APPROACH PRINCIPLES COLLABORATION DEVELOPMENT

# Creating Environmental Excellence

an overview of the KENT DESIGN Guide

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The Architecture Centre Ashford Borough Council Canterbury City Council

Council for the Protection of Rural England

Dartford Borough Council

Dover District Council

English Heritage

Environment Agency

Gravesham Borough Council

Government Office for the South-East

House Builders Federation

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Kent County Constabulary

Kent County Council

Kent Developers' Group

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Swale Borough Council

Thanet District Council

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

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## contents

Promoting <b>quality design</b> in Kent	4
Foreword	6
About the <b>Kent Design Guide</b>	8
Introduction	10
Creating a sense of place	14
The value of <b>good design</b>	18
Getting the <b>process</b> right	22
Respecting <b>context</b> and <b>character</b>	26
Understanding the site	30
Movement and connections	34
Safe and secure neighbourhoods	38
Sustainability	42
The next steps	46

# promoting quality design in Kent

"Better design standards should be uppermost in the thinking of all who are involved in the development process. Through commitment and partnership we and future generations will see and enjoy the difference." 'The Kent Design Guide, 2005'



## foreword

Over the next twenty years, Kent will be developing new housing and employment on an unprecedented scale. But when we look back in two decades time, how will Kent look and will we be proud of what we have achieved?

The criteria for success will not only be about numbers of houses built or jobs secured it will be about the quality of the places created. Development on this scale brings with it an opportunity for a stepchange in the quality of the houses we build, the attractiveness of the communities we create; and the vitality of our towns and villages. The new Kent Design Guide will place high quality design at the heart of the decision making process.

Kent Design is a unique initiative, bringing together the public and private sector in the push for better planning and design. This document is an overview of the new Kent Design Guide and provides a flavour of its content. The new Guide will be a thorough overhaul of *Kent Design - a guide to sustainable development*. This document was highly praised for its ground-breaking approach, and since its publication in 2000, many new buildings in Kent have met the very highest standards.

But often too much of what is built still fails to create sustainable new neighbourhoods that people find attractive, safe and friendly.

We must build new neighbourhoods with a heart, clustered around new and existing community facilities and commercial centres, close to public transport and with a distinctive Kentish identity. In short, places where people will want to live and be proud to live. Only by working together - public and private sectors, developers and planning authorities, professionals and community members, can this step - change in quality be delivered.

We encourage you to play your part in making the name of Kent synonymous with good design, providing development that rivals the best anywhere.

Sandy Brunde leddado

Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart OBE Leader Kent County Council

Tony Hillier Chairman, Hillreed Homes Kent Design Chairman

**Piers Gough**Partner CZWG Architects

Kent's Design Champion



## about the Kent design guide

The Kent Design Guide aims to achieve environmental excellence by providing practical advice on the process and design of development proposals. It is an essential first point of call for all those concerned with new development in Kent.



## introduction

#### The Kent Design Guide:

- applies to all types of development large or small, urban or rural, commercial or residential, private or public
- supplements national and regional guidance
- describes Kent's planning policy framework and the process for obtaining planning consent
- provides a framework for detailed guidance at local level
- gives examples of successful design and useful checklists for inspiration
- helps makes sense of the many complex issues that have to be considered in preparing development proposals

The Guide is being adopted by the Local Planning Authorities as a Supplementary Planning Document, so can be a 'material consideration' in determining planning applications.

#### Who the Guide is for

- landowners
- developers
- designers
- architects
- surveyors
- engineers
- property managers
- local authority members and officers
- community and amenity groups
- the general public



# alms

Kent Design brings together the public and private sectors in the push for better design. Starting with a series of design guides published by Kent County Council in the 1970s and 1980s, the initiative gathered momentum with the compilation and publication of *Kent Design – a guide to sustainable development (2000)*.

Since its publication, many new buildings in Kent have met the very highest standards of design. But too much of what continues to be built does not create sustainable new neighbourhoods that people find attractive, safe and friendly.

Kent Design is more than just a Design Guide. A broad based steering group comprising Kent's local authorities, professional bodies, academics, developers, amenity groups and other public bodies oversees an ambitious suite of activities, including an awards scheme, training initiatives, beacon projects events and publications. It is this comprehensive approach, backed by the new *Kent* 

Design Guide that will help bring about a step-change in design quality across the County.

