

# Planning Process Overview (for Bulstrode Camp Members)

## Introduction

This is a basic introduction to the planning process, and in particular how to respond to applications. It is also meant direct you to where to look for further help. South Bucks District Council (SBDC) run the local planning process and their website, as well as Government's Planning Portal, provide a more comprehensive guide to the process.

The planning process is complicated and is stacked in favour of development and against lay people who wish to object to it. The process can involve several layers of Government oversight, all adhering to multiple policy documents that ultimately require interpretation, judgement and attributing "weight" to. Whether applying for planning permission or objecting to it, it may be wise to employ an experience planning consultant to assist in drawing together a strong case.

## Where to seek more detailed advice and information

*SBDC Planning webpages* (<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/planning>)

Includes planning guidance as well as the search engine to locate planning applications. Use the map search to search for applications in your local area, and the time filter on the right to focus on recent applications. If you are applying for permission, browsing other planning applications can be useful to understand the policies that are relevant for building in the area.

*Central Government Planning Portal* (<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk>)

National planning guidance including useful tools such as an interactive planning permission tool that lets you point at parts of a house to understand permissions required or not. (<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/house>)

## Planning Policy

All planning applications are judged against extant planning policies at the time an application is being considered. These policies have been evolving over time, and the dates that planning policy documents were issued are therefore particularly important. The current Conservative Government have tried to 'simplify' the planning process with the introduction of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) **in 2012**, an overarching policy document that superseded a plethora of national planning policies, but that also puts pressure on Local Authorities to revisit their local plans to meet the current national priorities as perceived by Government (i.e. to build more). For the South Bucks area, The *Core Strategy* (**2011**) for SBDC, issued local planning policies for the period up to 2026, and adopted older but relevant policies from the *Local Plan* (**1999**). The extant Core Strategy therefore prolongs the relevance of the local policies adopted in 1999.

Whilst developers and their consultants might try to claim that older but extant policies are out of date, they have in fact stood the test of time, particularly important when looking to protect heritage and character of neighbourhoods.

The NPPF requires local plans that are consistent with it as well as accepted national planning priorities. Currently, the NPPF, Core Strategy (2011) and adopted policies from the Local Plan (1999) are broadly consistent despite developers regularly trying to prove otherwise for their own purposes. The SBDC Core Strategy needs to be updated by 2018 to remain consistent with the NPPF, and if a new local plan has not been accepted by the Planning Inspectorate by then, planning authorities and Planning Inspectors will judge applications against the NPPF only. Locally adopted policies, such as that protecting the character of Bulstrode Camp (Residential Area of Exceptional Character – Local Policy H10), will therefore cease to be protective. \*\*

Chiltern DC (CDC) attempted to update their Local Plans recently but these were thrown out by the Planning Inspectorate. SBDC and CDC therefore joined forces to more effectively revisit their plans, and to better coordinate development across the districts for the period 2014-2036. This process is looking at all aspects of planning policy, the identification of areas for development potential and increased housing density, but also including the retesting of Green Belt zones against Green Belt criteria to free up development space. A public consultation seeking thoughts on their approach closed on 14 March 2016, but further consultation will take place once a draft Local Plan has been written.

Much of the SBDC planning website is replete with information about the development of a new Local Plan, and obfuscates the planning process for current planning applications.

## Key Policy Documents

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf)

Core Strategy (adopted 2011)

List of saved and superseded policies from the Local Plan (2011)

South Bucks District Local Plan (adopted 1999)

