SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

ISSUES PAPER
SEPTEMBER 2009

Durham County Council
FORWORD

This Issues Paper sets out the need for a comprehensive design guidance document to support the Planning Service in County Durham. It introduces the reasons why good design and sustainable design are important and why it is crucial that design reflects the distinctive character of County Durham.

A ‘3 Step Approach’ is proposed to ensure places are better designed. This paper aims to stimulate debate and discussion regarding the distinctive character of the County and the need for an improved built environment.

The paper reflects the emerging structure of the Sustainable Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD will be the main planning tool to encourage higher quality developments. When adopted, the SPD will form an important part of the County Durham Plan (also known as the ‘Local Development Framework’).
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ISSUE 1
Why is Sustainable Design Important in Planning?

Good planning is dependent on good design which is concerned with how places feel, function and relate to each other.

“Good design is indivisible from good planning” – Planning Policy Statement 1

Government planning document ‘By Design’ stresses that good design is important in all communities and is especially important in stimulating regeneration in neglected areas.

“Good design is important everywhere, not least in helping to bring run down neglected places back to life” – By Design

Good design is not solely a visual concern; it has important economic, social and environmental consequences too. Environments should be designed around the needs of people. The quote below from CABE stresses the wide-ranging benefits good design can have on communities and on peoples’ lives.

“Good quality places can work well, look good and support a viable local economy...they can also encourage healthy lifestyles with walking, cycling and physical leisure”

Good design helps people to feel good about buildings and places and this fosters civic pride. Communities are more likely to care for their environment and this can result in reductions in vandalism, graffiti and crime.
In addition, and importantly for regeneration, good design attracts interest and investment in an area, which is important to the economy. Well-designed developments and places needn’t cost more to develop and needn’t utilise expensive materials and fittings.

Government studies by departments for design (CABE) and transport (DETR) show that good design adds economic, as well as humanitarian, value to the homes and we live in.

Good design can ensure pedestrian-friendly environments that encourage healthier lifestyles.
There is a need for clearer and consistent design guidance. Sustainable Design is important:

- **Locally** - Durham County Council
- **Nationally** - The Government
- **Globally** - Tackling climate change

**Locally**

**Durham County Council**

**Altogether Better**

In the past some of the former district Councils of Durham have been eager to attract new development and they have been willing to accept mediocre design as a result.

The New Unitary Council is committed to improving the standard of new development and design standards to ensure long-term quality and sustainability of places.

**Growth Points**

The Growth Point areas will be the focus of the greatest share of new housing and economic growth.

The Sustainable Design SPD should give guidance to help the Growth Point Areas become sustainable places where people want to live and work. These communities must foster a sense of community and civic pride.

**Improving the image of County Durham**

The SPD will align to the vision in the Council’s Core Strategy, which will help to improve the image and the attractiveness of the County.

A more attractive County will help to improve the economy and encourage tourists and visitors while putting residents at the heart of improvements.

**Area Action Partnerships**

New Area Action Partnerships have been formed within the County, which helps communities to get involved in place shaping.

The SPD will have more weight in planning decisions if it has been
prepared with the involvement of the local community.

Nationally

Government

Policy

National Planning Policy Statements are full of quotes that encourage Local Development Frameworks that respect local character and context. It is not acceptable for local policy makers to simply re-iterate national policy.

Departments

Government Departments have design and sustainability at the heart of their agenda. The Department of Transport have produced the policy document ‘Manual for Streets’ that recommends that people and communities must come before the needs of the motor vehicle.

Legislation

National Legislation was altered in the Planning Act of 2008 so that developers and local authorities must have regard to design issues. The section of the 2004 Planning Act regarding sustainability was amended to read:

“The person or body (in particular) must have good regard to the desirability of achieving a good standard of design”

– The Planning Act, Section 183

Building for Life

The Council for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE), who are the Government’s advisor on design and open space, have published the "Building for Life" criteria setting out the national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. This document will lead out guidance on residential layouts in Step 3 of the SPD.
Regional Government
Policies 8, 24, 38 and 39 of The North East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) aim to ensure development that is sustainable, takes account of climate change and is of high quality design.

In advance of local targets being set in LDFs, major new developments should secure at least 10% of their energy supply from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon sources.

Globally
Tackling Climate Change
Built development accounts for a significant portion of the UK’s carbon (and other climate changing gases) emissions. It is expected that by 2016 all new homes will have to be zero carbon.

Major schemes, including the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) and BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method), as well as changes to the Building Regulations that come into force from next year onwards, aim to ensure new developments produce fewer carbon emissions by requiring buildings to be better insulated and to reduce reliance on centralised and non-renewable sources of energy.

New forms of development will have to change significantly to ensure compliance with the CSH and BREEAM standards.
ISSUE 3
Should the Design Policy Framework be Locally Distinctive to County Durham?

