LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY

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Design Guide

Supplementary Planning Document







Guidance for applicants, decision makers and the local community

June 2026

Part 2 - Small Sites

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Introduction

London Borough of Bexley (the Council) has produced a series of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide design guidance and support to applicants, decision makers and developers for new development across the borough.

As demonstrated by Fig.01 opposite, the guidance supports the Development Plan which comprises the Bexley Local Plan and the London Plan. The SPDs demonstrate how policies within these statutory documents can be met and the guidance documents should also be read in conjunction with national and regional design guidance on placemaking, such as the National Design Guide.

Overarching guidance, which applies across all types of development, is provided in the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles. This should be read in conjunction with the guidance provided in Part 2 of the Design Guide SPD, which focuses on specific areas of development and comprises four documents which complement, and are structured around, the Design Principles.

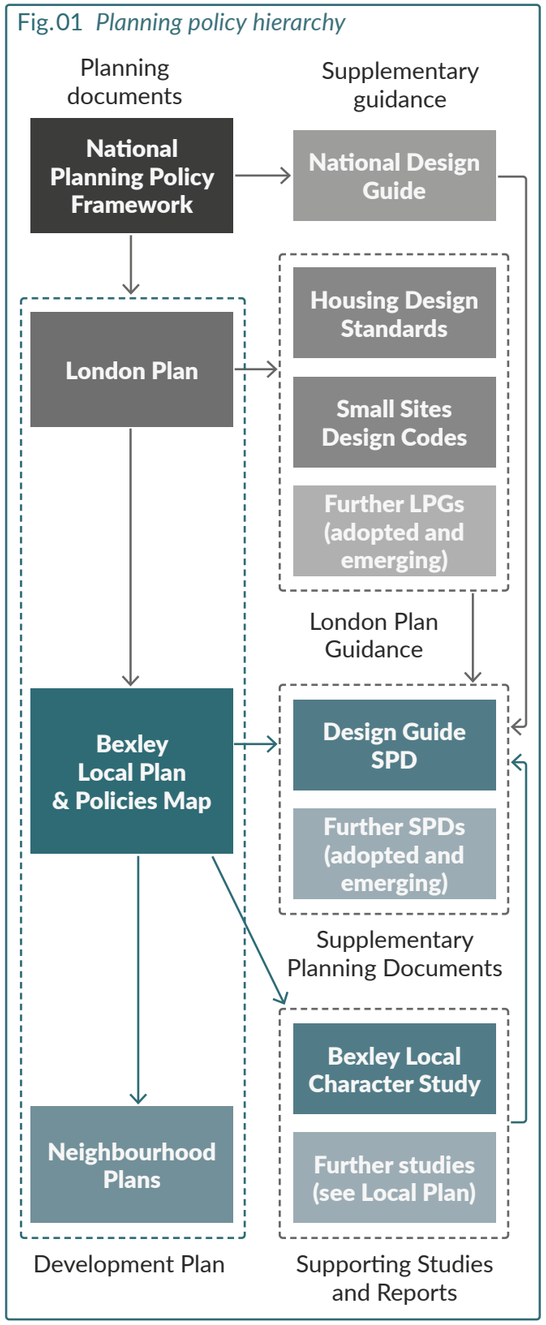
Once adopted, the Design Guide SPD Part 2 will also be a material consideration in determining planning applications. As such proposals should conform with the guidance provided to achieve the best outcomes at determination.

This new guidance will replace the following Bexley planning guidance: Design and Development Control Guidelines SPD, Crayford Residential Design Code, Crayford Town Centre Design and Identity Guide, and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.

The production of this document has followed best practice and been informed by a robust local evidence base. The guidance has been shaped through engagement with stakeholders and the public consultation process.

It should be noted that during preparation of the Design Guide SPD Part 2, the government published its draft NPPF. Once the final version of the new NPPF is published, it takes precedence should any conflicts arise between the two documents.

Fig.01 *Planning policy hierarchy*



Design Guide SPD Part 2 - Small Sites

The London Plan policy on small sites identifies a small site as one below 0.25 hectares in area and this SPD has been developed to support the delivery of new homes on Bexley's small sites.
The sustainable development of small sites offers the potential to incrementally address the housing needs of the borough to meet the requirements of the growing population.

This guidance should be used as a tool to develop high quality homes that respond to Bexley's character and contribute to places where people want to live, work and play.

In addition to the broader objectives set out in the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles, the objectives of this specific guidance is to:

- Increase the general quality of the small site developments taking place in the borough
- Increase the provision of homes on small sites
- Ensure proposed densification is delivered in a sustainable manner that protects the character of the borough
- Demystify and streamline the planning application process to reduce risks and encourage people to consider building out smaller sites.