The aim is to encourage development that:

- creates memorable quality places
- contributes to Kent's distinctive character
- creates attractive, safe and friendly neighbourhoods
- respects Kent's rich built heritage and landscape
- is **innovative** where appropriate
- draws on up-to-date **best practice**
- creates **sustainable** communities
- reduces the need to travel
- reduces **energy** use
- makes best use of land
- concentrates development in urban areas
- promotes mixed use

### -ve

### +ve

'Anywhere' place. A new suburban housing estate that neither delights nor provides a distinctive neighbourhood with character.







Character and a sense of place created by careful design and layout. Kings Hill & Canterbury

Highway too dominant in townscape. Poor roundabout design and signage create an unwelcome feature



Street design used to slow traffic in a more sensitive way. Village Green, Herne Nr Canterbury





Modern scheme using traditional street showing how cars and pedestrians can mix comfortably. *Ingress Park* Greenhithe



## Creating a sense of place

Drawing inspiration from a location's native character strengthens local identity. Design that is out of context will lead to an 'anywhere place'. A full appreciation of the overall site context is essential as a starting point for creating a sense of place.



# sense of place

Creating a 'sense of place' or 'character' is one of the most important things for new development to achieve and requires considerable skill.

#### Successful places tend to:

- Friendly, safe and attractive
- Be well used a steady passage of people provides a feeling of safety;
- Public space and squares to draw people together
- Have spaces for public events, markets and performances;
- Clearly distinguish **private and public** areas;
- Have building frontages with a direct relationship with the street.
- Have clearly defined entrances to buildings used by the public.
- Have a **network of pedestrian routes** and spaces;
- Give **priority in streets to people** rather than to vehicles
- Have clearly **defined boundaries for public areas** using hedges, fences and trees.
- Have a coordinated approach to street surfaces and furniture – lamps, seats, litter bins, paving, bus shelters and signs.

A sense of place is about character, identity and variety. Architectural distinctiveness and urban design is required that appreciates the surroundings, the topography and views and reinforces identity. Buildings need to reflect their specific location. The sense of place needs to be local, rather than one that has been imported from somewhere else.

Giving a village a new sense of identity. Conyer Quay, Swale





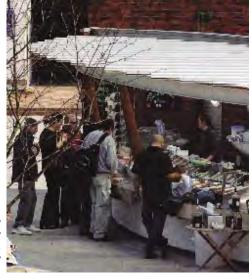


An active public realm goes a long way towards creating a sense of place.

"We want our towns, cities and suburbs to be places for people

– places that are designed, built and maintained on the principle
that people come first"

From 'Our Towns and Cities: the Future – Delivering an Urban Renaissance"





Public art can help by giving a sense of identity to new places. A unique and memorable feature in a new public square resulting from a design competition.

Chummys fish stall, Folkestone

## the value of good design

"Good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and should be encouraged everywhere" 'Planning policy guidance note 1'



#### Well designed development can:

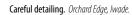
- raise people's spirits
- attract people
- create a higher quality of life
- enrich the existing environment
- create higher capital value
- increase marketability and prestige
- lift confidence in surrounding areas.

Determination to achieve quality design needs to permeate the working practices of the development industry and the architectural, engineering and planning services.

Design is a subjective issue and we all have our preferences, but most would agree that well-designed developments are those that add something to the environment. In general terms a well-designed new development will sit well within older well-designed buildings provided that the wider context such as scale and quality and colour of materials is appreciated and respected.

#### Good Design means:

- Enriching existing character reinforcing local patterns of development and landscape while not ruling out innovation
- Clarity of form public and private areas and different uses clearly distinguished
- Sense of well-being safe, welcoming and with lively and pleasant public spaces and routes
- Easy movement easy to get to and to move through (including for the disabled)
- Understandable a clear image and easy to understand
- Enduring and flexible built to last and energy-efficient according to the intended use but with the ability to change easily;
- **Diversity** making places with variety and mixed uses







Well integrated mix of uses. Kings Hill

"Good design keeps the user happy, the manufacturer in the black and the aesthete unoffended" Raymond Loewy



Harmoniuos mix of modern and traditional forms. *Lacuna, Kings Hill* 



Buildings and soft landscaping well integrated. *Ingress Park, Greenhithe.* 

## getting the process right

"The local authorities that are achieving significant improvements in design quality in their area tend to be those giving a consistent message that design matters at all stages.

