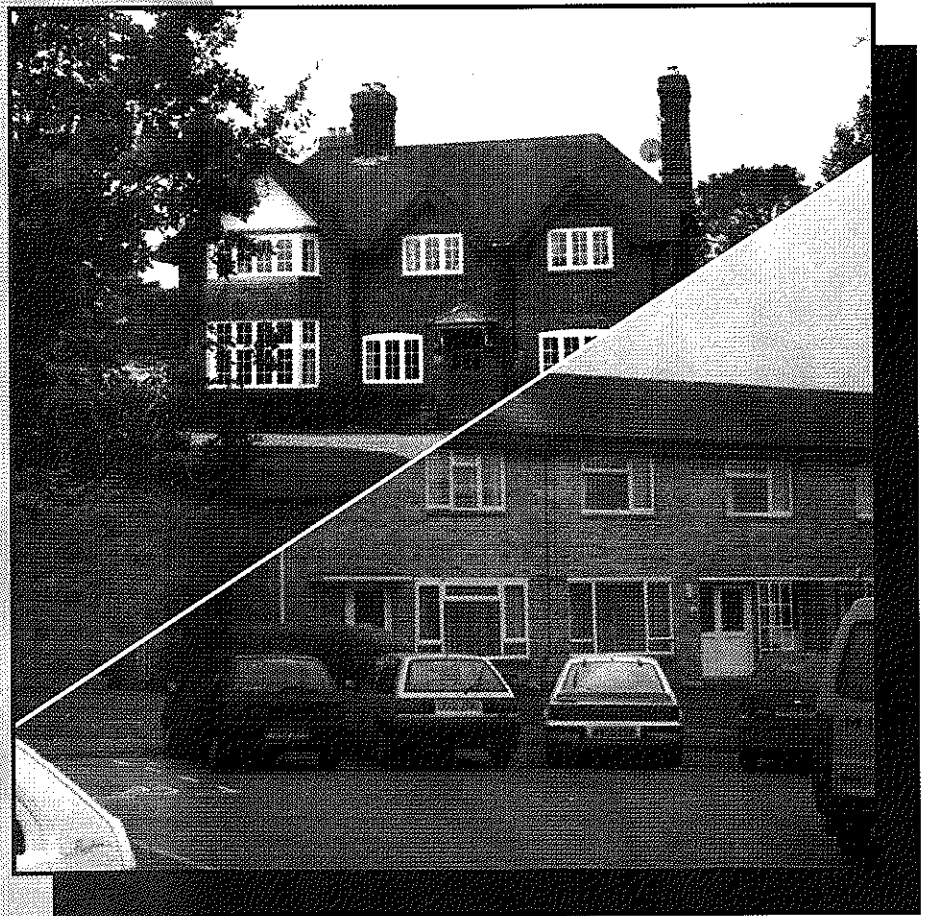


**Design and Layout of New Housing**



Suburban Dream?



Suburban Reality?

**DESIGN**

**Advice Leaflet No. 1**

# DESIGN ADVICE LEAFLET NO. 1:(NOVEMBER 1998)

## DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF NEW HOUSING

### INTRODUCTION

St Albans District Council seeks to promote a high standard of design and layout for new residential development. To this end, Policy 70 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review (adopted 1994) aims to encourage new housing design to both respect the setting and character of its surroundings, and to meet key objectives within the new layout.

Paragraph 9.21 of the District Local Plan Review states the Council's intention to produce a Design Advice Leaflet to supplement Policy 70. This leaflet offers a practical explanation of Policy 70, "Design and Layout of New Housing", showing examples of good practice wherever possible. The actual clauses of the policy are shown in capitals and bold print, whilst the full wording of Policy 70 can be found immediately after this introduction.

On 18th November, 1998, the Council's Planning and Heritage Committee approved this leaflet as supplementary planning guidance, which will be taken into account as a material consideration in deciding planning applications. However, it should be emphasised that this leaflet does not form part of the statutory development plan. In accordance with Planning Policy Guidance 12 this leaflet has been subject to public consultation with local amenity bodies. Attention is also drawn to this Council's separate design advice leaflet 'Extensions in Residential Areas' which accompanies Policy 72 of the District Local Plan Review, and deals in detail with the design of new extensions. It should also be noted that as and when the current District Local Plan is reviewed, some parts of this leaflet may be superseded.

Modern housing has sometimes been described as characterless, with "anywhere" type housing and cramped, overlooked back gardens. Multiple car ownership causes "cars rule OK" streets, and the desire to maximise house numbers means the opportunity for a pleasant relationship between buildings and spaces is often lost. New housing design must be aimed at more than creating a utilitarian place to live.

The revised Planning Policy Guidance 1, provided by central Government, emphasises the importance of good design in the development process, and that the appearance of a development is a material consideration in this process. This leaflet is therefore aimed primarily at developers and their advisers, but will also be of general interest to others such as amenity groups and interested members of the public. It should be noted that the policies in this leaflet apply to infill developments - small numbers of houses in an established residential area - as well as larger new schemes. N.B. Some large housing sites will have planning briefs produced by the Council containing specific requirements relating to Policy 70 e.g. suggested road layout/dwelling mix/design criteria. It is worth checking whether a brief exists for a particular site.

It should be noted that a previous proposed policy - Areas of Defined Residential Character - has been deleted in favour of amending Policy 70 to enable more comprehensive protection of residential areas. The resolution from Planning and Heritage Committee 5.1.95. reads; "That no Areas of Defined Residential Character be defined but that District Plan Policy be amended when the Plan was altered or reviewed to ensure the existing character of all residential areas was fully protected."

## POLICY 70 FULL WORDING:-

(i) DESIGN AND LAYOUT - MASSING AND SITING OF BUILDINGS SHALL CREATE SAFE, ATTRACTIVE SPACES OF HUMAN SCALE

(ii) DWELLING MIX - TO CATER FOR A RANGE OF NEEDS AND PROVIDE A VARIETY OF LAYOUT AND APPEARANCE, A MIX OF HOUSING TYPES AND SIZES WILL BE NEGOTIATED ON LARGE SCHEMES. LARGE CONCENTRATIONS OF SMALL DWELLINGS SHOULD BE DESIGNED IN A MANNER THAT AVOIDS DOMINATION OF PUBLIC SPACES BY OVERBEARING HARD SURFACES AND VEHICLES, AND BY LACK OF PRIVACY FOR GROUND FLOOR FLATS

(iii) ROADS AND FOOTPATHS - POLICY 34 SHALL BE COMPLIED WITH IN A MANNER THAT MINIMISES PEDESTRIAN/VEHICULAR CONFLICT AND IS VISUALLY ATTRACTIVE;

(iv) PARKING AND GARAGING - THE PARKING/GARAGING REQUIREMENTS SET OUT IN POLICIES 40 AND 43 SHALL BE MET WITHOUT ALLOWING THE MOTOR CAR TO DOMINATE PUBLIC AREAS (SEE SECOND SENTENCE OF (ii) ABOVE);

(v) LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS SHALL COMPLY WITH POLICY 74

(vi) PRIVACY BETWEEN DWELLINGS - A TOLERABLE LEVEL OF VISUAL PRIVACY IN HABITABLE ROOMS AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT IN PRIVATE GARDENS, SHOULD BE PROVIDED. THIS OBJECTIVE WILL NORMALLY BE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED IF THE FOLLOWING DISTANCES BETWEEN FACING WINDOWS TO THE REAR OF THE DWELLINGS HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED:

WINDOW TO WINDOW  
DISTANCE<sup>(1)</sup>

27 METRES

PERMANENT REAR  
BOUNDARY SCREEN

1.8 METRES HIGH

A REDUCED WINDOW TO WINDOW DISTANCE OF 18 METRES MAY BE PERMITTED IF THE PROPOSED DWELLING HAS NO OVERLOOKING REAR WINDOWS ON UPPER FLOORS AND WILL NOT BE OVERLOOKED BY NEIGHBOURING DWELLINGS WITH SUCH WINDOWS.

ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF ACHIEVING A TOLERABLE LEVEL OF VISUAL PRIVACY, THROUGH SUCH FACTORS AS SCREENING AND THE DISPOSITION OF LAND USES, WILL NORMALLY BE ACCEPTABLE.

SUITABLY INCREASED DISTANCES WILL BE REQUIRED WHERE :

- a) A FEATURE OF THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA IS GREATER SPACE BETWEEN BUILDINGS;
- b) DWELLINGS CONTAIN LIVING ROOMS RATHER THAN BEDROOMS AT SECOND STOREY OR ABOVE (eg. BLOCKS OF FLATS);
- c) RELATIVE LEVELS WOULD INCREASE THE EXTENT OF OVERLOOKING.

BALCONIES AND FIRST FLOOR CONSERVATORIES SHALL NOT BE PERMITTED IF PRIVACY OF EXISTING ADJOINING DWELLINGS AND PRIVATE GARDENS WOULD BE PREJUDICED.

WHERE DWELLINGS ARE PERMITTED, A CONDITION REMOVING PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS FOR EXTENSIONS OR FOR THE INSERTION OF NEW WINDOWS WILL BE IMPOSED IN LOCATIONS WHERE OVERLOOKING PROBLEMS MIGHT OCCUR;

Footnote (1) Only windows of habitable rooms are subject to this part of the policy. The 1991 Census Definition of a habitable room is any room except; small kitchens under 2m wide, bathrooms and toilets.

(vii) PRIVACY BETWEEN DWELLING AND REAR BOUNDARY - SO THAT FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF ADJOINING LAND IS NOT COMPROMISED IF THE APPLICATION SITE ABUTS EXISTING RESIDENTIAL LAND OR LAND WITH POTENTIAL FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, A MINIMUM OF HALF THE ABOVE DISTANCES IN (vi) SHALL NORMALLY BE ATTAINED. ACCOUNT SHOULD BE TAKEN OF (vi), ITEMS a), b) AND c) AND THE FACT THAT THERE MAY BE ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF ACHIEVING PRIVACY OBJECTIVES;

(viii) ORIENTATION - SUNLIGHT AND DAYLIGHT REQUIREMENTS AS SET OUT IN THE BUILDING RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT REPORT "SITE LAYOUT AND PLANNING FOR DAYLIGHT AND SUNLIGHT, A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE" SHALL NORMALLY BE ACHIEVED.

(ix) AMENITY SPACE AROUND DWELLINGS - THE SIZE OF A PRIVATE GARDEN SHOULD REFLECT THE NUMBER OF PERSONS FOR WHICH THE DWELLING HAS BEEN DESIGNED, THEIR LIKELY RANGE OF ACTIVITIES AND ALSO LOCAL RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER. GARDENS MAY BE SMALLER WHERE THERE IS PUBLIC OPEN SPACE NEARBY. IN THE CASE OF FLATS, IT WILL NORMALLY BE APPROPRIATE TO PROVIDE COMMUNALLY SHARED AMENITY SPACE, ALTHOUGH GROUND FLOOR FLATS MAY BENEFIT FROM PRIVATE SPACE ADJACENT TO THE DWELLING.

(xi) OPEN SPACE

DEVELOPMENTS WITH MORE THAN 30 DWELLINGS EACH WITH 2 OR MORE BEDROOMS SHALL NORMALLY BE PROVIDED WITH TODDLERS' PLAYAREAS<sup>(1)</sup> ON THE BASIS OF 3 SQ METRES FOR EVERY 5 SUCH DWELLINGS.

IN ADDITION, DEVELOPMENTS OF MORE THAN 100 DWELLINGS SHALL NORMALLY BE PROVIDED WITH APPROPRIATE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE INCLUDING CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND(S) ON THE BASIS OF 1.2 HECTARES<sup>(2)</sup> PER 1000 PERSONS, eg. 100 DWELLINGS  $\times$  2.5 (AVERAGE PERSONS PER DWELLING) = 250 PERSONS = 25% OF 1.2 HECTARES = 0.3 HA. OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE.

Footnotes

(1) Open space provision is generally in public ownership and open to the public, but private open space may also make a contribution - see paragraphs 10.12 and 10.13 of 'Recreational Open Space Provision' in the Appendix.

(2) 0.8 ha Children's Play Areas as per paragraph 10.13 above plus 0.4 ha General amenity space = 1.2 ha Total open space per 1000 persons.

(X) DEFENSIBLE SPACE - TO PROVIDE A TOLERABLE LEVEL OF SECURITY AND PRIVACY, LAND ADJACENT TO WINDOWS OF HABITABLE ROOMS AT GROUND FLOOR LEVEL SHALL NORMALLY BE A MINIMUM OF 3 METRES FROM AREAS TO WHICH THE PUBLIC HAS ACCESS (SEE ALSO SECOND SENTENCE OF (ii) ABOVE). EXCEPTIONS MAY BE MADE WHERE IT IS NECESSARY TO ACCORD WITH LOCAL CHARACTER (SEE POLICY 85, DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS). DEFENSIBLE SPACE IS CONSIDERED TO CONTRIBUTE TO USEFUL PRIVATE AMENITY SPACE (SEE (ix) ABOVE AND PROPOSED DESIGN ADVICE LEAFLET NO. 1);

(xii) MATERIALS - SHALL BE DURABLE AND COMPATIBLE WITH THEIR LOCATION.