<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/planning/developmentplan>

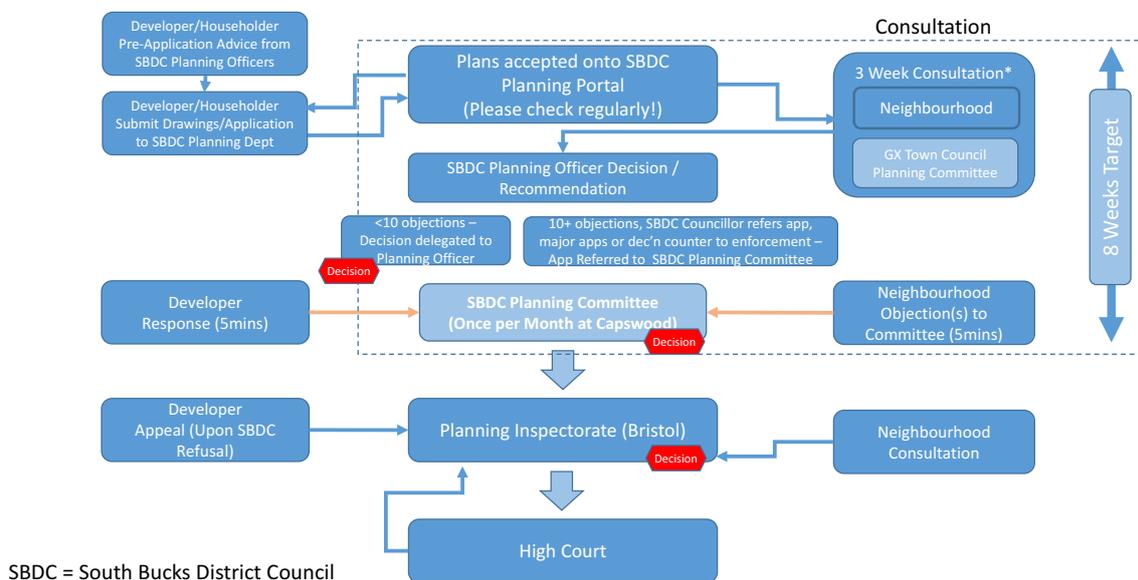
SBDC Residential Development Design Guide (2008)

<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/planning/spds/residesign>

## The Planning Process

The block diagram below summarises the planning process. It is an overview, but provides the key steps. Planning applications (if required for permission<sup>1</sup>) are initially made to SBDC who administer the approval process.

### Planning Application Process Summary



## South Bucks District Council

### SBDC Planning Process

1. The SBDC planning process is targeted to complete in 8 weeks, including any referral to Planning Committee for approval.
2. Planning Officers will often (but not always) have been consulted by applicants (pre-app advice) before applications are submitted to iron out Planning Officer objections.
3. Statutory public consultation is a 3 week window starting approx one week after applications are received by SBDC, although this timeframe can be interpreted depending on delays along the way. Significant changes to drawings partway through consultation can extend the public consultation period, but a request to the Planning Department might be needed.
4. SBDC publish all submitted documents, timings, consultation dates, and decisions on the SBDC planning website.
5. SBDC will accept objections beyond the end of public consultation because they must consider all comments received up to the time their planning officer writes their recommendation.
6. The number of objections can be important in determining whether an application is referred to Planning Committee for decision, and whether the Planning Officer can decide under Delegated Authority (see section on SBDC Planning Committee below)

<sup>1</sup> Some developments can be done under Permitted Development rights – see the Central Government Planning Portal

7. Generally, 10 objections will be needed for automatic referral to the Planning Committee. If neighbours plan to object to a development, they should always seek to ensure that 9 others also do so, or there is a strong risk that the application is determined by the Planning Officer.
8. Note:
  - a. Objections should be as specific as possible but do not need to be all encompassing to be registered. Even a directed single paragraph emailed to the [planning@southbucks.gov.uk](mailto:planning@southbucks.gov.uk) email address with the planning reference number and address of the objector, is sufficient as a counted objection.
  - b. Only one objection per household
  - c. Anyone can object, even those living further away, as long as they have reason to do so
  - d. The Bulstrode Camp Association/Board have decided collectively not to get involved in planning issues, but individual board members may be willing to object, especially to protect the character of the road. Please contact Elaine or Sue
9. For minor developments, the SBDC Planning Officers are able to write up their recommendation/decision immediately after the end of public consultation, but will do so only if no objections were forthcoming during the public consultation period.
10. If Planning Officers recommend refusal, applicants tend to (but not always) withdraw their application as the Planning Committee tend to follow an Officer's refusal.
11. Planning Officers write up their recommendations about 1 week before the Planning Committee meeting, and publish this on the planning application page.