"PPS12 states that supplementary planning documents should not simply re-apply national and regional guidance. They should consider local circumstance and detail" – Planning Policy Statement 12

Our design policies should attempt to respond to what is distinctive about County Durham’s character. Where attention is paid to the locality, developers, designers and planners are more likely to produce thoughtful and sustainable environments that are distinctive and reverse the modern tendency towards places that lack character and a sense of place.

Historically, design in County Durham’s built environment has evolved and reflected local geology, landscapes, culture and industry in the County. This has led to diverse built environments that are distinctive and have their own character in different locations. Understanding the site context is imperative for a strong design process.

"New development should be of a high quality having regard not just to neighbouring buildings but to the landscape and wider locality" – Planning Policy Statement 3

PPS3 refers to the different approaches and geographical scales that designers must think about when designing proposals.

Notwithstanding the creative skill of designers and their requirement to follow a client’s brief, this paper seeks to introduce a ‘3 Step Approach’ that should help guide designers and planners:

The 3 Step Approach of the proposed design guide is introduced from page 23 onwards.

New development should understand the sites context
ISSUE 4
What is Local Distinctiveness?

“A design that reflects and improves the site and its surroundings will help create a sense of character. It does not have to copy the style of surrounding architecture to belong to an area, but may benefit by responding to the scale and materials of surrounding buildings, the aspect of the site and particular views” – Building for Life (2008)

Materials

Materials are an obvious feature that people associate with the built environment. From the red brick and slate of the old colliery villages, to the sandstone and stone slab roofs and pantiles in older agricultural settlements, materials can reflect local geology, landscape and industry. Traditional paving materials are also important in creating a sense of place.

As mentioned above, local distinctiveness is about much more than just materials, it is also about......
Street Patterns
Street patterns should reflect local distinctiveness and should pay attention to the existing settlement and street patterns.

Settlement patterns in pre-mining villages in the County were largely established in the 12th century and related to agricultural systems.

In the west of the County, the Dales Fringes and the Pennine Moorland, you are more likely to see clustered hamlets and isolated farmsteads clinging the hill slopes of valley bottoms. Moving eastwards the character changes and includes regularly spaced small, nucleated villages arranged around village greens surrounded by open fields.

The mining industry has made a huge impact on settlement development and street patterns in County Durham. Workers were housed close to collieries and mines, in tightly knit communities of fairly high density. The terraces were often built to follow the contours of the steep hillsides creating linear environments or on more gently slopes staggered up the hill.

In recent years rapid growth and development has resulted in new towns, modern housing estates, and out of town shopping centres. This suburban development has been designed around the increase in car use and has created estates that are dominated by roads.
Height, Scale and Massing

Height, scale and massing is sometimes referred to as the building envelope and is important in terms of character.

The scale and massing in development can be distinctive to an area. A building may be quite different in architectural style but it may be in keeping if it is the same number of storeys and the same shape as buildings in the immediate locality.

FARM BUILDINGS:

In County Durham farm buildings in agricultural settlements tend to be long, low and linear in scale and new development of this type should reflect this scale.

The style of these estates are not unique to County Durham because they could be anywhere in Britain - such “anywhere estates” are not considered to be locally distinctive.

Some modern estates and new towns are designed around winding feeder roads and curved cul-de-sacs.
Roof Form and Pattern

The importance of roof-scape cannot be underestimated in County Durham. The topography is undulating and hilly due to the Pennines in the west, the central belt of river gorges, and the limestone plateau to the east. There is little flat ground in most of the County apart from the lowlands of the River Tees and the River Wear. The changes in terrain result in roof and townscapes that are very visible in many near and distant views at different levels.

Buildings often follow contours and ridges or river valleys in the County, in a west-east direction. Linear rooflines can be viewed from the surrounding hills and valley locations.

The larger town centers and Market Towns tend to have buildings of grander scale and new development should be sympathetic to this style.

Terraces are often staggered down the slopes in many villages in the central belt and east of the County providing attractive rhythmical patterns.
Detailing

Detailing is the detailed design of features within the larger building block. It can refer to the detailed design of doors, windows or roof features.

Detailing within the County varies; Within the Pennines in the far west in the North Pennine vernacular style which is similar in style to Cumbria prevails. Field barns, related to sheep farming, farming and lead mining cottages, with solid walls and small casement windows are a common feature tucked into the landscape to provide protection from any harsh weather.

In the gentler slopes of the Pennines and in the Dales especially to the south, the character is similar to North Yorkshire – attractive farm buildings, cottages, cart sheds and field barns, with Yorkshire sliding sash and casement windows and larger cart door openings.

The Victorian mining terrace dominates in this area and typical detailing consists of vertically proportioned sash windows in a symmetrical pattern, timber panelled doors and simple slate roofs with brick chimneys breaking up the scale of the roofs.
In ex-mining villages, Victorian terraces, outhouses and solid brick walls are important details.