**(i) DESIGN AND LAYOUT - MASSING AND SITING OF BUILDINGS SHALL CREATE SAFE, ATTRACTIVE SPACES OF HUMAN SCALE**

This simple statement encompasses a host of urban design concepts which should be borne in mind when designing a new housing layout. The basic aim should be to enclose space with buildings or landscaping to create a sense of place in a visually pleasing manner.

The *visual* elements of a new layout are critical. Careful planning is needed to create attractive spaces of human scale. Physical standards (e.g. privacy distances) such as those given later in this document can only go so far in creating a desirable living environment. Equally important is a sensitive approach to layout.

It may help to consider some simple urban design concepts.

**(1) SETTING - Rural/Urban/Suburban?**

There are two extreme settings for a new development; a rural setting where isolated buildings are contained within a dominant landscape setting, and an urban setting where the spaces (streets, courtyards, alleys) are contained within a built setting. The majority of sites for new housing in St Albans District will fall somewhere between these two extremes. On such sites it is important to achieve a *balance* of buildings and landscape.

### *Rural System*

Figure 1  
(EDG)



### *Urban System*



A common problem which results in "unsatisfactory suburbia" is where there are too many buildings for the landscape to dominate, but the buildings are too loosely grouped to enclose the space between them. This is a very common reason for the visual failure of much housing development.

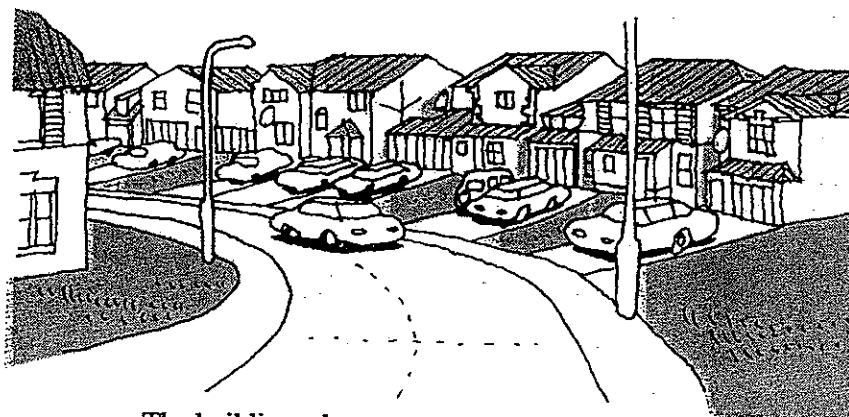


Figure 2  
(EDG)

### *Unsatisfactory Suburbia*

The buildings do not enclose spaces.  
Neither the buildings nor landscape dominate.

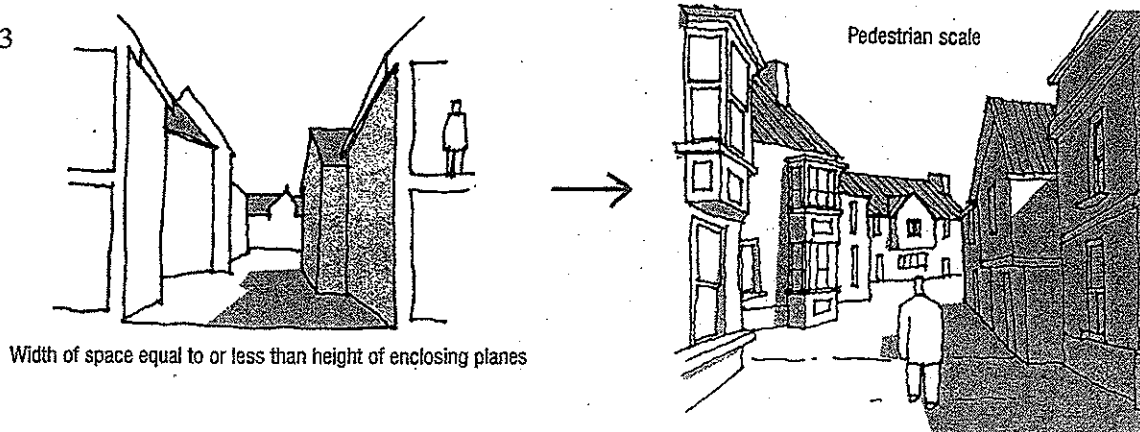
## (2) PATTERN of new development.

Most development takes place alongside existing built-up areas. Where this is a historic townscape, the new development should respect the established pattern of buildings and spaces. Where this is an undistinguished area with no strong character, the layout could create a new specific pattern of development.

## (3) HUMAN SCALE

In an urban situation, a "human scale" environment is created by the balanced relationship of buildings to spaces. The height and width of buildings and spaces should be planned from the pedestrians point of view. A comfortable relationship for an urban pedestrian street is where space width is less than or equal to building height. Inappropriate relationship e.g., buildings too high, spaces too narrow or wide, can alienate the pedestrian and make them feel uncomfortable, even claustrophobic or agoraphobic. However, spaces created by formal squares and long vistas can also be comfortable for pedestrians. It is important to treat ground floor elevations in a pedestrian-friendly manner.

Figure 3  
(EDG)



## (4) VARIETY- of layout

A new housing estate should be visually stimulating and interesting - a variety of vistas and spaces revealed as you progress through the estate usually achieves a visually satisfying environment. N.B. large numbers of differing house designs and materials on one scheme are *not* being advocated.

A long linear space e.g. road or footpath, can be monotonous if the full length is instantly revealed, whereas a curved road helps to limit visual length. Likewise, an important vista should be closed by a quality building, or significant landscape feature.

Figure 4

(EDG)

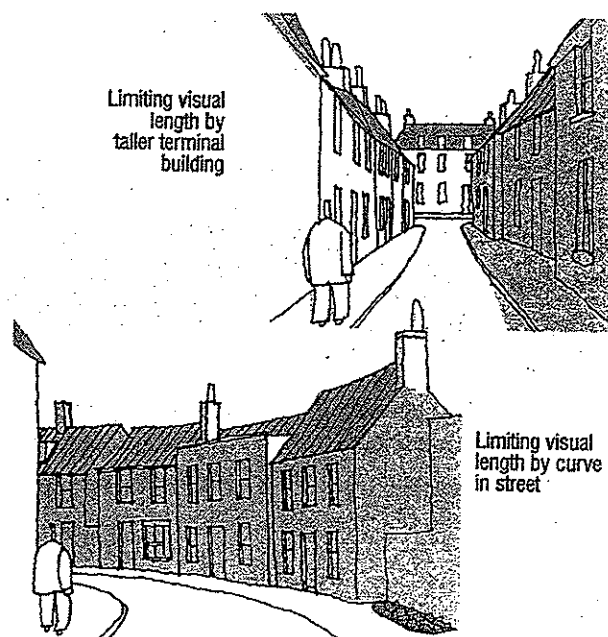
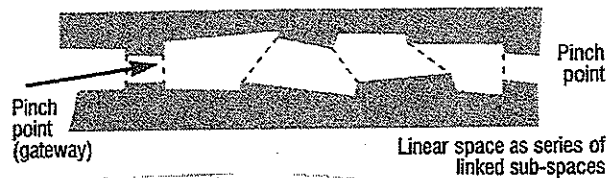




Figure 5  
(EDG)



If a road or footpath must be straight, it may be helpful to divide it visually into a series of small linked sub-spaces, each designed to be of human scale. Simple techniques can create this impression;

- use of varied building lines;
- changing surface levels and materials;
- pinch points created by building facades or hard surfacing or landscape treatment;
- varying the angles of building facades;
- varying the height/width relationships of buildings to spaces.



Figure 6

These measures applied to a road have the added advantage of influencing drivers' perception and should slow their speed.

#### SAFETY

Design and environmental factors, including concepts of defensible space, and natural surveillance, can affect the potential for crime on a housing estate. The recommendations in BS 8220 (Part 1) should be incorporated into development proposals in order to design out crime.

Department of the Environment Circular 5/94 "Planning Out Crime" also gives general and specific advice to developers about planning considerations relating to crime prevention. Developers are advised to consult this document. The Circular also advises local authorities to consult with local Police Architectural Liaison Officers (ALOs) who promote the nation-wide "Secured by Design" scheme. Developers are advised to consult with ALOs at the earliest opportunity prior to making a planning application, and have regard to their document "Secured by Design" which sets out detailed guidance for crime prevention within new housing developments. Late consultation may result in failure to achieve the 'Secured by Design Award'. The main relevant parts of this document are given in the Appendix.



**(ii) DWELLING MIX - TO CATER FOR A RANGE OF NEEDS AND PROVIDE A VARIETY OF LAYOUT AND APPEARANCE, A MIX OF HOUSING TYPES AND SIZES WILL BE NEGOTIATED ON LARGE SCHEMES. LARGE CONCENTRATIONS OF SMALL DWELLINGS SHOULD BE DESIGNED IN A MANNER THAT AVOIDS DOMINATION OF PUBLIC SPACES BY OVERBEARING HARD SURFACES AND VEHICLES, AND BY LACK OF PRIVACY FOR GROUND FLOOR FLATS.**

Large housing sites may already have a planning brief specifying dwelling mix, elements of design or percentage of affordable housing to private housing. If such a brief exists it should be followed. If no such brief exists, the policy as stated above applies. The aim is to provide an estate to cater for a variety of family types - single people, couples and families with children.

Where smaller dwellings are grouped together it has been common for the corresponding parking spaces to be grouped together in an unbroken line in front of the houses. This should be avoided e.g. by intermittent planting or hard landscaping to break up the view of a row of parked cars, or by courtyard parking (see section (iv) Parking and Garaging).

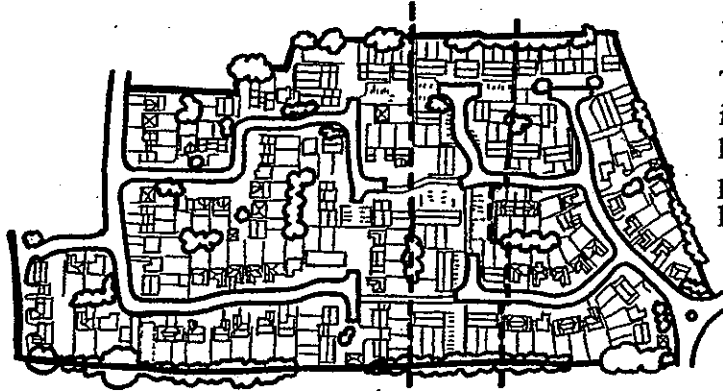


Figure 7

The new housing at Longacres incorporates the affordable housing fully within the private housing (affordable housing area shown dashed).

The Council believes that affordable and private housing should not be physically or spatially segregated, but positively integrated. Layouts which fail to integrate the two will not be viewed favourably. Government Circular 6/98 on Planning and Affordable Housing states that there should be some flexibility on parking standards, and higher densities may be appropriate in town centres, but special care with design is needed to ensure a good quality environment.

N.B. Specific thresholds above which affordable housing will be required on a site are currently given in Circular 6/98 (i.e. 25% affordable housing on a scheme greater than 1 hectare or 25 houses). However, this figure may be revised in the near future in the light of the forthcoming revised Planning Policy Guidance 3 'Housing', due out in January 2000.



Figure 8

Here the affordable housing is physically segregated by walls and bollards, forming a 'ghetto'. This is no longer acceptable.



**(iii) ROADS AND FOOTPATHS - POLICY 34 SHALL BE COMPLIED WITH IN A MANNER THAT MINIMISES PEDESTRIAN/VEHICULAR CONFLICT AND IS VISUALLY ATTRACTIVE.**

Policy 34 "Highways Considerations in Development Control" is set out in full in the Appendix. It states that several highway objectives must be achieved before development likely to generate a significant amount of traffic, or create or improve a highway access, can be permitted. Policy 34 should be looked at in its entirety; but the main considerations are summarised as follows;

- **Road safety** - to include adequate visibility, provision for pedestrians and cyclists and disabled and other disadvantaged people.
- **Road hierarchy** should determine road design, e.g. 20mph speed limits by design. New accesses to primary and main distributor roads will normally be resisted. Road design should consider physical methods for reducing traffic speeds to a safe level.
- **Environmental impact** of traffic, particularly in residential areas.
- **Present and predicted** road capacity.
- **St. Albans City Centre** - necessary highways improvements will be sought for proposals with traffic implications. (Policy 30 of the District Local Plan Review)
- **Local rural roads** - accident risk to pedestrians and cyclists, use of poor roads or adverse impact on rural character of the road or residential properties alongside it.