The document is structured to set out a range of typical small site developments seen in Bexley, alongside general considerations and signposting to other documents, including those within the Design Guide SPD. Where relevant, links to policies within the Development Plan that should be considered in the delivery of a small site are also provided.

The guidance sets out advice tailored to each of the three principles of growth in section D 08 of the Design Principles - either **Maintain**, **Enhance** and **Transform**, as described in Fig.02. D 08 provides further guidance on how these principles of growth should be applied within Bexley.

Fig.02 *Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles - Principles of Growth*

Principle of Growth	How is this applied?
Maintain - least capacity for growth *Outside a Sustainable Development Location*	Sites should play close attention to their context and respond carefully to the existing building typologies using an appropriate design approach. Capacity for growth is typically limited due to local infrastructure pressures
Enhance - medium capacity for growth *Within a Sustainable Development Location*	Developments will typically incrementally evolve the area. New types of development that are marginally denser than the existing context are more appropriate and may take the form of appropriate additional height or alternative development types, where infrastructure can support this
Transform - most capacity for growth *Within Sustainable Development Locations and an Opportunity Area with an adopted Planning Framework, and/or a Suitable Location for Tall Buildings*	Development can form part of a wider change in density and typology in the area. Generally these areas have specific area strategies or masterplans set out which should be read alongside other design guidance

How to use this document

The Design Guide is separated into several distinct documents. Part 1 of the Design Guide, the **Design Principles** was adopted in January 2025 and applies across all types of development in Bexley to ensure consistency and quality. This is followed by additional guidance specific to certain types of development, including:

- **Small Sites** – sites below 0.25 hectares
- **Building Alterations and Extensions** – extensions and alterations to existing residential and non-residential buildings
- **Area Types** – common and emerging development types in Bexley e.g. industrial sites
- **Site Design Codes –** design guidance for areas undergoing significant change (these will be provided as part of the new Local Plan for Bexley).

These documents are supported by a **Technical Handbook** that contains detailed specialist information and standards required for certain planning applications, including highways, waste, sustainability and biodiversity.

The documents are colour-coded to aid navigation and each section of design advice is given a sequential number for ease of reference. Design Principles are given the prefix **D**. Small Site codes are given the prefix **S**, Building Alterations codes **B,** and Area Types codes **A**. The prefix for the Site Design Codes will be based upon the name of the area that is being planned.

The codes either use the words must, should or could. These indicate the strength of the guidance and whether it is required to meet adopted policy or suggestive – see Fig.04. The codes only apply to relevant forms of development as judged appropriate by the planning officer assessing the relevant proposal.

The document uses precedent examples to illustrate the guidance, with text provided that explains what is deemed successful about the development. The use of these precedents does not automatically guarantee the approval of similar designs. All submissions to the Council will be determined based on their individual merits within their Bexley context.