In the larger town centers some of the buildings details are grandeur in scale.

There are a large number of 1930's inter-war housing estates that have very attractive features.
There are particular challenges to interpreting local distinctiveness in County Durham:

- Many of the distinctive buildings and structures associated with the mining and industrial heritage of the county have been demolished.
- Much of the 20th century regeneration of the former mining areas lacks distinctiveness and quality or else has quality that is not readily apparent.
- The County covers a very large and diverse area.

Spaces Around Buildings

In the older agricultural villages there is more open space either in open countryside, farmyards, or in village greens that are at the heart of the village.

Attractive Market squares and wide streets used formerly for trading are more prominent features of Market Towns such as Barnard Castle, Chester le Street, Sedgefield and Bishop Auckland.
In the ex-mining villages, terraces are often close to the road or pavement in a continuous building line. This creates active frontages which adds interest to the streetscene.

In the New Towns of Newton Aycliffe and Peterlee and in areas where 20th century housing estates predominate, such as Newton Hall, Ouston and Urpeth, there are many informal open spaces and grass verges that are landscaped.

Contemporary Buildings
Designers and planners must learn from good design in the past and reflect this good practice when we are designing places for the needs of modern communities. There should be a place for local distinctiveness when designing modern buildings. For example, modern buildings may be a similar scale and massing to the surrounding older buildings or they may share familiar detailed design features and materials or have similar spaces around buildings.
Dealing with Constraints/Opportunities

County Durham has significant variations in topography and the landscape consists of hills, ridges, gently sloping dales and river lowlands following the Wear and Tees River Valleys. As a result there are many examples of developments following contours on sloping sites in the County.

Much residential development in County Durham is likely to be on sloping hillside sites. Such sites are particularly conducive to terraced layouts, which can provide attractive rhythms of development when staggered to reflect the contours of a site; this can make for very distinctive design that can be sympathetic visually in long and short distance views.

There are likely to be many regeneration opportunities within the County on brownfield sites. In some cases these sites will be surrounded by existing development that lacks distinctiveness and/or is of poor or mediocre design quality. In such cases it may be necessary to look beyond the immediate surroundings to ensure the local distinctiveness of the area is reflected in the new scheme. In such cases more contemporary building styles may be appropriate.

Some development may take place on sites on the rural edge of settlements. Many of the 19th century mining settlements originally had a ‘hard edge’ whereby very dense housing would immediately adjoin the countryside, with little or no landscaping to integrate the settlement into the surrounding countryside. This is one distinctive feature that should probably not be reflected by new development; a lower density, ‘softer’, landscape-dominated ‘rural edge’ may be more appropriate.

Design of development in County Durham has had to adapt to the decline of much of the traditional industries. This has created pockets of deprivation, which is evident in run-down town and village centres.

The increase in car ownership along with the growth of large out-of-town shopping centres has also impacted on the character and vibrancy of County Durham’s villages and town centres.
1. Compartmentalism

- Different professions such as planners, highway engineers, architects, and landscape architects have different priorities and perceptions as to what is good design. Even Development Management & Heritage planners can have different perspectives and priorities.

- The guide will seek to balance these differences and create an integrated ‘one team’ approach.

2. Who cares what the planners say?

- Many housing estates rated ‘poor’ by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) assessments are sometimes popular with residents indicating public perception and priorities may differ to the professional view and need to be taken into account.

- Some buildings are designed from the inside (the occupant’s perspective) rather than from the public realm perspective (the planner’s and communities concern). There is a need for balance between the two perspectives.

- Local priorities and issues can often be prioritised over good design. For example, regeneration may be prioritised in one area, student accommodation in another or the rural economy in another area.

- It is important that there is broad community support for the guide in County Durham.

3. Current House Building Model
Often, the business model of the development industry (including some of the volume house builders) is focused on the initial sale of individual dwellings, rather than long-term quality of the development and the creation of place and community.

More partnership working between the public and private sector and the community may be the answer to creating more sustainable and ‘liveable’ places.

4. Single use rules ok?

The property and financial industries have a preference for single use schemes and buildings.

Although some uses don’t mix well, mixed use development can produce a better quality and more sustainable built environment.

The SPD should contain good practice design examples of appropriate mixed uses (e.g. dwellings and offices).

5. Inertia

There is a lack of innovation in new design and construction, particularly residential development.

Many residential development proposals can be compromised and substandard interpretations of traditional houses.

Because many developments designed in the 1960s such as tower block flats and concrete-dominated new town centres, which have not dated well in most instances, so there is a public mistrust of modern architecture.