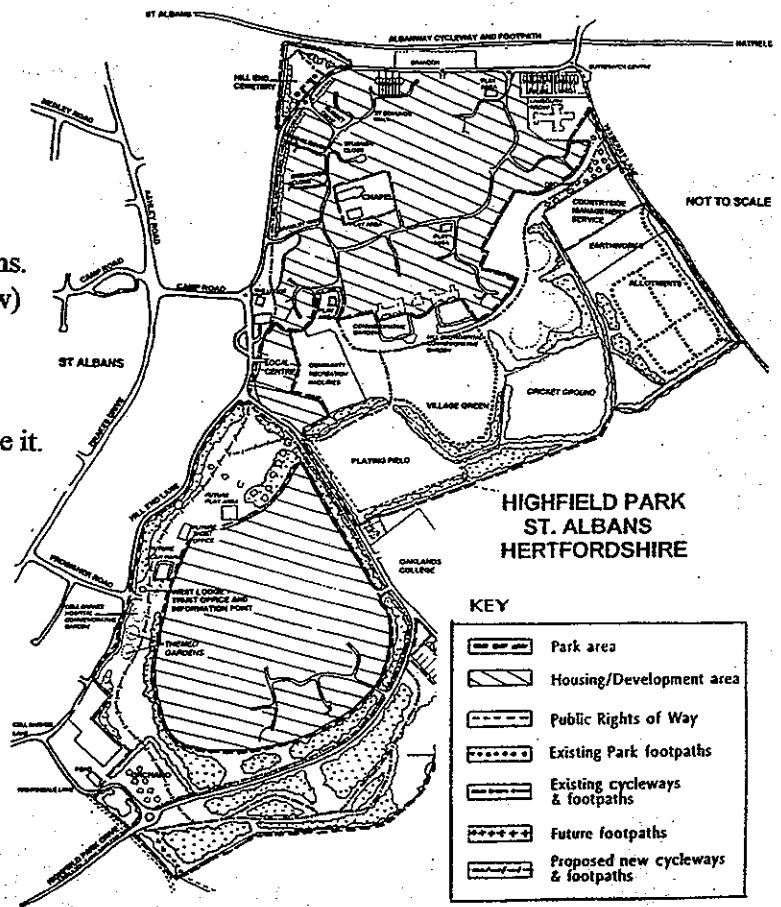


Figure 9

Highfield estate plan showing road/cycleway separation

The Hertfordshire County Council document "Roads in Hertfordshire - A Design Guide" is recommended to developers to compliment Policy 34. It is a detailed design guide covering all aspects of the Council's requirements for roads and footpaths. Part 2 "Highway Standards and Estate Layout" is particularly relevant.

In addition, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) produced a document in September 1998 'Places, Streets and Movement : A Companion Guide to Design Bulletin 32, Residential Roads and Footpaths'. The advice is strongly recommended for designers of new housing developers and is anticipated to have a major impact on future development. The main aim is to move away from residential layouts which focus on vehicular movements at the expense of pedestrians and other users. The document embraces the main elements of the Transport White Paper, which promotes walking, cycling and public transport. Copies can be obtained from DETR, Publications Sale Centre, Unit 8, Goldthorpe Industrial Estate, Goldthorpe, Rotherham, S63 9BL and branches of the Stationary Office.

**(iv) PARKING AND GARAGING - THE PARKING/GARAGING REQUIREMENTS SET OUT IN POLICIES 40 AND 43 SHALL BE MET WITHOUT ALLOWING THE MOTOR CAR TO DOMINATE PUBLIC AREAS (SEE SECOND SENTENCE OF (iii) ABOVE);**

Policies 40 and 43 set out parking requirements for occupants and visitors in new residential development and residential homes/hostels. Policy 50 sets out requirements for disabled parking. Please see the Appendix for the full policies including specific parking requirements. These should be complied with in any new housing scheme, with possible exceptions as set out below. N.B. New parking standards are adopted from time to time which may supersede these standards.

Policy 25 of the Adopted Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review (April 1998) is also relevant. This states that in general;

“Development proposals with potentially significant car parking demand will only be permitted where the applicant has agreed to take measures to address the problems (of traffic generation, congestion and on-street parking pressure) likely to arise from the parking demands generated by the development.”

Specifically for residential development Policy 25 states;

“Full parking needs should be met on site except in suitable town centre and other locations with good access to passenger transport, where reduced provision may be sought associated with commuted payments as appropriate. Car free residential development may also be considered in suitable locations, subject to satisfactory site covenants, on-street parking controls and provision of alternative means of transport

There are two types of car parking spaces which must be provided in a new housing development - spaces for residents and spaces for visitors. Both of these should be reasonably convenient, visually inconspicuous, and limit opportunities for car-related crime.

Residents' spaces (“allocated spaces”) should be located within the curtilage of their own house, or at least visible from their house. Where this is possible, with on site garages or hardstanding, great care must be taken to ensure that the streetscene does not become completely car or garage dominated (Figure 10 ). To help achieve this, garages/hardstandings should, where possible, be set back behind the main house frontage. Gable-end windows to houses should be considered to allow residents unrestricted views over cars parked on a side driveway. A driveway in front of a garage should be at least 6m long in order to count as a parking space and allow for opening of garage doors. Residents' spaces could also be located at the rear of houses, either approached between the houses or from a separate road or drive at the back. In the latter case, care should be taken that the parking space is overlooked from the house or else is within a secure garage to avoid theft.

*Many modern developments do not bear any relationship to their regional context. They could have been built anywhere, having no sense of place. Standardised designs, such as those below, lead to a loss of individuality and identity.*



Figure 10  
Garage-dominated frontages

*The needs of the car consume space and dominate new urban form. The quality and extent of the external landscaping add to the value of the house. Its absence limits individual expression and the possibility for the development to mature.*



Figure 11  
Planting or varied hard landscaping could prevent this bleak appearance

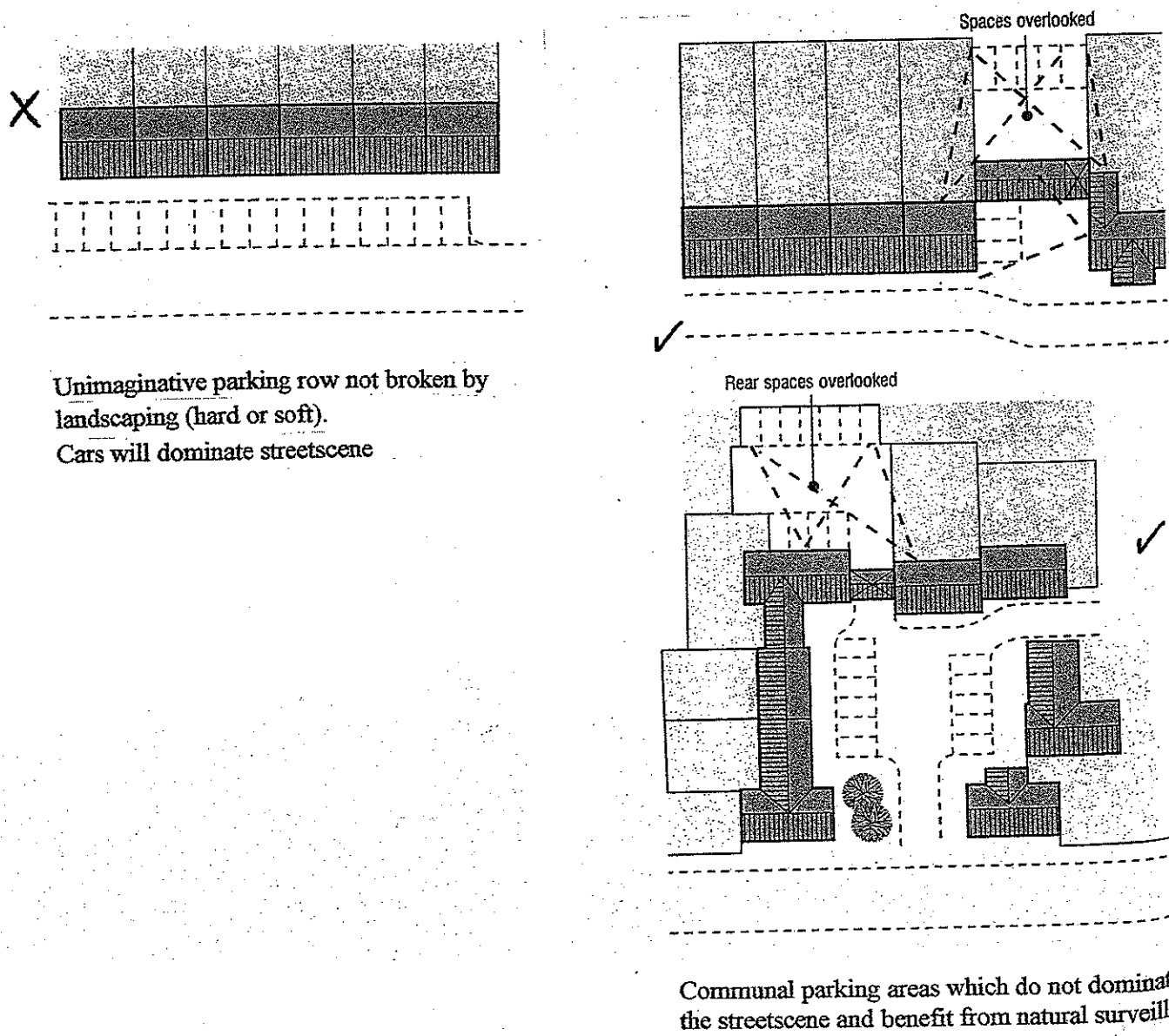
We have a tendency to be a car-dominated society. The needs of the car consume space and can easily dominate new housing layouts with large swathes of tarmac roads and hardstanding (Figure 11). With imaginative design, however, making use of a variety of hard and soft landscaping, this can be avoided.

Visitor spaces ("unallocated spaces") should be provided in small groups of up to 10 spaces, within 25m of the houses they serve. These should be well-lit and visible from other houses so as to discourage parking on the road. wherever possible visitor's spaces should be provided in lay-bys next to a new road in a form which can later be adopted by the highway authority.

Where parking cannot be provided within the curtilage communal parking areas should ideally be located so as not to be unduly conspicuous in the layout. A continuous row of parked cars in front of a terrace of houses is unacceptable. Preferably the communal parking areas will be broken up and distributed around the layout, with some spaces convenient for visitors on or near the frontage. In all cases care should be taken that communal parking areas are overlooked by the kitchen or living room windows of at least some dwellings or footways in regular use, in order to discourage car-related crime.

Developers are advised to refer to the Hertfordshire County Council document "Roads in Hertfordshire - A Design Guide" for further guidance on parking matters, particularly Part 3 "Highways and Parking Standards".

Figure 12 (EDG)



**(v) LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS SHALL COMPLY WITH POLICY 74**

Landscaping, both 'hard' and 'soft' is a fundamental element which contributes to the long-term amenity of an area. Retention of existing vegetation ('soft' landscaping), particularly large skyline trees, benefits any development by providing a degree of immediate maturity and lessening the scale of new buildings. Trees and shrubs can be used to enclose space, screen and generally enhance development. It is important at the design stage to allow sufficient space to accommodate new planting of a scale appropriate to the new development, e.g. semi-mature trees or boundary hedges. 'Hard' landscaping such as paving, walls and fences also contribute to the quality of space between buildings.

It is crucial that sufficient space is allowed for screen planting, which shall include large trees, where new development borders the edge of existing settlements. This often corresponds with the Green Belt boundary which makes provision of sympathetic landscaping particularly important.

Existing trees and woodlands which contribute to amenity need to be protected against wilful damage and destruction, particularly where they are threatened by development. **The Council will use its powers of protection if deemed necessary.** If a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order is destroyed, a replacement tree will normally be required in the same location.

The Council expects that proper consideration will be given to the landscaping requirements of all planning proposals, in order that the quality of the environment of the District will be maintained and enhanced. Sections 5 and 6 of BS 5837 ("Guide to Trees in Relation to Construction", 1991) provide excellent and detailed "good practice" guidance and should be used by applicants.