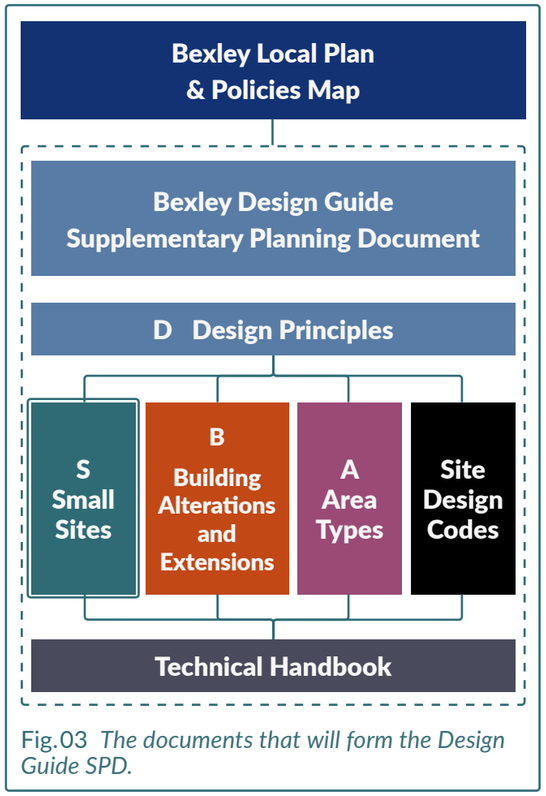


Fig.03 *The documents that will form the Design Guide SPD.*

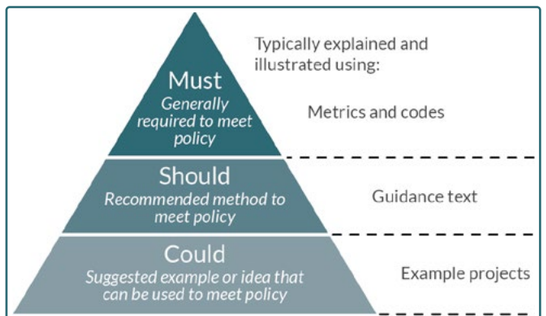
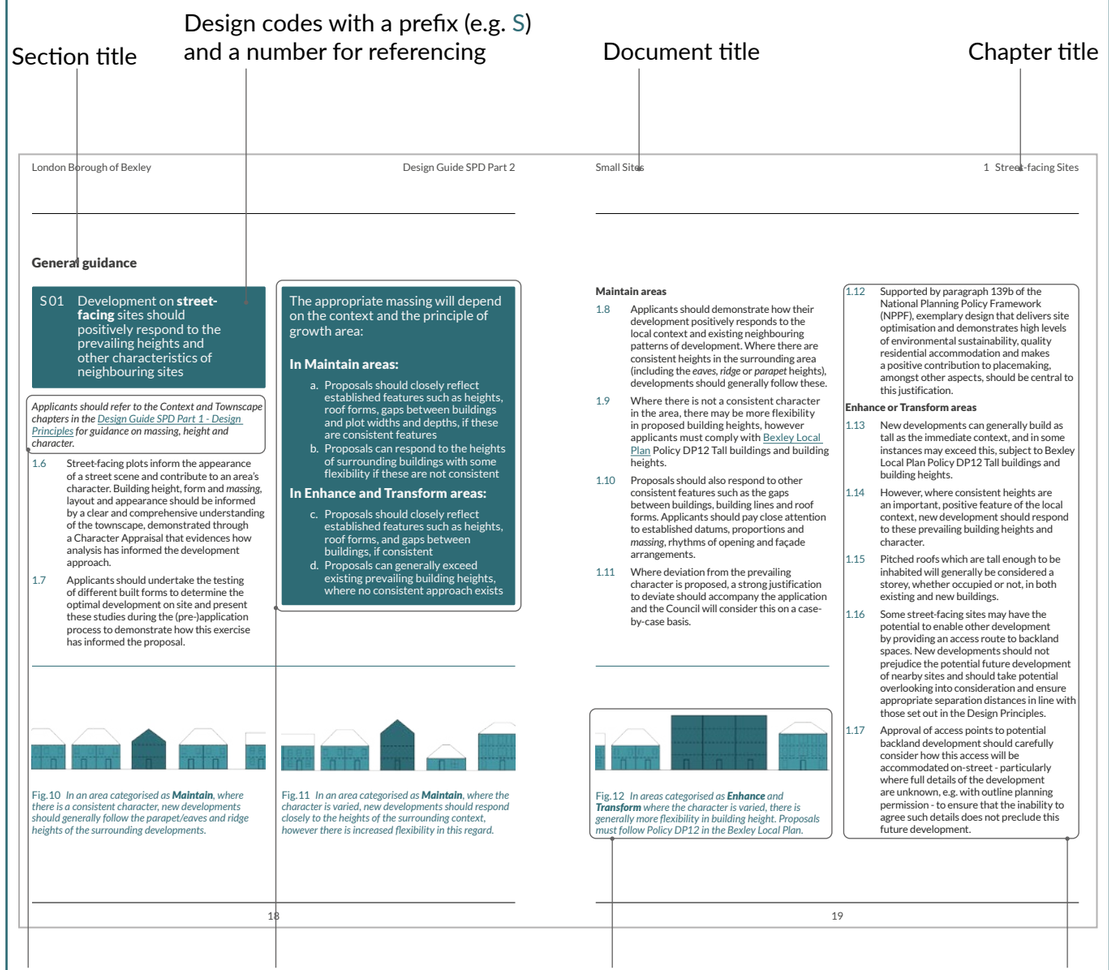


Fig.04 *The strength of the guidance is indicated in the use of the words must, should or could.*

Fig.05 *Example pages of the Design Guide with annotated features*



Summary of relevant policies for ease of reference

Metrics or design approaches that can be used to meet the code

Imagery including diagrams, numbered figures, example projects, tables, and maps to illustrate the text

Implementation text including guidance on when the code applies

Where underlined, highlighted text is used, this is a link to external resources. Where *italic text* is used, this word or phrase is a technical term and is included in the glossary. Highlighted text indicates a link to information elsewhere in the document. *Italic, highlighted text* is used to denote figures.

