The
Coventry Development
Plan 2001

The City of Coventry
Unitary Development Plan
1996-2011

Adopted as the Development Plan for Coventry on 9 December 2001, replacing the City of Coventry Unitary Development Plan 1993.

John McGuigan Strategic Director (City Development)
James Russell Assistant Director (Strategy and Planning)
David Lathbury Head of Development Policy

City Development Directorate, Coventry City Council, Civic Centre 4, Much Park Street, Coventry CV1 2PY Tel: (024) 7683 1298
# Chapter Eight: Built Environment

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Introduction and Policy Aim

8.1 Environmental Quality is one of the three Strategic Objectives of the Plan. This Chapter concentrates on the built environment which comprises buildings and the spaces and environment around them. It includes policies for creating a higher quality environment by:

- ensuring that new developments are of a high standard and relate well to what is already there;
- giving design advice on transport corridors, gateways, the historic environment and specific topics; and
- protecting and enhancing the environment generally.

The Plan sets out an approach to design against which development proposals will be considered. Policies are based on a proper assessment of the character of the City's built and natural environment.

8.2 The policy aim of the Built Environment Chapter is to achieve a high quality built environment throughout Coventry, not only for its own sake, but to maintain the attraction of the City as a good place in which to live, work, play, invest and visit.

National and Regional Policy Context

8.3 Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 1 "General Policy and Principles" 1997, amongst other things, promotes good design and emphasises that it should be the aim of all involved in the design process. Good design can help to create successful places, where people will choose to live, work, play, invest and visit. Local authorities should concentrate their advice on broad matters of scale, density, height, massing, layout, landscape and access and they should reject poor designs.

8.4 PPG 12 "Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance" 1992 advises that detailed development control policies may control particular aspects of development including visual intrusion and pollution and protect particular parts of the Plan area including Conservation Areas. It stresses that high quality environments should be protected and enhanced and poor environments should be improved.

8.5 PPG 15 "Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas" 1994 gives detailed advice on how to preserve the character and appearance of important historic buildings and areas. It sets out that new development should be designed to respect the character and settings of these buildings. PPG 16 "Archaeology and Planning" 1990 does the same for important historic sites.

8.6 PPG 6 "Town Centres and Retail Development" 1996 also gives significance to urban design policies in development plans in order to help improve the environment of town centres. In preparing a town centre strategy, the importance of an urban design analysis to providing a framework for policies, proposals and development briefs for key sites is stressed. Authorities are also encouraged to consider drawing up policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on shopfront design and to review street furniture, paving and signs.

8.7 RPG 11 "Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands" 1998 supports the maintenance and enhancement of the quality and distinctiveness of the Region's natural and built environment.

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8.8 As a result of Government Guidance and a recognition of the need to improve design advice, the City Council commissioned a City-wide Urban Design Study (1999) from consultants Urban Initiatives which informed the urban design policies in this Chapter. The overall objective of the Study is to help Coventry become a City:

- that inspires through imaginative and sensitive design;
- with a lively and distinctive character;
- where streets and public spaces are safe, accessible and pleasant to use;
- with a flourishing economic life; and
- that promotes sustainable development by using resources efficiently.
8.9 The report proposes a hierarchy of design policy and guidance which includes:

- general design policies which will be City wide;
- policies for particular contexts, e.g. corridors, gateways, the Canal, locally distinctive areas and suburban centres of activity;
- policies for specific areas, e.g. the City Centre, the Ringway, Inner Area Zones of Change and the North West City Fringe; and
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Some of the advice will be of a detailed nature and is best presented in the form of SPG rather than policies in the Plan.

8.10 Policies and guidance are also recommended for the processes to be followed in relation to design which include:

- urban design frameworks;
- the identification of situations where planning briefs will be required; and
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8.11 The Coventry Community Plan identifies four priorities which are highly relevant to the built environment:

- tackling crime and making communities safer;
- tackling poverty;
- investing in young people; and
- meeting the needs and aspirations of older people.

8.12 It refers to the need to spend money on physical improvements to people’s environment as part of tackling crime including:

- improvements to street lighting;
- designing out crime;
- schemes to improve security and safety;
- improving the environment of target areas to improve local confidence and pride; and
- enhancing the distinctiveness of neighbourhoods by appropriate street furniture or materials.

8.13 There are several other strategies which aim to complement and enhance development including Public Art, Lighting, Regeneration and Urban Design Strategies. Creative industries play an important part in regenerative strategies including attracting inward investment, assisting in the marketing of the City, creating identity, developing cultural tourism and supporting local industries.