Policy 74 is reproduced in full in the Appendix, but the following main points are intended as a brief guide to what the Council is taking account of when considering planning applications;

**1) Retention of existing landscaping;**

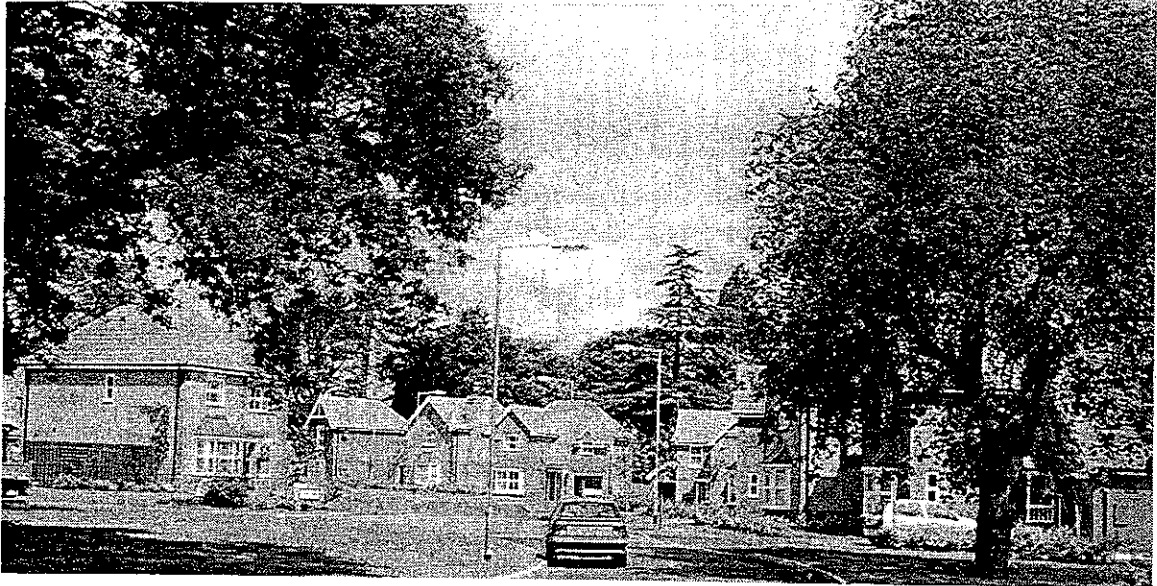
- Significant healthy trees, hedgerows and other features should be retained.
- A full tree survey will normally be required.
- Trees to be retained should not be topped, lopped, or endangered by construction work.
- New buildings should be sited far enough away from trees so as to avoid subsequent requests for felling or lopping.
- Tree Preservation Orders and planning conditions on permissions will be used to protect existing significant trees.
- Wildlife corridors/areas of wildlife interest should be retained where possible.
- Continuous dense tree belts should be taken into account in daylight calculations (see Part viii - Orientation). Also for daylighting purposes new windows should be sited away from existing trees.

**2) Provision of new landscaping;**

- Sufficient space must be allowed at the design stage for new planting.
- Screen planting with large trees and native hedgerows will be required particularly at edges of settlements.
- Detailed landscaping schemes (both 'hard' and 'soft') will normally be required as part of full planning applications. Native trees and shrubs should be incorporated where appropriate - avoid use of exotic trees and shrubs and leylandii.
- Wildlife corridors should be created where possible.
- For daylighting purposes new trees should be sited away from existing windows.

N.B. It is important to note that with larger schemes the Council will require full landscape details to be submitted as part of a full planning application, i.e. the Council will not simply attach a landscape condition to a planning permission. This is to ensure that sufficient space for landscaping is incorporated into a scheme at the design stage, and not treated as an 'add-on' after the layout has been finished.





(vi) **PRIVACY BETWEEN DWELLINGS** - A TOLERABLE LEVEL OF VISUAL PRIVACY IN HABITABLE ROOMS AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT IN PRIVATE GARDENS, SHOULD BE PROVIDED. THIS OBJECTIVE WILL NORMALLY BE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED IF THE FOLLOWING DISTANCES BETWEEN FACING WINDOWS TO THE REAR OF THE DWELLINGS HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED:

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**27 METRES**

**PERMANENT REAR  
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**1.8 METRES HIGH**

A REDUCED WINDOW TO WINDOW DISTANCE OF 18 METRES MAY BE PERMITTED IF THE PROPOSED DWELLING HAS NO OVERLOOKING REAR WINDOWS ON UPPER FLOORS AND WILL NOT BE OVERLOOKED BY NEIGHBOURING DWELLINGS WITH SUCH WINDOWS.

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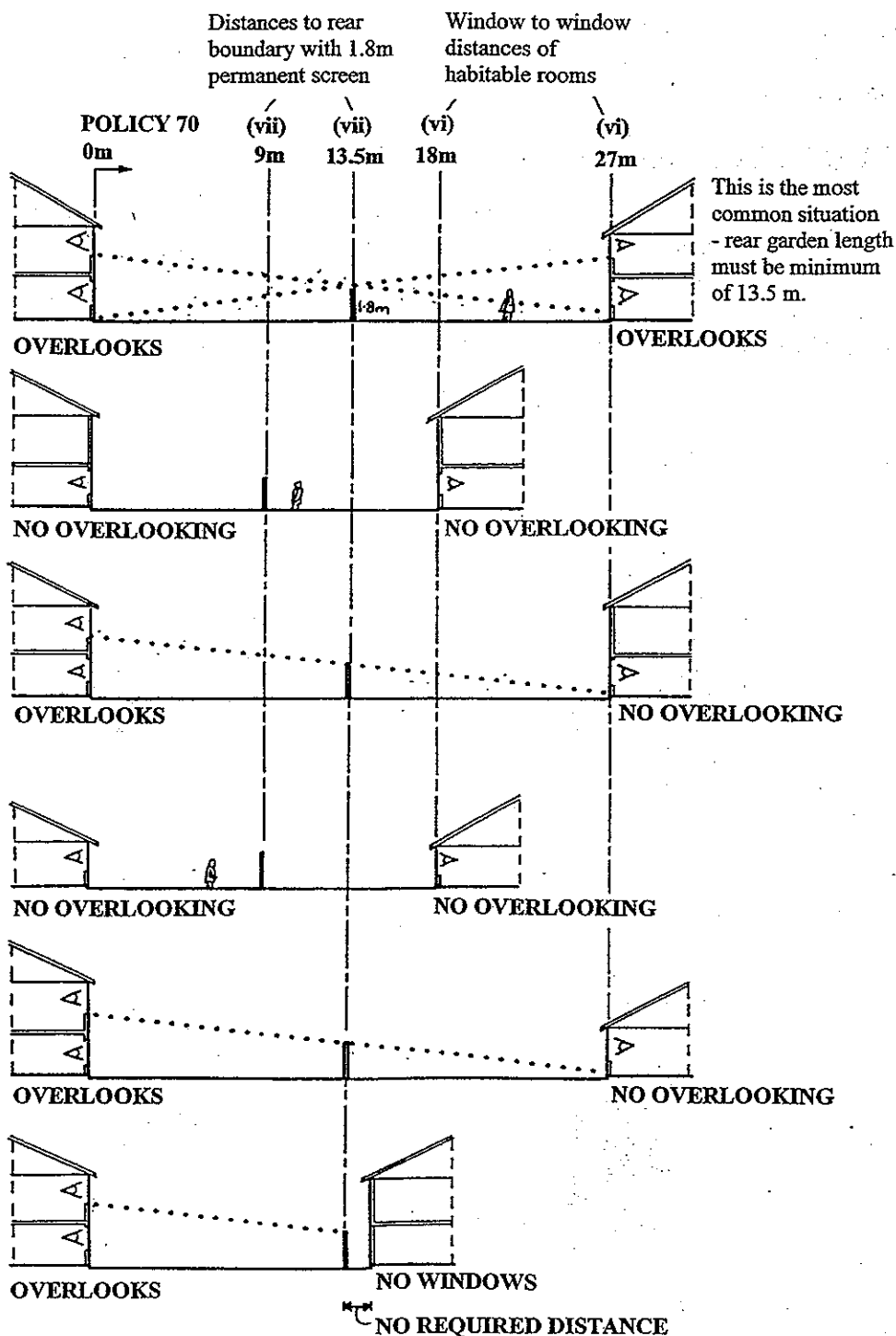
**Footnote (1)** Only windows of habitable rooms are subject to this part of the policy. The 1991 Census Definition of a habitable room is any room **except**; small kitchens under 2m wide, bathrooms and toilets.

Figure 14 illustrates the various potential situations, and the relevant application of this policy. The distances apply between new houses, or new and existing houses.

**vii) PRIVACY BETWEEN DWELLING AND REAR BOUNDARY** SO THAT FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF ADJOINING LAND IS NOT COMPROMISED IF THE APPLICATION SITE ABUTS EXISTING RESIDENTIAL LAND OR LAND WITH POTENTIAL FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT. A MINIMUM OF HALF THE ABOVE DISTANCES IN (vi) SHALL NORMALLY BE ATTAINED. ACCOUNT SHOULD BE TAKEN OF (vi) ITEMS a), b) AND c) AND THE FACT THAT THERE MAY BE ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF ACHIEVING PRIVACY OBJECTIVES.

In the majority of new housing development, this policy means that the rear garden length requirement is a minimum of 13.5m. However, as Figure 14 shows, there are several exceptions to this situation.

**Fig 14 EXAMPLES OF POLICY 70 (vi) & (vii) PRIVACY DISTANCES**  
Minimum Requirements





(viii) **ORIENTATION, SUNLIGHT AND DAYLIGHT REQUIREMENTS AS SET OUT IN THE BUILDING RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT REPORT "SITE LAYOUT AND PLANNING FOR DAYLIGHT AND SUNLIGHT, A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE" SHALL NORMALLY BE ACHIEVED.**

Everybody expects a good level of natural lighting in their homes, and in their private gardens. The layout of new houses can be crucial in determining whether this is achieved. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) Report (1991) gives advice on site layout planning to achieve good sunlight and daylight levels within buildings and in the open spaces between them. Developers must consult the BRE document as the advice in this leaflet is not a comprehensive representation. Copies are available from 'CRC,' 151 Roseberry Avenue, London EC1R 4GB. Telephone 0171 5056622.

In order for planning applications to be assessed in the light of the following guidelines, developers will normally be required to provide site section drawings, incorporating adjacent existing development/landscaping.

### DAYLIGHTING FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT - The provision of natural lighting within a building

New development should be designed so that buildings are not located so close as to obstruct daylight provision. It is the *main faces* of the buildings to which the following guidelines apply.

A building will have a good level of daylight provision if there is no obstruction in a field  $25^\circ$  above a point 2m above ground level (figure 15). This guideline applies whether or not the window positions have been decided.

Figure 15  
(BRE)

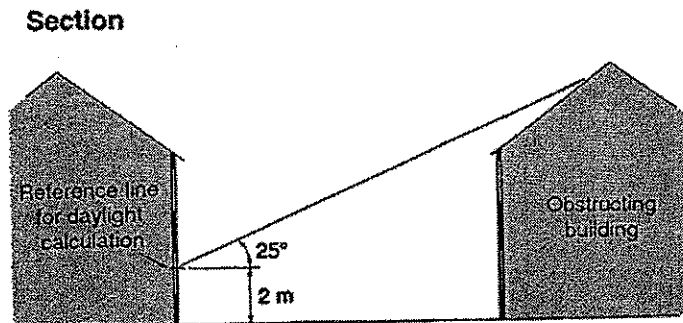


Figure 2 Section in plane perpendicular to the main face of the building

On sloping sites, the distance between buildings must be greater to achieve the same daylight levels (figure 16)

Figure 16  
(BRE)

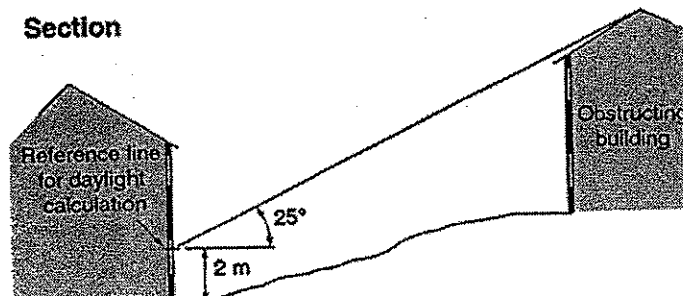


Figure 3 On sloping sites overshadowing is more of a problem and greater spacing is required to obtain the same access to daylight for buildings lower down the slope

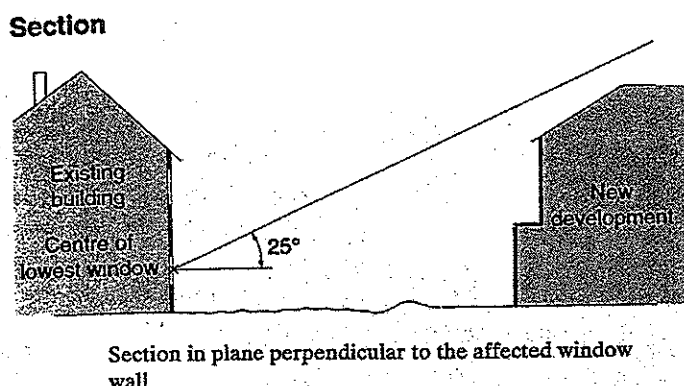
Finding the 2m reference line may not always be as obvious as in the diagrams above. The BRE document illustrates more unusual cases (page2).

