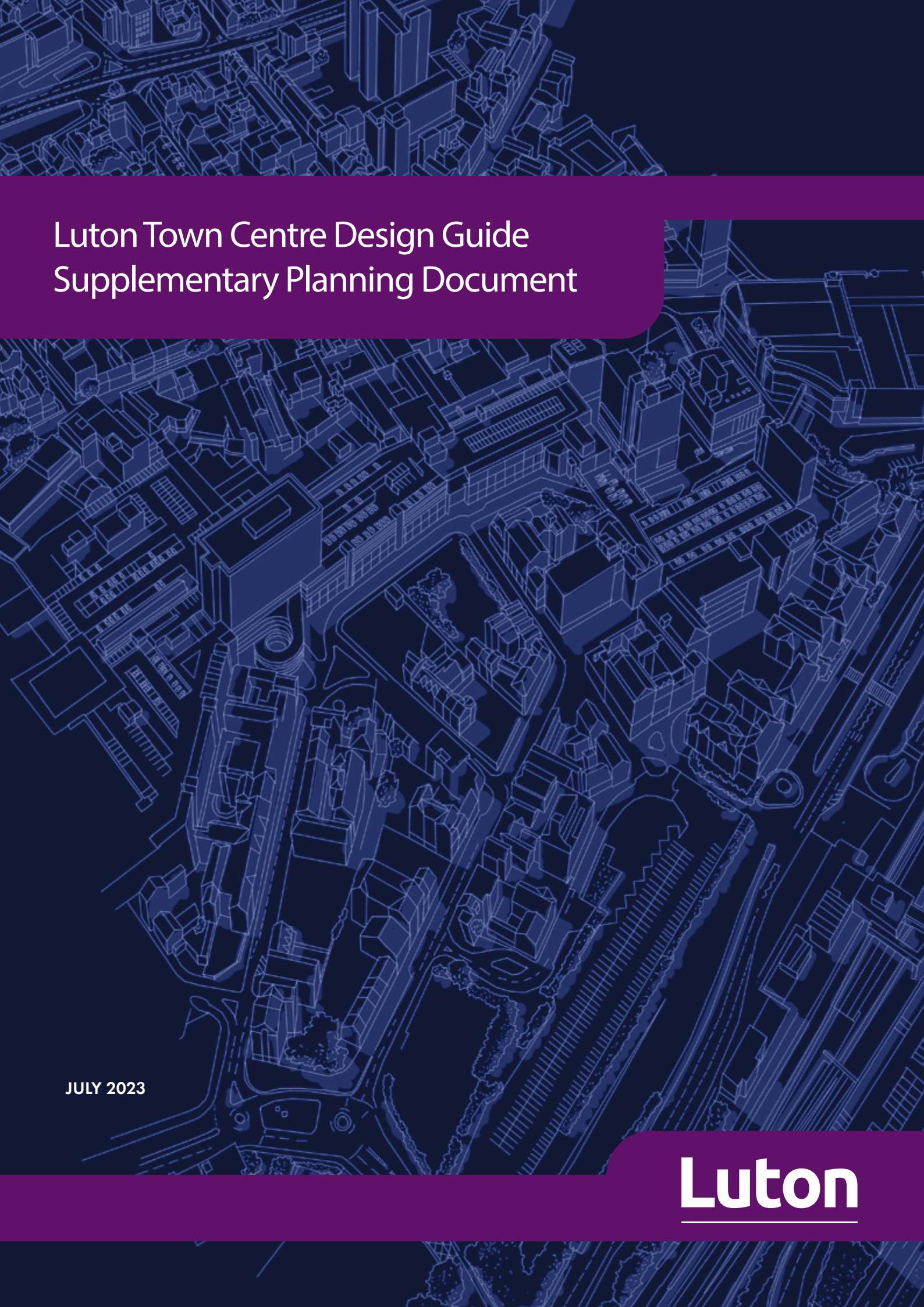
Luton Town Centre Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document



JULY 2023

Luton

Preface

This guide supports the Luton Town Centre Masterplan vision to deliver high-quality housing in the town centre and to make it a great place to live and be proud of.

The guide will help:

- Applicants to prepare successful planning applications for new build housing schemes and minimise the risk of planning refusal
- Officers to assess incoming proposals and expedite the decision-making process
- Community groups and residents with interests in the town centre, good design and the preservation of local character to participate in the planning process for town centre proposals

The introduction provides general information and context for the community, while the main sections of the guide provide design and planning resources for use by applicants and officers.

This supplementary planning document was adopted on 24 July 2023.

Contents

Introduction 4

1 Sustainability 10
1.1 Respond to the climate emergency 10
1.2 Sustainable design 11
1.3 Passive design strategies 11
1.4 Create a good microclimate 12
1.5 Whole life carbon approach 14
1.6 Energy hierarchy 15
1.7 Energy efficiency 16
1.8 Embodied carbon 17
1.9 Post-occupancy 18
1.10 Modern methods of construction 19

2 Block guidelines 20
2.1 Repair and complete urban blocks 20
2.2 A front door for Luton 21
2.3 Urban greening 22
2.4 The public realm 23
2.5 Heights and massing 24
2.6 Urban grain 26
2.7 Visually prominent sites 27
2.8 Fronts and backs 28
2.9 Safe and humane streets 29
2.10 Block interiors 30
2.11 Mixed uses 31
2.12 Cross-block pathways 32

3 Building guidelines 34
3.1 Base elements 34
3.2 Middle elements 36
3.3 Top elements 38
3.4 Preferred building types 39
3.5 Materials 44

4 Amenities 46
4.1 High quality homes 46
4.2 Outdoor space 47
4.3 Balconies 47
4.4 Landscaping 48
4.5 Public art 49
4.6 External lighting 50
4.7 Acoustics 50
4.8 Car parking 51
4.9 Cycle parking 52

Glossary 54

Introduction

Vision

Luton is in the midst of a transformation to surpass the needs of today and address the ambitions of tomorrow. Supported by a comprehensive consultation process, the Luton Town Centre Masterplan Framework captured the vision of local residents to reinstate the town centre as a focal point for community and commercial life.

Town centre living is an important part of the vision. In order for the town centre to be a desirable place to live, a significant upturn in the quality of housing schemes is required. All new schemes must focus on delivering high quality homes, it cannot be about just units. It must be about building community, and this means learning from what works well in order to deliver high quality design.

The **Luton Town Centre Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)** directly supports the masterplan vision by providing practical direction in the design of residential development and related uses in the town centre. The vision is for a town centre that:

- meets needs - focused on serving its local community in the best way possible (including housing needs)
- is diversified - embracing the need for big change and adapting well to future challenges (including the introduction of attractive places to live)
- is connected - improving physical and social connections
- is clean and green - with great green spaces and inviting public spaces (including high quality amenity spaces to support residential environments)

These objectives are interwoven within the guidance presented in this document. Housing design in the town centre should also align with the key moves described in the masterplan. Where opportunity arises, developments should:

- upcycle (re-use and adapt) existing buildings;
- re-stitch the town centre together;
- knit the centre into the rest of Luton;
- introduce a greater range of activities; and
- open up the River Lea.

By placing these strategic objectives in the heart of the design guide, compliant developments will work together to make Luton's vision a reality.

Stakeholders have consistently emphasised the need to set a higher bar for developments in the town centre. This design guide resets that bar and clearly outlines what is expected of every development in the town centre. The starting point for proposals should be to seek to achieve consistency with the guidance in this SPD. Any variations in approach should be justified and supported by clear analysis to illustrate how the objective will still be met or exceeded.

Masterplan Framework

Bute Street pedestrian link to train station

Context

The design guide focuses on the town centre, primarily on the area enclosed by the ring road, but also including a ring of outer blocks that are part of the town centre's immediate setting (see plan below). References to the "town centre" within this document should therefore be considered to apply to sites not only within the town centre itself, but within its immediate setting, as shown in the plan below.

The purpose of the design guide is to provide designers with a clear sense of Luton's priorities for the built environment, to enable early alignment and smooth progress through the planning process. The aim is to deliver quality homes in the town centre, set within a safe, inclusive and attractive public realm, offering ample outdoor amenities for residents of all ages and abilities to make it a great place to live and be proud of. Designers should also look to the National Design guide for additional design advice.

The guide applies to new-build market and affordable housing, mixed-use buildings with a residential component, as well as other buildings in close proximity to residential inhabitations. There is a policy emphasis on both family-sized and affordable homes, stemming from the clear need and the significant undersupply identified in the Local Plan adopted in November 2017.

Most sites in the town centre will be of an urban infill typology, with incomplete block development and hard edge conditions next to infrastructure forming the main urban design challenge. New buildings will be assessed for their contributions to, and impacts on their local context, including public realm, designated heritage assets and local heritage assets as well as their own design quality. All schemes should be strongly informed by local character and protect heritage assets, ensuring any new build is bespoke to the site.

Plan of the town centre

Local Plan policies

The overarching drivers behind this design guide are:

- Luton 2040 - providing for local need in good quality homes and designs that support healthy lifestyles and child friendly places.
- Climate Emergency - raising the bar and addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation early on in the design process to ensure all interventions in the town centre optimise their response to the emergency.

This guidance supports a number of policies in the Local Plan. Luton Local Plan Policy LLP3 (Luton Town Centre Strategy) commits to the council updating the Luton Town Centre Development Framework, while 9.11 of Policy LLP25 (High quality design) explains that consideration will be given to the need for producing a SPD for the design of new development. This SPD provides guidance for town centre sites on how to meet the policy requirements in the following key policies:

- Policy LLP25 – High quality design
- Policy LLP3 - Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP15 – Housing provision

In addition, this guide provides further guidance on how to meet the following policies for sites in the town centre:

- Policy LLP16 – Affordable housing
- Policy LLP27 – Open space and natural greenspace
- Policy LLP28 – Biodiversity and nature conservation
- Policy LLP30 – Heritage
- Policy LLP31 – Sustainable transport
- Policy LLP32 – Parking
- Policy LLP36 – Flood risk
- Policy LLP37 – Climate change, carbon and waste reduction and sustainable energy
- Policy LLP38 – Pollution and contamination

This guidance sits comfortably with the national policy drive on design with references to the National Design guide and National Model Design Code.

The idea for the guide itself was born out of community concerns about design quality in the town centre. Over 2000 stakeholders inputted extensively to the masterplan work and fed in recommendations for improving the quality of urban design, public realm design and architectural design, the appreciation of local character, and design responses to climate emergency. Informal stakeholder engagement on the emerging draft design guide helped steer the content further. This guide provides a first layer of design codes for the town centre. It should be considered in conjunction with other masterplans and SPDs that may be relevant to the town centre.

Content

The guide is organised into four sections:

1. Sustainability guidelines gather critical development principles that all new buildings need to address in order to meaningfully address the climate emergency.

2. Block guidelines describe urban massing principles to integrate new development with the surrounding context, to support a good public realm and a strong sense of place.

3. Building guidelines describe the architectural elements and building typologies that contribute to a civic-minded building, one that benefits inhabitants and the general public alike.

4. Amenities guidelines focus on improving the life-long usefulness and enjoyability of buildings for people.

Together, these guidelines work towards the betterment of the town centre, to enhance its qualities, its pride of place, and prospects for its citizens.

INTRODUCTION
1 SUSTAINABILITY
2 BLOCK GUIDELINES
3 BUILDING GUIDELINES
4 AMENITIES

Guideline format

Each guideline is graphically formatted to improve ease of use:

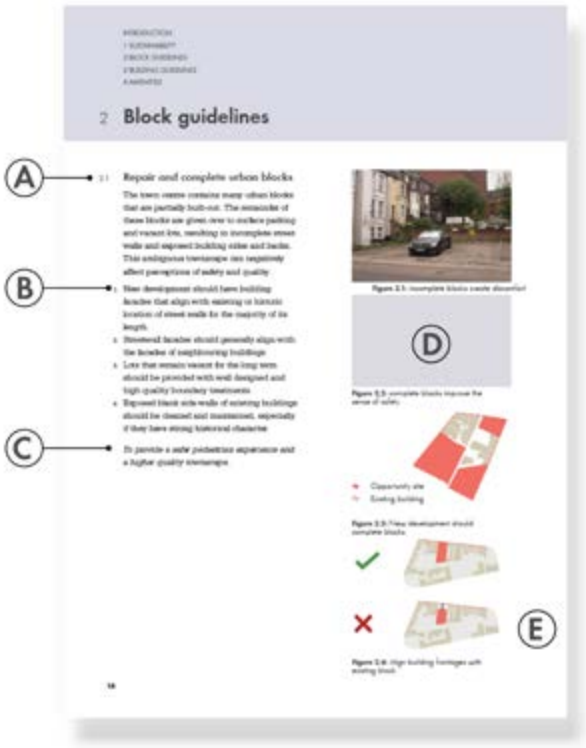
A. Guideline titles are enumerated and bolded to enable clear referencing.