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Part 1 Policies are shown in Upper Case
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E 8: Redevelopment of Existing Employment Sites
E 9: Windfall Additions to Employment Land Supply
E 10: Accessibility to Job Opportunities
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CC 23: The Queens Road/Butts Area
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CC 30: The Coventry University Area
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CC 40: The Ring Road Area
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CC 42: Bridges
CC 43: "At-grade" Crossings
CC 44: The Swanswell Area
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CC 46: The Drapers Fields Area
APPENDIX
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE (SPG)

1. **Guidance forming part of the 1993 Plan, now to be treated as SPG to this Plan**

   Care Homes for the Elderly and Homes for the Mentally Handicapped
   Houses in Multiple Occupation – Development Control Guidelines
   Car Parking Standards
   Canley Gardens Control Plan
   Stoke Green Conservation Area Control Plan
   Chapelfields Conservation Area Control Plan
   Spon Street Townscape Scheme – Control Policy for Signs and Advertisement Displays
   Kenilworth Road Control Plan
   Planning Guidelines for Outdoor Poster Advertising in the City
   Planning Policy for the Location of Satellite Antennae

2. **Other SPG to this Plan**

   Extending Your Home, A Design Guide January 1990
   Planning Guidelines for the Installation of Security July 1992 &
   Shutters and Grilles October 1994
   Canal Corridor Study May 1993
   A Green Space Strategy for Coventry March 1994
   Design Guidelines for Development in Coventry’s Ancient Arden March 1995
   University of Warwick Development Plan August 1995

3. **SPG to this Plan in the Form of Development Briefs**

   Allesley Annex July 1995
   Westwood Heath Phase 1 August 1996
   Radford Green September 1996
   Ivy Farm Lane sites January 1997
   Baginton Fields March 1997
   John Shelton School October 1997
   Mount Nod School August 1998
   Stoke Heath School August 1998

4. **Plan Commitments to Prepare New SPG**

   Local Area Regeneration (OS 3)
   Access by Disabled People (OS 9)
   Improving Cycling Facilities (AM 11)
   Cycling in New Developments (AM 12)
   Car Parking Standards (AM 17, CC 9)
   Overall Built Environment Strategy (para 8.17)
   Principles of Urban Design (para 8.30)
   Conservation Areas (BE 9)
   Outdoor Advertisements (BE 17)
   Lighting (BE 19)
   Coventry Local Biodiversity Action Plan (para 9.11)
   Coventry Playing Pitch Strategy (para 9.11)
   Review of Green Space Strategy, including Urban Green Space Map (GE 8)

Any SPG may be revised during the Plan period.
SPG listed here does not form part of the Plan.
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8.19 There is need for a partnership between the local authority, the developer and the community in caring for the environment. Developers are encouraged to consult with local communities and amenity societies in preparing proposals, particularly for major developments. The involvement of the community, if undertaken in an effective way, offers the advantage of generating greater concern and care for the environment and the development of a sense of responsibility towards the environment. Neighbourhood Watch Schemes can contribute to the security of areas.

8.20 Particular attention will need to be paid to the Priority Areas, described in paragraph 2.16 of the Overall Strategy Chapter, where the benefits of community involvement in environmental improvement can be increased by helping disadvantaged groups and areas to help themselves. There are other sections of society who suffer disadvantage in one form or another, including disabled people, children and young people, the elderly, unemployed and, in some respects, women. The needs of all such groups should be taken into account when issues of the built environment are considered, and their involvement in the actual improvement of the areas identified should be encouraged.

8.21 Proposals will also need to consider Policy OS 4 which promotes sustainability through developments which use resources efficiently and reduce the need to travel, and Policy OS 7 which encourages mixed-use developments.

BE 2: THE PRINCIPLES OF URBAN DESIGN

High quality urban design will be promoted by ensuring that all new development takes into account the following design principles:

- enhancing townscape and landscape character by reflecting locally distinct patterns of development;
- strengthening the continuity of street frontages and the enclosure of space by development which clearly defines the boundaries between private and public space;
- providing high quality public spaces which are safe, uncluttered, active and easily identifiable;
- making places that inter-connect and are attractive to move through;
- ensuring that developments are readily understood by users;
- encouraging developments which can adapt to changing social, technological, economic and market conditions;
- promoting diversity through mixes of use which work together to create vital and viable places; and
- ensuring that developments are sustainable in terms of their design, layout and density.

8.22 The positive features of a place and its communities contribute to its special character and sense of place. They include the landscape, building traditions and materials, culture and other factors that make one place different from another.

8.23 Successful urban spaces, including streets, are defined and enclosed by buildings and structures. The relationship between buildings on a street and between the buildings and the street is the key to this.

8.24 The success of public space depends on the quality and integration of:

- paving;
- planting;
- lighting;
- orientation;
- shelter;
- the arrangement of street furniture and signs;
The way in which it is overlooked; the routes which pass through it; and the uses in and next to it.

8.25 The convenience, safety and comfort with which people go to and pass through buildings and spaces plays a large part in determining how successful a place will be.

8.26 It is important that people can move easily through spaces and buildings by receiving clear messages about where to go and how the links work.

8.27 The most successful places can handle change. Even though people may live, travel and work in very different ways, the buildings and spaces can meet these changing needs, rather than being tightly fitted to some immediate purpose.