By taking the initiative in planning, a local authority can save time that might be wasted at a later stage in negotiations on ill-conceived planning applications, and in appeals that might have been avoided."

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) - The Councillor's Guide to Urban Design



# Key to achieving a quality product is a quality process. At an early stage it is vital to establish collaboration between all parties and ensure that design excellence is made a priority.

#### This can be helped by:

- holding early discussions with planners
- preparing effective **planning briefs** for sites
- rigorous project appraisal
- using **good practice** guidance
- establishing collaborative development teams
- encouraging community involvement

The statutory planning system is changing. You will need to be familiar with the existing County Structure Plan and Local Plans as well the new framework which includes:

- Area Development Frameworks
- Development Plan Documents
- Supplementary Planning Documents
- Urban Design Frameworks (for areas)

- Masterplans (for sites)
- Development Briefs (for sites)
- Design Codes (for sites)
- Village and Town Design Statements
- Statements of Community Involvement
- Sustainability Statements
- Landscape Character Assessments
- Biodiversity Action Plans
- Environmental Impact Assessments
- Planning Agreements

### All these are explained in the 2005 Kent Design Guide as well as

- some community involvement methods
- required components of a planning application
- ways of monitoring developments

Proactive planning – through pre-application discussions and design guidance can help the council meet its planning deadlines.

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) – The Councillor's Guide to Urban Design.



Bringing the community into the heart of the design process. Aylesham Enquiry by Design workshop.



**Collaborative working on site.** Ashford Enquiry by Design workshop.



A concept sketch will give the first impression of the character of a new development.



## respecting context & character

Kent has a rich and varied heritage of architecture and landscape that differs from other counties. The design of new developments should evolve from this special local character.



# character

Kent has a rich and varied heritage of architecture and landscape that differs from other counties. The design of new developments should evolve from this special local character.

Where there is little existing character to build on, a new local character of quality should be created and agreed upon to upgrade the local scene.

#### This means:

- Reinforcing **positive design** features of an area
- Respecting the scale, street patterns, landscape, local materials, colours, style and detailing of surrounding areas
- Carefully managing differences in building height
- Including public areas and routes which make a positive contribution
- Avoiding a wide variety of building styles or mixture of materials
- Maintaining and **creating good views** and vistas
- Forming a **harmonious composition** with surrounding buildings or landscape features

#### Kent vernacular. Cranbrook





Sensitive infill development Canterbury



Some strong cues can often be taken from the character and appearance of the area a developments sits within.



A new public building has created an iconic new feature at Whitstable using the motif of a boat hull. Horsebridge and Brownings Yard, Whitstable.



Distinctive beach home - this wouldn't work anywhere else. Dungeness

## understanding the site

'One of the keys to a successful project is to achieve an understanding of its physical context through an urban design analysis; it is unwise to try to change a place without first understanding it. This analysis should go beyond the view from the site boundary. The site's context includes the neighbourhood and the town or city as well as the street'.

CABE 'Design Review'



# the site

Good detailed design should be based on a rigorous investigation of the site. This 'Site Appraisal' should include:

- the **historical development** of the area
- existing qualities that will influence new development
- the level and lie of the land
- the historic influences and design quality of the built environment
- the pattern of streets and movement
- constraints and opportunities
- statutory protection provided in Conservation areas and for Listed buildings

The Kent Design Guide provides a detailed checklist for Site Appraisals.

New buildings in places with architectural or historic character need to enhance that character. Sometimes it may be best to repeat the predominant period style. But a design that interprets the character in a modern way using modern or traditional materials may often work well.

#### High quality surroundings -

A strong lead must be taken from the local character when starting design work

#### Poor quality surroundings -

The scheme should establish its own identity and sense of place.