B. Guideline action items or rules are enumerated with a number.

C. Guideline rationales are presented in bold. Guideline rationales state the reasons why guideline rules are made. This offers the applicant an opportunity to propose design alternatives that meet the rationale by other means. Alternative proposals require the approval of Luton Council.

D. All diagrams and images in this document are illustrative. Parameters provided in guideline text and tables take precedent over those in diagrams and images.

E. Geographic diagrams may not be to scale, and are included in this document for convenience and illustration only.



Design documentation

The council has a Planning Application Requirements list which outlines the information that may be required for submission with planning applications. Applicants should check this list prior to submitting a planning application.

Pre-application meeting:

- Site plan 1:500
- Statement of development intent

Application meeting:

- Site plan 1:500
- Concept diagram
- Basic height and massing proposal

Design review panel and final submission:

- Context analysis drawings covering a 400m radius (c.5 minute walk) from the centre of the site including:
  - Land uses
  - Building heights
  - Landscape and public realm
  - Examples of nearby building types and materials
  - Reference to the historic environment, including designated and non-designated heritage assets
- Location plan 1:1,000
- Site/block plan 1:500
- Existing and proposed floor plans 1:200 all floors, showing entrances, openings, uses, and servicing locations
- Existing and proposed roof plan 1:200
- Existing and proposed elevations showing context 1:200 (minimum 1 neighbouring building in each direction from project)
- Existing and proposed section showing context 1:200 (minimum 1 neighbouring building in each direction from project)
- Accurate 3D visualisations in context (including views from street and aerial views)
- Other supporting information or reports detailing design development and options considered
- Summary of climate response and passive design approach
- Daylighting and overshadowing studies
- Sample materials and standards of craftsmanship

Additional submissions or drawings at larger scale may be required beyond the list above, in response to specific review comments.

1 Sustainability

Sustainability: meeting the needs of the present without compromising on the needs of the future

1.1 Respond to the climate emergency

Luton Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to becoming a net zero borough by 2040. Residential buildings represent a significant proportion of the town's carbon footprint and this guidance is intended to reduce their overall contribution using a whole life carbon approach.

1. The council's climate change action plan aspires for new-build homes on public land to be built to Passivhaus standard or similar. Given the urgency required to address the climate emergency, private developments are expected to strive towards these same standards.
2. Applicants should adopt recommendations from the **LETI (Low Energy Transformation Initiative) Climate Emergency Design Guide** and **Easi Guide to Passivhaus Design**.
3. Key performance indicators and sustainability measures should be integrated early in the design process and discussed with planning officers through the pre-application process.

To support council policy commitments.

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has developed the 2030 Climate Challenge to provide a clear pathway towards reaching net zero for those involved in building design. The guidance incorporates recommendations from the Green Construction Board, industry experts and professional bodies from the built environment sector.

4. Applicants are advised to follow the **RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge** targets and checklist to reduce operational energy, embodied carbon and potable water.

To utilise and apply existing expertise.

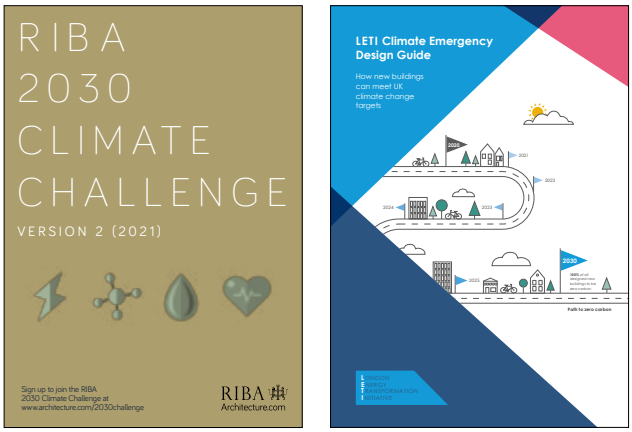


Fig. 1.1.1 Left: cover of RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge targets and checklist (2021). Right: LETI Climate Emergency Design guide (2020)

1.2 Sustainable design

Sustainable housing design is about creating high quality homes which maximise the positive contribution to their context, avoid harmful impacts to the environment and minimise the depletion of resources.

A logical, staged and contextual approach should be taken to understanding character, from landscape and geological characteristics at a higher level, to local architectural detailing and materials. This approach will help applicants and their design teams to understand the qualities and characteristics of the local area, and their own development sites. Place-specific analysis provides a good introduction to character; it should then be supplemented by more detailed analysis in the Design and Access Statement submitted with any planning application. This analysis should include reference to the development plan, its evidence base and material considerations such as national policy and guidance, and this guide.

1. In addition to environmental sustainability, good housing design should contribute positively to the social and economic vibrancy of existing neighbourhoods, supporting health and wellbeing.
2. Green and blue infrastructure and nature-based solutions can help play a role in aiding climate change adaptation and reduction in urban air pollution, contributing towards sustainable and high quality homes.
3. Consider sustainable design principles from the very earliest stages of the design process as the potential environmental impacts are very significant (see Fig. 1.3.3)

To have a holistic approach towards sustainability.

To maximise effectiveness of sustainability strategies by applying them early in the development process.

1.3 Passive design strategies

Passive design strategies are a key means of delivering sustainable housing. Passive design uses layout, fabric and form to eliminate or reduce the demand for mechanical heating, cooling, ventilation and lighting. Passive design strategies should be employed to:

1. Understand the local, climatic context in which a proposed residential building will be situated.
2. Optimise spatial planning and orientation to control solar gains and maximise daylighting.
3. Manipulate building form and fabric to facilitate natural ventilation.
4. Make effective use of thermal mass to help reduce peak internal temperatures.

To apply passive design strategies effectively.

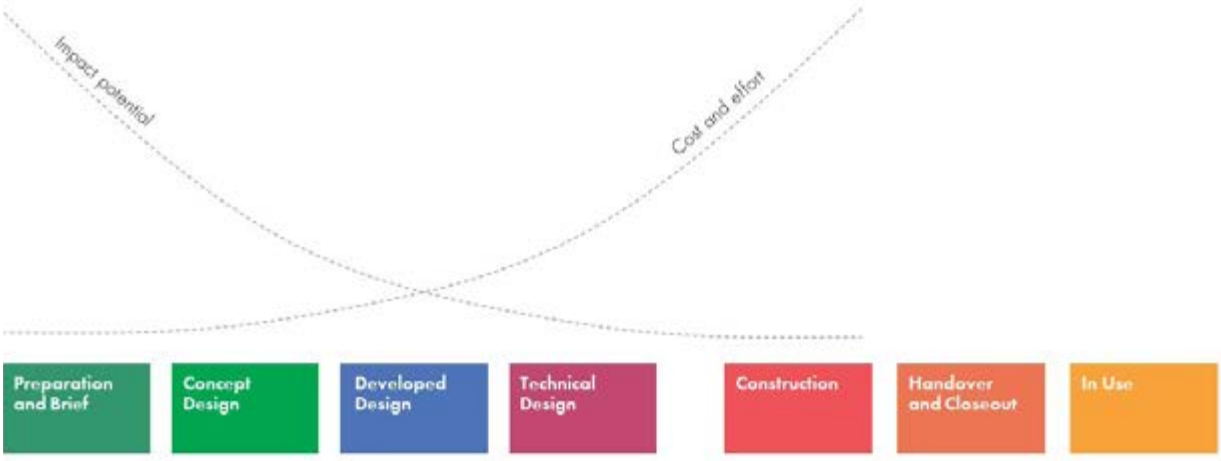


Fig. 1.2.1 Relationship between cost, impact and timing in the application of sustainability strategies.

1.4 Create a good microclimate

A microclimate is shaped by the interaction between the climate and the built environment. It influences the way buildings perform and how residents experience their homes and surroundings through variations in temperature, humidity, rainfall, wind and other factors.

Severe microclimatic variations which relate directly to apartment buildings include:

- Extreme wind turbulence: caused by the height and three-dimensional form of a buildings and its orientation to the prevailing wind direction.
- The urban heat island effect: whereby canyon-like developments with large surface areas absorb and reflect sunlight increasing the rate at which urban streets and spaces are heated.

Analyses of the macro and micro-scale climatic conditions for a site should be carried out at the earliest possible stage of the design process to ensure that a scheme can anticipate opportunities and mitigate risks in the way that the local climate interacts with the site.

Taking such early initiative will also ensure that effective passive design solutions can be implemented from the outset. This can lead to significant downstream efficiencies in energy demands such as heating and cooling as well as improvements to occupational comfort.

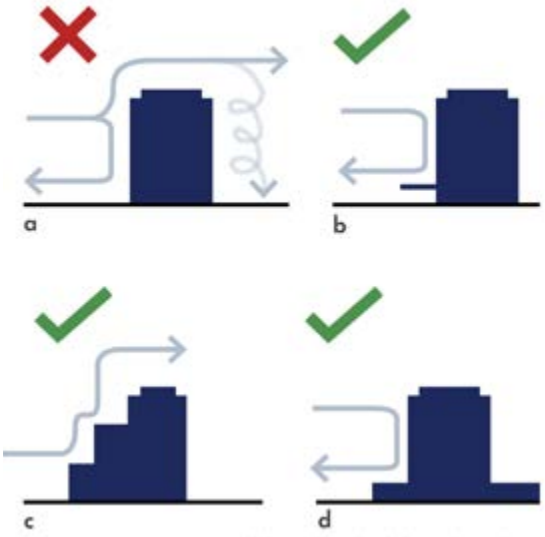


Fig. 1.4.1 Wake and downwash effects of excessive wind (a) can be mitigated by canopies (b), setbacks (c) and podia (d)

Fig. 1.4.2 Canyons may result in the urban heat island effect

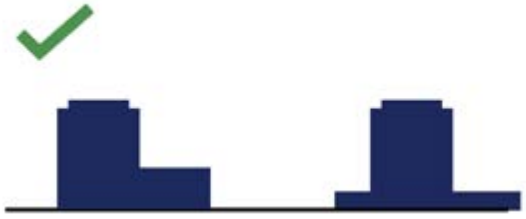


Fig. 1.4.3 Setbacks and wider street can mitigate the excessive heat

The following factors should be considered when carrying out a microclimate analysis:

Solar radiation

1. Evaluate annual levels of direct and indirect solar radiation in comparison to cloud cover. Can frequency of solar during winter months facilitate an effective passive solar design to aid heating demand? Or does cloud cover prevent this?
2. Assess the seasonal daylight available to outdoor amenity spaces and sunlight penetration into the building and its effect on occupant comfort and thermal performance.

Temperature

3. Review annual peak high/low and average temperature by month.
4. Consider the annual variation in temperature and any notable stress points from extreme high/low events.

Wind

5. Assess the direction and speed of prevailing winds and model its impact in relation to private amenities and public realm areas surrounding the building.

Noise

6. Consider the potential noise levels created by air movement, building use or operational machinery to maximise the enjoyment of internal and open spaces around the building.

Air movement

7. Model the building envelope and its effect on air movement.
8. Consider massing options which encourage the effective dispersion of pollutants, but avoid adversely affecting street-level conditions.
9. Proposals within the A505 Air Quality Management Area should be consistent with any local air quality action plans.

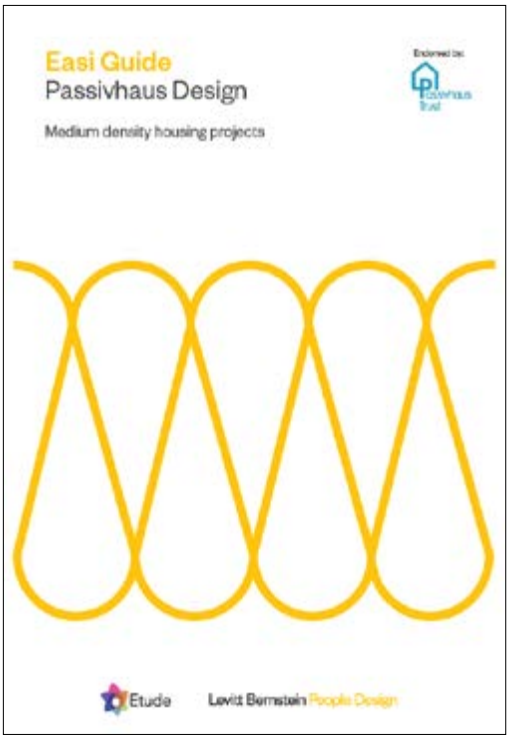


Fig. 1.4.4 Easi Guide to Passivhaus Design (2020)

1.5 Whole life carbon approach

This covers the operational carbon during a home's lifespan and also the embodied carbon associated with site preparation, construction and end of life demolition. Designers should take the following steps to ensure that they have sufficiently integrated a sustainable and whole life carbon approach to the energy hierarchy, efficiency and embodied carbon of new build residential buildings.

