



Rochford District Council

**SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING
DOCUMENT 6**

**DESIGN
GUIDELINES FOR
CONSERVATION
AREAS**

January 2007



ROCHFORD DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

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SPD6 DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR CONSERVATION AREAS



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*.

SPD6 DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR CONSERVATION AREAS



CONTENTS

Section		Page
1	Introduction	1
2	Policy background	2
3	Design guidance - general	3 – 5
4	Design guidance - specific design details	6 - 11
5	Design guidance - extensions	12
6	Design guidance - conservatories	13
7	Design guidance - garages	14
8	Design guidance - boundary treatment	15

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.



SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

1

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 *Conservation areas* have been designated to preserve and enhance the character of a whole area. The special architectural or historical interest of a *conservation area* lies in the unique combination of elements such as building style, street pattern and open space.
- 1.2 The special nature of *conservation areas* means that they are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of insensitive *development*. Any *development*, including new buildings and extensions or other alterations should be carried out in a way that does not harm the character they possess. Careful consideration must be given to below ground archaeological deposits.
- 1.3 However it should be remembered that *conservation areas* are not museums; they need to change and evolve over time just as they have always done. Carefully designed new buildings can make a positive contribution to character and there are situations where the sensitive *redevelopment* of an eyesore can enhance the quality of an area.
- 1.4 The advice contained in this *Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)* is not intended to be prescriptive. There is little value in modern architecture simply reproducing all the building styles that have gone before. Good design in *conservation areas* leans towards a “traditional” approach to *development*; appropriate materials and building forms are used to create a modern reflection of the vernacular architecture rather than a slavish copy.
- 1.5 When considering particular sites, it is important to note that the application of this guidance will often be improved by the knowledge and skilful interpretation of a designer. The application of rigid, quantitative standards can result in stilted *development* in terms of imagination and designs of a mediocre standard. The selection of a suitable designer is a vital initial step and advice can be sought from relevant professional bodies.
- 1.6 There must be early contact with the Planning Department before submission of applications.



SECTION 2 – POLICY BACKGROUND

2

2. POLICY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This *Supplementary Planning Document* provides further detail on the design policies set out in the Rochford District Replacement *Local Plan* and the emerging *Development Plan Documents* of the *Local Development Framework*. Policy BC1 of the Replacement *Local Plan* in particular, gives the criteria by which applications for *development* within *conservation areas* will be considered.
- 2.2 The guidance builds on provisions within the Planning (*Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas*) Act 1990 to preserve and enhance *conservation areas*. Account has been taken of PPS1 *Delivering Sustainable development* (2004) and PPG15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* (1994).
- 2.3 Proposals for the *development* of land adjacent to *conservation areas* and other sensitive areas will be considered with reference to the design advice in this SPD. It should be noted that where the proposed *development* relates to *Listed Buildings*, higher standards of design will be required.



3. DESIGN GUIDANCE – GENERAL

- 3.1 For new *development* to fit within the overall framework of a *conservation area* it must reflect the local characteristics of the neighbourhood. When designing a new building the starting point must be to consider the context of the site and the existing built environment. It is essential to make an assessment not only of the built form, materials and detailing, but also of the character of the spaces between the buildings and the appearance of the street scene. The following section outlines the principle points of consideration.

Scale and Form

- 3.2 Scale must reflect that of the surrounding buildings and be proportional to the setting of the area. In some areas uniform building height is the character of the street and it would not be appropriate to introduce variations in the general roofline or eaves line, while in other locations irregular building height might be accepted.

Scale

- 3.3 The mass of a new building must not dominate or conflict with the adjoining properties. Within the settlement areas of Rochford District the scale is primarily that of two-storey domestic architecture.
- 3.4 Traditionally the horizontal scale of urban frontages is long and narrow and therefore the amalgamation of more than one plot to form larger sites is not desirable.
- 3.5 The height of new buildings must be in keeping with the existing character of the area.

Form

- 3.6 The individual elements of a new *development* must be related proportionally to each other. In addition the form must be appropriate to its immediate neighbours and any important features on surrounding buildings.
- 3.7 The traditional building form in the District is that of two-storey pitched roofs with the roof generally spanning a width of 5 to 6 metres. Additionally there is the limited occurrence of three storey buildings in *town centres* that are more commercial/public building in character.
- 3.8 Where extension are carried out they must produce additive rather than subtractive forms.