#### *SBDC Planning Department*

All correspondence including objections, queries, requests for Committee representations contact details: [planning@southbucks.gov.uk](mailto:planning@southbucks.gov.uk). Make sure that the SBDC planning application reference is included on all correspondence.

#### *SBDC Planning Officers (public officers)*

For simple planning cases, planning officers can decide the outcome under Delegated Authority. This is the case for most applications. Officers will issue a decision notice with their rationale on the SBDC planning website.

For complex cases, planning officers make recommendations to the Planning Committee for their consideration.

#### *SBDC Planning Committee (elected District Councillors)*

An application will only be considered by the Planning Committee if:

- SBDC is the applicant
- A District Councillor has referred it to the Planning Committee
- It is a major application with 1 or more objections
- It is a minor application with 10 or more objections

The SBDC Planning Committee meets approx. once per month, and the schedule and issued agenda, supporting documents, planning officer recommendations, and minutes are available at: <http://sbd-spider2.southbucks.gov.uk/democracy/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=114&Year=0>

Public representations to the Planning Committee meeting are only allowed if a request has been formally registered with the SBDC Planning Officer or Department. Objectors are allowed a total of 5 minutes (timed) to object to an application, and the applicant is allowed 5 minutes (timed) to respond.

The Planning Committee need supported statements of objection rather than emotional appeals - particularly factual arguments quoting the most relevant extant local and national planning policies. The Committee must support any refusal with reference to planning policies, although if they approve, they need only refer to the Planning Officers recommendation. **The process is therefore inherently pro-development.**

Planning Committee members are sometimes wary of refusing marginally unacceptable planning applications because of the cost to SBDC if applicants take their case to Appeal with the Planning Inspectorate (SBDC Planning Department need to champion the Committee's refusal). This is particularly the case when SBDC planning officers have recommended approval but the Planning Committee would be going against the officer's recommendation. There are, however, several instances around Bulstrode Camp where planning officer's recommendations have been overlooked in favour of Planning Committee refusal, and their decision subsequently upheld even at Appeal to Planning Inspectorate.

Note: GX Town Council - GXTC have a Planning Committee too that meets approx twice per month on Monday evenings. This body has no authority, but its recommendations are considered by planning officers as part of their recommendations and included in their report to the Planning Committee. It is considered a single objector when SBDC planning officers count objections. As a public body, GXTC Planning Meetings are open to the public to air objections (5mins per application)

#### Planning Inspectorate (Right of Appeal to Secretary of State) - PINS

1. If applications are refused by SBDC, applicants have up to 6 months (householders have 12 weeks) to register an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol (Secretary of State).
2. Consideration by the Planning Inspectorate is targeted to report within 19 weeks of the appeal being submitted.
3. Applicants request one of three appeal procedures. If the PINS triage process accept the applicant's request for appeal, PINS decide which procedure is appropriate.
  - a. Written representations (non-complex) – most often used
  - b. Hearing (more complex with some testing of evidence needed)
  - c. Inquiry (complex needing questioning and presentation by advocates)
4. Further public comment is allowed to answer the applicant's case of appeal. Objectors can submit supplementary objections to PINS via the Planning Inspectorate website using the PINS reference number.
5. The applicant gets the opportunity to answer any additional objections, but not using new information.
6. A site visit can be requested by either the applicant or the objectors, but must be done in writing. No comment can be made to the Planning Inspector except to draw attention to physical aspects. No reference may be made to anything else (policies, statements etc)

7. Planning Inspector's can sometime take several months to finalise their report. They have several cases running in parallel.