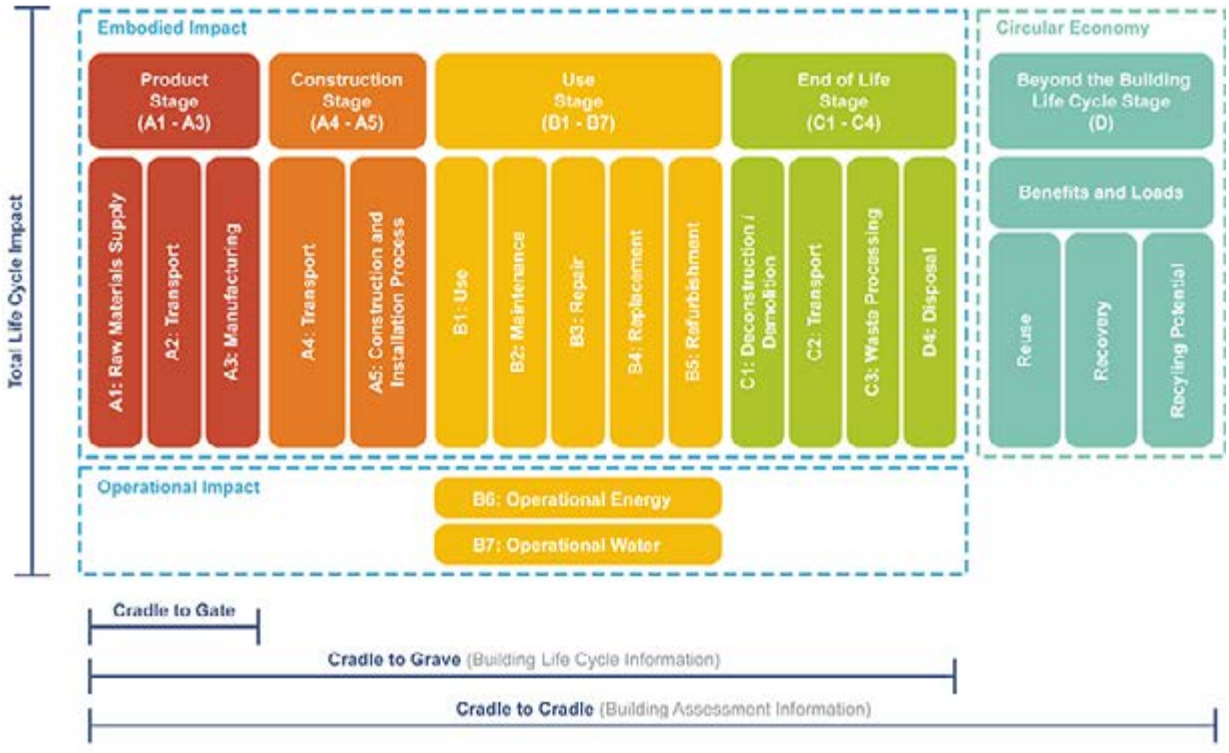


Fig. 1.5.1 Modular reporting structure of BS EN 15978 as used in RICS PS

1.6 Energy hierarchy

All development proposals should make the fullest contribution to minimising carbon dioxide emissions by using less energy, supplying energy efficiently and using renewable energy where possible.

1. Speak with the council early in the design process to understand net zero carbon requirements for certain schemes.
2. Adopt a "fabric first" approach to design out the need for energy, and minimise any future operational need.
3. Target a heating and hot water generation system that is fossil fuel free.
4. Consider how to integrate on-site energy generation, such as air source heat pumps and/or solar PV (photovoltaic) panels, district heat solutions, and related storage options such as PV cell water cylinders.
5. Incorporate Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR), and Waste Water Heat Recovery (WWHR) to reclaim waste heat from both space and hot water heating systems.
6. Seek to limit development loading on the electrical grid. The LETI guide highlights that an average 4 kW peak demand per unit achieves this.
7. For residential extensions or conversions, the council encourages home owners to take the opportunity to reduce operational carbon emissions when refurbishment work is undertaken.
8. The approach on all developments should demonstrate a clear objective to meet net zero carbon on site, or to get as close as possible.

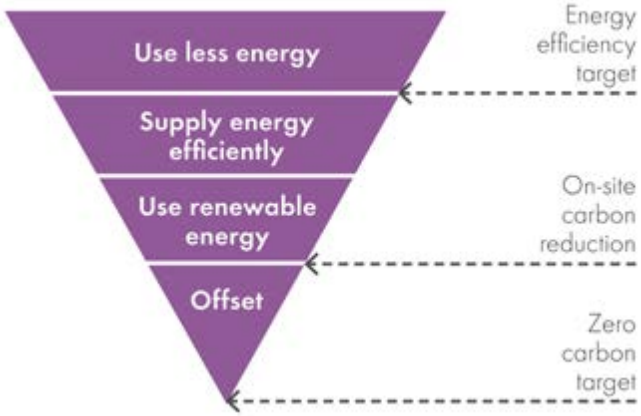


Fig. 1.6.1 Relationship between energy hierarchy and carbon reduction targets

To meet carbon reduction targets.

1.7 Energy efficiency

Consuming less energy is the foundation of environmental sustainability. To provide greater energy efficiency, designers of residential buildings should:

1. Consider the ratio of external surface area to net internal floor area (form factor) in delivering compact building form to maximise energy efficiency. Form factor values between <0.8 - 1.2 are considered best practice by LETI.
2. Consider building orientation and window placements to balance daylight, space heating demand and overheating risk. A total glazing ratio between 15-40% is considered best practice.
3. Ensure sufficient building shading provision to east, south and west façades, to mitigate overheating risk and mechanical cooling demand.
4. For large sites, maximise dual aspect homes, to enhance cross ventilation and mitigate overheating.
5. Develop a whole building airtightness strategy to limit facade air leakage. Maximum leakage of 1 m3/h/m2 at 50Pa is considered best practice.
6. Include active demand responsive appliances such as passive infrared sensor controls to limit unnecessary energy use and consider internet of things approaches to communal spaces to deliver even greater efficiency savings.
7. The council encourages applications that calculate and disclose the Energy Use Intensity (EUI) and space heating demand, to evaluate on-site energy efficiency measures. EUI of 35 kwh/m2 per year and Space Heating Demand of15 kwh/m2 per year are considered best practice by LETI.

To use less energy.

Fig. 1.7.1 St Andrews, Bromley by Bow

1.8 Embodied carbon

Embodied carbon consists of all the greenhouse gas emissions associated with building construction, including those that arise from extracting, transporting, manufacturing, and installing building materials on site, as well as the operational and end-of-life emissions associated with those materials. Applicants should:

1. Consider retrofit of existing buildings - a clear analysis of the opportunities to re-use and adapt existing buildings must be undertaken as a first step to protect historic buildings and make best use of the existing embodied carbon on site.
2. Where full building reuse is not possible or desirable, every effort should be made to reuse substructures / superstructures and reuse and/ or recycle materials.
3. Design buildings to be flexible so that they can adapt to users' needs over time, for example through loft conversion or internal reconfiguration.
4. Consider how a building might adapt to a different use over a longer period, such as across retail, employment and residential uses.
5. Work with site topography to limit excavation.
6. Design and choose materials to limit embodied carbon. Using 30% from re-used sources is considered best practice.

Fig. 1.8.1 RIBA Embodied and whole life carbon assessment for architects (2018)

7. Design 'light' structures. Substructures and superstructures account for 57% of small scale housing embodied carbon.
8. Ensure longevity of materials to limit maintenance and replacement over time.
9. Applicants are strongly encouraged to carry out a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). Achieving an up front embodied carbon target of < 500kg CO2/m2 is considered best practice.

To consider the every stage of a building's life cycle and its potential for reuse.

Fig. 1.8.2 Luton has a wealth of attractive and well designed historic buildings - some listed, some not. This historic fabric should be protected and projects should bring vacant buildings back into use where desirable. The quality and character of this historic fabric should inform new developments.

1.9 Post-occupancy

A holistic approach to sustainability extends beyond the design and construction of buildings, requiring behavioural change in the occupants across the usable life of the building.

1. Include in-home energy displays to monitor ongoing energy consumption and influence user behaviour, and ability to link to apps for greater detail on and control of energy use.
2. As a minimum, include smart metering for the following designated end uses:
   - Renewable energy systems for energy generation
   - Electric vehicle charging equipment or other technologies
   - Heating fuel
3. Commit to monitoring building energy consumption for a minimum of three years post-occupation.
4. Provide results from annual occupant surveys to the council for 2+ years following completion.
5. Provide details of Luton Council's central energy use monitoring website to occupiers.

To encourage responsible energy usage.

6. Design buildings to be flexible so that they can adapt to users needs over time (for example through loft conversion or internal reconfiguration).
7. Consider how a building might adapt to a different use over a longer period (for example Victorian warehouses have shifted across industrial, business, retail and residential uses).

To extend the lifespan of buildings.

Fig. 1.9.1 Passive Infrared Sensors detect body heat from humans and activate lights when they enter a room.

Fig. 1.9.2 Regular monitoring of smart energy meters encourages responsible energy usage

1.10 Modern methods of construction

Modern methods of construction focus primarily on off-site production to maximise work efficiency and material use.

1. Where feasible, use modern methods of construction (MMC) and pre-fabrication. Options may include DfM/DfA (design for manufacturing / assembly), bathroom pods and façade cassettes.
2. Specify materials that can be re-used at the end of the building life. A 50% reuse rate is considered best practice.

To limit carbon associated with extraction, manufacturing, transport, construction and installation processes.

Fig. 1.10.1 Prefabricated, pre-cast concrete panels with factory fitted windows illustrate modern methods of construction on a housing project

Key references for sustainability

- LETI Climate Emergency Design guide (2020)
- RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge targets and checklist (2021)
- Easi Guide to Passivhaus Design (2020)
- RIBA Embodied and whole life carbon assessment for architects (2018)
- RICS Whole life carbon assessment for the built environment professional statement (2017)
- Historic England Retrofit and Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings (suite of advice notes, various dates)

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP37 Climate change, carbon and waste reduction and sustainable energy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

2 Block guidelines

Block guidelines co-ordinate the location and massing of buildings to create a good public realm and a strong sense of place.

2.1 Repair and complete urban blocks

The town centre contains many urban blocks that are partially built-out. The remainder of these blocks are given over to surface parking and vacant lots, resulting in incomplete street walls and exposed building sides and backs. This ambiguous townscape can negatively affect perceptions of safety and quality.

1. Existing buildings should be considered for retention, re-use and repurposing and existing façades retained, restored and sensitively maintained and enhanced, unless there are wider planning benefits associated with their redevelopment / removal.
2. New development should have building façades that align with existing or historic location of street walls for the majority of its length.
3. Building façades should generally align with the façades of neighbouring buildings.
4. Lots that remain vacant for the long term should be provided with well designed and high quality boundary treatments.
5. Exposed blank side walls of existing buildings should be cleaned and maintained, especially if they have strong historical character.

To provide a safer pedestrian experience and a higher quality townscape.

Fig. 2.1.1 New development should complete blocks

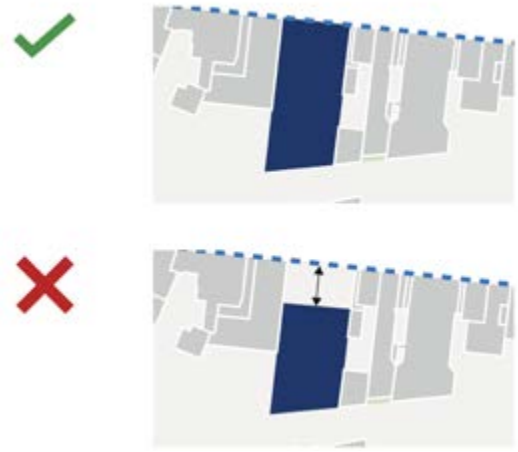


Fig. 2.1.2 New frontages should respect existing streetwall alignments

Fig. 2.1.3 Incomplete blocks expose building backs and create ambiguous spaces

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

2.2 A front door for Luton

Development sites directly visible from the railway line and on routes linking the station to the town centre have a high potential to create positive first impressions of Luton and contribute to a memorable townscape for people arriving by train.