Trees should be taken into account if they form dense continuous belts i.e. treated as an obstructing building. Existing individual trees can be ignored, but new trees should be sited away from windows, and new windows away from existing trees.

### SAFEGUARDING EXISTING BUILDINGS

In designing a new development it is important to safeguard the daylight provision to existing nearby buildings.

Figure 17  
(BRE)



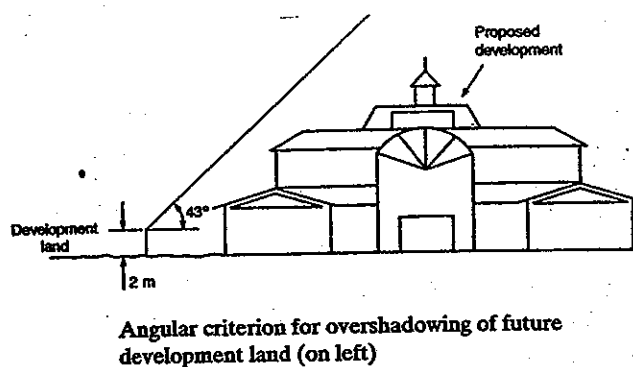
If the above situation can be achieved, then the development should not adversely affect the quality of the daylight to existing buildings.

NB. This exercise *can* be carried out for each individual window in an existing building, but it is not necessary to achieve this light level to non-habitable rooms e.g. bathrooms/hallways/garages.

### ADJOINING DEVELOPMENT LAND

The daylight levels of adjoining potential development land must be protected to allow future nearby developments to enjoy equal access to daylight. By doing this the new development will also keep its own natural light when the adjoining land is developed. The following situation should be achieved:

Figure 18  
(BRE)



NB. This guideline need not apply if the main walls facing the boundary on both the current new development and the future development of the adjoining site are windowless. However, this means that future developers of the adjoining site will be committed to providing windowless flank walls next to the party boundary.

### Variable daylight provision in new development

Where the new layout leads to variable daylight provision e.g. gaps between houses, varying ridge height and building lines, then windows in houses opposite should be placed where most daylight is available.

It is worth remembering that in "L" shaped blocks, or internal courtyards, windows close to the internal corners suffer poor daylight levels and lack of privacy (Figures 19 and 20).

Where space in a layout is unavoidably restricted, it is worth thinking about other methods of increasing natural daylight into a room;

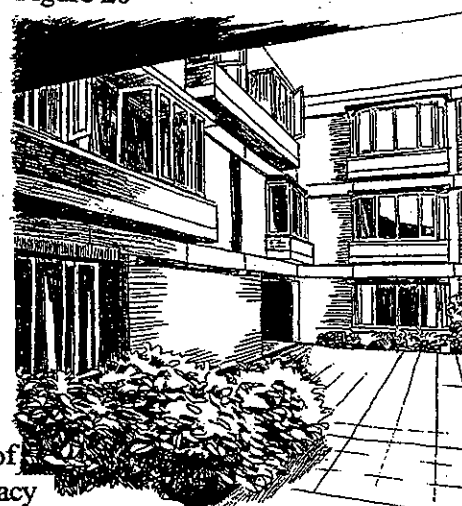
- 1) increase window size, preferably by raising the window head height (this allows more light in and helps it spread inside the room)
- 2) reduce building depth i.e. front to back depth between walls which contain main windows.

Figure 19



Extensive shadowing can occur in courtyards unless care is taken in their design

Figure 20



Rooms looking out from the internal corners of courtyards can often be gloomy and lack privacy

### HOUSING ACT - DAYLIGHTING

It should be noted that daylighting provision to new housing is now also regulated by the Housing Acts - "Local Government and Housing Act 1989: Area Renewal, Unfitness, Slum Clearance and Enforcement Action."

Under this Act, habitable rooms in a new dwelling must have;

"sufficient natural lighting to enable normal domestic activities to be undertaken without strain during the main hours of daylight without requiring artificial light, unless the day is particularly overcast (Fitness Standard 2.11)."....."As a general guide, the total size of glazed openings in a habitable room should be not less than 1/10th of the floor area, and some part of the window should normally be at least 1.75m above floor level.

Where there is a continuous solid external obstruction within some 3 metres of the window or windows of a habitable room, for example, as may occur outside a basement, there should normally be a glazed area totalling not less than 1/10 of the floor area of the room, above the points on the window or windows from which a line can be drawn upwards at a vertical angle of 30 degrees with the horizontal to pass the top of the obstruction. For this 'rule of thumb' calculation, a bay window with side lights may be treated as a flat window, equal in area to the sum of the front and side lights and situated at a distance from the face of the wall from which the bay projects equal to half the maximum depth of the projection (Fitness Standard 2.10)."

It should be understood that under these Regulations, this Council's Environmental Services Department can recommend refusal of a planning application, or declare a new or refurbished house unfit for human habitation.

**SUNLIGHTING - the amount of direct sunlight which can access the interior of a house or garden area.**

The BRE guidelines state that adequate sunliting in buildings, gardens and amenity areas is particularly important. Site layout is the most important factor affecting the duration of sunlight in *buildings*. Two factors need to be considered.

1) **Orientation**

A south-facing window generally receives most sunlight, whilst a north-facing window only receives it early morning and late evening in summer. East and west facing windows receive sunlight only at certain times of the day. At least one main living room should receive a good level of sunlight. Ideally, living rooms should face south or west.

2) **Avoidance of Overshadowing**

- Choosing a site on a south-facing slope, if possible, rather than a north-facing one.
- Having taller buildings to the north of the site with low-rise buildings to the south, but care must be taken not to overshadow neighbouring property.
- Having low-density housing (semi-detached and detached) at the southern end of a site, with terraced housing to the north.
- Placing terraces on east-west roads (so that one window wall faces nearly south) with detached and semi-detached houses on north-south roads.
- Opening courtyards to the southern half of the sky.
- Having garages to the north of houses.
- Avoiding obstructions to the south, such as protruding extensions or other buildings, where window walls face predominantly east or west.

For interiors, access to sunlight can be quantified. The British Standard BS 8206 recommends that interiors where the occupants expect sunlight should receive at least one quarter of annual probable sunlight hours, including at least 5% of annual probable sunlight hours during the winter months, between 21 September and 21 March. Here "probable sunlight hours" means the total number of hours in the year that the sun is expected to shine on unobstructed ground, allowing for average levels of cloudiness for the location in question. The sunlight availability indicator in Appendix A of the BRE document can be used to calculate hours of sunlight received.

NB. It is not always necessary to do a full calculation to check sunlight potential. It can be shown that the British Standard criterion is met provided *either* of the following is true:

- The window wall faces within 90° of due south and no obstruction, measured in the section perpendicular to the window wall, subtends an angle of more than 25° to the horizontal (Figure 15) Obstructions within 90° of due north of the reference point need not count, *or*,
- The window wall faces within 20° of due south and the reference point has a 'vertical sky component' of 27% or more.

3) **Gardens and Open Spaces**

Good site layout planning for daylight and sunlight should not limit itself to providing good natural lighting inside buildings. Sunlight in the spaces between buildings has an important impact on the overall appearance and ambience of a development. It is valuable for a number of reasons;

- To provide attractive sunlit views.
- To make outdoor activities like sitting out and children's play more pleasant.
- To encourage plant growth.
- To melt frost, ice and snow.
- To dry clothes.

The use of specific parts of a site can be planned with sunlight in mind. This could include reserving the sunniest parts of the site for gardens and sitting out, while using the shadier areas for car parking. In summer, shade is often valued in car parks.

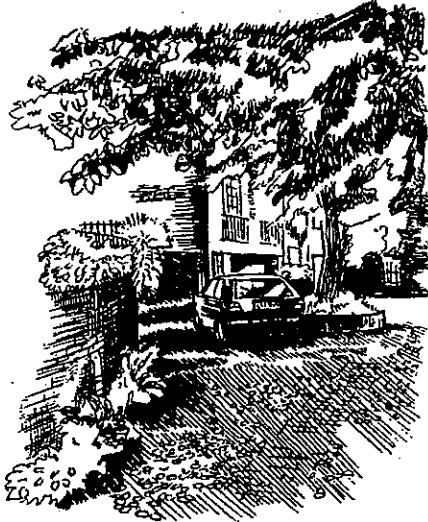


Figure 21

Shadier areas can usefully be reserved for car parking.

The availability of sunlight should be checked for all open spaces where it will be required. This would normally include:

- Gardens, usually the main back garden of a house.
- Parks and playing fields.
- Children's playgrounds.
- Outdoor swimming pools and paddling pools.
- Sitting-out areas.
- Focal points for views, such as monuments or fountains.

The worst situation is to have significant areas on which the sun does not shine for a large part of the year. These areas can be damp, chilly and uninviting e.g. Children's play areas and sitting-out areas in particular can suffer and will be poorly used. The equinox (21 March) is a good date for assessment.

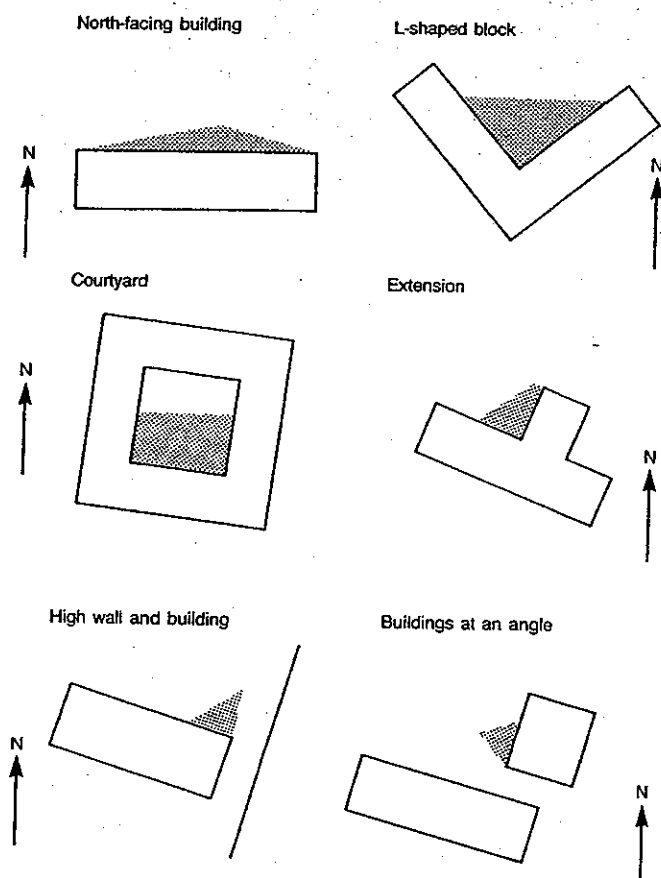
This problem occurs with only certain forms of layout. If a long face of a building faces within  $13^\circ$  of due north, then there will be an area adjoining the building face which is permanently in shade at the equinox (and hence all winter). Areas of this sort can also occur if buildings form an enclosed or partly enclosed space which is blocked off from the southern half of the sky. Figure 22 overleaf illustrates some typical examples.

It is usually possible to redesign the layout to minimise these areas, either by reorientating buildings or by opening gaps to the south in courtyards.

Where this is not possible, it is suggested that no more than two-fifths, and preferably no more than a quarter, of any of the amenity areas listed above should be prevented by buildings from receiving any sunlight at all on 21 March. Sunlight at an altitude of  $10^\circ$  or less does not count. In working out the total area to be considered, driveways and hard standing for cars should be left out. Around housing, front gardens which are relatively small and visible from public footpaths should be omitted; only the main back garden should be analysed. Each individual garden for each dwelling in a block should be considered separately.

Areas of open space which can/cannot receive sunlight on 21 March may be found using the sunlight-on-ground indicator tables which accompany the BRE Report.

Figure 22 (BRE)



Examples of layouts where poor sunlighting on the ground can occur. The shaded areas will receive no sunlight at the equinox

It is important to realise that the area based guideline is very much a minimum standard. It will not guarantee large amounts of sun in summer, or any sun at all in winter. It will not ensure that sunlight is available in specific areas like patios, terraces or flower beds.

This guidance applies both to new gardens and amenity areas and to existing ones which are affected by new developments. If an existing garden or outdoor space is already heavily obstructed, any further loss of sunlight should be minimised.