Materials

- 3.9 Before transport improvements in the nineteenth century builders were largely restricted to the range of materials found in their locality. This has resulted in the creation of buildings that have a local distinctiveness and cohesiveness. Often new *development* is disappointing because although the overall design is suitable it is poorly detailed and the choice of materials inappropriate. Ensuring that the correct detail and materials are specified requires time and care. Advice can be obtained from Planning Policy on 01702 318002 or planning.policy@rochford.gov.uk
- 3.9 In the district a wide range of traditional building materials has been employed. For walls brick (both red and stock), smooth plaster render and featheredged weatherboarding on timber frames have all been used. Traditional roofing materials include clay plain tiles and pantiles, natural slate and on occasion thatch.
- 3.10 The width of buildings and the resulting roof pitch dictates the type of covering that should be used. Peg tile roofs are steeply pitched normally between 35° and 45°, while slate and pantiles have a lower pitch of between 25° and 35°. It should be noted that pantiles are rarely used for the main roofs of buildings, they are usually found as subordinate roofs, or on single storey agricultural buildings or other outbuildings.
- 3.11 The plain tiles or pantiles found on older buildings are traditionally hand-made, resulting in a roof that exhibits a particularly attractive uneven appearance due to the small differences between individual tiles. New hand-made tiles are available and are preferable in many situations to the uniformity of those that have been machine-made. The re-use of appropriate traditional building materials provides an alternative option which can enhance the delivery of *sustainable development*.
- 3.12 The richness of a building lies in the texture, colour and durability of its materials and the way they have been used. It is often forgotten that time and the elements are important effects. The weathering of natural materials results in an appearance that improves with age and therefore modern artificial alternatives are not generally acceptable.
- 3.13 Within areas of *Flood risk*, as defined on the Replacement *Local Plan proposals map*, consideration must be given to the materials and design of schemes to ensure that they are appropriate to the area.



Siting and *Townscape*

- 3.14 The importance of the setting of a building is often forgotten. It is derived not only from the relationship to other buildings, but also by the spaces created between buildings.
- 3.15 The siting of a new building in an existing settlement must take account of the impact it makes on existing spaces: whether this is enclosed or open. A tightly knitted *townscape* should be sought, although in rural locations a more open character is appropriate. The scale and height of existing buildings will influence the *townscape* character and in certain commercial areas a more significant scale for a new building may be appropriate.
- 3.16 When considering the streetscape and siting of buildings it is important that adequate consideration is given in the design to the permeability and connectivity of the proposed *development*. The streetscape must be designed with consideration for crime prevention and the principles of ‘Secured by Design’ – www.securedbydesign.com (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2004).
- 3.17 *Development* must respect the alignment of the street of which it is part. This means building to the same frontage as the existing and keeping any angles, which may reflect earlier subdivisions. Extensions may be set back from the main building line to allow a clear visual break between existing and new work.
- 3.17 The siting of new *development* within *Flood risk* areas will have design implications. Any proposed *development* within areas at risk of flooding must follow the guidance set out in Chapter 8 (Natural Resources) of the Rochford District Replacement *Local Plan*. Policy NR11 (*Development within Flood risk Areas*) sets out how applications for *development* in *Flood risk* areas will be assessed.



4. DESIGN GUIDANCE – SPECIFIC DESIGN DETAILS

General

- 4.1 Successful *development* depends on the quality of the detailing. A great deal of the *development* that has taken place in the last 50 years has been disappointing and architecturally unconvincing due to incorrect usage or lack of attention. Standard pattern book “styles” tend to devalue the merits of genuine historic buildings and to blur the local identity of an area. The following notes highlight some specific areas that should be considered.