1. The edges of new developments facing the railway line should be considered primary frontages and receive design priority.
2. Buildings should not turn their back onto the train station or the adjacent transit hub.
3. New buildings should positively support views towards the urban blocks beyond (St. George's Bridge, Plaiter's Lea Hat District, St. Mary's Church). They should contribute to a rich, layered townscape with intermittent views in. **To present an attractive view of Luton as seen from the railway line.**
4. Additional north-south pedestrian routes cutting through the edge development sites should be considered.

   To improve pedestrian permeability in the Station area.

Fig. 2.2.1 Highly visible backs facing railway line

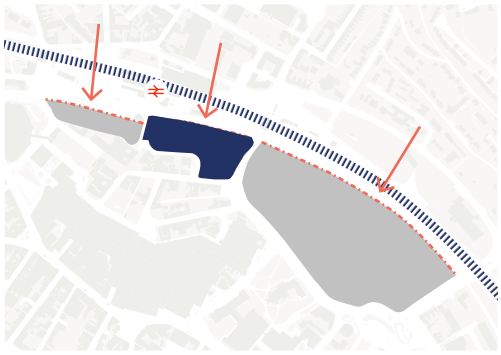


Fig. 2.2.2 Frontages visible from train station

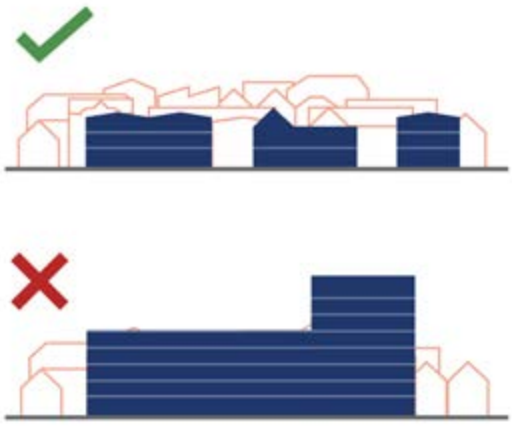


Fig. 2.2.3 Create layered townscape with intermittent views in

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

2.3 Urban greening

Large extents of buildings, infrastructure and hard landscaping can result in a harsh environment, with urban heat island effects and exacerbated air and noise pollution. New developments should mitigate and reverse these effects with meaningful strategies for urban greening which maximise the opportunities that urban greening brings, such as opportunities for natural play and physical activity, whilst also improving biodiversity and integrating landscaping into the scheme.

1. Incorporate significant structural tree planting to provide microclimate comfort (shading, noise and wind attenuation) to pedestrians, and rainfall / runoff attenuation. This strategy is particularly important for approach roads into the town centre.
2. Follow the Right Tree Right Place principle ensuring that the largest trees possible are planted to bring greatest benefits.
3. Use multifunctional sustainable drainage systems and porous landscaping for on-site storm water retention and treatment. Design in rain water harvesting.
4. Open up and develop the Lea River channel for outdoor amenity and to support creating a riverside walk.
5. Accentuate street view focal points with landscaping.
6. All urban greening contributions must be new additions and be either on site or within the town centre public realm, and cannot be offset by contributions elsewhere.
7. All urban greening interventions must maximise their contribution - for example green roofs should be substantial with a range of planting, light weight limited sedum roofs are not encouraged.

To improve pedestrian experiences of the street and support climate adaptation.

8. Delivery of green infrastructure when retrofitting existing buildings is encouraged.
9. Provide multi-level planting strategies that can host a wider range of wildlife and deliver a 10% biodiversity net gain.
10. Provide connected green spaces, continuous with existing parks and green networks where possible.
11. Provide artificial roosting locations for bats and birds, particularly integrated boxes (e.g. swift bricks / boxes).
12. Ensure current ecological networks are not compromised, and future improvements in habitat connectivity are not prejudiced, particularly in the cases of designing block interiors and filling in urban blocks.

To promote species biodiversity and to enable species migration.

Fig. 2.3.1 Greening at street focus

Fig. 2.4.1 Opening up the River Lea at Hat Gardens

Fig. 2.4.2 Residential street design prioritising people

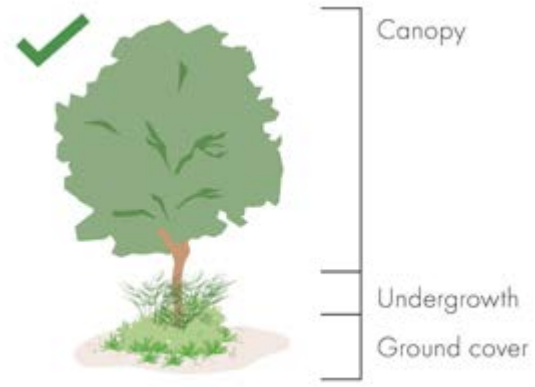


Fig. 2.4.3 Use a multi-level planting strategy to improve habitat range and biodiversity

2.4 The public realm

Buildings have a civic obligation to the public realm. Working alongside neighbouring buildings, the quality of streets and towns are incrementally built up by many individual buildings. The design of the space between buildings should be as high a priority as the buildings themselves.

1. Consider the provision of supporting landscape, public art, street furniture and play space. Public realm should be child-friendly and increase opportunities for play and informal recreation for everyone. Consideration should be given to street furniture being located for making the best use of shade.
2. Study and assess the surrounding environmental context of the new building.

3. Design any private curtilage space at ground floor to be compatible with or improve upon adjacent public spaces, through matching material and design quality.
4. Program and design ground floor uses to support safety and vibrancy in the streets (see also 2.10 Safe and Humane Streets).

To carefully consider the effect of new buildings on surrounding spaces.

To promote a safe and attractive public realm.

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design
- Policy LLP27 Open space and natural greenspace
- Policy LLP28 Biodiversity and nature conservation
- Policy LLP31 Sustainable transport strategy
- Policy LLP36 Flood risk
- Policy LLP37 Climate change, carbon and waste reduction and sustainable energy

Key references for urban greening and public realm

- Luton Town Centre Tree Planting Strategy (2021)
- Natural England Environmental Benefits from Nature Tool (2021)
- UKGBC Delivering Nature based solutions (2021)
- Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development (2019)
- Also useful to look at the London Urban Greening for Biodiversity Net Gain Design guide (2021)
- Luton Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) - draft (2023)
- Public Health England Healthy Places guidance (various years)
- Preventing Suicides in Public Places (2015)
- Luton Sustainable Drainage Design and Evaluation Guide (2018)
- Natural England Climate Change Adaptation Manual (NE751) 2020
- Natural England Green Infrastructure Principles (2023)
- Natural England Green Infrastructure Standards (2023)
- Natural England Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide (2023)
- Luton Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2015)
- Historic England Streets for All (2018)

2.5 Heights and massing

Nestled into a valley, Luton is a predominantly low-lying town, with the terrain gently visible in the rise and fall of the roofscape.

1. There should be a preference for low to mid-rise development that respects the general height of the surrounding context.
2. The height and massing of a scheme must be strongly informed by a thorough analysis of the site's context and setting, and should avoid any harm to heritage assets.
3. The design should work with the existing site topography; excavation should be limited.
4. Where new development is taller than its neighbours, upper floors of buildings should be set back to ease the transition in height and relate well to existing building frontages/parapet heights.
5. Where tall building elements that dramatically alter the skyline are proposed, they must be meritted by the civic importance of the building, architectural excellence of the design, and contribute positively to the new skyline and the streetscape. Applicants must demonstrate suitability of the above through verified visual testing from view locations agreed with the Luton Council.

To maintain the generally modest and comfortable scale of town centre buildings.

To improve the coherence of Luton's skyline.

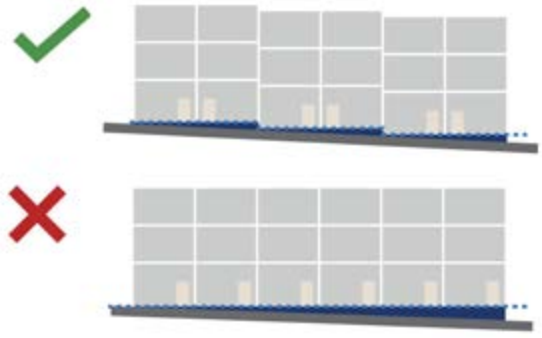


Fig. 2.5.1 Buildings should work with the topography

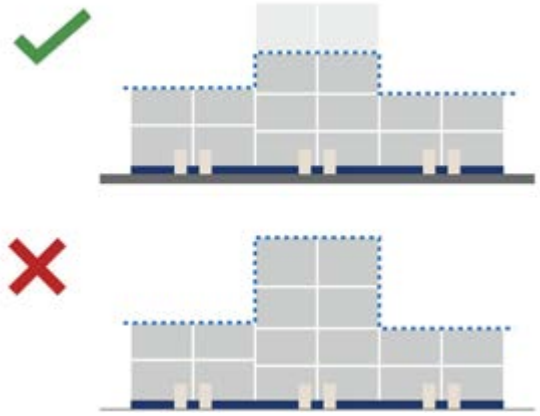


Fig. 2.5.2 Mid-rise building with upper level setback

Fig. 2.5.3 Tall elements should create good townscape

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design
- Policy LLP30 Heritage

2.6 Urban grain

The scale of a town is perceived by the average length and height of its building frontages, and by the distance between street intersections (its block dimensions).

1. The historic grain of the area should first be analysed and then reinforced in proposals for new development
2. New buildings should avoid creating long, uninterrupted horizontal façades. They should be broken down into more discrete elements with vertical breaks every 6m to 15m, or variations as agreed with the local authority.
3. New development should avoid creating (and improve upon existing) long uninterrupted urban blocks. New streets or pedestrian passages should be provided every 50m, or as agreed with Luton Council.
4. The layout of new streets should consider the outward views generated by its orientation. Look to frame attractive landscapes and townscapes at the streetview focal point.

To improve the walkability of the town by increasing pedestrian permeability and townscape interest.

Fig. 2.6.1 Residential urban grain

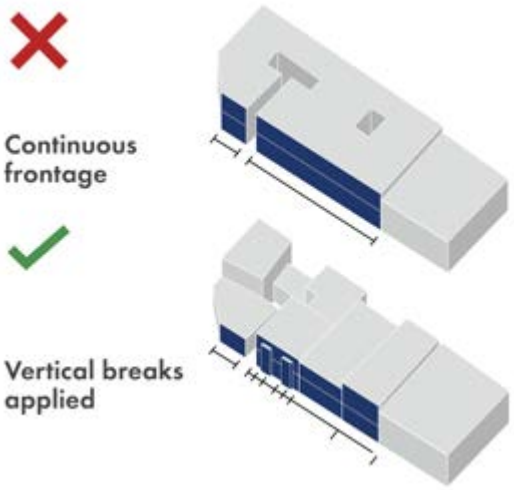


Fig. 2.6.2 Improve urban grain with vertical breaks

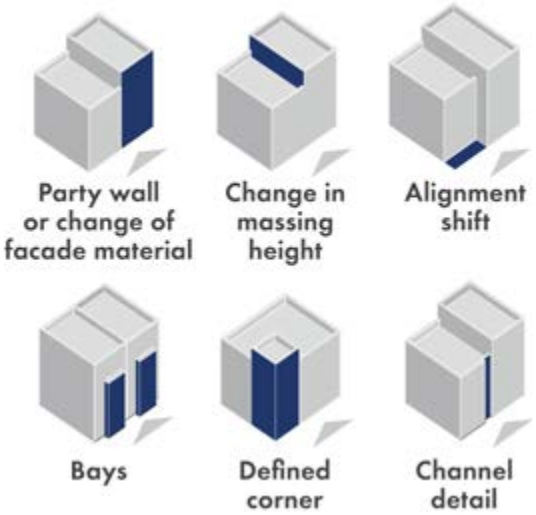


Fig. 2.6.3 Types of vertical break

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design
- Policy LLP30 Heritage

2.7 Visually prominent sites

Some building plots are visually prominent, being located at the focal point of street views, at corners, changes in street alignment, or next to open spaces with long views.

