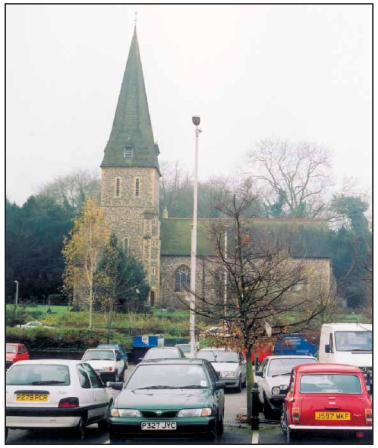
Feature buildings create interest and visual identity



Local landmark of St Mary's Church in Apsley - views of this from the site will aid orientation

3.8 Landmarks, corners and gateways

Landmarks are important townscape elements that help to create identity, distinctiveness and aid orientation. They will be viewed from some distance as well as from close up, and are important points of orientation for the area as a whole. In the new development, the importance of landmarks, notably at corners and other strategic points in the spatial network, should be reflected in the detailed design of buildings and spaces.

Any architectural emphasis should be integral to the building design and functional rather than superficial.

Corner buildings act as landmarks and can be used to terminate terraces positively and better enclose and define spaces and can act as gateways into streets.

The use of three and two storey buildings, combined with changes of building orientation add interest to scale and roofscape

3.9 Building lines

Building lines must be consistent with a minimum of breaks and setbacks. The building line may be set back from the back edge of the pavement to define a small semi-private space in front of ground floor windows. However, in order to achieve acceptable enclosure ratios, particularly where two-storey development is proposed within the inner blocks, some building fronts may be contiguous with the back edge of footways.

3.10 Building heights

Development will be primarily two storeys in height, though there may be the occasional three storey to create focal points and to form an edge to the railway line. Housing will be arranged in tight clusters to ensure adequate distance remains between sensitive tree lined corridors.

Buildings should be designed to turn street corners and help provide a clear definition between public and private spaces

High Ridge Road, Apsley Manor. Buildings step up the slope, whilst providing a strong and consistent building line. (Note use of brick, render and slate)

New development should aim to create a well defined frontage and variety to the roofscape of the street

3.11 Frontages

Continuous frontage development may be necessary in places to achieve the residential densities required within the higher density character areas. As well as being land efficient, such development can help reduce the length, and land-take of roads, which itself helps to keep traffic speeds low.

The frontages of blocks of flats will vary more widely depending on the mix and number of flats accommodated as well as their location. However, the principle of narrow frontages to achieve land and infrastructure efficiencies also applies to blocks of flats. Exceptions to the general requirement for continuous frontage development must be based upon a deliberate design rationale that accords with the character of the place that is being created.

3.12 Building Styles

There are a variety of architectural styles and building forms within the Manor Estate. The character of the area is primarily defined by landscape and topographical characteristics, as well as grid form of the existing development blocks. Much of King Edward Street does have a strong Edwardian influence, which is even stronger within the core of Apsley (e.g. Weymouth Street and London Road). New buildings should aim to reflect or enhance this character where there is a visual link to adjoining properties within King Edward Street. New development in these locations should acknowledge elevational modelling and details, either in an historic interpretation of styles or through the use of more contemporary and innovative interpretation.

Affordable housing units must be built to the same design so that they are externally indistinguishable from the market housing.

3.13 Fenestration, eaves and roof-lines

Vertical emphasis is important in higher density development for privacy, since people walking along the pavement are less likely to see into rooms obliquely. Where front gardens are very short or do not exist, consideration must be given to maintaining residents' privacy through windows as seen from the street.

Eaves and rooflines should not be over-long or unrelieved and should be articulated to avoid monotony by using, for example, bays, dormers, parapets and chimneys.

3.14 Materials

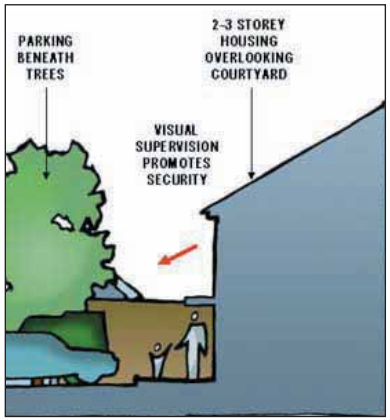
Materials should reflect the local context so that the new development is seen as a responsive and positive progression from the adjoining development in order to achieve an integrated neighbourhood. Local materials range significantly, though the use of red/ orange detail bricks, buff multi bricks, render as well as slate and red plain tiles are typical, especially on the earlier Edwardian properties on the lower slopes.

3.15 Defining boundaries

The design of boundaries will have a significant impact upon the quality of the development and the public realm as well as in some instances providing an important aspect to the security of development plots.

The distinctions between public and private space must be clear and well defined to give a clear sense of ownership and stewardship. Wherever possible housing and other buildings must be used as a barrier between public space and private back gardens. Continuous frontages will achieve this in appropriate locations. Rear gardens wherever possible should abut other rear gardens. Where housing fronts cannot enclose private gardens from public areas, brick walls should enclose them.

New development should aim to provide a clear distinction between public and private areas to aid security



New development should aim to provide overlooking of all public areas (streets and spaces) to create a safe environment

Front boundary walls, railings and hedges are part of the local character to the Manor Estate. These should be designed or implemented so as not to compromise natural surveillance of streets and spaces from ground floor windows.

3.16 A secure environment

Natural surveillance

Particular regard needs to be had to defensible, secure and 'self policing' development where empty 'dead' areas are avoided and where buildings, streets and spaces are positively overlooked by residents in adjacent buildings.

Any public spaces in particular must be well defined, well used by both pedestrians and vehicles, and overlooked.

Ends of building terraces need to be considered carefully to ensure that surveillance and activity are maintained. This will probably involve the introduction of special corner buildings with side windows and doors. Flats are particularly appropriate on corner locations where they can have two public 'fronts', and can provide three storey buildings overlooking public space.

Where gardens back onto public spaces, robust walls should be designed to improve security

All buildings must be designed to minimise climbability via external elements such as porches, garden walls, rainwater/drain pipes, balconies, etc.

3.17 Footpaths and communal areas

Pedestrians should have a choice of clear, direct routes and cul-de-sac streets should therefore be avoided.

Footpaths, whether public or private, must have good clear forward visibility and avoid corners or other potential hiding places. The length of paths to front doors must be minimised and they should be overlooked by habitable rooms.

Public footpaths should generally follow roads, streets and other public spaces, and be of sufficient width for their intended purpose.

Detailed design considerations may require some variation in footway and road widths where this contributes to the successful layout of the development. For instance, wider footways are likely to be needed adjacent to a community building like the school or communal entrance to flats, whilst short sections that are narrower may be appropriate where they help to achieve wider urban design objectives.

Public areas should be designed with a view to their eventual adoption by Dacorum Borough Council, or Hertfordshire County Council. Public areas, footpaths, and fences must be protected from potential damage by cars being driven across or parked on them.

Lighting should be designed in accordance with current standards. Lamp columns should be unclimbable and any wall fittings out of reach.