URBAN VISION | Enterprise CIC

The Salings
Design Codes
February 2019

Contents

1. Introduction 5
1.1 Background and Purpose 5
1.2 Process 6
1.3 Design Terms 9
2. Design – Policy Framework 10
2.1 National Design Policy 10
2.2 Local Green Space 11
2.3 Local Policy 12
2.4 Emerging Neighbourhood Plan 14
3. Local Character Analysis 15
3.1 Baseline Data 15
3.2 Landscape and Setting 16
3.3 Heritage 17
3.4 Townscape Character 19
3.5 Public Realm and Boundaries 22
3.6 Building Types 23
3.7 Materials 26

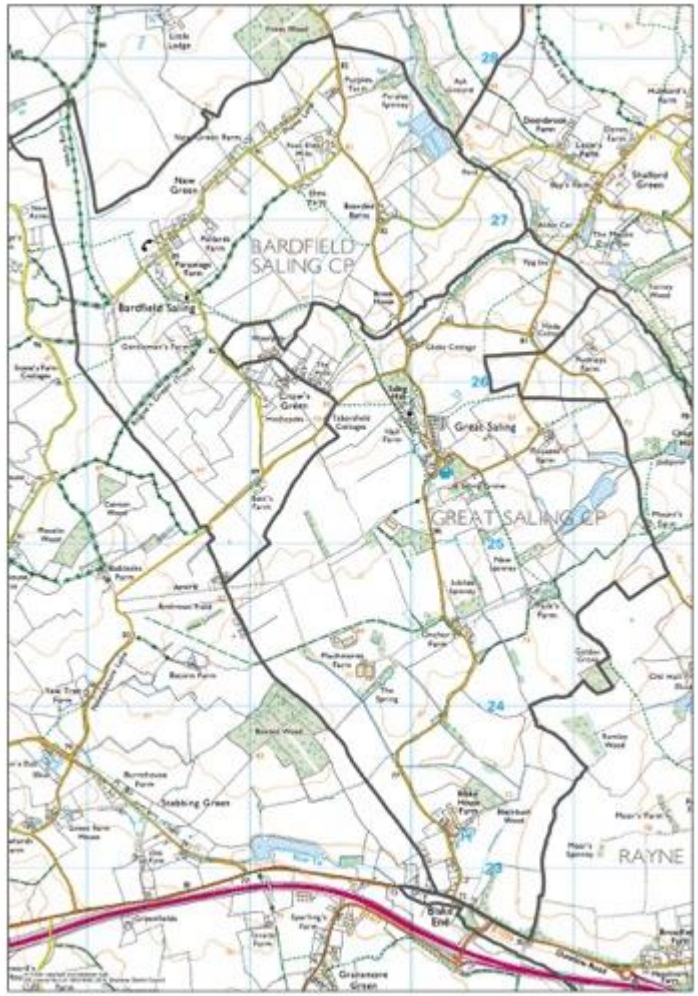
3.8 Conclusions on Character 28
4. Design Guidelines 29
4.1 General Points 29
4.2 Design and Character Policy (Infill) 29
4.3 Design Policy for Strategic Housing Site 30
4.4 Local Green Space 31
4.5 Sustainable Design 31
5. Next Steps & Recommendations 32
5.1 General 32
5.2 Natural Environment 32
5.3 Design 32
5.4 Housing Design 33
5.5 Other Areas 34
6. More Advice 35
Contact 36

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose

Urban Vision Enterprise CIC has been commissioned to help prepare this report by Locality, through the national neighbourhood planning support programme, funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The purpose of the report is to inform the design related content of the Salings Neighbourhood Plan, this would include design policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.



(Neighbourhood Area, Neighbourhood Area Application, The Salings Parish Council, 2017)

1.2 Process

The area being covered is the Salings Neighbourhood Area, which is the two Parish Council's administrative area for Bardfield Salings and Great Salings. Following discussion with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, the analysis focuses in particular on:

- Identifying the established design character for the existing settlements to inform design of infill development, re-use of existing buildings and replacement dwellings.

- Establishing the design characteristics that could be transferred to large developments (over 10 units), to reflect the design character of the neighbourhood area, preserve the degree of separation between the existing and new developments, and integrate development into the open countryside.

Good design is an intrinsic value within the emerging neighbourhood plan. The Steering Group is also keen to ensure that the policies of the plan deliver the vision and aims set out in section 2 of this report.

Following a guided site visit around the neighbourhood area the Steering Group participated in a workshop which has been used to inform this report, highlighting positive design features both natural and built as well as identifying areas of concern. A similar exercise was carried out at a Salings Community Event in early December 2018. The results of the two workshops have been combined.

(Workshop, November 2018)

The workshops posed 3 questions, illustrated with the comments received:

What are the key design or character features of the neighbourhood area?

- **Cars generally parked off road**
- **Chimneys**
- **Defend green spaces and play areas in close proximity to houses**
- **Detached garages**
- **Garages are generally to the side of the house**
- **Good housing mix**
- **Hedgerows**
- **High share of listed buildings**
- **Housing is generally set back from the road**
- **Individualism**
- **Linear development**
- **Mature trees**
- **No lighting**
- **No pavements**
- **Partly screened by hedges and trees**
- **Peg Tiles**
- **Rural setting**
- **Soft verges and hedges**
- **Two storey houses**
- **Views**
- **Mixed character housing - no cookie cutter uniformity (2 people)**
- **Housing set back from road**
- **Single thoroughfare roads**
- **Pathways and cycleways that link small communities**
- **Houses with proper gardens not 'postage stamp'**
- **Proper footpaths and protect areas**

What do you think are the special natural landscape features of the neighbourhood area?