#### Trees and Fences

The question of whether trees or fences should be included in the calculations depends upon the type of shade they produce. Normally, trees and shrubs need not be included, partly because their shapes are almost impossible to predict, and partly because the dappled shade of a tree is more pleasant than the deep shadow of a building. This applies especially to deciduous trees. Nevertheless, choose locations for tree planting with care. The aim should normally be to have some areas of partial shade evergreens is specifically planned as a windbreak or for privacy purposes, it is better to include them in the calculation of shaded area e.g. a row of leylandii trees kept trimmed as a hedge. The growth of trees and their likely final size should be allowed for. Fences over 1.5m should be taken into account. Lower fences or walls can be ignored.



**(ix) AMENITY SPACE AROUND DWELLINGS - THE SIZE OF A PRIVATE GARDEN SHOULD REFLECT THE NUMBER OF PERSONS FOR WHICH THE DWELLING HAS BEEN DESIGNED, THEIR LIKELY RANGE OF ACTIVITIES AND ALSO LOCAL RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER. GARDENS MAY BE SMALLER WHERE THERE IS PUBLIC OPEN SPACE NEARBY. IN THE CASE OF FLATS, IT WILL NORMALLY BE APPROPRIATE TO PROVIDE COMMUNALLY SHARED AMENITY SPACE, ALTHOUGH GROUND FLOOR FLATS MAY BENEFIT FROM PRIVATE SPACE ADJACENT TO THE DWELLING.**

The current wording of this policy was recommended by the Inspector at the District Local Plan Public Inquiry which led to the adoption of the Local Plan in November 1994. Prior to this, more specific amenity space guidelines were included in the 1991 Deposit Draft version of Policy 70. The Inspector felt that this specific guidance should be incorporated into a guidance note (i.e. this document) but not into the main policy wording.

Therefore, this Council feels that the following provision for amenity space should preferably be met:

- i) **houses/bungalows - private gardens - 40m<sup>2</sup> for the first bedroom and 20m<sup>2</sup> for other bedrooms. e.g. 80m<sup>2</sup> for a 3 bedroom house.**
- ii) **flats - amenity space - 20m<sup>2</sup> for the first bedroom of each flat and 10m<sup>2</sup> for additional bedrooms e.g. 180m<sup>2</sup> for a block of 6 x 2 bedroom flats.**
- iii) **bed-sitting rooms - amenity space - 15m<sup>2</sup> for each room e.g. 75m<sup>2</sup> for a block of 5 x 1 bed-sitting room flats.**

Figure 23 illustrates typical examples of where the guideline levels of amenity space have been achieved. It is important to remember that only *useful* amenity space can be counted as contributing towards the guideline figure. Examples of areas not considered "useful" are:-

- i) car parking areas;
- ii) narrow landscape strips around or within parking areas;
- iii) strips of land less than 1m wide;
- iv) Areas under trees where low branches make access difficult;
- v) Areas where external noise sources reach a certain level (as per Planning Policy Guidance 24 'Planning and Noise').

Figure 23 also incorporates areas of *defensible space* (see Policy 70 (x) below). Defensible space can be counted as contributing towards the guideline figure for total amenity space.

(X) **DEFENSIBLE SPACE** TO PROVIDE A TOLERABLE LEVEL OF SECURITY AND PRIVACY. LAND ADJACENT TO WINDOWS OF HABITABLE ROOMS AT GROUND FLOOR LEVEL SHALL NORMALLY BE A MINIMUM OF 3 METRES FROM AREAS TO WHICH THE PUBLIC HAS ACCESS (SEE ALSO SECOND SENTENCE OF (ii) ABOVE). EXCEPTIONS MAY BE MADE WHERE IT IS NECESSARY TO ACCORD WITH LOCAL CHARACTER (SEE POLICY 85, DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS). DEFENSIBLE SPACE IS CONSIDERED TO CONTRIBUTE TO USEFUL PRIVATE AMENITY SPACE (SEE (ix) ABOVE AND PROPOSED DESIGN ADVICE LEAFLET NO. 1);

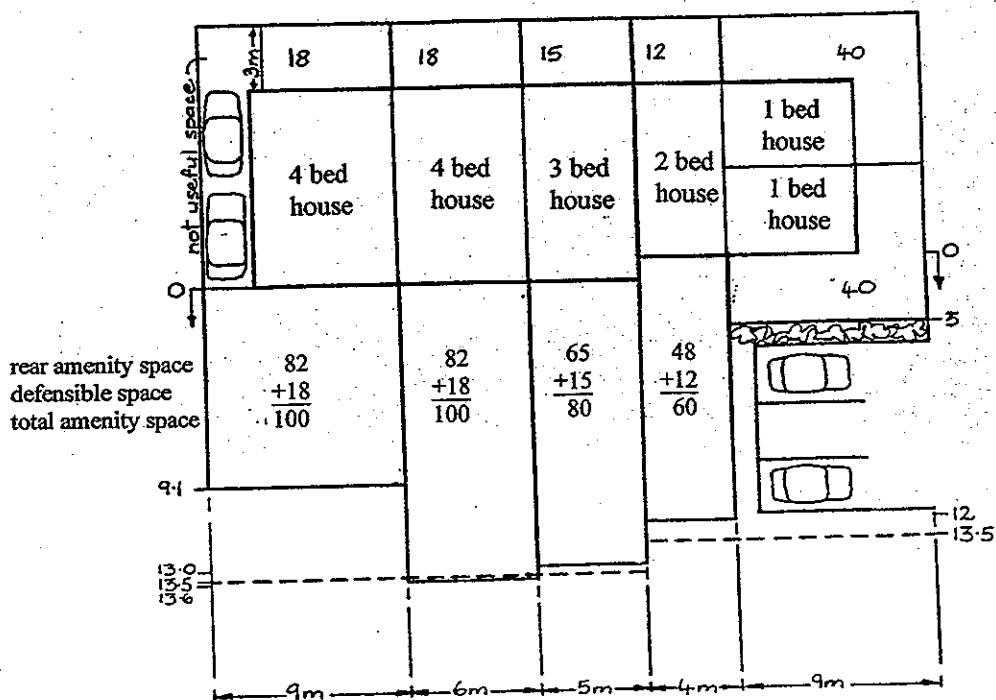
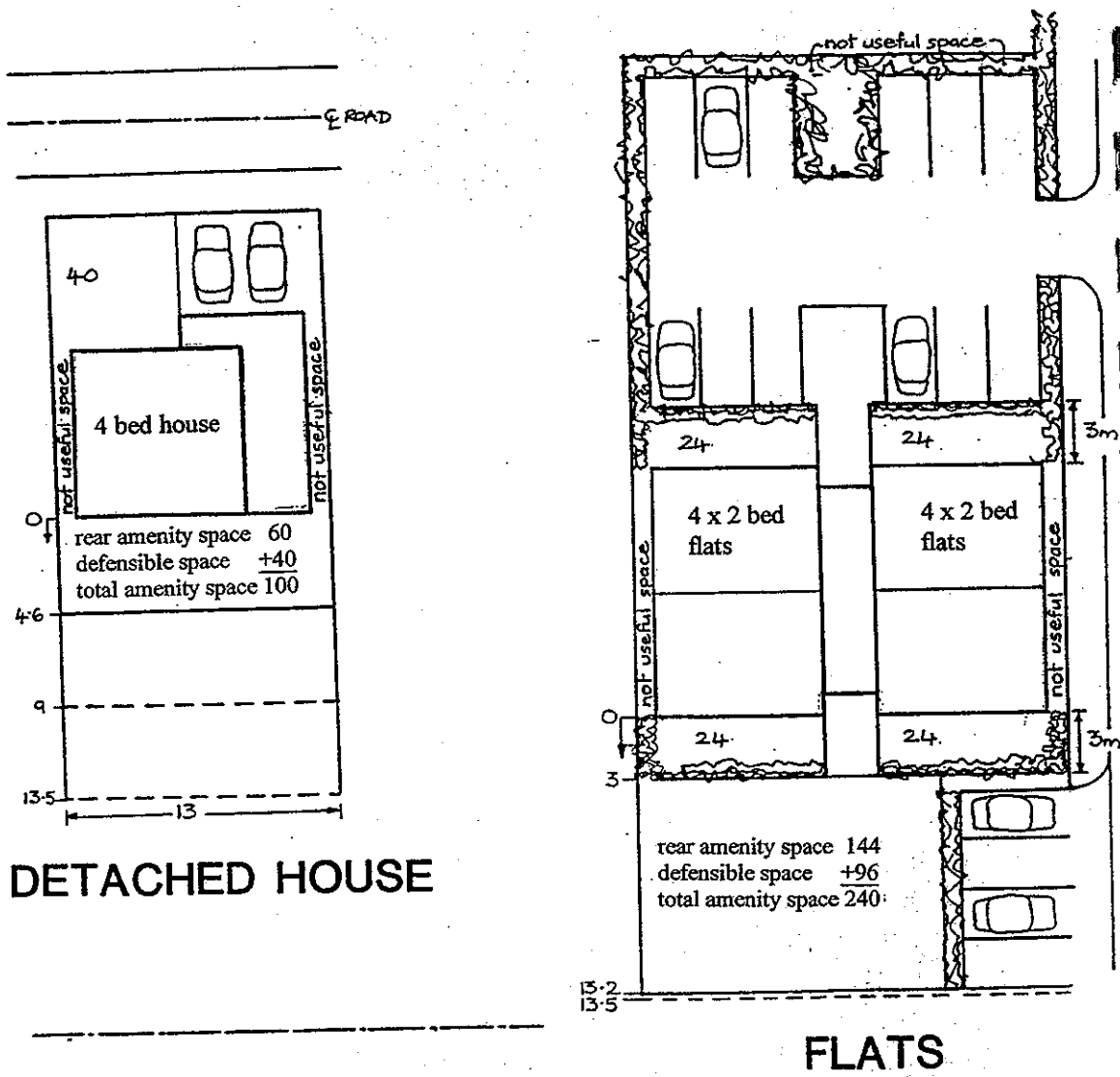
A 3m defensible space strip is usually required between the front of the house and the public footpath or highway (if no footpath), or communal garden (if flats). On corner plots where habitable rooms face to the side, defensible space is required here also. Only if the character of the area dictates that e.g. Houses front directly onto the footpath, will defensible space not be required. This situation is quite common with Medieval, Georgian and Victorian terraced streets.



Figure 24 | New housing benefiting from defensible space

22 Figure 23 **EXAMPLES OF POLICY 70 (ix) AMENITY SPACE & (x) DEFENSIBLE SPACE**

Minimum Requirements 2 storey residential development  
(all figures in metres and square metres)



**(xi) OPEN SPACE**

DEVELOPMENTS WITH MORE THAN 30 DWELLINGS EACH WITH 2 OR MORE BEDROOMS SHALL NORMALLY BE PROVIDED WITH TODDLERS' PLAYAREAS<sup>(1)</sup> ON THE BASIS OF 3 SQ METRES FOR EVERY 5 SUCH DWELLINGS.

IN ADDITION, DEVELOPMENTS OF MORE THAN 100 DWELLINGS SHALL NORMALLY BE PROVIDED WITH APPROPRIATE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE INCLUDING CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND(S) ON THE BASIS OF 1.2 HECTARES<sup>(2)</sup> PER 1000 PERSONS, *e.g.* 100 DWELLINGS  $\times$  2.5 (AVERAGE PERSONS PER DWELLING) = 250 PERSONS = 25% OF 1.2 HECTARES = 0.3 HA. OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE.

**Footnotes**

(1) Open space provision is generally in public ownership and open to the public, but private open space may also make a contribution - see paragraphs 10.12 and 10.13 of 'Recreational Open Space Provision' in the Appendix.

(2) 0.8 ha Children's Play Areas as per paragraph 10.13 above plus 0.4 ha General amenity space = 1.2 ha Total open space per 1000 persons.

The operation of Policy 70 (xi) was amended for development control purposes at the Planning and Heritage Committee on 21st May 1997 to take account of the revised (1992) National Playing Fields Association's (NPFA) guidance on children's playing space standards. This amendment also brings the Policy in line with the Council's Leisure Strategy which recommends the use of the NPFA standards in new housing development. It is envisaged that this part of Policy 70 will be amended formally in the next Local Plan Review to take full account of the NPFA recommendations ( see Appendix for amended version).

The amended policy does not require at this stage any extra provision rather the creation of smaller, yet more frequent playspace areas. The revised standards introduce different categories of equipped and casual playing space for children in new and existing communities. Three new categories of play are recommended by the NPFA ; 'LAP's, 'LEAP's and 'NEAP's, as described below. The NPFA claims that adoption of this hierarchy, through good design, makes better use of space for children and would not result in any reduction in housing provision or increase in the amount of land required.