Roof

- 4.2 The roof is nearly always a dominant architectural feature; style, covering, ridge detailing, chimneys, eaves detailing, rainwater goods and verge details are all-important visual and decorative elements.
- 4.3 Raised ridge tiles used to provide extra ventilation must be avoided. It is possible to obtain hand-made ridge tiles capable of providing ventilation, but still maintaining an unbroken ridge height along the length of the roof.
- 4.4 On occasion thatch is considered to be an appropriate roofing material in a rural situation.
- 4.5 Roof design must follow local tradition and relate to the best of existing roof details. On tiled roofs simple verges with undercloaks will normally be appropriate. Verges formed by the use of bargeboards must be generally avoided unless the building is rendered or weatherboarded. Where barges are used “boots” at the base must be avoided. Verges that finish against a protective parapet are sometimes appropriate in higher status buildings.
- 4.6 There is wide range of decorative features found on historic roofs. The use of red ridge tiles, crested ridges and terminal features will be encouraged. Ridges may be protected with half or third round clay ridge tiles or, as is usual on lower pitched slate roofs, a lead roll ridge. Raised ridge tiles used to provide extra ventilation are to be avoided.
- 4.7 The form of the eaves gives the opportunity for a variety of detailed design elements. Both open eaves with exposed rafter feet and closed eaves with overhangs are appropriate. Overhangs supported on brick corbels and the use of dentil courses are suitable types of finishing. Bonnet hips are not appropriate in Rochford District. The traditional thatch material is long-straw, not reed and the detailing should be simple and in keeping with the local vernacular.



Chimneys

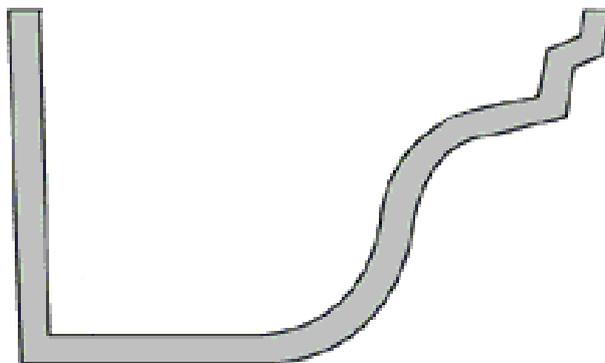
- 4.8 Chimneystacks are both formal and functional features of the roofspace and will be encouraged.
- 4.9 The construction of stacks will be encouraged. The use of corbel courses and decorative pots can enliven the silhouette and roofscape. Modern stacks tend to have a squat appearance and this is not appropriate in the *conservation area* situation, where a more imposing presence is desirable.

Plumbing and Rainwater Goods

- 4.10. External plumbing must be avoided for both visual and practical reasons. Every opportunity should be taken to rationalize and simplify the design of disposal pipes. Moulded or ogee gutters are generally more decorative and should be used in *conservation areas* when half round gutters would be inappropriate.
- 4.11 External plumbing must always be avoided and must not disturb or break through any mouldings or decorative features. Cast iron for gutters and downpipes is the first choice for new buildings in a *conservation area*. Metal is appropriate but plastic is out of character in historic environments and must be avoided. All rainwater goods must be painted black. On most buildings half round gutters with round downpipes are suitable, although gutters that are moulded or ogee in section may be more in keeping for a building which has an eighteenth or nineteenth century character.

NOTE

Ogee is a term that refers to an architectural design that incorporates a double curve in the shape of an elongated 'S'. Ogee gutters incorporate an elongated 'S' into the front face design.



Cross section of an ogee gutter



Walls

- 4.12 Walls form the main structural fabric of a building and the choice of material has a major effect on appearance. Too often in the past little attention has been given to the selection of the appropriate type of brick. The delight of traditional brickwork lies in the nature of the brick, the type of bond and the pointing (where colour and type of joint can enhance the character of the brick).
- 4.13A good mortar will always be weaker than the fabric of the wall and at least as porous. If the mortar is the correct strength any cracking will occur along the joints. Mortar that is too strong will crack in the walling fabric and must be avoided.
- 4.14 Smooth rendering is traditional. There are good reasons for preferring soft lime plaster to hard cement in terms of its ability to accept movement without cracking and its absorbent nature which allows it to dry out externally. On timber framed buildings this difference is vital to the preservation of the building. Pargetting, where external lime plaster is used in a decorative manner creating incised or moulded surfaces, is not appropriate in the Rochford District.
- 4.15 Brick, render and weatherboarding are all suitable finishes. Both red and stock bricks were used locally and either would be appropriate depending on the situation. Brickwork should always be built in Flemish or English bond. The primary feature of a wall is the building material itself and the pointing should normally be visually subservient to it. The choice of colour depends on the colour of the bricks.
- 4.16 Hard cement pointing should be avoided, as moisture will be forced to evaporate through the face of the brick only, rather than through the whole surface of the wall. To finish, pointing should be “flush” or “ironed” rather than “struck”.
- 4.17 Hard cement must be avoided and instead soft lime plaster finished with a wood float, colour washed white or cream should be used. The likely exposure to weathering and porosity must all taken into account when determining the strength of rendering. A good all round plaster mix would be 1:2:9 – cement: white lime: sand.
- 4.18 Pargetting is not appropriate for this part of the country, though simple paneling may occasionally be employed.
- 4.19 In brick walls proper arches must be over openings. Coursed brickwork or brick-on-end soldier courses are unsuitable. Cambered or flat arches must be formed using special voussoir (wedge-shaped) bricks.