- **Ancient woodland**
- **Areas outside of the village are dark**
- **Dispersed housing and long views of groups of trees and hedgerows**
- **Ditches**
- **Hedgerows**
- **Mature trees**
- **Open farmland**
- **Open spaces**
- **Small green's and separation between settlements**
- **Views across the fields**
- **Streams and water meadows**
- **Hedgerows either side of the road**
- **All existing hedgerows must stay!**
- **Views over open fields**
- **Replant New Pastures Wood**
- **All existing grassland must be kept**

What are the key design elements, character or features that new housing development should include?

- 2 Car spaces that are off road parking
- Appropriate human scale
- Being able to retain existing historic/listed buildings
- Build in 'greens' between and around new buildings
- Chimneys
- Detached garages
- Fenestration
- Flats etc... have high quality shared areas
- Garages
- Good quality materials
- Green spaces
- Hedgerows
- Height of roofs, reflecting existing
- Irregular rooflines
- Appropriate massing and height
- Materials
- Mature trees
- Mix of render and brick
- Mix of slate and tile roofs
- No fake materials, authentic materials only
- No road parking
- Non-uniformity
- Permeable areas
- Plenty of off street parking
- Set back from the road
- Still have current views to churches
- New properties should conform with the tradition of the village
- Tiling on roof, paying attention to adjacent roof
- Use of natural materials
- New grassland and hedgerows
- Use of weatherboarding for barn conversions
- Variety of porches
- Views across 'Flat' areas
- Views to the open countryside
- Affordable housing (3 people)
- Any new houses must be in keeping with their vicinity
- Woodland/mixed woodland (3 people)
- Proper car parking (2 people)
    - Any new houses to have at least 2 car parking spaces)
- Infrastructure first (Infrastructure mentioned twice)
- Must not be commuter town
    - People who live in homes must work within development - it needs an industry
- Quiet Lane status
    - Proper speed limits to recognise natural usage of our countryside
- Green lanes
- A golf course was suggested (2 people, both golfers) to form a natural barrier between the Salings and any new strategic development
    - But one resident opposed this

1.3 Design Terms

Urban Design: This is described by the Urban Design Group as follows: 'Urban design is the design of towns and cities, streets and spaces … the art of making places; design in an urban context. Urban design involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes …' So the focus of urban design is on places, spaces, townscape and movements, rather than individual buildings.

Vernacular: Vernacular buildings are informal and use materials that were available locally at the time they were built. The constructional techniques are related to the materials available. The aesthetic qualities of vernacular buildings are a result largely of constructional and functional necessity.

Polite architecture: This is more formal and usually architect-designed, using a conscious aesthetic, based on design theories and principles. Polite architecture usually draws on national and international influences. Within the neighbourhood area, this would primarily relate to the listed buildings, which include both polite and vernacular characteristics.

Permeability and connectivity: Ease of movement in an area and links to surrounding areas, including for pedestrians. A permeable layout will enable good choice of movements. Good connectivity will mean that new layouts are well integrated with existing networks of roads and paths.

Perimeter blocks: This refers to layouts based on blocks of development, where housing frontages face the surrounding streets, with private garden space to the rear. Such layouts create 'active' street frontages and good separation of public and private space.

Active frontages: Active frontages are those with windows and doors, so as to provide overlooking and natural surveillance.

Legibility: How easy it is to 'read' an area and find your way around. Things that make an area more legible include areas with different characters, well defined roads, distinctive features at junctions, and landmark features (in scale, character or design).

Low embodied energy: This refers to building materials that have used relatively low amounts of energy in their manufacture, so have a lesser environmental impact. Materials like bricks have relatively high embodied energy, but they are durable, so require replacement on an infrequent basis. So there can be a trade-off between embodied energy and durability.

2. Design – Policy Framework

2.1 National Design Policy

National policy on design is contained in Part 12 (Achieving well-deigned places) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 (Paragraphs 124 to 131).

Paragraphs 124 to 127 provide advice for design policy making. This is as follows:

> *124. The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.*
>
> *125. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities, so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development.*
>
> *126. To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, plans or supplementary planning documents should use visual tools such as design guides and codes. These provide a framework for creating distinctive places, with a consistent and high-quality standard of design. However their level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances in each place and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified.*
>
> *127. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*
>
> *a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
>
> *b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
>
> *c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users46; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Paragraphs 128 to 131 are advice for local planning authorities in considering design when dealing with planning applications.

Paragraph 130 includes:

Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents …

Paragraph 131 states:

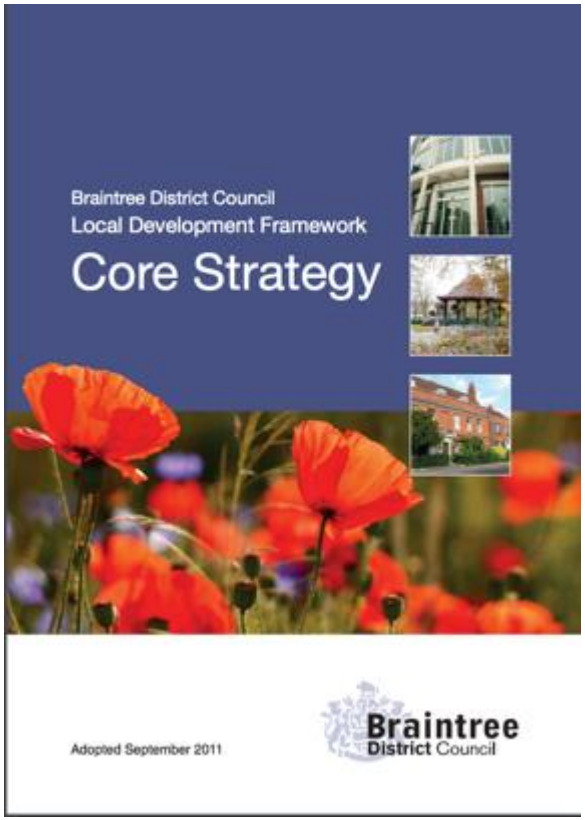
In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

2.2 Local Green Space

The emerging neighbourhood plan does not currently include any Local Green Space designations. However, following the site visit potential sites were identified. The Steering Group could explore Local Green Space designations to protect and preserve those of demonstrable community value.

