✗


A negative example of stairs and level differences restricting movement and views ✗

**Principle 4.2**

**New developments should provide a suitable amount of parking in a mix of parking solutions that are convenient, efficient and facilitate good urban design.**

a. Positive parking solutions

New development should provide a mix of positive parking solutions for cars, motorcycles and bicycles, including a suitable level of on-street parking for cars and bikes wherever possible.

The layout and location of parking areas are key features affecting the overall quality of residential and commercial schemes. Positive parking solutions include on-street parking, underground parking and under-deck parking. On-street parking is more efficient, may be beneficial for the streetscene and is essential for visitors.

In areas of high public transport accessibility and near town centres, car-free development may be appropriate, in which case access to a car-club may be required. For other areas, developers should refer to Brents Parking Standards.

A shared surface solution with on-street parking softened with street trees ✓

On-street bicycle parking is important for visitors and can increase cycle use ✓

On-street parking, leaving space for green front gardens ✓

Efficient parking inbetween homes ✓


An innovative example of under-deck parking, providing garden space above parking for a traditional terrace ✓


Under-deck / basement parking can provide a positive solution for more central, higher density schemes ✓

b. Negative parking solutions

New development should minimise the amount of negative parking solutions, including front garden parking.

Negative parking solutions include rear courts, front garden parking, undercroft parking, and integral garages.

Rear parking courts should be avoided wherever possible, but if they are necessary they should be dead-end routes that serve a minimal number of cars, with the entrance well overlooked by ground floor windows. They should be well landscaped with semi-mature trees and shrubs across the court.

To maintain and increase street quality, on-plot parking areas at the front of new development are not accepted.

Where parking associated with retail and office uses is considered necessary, parking areas should be located to the side and rear of the scheme or in basements or on roofs, to maximise active frontage onto the main street(s). The entrance should also be on the main street frontage to encourage pedestrian accessibility.

Landscape needs to be considered carefully with trees, landscaping, permeable surfaces and seating areas to make areas more pleasant to live and work in.

Rear parking street causing inactive space without supervision of cars or people

Front garden parking dominating the streetscene, instead of green gardens

Front garden parking and hardstanding dominating the streetscene

On-street parking is preferred by residents but if not designed in it causes problems

Undercroft parking eliminates active frontage on the ground floor

Integral garages cause a lack of active frontage on the ground floor

Double garages are rarely used for parking and cause inactive frontage

Large rear courts are rarely used and can attract crime or anti-social behaviour

**Principle 4.3**

**New development should provide suitable trees to new streets and spaces and retain existing trees where possible.**

There is now a wealth of evidence on the many benefits of high tree canopy cover, including improving: physical and mental health; air quality; water quality; water management (reducing flooding); shading; cooling through evapotranspiration; as well as the more obvious benefit of improving biodiversity. Larger forest type trees provide greater benefits and older trees generally support more biodiversity.

There will be a presumption in favour of the retention of trees of a high and moderate quality. Where it is agreed not to be possible to retain such trees then measures should be taken to provide adequate space elsewhere on site for suitable replacement planting.

Developers will need to demonstrate that they have provided sufficient space below ground to provide adequate rootable soil volume for the tree(s) to reach their optimal size and life expectancy as well as suitable set back to allow for the tree to grow in its natural form. Sustainable drainage systems and other green infrastructure benefits can also be designed into tree planting schemes, further enhancing the positive impact of an arboreal landscape

Development should integrate green infrastructure from the beginning of the design process and contribute to urban greening. Good quality landscape design and tree planting in new development are fundamental to the local environment.

Street trees, like front gardens, provide a wide range of environmental and visual benefits and contribute heavily to creating attractive street character. They are an efficient way to increase kerb appeal and development value. New streets should be tree-lined wherever possible.

Existing mature trees can provide enormous value and character to development sites and should be retained wherever possible, unless identified as unsuitable by the relevant tree officer. To achieve their optimal amenity value they should be incorporated into public open space or at least visible within the public realm.