Historically people have found attractive solutions for developing challenging sites. *Mermaid Street* 



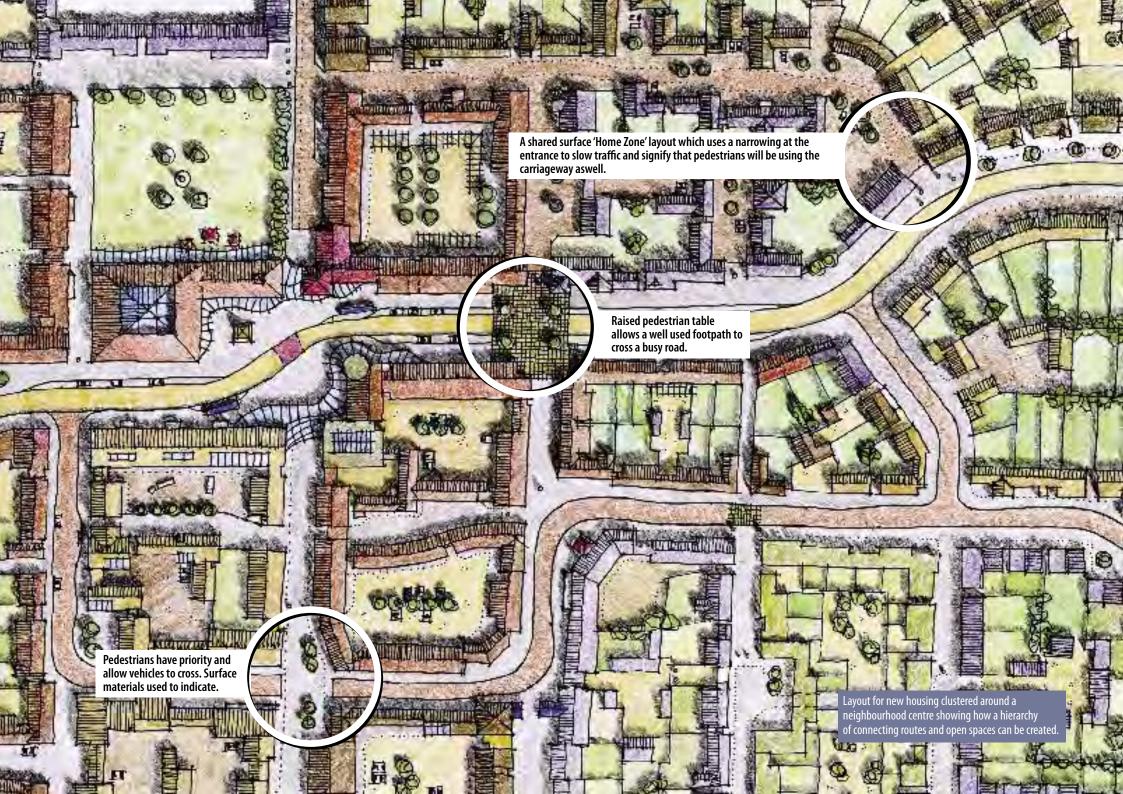
St Augustines School makes the most of its hill top location giving each classroom a sea view. Saltwood



Picking up on maritime themes and creating interest on a flat riverside site. Fishing Village St Mary's Island

## movement and connections

New areas of development should use a hierarchy of urban spaces to make it easy to move to and through them. Layouts should be 'permeable' to encourage walking and cycling with good connections between new and existing developments providing a choice of routes.



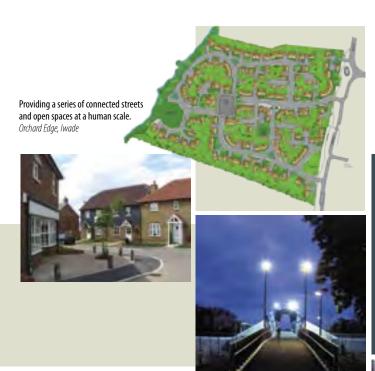
# connections

Over-generous road space makes drivers feel they have priority over other road users. It encourages people to use their cars when they do not really need to and it encourages speeding. Developments should be designed so that walkers, cyclists, children and the disabled have priority over vehicles except on main roads.