Further information on Local Green Spaces and how to designate them can be found at: https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/making-local-green-space-designations-neighbourhood-plan/

2.3 Local Policy



The adopted Local Plan is the Core Strategy 2011, setting the vision, objectives and strategy for development in Braintree District to 2026. Adopted in September 2011 this replaced the Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005.

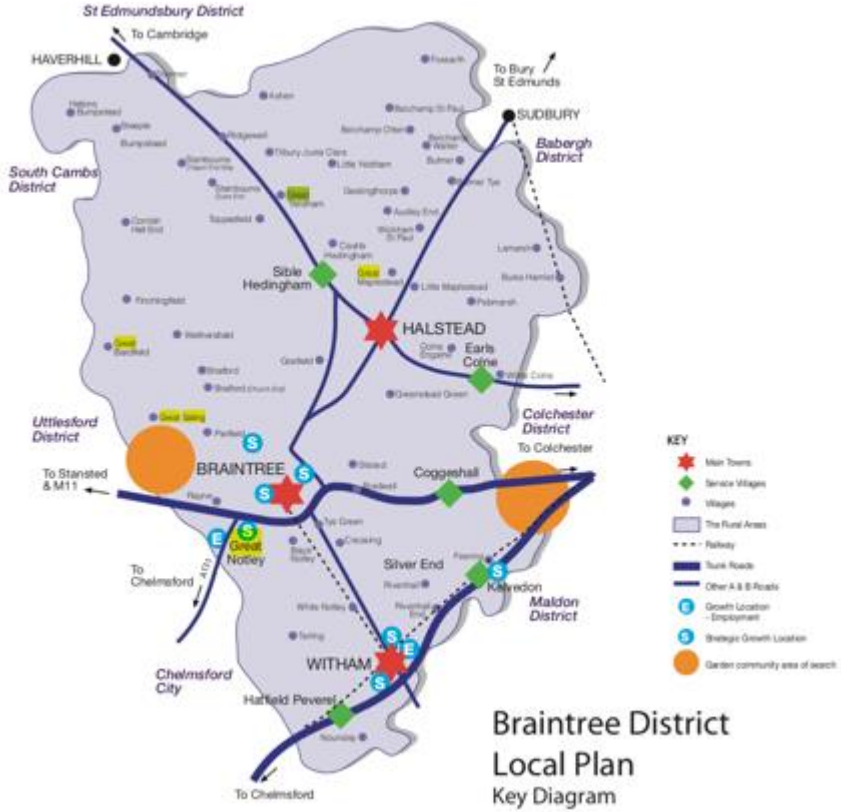
The Core Strategy includes policies that relate to design, heritage, landscape or character these include:

- CS5 The Countryside
- CS7 Promoting Accessibility for All
- CS8 Natural Environment and Biodiversity
- CS9 Built and Historic Environment
- CS10 Provision for Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- CS11 Infrastructure Services and Facilities

The emerging Local Plan is in two parts, the first of which addresses strategic cross-boundary issues, while the second deals simply with Braintree. The emerging Local Plan went to examination in January 2018 according to the LPA website. There are no further details about the likely adoption date.

There are some policies that are applicable to design; natural landscape and housing that could be used in conjunction with policies developed for the neighbourhood plan. Care should be given when drafting design policies to ensure there is no repetition between the local plan and the neighbourhood plan policies. It is recommended to consult the LPA with any draft policies to ensure they are as relevant as possible and avoid repetition.

One further key element of the emerging Local Plan is a strategic allocation for housing within the neighbourhood area. The following map illustrates its broad location within context named a ‘Garden Community’.



(Source, pg34, Publication Draft Local Plan, June 2017)

The West of Braintree Garden Community it is proposed strategic housing site allocated in the emerging local plan that has not yet been adopted. This area covers a wider area than this neighbourhood plan, however a substantial part is within the neighbourhood area. Currently there is no detailed masterplan for the site. The emerging local plan states that policies relating to the site are set out in the Strategic Plan for North Essex and that further details will be set out for the site in a site specific Strategic Growth DPD. The Parish Council's could respond to this during its consultation using the evidence from this report to inform their comments.

It should be noted that this site contributes to the LPA's 5-year land supply. The actual housing need identified for the neighbourhood area over the plan period is actually 14 new homes.

2.4 Emerging Neighbourhood Plan

The emerging Salings Neighbourhood Plan includes a vision and set of aims informed by community engagement. These are based on what makes the two parishes and the villages of Great Saling and Bardfield Saling distinctive, including their rural settings, strong sense of place and agricultural character. The emerging Neighbourhood Plan explores and identifies the issues and challenges that face the Neighbourhood Area, including significant residential development in two small rural parishes, infrastructure provisions and capacity, protecting and enhancing the distinct rural local character and Conservation Area.

The draft vision states:

"Our vision for the Salings is for a safe, friendly, tranquil community with a village feel, which conserves our historic buildings and natural habitats- particularly our wildlife and woodlands - and provides easy access to the open countryside."