Developers should provide street trees within the public realm of sufficient size (semi-mature) to provide the visual benefits and increase their chance of survival. All trees included on development layouts are expected to be specified and provided.

A tree-lined street with trees within paving areas ✓

A large specimen tree within generous open space allowing the tree to flourish ✓

A tree-lined street with trees inbetween on-street parking ✓

A tree-lined street including planters ✓

Street trees located within the footpath ✓

A hard environment that would benefit from planting and street trees ✗

**Principle 4.4**

**New dwellings should have green front gardens wherever possible; taking into account existing context and character.**

Front gardens fulfil a wide range of important uses, including environmental, visual, social and personal. Most of these benefits are only achieved through green front gardens. Hardstanding for parking or storage should be minimised as much as possible.

To encourage the use of front gardens for decorative planting and to optimise their visibility from the street, boundary treatment is important. Low decorative railings or low walls are suitable boundaries for front gardens. Higher walls and fences and high hedges are not suitable as they obscure visibility and deter planting.

The dimensions of front gardens also play a large role in their use. Gardens or 'privacy strips' that are too small (less than 2m deep) are less likely to be planted and will provide minimal privacy. Infill development should respect the existing street character.

As residents generally aim for gardens to fit in with the existing character of the street, developers should provide planting in front gardens, to set the precedent and create the green character of the street. All front garden areas should have a detailed landscape design which includes boundary treatments, planting and paving.

Front gardens with only planting functioning as a suitable boundary ✓

Front gardens designed as green gardens from the outset are likely to remain green ✓

Medium-sized front gardens with planting clearly visible through a low railing ✓

Needlessly high walls and railings reduce the interaction between building and street and give the impression the area is unsafe ✗

**Principle 4.5**

**Street design and public realm should reflect the street hierarchy and accommodate for movement and the street as a place accordingly.**

The design of streets and the public realm should reflect the right balance of movement and place functions relevant to their place in the route hierarchy. Streets that are not primary roads should be designed as places and attractive destinations, in addition to accommodating through traffic.

Local residential streets, which make up the majority of streets, should be designed to ensure pedestrian priority over vehicles and actively limit vehicular speeds through street layout and materials.

Streets should be designed for people and provide for a pleasant place to be in. 'Manual for Streets' and Transport for London's (TfL) 'Healthy Streets' approach will be used in their design. Standard highway designs can be appropriate for roads higher up in the route hierarchy although other road users and placemaking remain key design considerations. Pedestrians, cyclists and public transport should generally take priority over private cars.

Where shared surface streets are provided they should be designed to ensure pedestrian priority and be safe and comfortable for all vulnerable road users. Design speeds should be very low.

Narrow and constrained streets should ensure sufficient access for refuse and emergency vehicles. Further information on street design, including minimum pavement widths, can be found in the Brent Placemaking Guide (2011).

A local street that emphasises pedestrain priority through its surface materials and lack of kerbs ✓

A collector road should still have building frontage, cycle lanes and pedestrian crossing facilities ✗

Paving and planting creating an attractive public realm ✓

Concrete block paving creating a durable and attractive footpath surface ✓

secondary route with natural traffic calming measures ✓

An attractive shared surface homezone ✓

Local street with attractive materials, planting and on-street parking ✓

Local street with attractive materials, planting and on-street parking ✓

**Principle 4.6**

**Larger sites should integrate with their surroundings and provide a clear network of routes, views, open space and landscape.**

a. Routes

Development should have a clear route hierarchy and facilitate ease of movement and access for all.

Local streets, including the vast majority of residential streets, should be designed to prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and placemaking, providing a low speed environment. They should be designed to accommodate the principles of Active Design (Sport England, 2015) and Healthy Streets. Of particular relevance would be TfL's Streetscape Guidance, London Cycle Design Standards, West London Cycle Parking Guidance and London Plan policy D7 Public Realm.

Site layouts should integrate routes through the site, including access to potential future development sites. Dead-end routes, for any mode of transport, should be avoided wherever possible. Routes for all modes of transport should be combined in the same location (streets) wherever possible, as opposed to separating pedestrian routes and vehicle access.