There are good examples of modern and sustainable office design in County Durham, but the residential schemes tend to be small scale or specialist.
The climate change agenda and the emerging requirement to construct buildings with a zero carbon impact is likely to have design implications, not all of which may be consistent with the aspirations of this document.

6. Modern Building Standards & Materials

Modern building techniques and materials often mean that because of requirements for insulation, ceiling heights and the like, traditional detailing and proportions cannot be directly reflected. For example, a newly built house could fit three stories into the space that a Victorian house would typically provide two stories.
## ISSUE 6
The ‘3 Step Approach’ - The Proposed Layout of the Sustainable Design SPD

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<th>STEP</th>
<th>The Design Process of Designer and Planner</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 1</strong> General Design Principles</td>
<td>This step looks at the principles of good design with regard to layouts and the appearance of the buildings</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 2</strong> Context</td>
<td>This step looks at the locally distinctive character area, settlement and site of the development proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 3</strong> Dealing with the Detailing</td>
<td>This step looks at the detailed design requirements of specific types of development e.g. residential extensions, shopfronts, etc.</td>
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The ‘3 Step Approach’ of the SPD is based on an in depth understanding of good design practice and an appreciation of the County Durham context. The design guide will seek to follow the design principles and policies from the existing sources, but at the same time ensure that they are adapted to fit the characteristics of County Durham. The following pages introduce this 3 Step Approach.
The Principles of Good Design

Step 1 of the SPD focuses on good practice design guidance, which aims to ensure successful place creation and management. These general principles can be summarised as follows:

- There are clear links between design, local distinctiveness and sustainability. Many of the key features of established, mainly Victorian, towns and neighbourhoods such as interconnectedness, high densities, tightly packed streets and buildings with a ‘walkable scale’ and mixture of uses such as corner shops, post offices and pubs, can help reduce demand for car-borne travel by providing services and facilities within close vicinity of peoples homes.

- New schemes should ensure the character of the surrounding environment is taken into account when designing new buildings and places. The special character of a place can be reflected in new schemes by building places that respond to local materials, features, layouts and patterns found in buildings, spaces and the landscape.

- Ensuring places are easy to find your way around and have a clear and understandable sense of place. Places need to be well connected to surrounding areas and ensure public and private spaces are easily distinguished and made to feel enclosed so that they feel safe, comfortable and interesting areas in which to move around and dwell. Good quality public spaces can be achieved by ensuring they are not cluttered with unnecessary signage and furniture.

- Successful buildings and places foster diversity and interest and support variety and choice. By making buildings that can be used for a variety of uses as well as respond to changing requirements, needs and habits of users will ensure they stand the test of time and help create there own character and feel. A changing climate will mean places and buildings must be built to withstand more extreme weather conditions and the resultant impacts of a less predictable environment.
General Design Principles

The SPD will expand on the following general principles and ensure they reflect the design challenges of County Durham.

Sustainability in design

- We need to ensure sustainable design is incorporated into developments so that they can reduce resource consumption now and adapt to the impacts of climate change in the future:
  - Design is a fundamental consideration if we are to ensure sustainable development.
  - Design solutions can be implemented at the town, neighbourhood, and, individual building scales. Examples include, at the town-level, solutions such as consideration of green-infrastructure, and district heating systems for more efficient energy supply. At the neighbourhood and individual building scale factors such as types or windows, heating, orientation and layout of buildings in relation to the sun, natural ventilation and daylighting can all help reduce a buildings energy requirements.
  - Sustainable design also involves responding to and utilising the built and natural features of a site to create places that reinforce and relate to their surroundings.

- Materials and craftsmanship should be locally sourced where possible to reduce the wider construction impacts involved in schemes. Utilising traditional building methods and materials can reinforce the local distinctiveness of buildings and places.
A ‘sense of place’

- We need to create distinctive places that have a sense of place.
- We need to move away from generic ‘anywhere estates’.
- Places should respect the site context and use local character to create interesting developments that connect to the locality.

We need to move away from ‘anywhere estates’ that lack identity and fail to reflect local character

Distinctive places that reflect the scale, massing and materials tend to have a better connection with the local character of our settlements
Better quality and greater variety of new housing

- Most new housing estates built in recent years would likely be deemed to be of poor or mediocre quality when assessed against the CABE ‘Building for Life’ criteria.

- We need a greater variety of quality new housing, built in coherent and connected street patterns which make it easier to find your way around and which are pedestrian and cycle friendly.

- Good quality streetscenes and public spaces with character and appearance appropriate to location.

- Dwelling types should exhibit architectural quality in terms of co-ordination of proportions, materials, colouring and detailing.

- There is a need for quality affordable dwellings.

- There is a need for some low density, large executive dwellings set within appropriately large plots, particularly in locations where such quality houses need to be linked with quality job opportunities.

