



Rochford District Council

**SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING
DOCUMENT 2**

HOUSING DESIGN

January 2007



ROCHFORD DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

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SPD2 HOUSING DESIGN



STATUTORY BASIS

This document has been prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) and the various relevant subsequent *statutory* instruments.

It was adopted by Rochford District Council on 11th January 2007 & came into effect on 5th February 2007.

The following are also particularly relevant to the preparation of this document:

- Under S.71 of the Planning (*Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas*) Act 1990, the *Local Planning Authority* has a duty from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are *conservation Areas*.
- Under S.39 of the *Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, the *Local Planning Authority* has a duty, when exercising its functions, to contribute towards achieving *sustainable development*.
- Under S.40 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006, the *Local Planning Authority* has a duty, when exercising its functions, to conserve *biodiversity*.

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A glossary of the technical terms used in this document is available on the Council's website or can be obtained in hard copy from the Council's offices in Rochford and Rayleigh. Terms listed in the glossary are shown in *Italic* type.



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This *Supplementary Planning Document* aims to clarify the situation with regard to the design policies used by the *Local Planning Authority* as a basis for negotiation in proposals for residential *development* in accordance with Policy HP6 (See Replacement *Local Plan* Chapter 2, Housing).

2. POLICY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The *Essex Design Guide* for Residential and Mixed Use Areas (2005) has formally been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance for the District. It is also the Council's intention to adopt the *Essex Design Guide* Urban Place Supplement as a *Supplementary Planning Document*. These documents detail the core design advice against which *developments* within the district will be assessed. Developers and designers will need to consult them in addition to this guidance note.
- 2.2 This SPD provides further guidance on Policy HP6 (Design and Layout) of the Replacement *Local Plan*. It should be noted that the SPD is required to conform to any *Development Plan Documents* that the Council may adopt and it may be necessary to amend the SPD upon the *adoption* of LDF documents.

POLICY HP6 – DESIGN AND LAYOUT

The *Local Planning Authority* will expect new housing schemes and alterations/extensions to existing housing to be a high standard of layout and design, taking into account the following key issues:

- i) **Accessibility**
- ii) **Boundary treatment**
- iii) **Car parking**
- iv) ***Density***
- v) **Gardens, play space and other shared space**
- vi) **Impact on designated sites, *Conservation Areas* and *Listed Buildings***
- vii) **Landscaping**
- viii) **Overlooking, privacy and visual *amenity***
- ix) **Relationship to existing and nearby buildings**
- x) **Scale and form**

Detailed advice on these issues is included in LPSPD2 – Housing Design and Layout, LPSPD5 – Vehicle Parking Standards and the *Essex Design Guide* for Residential and Mixed Use Areas.



2.2 The following advice in addition to the *Essex Design Guide* for Residential and Mixed Use Areas (2005) is based on local design policies. Car parking standards for housing *development* can be found in the Vehicle Parking Standards SPD.

3. MINIMUM GARDEN AREAS

3.1 The Design Guide criteria for minimum garden areas has been adapted as a result of changing household sizes. The range of house types now required includes a considerable proportion of small dwellings. The resultant higher densities mean that garden sizes are likely to be below the 100 M² minimum recommended in the Design Guide.

3.2 The *Local Planning Authority* will apply the following criteria when considering the provision of private garden areas. Houses, when built, shall have a minimum private zone garden area of 100 m². Exceptions to this requirement will be:

- i. Single storey patio housing - a walled patio area of 50 m² minimum will be required, a substantial proportion of which shall be paved.
- ii. Dwellings adjacent to a substantial area of well landscaped and properly maintained open space.
- iii. One and two bedroom dwellings - a minimum private garden area of 50 m² will be required provided that the second bedroom is not of a size that would allow sub-division into two rooms.
- iv. Three bed terraced dwellings - private gardens shall be a minimum depth of 2½ x the width of the house (except where the provision exceeds 100 m²) to a minimum private garden area of 50 m².

3.3 For flats, when built, the standard shall be:

- a) Minimum balcony area of 5 m², with the ground floor dwelling having a minimum patio garden of 50 m²; or
- b) The provision of a useable communal residents garden on the basis of a minimum area of 25 m² per flat.

These two methods for flats may also be combined.