This vision is delivered through the draft policies of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan that cover the following themes:

3. Local Character Analysis

3.1 Baseline Data

Population Size Great Saling Parish 282 (2011 Census)	The Neighbourhood Area has two Local Wildlife Sites, Hall Farm Meadows and Parsonage Farm Meadow	There are 217 dwellings in the Neighbourhood Area
80m (262ft) above sea level	Braintree Railway is 6.6 miles away from the Neighbourhood Area	Stanstead Airport is 13.2 miles away from the Neighbourhood Area
The Neighbourhood Area has around 60 Listed Buildings, 1 Conservation Area and 2 Registered Parks and Gardens	The Neighbourhood Area has an Ancient semi natural woodland (ASNW) at Golden Grove	Population Size Bardfield Saling Parish 193 (2011 Census)

3.2 Landscape and Setting

The natural landscape is a key element of the character of the neighbourhood area, it has had significant influence on the use of the land and how settlements have developed over time. In August 2018 a Landscape Assessment Study Part 2 was produced for the neighbourhood area.

The findings of this study highlighted that:

"Views of the landscape within The Salings are from a mixture of rural country roads and ancient byways where tall hedgerows often restrict views and from footpaths which cross arable fields providing open views to the countryside and towards settlement edges. Views are generally a mixture of open arable farmland contained by boundary vegetation and/or woodland blocks; panoramic views across the valley of Pods Brook towards the neighboring parishes of Shalford and Panfield; and more enclosed, channeled views within the valley of Pods Brook and Willow Brook where topography and vegetation restrict views.

The landscape contributes to the distinctive character and sense of place of the villages of Great Saling and Bardfield Saling, providing a valuable rural setting to the villages, to the Great Saling Conservation Area (CA) and to its two key registered Parks and Gardens. The mature evergreen trees within both Salings Grove and Salings Hall are a feature of many views towards Great Saling and are particularly visible in winter providing a varied skyline. "

(Source, Pg 33, Landscape Assessment Study Part 2, August 2018, Liz Lake Associates)

The study also identified in a visual analysis that key views could be divided into 8 groups:

- *"Views in the south from Blake End Road*
- *Views in countryside to the east of Great Saling*
- *Views in countryside to the west of Great Saling*
- *Views within and across the valley of Pods Brook*
- *Views within Willow Brook*

- *Views to the west of Crow's Green and Bardfield Saling*
- *Views in countryside around Bardfield Saling*
- *Long distance views from outside the project area."*

(Source, Pg 33, Landscape Assessment Study Part 2, August 2018, Liz Lake Associates)

The evidence and illustration of these key views could be used to inform draft design policies in the neighbourhood plan, to create framed views and vistas within the strategic site and protect key natural landscape assets.

3.3 Heritage

The neighbourhood area has a number of heritage assets that are statutory listed, two registered parks and gardens and Great Saling Conservation Area designated in 1989. Braintree District Council is in the process of undertaking conservation area appraisals. There has not been one prepared for the Great Saling Conservation Area, which provides an opportunity to use the evidence from the neighbourhood plan to support this work when it is undertaken. This could include helping to identify where the Conservation Area could be extended and other buildings or heritage assets of significance, as a neighbourhood plan cannot do this.

This report does not consider non-statutory heritage, but identification of buildings of local interest could be done as part of the neighbourhood plan evidence base and could then inform a local list. There is a distinctive character to the villages, with historic and architectural interest. The historic interest is based on the historic development of the area, which is outlined in a potted history in the emerging neighbourhood plan. This also includes a detailed description of the heritage and its designated assets, highlighting the architectural interest and merit of many of the buildings and structures. The emerging neighbourhood plan summaries the:

> *"heritage of the Salings is indelibly entwined with those people who worked and lived off the fertile farmland that surrounds us. Farmers and landowners set out field boundaries and helped to create the landscape that we enjoy today. The same people who farmed the land built homes, some grand, some small by which to sustain their lives. Small communities, as they were then and remain now, came together in secular and non-secular ways to improve and protect their lifestyles under the guidance of landowners who at that time had a direct interest in the success and longevity of those communities. In this way landowners, the Church and the community worked together to invest in our heritage for the greater good of all.*
>
> *The heritage we enjoy today embraces our buildings, their setting and connectivity and the lives of the people who owned and occupied the land. Our heritage is a living record and the sum of their work and influence. There is much to treasure and protect but as with many small village settlements there are threats to anticipate. Much of what we seek to protect now in the form of period buildings and mature tree covered landscape is merely a small part of what existed before but whose loss was not recognised or fought for until it was too late to save. Therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan must look forward as well as backward*

in conserving our heritage.

In many ways the heritage of the Salings is little different to that of many English villages but in 1941 that peace and order was shattered by a dramatic postscript. Global events in the form a World War suddenly intruded. The construction of Andrewsfield Airfield at a stroke destroyed much of the traditional landscape in the vicinity of Great Saling and added a fresh chapter to our heritage. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to retain and restore elements of that 'lost' landscape as far as possible, whilst retaining the remaining airfield and community facilities, which now occupy part of the WWII site. "

(Source, Pg12, The Salings Neighbourhood Plan, September 2018 Draft)

Some of these elements highlighted have been included in the potential design policy suggestions in section 5 of this report. The emerging neighbourhood plan also includes a variety images that illustrate the variety of heritage assets found in the neighbourhood area.

(Source, Pg16, The Salings Neighbourhood Plan, September 2018 Draft)

3.4 Townscape Character

The townscape has been characterised into three key areas in section 3.4 and this identifies the design code and characteristics of each, identifying features that could be translated in to design policies for the neighbourhood plan. Townscape refers to built form and its visual appearance of the street and its components. Gordon Cullen wrote *"One building is architecture, but two buildings is townscape."*

Bardfield Saling:

The settlement character predominantly consists of larger detached and semi-detached properties set within good sized gardens. Some of the other key design characteristics include:

- There is a distinct rural character to the area which is a mixture of residential and agricultural uses.
- Pastel coloured render, often with an inlaid pattern and brick are the predominant building materials.

Images: Examples of development within Bardfield Saling.