Contemporary housing can be distinctive and reflect aspects of locality such as scale, massing, height and materials

We need to avoid estates that lack a distinctive sense of place and real variety of house types and tenure opportunities.
Mixed, well-served communities

- We need lively and well-served communities and more mixed use neighbourhoods.
- Places that have good access to facilities are more accessible, vibrant and interesting as a result of a variety of uses in one place.

Single use tends to equal limited vibrancy and separates services from residential areas limiting access

Mixed uses of housing and retail provide localised services and are generally more animated and accessible places
Development not dominated by cars

- We need developments where car parking is well-integrated and discreetly incorporated into the layout.

- Ensure more than one point of entry into and out of developments.

- Ensure pedestrian permeability and safety by designing in shared surfaces and street features; this can also encourage community interaction and care of places.

Pathways following desire lines linking into new estates

Car use tends to dictate the layout of new development, which creates uninteresting and uninviting places
Improve the design and layout of ‘large sheds’ and estates

- Large sheds (retail and industrial buildings) need to be better designed and integrated into the landscape. Contours and orientation need to be taken into consideration.

- By using appropriate materials and breaking up the scale/roofs of buildings the impact can be reduced.

- New landscaping and using existing hedgerows, trees to provide screenings can help.
**Improve residential extensions**

- We need to ensure residential extensions are suitable in design terms, in relation to scale, height, massing, fenestration pattern and materials to the existing building, street scene and neighbourhood.

- Extensions make up the majority of planning applications in the County so this is where the design SPD can really make an impact.

- Extensions need to take into consideration neighbouring amenities in terms of privacy, overlooking, visual impact and day light/sun light.

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**Extensions should not dominate the original house**

Here the extension is high quality and it is sympathetic to scale of the original house.

**Extensions should respect the character, materials and fenestration pattern of the original house**

**Side extensions should be subservient to the original structure in terms of scale and height and set slightly back from the building line**

**In this instance a flat roof extension does not respect the character of the original house**

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Good quality
Context and Local Distinctiveness

The second step in the design process focuses on the context of the site, which is imperative to creating distinctive developments.

Step 2 can be broken into four stages as illustrated. You start by establishing the landscape character area, as depicted in Steps 2a and 2b. For the purposes of this paper we have concentrated on the East Durham Limestone Plateau, which is situated in the East of the County.

The next stage, examined in Step 2c, focuses on the settlement type and we examine Easington Colliery as a case study.

The final stage, Step 2d, focuses in on the specific site where we consider the context and how a new development could respond to this context.
Step 2a - The County Durham Landscape Character Areas
CHARACTER AREAS

Example: East Durham Limestone Plateau

Geology
- A low upland plateau of magnesium limestone with glacial drift.

Landscape
- Gently undulating countryside deeply incised by wooded denes leading to the coast.
- Pastoral landscape with cattle and arable farming (potatoes and cereals).
- Scrub vegetation and grasslands/wildflower meadows along coast.

The Heritage Coast, Limestone Plateau - here cliffs are incised by coastal denes
Typology

- Small farmsteads and hamlets set in undulating countryside. Some nucleated villages surrounding village greens e.g. Easington Village, Seaton.

- Mainly mining settlements, tight-knit settlements of high densities in a grid system, e.g. Easington Colliery, Horden, Shotton Colliery and Thornley.

- Industries, many large deep sea mines located along the coast such as Easington Colliery, Vane Tempest at Seaham and Horden. Other mines scattered around the district. Port at Seaham; the harbour was built specifically to transport coal from the North East to London.

- New Town at Peterlee built circa 1950 based on new town principles, separate estates connected by green corridors of landscaped open space, walkways and roads.
Types of buildings

- Rural - Barns, granaries, ing-gangs, cattle sheds, farmhouses and workers cottages. Organic form; buildings linked together around courtyards.

- Cottages, farm buildings and other commercial buildings located in farmsteads, hamlets, villages situated around village greens.

- Urban - Victorian Terraces tightly knit in high densities. Back yards and access lanes. Symmetrical design to the frontages and window and door openings. The roofs are particularly prominent with the rhythm of slate roofs broken up by brick chimneys. Commercial settlements characterised by Victorian shopfronts, often with first floor bays and ornate cornice and fascia details.
Materials

• **Rural** - Originally local magnesium limestone, some stone left intact but many of these buildings are rendered or lime-washed - brick buildings also common. Red pantile and slate roofs.

• **Urban** - 19th century mining villages predominantly red brick and slate. Back lanes surfaced with of scoriae blocks (waste from mining workings) and granite setts.

Details

• **Rural** - Casement openings and sash windows in farm houses. Farm buildings, slit windows, hit and miss openings, hopper windows, casements. Timber batton doors, cart doors.

Development Issues

- Dense settlement pattern left by the coal mining industry together with the presence of busy roads, railways, quarries, waste disposal sites and industrial estates, power lines and communication masts, give a semi rural or urban fringe quality to parts of the landscape.