A good example of a connected, permeable network of routes ✓


A poor example of a disconnected, inward looking development ✗

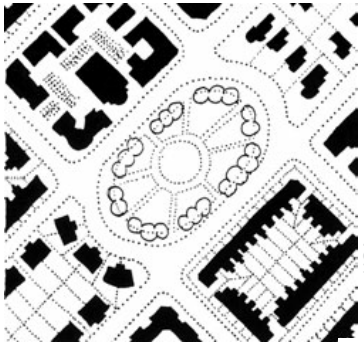

Desire lines for pedestrians are the shortest routes possible ✓

Gated communities and private roads are impermeable and unacceptable ✗

Development should ensure the layout and route hierarchy are easy to understand for those visiting the site or passing through. It should provide ease of movement for all, within and through the site; facilitating desire-lines for pedestrians and cyclists wherever possible, potentially using filtered permeability where appropriate.

All routes should be public and free to use at any time and gated developments are not acceptable. Cul-de-sacs and private roads should be avoided wherever possible.


Shared space for all modes of transport ✓




Perimeter blocks allow for good legibility ✓

## b. Open space

A suitable range of open space should be an integral part of new development.

Larger development should include a sufficient range of well-designed open spaces, varying in scale and character. Parts of streets, designed as shared space, with quality planting, seating and paving and sheltered from car movement can be valuable, attractive open space.

Well-designed landscaping can provide for several uses at once. For instance, an area used for sustainable urban drainage could also provide for biodiversity, visual amenity and informal play. It is important to locate open spaces so that they are well-overlooked and easily accessible to residents. Sufficient, well-placed seating should be included.


A simple green open space can be used for play, recreation and visual amenity ✓

Well-designed streets can also be used for play and as a meeting space ✓


Attractive, useable, accessible and overlooked public space ✓

## c. Views

The potential for attractive views should inform the layout of new development; integrating the development with its context.

Development should line up new streets and building massing to maintain or create attractive public views of key buildings or features wherever possible. Protected views of the Wembley Arch, as identified in the Wembley Area Action Plan (2015) should be respected.


A street lined up to provide a vista to a heritage building, providing a visual stop ✓

A street lined up to provide a vista to a heritage building, providing a visual stop ✓

The Wembley stadium arch is an iconic element that can be seen from many places in Brent ✓

d. Landscape structure

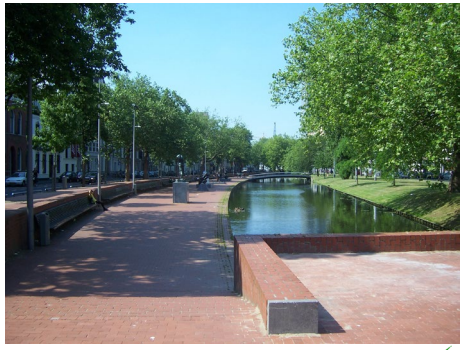
Landscape design, including green and blue infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems (SUDS), should be an integral part of new development.

Green infrastructure, including parks, fields, hedges and trees, can provide attractive views, recreation and biodiversity. A range of well-designed green infrastructure of different types and sizes should be integrated into development, including linear parks and tree-lined streets.

Blue infrastructure, including rivers, streams, canals, ponds and swales can provide valuable visual amenity and should be designed as such, with public routes and building frontage along it. Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) aim to manage the flow of surface water run-off (rain water). They can include attractive natural features such as swales and ponds, but also underground storage tanks where necessary.

Blue infrastructure and SUDS should be considered as part of early masterplanning as they may not easily be integrated afterwards. They should combine visual amenity with their drainage function wherever possible. Developers should refer to Policy DMP 9B or subsequent Local Plan policy on on-site water management and surface water attenuation.