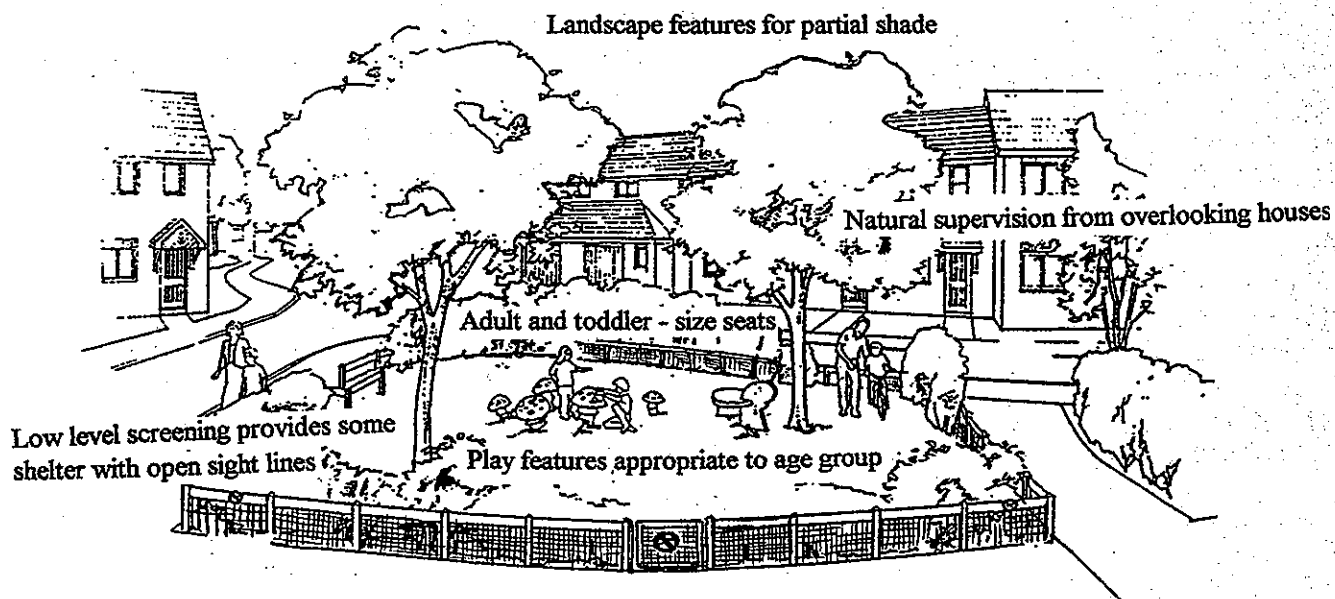
It is envisaged that LAP design could be incorporated into landscape areas and it is suggested that developers be made aware of the benefits of all the design elements of LAPs in order to enhance the appeal of a development.

For further details on LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs a copy of the NPFA document "The Six Acre Standard - Minimum Standards for Outdoor Playing Space" can be obtained from the NPFA. This Council's Leisure Services Department are also able to give advice on identifying sites for play facilities and request that formal consultation is undertaken with them on individual planning applications as recommended in the Council's Leisure Strategy. A brief summary of the three types of play area are given here, but potential applicants are encouraged to obtain the full document.

1) **Local Area for Play (LAP)**

- a small area of unsupervised open space suitable for young children from four to six years old only and sited within one minute's walking time from home (60m straight line distance, 100m pedestrian route). Unsupervised LAPs should be appropriate for low-key games such as tag, hopscotch, or play with small toys. The site should be flat with grass or hard surface and have seating for carers. Road related and other accidents must be avoided by safety measures. Neighbour disturbance should be minimised by use of a "buffer zone" of 5m minimum between the play area or "activity zone" and any neighbours' ground floor windows.

# EXAMPLES OF LAP s.



Dog-proof guard rail, with self-closing gate and 'no dogs' sign





2) **Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)**

- a LEAP is a larger area with at least five types of play equipment for children mainly aged from 4-8 and situated within five minute's walking time from home (240m straight line distance, 400m pedestrian route). It can be unsupervised, but should mainly cater for accompanied children, and therefore have seats for adults. The site can be grass and/or hard surface play space. Accident avoidance must be considered and they should be located to allow informal supervision e.g. by being overlooked from nearby houses or well-used pedestrian routes. The play area or "activity zone" should be approximately 400m<sup>2</sup>, with a buffer zone of 20m to the nearest house, on all sides if necessary. The buffer zone can include footpaths and planted areas.

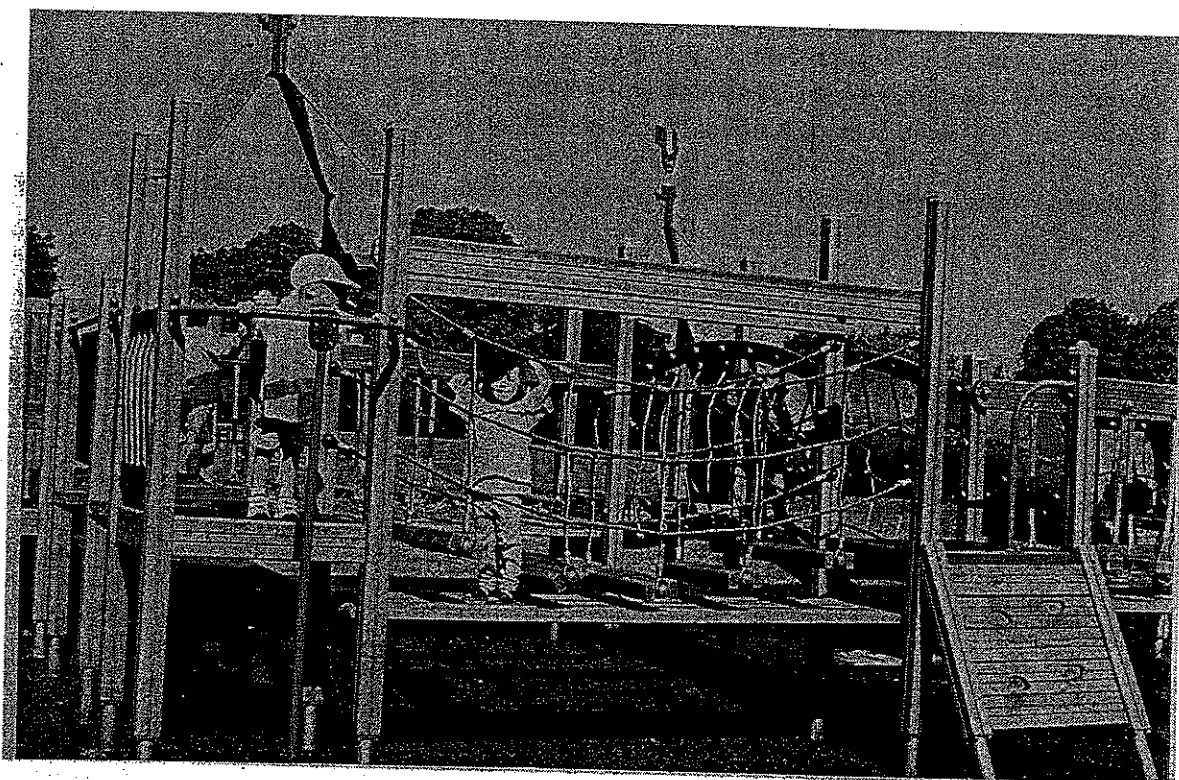


Figure 26 Example of a LEAP (Local Area Equipped for Play)

3) **Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)**

-a NEAP is an area which should offer a minimum of eight types of play and recreation for children mainly between 8-14 and sited within 15 minute's walking time of home (600m straight line distance, 1000m pedestrian route). It is likely to be unsupervised, but with consideration for use by supervised children under 8 years old. There should be a kickabout area, and a wheeled play area e.g. Bicycles/roller-skates and seating for adults and older children to use as a meeting place. The activity zone should be around 1000m<sup>2</sup> with a buffer zone of 30m to the nearest house.

With all categories of play area, pedestrian and anti-dog barriers should be incorporated for safety, and landscaping around the site encouraged. Care should be taken that the route to the area would not involve crossing busy roads or other obstacles unless there is a safe crossing point.



**(xii) MATERIALS SHALL BE DURABLE AND COMPATIBLE WITH THEIR LOCATION**

For new housing within conservation areas, proposed materials will be considered against Policy 85 "Development in Conservation Areas" which states that materials must be :

**"Good quality, normally traditional and natural, with acceptable long term weathering characteristics and compatible with those in the vicinity. Planning permissions will normally be subject to a condition requiring submission and approval of materials prior to commencement of work. For prominent buildings, sample brick panels, displaying the chosen mortar and joint will normally be required."**

The visual character of new housing used to rely on locally available materials, but ease of transport and economies of scale now leads to a larger choice of materials, which often erodes the distinctiveness of an area. Nevertheless, it is desirable both inside and outside conservation areas, that materials should be compatible with their location i.e. respect the materials of existing surrounding buildings. This helps to maintain a sense of identity and integrity with the existing housing stock.

Outside conservation areas there may be some greater flexibility in the range of materials considered suitable, provided they possess sufficient long-term durable characteristics.

Figure 27

New housing inside a conservation area  
- good use of natural materials and detailing

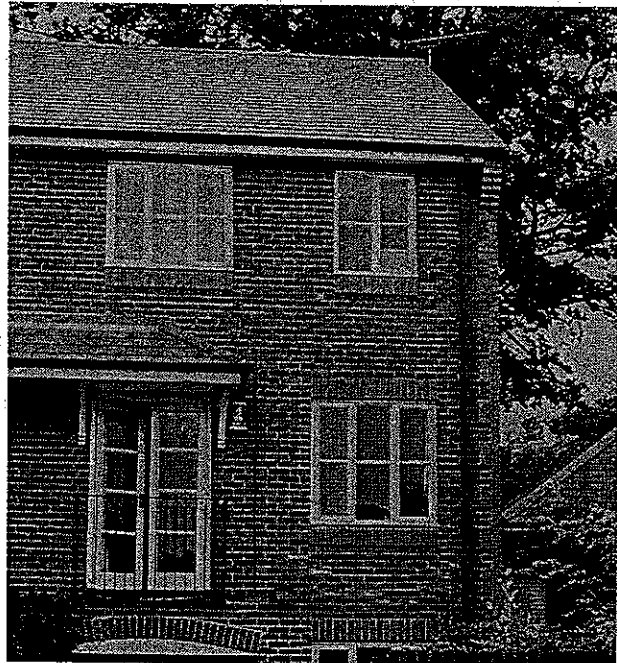


Figure 28

New housing outside a conservation area  
- use of a range of materials and good detailing



# APPENDIX

- 1 Extract from Police 'Secured By Design' initiative.
- 2 St Albans City and District 'District Local Plan Review' Policy 34 - Highways Considerations in Development Control.
- 3 St Albans City and District 'District Local Plan Review' Policy 74 - Landscaping and Tree Preservation.
- 4 St Albans City and District 'District Local Plan Review' Policy 40 - Residential Development Parking Standards.
- 5 St Albans City and District 'District Local Plan Review' Policy 43 - Elderly Persons Dwellings and Residential Homes/Hostels, Parking Standards.
- 6 Policy 70 (xi) OPEN SPACE - amended policy to be incorporated into the next District Local Plan Review.
- 7 St Albans City and District 'District Local Plan Review' paragraphs 10.12 and 10.13 - Recreational Open Space Provision.

## **1 CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH DESIGN ("SECURED BY DESIGN")**

This Council accepts that housing layout design can affect the potential for crime within an estate. Concepts such as defensible space and natural surveillance are important factors, which are fairly easy to include at the planning stage, but impractical to try to "add on" once a scheme has been built.

Developers and applicants are strongly advised to consult the Hertfordshire Constabulary Architectural Liaison Officer (ALO) at Police Headquarters, Welwyn Garden City for advice, telephone 01707 354613. NB. This advice is always subject to the requirements of Planning and Fire Regulations.

"Secured by Design" (SBD) is a Police initiative developed by the Association of Chief Police Officers and backed by the Crime Prevention Agency. The objective is to encourage the adoption of crime prevention measures in both estate design, and individual house design. This will assist in reducing the *opportunity* for crime, the *fear* of crime, and anti-social behaviour. Any developer achieving the approved standards will be entitled and encouraged to use the official "Secured by Design" logo for marketing purposes.

The following is a brief summary only of the relevant parts of the document. Developers are advised to obtain the full version from the above address.

## THE DEVELOPMENT

To achieve a safe and secure environment equal weight should be given to both environmental and physical security. The basic principles of the document 'Secured by Design' must be incorporated within the proposal and be agreed with the ALO.

The following should be adopted:

**Development layout** boundaries must be clearly defined and dwellings positioned to provide unobstructed views of neighbouring properties. A mix of dwellings, is desirable as the potential for homes to be occupied throughout the day offers increased natural surveillance, community interaction and environmental control.