- The built environment of some former mining settlements is of poor quality, centres are often run-down, lack investment and maintenance.

- Settlement edges are abrupt or poorly defined and fringed with allotments, pony paddocks and industrial land.

- The presence of large urban populations brings pressure for recreational development like golf courses and equestrian centres in the countryside near towns and villages, which weaken its rural character. The poor conversion of many farms and outbuildings to residential use adds to urbanising process.

- New housing development often dominated by the car and lacking character.
STEP 2 CONTEXT
EASTINGTON COLLERY

Location
Easington Colliery is located directly to the east of Easington Village, approximately 2 miles from A19. The main street, Seaside Lane runs down to the coast.

Landscape Character Area
East Durham Limestone Plateau

Type of Settlement
Old coal mining town

Geology
A low upland plateau of magnesium limestone with glacial drift.

Landscape
The plateau slopes down to the sea. The landscape changes from the coast and on the former colliery site, grassland and scrub leading down to cliffs and the beach.

Settlement
The former mining village dates back to 1850, with the sinking of the first pit. The main street (the commercial centre) is Seaside Lane. It is a long linear road leading down from Easington Village to the coast with attractive open sea views. The village was built on a grid system pattern with rows upon rows of Victorian terraces staggered down the hill. The former mine at the bottom of Seaside Lane has disappeared and the land has been reclaimed as part of the Heritage Coast Initiative providing open grassland. This site has potential for future development.

Buildings
Easington Colliery’s buildings are predominantly late Victorian. The simple, red-brick terraces are constructed of a dark red bricks with slate roofs with prominent chimneys and vertical proportioned windows. Former sash openings are an attractive and dominant house type here. The commercial centre along Seaside Road has many Victorian timber shopfronts with large facades, ornate cornice and console details. First floor bays are also a feature.

Pre 19th Century
No development.

Late 19th/Early 20th Century
The sinking of the pit in the late 19th century resulted in a large influx of workers, a significant population growth and a demand for housing. Tightly packed Victorian terraces with enclosed back yards appeared row upon row to the rear and bottom of Seaside Lane. The terraces staggered down the hill provide an attractive roofscape and streets that is particularly distinctive.

Late 20th Century
Sporadic estates - suburban in character dating back to 1950’s, 1960’s dominated by terraced houses with red brick and concrete tiles. Recent infill to the rear of Seaside Lane a small enclosed development similar to the Aged Miners Cottages is the north of Easington Colliery.

The Future
Infill
Small gap sites where some demolition of Victorian housing has taken place. The pattern of the streets should be replicated in particular the building line and missing.

New Development
The former pit site at the bottom of Seaside Lane is a large exposed attractive open site. There is significant development opportunities here.

Layout
Any development should respect the existing grid system and should take, where possible, the missing and building line which is so distinctive, especially at the front of the site. Housing should be fairly densely packed although there should be provision for front and rear gardens. To the rear of the site the desirability could be lower opening up the views to the sea.

Materials
Dark red bricks slate roofs and timber windows. Contemporary materials could provide seashore emphasis this could include timber cladding, sash windows and slate use of grey.
**Step 2d – Site Level: bringing all the stages together to consider a typical development**

**STEP 3: EASINGTON COLLIERY – POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT – FORMER PIT SITE**

**Character of area and site**

- Victorian terraces – Existing character
- Victorian terraces – Seaside Lane
- Open view of site entrance
- Terraces with enclosed front gardens
- Open site looking towards the sea
- Sea views – Bottom of Seaside Lane

**Graphical representation:**

- Terraces town houses along the frontage of the site, higher density
- Symmetrical grid pattern of the Victorian housing
- Garden/squares centre of development
- Grid system with perimeter blocks replicated
- Effective screening on the edges of the site
- Lower density housing along the edges of the site
- Focal point, buildings on junction
- Open site looking towards the sea
Detailed Design Guidance for Specific Types of Development

The third step to the SPD focuses on the specific type of development planned and is set out as a series of design guides which provide detailed advice and guidance.

These guides should be followed in conjunction with the principles and stages that are established in Step 1 and Step 2 of the SPD.

It is envisaged that the following specific design guides will be produced:

RESIDENTIAL EXTENSION DESIGN GUIDE

The Residential Extension Design Guide is aimed primarily at householders who are interested in carrying out extensions or new building work to their home. The document will provide useful guidance to architects, designers and planners.

Extending a home is a large financial commitment and if it is poorly designed and/or badly located and built, it can harm the appearance and character of the house itself, the neighbourhood and streetscene. It can also adversely affect the amenities of neighbours and can even reduce the value of the property.

The purpose of the Residential Extension Guide is to promote higher standards of sustainable design and provide practical advice to resolve some of the issues raised above.