A green route, with active frontage along a green open space ✓



A blue and green route ✓

Attractive Sustainable Urban Drainage ✓

SUDS that double up as an area for play and visual amenity ✓

4.1 Block structure and active frontage – *New development should create well-dimensioned perimeter blocks wherever possible; providing active frontage and maximising sunlight into amenity space.*

a. Does the development consist of a clear network of through routes and buildings fronting these routes in the form of perimeter blocks?
b. Are apartment buildings treated the same as houses, incorporated into the streetscene and designed with dual frontage wherever possible?
c. Are non-residential uses incorporated into the streetscene and wrapped with other uses where necessary to provide active frontage?
d. Are routes and spaces designed as open, public and fully accessible space?

4.2 Parking – *New developments should provide a suitable amount of parking in a mix of parking solutions that are convenient, efficient and facilitate good urban design.*

a. Does the development provide a mix of positive parking solutions for cars, motorcycles and bicycles, including a suitable level of on-street parking for cars and bikes?
b. Does the development minimise the amount of negative parking solutions, including front garden parking?

4.3 Street trees – *New development should provide street trees to all streets and retain existing trees where possible.*

a. Do development layouts incorporate existing mature trees and tree groups in the public realm wherever possible, providing visual amenity?
b. Do streets and spaces incorporate semi-mature street trees of a suitable specification within the public realm?

4.4 Front gardens – *New dwellings should have green front gardens; taking into account existing context and character.*

a. Do new dwellings have green front gardens with suitable low boundary treatments, encouraging use for planting?
b. Do new dwellings have green front gardens of suitable dimensions, encouraging use for planting whilst making efficient use of space?

4.5 Public realm – *Street design should reflect the street hierarchy and accommodate for movement and the street as a place accordingly.*

a. Do streets designs reflect the right balance of movement and place functions relevant to their place in the route hierarchy?
b. Do the design and materials of the public realm reflect pedestrian priority over vehicular movement?

4.6 Larger sites – *Larger sites should integrate with their surroundings and provide a clear network of routes, views, open space and landscape*

a. Does the development have a clear route hierarchy and facilitate ease of movement and access for all?
b. Is open space an integral part of new development?
c. Does the potential for attractive views inform the layout of new development; integrating the development with its context?
d. Is landscape design, including green and blue infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems (SUDS), an integral part of new development?

# 5 Amenity and Services

**Principle 5.1**

**New development should provide adequate privacy and amenity for new residents and protect those of existing ones.**

Development should ensure a good level of privacy inside buildings and within private outdoor space. Directly facing habitable room windows will normally require a minimum separation distance of 18m, except where the existing character of the area varies from this. A distance of 9m should be kept between gardens and habitable rooms or balconies. Reduced distances between new frontages may be acceptable subject to consideration of overlooking and privacy as well as high quality design and solutions which can sometimes mitigate impacts and allow for efficient use of land.

For sites within an existing street scene, the distance between front elevations should normally be determined by the character of road widths or set-backs from roads in the area. Windows may be designed to direct views in certain ways and to avoid overlooking in other directions.

Privacy should be balanced with active frontage and overlooking of public spaces. Too small privacy strips or too small overlooking distances cause people to leave the blinds closed, reducing animated facades and active frontage as well as views from within the home. Front gardens of 2-4m depth can provide the right balance.

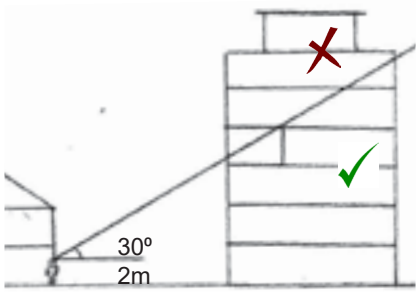
Medium sized front gardens providing sufficient privacy for people to leave their ground floor curtains open ✓

A narrow privacy strip will not provide much privacy and is unlikely to be planted ✗