**Entrance roads** should incorporate rumble strips, change of road surface (by colour or texture), pillars or a narrowed entrance. Such features give the impression that the area beyond the barrier is private to the resident community.

**Roads and Footpaths** should discourage casual intrusion by non-residents through the development. Public access should be restricted to as few routes as possible, *after taking into account the requirements for convenient and safe circulation*. Footpaths should be as short as possible, direct, open to view and with adequate lighting.. They should be designed to serve the development rather than provide unnecessary public access

**Landscaping**, if sensitively thought out, can help prevent graffiti and loitering. It should avoid creating potential hiding places, e.g. by using low growing shrubs next to footpaths. Walls and hedges should not obscure doors or windows and trees should not be planted so as to obscure street lights or become climbing aids

**Communal Areas** such as playgrounds, drying or seating areas should be open to supervision from surrounding dwellings. Boundaries between fully public and less public space should be clearly defined, where possible with walls, fences, or landscaping. Approach roads to such areas should have traffic calming measures.

**Street Lighting** on both adopted and unadopted roads, lighting must conform to BS 5489. All other lighting requirements should be discussed with the Architectural Liaison Officer.

**Dwelling Numbering** should be clear to aid the emergency services.

**Dwelling Boundaries** need clear definition i.e. public versus private areas. Front and side/rear boundaries to gardens should be secured against intrusion by correspondingly low and higher fences or walls of approximately 1.8 metres high. Those backing onto footpaths or open spaces should ideally be given further height protection, with an additional deterrent e.g. timber trellis. However, variations may be appropriate depending on the circumstances.

**Rear access footpaths** must have lockable gates the same height as the adjacent fencing.

**Meter cupboards** should be located to the front of the building line and preferably overlooked.

**Car Parking** is preferred within the curtilage of the house but where communal car parking areas are necessary they must be in small groups, close and adjacent to the owners which they serve and open to view of the residents from regularly habitable rooms.

**Site Management** is essential to maintain the physical development and its environment. e.g. regular grass cutting, ground maintenance, litter and graffiti removal are examples of management.

**Social and service needs** of the residents will have to be considered, for example, shops, telephone kiosks, bus routes and meeting rooms.

## POLICY 34: HIGHWAYS CONSIDERATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Development likely to generate a significant amount of traffic, or which involves the creation or improvement of an access onto the public highway, will not normally be permitted unless acceptable in terms of the following highway considerations:

- (i) **Road Safety.** Particular requirements are adequate visibility, turning radii and provision for pedestrians and cyclists and for disabled and other disadvantaged people;
- (ii) **Environmental impact of traffic,** especially in residential areas;
- (iii) **Road capacity,** including present and predicted future year assessments;
- (iv) **Road hierarchy.** New roads shall be of a design appropriate to their position in the hierarchy. New accesses to primary roads and main distributor roads (see Figure 8) will normally be resisted, but where access is permitted a high standard of provision will be required;
- (v) **Car parking provision.** See Policies 39 - 50;
- (vi) **St. Albans City Centre restraint on development.** See Policy 30;
- (vii) **Local rural roads.** Particular regard will be had to increases in:
  - a) the risk of accidents, especially to pedestrians and cyclists;
  - b) the use of roads that are poor in terms of width, alignment or structural condition;
  - c) adverse impact on the local environment, either to the rural character of the road or residential properties alongside it.

This particularly applies to recreational developments which could attract large numbers of visitors, even if only on one or two occasions a year.

In assessing applications, account will be taken of the advice contained in current documents prepared by Department of the Environment, Department of Transport, Hertfordshire County Council and this Council.

## POLICY 74<sup>29</sup> LANDSCAPING AND TREE PRESERVATION

The Council will take account of the following landscaping factors when considering planning applications:

- (i) **Retention of existing landscaping**
  - a) significant healthy trees and other important landscape features, such as hedgerows, ponds and watercourses shall normally be retained unless it can be shown that retention is incompatible with overall design quality and/or economic use of the site;
  - b) on sites with significant existing landscaping, planning applications shall be supported by a full tree survey indicating all landscape features, tree species, canopy spread, trunk diameter and levels at the base of each tree;
  - c) trees shall not normally be severely topped or lopped, or endangered by construction work or underground services. In addition, buildings shall not be sited where they are likely to justify future requests for tree felling or surgery for reasons of safety, excessive shading, nuisance or structural damage;
  - d) the Council will make tree preservation orders and/or attach appropriate landscaping conditions to planning permissions to safeguard existing trees and ensure that new planting is established and protected;
- (ii) **Provision of new landscaping**
  - a) where appropriate, adequate space and depth of soil for planting must be allowed within developments. In particular, screen planting including large trees will normally be required at the edge of settlements;
  - b) detailed landscaping schemes will normally be required as part of full planning applications. Amongst other things they must indicate existing trees and shrubs to be retained; trees to be felled; the planting of new trees, shrubs and grass; and screening and paving. Preference should be given to the use of native trees and shrubs;
  - c) wildlife corridors shall be established in accordance with Policy 75, wherever opportunities occur.



## POLICY 40 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PARKING STANDARDS

DWELLING SIZE (BEDROOMS)		NUMBER OF SPACES REQUIRED PER DWELLING		
		ALLOCATED <sup>(1)</sup>	UNALLOCATED <sup>(2)</sup>	TOTAL
1 (including bedsits)	either <sup>(3)</sup>	0	1.5	1.5
	or	1	0.5	1.5
2	either <sup>(3)</sup>	0	2	2
	or	1	1	2
	or	2	0.5	2.5
3		2	0.5	2.5
4 or more		3	0.5	3.5

Proposals will also be assessed against the following criteria:

- (i) Policy 39 must be complied with, especially criteria (iii) and (ix);
- (ii) Elderly persons dwellings and residential homes/hostels. See Policy 43;
- (iii) Location of spaces.
  - a) Allocated spaces must be located within the curtilage of individual dwellings where possible and normally be visible from the dwelling to which it is allocated. A driveway in front of a garage must be at least 5.5 metres long to count as a parking space and allow for opening of garage doors;
  - b) Unallocated spaces shall be provided in smaller groups (usually of no more than 10 spaces) and normally be placed within 25 metres of the entrance to dwellings they serve. These spaces must be well lit and be visible from dwellings in order to discourage parking on the highway. The unallocated spaces shall include 0.25 per dwelling for visitors parking. Where possible, visitors parking spaces shall be provided in lay-bys adjoining a proposed new highway in a form to be adopted by the highway authority;
- (iv) Extensions to existing dwellings providing potential additional bedrooms, and residential conversions. Permission will not

normally be permitted unless parking complies with the above standards (see also Policy 39, criterion (v));

- (v) Parking Requirements of Affordable Housing. A lower parking requirement will be applied to affordable housing schemes if secure arrangements are made to ensure that the housing will remain "affordable" in perpetuity, rather than just for the initial occupants (see Policies 7A and 8). The extent to which parking standards will be relaxed will depend on the circumstances of the individual site. Once Project 5 (ii) has been carried out, the conclusions arising from this project will also be taken into account;
- (vi) Review of Parking Standards. The results of the County-wide review of parking standards (see project 5 (i)), will also be taken into account.

### Footnotes

- (1) *Allocated parking spaces = off-street spaces allocated to individual dwellings in the form of grouped garages, allocated grouped handstandings, or garages or handstandings within a dwelling's curtilage.*
- (2) *Unallocated spaces = parking spaces not allocated to any dwelling, but available for general public use including visitors.*
- (3) *1 and 2 bedroom dwellings and bedsits - applicants have a choice of whether or not parking provision will include spaces allocated to individual dwellings.*

## POLICY 43 ELDERLY PERSONS DWELLINGS AND RESIDENTIAL HOMES/HOSTELS, PARKING STANDARDS

HOUSING CATEGORY	PARKING REQUIREMENT (INCLUDING VISITORS)
1. Independent dwellings for elderly people (not warden controlled; may have 24 hour care alarm service)	1.25 spaces per dwelling (including at least 0.25 unallocated spaces <sup>(1)</sup> ).
2. Sheltered housing with resident warden	Residents: 0.8 spaces per dwelling subject to (iii) below. Wardens: Policy 40 standards apply.
3. Residential home/hostel with care staff working on premises	Residents: 1 space per 5 bedspaces. Staff living on premises: Policy 40 standards apply. Staff living elsewhere: 1 space per 2 staff.
4. Hostels for homeless people	0.75 spaces per dwelling unit.

Proposals will also be assessed against the following criteria:

- (i) Policies 40 (criteria (i), (iii), and (iv)), and 50 must be complied with;
- (ii) **Occupancy.** Elderly persons dwellings will be restricted by agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to persons aged 55 and over or to the registered disabled;
- (iii) **Sheltered Housing.** Parking requirements for residents' dwellings may be reduced to a minimum of 0.5 spaces per unit depending on:

- a) tenure and nature of the scheme (more parking is required for private schemes);
- b) proportion of 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings;
- c) topography of the area;
- d) distance from facilities such as shops and buses;

- (iv) **Health/social services workers.** Parking spaces shall be reserved for the use of doctors and other health or social services workers if necessary.

*Footnote*

- (1) Unallocated spaces - see Policy 40, footnote (2).



## 6 (xi) OPEN SPACE AMENDED POLICY TO BE PUT INTO THE NEXT DISTRICT PLAN REVIEW

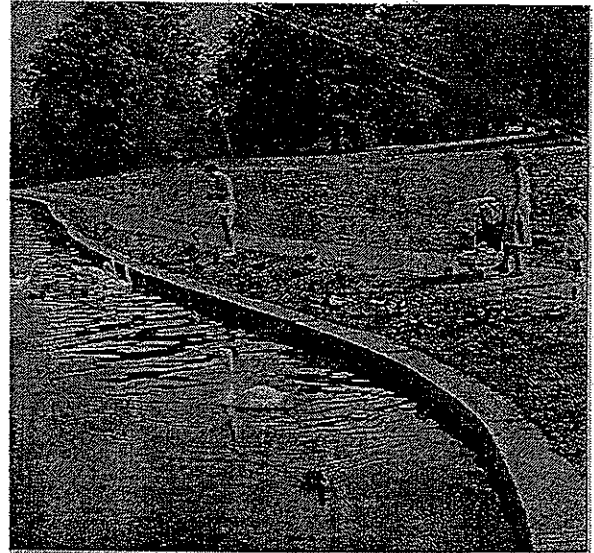
(a) ON DEVELOPMENTS WITH MORE THAN 30 DWELLINGS EACH WITH 2 OR MORE BEDROOMS, THE TODDLERS' PLAYAREA(S) SHOULD BE PROVIDED IN THE FORM OF LOCAL AREAS FOR PLAY (LAPS) ON THE BASIS OF 3 SQ METRES FOR EVERY 5 SUCH DWELLINGS.

(b) ON DEVELOPMENTS OF MORE THAN 100 DWELLINGS, THE CHILDRENS' PLAYGROUND(S) SHOULD BE PROVIDED IN THE FORM OF LAPS AND LOCAL EQUIPPED AREAS FOR PLAY (LEAPS), HAVING DUE REGARD TO LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES, ALTHOUGH NORMALLY WITH AT LEAST 0.3 HA OF CHILDRENS' PLAYAREA(S) PER 1000 PEOPLE.

(c) ON SUBSTANTIAL NEW RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF WELL OVER 100 DWELLINGS, THE PROVISION OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUIPPED AREA FOR PLAY (NEAP) MAY ALSO BE APPROPRIATE.

## 7 RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE PROVISION

10.12 The primary method used by the Council to assess land requirements for recreational open space identifies the catchment areas of open space of different sizes and function. Such open space is generally open to the public and usually in some form of public ownership. However, in some situations, private open space makes a substantial contribution.



*Verulamium Park - St. Albans*

### Recreational Open Space Hierarchy

Type of Open Space	Size Range	Catchment (Maximum distance from homes)
District Park	Over 20 ha	3,200 m (2 miles)
Local Park	2-20 ha	1,200 (¾ mile)
Small Local Park	0.8-2 ha	400 m (¼ mile)
Children's Play Area	0.4-0.8 ha	400 m (¼ mile) <sup>(1)</sup>
Toddlers' Play Space	20m <sup>2</sup> -100m <sup>2</sup>	less than 200 m

#### Footnote

(1) A separate children's playground need not be provided where facilities exist in a park located within 400 metres of homes. Ideally, each home would be within the appropriate catchment area for each type of open space.

10.13 The Council also accepts that playing space should be provided to meet the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) target of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population. This space should be distributed within the open space hierarchy to meet the needs of all age groups. It should be noted that the NPFA target is not a general open space standard. With certain exceptions, educational playing fields, ornamental gardens, woodlands, commons, golf courses and large areas of water are excluded from the calculations.

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Acknowledgements:

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