Illustrated on Sketch:

A. Garages and outbuildings are typically set away from the main dwelling although more recent developments have seen them integrated as illustrated in the images.
B. The transition into the open countryside, consists of soft boundaries and typical boundary treatments include mature hedgerows or wooden palisade fencing.
C. There is no regular building line.
D. Two-storey buildings at a domestic scale.

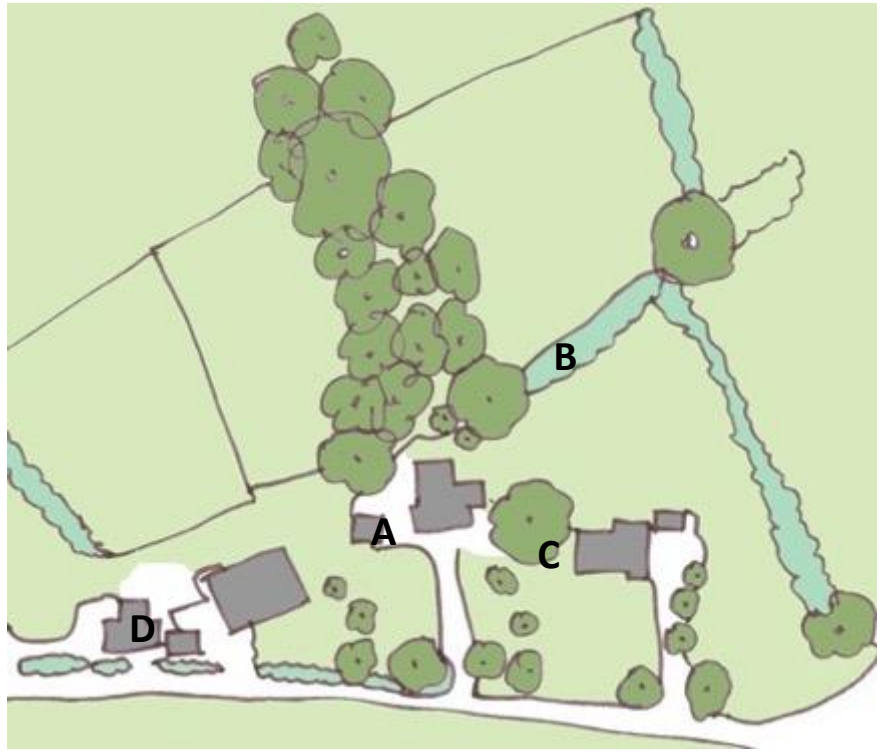


Image: Indicative Sketch of layout on detached properties on Plums Lane.

Great Saling:

The larger of the two main settlements within the neighbourhood area, Great Saling's design character can be described as:

- Boundary treatments vary from low brick walls, palisade wooden fencing, hedgerows or flint and brick walls.
- There is good pedestrian permeability throughout the village, particularly to community facilities.
- Most properties include a chimney, although some may be for aesthetic reasons.
- Most buildings have a porch of some design.
- There is a soft transition to the open countryside.

Images: Examples of development within Great Saling.

Illustrated on Sketch:

A. More formal and regular layout.
B. Clear building line, with buildings orientated to face the street.
C. There is always a degree of setback from the highway, although this can vary from a small front garden at the back of the pavement to a larger garden set behind a grass verged space.
D. The streetscene is characterised by verges in front of gardens and green spaces.
E. Mature trees are a significant natural landscape feature.

Image: Indicative Sketch of layout on detached properties on Grove Villas.

Conversion of Agricultural Buildings:

Where there are concentrations of agricultural buildings, some sites are solely commercial uses, others residential and some are mixed use. The example illustrated in the images is a mixture of residential, office and commercial uses, re-using existing buildings and creating new ones that complement the complex of buildings to create a small rural development. The design characteristics often include:

- Buildings orientated to maximize views into the open countryside and to coppices of trees.
- Re-use of agricultural railings as boundary treatments.
- Appearance of new buildings is agricultural in character.

Images: Examples of conversion of other agricultural buildings in Neighbourhood Area.

Illustrated on Sketch:

A. Landscaping to reflect the rural character, internal courtyards are personalised managed domestic garden areas and land between and surrounding maintains the rural design.
B. New buildings are sympathetic to the scale and size of the development.
C. Sense of enclosure to the site as a whole with minimal definition of defined domestic curtilages.