Applicants request for appeal needs to lay out a clear case for appeal. This is the applicant's only opportunity to submit clarification (e.g. drawings, photos or statements not previously submitted in their original application to SBDC).

Notification of the appeal is run through the SBDC Planning Department who should inform all original objectors of the application that an appeal has been lodged (with new PINS reference number). SBDC publish the applicant's appeal documents on the SBDC planning website alongside the original planning application submissions.

SBDC provide PINS with a copy of the original application documents, as well as all original objections. SBDC then submit their defence of their Planning Committee's decision.

Once the appeal is accepted, there is a defined timetable for applicants and objectors. It is advisable for objectors to submit a supplementary objection that takes into account the applicant's case for appeal.

A Planning Inspector's decision / report is final and binding.

### High Court

If the Planning Inspectorate has upheld an SBDC Planning Committee's decision, then applicants could still decide to seek High Court review of the Planning Inspector's decision, but then only if they believe the process has been flawed in some way. This generally has a poor success rate for applicants and is rarely sought due to high costs. Only for large scale or high value developments do applicants follow this route, and the High Court will generally just require that the appeal be reconsidered.

### FAQs

Q. Where can I see submitted planning applications?

A. On the SBDC planning webpages: <http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/viewplanning>

Q. Which are the most relevant saved local policies for developments to the Bulstrode Camp area?

A. The most relevant saved local policy aims to protect Residential Areas of Exception Character (RAECs). Local Policy H10 – Residential Areas of Exception Character is the relevant policy, but H10 in turn refers/links to other policies that are important in maintaining a preserved character, namely :

EP3 The Use, Design and Layout of Development

EP5 Sunlight and Daylight

H9 Residential Layout and Design

H10 Residential Areas of Exceptional Character

The whole of Bulstrode Camp estate lies in a designated RAEC, although so does Windsor Road which has changed markedly over the past 2 decades, and developers have been tempted to test the interpretation of H10 especially in order to increase housing density. \*\* GXTC, and SBDC Councillors are particularly keen to ensure that the updated Local Plan contains strong protection for RAECs, Conservation Areas, and Green Belt.

Q. Where can I read the extant Local Policies?

A. The extant policies can be found within the edited Local Plan (adopted 1999) (see section on Key Policy Documents). Policies that were replaced by the Core Strategy (2011) have been struck out. The key extant policies at the time of writing this document are attached

**POLICY EP3 - THE USE, DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF DEVELOPMENT**

Development will only be permitted where its scale, layout, siting, height, design, external materials and use are compatible with the character and amenities of the site itself, adjoining development and the locality in general. Poor designs which are out of scale or character with their surroundings will not be permitted.

In assessing proposals, the Council will have regard to:-

**(a) Scale of Development**

Development should be in scale with surrounding development, including any buildings which are to be retained on the site, and should not adversely affect the character or amenities of any nearby properties or the locality in general.

The retention and provision of space between buildings should respect the scale of spaces in the locality.

**(b) Layout of Development and Siting of Buildings**

The layout of development and the siting of buildings should make positive use of the intrinsic qualities and features of the site including its topography, landscaping, water features, and views into or out of the site.

The siting of buildings should not adversely affect the character or amenities of any nearby properties or the locality in general.

The layout should not be dominated by large areas set aside for parking, servicing or access, and where extensive space is required for such activities, it should be subdivided by landscaping.

The layout of new development should, where possible, create attractive groupings of buildings and spaces between buildings.

**(c) Height of Development**

**The Council will seek the inclusion of works of art in major developments.**

The height of new development should respect the height of surrounding development, including any buildings on the site which are to be retained, and the height of buildings in the locality generally.

Proposed extensions to existing buildings should reflect the height of those buildings.