1. Buildings on visually prominent sites should be held to a higher design standard as they function informally as local landmarks.
2. The proposed design should be assessed through verified view testing.
3. Blank façades should be avoided at these locations.

To contribute to intuitive wayfinding in the town.

To promote high quality architectural design at sites with high visibility and impact on the public realm.

Fig. 2.7.4 High quality urban design in a visually prominent location, Trafalgar Place in Elephant and Castle (Alex de Rijke)

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design
- Policy LLP30 Heritage

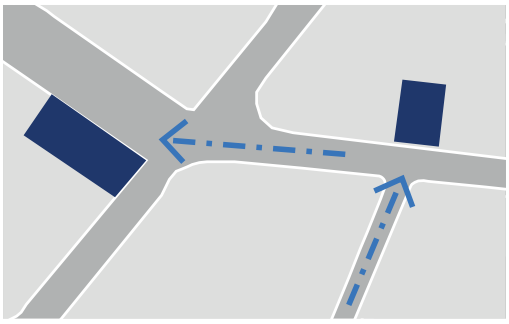


Fig. 2.7.1 Prominent sites

Fig. 2.7.2 Prominent facade created by change in street alignment

Fig. 2.7.3 Non-responsive blank facade at streetview focal point

2.8 Fronts and backs

The orientation of a building directly impacts the quality of the streets surrounding it; buildings should support the hierarchy of public spaces and streets surrounding it.

1. Buildings and spaces should be designed in a way that clearly defines whether they are public, semi-public or private, and provide opportunities for both activity and passive surveillance of streets and spaces from the lower floors of buildings.
2. Important spaces and streets should be flanked by the primary facade of buildings, where main entrances and design emphasis are located.
3. Building fronts should generally be aligned to provide a good sense of enclosure.
4. Where possible, building service access should be located on secondary and tertiary streets.
5. Where 'back of house' elements such as building plant, bins, or service access are necessarily located on an important public space, its effects should be mitigated by landscaping, art, or well designed boundary treatments. Please also see safe street design elements (section 2.10).

To improve the quality of streets.

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design
- Policy LLP30 Heritage

Fig. 2.8.1 Regular front doors and main entrances on to the street

Fig. 2.8.2 Blank walls can reduce pedestrian comfort on the street

Fig. 2.8.3 Utilities and plant can create a hostile environment

Fig. 2.8.4 Boundary treatments and landscape can mitigate backs and back of house

2.9 Safe and humane streets

Buildings should contribute to the sense of safety and security, both for its occupants and for members of the public in the surrounding streets. This is particularly important in the town centre, where the sense of safety of the walking environment is strongly influenced by the way buildings relate to the street.

1. Buildings should provide passive surveillance for all adjacent public realm. This can be achieved through window and entrance placement. Blank walls next to public pedestrian routes should be avoided.
2. The layout of buildings should not inadvertently create blind corners for public routes. Layouts which require the installation of convex security mirrors to mitigate danger indicate a fundamental deficiency in the design.
3. Ironically, overt security measures such as fencing or razor wire can raise the sense of threat or danger for pedestrians. Attractive security measures such as architectural boundary treatments or suitable landscaping should be used instead.
4. Exterior lighting should be sensitively designed to avoid negative colour rendering of people or the creation of dark pockets or long shadows along pedestrian routes. Lighting should have appropriate fittings, sensitive lux, anti-glare measures and cabling routes.
5. Walls that are subject to damage from anti-social behaviour should consider the use of easy-to-refresh surfaces.

To create and maintain a sense of safety and security in the streets.

To increase pride of place.

Fig. 2.9.1 Passive surveillance from windows

Fig. 2.9.2 Passive surveillance provided on two streets from corner entrance

Fig. 2.9.3 Avoid harsh security measures

Key references

- Secured by Design Development Guides

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design
- Policy LLP31 Sustainable transport strategy

2.10 Block interiors

The interior of urban blocks can be an opportunity to explore and celebrate Luton's distinctive post-industrial character, where complex open spaces and yards are created by a collection of simple building forms around the perimeter.

Residential blocks also contain intimate block interiors that provide valuable outdoor amenity to its occupants.

1. Sites flanking the Lea River channel should consider its integration into the landscape strategy.
2. Where on-site parking is proposed, a podium courtyard should be considered above the parking to improve levels of outdoor amenity.
3. Where interior yards are smaller than 18m in depth and building uses warrant, design considerations should be made protect privacy and to minimise overlooking.

To develop the existing spatial character of Luton into a distinctive architectural type.

Fig. 2.10.1 Existing block interior

Fig. 2.10.2 Existing block interior

Fig. 2.10.3 Example block interior

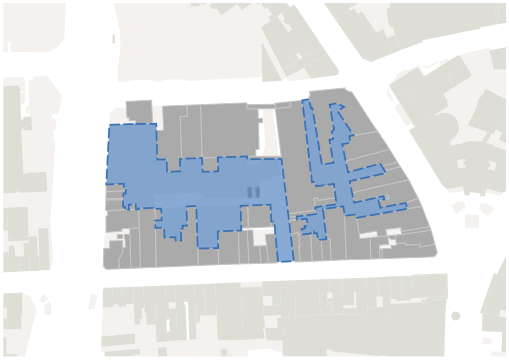


Fig. 2.10.4 Complex spaces made by simple buildings

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design
- Policy LLP27 Open space and natural greenspace

2.11 Mixed uses

Many of the town centre streets are populated by retail frontages with residential or commercial spaces above. This mixing of uses is a positive attribute, providing a variety of amenities for residents, and creating street activation throughout the day.

1. Even as market demand tends towards the concentration of development types, mono-use developments should be discouraged.
2. Mixed-use developments are strongly encouraged in the town centre as there will be very few locations where ground floor residential use will be appropriate.
3. Ground floor entrances to residential homes on upper floors should be well integrated into the main street facade.

To create activation of streets throughout the day and improve the sense of safety in the public realm.

Fig. 2.11.1 Existing mixed-use street

Fig. 2.11.2 Mixed-use buildings with active ground floors

Fig. 2.11.3 Example of residential-led mixed use building (312 Hackney Road © Cuozzo Fleming)

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

2.12 Cross-block pathways

The impermeability of large urban blocks to pedestrians can diminish the walkability of towns, reducing street activity and access to amenities. As the town centre transforms, so to should the connections between different areas, supporting the ease of pedestrian movement.

The condition of large urban blocks in the town centre can be mitigated by creating cross-block pathways, publicly accessible pedestrian routes that provide short-cuts through them.

1. Where the creation or redevelopment of new urban blocks exceed 80m in length, designers should consider providing cross-block pathways every 50m.
2. Consider the re-instatement of historic street patterns / linkages through new developments
3. Pathways should be safe: of sufficient width, providing a level walking surface, be well overlooked by adjacent buildings, and be well lit in the evenings.
4. Long underpasses beneath buildings and blind corners should be avoided.
5. Where pathways cross private land, publicly accessible hours should be agreed with the council and posted clearly at entry points.
6. Maintenance responsibilities for pathways should be clearly delineated between public and private agencies.

To improve the walkability of the town.

Fig. 2.12.1 Provide pathways through large urban blocks, forming part of a hierarchy of well-connected routes with good connections to public transport and promoting active travel. (National Design Guide)

Fig. 2.12.2 Existing cross-block pathways are an important part of Luton's movement network and new attractive connections should be encouraged as part of developments

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

Fig. 2.12.3 Accordia, Cambridge (Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios)

Fig. 2.12.4 Adelaide Wharf, Hackney (AHMM)

Fig. 2.12.5 St Andrews, Bromley by Bow

Fig. 2.12.6 Coin St community-led housing, London (Academy of Urbanism)

Fig. 2.12.7 Lampton Parkside, Hounslow

Fig. 2.12.8 Trafalgar Place, Elephant and Castle (Thomas Etchells)

Good practice precedents illustrating viable high quality design

3 Building guidelines

Building guidelines raise the architectural quality of individual buildings for the benefit of inhabitants as well as the general public.

Whether three or ten storeys, all buildings should be consciously designed with attention to their base, middle and top.

3.1 Base elements

The design of the ground floor of a building has the most implications on the character and quality of the adjacent streets and spaces, and should be carefully considered and detailed.

Active frontages

1. Buildings on larger, mixed-use streets should maximise active frontages: entrances, windows, and ground floor programming can promote around-the-clock activity on the street and provide passive surveillance.
2. Long extents of blank walls should be avoided. Where blank walls are absolutely necessary, windows or doors with vision lites should be introduced at corners or upper levels.
3. Where pavement width and street environment safely permits, outdoor seating areas should be permitted for food and beverage establishments.

To improve perceptions of safety on the street.

Welcoming entrances

4. Entrances should be welcoming, providing space to safely transition and enter into the building. This is especially important on buildings with narrow pavements or tight clearances from the public realm, where inset porches or niches may need to be provided.
5. Entrances should be proportionate in size to the number of properties they serve; collective entrances to blocks of flats should have greater status and amenity than for individual homes.
6. Entrances for private properties should include opportunity for personalisation.

Fig. 3.1.1 Active frontages - retail

Fig. 3.1.2 Active frontages - employment

Fig. 3.1.3 Inhospitable entrances

Fig. 3.1.4 Welcoming entrances

7. Staircases should be designed and located to encourage people to use them. They should be clearly signposted, well lit (preferably with natural light), and attractive to use.
8. Pedestrian passages to back-lot properties should be well lit, with daylighting at the end to create a safer environment.
9. Buildings along the ring road and primarily commercial streets should not have residential uses adjacent to the public realm at the ground floor.
10. Entrances to residential buildings should be tenure-blind.

To improve the quality and safety of building entrances, and to enable pride of place.

Well-integrated services

11. Sufficient storage space should be included for bins and bikes within the design of the entrance and/or the front yard boundary treatment. These elements must be well designed into the scheme, not an add on.
12. Where large (collective) bins are used, a dedicated garbage room or screened enclosure should be provided.
13. Ventilation grilles and louvers should not be located on primary façades or next to pedestrian pathways.
14. Utility access panels and cleanouts should be incorporated into the design of the facade and the ground hardscaping with matching or complementary cover materials.

To raise architectural quality by addressing ordinary building details with care and attention.

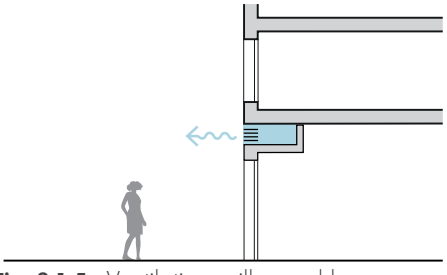


Fig. 3.1.5 Ventilation grilles and louvres - position

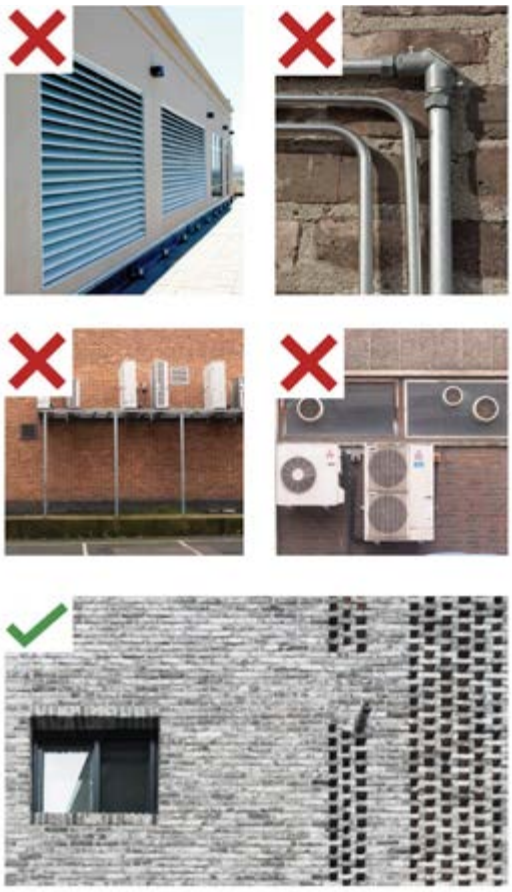


Fig. 3.1.6 Services

Fig. 3.1.7 Bins

Fig. 3.1.8 Bins

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

3.2 Middle elements

The middle of building façades form the main visual component of urban streets, with neighbouring buildings cumulatively creating or eroding the sense of character for the street.