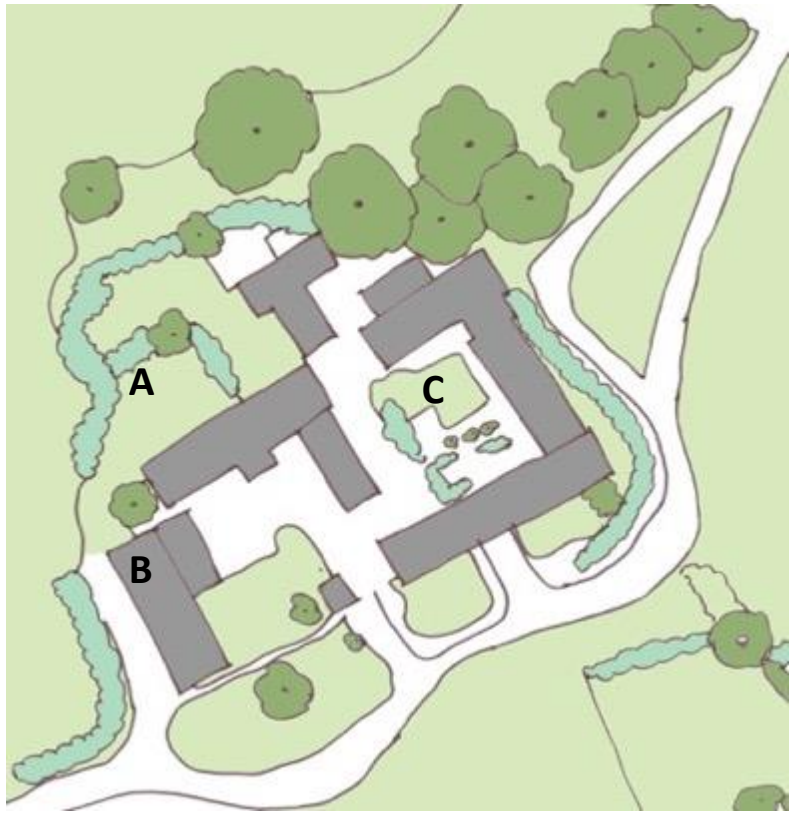
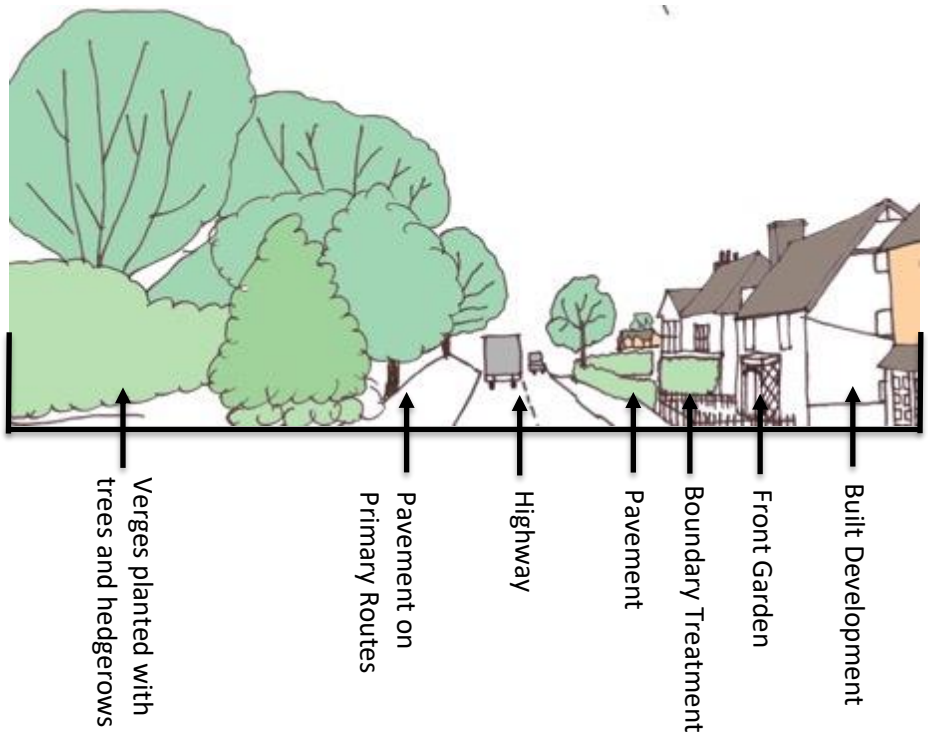


Image: Indicative Sketch of layout on detached properties on The Street, accessed from Grove Villas.

3.5 Public Realm and Boundaries

The public realm is more clearly defined in Great Saling, the larger of the two small rural settlements in the neighbourhood area. Predominantly the public realm is characterised by hedges, large mature trees and green spaces that provide a soft natural landscape character. The public realm is rural in character with few hard-landscaped areas, footpaths can be found on primary routes, however often there are lanes without formal footpaths. There is clear definition between public and private space marked by boundary treatments. Some examples of the typical boundary treatments are shown in the following images. A key characteristic of the neighbourhood area is that there is always a degree of setback from the highway with all development.

Section of Primary Route (not to scale)



Boundary Treatments:

Images: Post and Rail Fencing

Wooden

Brick and Tile

Hedging

Flint and Brick

3.6 Building Types

Roof Styles:

The neighbourhood area includes a broad mix of the most common primary forms of British roofs. Further interest is created within the roof through dormer and eyebrow dormer windows, chimneys and most notably weathervanes. The following images highlight the diverse form of roofs.

Images: Pitched or Gable

Hipped

Mansard

Half Hipped

Dormer Windows:

Many residential buildings include dormer windows within the roofscape. It is important to note the modest size and scale of each dormer window, are modest in scale. Some styles include gabled dormers with triangular pediments and casement windows, eyebrow dormers and catslide dormers.

Images: Eyebrow Dormer *Catslide Dormer*

Images: Gabled Dormers with Triangular Pediments (Shiplap and Render) *Pitched Dormer*

Porches:

There is an eclectic mix of porch design, these canopy porches either a projecting flat element or a pitched structure with wooden frame, enclosed and partially enclosed porches, with roofing materials to match the dwelling.

Images: Examples of canopy porch design

Images: Examples of partially enclosed porch design

Images: Examples of enclosed porch design

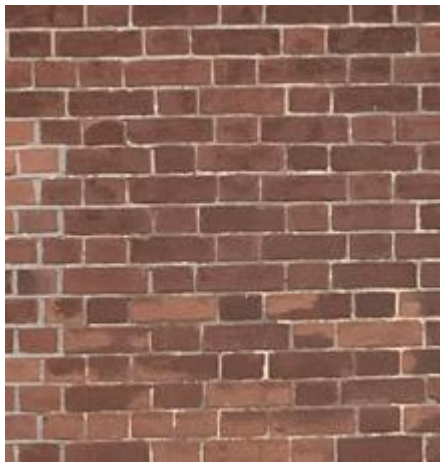
3.7 Materials

Here we identify the predominant and common building materials found in the neighbourhood area. Within the two main settlements there are a few vernacular buildings, as such predominantly buildings are either constructed from brick or rendered structures. Roofing materials vary from clay tiles, terracotta pantiles or thatch, which is a common roofing material for buildings east of Leicestershire as the reeds were easily accessible from the Norfolk Broads.