4. LANDSCAPING

- 4.1 Landscaping is an important aspect of visual design. The lack of it can render an otherwise satisfactory scheme dull and uninteresting. Conversely, a mundane *development* can be transformed by an imaginative scheme.
- 4.2 When considering planning applications for residential *development*, the *Local Planning Authority* will need to be satisfied that adequate provision is made within the site for hard and soft landscaping, including paving, grassed and planted areas. This landscaping must be an integral part of the overall *development* scheme. Where full details of the landscaping of the sites are not included within the planning application, the *Local Planning Authority* will make any permission conditional upon a landscaping scheme being agreed and implemented within a specified period. In considering landscaping schemes the *Local Planning Authority* will require:
- a) All existing sound and healthy trees and hedgerows will be retained wherever possible, particularly in rural locations. Where a hedge or tree must be removed to satisfy visibility requirements it must be replaced, set back if necessary to satisfy these requirements.
 - b) In deciding upon the location of planting, proper consideration must be given to the mature size of the tree and its effect upon daylighting and underground services.
 - c) The provision of shrub planting will be encouraged so as to provide an instant impact in the new *development*.
 - d) There will be sufficient planting which contributes to the *development* by:
 - preventing soil erosion or stabilizing slopes;
 - providing a screen from wind, noise or view;
 - softening the appearance of buildings; and/or
 - providing a focal point in a space.
 - e) Where existing healthy trees are protected by the *conditions* of a planning consent or where tree planting is required in a landscaping scheme, the *Local Planning Authority* will ensure their long-term preservation as an integral part of the housing *development* by serving *Tree Preservation Orders* as appropriate.
 - f) Within residential environments, landscaping schemes must include the use of paving or additional features such as *public art* where appropriate to enhance the *amenity* of these areas.
 - g) Landscaping schemes in residential areas must include the use of landscaping measures to reduce the risk of flooding. This is especially important when the proposed *development* is in an area at risk of flooding as defined by the Rochford District Replacement *Local Plan Proposals Map*.
 - h) Landscaping schemes must link in with existing *habitats* to preserve or enhance *biodiversity*.



5. INFILL DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 Minimum requirements for site frontage are a useful measure to guard against the *overdevelopment* of infill sites. The standards set out below allow for the variation of frontage sizes where necessary to ensure they are compatible with the existing form and character of the area. Housing *development* on small vacant frontage plots comprising infilling shall be subject to the following building design criteria.
- 5.2 In the case of housing *development* on small vacant frontage plots comprising infilling, site frontages shall ordinarily be a minimum of 9.25 metres for detached properties or 15.25 metres for semi-detached pairs of properties or be of such frontage and form compatible with the existing form and character of the area within which they are to be sited. Consideration will also be given to the *developments* compatibility with the historic and cultural environment of the area. In addition to this the proposed *development* must not have an adverse impact upon *biodiversity* or other green spaces. Higher densities of infill *development* may be permitted in areas that are easily accessible by a choice of means of transportation and within easy access of local facilities and services.

6. EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING HOUSING

- 6.1 In assessing planning applications for extensions to existing dwellings regard will be had to the following standards. It should be noted that a conservatory will be treated in the same way as an extension.
- 6.2 Extensions to existing dwellings must conform to the following standards:
- a) Be harmonious in character, scale, form, and materials used in external construction with the existing dwelling;
 - b) Proposals for single-storey extensions shall be treated on their own merits having regard to:
 - the siting and orientation of the existing dwelling and proposed extension in relation to adjacent properties;
 - the impact of the extension on the amenities of the adjoining residents;
 - the visual impact of the proposed extension on the appearance of the streetscene;
 - the impact on the main windows in the side elevations of adjacent properties; and
 - the satisfactory positioning of rainwater goods.
 - c) Single-storey rear extensions (including conservatories) to semi-detached and terraced properties should not detrimentally impact on neighbouring residential *amenity*, by way of overlooking, overshadowing or being overbearing.



- d) First floor rear extensions to classes (b) and (c) above and all other first floor extensions shall be decided on their merits having regard to the protection of the amenities of the adjacent properties. In order to prevent excessive overshadowing of neighbouring properties extensions at first floor level shall be sited to ensure that their projection does not form a horizontal angle greater than 45° with the nearest *habitable room* window of any adjacent property;
- e) Side extensions will be decided on their merits, but shall be located a minimum of 1 metre from the plot boundaries at first floor level to prevent the coalescence of adjacent properties and the roof design should be compatible with the original dwelling.