Responsive design

1. In the design of new façades, take into consideration the character of neighbouring buildings: floor heights, window sizes, parapet heights and other architectural features. Facade heights (parapet or top of roof visible from the public realm) should be generally continuous to provide good public realm containment.
2. Buildings should be oriented to support the public realm hierarchy; primary façades should address the most important public streets and spaces. (See also Guideline 2.7)
3. Window proportions, location and number should be responsive to the solar orientation of the facade. Proportions are particularly key in a heritage context.

To create buildings responsive to site and context.

Fig. 3.2.1 Addressing public spaces

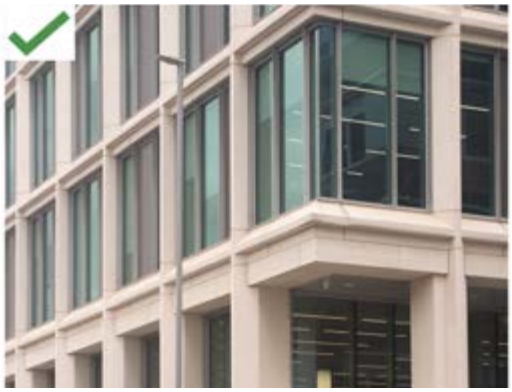


Fig. 3.2.2 Deep window reveal

Fig. 3.2.3 Coin Street Housing, London (Community Led Housing)

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

Clean façades

4. Vents, drain pipes and building envelopes should be properly detailed to avoid wall staining and efflorescence.
5. Facade design should include concealed or aesthetically acceptable locations for conduits, cables and downpipes. Ad-hoc surface mounted building elements should be avoided.
6. Where applicable, buildings should provide shared digital feeds or antennas for individual units. The installation of independent satellite dishes should be avoided.
7. Rationalisation of modern interventions such as satellite dishes and condensors is encouraged.

To remove visual clutter from building façades, and draw attention to architectural quality.

Character

8. In post-industrial areas, consider the use of (and retention of existing) ancillary building structures (fire escapes, balconies, walkways).
9. Provide opportunities for personalisation and expression of craft by building occupants.
10. Provide deeper reveals for doors, windows and balconies.

To strengthen the townscape character of Luton.

Fig. 3.2.4 Clean facade

Fig. 3.2.5 Avoid cluttered façades

Fig. 3.2.6 Trafalgar Square, Elephant and Castle (Daniel Romero)

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

3.3 Top elements

The tops of buildings interface with the sky, and create rooflines that define urban character. This layered panorama is made particularly visible by Luton's valley setting.

A coherent skyline

1. The composition of roof elements should consider the roof profile of surrounding buildings and create a coherent roofscape. It should contribute to the overall landscape.
2. Where neighbouring buildings are of lower height, consider setting back upper floors to reduce the impact of massing on the street.
3. Rooftop plant and building maintenance units (in their storage position) should not be visible from the public realm below; they should be screened or set back from the roof edge.

To strengthen the townscape character of Luton.

Outdoor amenity

4. The provision of biodiverse roofs, that also play an active role in rain water management, is encouraged.
5. The provision of outdoor amenity space is encouraged, and should be inclusive and accessible.

To improve access to outdoor space in urban environments.

Fig. 3.3.1 Distinctive industrial roof line

Fig. 3.3.2 Green roofs help to reduce heat-island effect

Fig. 3.3.3 Steeped roofs at Coin Street (Community Led Housing)

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

3.4 Preferred building types

The shape and size of urban blocks, as well as their location within the structure of the town can provide indications for the suitability of particular building types.

1. New developments should be of human scale, respecting the character of the town and site sensitivities such as conservation areas and the setting of listed buildings.
2. A mix of housing types including flats and houses is strongly encouraged on sites and across the town centre.
3. Sites near the core of the town may be more suitable for denser building types (courtyard blocks, mansion blocks, linear blocks)
4. Sites facing large roads may also be suitable for denser building types.
5. Sites in traditionally residential neighbourhoods should respect the local scale and use primarily lower-density building types and houses (townhouses, terraces, and mews).
6. Point towers are generally discouraged in the town centre.

To contribute to the overall block structure and urban logic of the town plan.

Fig. 3.4.1 Courtyard block

Fig. 3.4.2 Linear block

Fig. 3.4.3 Terraces

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

Courtyard blocks

- are 4 - 10 storeys high (incl. ground floor)
- may have tower elements (see tower elements below)
- can have ground floor retail units and/or maisonettes at ground floor level directly accessible from the street via their own front door.
- have apartments or duplexes above ground floor
- have 1 - 4 bedroom dwellings
- may have undercroft, naturally ventilated parking
- have shared courtyards with private terraces for first floor dwellings

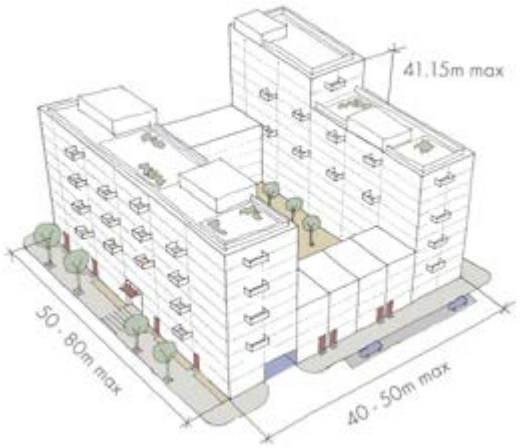


Fig. 3.4.4 Courtyard apartment blocks

Linear blocks

- are 4 - 6 storeys high (incl. ground floor)
- can have ground floor retail units and/or maisonettes at ground floor level that are accessed directly from the street via their own front door.
- have apartments or duplexes above ground floor
- have 1 - 4 bedroom dwellings
- can have undercroft, naturally ventilated parking
- have shared communal gardens with private terraces for first floor dwellings or ground floor dwellings if there is no undercroft parking
- can serve well to screen street noise away from lower density urban blocks.

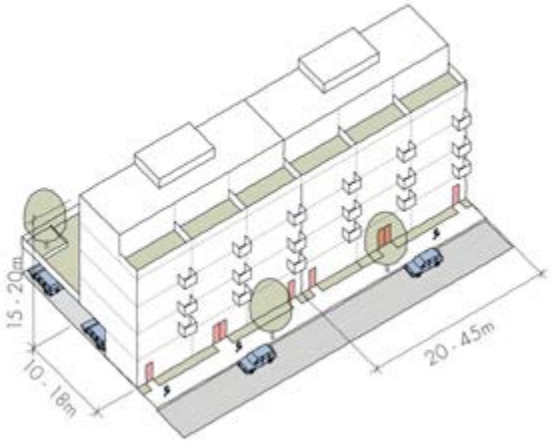


Fig. 3.4.5 Linear apartment blocks

Stacked maisonettes

- are 3 - 4 storeys high (incl. ground floor)
- are 2 - 4 bedroom dwellings
- have on street parking
- can offer the opportunity for retail units at ground floor

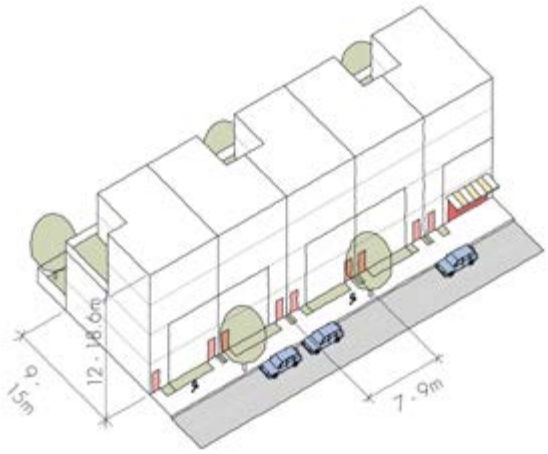


Fig. 3.4.6 Stacked maisonettes

Terraces/Townhouses

- are 2 - 4 storeys high (incl. ground floor)
- are 3 - 5 bedroom dwellings
- have on street parking
- have 1,000 - 2,000 mm defensible spaces
- have individual back gardens (minimum depth 6 metres)

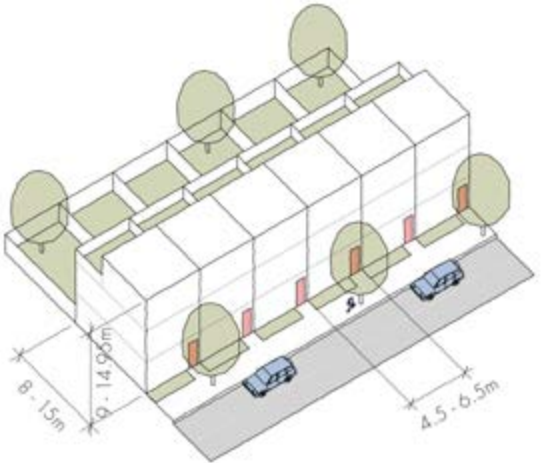


Fig. 3.4.7 Terraced houses

Mews

- are 2 storeys high (incl. ground floor)
- are generally single aspect dwellings facing the mews
- are 2 or 3 bedroom dwellings
- have on - plot parking
- have their individual private terrace
- have no projecting balcony
- have nominal defensible spaces

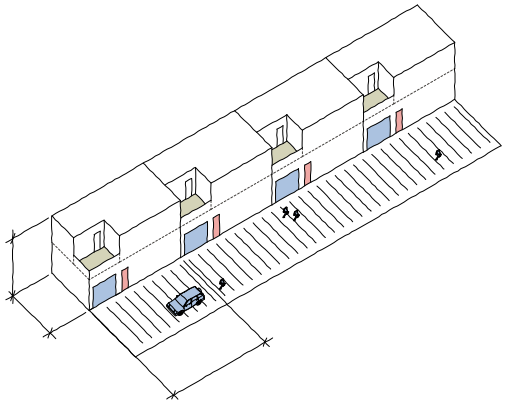


Fig. 3.4.8 Mews houses

Mansion blocks

- are similar to linear blocks but typically have a shared entrance for the entire building
- are 4 - 6 storeys high (incl. ground floor)
- have lateral flats
- have 1 - 4 bedroom dwellings
- have taller floor-to-floor heights
- may have shared amenities such as a concierge and work-out rooms
- may incorporate underground parking

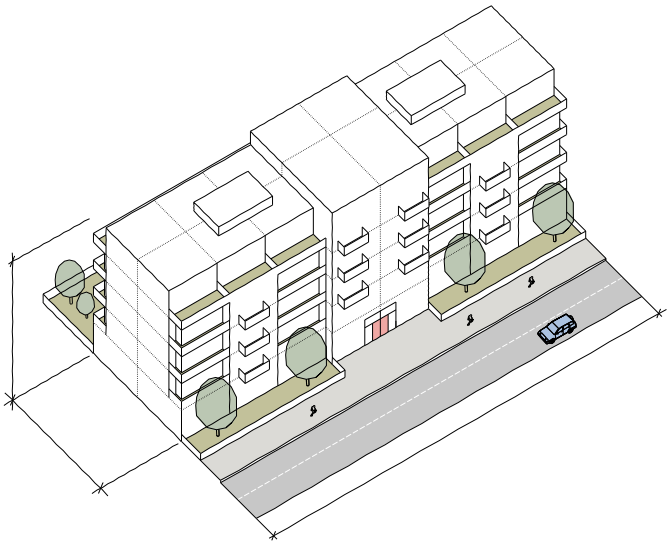


Fig. 3.4.9 Mansion block

Tower elements

Tower elements are not generally recommended for the town centre.