Most windows are timber frame, the use of UPVC windows is limited and when used within the conservation area detracts from the character and appearance.

Building Materials:

Images: Wooden shiplap



Brick

Flint

Render

Roofing Materials:

Images: Clay Tiles

Clay Pantiles

Thatch

3.8 Conclusions on Character

The local character is based strongly on the rural character and setting of the two small villages set within the natural landscape. The settlement character is that which has evolved over time with small-scale incremental growth, including a diverse range of architectural styles and periods, reflective of that incremental growth.

Therefore, design parameters; policies and guidance should be focused in two main parts:

- Small Scale in-fill: That relative to the further small-scale growth of the two villages to ensure that the design characteristics are enhanced through any new development; and

- 10 Houses or More: Focused on informing the significant growth with the strategic site to develop policies that focus on general layout and townscape characteristics, without being over-prescriptive on building characteristics, whilst also ensuring through new design policies that it makes a sensitive transition into the open countryside and as such does not encroach on these two small rural settlements.

Design policies for the strategic site should emphasize retention of key contextual landscape and building features and creation of sustainable urban design characteristics. The Design Councils Building for Life 12 tool could inform the formulation of such policy.

4. Design Guidelines

4.1 General Points

Being sensitive to context is about understanding the process of change and development that created an area and analysis of the essential characteristics that make an area distinctive.

There is sometimes a misconception that sensitivity to context is about stylistic imitation, but this is not the case. Analysis of character often highlights stylistic diversity resulting from changes over time. So policy should set out essential characteristics for townscape and layout, but avoid being over-prescriptive on matters of detail and style.

Design policies and guidance should lift quality and prevent poor design, but not suppress creative and individualistic design. In particular, innovation could be encouraged, including construction for high environmental performance, which can radically reduce energy use and running costs.

For the allocated housing site, the emphasis is on urban design, including layout, pedestrian permeability and connectivity, townscape and creating a high quality public realm and distinctive character or sense of place.

For the existing built areas, the emphasis is more on infill development or replacement development, reinforcing local character.

Where design policies in the neighbourhood plan and local plan are different, the later plan will have precedence.

4.2 Design and Character Policy (Infill)

For infill development, design and character policy could include:

- One and half and two-storey construction;
- Where dormers are used, parameters for design such as use of a gable rather than hipped front, and choice of tiles to allow a good standard of detail and finish;
- Incorporate garden and/or hardstanding space between and around buildings to avoid an over-dense or crammed character;
- Maintain a degree of setback from the road frontage (based on nearby properties);
- Use mix of high-quality, durable materials, traditional and modern;
- Retaining existing hedges and trees in the development;
- Identify the key boundary treatments;
- Innovative and distinctive design solutions should be positively encouraged, reflecting the local context.

4.3 Design Policy for Strategic Housing Site

Design policy for new-build development on the strategic housing site may incorporate some or all of the principles from the Design Council's Building for Life 12 tool. It is poor practice to require compliance with external standards, as they may change, so the solution is to draft policies requiring good urban design principles, informed by Building for Life 12.

This could include:

- Linking to roads and footpaths around sites and ensuring ease of movement within the site through permeable layout of the new development, with an emphasis on pedestrian convenience;
- Ensuring new streets and spaces are well defined and flanked by suitable boundary treatments (not too high) and active building frontages (doors and windows) rather than high fences or plain gable walls;
- Creating good legibility through the provision of varied building styles, attractive public spaces, good enclosure and definition of streets and positive landmarks (such as the coppices of trees);
- Ensuring variation in car-parking provision to avoid streets and spaces being dominated (this could include garage space, hardstanding space within the curtilage of dwellings and perhaps some street parking);
- Allowing variations in scale, for example for a neighbourhood centre;
- Incorporating contextual features, such as mature trees, hedges, and landscape features;
- Designing in storage space for bins, recycling and cycles;
- Preparation of a site brief would allow key characteristics of the site and context to be explicitly identified. This could include:

    a) Main paths, routes and links around the sites;
    b) Contextual features, such as trees, hedges, water, historic buildings or structures;
    c) Key views;
    d) Topography and landscape characteristics.

- In terms of scale for the new housing sites, a possible approach could be:

    a) General scale of two storeys;
    b) 3 storeys within the centre of the development.

- Soft boundary treatments could be required to the urban/rural edge of the development (for example hedges, but not timber panel and concrete fencing).
- Innovative design solutions could be welcomed and encouraged, especially 'green' construction (see section 4.5).

4.4 Local Green Space

Some green spaces in the area may have community value and could be designated as Local Green Space (LGS) by the neighbourhood plan.

To be eligible for LGS designation, they must meet the criteria contained in Paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.

It is important to engage with the local community and landowners as part of the process of identifying and including spaces for designation.

4.5 Sustainable Design

Elements of sustainable design include creating a balanced mix of uses, including community facilities, so as to create more sustainable live-work patterns and reduce the need for car journeys supporting one of the objectives in the emerging neighbourhood plan Rural Economy section which aims to *'Encourage and support local businesses including home working, in order to retain them within the parish thus reducing the dependency on local transport infrastructure'*. Although this final part is not about supporting a reduced public transport provision, more about tackling traffic issues on the narrow country lanes. But there are limits to what can be achieved, even with a number of 2500 new homes. This could be linked to the objective of Community and Leisure Facilities in the emerging neighbourhood plan, which encourages *'the provision of new facilities where these are financially viable.'*

In terms of building design, things like energy performance are covered by the building regulations rather than planning. However, planning policy can welcome and enable 'green' designs, which are not just better in terms of environmental impact, but also cheaper to run. This could include construction with superior insulation and heat retention qualities, including in walls and window design. This can include prefabricated building components.