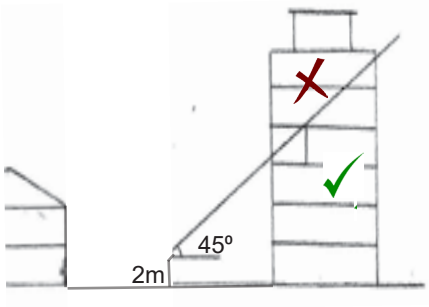
Development should ensure a good level of daylight, sunlight and outlook, throughout the day and the year and minimise the impact on surrounding properties and spaces. At the date of publication, Brent supports the use of 'Site Layout planning for daylight and sunlight: a guide to good practice' produced by BRE (BRE209). Daylight and sunlight should be evaluated from the initiation of the project. The comfort and safety implications associated with wind should be evaluated for all tall buildings and those significantly taller than their surroundings.

The building envelope should be set below a line of 30 degrees from the nearest rear habitable room window of adjoining existing property, measured from height of two metres above floor level. Where proposed development adjoins private amenity / garden areas then the height of new development should normally be set below a line of 45 degrees at the garden edge, measured from a height of two metres.

The 2:1 guidance for two storey extensions outlined in the Residential Extensions and Alterations SPD2 applies for commercial developments next to residential as well as between residential developments. This requires new buildings and extensions to not extend further beyond the neighbouring building line than half the distance to the centre of the nearest habitable room. Towards public streets and spaces, it is expected that buildings continue the established builidng line.




The 30 degree rule




The 45 degree rule

**Principle 5.2**

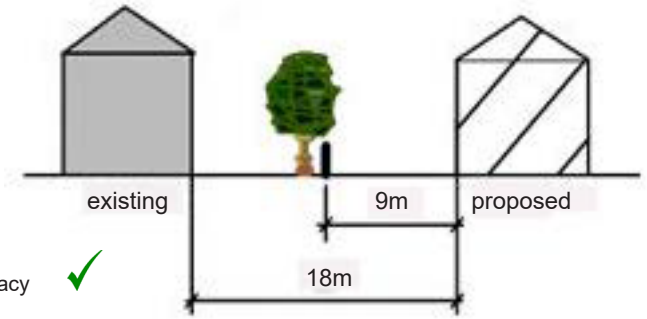
**New development should provide good levels of private outdoor space and well-designed communal amenity space for new residents.**

Private and communal amenity space should be provided in accordance with the Mayor's latest guidance and other Brent adopted guidance. Brent's policy DMP19 states that the standard sizes of external amenity space to satisfy residents' needs are:

- 50 m2 for family housing (3 bedrooms or more) including ground floor flats
- 20 m2 for other flats

Private amenity space should be accessible to all dwellings from a main living room, ideally without level changes. It should also be planned to take maximum advantage of daylight and sunlight. Where sufficient private amenity space cannot achieve the full requirement of the policy, the remainder should be provided in the form of communal amenity space. Privacy of private spaces should be considered. Communal spaces should benefit from good levels of natural surveillance.

Apartments and duplexes at ground floor should be provided with a minimum 1.5m deep front garden with an additional 0.5m strip for planting against the public realm. Projecting balconies need to be well spaced to avoid over shadowing of balconies below and generally not used at higher levels where they are subject to extreme weather conditions. Minimum width and depth for balconies and private external spaces is 1.5m.



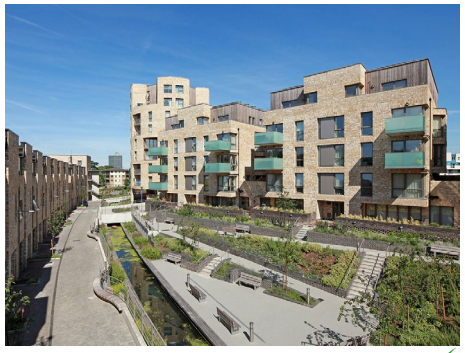

18m and 9m distances promote adequate garden sizes and privacy ✓

Roofs should be used as amenity space and support biodiversity wherever possible.They can also play a positive role in improving townscape by greening urban areas with the ecological benefits of reducing the impacts of climate change. Set-backs from the building edge will be required where roof gardens would be unacceptable in terms of overlooking impacts on neighbours' amenity or undermining the established character of the area.

