

a safe and healthy environment

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DESIGN PRINCIPLE 5

A SAFE & HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

New developments should create places where people feel safe and that are easily accessible to all.

key design issues

New development can be designed and laid out to reduce opportunities for crime and people's fear of crime

Crime can be deterred by ensuring that new developments have high levels of casual surveillance and clearly defined public and private areas.

Residential amenity standards are an important measure of design quality.

> safety

Creating places that are safe and that give people a sense of security is of fundamental importance. Issues of traffic safety and crime reduction should always be considered when designing new development.

safety of movement

It is a basic design requirement, that people should be able access a development, and move around it, safely, whether they are travelling on foot, by cycle or by car, and whether they are able-bodied or disabled.

Options for appropriate access locations should be established early in the design process, usually as part of the initial assessment of local context. The location of access into a development site should be determined by reference to established highway standards, including visibility splay and junction spacing requirements.

Particular attention should be paid to providing direct and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists to local services. Many recent housing developments fail to do this, and, as a result, residents and visitors find it more convenient to travel by car than walk or cycle, even for short trips.

A fresh approach is needed where roads and streets are designed as attractive and safe places for people to walk, cycle and meet, rather than just as a means of moving cars around as quickly as possible. By following a few simple design principles roads can be designed to reduce traffic speeds, improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and reducing the number and severity of accidents.

designing out crime

The way new development is laid out has an important part to play in reducing the opportunities for, and people's fear of, crime. As a good deal of crime relies on concealment, designing places that will be well used and overlooked can help to deter criminal activity. New developments will also be safer where they are designed to create a sense of ownership by local residents and make effective use of areas of defensible space. On a more basic level the use of robust doors, windows and fencing, can all enhance security.

natural surveillance

As a good deal of crime relies on concealment, maximising natural surveillance can help to deter crime. Crime is obviously much less likely to occur in busy places, than in quiet and secluded areas. Good natural surveillance of streets, footpaths, car parks and play areas is essential if people are to feel secure. In order to provide casual surveillance of public areas, buildings should generally be laid out to face directly onto roads, footpaths and open spaces. Windows should be positioned to overlook streets, parking areas and the entrances

It is beyond the scope of this Guide to consider in detail the design of roads, accesses and footpaths. Much useful and practical advice can be found in the Norfolk Residential Design Guide and in the government publication Places Streets and Movement (see appendix 2).

to buildings. On corners, blank gables facing side streets should be avoided. Bay and oriel windows are particularly effective in providing good natural surveillance. Surveillance is most effective where dwelling types and uses are mixed, as this increases the likelihood that buildings will be occupied at different times of the day.

sense of ownership

Would be criminals also rely on anonymity – being able to pass through an area without being noticed. Streets and other public spaces can be designed to infer a sense of ‘ownership’ by the occupants of adjacent properties. Where this is achieved, people are more likely to notice and report suspicious or anti-social behaviour.

Dividing developments into distinct areas can help to foster a sense of ownership. Measures designed to create a sense of identity such as visual gateways can also encourage a sense of community ownership by creating clear territorial boundaries.

Small closes or culs-de-sac generally encourage a strong sense of ownership, as residents are likely to recognise their neighbours and to notice others. This must be balanced, however, against the lower levels of movement and casual surveillance that culs-de-sac have in comparison with through routes.

Developments should not include areas of left over space that are not clearly part of the private or public realm. Because ownership is unclear, such spaces often become neglected, and can become subject to anti-social activities.


defensible space

It is important that clear distinctions are made in the layout of new development between the public realm and areas of defensible private space. Where such distinctions exist, it will be obvious to all where people are free to go at anytime and where they may go only at the invitation of the owner.

In order to deter the opportunist intruder from entering private areas, spaces around buildings should be designed to induce progressively a sense of intrusion.

Creating areas of defensible spaces and secure areas generally requires careful thought to be given to the design of boundary treatments. To the front of properties, fencing, hedging or railings can be used to define clearly public and private areas. Boundary treatments should not be so high though that restrict natural surveillance of streets from within houses, or vice versa. At the rear of properties, higher and more robust fencing or walling will generally be appropriate in order to deter casual intruders.


> residential amenity



The amenities provided to residents of new development in terms of privacy, access to daylight and outdoor space, and the protection of the amenities of existing residents living adjacent to new developments, are important measures of design quality.


Current trends towards increased residential densities will, in some instances, require designers to adopt innovative approaches to building design and site layout to ensure that amenity standards are not compromised.

privacy




Within residential developments, privacy is an important design objective. Whilst a degree of overlooking between properties is inevitable in most development situations, direct overlooking, particularly of rear facing living room and bedroom windows, should be avoided in order to meet normal expectations for privacy. Gardens should also enjoy a reasonable degree of freedom from overlooking. Privacy can be achieved in a variety of ways, including by distance, orientation or design. Successful housing layouts often make use of a combination of these devices.

distance



Different degrees of privacy can be provided by setting buildings a certain distance apart. Minimum back to back distances of around 20 metres have long been applied to this end (although slavish adherence to such standards can frustrate the creation of attractive environments). Privacy levels can be further enhanced by use of planting to provide screening.

orientation



Setting buildings at different angles, or offsetting one against another, can provide privacy, even where buildings are relatively close to each other. This device is particularly useful where buildings face each other across an enclosed street and on corner sites.

design

The design of buildings, both internal and external, can affect privacy levels. Projecting wings and porches, and garages/stores, can be positioned to provide screening between properties. Internal layout is also important — rooms needing less privacy such as kitchens can be located to look onto public areas.

daylight

Good natural light makes buildings more attractive places to live and work. Designers should ensure that buildings are laid so that they are not overshadowed themselves or overshadow others.

Sunlight also makes gardens more attractive, particularly for sitting out. Layouts should aim to provide garden areas that have the potential to receive direct sunlight for at least part of the day.

As a general rule of thumb, good interior lighting will be achieved if there are no obstructions, measured in a vertical section at right angles to a principal elevation from a point 2 metres above ground level, subtend at an angle of more than 25 degrees.

'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight' provides a useful source of information of this issue (see appendix 2 for further details)



DESIGN CHECKLIST

- > Has the development been designed to provide safe and convenient access for all?
- > Have buildings been designed and laid out to maximise casual surveillance of public areas?
- > Does the layout of development create areas of 'defensible space' and help to engender a sense of ownership?
- > Does the design and layout of development provide for good standards of privacy and access to daylight?