**(d) Building Form, Design and Fenestration**

Buildings should be of a form and design which would respect and harmonise with surrounding properties, including any buildings on the site which are to be retained, and with buildings in the locality in general.

Proposed extensions to existing buildings should reflect the form and design of those buildings.

The fenestration of extensions to existing buildings should respect the fenestration of those existing buildings.

The fenestration of buildings should safeguard against the loss of privacy to residential properties by reason of overlooking.

**(e) Materials**

The external materials to be used in new developments should be of a type and quality which harmonise with the materials of surrounding development including any existing buildings on the site which are to be retained. Where an existing building is to be extended, the extension should usually be constructed in materials to match the existing building as closely as possible.

**(f) Use of Land and Buildings**

The use of land and buildings should be compatible with the uses of adjacent land and buildings and with the character and amenities of the locality in general. Permission will not be granted for uses which would be, or which would have the potential to be, detrimental to the character and amenities of nearby properties or the locality in general by reason of noise, vibration, smell, pollution, disturbance, visual intrusion, loss of privacy, the impact of traffic, or other nuisance.

The scale of a proposed use should be compatible with and not adversely affect the character or amenities of neighbouring properties or the locality in general.

Where permission is granted, conditions may be imposed in order to minimise to an acceptable level the impact on adjacent uses.

**Explanation**

6.12 The Council wishes to ensure that developments are of a high standard of layout and design. Development should make the best use of features of the development site, and respect adjoining development and the locality in general.

6.13 The opportunities for development in the District are very limited, principally as a result of policies of strategic restraint and especially those relating to the Green Belt. Accordingly the pressure for development will be concentrated in those areas where, in principle, development is acceptable. It is important that development is compatible with the character and amenities of the site itself, adjoining development and the locality in general, and the Council will therefore judge all applications against the criteria listed in the policy.

6.14 The criteria listed in the policy do not generally require that the design or layout of development should be identical to existing surrounding development. Indeed such an approach could stifle innovation or produce an uninteresting environment. It is nevertheless important that development respects the character and amenities of buildings and spaces on and adjacent to the site and in the locality.

6.15 New development should respect the scale of surrounding development and not appear unduly prominent or obtrusive in the street scene or when viewed from adjoining properties. The height of buildings should also be in keeping with any surrounding development and not appear incongruous. Siting and layout of buildings should relate satisfactorily not only to any surrounding buildings, but should also take advantage of any existing topographical or natural features on the site, including existing trees and vegetation. The topography of a site, for example, should be utilised where possible to minimise the impact of new development. Existing natural or built features, such as trees, water features, walls or walled gardens, can be utilised to provide some element of screening or to enhance the visual appearance of the development.

6.16 Buildings will be required to be of a form, design and fenestration which would harmonise with surrounding developments; extensions will be expected to respect the existing building. Conditions will be imposed on any permission granted requiring that materials to be used for the development be approved by the planning authority, or alternatively that materials match the existing building. The re-use of materials, or the use of second-hand materials, will often be preferable and may especially be required in the case of listed buildings and Conservation Areas.

6.17 Development can have an impact upon character and amenity not only in terms of its design and layout but also in terms of its use. It is important that development does not have an unacceptable impact on adjacent properties or the locality by reason of those

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matters set out in clause (f) of the policy. The Council accepts that a new use of land or buildings will often, merely by the nature of change, have some impact upon character and amenities. In this context the Council is not seeking to prevent change itself and will not refuse permission where the impact on the character and amenities would not be detrimental. In assessing whether a new use would be detrimental the Council will take account of the level and nature of the impact of the proposed use and the type of existing development adjacent to the application site. Proposals for a new use in a residential area especially must respect surrounding development as residential development is particularly sensitive to disturbance. In some circumstances it may be necessary to impose conditions in order to limit the impact of the proposed use. One such example is the imposition of **strict** conditions relating to proposals for food and drink establishments **as set out in policy S7**.