Communal amenity spaces should be designed by a landscape architect and will be expected to create a usable and attractive environment, including tree planting and landscaping. They should include playable spaces and features complying with the London Plan Play and Recreation SPG. Amenity space that lacks clear landscape proposals and consists of simple grassed or hard surfaced areas is not acceptable.


Generous balconies; allowing for various uses and views ✓


Generous balconies, internal and external to the facade; adding depth ✓



Useable communal space with seating, visual and ecological benefits ✓

Roof gardens are efficient use of space and can aid leisure and biodiversity ✓

**Principle 5.3**

**Services, bin and bike storage, should be designed as part of the building envelope wherever possible; minimising visual impact on the streetscene.**

Sufficient storage, including for bins and bikes, should be provided in a safe, convenient location, sheltered from the weather. Development will be expected to provide adequate safe and secure cycle parking, for residents and visitors, in accordance with London Plan and sub-regional policies.

Bin and bike storage elements should normally not protrude from the front of buildings as this can limit visibility of ground floor windows and doors and has a negative impact on active frontage and passive supervision. Positive solutions include communal bin storage, potentially underground within the streetscene, to the rear of properties with suitable access or within the building envelope, away from facades providing active frontage.

New development will be expected to comply with Brent's "Waste and Recycling Storage and Collection Guidance for Residential Properties", including the amount of waste storage and the maximum distance for residents and operatives to wheel rubbish to and from storage areas.

Other services, such as meter boxes, gutter pipes and satellite dishes, should be designed in a way that minimises their visual impact and best fits in with the building and the local character. This involves attention to size, colour, materials and location. Meter boxes can be placed out of sight or in a similar colour to the building. Gutters and drainpipes can be provided in a suitable colour or integrated within the façade early in the design process.

In a Conservation Area, metal gutters and drainpipes can minimise harm to the existing character. For apartment blocks, communal satellite dishes should be provided out of sight where possible.


Drain pipes not designed in from the start are likely to detract from the facade ✗

Apartment buildings should provide communal communications facilities ✗


Secure on-street bicycle parking can eliminate the need for on-plot solutions and retain active frontage ✓

Inactive protruding elements to the front of the building, blocking views from and to ground floor doors and windows ✗

## 5.4 Space standards

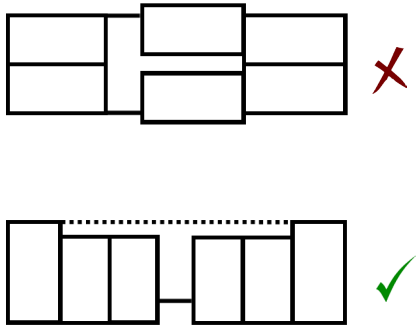
**Principle 5.4**

**New development should provide adequate space, access and orientation and adhere to the relevant space standards.**

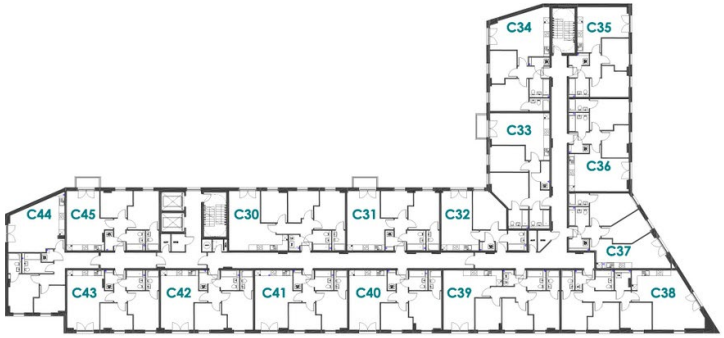
Development should comply with national Technical Housing Standards, the London Plan and the Mayor's Housing SPG. 90% of housing needs to meet Building Regulation requirement M4(2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings' and 10% M4(3) 'wheelchair user dwellings'.

