

3. LANDSCAPING ON DEVELOPMENT SITES

- 3.1 The spaces around buildings are as important as the buildings themselves to the character and amenity of an area and should be designed to a high standard. This includes the retention and enhancement of existing trees and landscaping (see Policy 11). Landscaped areas benefit residents in the development itself and in the surrounding areas and if carefully designed can ensure safety and sustainability and maintain a high quality of life for existing and future occupiers.
- 3.2 Trees, shrubs and other plants provide a setting for the building and a buffer between the development and adjoining land, and they can provide an attractive contrast to hard materials and surfaces. They may also be used to reduce noise intrusion and to screen or enhance particular views. Integrating landscaping in all developments can help create an attractive and safe environment. It can deter access to restricted areas, exposed boundaries can be protected and the use of thorn hedges and prickly shrubs can be used to avoid creating potential hiding places or discouraging access to windows.
- 3.3 Elements of the existing and proposed landscape should be an integral part of layouts, especially for residential developments.
- 3.4 Natural boundaries comprising hedgerows and trees should be retained, as should more scattered trees throughout a site wherever appropriate. Planning for the retention and protection of trees within new developments should follow the guidelines contained in British Standard 5837: 'Code of Practice for Trees in Relation to Construction'.
- 3.5 Applicants should consider the practicality of retaining trees at an early stage in formulating their development proposals. The following information should be provided and submitted on accurate, scaled plans to assist full evaluation:
 - (a) an up-to-date site survey, showing trees greater than 75 mm stem diameter at 1.5 m above ground level, other features such as hedges and trees on adjacent land, and spot heights throughout the site;
 - (b) trees to be retained or proposed to be removed, including an assessment of their physical condition and amenity value: the services of an arboricultural specialist may be needed in certain cases; and
 - (c) the position of protective zones around each important tree or group of trees to be retained: the area to be protected will vary according to the proposed development and to the age, condition and species of tree.

- 3.6 Provision should be made for space to carry out building operations - including service routes, site huts, scaffolding, storage areas and temporary access - outside the protective zone. The protective zone should be bounded by fencing during building operations. New underground services should not be laid through it.
- 3.7 Ground levels around trees to be retained should not normally be altered.
- 3.8 A harmonious arrangement should be planned between the new development and trees. Account should be taken of trees' future growth and their likely effect on future occupiers. If too close to main windows, trees could create excessive overshadowing or induce feelings of apprehension (e.g. during storms). The layout of development should allow sufficient space to avoid damage to established trees during building construction, or indeed damage to buildings, underground services or hard surfaced areas by the trees themselves. At minimum, buildings should be outside the extent of the tree's root system: the spread of the branches may give an indication of this.
- 3.9 Very few building developments can rely solely on the retention of existing trees to create an acceptable overall appearance. The existing vegetation, along with water features and even man made features such as old walls, helps to give the site a feeling of maturity, and links past and present. New planting is also necessary.
- 3.10 Planting schemes should generally use species of trees and shrubs which are similar to those occurring adjacent to the development site to help buildings to blend in with their surroundings to help maintain and enhance local distinctiveness (also see the guidance on Landscape Character). Wherever possible plant species should be native to the area and local provenance and/or important for native wildlife. There will be circumstances where more exotic species are appropriate, particularly in formal urban layouts where there are very substantial areas of hard surfacing and building.
- 3.11 The location of parking provision and nature of hard surfaces should be carefully chosen to enable existing trees and shrubs to survive and new planting to flourish. Planting should, however, not be positioned where landscaping can obscure cars to avoid potential car thieves to be hidden from view
- 3.12 Landscaped areas should be designed to ensure that maintenance is straightforward and does not become a future problem. Rates of growth and ultimate size of different species and their contribution to the scene at all seasons should be borne in mind.

- 3.13 A separate advice note on the preparation of applications and general principles, entitled "Landscaping on Development Sites", may be obtained from the Council's Head of Landscape Services.
- 3.14 Landscaping also includes details of the street scene (hard landscaping) such as seats, bollards, litter bins, paving. Subtler means of delineating parking spaces than white lines on tarmac, and innovative design solutions will be encouraged.
- 3.15 Care should be taken in siting street furniture, tree planting etc, so that it does not impede the movement of disabled people.