- Where permitted, their massing and height should be carefully integrated with the surrounding context.
- if used, its massing and layout should be well integrated with adjacent building types.
- have 1 - 4 bedroom dwellings

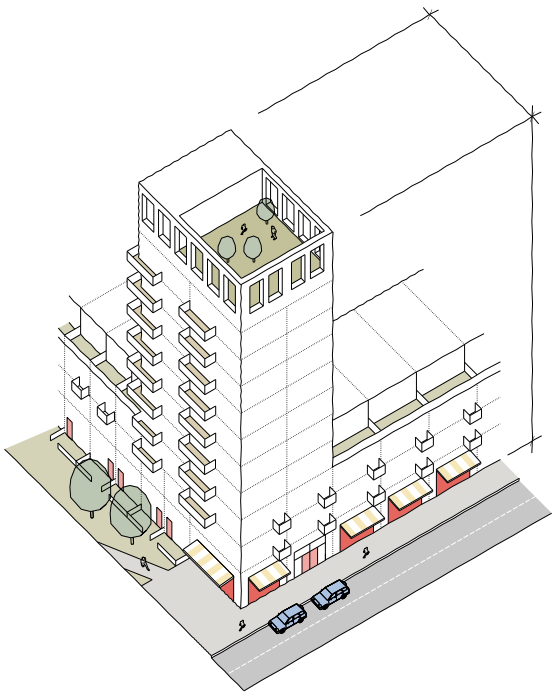


Fig. 3.4.10 Tower element

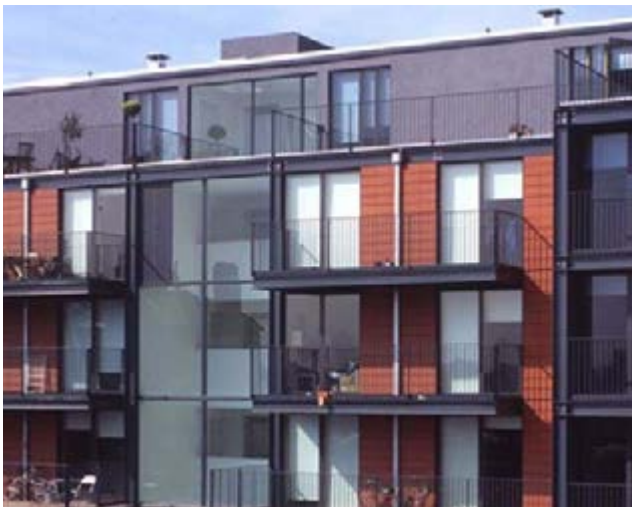


Fig. 3.4.11 Beaufort Court, London (Peabody)

Fig. 3.4.12 Adelaide Wharf, Hackney (AHMM)

Fig. 3.4.13 St Andrews, Bromley by Bow

Fig. 3.4.14 Coopers Road, Southwark (ECD Architects)

Fig. 3.4.15 Lampton Parkside, Hounslow

Fig. 3.4.16 Murray Grove, Hackney (Peabody)

3.5 Materials

Building materials should be robust, durable and sustainable, to reflect the pragmatic working character of the town centre.

1. Solid, integral materials are preferred over thin veneers and claddings, as the former age better than the latter. Choose materials that age well.
2. An understanding of local vernacular should inform material choice and detailing. A preference for brick, and specifically Luton brick, is encouraged.
3. Choose building materials that are easy to refresh or repair. Consider the maintenance of building façades and establish how this will be undertaken and who has responsibility.
4. Robust details and durable materials should be used on high-wear surfaces, such as building corners, wall bases, and door frames.
5. On prominent façades and around main entrances, expression of craftsmanship and personalisation in materiality should be explored.
6. In historic post-industrial buildings, preserving the evidence of past alterations to the building fabric is desirable.
7. Superficial and oversized graphical patterning of façades should be avoided.
8. Highly saturated artificial colours should be avoided.
9. Application of fake, non-functional architectural elements (for example, fake window muntins or false support beams) should be avoided.
10. Large expanses of glazing should be avoided.
11. The re-use of materials on site is encouraged to reduce embodied carbon and support circular economy principles.

To set a high material standard for town centre architecture.

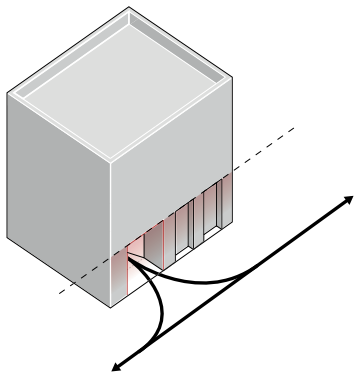


Fig. 3.5.1 Wrap cladding around corners

Fig. 3.5.2 Materials to avoid

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design
- Policy LLP30 Heritage

Fig. 3.5.3 High quality materials and craftmanship evident in the town centre

4 Amenities

Amenities guidelines focus on improving the life-long usefulness and enjoyability of buildings.

4.1 High quality homes

The revitalisation of the town centre will be based in part on the provision of attractive, high quality homes to draw in a wide range of residents.

1. The provision of homes should be clearly steered by local needs, with an emphasis on family and affordable homes.
2. Homes should appeal to a broad market, including young families, the elderly, and multi-generational households.
3. Homes should accommodate the needs of growing, ageing and disabled households; spatial provisions should be made for future installation of assistive mobility devices and bathroom fixtures.
4. Internal layouts should be informed by national space standards recognising these as nationally adopted minimums, and should seek to accommodate space to support flexibility (e.g. home working space).
5. Homes should have well designed relationships with surrounding public realm, with clear demarcation of defensible zones and private outdoor amenity spaces.
6. The provision of family homes should be well-considered: using typologies which support family life, located on lower floors and those adjacent to outdoor space, and internally designed to accommodate working from home, the needs of children (for example space to do homework) and supporting activities such as preparing home cooked food and enabling families to eat together.
7. The delivery of new homes should be matched with community and social infrastructure to support new residents needs including education and health provision.
8. All schemes should be tenure-blind.

To create desirable places to live within the town centre.

Fig. 4.1.1 Clear demarcation of public and private space

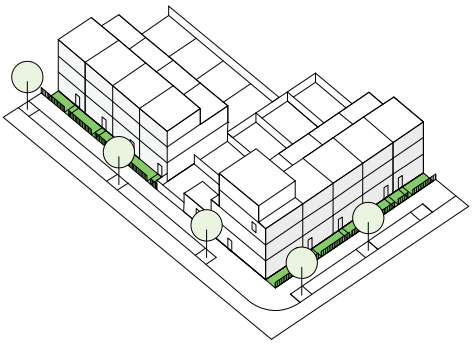


Fig. 4.1.2 Well considered defensible zone

Key references for amenities

- Luton Local Plan Appendix 6 External Amenity Space Standards
- Bat Conservation Trust Bats and artificial lighting guidance note (2018)

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP15 Housing provision
- Policy LLP16 Affordable housing
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

4.2 Outdoor space

Outdoor spaces are a precious commodity and a necessary amenity to make town centre living attractive.

1. Provide public outdoor amenity spaces proportionate to the size of development.
2. Provide semi-private, shared outdoor amenity spaces in larger building types, for the common usage of building residents. These spaces must be secure, well proportioned and well designed to accommodate a range of recreational uses by all residents. Communal play space should benefit from natural surveillance - for example, it should be in sight of residential windows and have step free access.
3. Provide sufficient private outdoor amenity spaces in housing units targeted towards families. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide more than the 5sqm minimum.

To ensure access to outdoor amenities for town centre residents.

Fig. 4.3.1 Lea River landscape amenity

Fig. 4.3.2 Semi-private shared outdoor space

4.3 Balconies

Poorly designed balconies diminish the quality of a place, when they remain unused or demoted to outdoor storage. Design balconies to maximise usefulness, comfort, and safety all year round.

1. For harsher weather conditions, the provision of inset balconies, loggias, and winter gardens may be preferable instead of projecting balconies.
2. Privacy and sightlines to neighbouring units should be considered in the location of balconies. Balconies should not project over the public highway.
3. Wind mitigation should be considered in the design of balconies.
4. The soffits of balconies should be well detailed for visual cleanliness and to aid daylight penetration of residential units.
5. Thermal bridges should be mitigated at balconies.

To improve balcony design.

Fig. 4.3.3 Small, unuseable balconies

Fig. 4.3.4 Well proportioned and designed balcony spaces

4.4 Landscaping

In addition to the urban greening objectives (see 2.3) landscape around new developments should contribute to outdoor amenities for residents and relate well to adjacent public realm.

1. At plot access points, hardscaped surfaces within the curtilage zone should be level with surrounding public realm surfaces to avoid creating trip-hazards. Single-step transitions should be avoided where possible as they are a particularly common trip-hazard.
2. Public/private boundaries should be clearly delineated to indicate management responsibilities, and to avoid neglected 'no-man's lands' around properties.
3. Building adjacencies with hostile environments such as busy roadways or railway tracks should be mitigated with good landscape boundary design.

To mediate the interface between public and private realms, improve amenity, and the fit of buildings within their context.

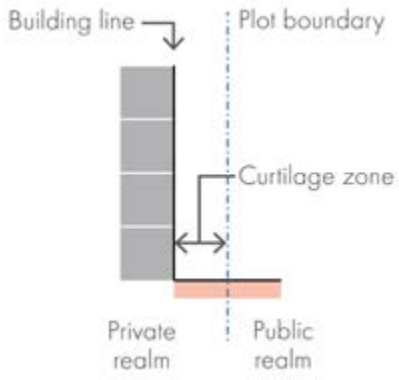


Fig. 4.4.1 Provide level surfaces at plot access point

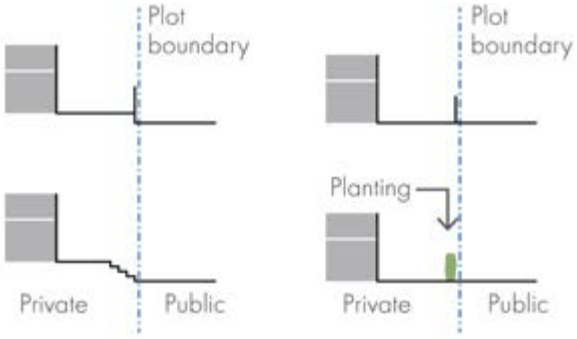


Fig. 4.4.2 Clearly define plot boundaries

Fig. 4.4.3 Clearly delineated public and private boundary

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design
- Luton Local Plan Appendix 6 External Amenity Space Standards

4.5 Public art

Public art is about much more than murals and statues, it is about a creative process connecting people to place through the creativity of artists, architects and designers. Public art has already played a central role in the revitalisation of the Luton town centre transforming urban spaces into sites of cultural appreciation.

1. Development proposals should actively embrace the process of public art to embed a sense of place and belonging.
2. Public art can function as urban wayfinding devices, helping people orient themselves to the layout of the town.
3. Public art can help mitigate the effects of buildings with negative townscape elements, such as the painting of expansive blank façades and dead frontages.
4. New developments should find opportunities to meet the objectives outlined in **Harnessing Momentum: Luton's strategy for arts, culture and the creative industries 2017-2027**.
5. The commissioning and production of public art should actively consult with and involve local communities.

To integrate public art strategies with new development and improve the urban environment.

Fig. 4.5.1 Public art at Hat Gardens (art by Aimi Rix)

Fig. 4.5.2 Example of how public art can enliven blank walls (The Promise by Mark Titchner and Jonathan Barnbrook in the Luton's Hat District)

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design

4.6 External lighting

The external lighting of buildings should enhance the safety of the public realm, while minimising nuisance to adjacent properties and wildlife.

1. Fixtures should have cutoffs that minimise glare into neighbouring properties and light pollution into the night sky.
2. Electrical conduits to fixtures should be concealed with in the facade and landscape design.
3. The use of warmer colour temperature lighting is preferred (3000-6000K) for a better rendering of human skin tones and creating a more welcoming environment.
4. Applicants should refer to specific lighting guidance for bats when designing lighting schemes.

To improve safety of the public realm.

To minimise impact of development on nocturnal wildlife.

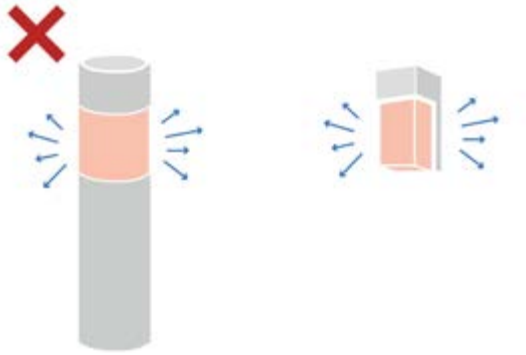


Fig. 4.7.1 Fixtures which cause light pollution

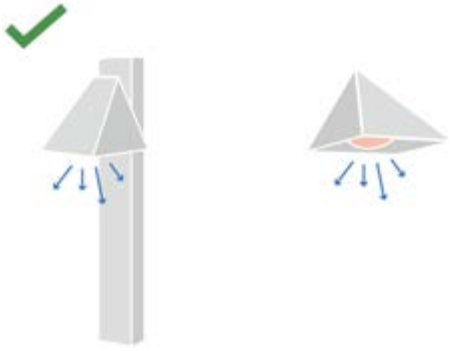


Fig. 4.7.2 Fixtures which minimise light pollution

Fig. 4.7.3 External lighting should be integrated with the design of the facade rather than attached as an afterhtought

4.7 Acoustics

Densely populated building types require careful treatment of acoustic separations to ensure residential privacy and comfort.