Good design is not just a matter of personal taste but is based upon established principles such as those discussed in Step 1. This guide explains how these principles inform extensions to the home:

- The design, detailing and materials should match the original home.
- The size and scale of the extension should be smaller than the original house and the siting should respect the building line.
• Scale and massing of the streetscene and neighbourhood.

The impact on neighbouring properties is an important consideration and the guide provides general guidance in relation to protecting this important amenity. Practical advice is provided regarding:

• Privacy and overlooking.
• Outlook and overbearing impact.

One of the main aims of the extensions guide is to encourage sustainable building practices that minimise the use of resources, reduce energy consumption and waste. The guide will advise on suitable solutions in respect to insulation, glazing, renewable technologies and the use of local materials and skills.

The document applies to commonly used methods of extending a house, these include:

• Single storey additions, side and rear.
• Porch and front extensions.
• Dormer roofs and roof extensions.
• Garages and outbuildings.
• Conservatories and garden rooms.

The guide will provide some information on permitted development, planning permission that deals with appearance and location and Building Regulations Approval that is concerned about safety and construction standards. Information on Listed Building and Conservation Area controls will also be included.

DESIGN GUIDANCE: Typical page from the Residential Extensions Design Guide

This contemporary single storey extension is appropriate in terms of design, scale, proportions and materials

Extension set back and subordinate to the existing 1930's house
SHOPFRONT, SECURITY AND COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDE

The existing County Council Shopfronts and Shopfront Security Design Guides will be added to this part of the SPD. The shopfronts guide has been reprinted and updated in recent years due to demand and the advice remains relevant today, particularly for more traditional shopfronts and development in conservation areas.

Additional advice will be provided to cover issues regarding sustainability and distinctiveness.

The document will provide advice and detailed guidance on external lighting of buildings and illumination, advertisements, disabled access and materials.

In addition the Guide will look at how you maintain and enhance local character. It will, in particular, focus on areas outside of conservation areas and in shopping environments away from town centres. The new Guide will also encourage imagination and flair when dealing with contemporary designs, while maintaining high standards.

Contemporary shopfronts should ensure design and materials are of a high standard applied to an appropriate building.

SADDLER STREET, DURHAM CITY: Good example of a well-detailed shop front.

The existing Shopfront Guide provides guidance on the principles of good quality distinctive design. It focuses in particular on the different elements that make up a shopfront, and the roles that the fascia, plaster, stallriser console and comices play. External lighting, signage and lettering style are also discussed.

The shutter guide focuses on carefully considered security measures for conservation areas and other areas in our town and village centres. The Guide was produced as a response to an overwhelming desire to improve
RURAL BUILDINGS DESIGN GUIDE

The rural design guide aims to provide advice on new dwellings and conversions, stables, new agricultural buildings and sheds, and also caravan parks in a rural setting.

The document will focus in particular on providing guidance to achieving good quality design in relation to traditional farm buildings to ensure that the character of the buildings is conserved without the loss of their visual importance and architectural and/or historic value. A brief description of some of County Durham’s farm building types is provided to give the reader an idea of what is distinctive in this rural county.

The Guide aims to promote higher standards of sustainable design in new rural housing and also focus on maintaining local distinctiveness. This is particularly important in the Pennines where the Durham vernacular architecture prevails and is particularly distinctive and engaging. Using local materials and detailing are extremely important along with the scale and massing of the building and fenestration pattern.
INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDE

The Industrial and Commercial Design Guide will be most useful to developers who are interested in creating new industrial estates, business parks or providing individual industrial, commercial or office buildings. The document will also provide useful guidance to architects, designers and planners.

The document will focus on industrial estates and buildings/sheds that in the past have sometimes been poorly designed and appear highly visible in the open countryside as a result. Little respect or consideration has been given to the various viewpoints especially in areas such as the Durham Bowl or along the central corridor.

Design advice on individual buildings within the document consists of:

- Breaking up the roof mass and overall scale where possible.
- Providing guidance on materials, colours and fixtures.

Guidance on the layout of industrial estates is also looked at in detail, focusing on:

- Designing estates not completely dominated for the use of motorised vehicles. Pavements, footpaths and
- Minimising the visual impact on a development by taking on board the existing contours and utilising sensitive siting and screening.
- Respecting the existing trees and hedgerows where possible and advising on appropriate planting in and around the site.
Much of the advice for industrial estates and buildings can apply to business parks and larger commercial buildings, although the standards of layout and design on the whole tend to already be higher. Attention here should be focused more on the design, fenestration pattern, frontage and entrance details, along with paving/road materials.

The Guide will also encourage sustainable building practices which minimise the use of resources, reduce energy consumption and waste.