SECTION 4 – DESIGN GUIDANCE – SPECIFIC DESIGN DETAILS

9

- 4.20 Weatherboarding must always be featheredge not shiplap and generally painted white or cream. The use of stains is not appropriate.

Floorscape

- 4.21 Too often modern materials, including tarmac, have been used for the surfacing of pavements, roadways and courtyard areas and this has detracted from the appearance of many well planned and executed schemes.
- 4.22 The use of traditional paving and setts will be a fundamental part of the overall appearance of any new *development* or *redevelopment* scheme. Consideration must be given to the appearance of both the front boundary and entrances gates as well as adjoining buildings. The design of floorscape, walled and gated buildings must have regard to 'Secured by Design' principles – www.securedbydesign.com (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2004).

Windows

- 4.23 Of all the detailing to new buildings (and existing buildings in the case of replacement) windows are one of the most prominent and abused features. They are an integral part of a building's character and require very careful consideration.
- 4.24 Traditional window patterns comprise designs which are symmetrically balanced about both the horizontal and vertical axes. Within the broad window types such as sash or casement there is a wide variation of detail according to date, function and region.
- 4.25 The staining of external joinery is a modern phenomenon which disguises the intricacy of the joinery and gives a dull uninteresting appearance. Paint is the correct finish for timber windows, staining is not a traditional finish and must not be used.
- 4.26 The placing of windows within the wall thickness has a considerable effect on the character of the building.
- 4.27 The fenestration (arrangement of windows), window style (including lintel and sill detailing), materials, colour and means of opening will all need thought. The widespread use of double glazed units, normally made in thick sections of UPVC, supposedly in imitation of sash has been an unwelcome visual intrusion to the appearance of buildings, particularly within *conservation areas*.
- 4.28 Opening types are commonly either vertical sliding double hung sashes or side hung casements. Occasionally, horizontal sliding (Yorkshire) sashes may be



SECTION 4 – DESIGN GUIDANCE – SPECIFIC DESIGN DETAILS

10

suitable. Top hung, bottom hung or pivoted openings are all unsuitable for use in *conservation areas*. Night vents are a 20th Century innovation and also not appropriate.

- 4.29 The thickness and moulding of glazing bars, the size and arrangement of panes and other details must be appropriate to the type/style of the building. Standardisation to one pattern found in many new “Georgian” type sashes must be avoided.
- 4.30 Dormer windows were used to light attic rooms, which were considered to be of secondary importance to the main part of the house. They were therefore very simply detailed. New dormers, if absolutely necessary, must be carefully designed to match the character of the surrounding buildings and must be detailed in a simple style. They must appear as an incident in the roof space and must not proliferate or be set close together. In design flat roofed dormers must be lead covered whilst pitched roof types must have plain tiles at a 50° pitch. The side panels, or cheeks, must be thin rather than wide to ensure the dormer appears incidental to the existing building.



- 4.31 Dormer windows have a more permanent appearance are vastly preferable to in-plane rooflights but in cases where the latter may be used the traditional 19th Century pattern should be followed. All windows and other external joinery should preferably be painted and not stained.



SECTION 4 – DESIGN GUIDANCE – SPECIFIC DESIGN DETAILS

11

- 4.32 In brickwork, window and door frames should be set back within the wall thickness so as to show a minimum reveal depth of 100mm. In rendered buildings the reveal depth is less critical and where the building is weatherboarded a timber lining should be formed around the opening. In rendered and weatherboarded buildings traditional pentice boards over window and door openings must be incorporated.