**POLICY EP5 - SUNLIGHT AND DAYLIGHT**

**Development will only be permitted where its design and layout:-**

- (a) would provide for adequate daylight, and where possible sunlight, to reach into spaces around and between buildings and other physical features; and**
- (b) would not result in a significant loss of daylight or sunlight to adjacent buildings or land; and**
- (c) would comply with all the other policies in this Plan. Particular attention is drawn to policy EP3 (the Use, Design and Layout of Development).**

**Explanation**

6.21 It is important for amenity and public health reasons that land should receive adequate daylight and sunlight, particularly where that land is used or is intended to be used by people. If land does not receive adequate light its intended users may be discouraged from using it. Alternatively the land may still be used but because of inadequate daylight the land and its users become more prone to the possibility of crime. Neither situation is considered to be acceptable. The Council will therefore endeavour to ensure that public and private areas to which the public have easy access receive adequate daylight and, where possible, sunlight. This policy also relates to private land and buildings to which there is no public access.

6.22 One of the ways in which development can have an impact on its surroundings is by causing the loss of daylight or sunlight. Whilst the Council considers that the amount of light penetrating a new building is primarily a matter for the developer and the subsequent user, the effect of the development on the amount of light penetrating adjacent buildings and land is a matter which the Council will consider in assessing any proposal for built development. New development which would result in a significant loss of light to adjacent properties will not be considered acceptable due to the reduction in the level of amenities to the existing properties. Some uses, including residential, are dependent upon adequate daylight and sunlight. Where adequate light is prevented from reaching into existing buildings and land, the amenities of those properties will be unacceptably impaired. At the extreme, a loss of light could prevent buildings or land being put to the use for which they were intended. Loss of light can in some cases have a very significant impact on the amenities or use of adjoining buildings or land. Where this is so the Council will not normally be prepared to grant permission.

6.23 In assessing proposals the Council will take account of the nature of adjoining development and the level of light loss. In considering proposals for development adjacent to residential development, for example, account will be taken of the rooms affected and whether the garden area affected is a private sitting-out area. Proposals which would not affect habitable rooms will not be considered as detrimental to amenity as those which would affect primary windows to habitable rooms.

**POLICY H9 - RESIDENTIAL LAYOUT & DESIGN**

Proposals involving the development of land for residential purposes will only be permitted where:-

(a) the proposal would be compatible with the character of the surrounding area in terms of density, layout, design, height, scale, form and materials. Development adjacent to the areas defined in Policy H10 (Residential Areas of Exceptional Character) should be sympathetic to the character of these areas. In assessing whether proposals are compatible the Council will have particular regard to the size and shape of the site and its physical characteristics; and

(b) the proposal would not adversely affect the character or amenities of nearby properties or the locality in general, for example through overdominance, obtrusiveness, loss of important trees or important groups of trees, loss of privacy or loss of daylight, and the proposal would be in accordance with policy EP3 (Use, Design and Layout of Development); and

(c) the proposal includes provision for conveniently located, usable amenity space; and

(d) satisfactory access would be available for emergency vehicles and for refuse collection; and

(e) the proposal would comply with all the other relevant policies in this Plan. Particular attention is drawn to policies H10 (Residential Areas of Exceptional Character), EP4 (Landscaping), **R4 (Public Open Space Provision)**, GB2 (Re-use of Buildings in the Green Belt), GB3 (Residential Infilling in Green Belt Settlements), GB11 (Rebuilding of Dwellings in the Green Belt), **GB12 (Development Adjacent to Settlement Boundaries)**, TR5 (Accesses, Highway Works and Traffic Generation) and TR7 (Parking Provision).

The Council will not grant permission for proposals which do not make as full and effective use of land as would be possible whilst remaining consistent with all other policies in this Plan. Permission will not be granted for proposals which sterilise adjacent land or which reduce its availability or suitability for future development.