8.28 The mix of uses (whether within a building, a street or an area), where appropriate and desirable, can help to determine how well used a place is, and what economic and social activities it will support.

8.29 All the urban design principles contribute to making sustainable places, but issues relating to the form of development including layout, scale and density are particularly important. Layout is the way buildings, routes and spaces are placed in relation to each other and should be designed to conserve energy. Buildings orientated towards the sun need less heating and the layout should consider micro-climate (wind and frost) pockets. The scale of building relates to height and size in relation to the surroundings. Shallow buildings allow better penetration of natural light and ventilation. Developments at higher densities can reduce demand for land, increase energy efficiency, reduce resource consumption and generate a critical mass of people to support services. The layout and density of development should relate to accessibility to public transport and amenities and the capacity of the physical infrastructure. Design and layout should also take account of their impact on local ecology. All of these issues need to be considered in their local context. Proposals which utilise sustainable materials will be encouraged.

8.30 The urban design principles are backed up by a hierarchy of policies and guidance which includes some which relates to particular contexts, corridors, locally distinctive areas; some for specific areas, such as the City Centre and some for specific design topics, for example, lighting, safety and security. There are also processes to enable the application of these policies and guidance. These are covered in the next section, applying the design principles. These include a policy for the preparation of design statements as part of major planning applications, advice for areas where change needs to be guided ie urban design frameworks and sites where planning briefs may be required. Some of the guidance will be in the form of SPG.

Applying the Principles of Urban Design

8.31 The design policies in BE 2 are advanced by a variety of means within this Plan and in SPG. This section of the Chapter focuses on three important means of guiding development in particular places:

- urban design frameworks - area based
- development briefs - site based
- design statements - major developments

Urban Design Frameworks

8.32 Urban design frameworks set out how development plan policies should be implemented in a particular area where there is a need to control, guide and promote change. They draw on detailed area appraisals, set out urban design principles, link strategy to practical proposals and include an implementation strategy. An urban design framework could include areas which are identified as having special characteristics, such as Areas of Local Distinctiveness, Transport Corridors or Gateways or areas of extensive change such as local regeneration areas. They are initiated and prepared by the City Council, landowners, developers, community groups and regeneration agencies or partnerships of these bodies. Depending on their origin these frameworks might become SPG or act as a basis for dialogue.
Development Briefs

8.33 A development brief provides a clear statement of how the Plan’s policies should be applied to a specific site. Development briefs bridge the gap between the development plan and a planning application and can perform a number of functions such as:

- interpreting development plan policies;
- promoting a site for development;
- promoting high standards of layout and design;
- promoting a mix of uses; or
- addressing a particular site constraint or opportunity.

Development briefs provide guidance and supplement the policies and proposals of the development plan, they do not introduce new policies or contradict them.

8.34 Development briefs will be used in selected cases including mixed-use developments, very large housing schemes, development on sensitive sites and for areas of extensive change such as local regeneration areas.

8.35 Development briefs should include advice as appropriate to each situation on scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access in relation to the site itself, neighbouring buildings and the surrounding area more generally. SPG will be produced to give more detailed guidance on the content of development briefs. Development briefs should normally be prepared at an early stage in the development process well before the submission of a detailed planning application. Briefs should inform the masterplanning process. Applicants should explain in their planning application design statement how they have responded to the brief. Briefs will include formal public consultation, where appropriate, so that they can be adopted as SPG. This will give more weight to them as a material consideration in the development control context.

8.36 Development briefs are generally prepared by the City Council as a basis for assisting in the determination of planning applications. Landowners, developers, regeneration partnerships, and business and community organisations often have a role to play in the preparation of such briefs.

Design Statements

8.37 Design Statements are submitted by applicants to explain how their proposal will respond to the design principles in Policy BE 2 and to other relevant design policies and guidance.

BE 3: DESIGN STATEMENTS AS PART OF MAJOR PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Applicants for planning permission for major new developments or redevelopments will be expected to submit a written statement setting out the design principles adopted and how they are achieved in relation to the site and the wider context, as well as illustrative material in plan and elevation.

8.38 Major developments are defined as the Principal Housing Sites identified in Policy H 8, the Principal Employment Sites identified in Policy E 6, shopping schemes larger than local shops and social, community and leisure schemes with more than a local catchment area as described in Policy SCL 2. The Policy will also apply to proposals for redevelopments of a similar scale to those identified above. The design statement could include:

- an explanation of the design concept and principles;
- an outline of how these will be reflected in the development’s layout, density, scale, landscape and visual appearance;
- an explanation of the purpose of the proposed development and how the design relates to the site and wider area;
- an explanation of how the development will meet the urban design policies outlined in Policy BE 1;
- any relevant supplementary planning design guidance. This will take the form of design guides for topics or areas or site specific development briefs; and
- plans and drawings should be submitted to ensure that the design can be properly assessed. These should include a location plan, plan of existing layout, plan of proposed layout, floor plans, elevations and cross-sections.
CHAPTER EIGHT BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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