Doors

- 4.33 Doors are important elements of the historic and architectural character of any building. Many off-the-peg doors attempt to copy historic detailing but are architecturally inaccurate.
- 4.34 Traditional panelled or boarded entrance doors must be used and any patterns incorporating pseudo fanlight glazing must be avoided. It is better to keep the design as simple as possible, for example, ledged-and-braced doors and basic four or six-panelled Victorian style doors. Doors should generally be constructed in softwood and painted.
- 4.35 Attention to small details of design such as doorcases, door furniture including hinges, knockers and letterboxes adds depth to a scheme. Simple doorcases with hoods can provide interest of which there are many traditional examples in the District.



SECTION 5 – DESIGN GUIDANCE – EXTENSIONS

12

5. DESIGN GUIDANCE – EXTENSIONS

- 5.1 Whenever extensions to existing buildings in conservation and other sensitive areas are proposed all the criteria set out above will apply, but in addition, attention must be paid to the manner in which the extension may directly affect the existing building.
- 5.2 Modern extensions must not dominate the existing building in either scale, material or situation. Extensions must be designed to be in sympathy with the character of the original building so that it complements its appearance. They must be visually subordinate to the main building.
- 5.3 The main building must be used as a reference for materials and detailing. Pitched roofs must have a definite break in the ridge-line. The wall line must not be continued on the same plane. Care must be taken to follow the fenestration and detailing of the original building.
- 5.4 Whilst generally the character of the new must reflect that of the old there are circumstances where this may not apply. In areas where variety of materials and forms frequently provide most of the local character an extension may best be expressed by using contrasting but still vernacular materials. Where the existing building is itself of poor design an extension may provide an opportunity to enhance or screen its appearance.



6. DESIGN GUIDANCE – CONSERVATORIES

- 6.1 This form of extension deserves separate consideration because of its widespread popularity and the poor quality of design and materials normally proposed. Designs often take the form of elaborate Victorian or Edwardian styles which rarely sit comfortably with 20th Century buildings or simpler earlier cottages or terraces. The other problem is the proliferation in the use of UPVC materials which do not exhibit the character of a well designed softwood conservatory and can create considerable incongruity with the existing building. The grand examples of conservatory design only fit happily with large detached period houses sitting in spacious grounds.
- 6.2 Conservatories must be modest in size in relation to the original building, carefully detailed with the minimum of architectural embellishment and sensitively sited away from the principle elevations. They should take a simple lean to greenhouse form, be constructed of white painted softwood and with the minimum of fancy decoration. Conservatories must be designed to be in keeping and in harmony with the existing environment.



SECTION 7 – DESIGN GUIDANCE – GARAGES

14

7. DESIGN GUIDANCE – GARAGES

- 7.1 The siting and design of domestic garages and other out buildings is an issue that is often overlooked.
- 7.2 Buildings within *Conservation areas* must always be designed to be in scale and harmony with adjoining buildings and with the area as a whole. Garages can often be designed to look like a sympathetic outbuilding.
- 7.3 A double garage is more or less square in plan and lends itself to a pyramid roof in certain locations. Garages with a rectangular shape usually produce buildings of better proportions, for example where a garage and storage facilities have been combined under one roof with open bays and side hung doors.



SECTION 8 – DESIGN GUIDANCE – BOUNDARY TREATMENT

15

8. DESIGN GUIDANCE – BOUNDARY TREATMENT

- 8.1 The design of boundary walls, fences and gates is critical to the finished appearance of most *developments*.
- 8.2 Walls must be constructed with suitable bricks for the locality. They must be articulated with piers at suitable centres and capped with traditionally detailed copings. Major lengths of enclosing walls may require a plinth in order to give them visual substance.
- 8.3 Walls are often necessary to provide enclosure and in such cases they must be at least two metres high. Where gates are necessary in such enclosing walls, they must be close boarded in order to continue the containment.
- 8.4 Where railings are required the purpose is generally to protect and give enclosure to a yard or garden which has a residential character. Such railings and the necessary gates must be traditionally detailed with spear tops, hoops or other historic forms. The railings may be raised on low brick plinth walls with stone copings.



**PREPARED BY THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLANNING POLICY TEAM**

☎ 01702 318002
E-mail planning.policy@rochford.gov.uk
Website <http://www.rochford.gov.uk>

**Rochford District Council, Council Offices,
South Street, Rochford, Essex SS4 1BW**