**Explanation**

8.39 The Council will, through the implementation of this policy, continue to encourage development which is compatible with the character and amenities of the surrounding area and which contributes overall to the visual and environmental qualities of South Bucks. The policy will apply throughout the District to all residential development. There are some areas which have a very special character but which do not meet the stringent criteria for designation as a Residential Area of Exceptional Character. In such areas the policy will be applied to ensure that their special character is not lost or destroyed.

8.40 Proposals for new residential development, whether in the form of a single dwelling or a larger development, should safeguard and where possible enhance the character of the surrounding area. New development should respect the general density of development in the locality of the application site, as well as being appropriate in terms of layout, siting, design, height, building form and scale. The policy does not seek to prevent development at higher densities where this would not be out of character with the locality.

In certain cases, for example, a development of flats may relate satisfactorily to surrounding residential development at a lower density. Sharp contrasts in density, design, layout, siting, height, building form, scale or elevational detail will often harm the

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character and amenities of a locality and where this is so such proposals will be contrary to the policy. The Council particularly wishes to ensure that such contrasts are avoided when proposed development adjoins a Residential Area of Exceptional Character as defined in Policy H10. Therefore, whilst not subject to the controls in Policy H10, development adjoining those areas should relate sympathetically to them.

8.41 New development should satisfactorily relate to existing development, ensuring appropriate standards of residential amenity for the occupiers of both existing and proposed dwellings. Backland or tandem development can sometimes give rise to unacceptable relationships between existing and proposed dwellings, and often results in disturbance through the creation of a new access drive alongside existing development. The Council will resist such proposals where an unacceptable relationship between existing and proposed development would arise. Similarly the Council would wish to safeguard against proposals which would result in a loss of amenity affecting neighbouring properties by reason of loss of privacy or the overdominance of new buildings or means of enclosure.

8.42 All residential developments should include amenity space for residents that is attractive, usable, conveniently located in relation to the dwelling itself and of an appropriate size. The best amenity is provided when dwellings have their own individual private gardens, however, it is accepted that in the case of flats communal provision may be necessary. The site and characteristics of external space and ancillary facilities should reflect the type and level of use to which the space is likely to be put.

8.43 It is not intended to stifle imaginative or innovative design through the application of rigid rules. It may not always be appropriate for example for the design of a new building to imitate the elevational features of existing buildings. Where such an approach would produce unsatisfactory results, a contrast in siting, materials or design may be preferable.

8.44 The amount of land available for housing development in the District is very limited. Accordingly, it is important that full and effective use of land is made, whilst at the same time ensuring that development complies with the other policies in the Plan and does not result in an overdevelopment of a site to the detriment of the character or amenities of nearby properties or the locality in general. The policy seeks to ensure that development is sustainable. Full and effective use of land must be made because land is a very scarce resource and because development in any other form would not be sustainable.

8.45 This policy seeks to protect both the amenities of existing development and the local environment generally by ensuring that new development relates satisfactorily to surrounding properties and the character of the area.

**POLICY H10 - RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF EXCEPTIONAL CHARACTER**

Residential Areas of Exceptional Character are defined on the proposals map. Within any of these areas proposals for residential development including house extensions and ancillary buildings which would have an adverse effect on their exceptional character will not be permitted. In particular the Council will not normally permit proposals involving the development of sites which do not reflect the prevailing density of the area, the conversion of single dwellings into flats or the introduction of backland development. In assessing proposals the District Council will have particular regard to the following factors:-

- (a) the plot of any proposed dwelling should be larger or similar in shape and size to that of the majority of others in the area of exceptional character; and
- (b) the plot frontage of any proposed dwelling should be larger or similar in width to that of the majority of others in the area of exceptional character; and
- (c) the siting of any proposed dwelling, extension or ancillary building should be consistent with the spacing and layout of dwellings in the vicinity of the application site in the area of exceptional character; and
- (d) the majority of important features which are characteristic of the site or the street scene should be retained, such features include for example trees, shrubs, hedges, walls, verges, lack of kerbs and footways; and
- (e) the design of each proposed dwelling extension or ancillary building should be of a high standard and compatible with the character and size of existing development in the vicinity of the application site; and
- (f) the proposal would comply with all the other policies in this Plan. Particular attention is drawn to policies H9 (Residential Layout and Design), TR5 (Accesses, Highway Works and Traffic Generation) and EP3 (Use, Design and Layout of Development).