7. SEPARATION OF DWELLINGS

- 7.1 The relationship between new dwellings and existing dwellings in the case of infill *developments* is considered to be of particular importance to the maintenance of the appearance and character of residential areas and to the overall appearance of new estates. The *Local Planning Authority* will apply the following standards to ensure the adequate separation of new dwellings.
- 7.2 In assessing planning applications for housing schemes, including the *development* of new estates and infill plots within existing residential areas, the *Local Planning Authority* will require that a minimum separation of one metre is achieved in all cases between the side boundaries of the hereditament and *habitable rooms* of the dwelling house. This will apply to the spaces between detached dwelling houses, pairs of semi-detached dwellings and blocks of terraced houses, flats or maisonettes, to provide a total separation of two metres between the sides of the buildings. It is accepted that a total side to side separation of two metres may not be achievable in all cases relating to infill applications. In all cases, however, building separation will be required to be compatible with the location of the residential *development* and the character of the existing neighbourhood.

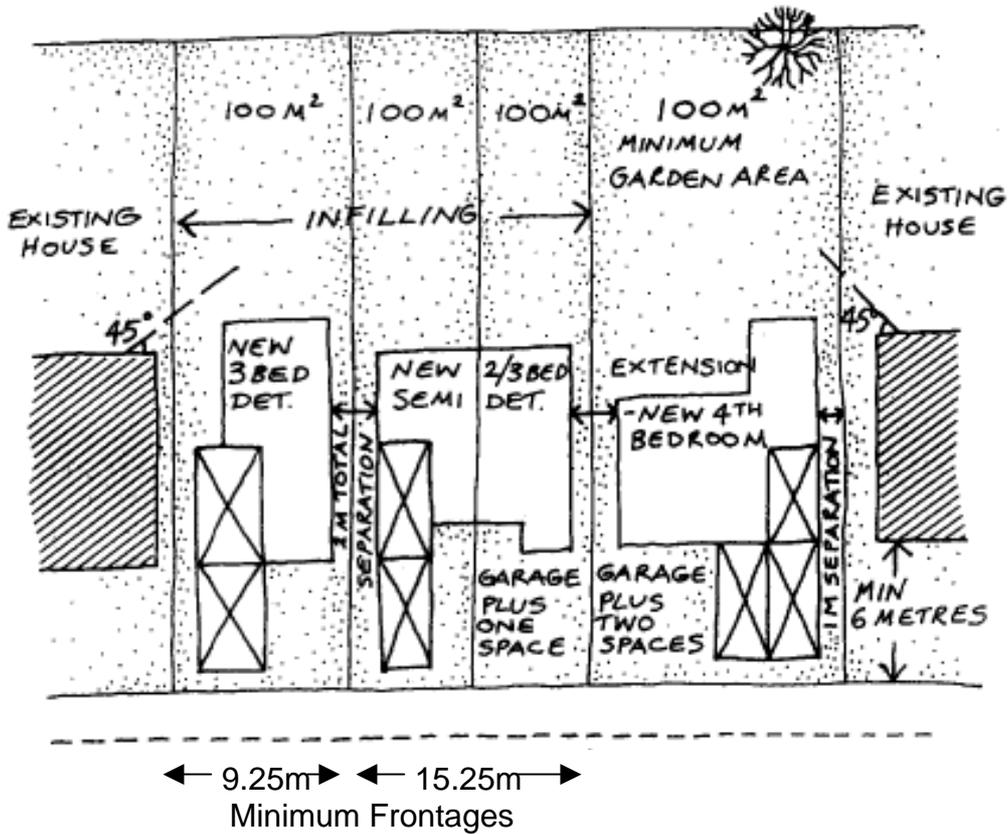
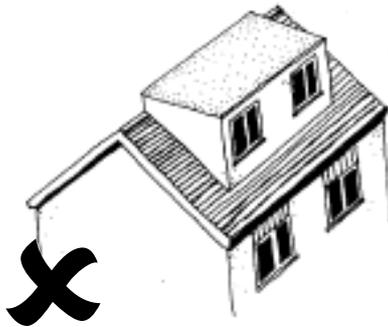


Diagram illustrating some of the principles to infill and extension development

8. ROOMS IN THE ROOF / DORMER WINDOWS

8.1 Utilising the roof space to provide additional living accommodation has proved to be an attractive proposition to householders in recent years because it offers economy in space requirements and costs. It must, however, be recognised that many dwellings were never designed to accept this form of extension and that to attempt to add a further floor by extending the lower walls vertically through the roof will produce massive dormers which can never look satisfactory.