In addition:

- The number of units per core and storey should not normally exceed 8 in order to encourage neighbourly interaction. Tall buildings may need to reduce the amount of flats per floor in order to create slender buildings and to avoid single-aspect flats.
- Internal communal corridors should be 1.5m wide minimum and ideally have windows which open to promote cross ventilation and maximise daylight.
- Housing development must maximise dual aspect homes and normally avoid single aspect dwellings.
- The design must avoid single aspect units, in particular north and south facing ones. Genuine dual aspect dwellings require different facades to provide the necessary benefits and adhere to London Plan policy D4 and paragraph 3.4.5 'single aspect dwellings'. A stepped façade or corner window does not constitute dual frontage.



Central corridor with single aspect flats vs gallery access, providing dual frontage with opposing facades




A deep block layout with long, narrow corridors, far too many flats per core, no private outdoor space and a majority of single-aspect flats

## 5.5 Lighting and noise



**Principle 5.5**

**Buildings and spaces should be designed to minimise potential noise and light pollution.**

Lighting of buildings should be carefully considered to minimise impact on local character during night-time and to protect residential amenity. Flood-lighting, up-lighting and external lighting on buildings should generally be avoided. Buildings and surrounding areas should be designed to ensure sufficient daylight to avoid a need for electric lighting during daytime.

Lighting in developments and public spaces, whilst ensuring safety and visibility for people at night, should always be directed for its purpose and not create glare or light pollution on residents' homes. Flood-lit areas and lit-up advertising that detract from local character should be avoided.

Developments should minimise and mitigate the existing and potential adverse impacts of noise. BS4142 2014 emphasises the "characteristics" of sound as well the sound levels, for example the annoyance and repetition. These are particularly useful when assessing developments next to dual carriageways, railways, commercial (early morning deliveries at supermarkets and late night noise at nightclubs and bars) and industrial developments.

Up-lighting of buildings detracts from the local character

## 5.6 Amenity and Services: checklist

5.1 Privacy and amenity – *New development should protect the privacy and amenity of existing residents and provide good levels of privacy and amenity for new residents.*

a. Does development ensure a good level of privacy inside buildings and within private outdoor space?
b. Does development ensure a good level of daylight and sunlight and views?

5.2 Private outdoor space – *New development should provide good levels of private outdoor space for new residents.*

a. Are rear gardens well-proportioned and laid out, relate well to habitable rooms of the property?
b. Are apartments provided with balconies of sufficient usable size for the occupancy?

5.3 Bins and bike storage – *Services, bin and bike storage should be designed as part of the building envelope wherever possible; minimising visual impact on the streetscene.*

a. Are services such as meter boxes, gutter pipes and satellite dishes designed in a manner that is least visible from the street?
b. Is bin and bike storage avoided to the front of dwellings, separate from the building envelope?

5.4 Space standards – *New development should provide adequate space, access and orientation and adhere to the relevant space standards.*

a. Does development meet the relevant space standards?
b. Does development meet the standards on access, layout and orientation?

5.5 Lighting and noise – *Buildings and spaces should be designed to minimise potential noise and light pollution.*

a. Do buildings generally avoid external lighting and light pollution?
b. Is lighting within the public realm, such as street lights and advertising signs, kept to a minimum and directed away from residential windows?

# 6 Appendices

**Principle 6.1 - Building for Life 12:**

**Development should perform positively against the recommendations set out in the latest Building for Life (BfL12) guidance.**


**Integrating into the neighbourhood**

1. Connections
   Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones, while also respecting existing buildings and land uses around the development site?
2. Facilities and services
   Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?
3. Public transport
   Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?
4. Meeting local housing requirements
   Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?

**Creating a place**

5. Character
   Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?
6. Working with the site and its context
   Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates?
7. Creating well defined streets and spaces
   Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?
8. Easy to find your way around
   Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?

**Street & home**

9. Streets for all
   Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?
10. Car parking
    Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?
11. Public and private spaces
    Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?
12. External storage and amenity space
    Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles?