Careful choice of materials could include those with low embodied-energy in their manufacture or materials with superior characteristics in terms of long-term durability. This could include prefabricated building components.

Other sustainable features could include:

- Rainwater harvesting and use;
- Micro-generation, such as solar roof panels;
- Living roofs, especially if they are informed by surrounding landscape;
- Electric car charging points; and
- Water permeable ground surface materials and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.

5. Next Steps & Recommendations

5.1 General

- Care should be given when drafting design policies to ensure there is no repetition between the local plan and the neighbourhood plan policies. It is recommended to consult the LPA with any draft policies to ensure they are as relevant as possible and avoid repetition.

- When drafting policies for the neighbourhood plan consideration should be given to preparing policies that set clear and specific requirements for the development to meet. Policies should be worded positively and cover topics such as the design and context of new development providing a clear framework or set of criteria.

5.2 Natural Environment

- Look at policy LPP 72 Green Buffers of the emerging local plan and consider developing a similar policy supported by a map to clearly indicate a 'green buffer' between the edge of the strategic housing allocation and the main neighbouring settlement. The Landscape Character Study can be used as evidence to support and provide detail to the policy.

- The Landscape Character study identified clear landscape characteristics typical of the neighbourhood area and important natural landscape features such as a prevalence of small coppices of trees. These features can be protected and enhanced by policies in the neighbourhood plan.

5.3 Design

- Some more recent developments have included the re-use of agricultural buildings and conversions. These have been for a variety of uses, the opportunity is to develop a design policy that encourages the re-use and conversion, setting design criteria to ensure they are well designed and are not to the detriment of neighbour amenity.

- Boundary treatments: using the evidence from this report includes a policy on the types, design and materials of typical boundary treatments.

- Ensuring high quality materials and high-energy performance: There is a great opportunity here to encourage development that incorporates a high-energy performance within the design. The use of high quality materials should also be strongly encouraged as there is a high quality in the built environment (stone, brick, clay tile and thatch), using a variety of local materials and styles. Particular care should be given to rendering, a feature of many residential properties, there is a limited colour pallet of

predominantly cream colours, uniquely detailed with pattern and detailing. These subtle design elements could be encouraged in the small-scale and infill design policy.

5.4 Housing Design

- The housing need for the neighbourhood area could be delivered by small scale infill development or replacement dwellings. Separate to this is the proposed strategic allocation made in the emerging Local Plan that has not yet been adopted. Given the two very different aspects the neighbourhood plan could develop a design policy for any infill or small-scale development that reflects in more detail the local character and design features highlighted in this report and another design code policy that is more influenced by good design principles that could be applied from criteria such as Build for Life 12 (BFL12) and key elements that could be combined from the design code. These are discussed in more detail in the following points:

- Infill and small-scale design policy: The policy could include identifying the following points:

    a) New garages should be separate from the main dwelling;

    b) New development should respond to the existing building line to maintain the appearance and rhythm of the streetscene;

    c) Encourage properties with front gardens;

    d) New development should maintain a degree of set back from the road;

    e) Detailing and materials (weathervanes, patterns in render, dormer windows, porches); and

    f) Height, scale and massing of new development should reflect the local character.

- Larger developments of 10 or more new homes: The policy could include identifying the following points:

    a) Be tenure blind;

    b) Provide a sensitive transition between the open countryside and the new development;

    c) Retain existing trees and hedgerows where possible;

    d) Key Views and Vistas: Opportunity to frame in new development key views and vistas identified by the neighbourhood plan, these may include features such as church towers, coppices of trees and other landmark features;

    e) Natural boundary treatments and mature planted gardens are a distinct characteristic of the area;

f) Integrate design options in to residential development to address the concerns raised about flexible parking such as ensuring a range of parking is provided within the domestic curtilage of larger new homes;

g) Creating good legibility through the provision of varied building styles, attractive public spaces, good enclosure and definition of streets and positive landmarks;

h) Ensuring variation in car-parking provision to avoid streets and spaces being dominated (this could include garage space, hardstanding space within the curtilage of dwellings);

i) Allowing variations in scale, for example for a neighbourhood centre; and

j) Incorporating contextual features, such as trees, hedges and landscape features.

5.5 Other Areas

- Developer Contributions: The neighbourhood plan can identify priorities for developer contributions. This may include improvement to community facilities, infrastructure, sports, play and leisure, natural environment etc. The neighbourhood plan identifies Quiet Lanes, village hall development and signage and gateways to the villages as some possible projects.

- Another policy area that the neighbourhood plan should consider relates to the movement and connectivity of the neighbourhood area in relation to the Proposed Strategic Housing Site and wider context. This could provide an opportunity to encourage existing Public Rights of Way to be linked and new routes created to ensure a permeable and well-connected new development.

- Local Green Space Designations: The emerging neighbourhood plan does not currently include any Local Green Space designations. However, following the site visit potential sites were identified. The Steering Group could explore Local Green Space designations to protect and preserve those of demonstrable community value.

6. More Advice

More advice on the neighbourhood plan process is available in the Locality Roadmap Guide, here:

https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/NP_Roadmap_online_full.pdf

Locality advice on Local Green Space designations is here:

https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/making-local-green-space-designations-neighbourhood-plan/

Design Council Building for Life 12 is available here:

https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/building-life-12-third-edition

Contact

Urban Vision Enterprise CIC

www.uvns.org
info@uvns.org
01538 386221 (Leek Office)
07973 522428 (Liverpool Office)

Liverpool Office:

RIBA National Architecture Centre
21 Mann Island
Liverpool
L3 1BP

North Staffordshire Office:

Foxlowe Arts Centre (1st Floor)
Stockwell Street
Leek
Staffordshire
ST13 6AD