UNATTRACTIVE FLAT
ROOFED DORMER



WELL DESIGNED DORMER

- 8.2 In proposals involving rooms in the roof of dwellings, any projecting walls or windows shall respect the scale, form, and character of the existing or proposed dwelling and shall ensure that substantial roof verges are maintained at the sides and below any projecting dormer. Front and side dormers shall have pitched roofs. Dormers projecting above the ridge line or beyond a roof/hip will be refused.

9. BALCONIES

- 9.1 Under current planning legislation (the Town and Country Planning *General Permitted Development Order*) the formation of a balcony can in many instances be carried out without the need to obtain *planning permission*. Balconies can, however, give rise to overlooking, increased levels of noise, and loss of privacy to neighbouring *curtilages*. In some cases the use of a privacy screen may be required as a condition of the *planning permission*.
- 9.2 In order to safeguard neighbouring *curtilages* from a loss of privacy and increased levels of noise, the *Local Planning Authority* will, in appropriate cases, impose suitable *conditions* in any *planning permission* for new dwellings and extensions to existing properties restricting or prohibiting as the case may be the provision of balconies.

10. OTHER DESIGN ASPECTS RELATED TO WINDOWS

- 10.1 The Fire Brigade is concerned about the use of high level windows, particularly where these were the sole windows in rooms, since these cannot be used as a means of escape. This type of window should, therefore, be avoided in the design of new buildings.



11. CONSERVATION AREAS, LISTED BUILDINGS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

- 11.1 In assessing planning applications for new housing *development*, extensions and alterations to existing housing within designated *conservation areas* and/or proposed works to buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest and/or areas recorded as being of archaeological interest on the *Historic Environment Record*, regard will be had to the additional design policies and advice contained in *Local Plan* Chapter 7 (Building Conservation and Archaeology) and the Design Guidance for *Conservation Areas* and *Listed Buildings Supplementary Planning Document*.

12. ADDITIONAL DESIGN POLICIES PRIMARILY RELATING TO ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

- 12.1 In accordance with Replacement *Local Plan* Policy HP6, design policies on estate *developments* should comply with the *Essex Design Guide* for Residential and Mixed Use Areas (2005), together with the following additional policies. The following standards relating to vehicular movement are local standards.
- The *Local Planning Authority* recognises that all surface finishes and access treatments are *material* considerations to the environment of residential estates and will, in all cases, require full details of these in advance of commencement of the *development*, to be implemented before occupation of the dwellings.
 - One adoptable road type set out in the *Essex Design Guide* for Residential and Mixed Uses Areas (2005) is the mews court (type8, page 133 and 187).
 - The *Local Planning Authority* will not automatically seek the use of mews courts and private drives in layouts where the character of the existing neighbourhood justifies a *density* and type of *development* where other alternatives can be considered.
 - Where mews courts are incorporated into new housing schemes, these should normally be closed courts serving a maximum of 12 units.
 - The provision of square mews with central parking areas will not be accepted.

13. CHILDREN'S PLAY SPACE

- 13.1 Children's play spaces are not usually considered to be necessary because of the reasonable garden sizes which are required by the *Local Planning Authority*, and taking into account that adequate *public open space* provision is located within walking distance of the proposed housing *development*. The provision of play spaces can cause problems of maintenance and supervision, whilst play in gardens allows for greater parental control.



13.2 The need for the provision of children's play spaces in new residential *developments* will, therefore, be assessed by the *Local Planning Authority* using the following criteria:

- the adequacy of private garden space for each dwelling, having regard to the *Local Planning Authority's* minimum garden areas (see previous policy in this Guidance note); and
- the provision of *public open space* facilities in relation to the proposed housing *development* (see Chapter 6 - Leisure & Tourism).