There are four key steps that will improve design in developments in Brent:

**Expertise**

It is strongly advised that skilled architects, landscape architects, planners and other trained design professionals are engaged in new development proposals. The professional bodies for these organisations can provide appropriate contacts (RIBA, Landscape Institute, RTPI). Websites such as the Housing Design Awards and Built for Life may give indications of those practices that can produce high quality work. The professionals must show evidence of considering policy and guidance to ensure good design quality.

**Pre-application and Design Review**

It is strongly recommended that pre-application advice is sought which enables developers to discuss the development proposals with Brent officers and potentially the Planning Committee before formally submitting a planning application.

Where applications raise more complex issues, for example taller buildings, large scale regeneration, or where it is likely to impact on a sensitive setting, design review by a panel (of external independent experts across a variety of disciplines) is likely to be recommended, e.g. CABE Design Review Panel. This is strongly encouraged at the pre-application stage. More than one design review may be necessary. Weight shall be given to comments from the design review process

**Ensuring a quality development**

The Council is keen to ensure the delivery of quality after the grant of planning permission. The transfer of land ownership after planning approval can sometimes lead to reduced design quality. Appropriate design details of the development (design codes) should be conditioned to reflect the quality of the approved submission.

**Presentation Standards and Consultation**

In order that the planning authority and the public can make a balanced assessment of submitted schemes, the applicant will be expected to submit the following (in addition to the normal set of scaled plans) for applications for major developments and applications affecting a listed building or within a conservation area:

- A Design and Access Statement which is detailed enough for applicants to explain how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, whilst demonstrating that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users. Planning Practice Guidance and CABE provide guidance on the context.
- Contextual drawings and graphics such as street elevations and perspectives that illustrate the proposed development.
- Developers will be expected to examine the character of an area as part of the overall design process. The Greater London Authority's Character and Context SPG sets out good methodology to interpret the character of an area.
- For outline applications, design codes for major developments such as elevation detailing should be included. In larger scale developments a masterplan should be agreed and conditioned for use in setting the design quality for subsequent reserved matters applications.
- For full applications, architect's drawings (ideally RIBA Stage 4) at 1:50, or in some cases 1:20 that provide sufficient clarity on particular design features e.g. the colour and quality of brick or stone work, the width of window reveals or how a glazed atrium might connect to a historic building.
- The Planning Committee will be determining major applications therefore high quality, clear information that assists in their understanding of the development proposal such as 3D images including CGIs (computer generated images) will help the committee make an informed decision.
- For large schemes a 3D computer generated model should be provided in a format to be agreed with the local planning authority.

**National Policy and Guidance**

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2018)
- Planning Practice Guidance
- Manual for Streets 1 (DfT, 2007)
- Manual for Streets 2 (CIHT, 2010)

**London Policy and Guidance (GLA)**

- London Plan (2016)
- Draft London Plan (2018)
- Housing SPG (2016)

**Brent Council Policy and Guidance**

- Local Plan - Development Management Policies (2016)
- Local Plan - Core Policies (2010)
- Brent Placemaking Guide (2011)
- Residential Extensions SPD2 (2018)
- Shopfronts SPD3 (2018)
- Wembley Area Action Plan (2015)
- Conservation Areas Character Appraisals & Design Guides
- Advertisements (other than shops) SPG8 (2004)

**Good Practice Publications**

- Building for Life 12 (Design Council CABE / HBF / Design for Homes, 2016)
- Built for Life website (builtforlifehomes.org)
- Design and Access Statements: how to write, read and use them (CABE, 2006)
- Space to Park (URBED / University of Edinburgh / Design for Homes, 2014)
- Space to Park website (spacetopark.org)
- Urban Design Compendium, part I & II (Homes & Communities Agency)
- Urban Design Lessons (Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), 2014)
- Building Research Establishment (BRE)
- Residential Development and Trees (Woodland Trust, 2015)
- Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG.org.uk) publications:
  - Trees in the Townscape
  - Trees in Hard Landscapes
  - Species Selection for Green Infrastructure

This document is prepared by:

Spatial Planning
Brent Council
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www.brent.gov.uk/spd1

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