#### This can be done by:

- Designing road layouts that **constrain drivers** (short lengths, tight curves, narrow widths)
- Providing good links to surrounding areas and within sites
- Encouraging cycling by providing specially designed routes
- Providing disabled access on all routes
- Providing good public transport links with a coordinated approach between different forms of transport (eg buses and trains)
- Designing streets for **all users**, not just motor vehicles
- Providing adequate car parking spaces to prevent people parking on pavements.
- Encouraging community support for sustainable transport (eg green travel plans)

The Kent Design Guide provides detailed specifications for road and pavement design.



New civil engineering projects can enable easy movement between neighbourhoods. *Ashford* 



Thinking beyond the car.

### safe and secure neighbourhoods

Layout design has a crucial role to play in preventing crime and alleviating the fear of crime. Safe, secure and neighbourly environments are those that provide a human scale and intimacy and are sociable and comfortable.



## safe/secure

Most sought-after traditional homes in towns and villages were built to high densities but provide a human scale and intimacy that people find attractive. The challenge is to design new developments with similar qualities at the same time as accommodating the car and making life hard for the modern criminal.

#### This means considering:

- Privacy in the home and garden careful layout of buildings, boundary walls and planting to avoiding overlooking from neighbouring properties or public areas.
- Protection from noise careful layout and arrangement of uses; soundproofing.
- Easy access for the disabled and the emergency services.
- Deterring crime buildings facing onto streets and footpaths with windows facing onto them; car parking visible from homes.
- Deterring **vandalism** public spaces well lit and overlooked; facilities for young people.
- Clear definition of space providing a sense of neighbourhood and helping residents exercise control over their environment.

The Kent Design Guide provides detailed advice and standards on these issues.

"Crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour are major concerns for society today – but these are battles we can win and are winning.....Success in stopping and reversing 'crime climb' has been down to a number of themes...

...Included amongst these has been a focus on and the development of crime prevention through environmental design"

Dr Tim Pascoe, Building Research Establishment in his foreword to 'Design Out Crime' by Ian Colquhoun, 2004.



Careful design can make the highway a safe place for all. Home Zone at Cavell Way, Sittingbourne



Surveillance from homes overlooking streets, paths and squares. *Lacuna, Kings Hill* 



Making more use of the streets. Diagram showing the most important elements that go to make a safe and secure neighbourhood.

## sustainability

'Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' The Brundtland definition



# Creating more sustainable development – making better. The Kent Design Guide provides detailed advice and

Creating more sustainable development – making better long term use of natural resources – is a key objective.

The Kent Design Guide provides detailed advice and standards on these issues.

#### This means:

- New developments on 'brownfield' or **recycled land** rather than on 'greenfield' sites
- Planning to reduce car use
- Designing buildings which are adaptable for different uses over their lifetime
- Designing and adapting buildings that use **less energy** to build, heat and light
- Using **materials** which take less energy to produce and are easy to recycle
- Provision of **recycling facilities** for waste in the home and neighbourhood
- Use of water saving devices and natural drainage to prevent depletion of the water table
- Reducing long term **maintenance** costs
- Minimising destruction during the **construction** process



Canadian technology went into creating this highly insulated timber framed house cutting energy bills to a minimum. Kings Hill



Finding new uses for old buildings. Habitat, Tunbridge Wells



Straw bale construction provides high thermal insulation on an exposed site with a tight budget. Romney Marsh Visitors Centre.



Highly efficient modern design cutting energy consumption and helping protect our environment through sustainable construction methods. The Boundary House, Sevenoaks

#### the next steps

This document has been produced as a summary of the *Kent Design Guide* which will be available as a draft for public consultation over the winter 2004/05. The *Kent Design Guide* will be adopted by Kent's local authorities following public consultation and will be taken into consideration when dealing with planning applications.

During the public consultation draft documents will be available to view at council offices across Kent. Contact The Kent Design Team on 01622 221961 or via e-mail at urban\_design@kent.gov.uk to find the nearest location to you.

Creating Environmental Excellence - an overview of the Kent Design Guide is produced by the **Kent Design Initiative** – a partnership of Kent's local authorities, developers, builders, communities and interest groups.

*'Kent Design: a guide to Sustainable Development'* published by the Kent Association of Local Authorities in March 2000. Forthcoming new revision – by Kent Architecture Centre for the Kent Design Initiative and all of Kent's local authorities, early 2005.

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