The guide will take on board much of the existing good practice guidance from the Government and CABE and will provide clear guidance in the form of a useful and interesting pictorial design manual, with examples of good quality layouts and house types.
The guide will encourage development to reflect and be sensitive to the topography, landscape and existing buildings related to the site.

The building layout is extremely important and the guide will advise how to achieve layouts that are pedestrian and cycle friendly and are easy to find your way around. The aim will be for new residential schemes to create a ‘sense of place’.

Methods of construction and management are also important components. The guide will advise on architectural quality, potential adaptation, conversion and extension of buildings and raise the issue of new technology, performance, quality and attractiveness in new developments.

Good estate layout retaining existing trees and providing an interesting, pedestrian-friendly environment

Distinctive new development that reflects the character of the surrounding development through use of materials, scale and proportion and building lines and layout - this development in Durham City also integrates with existing roads and pathways

Does the scheme feel like a place with a distinctive character?

Successful places tend to be those that have their own distinct identity. How a neighbourhood looks affects how residents feel about where they live. Character and quality help increase community pride. The ability of a scheme to create a sense of place greatly depends on the quality of the buildings and the spaces around them. This not only needs architecture of a high standard but a strong landscape strategy. It is about character, identity and variety.

The Building for Life design guidance provided by CABE is particularly useful to achieving successful residential developments.

Durham County Council – SPD – 10th September 2009
The guide will also consider community aspects. Advice is given regarding the development of mixed uses within housing developments, providing facilities for play areas, parks, schools, shops, pubs/cafes, to reflect the needs and aspirations of the local communities.

Environmental aspects are particularly important considerations and the guide will encourage provision and access to public transport. Sustainable design methods and layouts will be explored, as might ways of increasing biodiversity on a site.

Developments benefit from providing play areas and other community uses.

Integrating public transport into large schemes encourages more sustainable transport usage.

New development should take into account site characteristics including orientation, aspect and topography to ensure passive energy and light gain and to create visually interesting and distinctive schemes.

Good sympathetic infill development, which follows the distinctive character of the terrace.
ISSUE 7
Moving from Issues Paper to First Draft of the SPD

There is a culture change occurring in the way that design is viewed in the planning process. The Government increasingly promotes the importance of good design, distinctiveness and sustainability through planning policy statements, via CABE and the DETR and by introducing development management tools such as Design and Access Statements and the Building for Life criteria.

While the success of Design and Access Statements is questionable, the Building for Life criteria could have a much more positive affect on the design and development process. Through changes in legislation, good design is now a requirement and not just an aspiration. The Sustainable Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) aims to help all parties involved in the development process, from planners and large and small scale developers to achieve a much higher standard of design. If, as intended, new residential schemes are assessed against the Building for Life criteria, then the SPD should help developers achieve the highest award levels.

Appropriately, developments should also aim to achieve higher CSH (Code for Sustainable Homes) and BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) standards.

The SPD should not replace national policy but should help developers and planners in County Durham to better understand good design principles and, significantly, to appreciate what is locally distinctive about Durham County.

The SPD will synchronise all existing design policies in the former Durham District Local Plans by creating a single suite of planning guidance to be used in the new Authority.

Understanding the site context is imperative to achieving a high quality design process and outcome. The ‘3 Step Approach’ introduced in this issues paper should be used when designing layouts and buildings and when reading the site context. We hope that this approach will be easy to use and understood by all parties that get involved in the development process.

In order to achieve a sound, useful and comprehensive SPD, there is a need for consensus throughout the Authority and amongst users to make this a worthwhile and user-friendly guide.

A questionnaire is appended to this document which we would like you to complete. Please return by E-mail to: planpolicy@durham.gov.uk

Post to:
Planning Policy Team,
Durham County Council,
17 Claypath,
Durham,
DH1 1RH

Please make sure your comments reach us by 31st October 2009. The responses you give will help the SPD team move forward with the next stage of the design guide.
APPENDIX I
Questionnaire
Sustainable Design SPD

Step 1 - General Principles
1. Do you think the SPD should have specific guidance to inform sustainable construction techniques? If not, do you think there is a requirement for a separate SPD to cover these issues?

Step 2 - Local Distinctiveness
2. What distinctive characteristics of County Durham have you noticed while working/living in the County? (This can be at any geographical scale i.e. village, town, county...)

The ‘3 Step Approach’
3. Do you have any comments or suggestions regarding the ‘3 Step Approach’ introduced in this issues paper?
Consultation

4. How should the SPD team engage with members of the community regarding design and local distinctiveness?

5. How should the SPD team engage with agents, architects and developers from the private sector regarding the issues set out in this paper?

6. Do you have any other comments regarding the issues covered in this paper?

Thank you for taking the time to give us your comments. Please return by 31.10.09
E-mail to: planpolicy@durham.gov.uk
Post to: Planning Policy Team, Durham County Council, 17 Claypath, Durham, DH1 1RH