13.3 Where it is considered that the provision of a children's play space is required in a new *development* scheme, the *Local Planning Authority* will require it to be located:

- so as to minimise annoyance to adjoining occupiers;
- to maximise children's safety; and
- to ensure that it is visible from neighbouring properties.

13.4 The spaces must also be prepared for *adoption* and maintenance by the District Council or by some other agency as may be agreed.

14. **BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT**

14.1 Replacement *Local Plan* Policy HP14 highlights the criteria against which any *intensification* proposals, using long back gardens, often referred to as '*backland development*' will be assessed. This section provides detailed guidelines to complement the criteria in Policy HP14.

14.2 **ACCESS**

It is essential that an adequate and satisfactory means of access is provided to the proposed *development* site. Means of access will be assessed as follows:

- a) In the case of *backland development* accessed from an estate road - as set out in the *Essex Design Guide* for Residential and Mixed Use Areas;
- b) In the case of *backland development* accessed from a classified road – as advised by the Essex County Highways department;
- c) In all cases - any access to a *backland* site which is in close proximity to existing dwellings and would detrimentally affect the visual and residential *amenity* of those dwellings by virtue of noise, dust or fumes, disposal of rubbish or create road safety problems will be refused.



Applications for *backland development* will also need to show that the proposal will not result in any adverse impact upon sites of cultural and historic importance, or upon *biodiversity* and green spaces.

14.3 TANDEM RELATIONSHIP

Any *development* which produces a 'tandem relationship' between dwellings with one dwelling directly facing the rear of another will not be acceptable. Such a relationship will result in overlooking and privacy problems to the detriment to the *amenity* of existing residents.

14.4 SCALE OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The scale and form of the proposed *development* will be crucial in the design of a successful scheme. A *development* which is out of scale and unduly obtrusive to the outlook of surrounding *development* will be refused. In this respect a bungalow may be acceptable in a *backland* situation where a house is not.

15. SUB-DIVISION OF SINGLE DWELLING HOUSES WITHIN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

15.1 As explained in the Housing Chapter of the *Local Plan*, the *Local Planning Authority* is keen to encourage wherever possible the sub-division of single dwellings into smaller units of accommodation, but not at the expense of the residential *amenity* of surrounding properties. The section provides detailed guidelines to complement the criteria included in Policy HP16. Car parking standards are detailed further in the Vehicle Parking Standards SPD.

15.2 CAR PARKING

The spaces must be sited so as not to adversely affect the *amenity* of neighbouring residents or the character and appearance of the street (see also Vehicle Parking Standards SPD).

15.3 GARDENS

The standard for minimum garden areas is set out previously in this Guidance note. Garden areas must be sited to allow convenient access from all flats in a scheme.



15.4 APPEARANCE OF THE SCHEME

All conversion proposals will preserve, as far as possible, the appearance of the property as a single dwelling house. Where an extension or loft conversion is proposed this will be considered against the detailed design policies in The *Essex Design Guide* for Residential and Mixed Use Areas and elsewhere in this note.

15.5 OVERLOOKING AND PRIVACY

Proposals must not give rise to overlooking and unreasonable loss of privacy to adjoining properties. In this respect, the location of living rooms on any upper floor must not directly overlook the private garden areas of adjoining properties. The inclusion of an external staircase which would be visually intrusive and create daylighting and overlooking problems will not be acceptable.

15.6 INTERNAL LAYOUT

The internal layout must be carefully arranged to prevent noise disturbance to adjoining properties. This will be particularly important in *conversions* involving semi-detached or terraced dwellings. The provision of noise insulation materials is likely to be a pre-requisite to the granting of planning consent.

15.7 DENSITY

The *Local Planning Authority* is conscious of the need to ensure the best use is made of land within the urban area to help reduce the pressure for *development* in the *Green Belt*. Nevertheless, a careful assessment will be made of the *density* of conversion proposals in relation to surrounding properties. Proposals which will result in *over-development* or unreasonably high *density* compared to the surrounding area will not be acceptable.

16. ENCLOSURE OF GRASS VERGES

- 16.1 Grass verges and *amenity* areas do contribute to the character and appearance of housing estates and are intended for public benefit. The *Local Planning Authority* considers that such areas are better retained as open areas with soft landscaping, but there may be occasions when enclosure in an adjacent private garden is acceptable, particularly where there is a history of neglect. This section provides detailed guidelines to complement the criteria included in Policy HP18.