1. Buildings adjacent to large roads and railway lines should provide sufficient acoustic isolation from environmental noise.
2. Internal party walls should provide privacy between adjacent units.
3. Landscaping and planting can soften the acoustic profile of external spaces for greater amenity.
4. It is essential that all residential properties in the town centre include sufficient sound proofing to avoid conflict with evening and night time uses, and other existing sources of noise such as the railway. Developments along the A505 should pay particular attention to noise insulation.

To consider the acoustic dimension of building quality.

Relevant Local Plan policies

- Policy LLP3 Luton town centre strategy
- Policy LLP25 High quality design
- Policy LLP28 Biodiversity and nature conservation
- Policy LLP32 Parking
- Policy LLP38 Pollution and Contamination
- Luton Local Plan Appendix 2 Parking and Cycling Standards

4.8 Car parking

Given the high accessibility of the town centre, zero or light car parking provision is expected. Where parking is required, careful consideration can make a significant contribution to a better townscape.

1. Any on-street car parking provision should be tempered periodically with complementary landscaping.
2. Long runs of parking stalls should be avoided.
3. Surface parking lots should minimise extensive hard impermeable surfaces and provide well integrated landscaping and pedestrian priority walkways.
4. Where it is needed, new car parking should be integrated within residential developments with clearly defined access points.
5. When situated on mixed use streets, car parking areas should be wrapped with active uses at ground level. Blank walls should be avoided.

To reduce the amount of car parking in the town centre and integrate it better with housing.

Fig. 4.8.1 Podium car parking embedded between commercial and residential uses

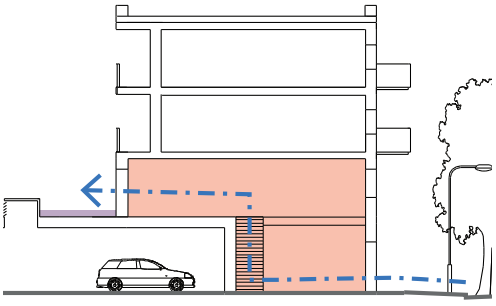


Fig. 4.8.2 Access to communal courtyard

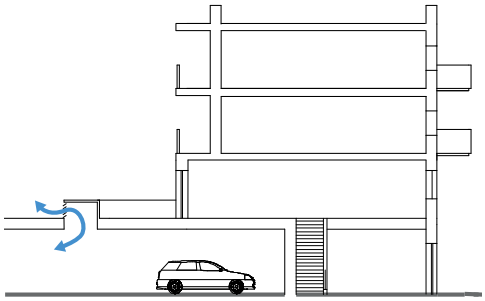


Fig. 4.8.3 Natural ventilation of parking

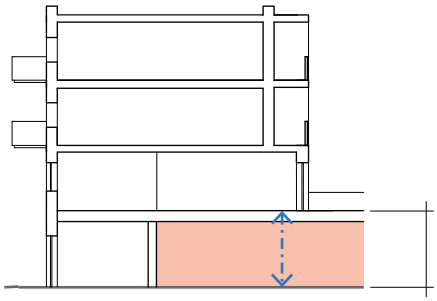


Fig. 4.8.4 Podium maximum height

4.9 Cycle parking

Developments should provide high quality cycle parking at least in accordance with best practice guidance.

1. All cycling parking should be designed in accordance with best practice, being fit for purpose, secure and well-located.
2. Full details about proposed cycle provision should be submitted as part of the planning application and not dealt with by condition.
3. Proposals should demonstrate how cycle parking facilities cater for larger cycles, including adapted cycles for disabled people.
4. Single dwelling buildings can include cycle parking within the dwelling, at entrance level, within, or adjacent to the circulation area.
5. High quality cycle parking should be integrated into the building envelope where possible, secure within the property curtilage is also appropriate. Locating close to front doors can encourage everyday use and healthy lifestyles.
6. Communal bike storage should be lit at night and provide a good level of natural surveillance.
7. Access to storage areas should be kept to a minimum on street facing elevations in order to maximise active street frontages.
8. Electric bike charging provision should be accommodated within dedicated communal cycle parking storage areas that meet fire resistance requirements. These should ideally open into fresh air, and not impact on means of escape.
9. Showers, storage and changing facilities for cyclists are encourage for larger mixed-use developments with significant employment uses.
10. Where little or no car parking is being provided, developments are expected to provide cycle parking that exceeds minimum standards.

Fig. 4.9.1 Secure internal cycle parking with lockers located next to the changing rooms, and a few metres from the building access point.

Key references for cycle parking

- London Cycling Design Standards (2014) provides a useful benchmark for the design of cycle parking nationally
- Luton Local Plan Appendix 2 Parking and Cycling Standards

Glossary

Access
The accessibility to and within the site, for vehicles, cycles and pedestrians in terms of the positioning and treatment of access and circulation routes and how these fit into the surrounding access network. (Article 2, The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)

Active Frontages
A building front that promotes activity and encourages movement between public realm and the building by the way it is designed. Active frontage strategies include mixed-uses at ground floor, windows and entrances, related outdoor uses, and the reduction / limitation of blank walls.

Address
The main entrance and primary facade for a building.

Amenity
A positive element that contributes to the overall character or enjoyment of an area (for example: open land, trees, and historic buildings).

Appearance
The aspects of a building or place within the development which determine the visual impression the building or place makes, including the external built form of the development, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture. (Article 2, The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)

Basement
Below ground building area.

Block
A building or set of continuous buildings within a plot.

Building Height
The height of a building measured from the lowest point of the ground level adjacent to the building.

Building Line
The line which when extended vertically forms the plane to which the majority of a building facade should meet.

Building Typology
An arrangement of building form that interfaces with the surrounding urban context or built environment in a particular way. Building typologies are not specific to an architectural style and can be expressed in multiple ways.

Character
The combination of scale, layout, access, appearance, and landscaping of streets, open spaces, and buildings that can give places their own distinct identity.

Commercial use
Uses falling within Class E of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended): 'Commercial, business and service uses' including shops, financial and professional services, restaurants and cafés, indoor sport, day nurseries, medical services and business uses that can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to the

amenity of that area' (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

Conservation Area

Local planning authorities are obliged to designate as conservation areas any parts of their own area that are of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve, or enhance. In conservation areas, there are extra planning controls and considerations in place to protect the historic and architectural elements which make that place special.

Cumulative Impact

A number of developments in a locality or a continuous activity over time that together may have an increased impact on the environment, local community or economy.

Defensible Space

A place with a clear sense of ownership and responsibility to promote security and discourage antisocial behaviour.

Density

In the case of residential development, a measurement of either the number of habitable rooms per hectare or the number of dwellings per hectare.

Design Code

A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build on a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.

Design Guide

A document that is often produced by a local planning authority, providing guidance on how development can be carried out consistent with good design practice.

Dual-Aspect

A room or dwelling (usually an apartment) with windows on two walls facing two different directions.

Enclosure

The definition of the public realm through the use of building façades to create a space such as a street or a square.

Floorplate

The plan area of a building at a given floor level.

Frontage

The boundary between a plot of land or a building and the road or public realm onto which the plot or building fronts.

Gross External Area (GEA)

Gross area floorspace which includes perimeter wall thickness and external projections.

Ground Level

The floor of a building that is at or nearest to the level of the ground around the building.

Guidance
Non-prescriptive elements in a planning document provided to promote best practice.

Guideline rationale
A listing of reasons for prescriptive guidance. The rationale is printed in italicised text and is non-prescriptive. Designs that fulfil a rationale may be proposed as an alternative solution to be submitted to the local planning authority for approval.

Habitable rooms
Any room used or intended to be used for sleeping, cooking, living or eating purposes. Enclosed spaces such as bath or toilet facilities, service rooms, corridors, laundries, hallways, utility rooms or similar spaces are excluded from this definition.

Hard/Soft Landscaping
Hard landscaping is the provision of features such as paving, lighting, seating, etc. Whilst soft landscaping is the provision of plants, shrubs and trees to improve the quality of the environment.

Heritage Asset
A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.

'Heritage Asset' includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

High Street
A concentration of retail and commercial uses situated on a city or town road. Traditionally associated with the centre of a town, village, or neighbourhood.

Inclusive design
Designing the built environment, including buildings and their surrounding spaces, to ensure that they can be accessed and used by everyone.

Land Use
Allowable occupancies and adjacencies, based on the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended), and longer established occupancies.

Landscaping
The treatment of land (other than buildings) for the purpose of enhancing or protecting the amenities of the site and the area in which it is situated and includes: (a) screening by fences, walls or other means; (b) the planting of trees, hedges, shrubs or grass; (c) the formation of banks, terraces or other earthworks; (d) the laying out or provision of gardens, courts, squares, water features, sculpture or public art; and (e) the provision of other amenity features.
(Article 2, The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)

Layout

The way in which buildings, routes and open spaces within the development are provided, situated and orientated in relation to each other and to buildings and spaces outside the development.
(Article 2, The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)

Listed Building

A building or structure of special architectural or historic interest. 'Listed Buildings' are Graded I, II* or II with Grade I being the highest.

Local Plan

A plan for the future development of an area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is 'the development plan', a form of 'development plan document' that is adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). Planning applications have to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Masterplan

A long-term, spatial planning document that provides a conceptual layout to guide future growth and development in a specific area.

Mixed use

Provision of a mix of complementary uses, such as residential, community and leisure uses, on a site or within a particular area.

Multi-storey Car Park (MSCP)

A car parking facility comprised of more than one floor level, typically above ground.

Net Internal Area (NIA)

The useable area within a building measured to the internal face of the perimeter walls at each floor level.

Overlooking

A term used to describe the effect when a development or building affords an outlook over adjoining land or property, often causing loss of privacy and amenity.

Overshadowing

The effect of a development or building on the amount of sunlight presently enjoyed by a neighbouring property, resulting in a shadow being cast over that neighbouring property.

Passive Surveillance

Design that increases the occupation and/or visibility of a space to deter crime, and promote safety and security.

Plot

A smaller partition within a development area. This may be created by a fixed route passing through the area, or a subdivision in use or ownership.

Plot Line

The limit of a development plot.

Plot Ratio

The amount of floorspace in a building expressed as a multiple of its site area. 'Plot Ratio' is arrived at by dividing the above ground floor area of the building by the area of the site excluding any parts of adjoining streets.

Predominant Use
The use which dominates by occupying the largest amount of floor area within the building. Usually equates to at least 51% of the specified area.

Privately Owned Publicly Accessible Space (POPS)
Areas where access for the public is secured by virtue of legal agreement with or offered implicitly through design and arrangement by the landowner. Landowner / local planning authority-defined limitations on hours of access and types of activity may apply.

Public Open Space
Publicly owned and publicly accessible space.

Public Realm
Those parts of a village, town or city (whether publicly or privately owned) available for everyone to use. This includes streets, squares and parks.

Residential Use
Use Classes C1, C2, C3, and C4 as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

Retail Use
Included in Use Class E, commercial use: shop units including the sale of comparison and convenience goods, as well as food and drink mostly consumed on the premises (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)).

Roofscape
The appearance of the tops of buildings as seen on the skyline and from tall buildings (including uses and occupancies).

Scale
The height, width and length of each building proposed within the development in relation to its surroundings.
(Article 2, The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)

Secured by Design
The national police scheme which aims to minimise crime and opportunities to commit crime through better design of buildings and places.

Servicing
Access strategy for deliveries, infrastructural and waste services.

Setbacks
Where the frontage of a building is not extended to the limits of the building envelope.

Single-Aspect
A room or dwelling (usually an apartment) with windows on one wall only facing a single direction.

Supplementary Planning Document
A document that adds further detail to the policies in the development plan, that can be used to provide further guidance on particular issues, such as design, or for the development on specific sites. A supplementary planning document is capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but is not part of the statutory development plan.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
A natural approach to managing rainwater runoff from a site, to reduce or eliminate reliance on civic infrastructure.

Topographic Level
Surveyed existing site level at ground.

Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA)
New development often brings about increase in traffic. Traffic impact assessments are prepared by developers to enable the highway authority to assess whether highway improvements are needed, and, if so the extent of these improvements.

Upper Floor
Any floor located above ground and upper ground (or mezzanine) floor.

View Testing
The overlaying of a wireframe massing model of a proposed development over the existing context from a specified test view position.

Planning Policy Team
localplan@luton.gov.uk