**Explanation**

8.46 Over the last 40 years, the effect of Green Belt policy has been to constrain the supply of land for housing. The result of this has been that most new dwelling provision has taken place within the settlements excluded from the Green Belt, through infill and redevelopment of existing sites. The cumulative effect of this has been a gradual and progressive change in the character and amenity of many parts of the excluded settlements. The Council is concerned to ensure that whilst the housing requirement from the Structure Plan is met, that the cumulative effects in residential areas of new housing provision by redevelopment, infilling, backland development and conversion does not cause serious harm to the character and amenities of those residential areas.

8.47 Policy H9 (Residential Layout and Design) provides the framework for guiding and controlling the design and layout of residential development throughout the District. However, there are residential areas which have an exceptional character and which merit especially sensitive planning control. Indeed PPG3 recognises that it may be necessary to develop policies to secure the protection of older established residential areas which have an exceptional character. In line with government policy and to safeguard against a loss of this exceptional character, policy H10 provides a clear and strong framework for the consideration of proposals in these areas of exceptional character. The Council has

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identified a number of older established residential areas which meet very stringent criteria justifying their designation as residential areas of exceptional character. The special character of each of these areas is described at Appendix 4. There are also a considerable number of other older established residential areas which do not have an exceptional character but nevertheless have special environmental qualities. Those areas are not subject to this policy because if they had been, the likelihood would have been to concentrate new housing development into more limited areas of the District, and to devalue the concept of protecting those residential areas with the most highly valued character .

8.48 The Residential Areas of Exceptional Character were all developed mainly prior to 1948 and exhibit a residential environment which is of an exceptionally high quality in terms of landscaping, spacious layout and building design. A number of principal common characteristics are present in all of these areas. They are low density, being between about 3 and 7 dwellings per hectare; they have a spacious layout characterised by generous plot sizes, wide frontages and wide spaces between buildings; they are largely detached houses of an individual design but which exhibit common characteristics having been built during the same period; each area exhibits a consistent character and is of sufficient size to warrant identification and the protection afforded by the policy; they have been largely untouched by new development which would harm their exceptional character; and they each incorporate substantial mature and well established landscaping which is a significant feature in the street scene.

8.49 The Council is concerned to ensure that due to their low density these areas of exceptional residential character do not attract proposals which would erode their character. The potential of these areas to accommodate further development will be very limited. The development on infill plots may well be acceptable if the criteria in the policy are met in full. However, the Council considers that the development of sites to produce densities higher than prevailing in the area, the conversion of single dwellings into flats or the introduction of backland development would normally have an adverse effect on the exceptional character of these areas and accordingly such proposals will not be considered acceptable. Development can have a considerable impact on the character of these areas, not only in terms of the visual impact of new buildings and an increase in density, but also in terms of increased traffic generation, the loss of hedges and trees, punctuation of the street scene with access roads and the introduction of other more urban features including additional hard surfacing, new footways and kerbing, lamp columns, walls and fences. To properly assess the impact of new dwellings and their relationship to other buildings within the area the Council will normally require the submission of street elevations as part of the planning application.

8.50 Whilst this policy is primarily aimed at proposals involving the provision of new dwellings, for the purpose of this policy 'residential development' is taken to include all development associated with residential use. The Council would not wish to see harm caused to the exceptional character of these areas arising from proposals for extensions to dwellings or the construction of other outbuildings or structures.