16.2 VISUAL APPEARANCE

Grass verges and open *amenity* areas were usually intended to be an integral part of estate design and layout. Where such areas continue to make an important contribution in this respect and where neglect is not a problem the *Local Planning Authority* will prefer to see their retention rather than enclosure into an adjacent private garden. Enclosure in these cases can result in a significant change in the overall design, layout and symmetry of an estate or locality to the detriment of the *amenity* of all the residents.

16.3 HIGHWAY SAFETY

Many grass verges or open areas were provided specifically to ensure adequate vision at junctions for motorists and pedestrians alike. The *Local Planning Authority* will resist proposals for the enclosure of verges originally intended for this purpose. Where enclosure is contemplated it may be desirable to require walls and fences to be set slightly back from the highway edge, for their maximum height to be restricted to 600mm and for construction to be in non-solid materials.

16.4 WALLS AND FENCES

Where enclosure involves the provision of a screening wall or fence the *Local Planning Authority* will require the structure to be provided to a high standard design. Too often, boundary walls and fences are of poor quality and within a short space of time they deteriorate with a resultant impact on the visual appearance of a residential estate or locality.

16.5 TREES

In cases where street trees exist on grass verges, the *Local Planning Authority* will require those trees to be retained and *Tree Preservation Orders* will be served where necessary.

17. SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEMES

17.1 SETTING

Where the proposed sheltered accommodation will be within an area of single family dwellings, it will be important to ensure that the new building is compatible in height and bulk with the surrounding dwellings and where the surroundings are particularly open and spacious the new *development* must reflect this same character. In *Town Centre* locations there will be more opportunity to vary the *density*, form and character of the *development*.



17.2 TRAFFIC AND NOISE

In a predominantly residential area the traffic travelling to and from a sheltered scheme can have an impact on the *amenity* of the area and it is essential that areas set aside for parking, garaging and for access roads suitably reflect this sensitive issue. In particular, car parking areas should be kept away from private *amenity* space and fences and screening walls provided in appropriate locations.

17.3 PRIVATE AMENITY SPACE

Many of the people living in sheltered accommodation are no longer concerned about tending their own garden, but do still enjoy the opportunity to sit and enjoy a private garden area. The *Local Planning Authority* considers therefore that it is appropriate to identify an area within any sheltered scheme of 25 square metres of private *amenity* space per unit including warden accommodation.

17.4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

All category 2 sheltered type schemes i.e. with a resident warden must be provided with appropriate communal facilities. Furthermore all schemes will be designed with facilities for elderly people and include adequate warden accommodation. Schemes must include facilities for the storage and charging of invalid buggies.

Refuse and *recycling* storage facilities and any external drying areas will be screened and located where they will not be detrimental to the appearance and amenities of the locality.

18. PURPOSE BUILT FLATS

18.1 LOCATION

Within areas comprising predominantly single family dwellings, purpose built flatted schemes have the potential to detract from the amenities of the area if they do not respect the height, bulk and general spaciousness of their surroundings. For example, three or four storey accommodation will usually be entirely inappropriate in an area of single family dwelling houses, but fit well into the skyline in a *Town Centre* location. Furthermore, a *Town Centre* location will often be more suitable in terms of accommodating traffic and parking and offer more scope for interesting and innovative design. The *Local Planning Authority* must be satisfied that any proposed scheme adequately reflects the character and appearance of its surroundings.



18.2 GARAGING AND PARKING

Garaging and parking provision will not give rise to unduly large areas of hard surfacing or be sited so as to adversely affect the visual amenities of the area or adjoining residents or give rise to nuisance from lights, noise or fumes.

18.3 OVERLOOKING

No scheme should give rise to unacceptable overlooking of private garden areas or loss of privacy or daylighting to adjoining properties especially due to the location of living rooms on upper floors.

18.4 REFUSE AND RECYCLING STORAGE

Refuse and *recycling* storage facilities and external drying areas will be screened and located where they will not be detrimental to appearance and *amenity*.

18.5 CYCLE STORAGE

Schemes must include provision for the storage of bicycles to the standards set out in SPD5 Vehicle Parking Standards. Residential cycle parking must be fully secure and weather protected.

SPD2 HOUSING DESIGN





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