

Chapter 7 Delivering High Quality Places



Public Art in Milton Country Park, South Cambridgeshire

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Chapter 7 Delivering High Quality Places

- 7.1 Planning should “always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings” (National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), page 5).
- 7.2 South Cambridgeshire has been voted amongst the top 10 places in the country to live in a number of national surveys over recent years. The Local Plan needs to continue to shape development to create sustainable and successful places that protect the special qualities of the district, whilst using the opportunities presented by development to enhance the built and natural environment.
- 7.3 South Cambridgeshire has adopted the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth, alongside a range of other Councils and agencies. The Charter aims to inspire innovation and the pursuit of higher standards, to help communication, and support a cooperative approach between stakeholders. The Charter is organised around the ‘4 Cs’:
- Community: creating healthy communities with a good quality of life where people choose to live;
 - Connectivity: creating places that enable easy access for all to jobs and services using sustainable modes;
 - Climate: creating places that anticipate climate change in ways that enhance the desirability of development and minimise environmental impact; and
 - Character: creating places with distinctive neighbourhoods and where people create ‘pride of place’.

Key Facts:

- The district has settlements of varied and distinct local character, ranging from compact hamlets through larger villages with linear street patterns to new settlements and extensions to the urban fabric of Cambridge.
- The Council has signed up to the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth, which sets out core principles of the level of quality expected in new developments.
- South Cambridgeshire has adopted a District Design Guide to provide additional guidance on how developments can ensure they are sustainable and achieve a high quality of design in a way that respects the local context. www.scambs.gov.uk/ldf/spds
- Through its public art policy the Council has delivered more than 20 schemes since 2008 including Kenny Hunter’s Deer at Orchard Park (Travelodge) and Emma Smith’s Living Museum at Waterbeach (Morris Homes).

Securing High Quality Design

- 7.4 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The design of new development needs to create viable and vibrant spaces and buildings that respect, preserve and enhance the special character of South Cambridgeshire.
- 7.5 All new development will have an impact on its surroundings. The aim must be that any development, from a new urban area to an extension to an individual home, takes care to fit in with its surroundings, creating environments where people wish to live, work, shop and study. The Local Plan needs to set out the quality and standard of design that any development is expected to achieve.
- 7.6 Larger scale developments can take a number of years to complete, and are often delivered and planned in stages. In order to ensure developments take place in a coherent and structured way, masterplans and design codes can be produced to agree an overall vision and strategy for a development as a whole at the outset.
- 7.7 The Council monitors the design quality of new housing developments in the district using the Building for Life assessment tool, and the results are reported in the Annual Monitoring Report. The Council proposes to continue to use this tool to help it assess proposals for new housing developments.

Issue 28: Securing High Quality Design

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that the Local Plan includes comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. All development must be of high quality design and make a positive contribution to its local and wider surroundings.

Design principles could include:

- Achieve variety and interest in design to create a sense of place and identity while respecting and enhancing the natural, historic and built forms of the site and its surroundings.
- Create easy access and movement within the development and to the surrounding area for all, focussing on walking, cycling and public transport.
- Provide a harmonious mix of uses both within the site and its surroundings that contributes to provision of the services and facilities necessary to meet the needs of the community.
- Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that provide opportunities for recreation and social interaction, biodiversity, sustainable drainage, and climate change mitigation.
- Protect trees and other landscape features of amenity and biodiversity value.
- Ensure developments deliver flexibility that allows for future changes in needs and lifestyles.
- Protect the amenity of occupiers from unacceptable impacts such as noise, odour and overshadowing, and minimise opportunities for crime.

The District Design Guide provides more detailed information on how to deliver high quality development locally, and assists applicants by setting out the information required to accompany planning applications and issues to consider in Design and Access Statements. This could be retained and updated, or new design guides for individual villages or clusters of villages could be produced. We are interested to know whether villages would like to produce their own design guides to provide local guidance on design issues important to the local community.

A further issue identified is whether specific guidance should be provided on the design and width of streets. This could address street character in terms of verges, tree planting, pavements, and sustainable drainage systems.

Question 28:

- A: Have the right design principles been identified to achieve high quality design in all new developments?**
- B: Should the Local Plan provide guidance on design of streets to improve the public realm, including minimum street widths and street trees?**
- C: Do you think the Council should retain and update the District Design Guide?**
- D: Would you like your village to produce its own design guide? If so, please let us know which village so that we can discuss how to take this forward with the local Parish Council.**

Please provide any additional comments on any of these questions.

Public Art

- 7.8 The provision of quality visual arts and crafts as part of new developments can bring social, cultural, environmental, educational and economic benefits, both to new development and the local community. Done well, it can assist in adding local distinctiveness and creating a sense of place. An appropriate balance needs to be struck between all the competing demands on development and the benefits of public art.
- 7.9 The Council's existing policy encourages the inclusion of public art within new developments as a means of enhancing the quality of the development. Examples of public art delivered can be found on the Council's website:

<http://www.scambs.gov.uk/leisureandculture/artsdevelopment/publicart.htm>

Issue 29: Public Art

Public art that is designed to reflect and enhance its surroundings can help to raise the visual quality of developments and create a sense of place.

Public art can encompass a range of approaches. It could be a landmark work such as a sculpture but could also include designing a development so that functional elements such as lighting, seating, fencing, landscape, fountains and water features, and signage are bespoke and designed to give a new development a sense of place and individuality.

The Local Plan could continue to include a separate approach on public art or public art could be included as part of the design principles.

Question 29:

What approach do you think the Local Plan should take on public art?

Please provide any additional comments.