Developing Small Sites

The advice provided throughout this document is structured on the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles and links back to relevant sections provided in the subtitles e.g. Context. Applicants should, therefore, use these documents in conjunction.

The site-specific guidance for Small Sites that follows is split according to the typologies set out in Fig.06 opposite. The guidance addresses common design challenges and opportunities and provides a framework for developers to consider when proposing new schemes.

Across each site typology, built precedents provide examples of best practice and exemplars explore how certain development sites could be approached.

Small site development typically occurs through either:

- **Addition**: additional homes are built on vacant spaces
- **Redevelopment**: existing buildings are adapted or demolished and replaced with additional homes.
- **Conversion**: existing buildings are adapted involving some form of extension. Other advice on extending residential properties can be found in the Design Guide SPD Part 2 - Building Alterations and Extensions document.

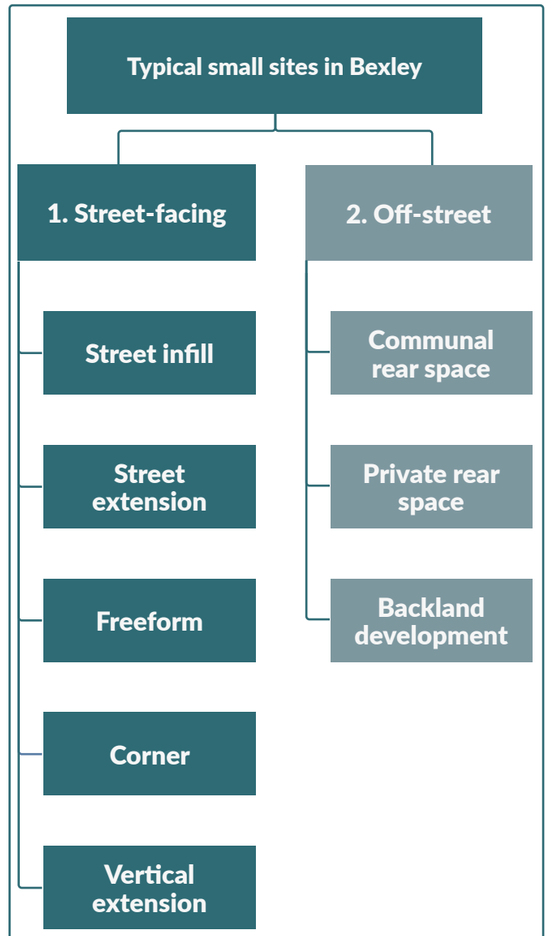


Fig.06 *Categories of small sites typically found in Bexley that may be suitable for development.*

Preparing Development Proposals

Working with specialists and building a design team

The Council strongly recommends engaging with high quality specialists early in the design process to provide advice, develop and coordinate the design and submit a planning application.

The RIBA and CIAT are valuable resources to review when seeking architects or architectural technologists to employ. On more complex projects, planning agents can help with navigating the planning process - the RTPI can help with finding a planning specialist.

Other consultants required may include structural, civil and electrical engineers, landscape architects, quantity surveyors, conservation architects, ecologists and arboriculturalists. An architect or planning expert will be able to confirm whose services are required for the project.

Neighbour engagement

Pro-active, early and ongoing engagement and consultation with nearby residents and local community groups is strongly recommended as this can draw upon local knowledge to develop plans, allowing people to meaningfully contribute to shaping the places they live, work and play in. Applicants should provide evidence of how this engagement has been used to shape their proposal.

Permitted Development (PD) rights

Some development can be undertaken under permitted development (PD), meaning no planning permission is required. Rights are set by the Government and do not fall under Council control.

The Planning Portal has up-to-date guidance on which works constitute PD. Some permitted development is subject to prior approval and requires an application to be submitted to the Council for approval before starting any construction works.

PD rights can be removed by the Council using Article 4 Directions which bring development back under planning control.

For example, across Bexley, the change of use of Class E space (i.e. offices and shops) to residential homes within the borough's town centres and the change of use of buildings from commercial, business and service to residential within designated industrial locations are protected by an Article 4 Direction.

The scope of works that can be undertaken under PD can be limited and there is typically less control over the space created. The Council would recommend the planning process to enable applicants to make full use of a development site. For example, the upward extension of an existing building to create additional homes is PD subject to prior approval, however there are limitations as to the extent of works permitted.
Works proposed to flats, houses converted into flats, maisonettes and *listed buildings* are often excluded from PD rights and would require planning permission.

Conservation Areas and *listed buildings*

Conservation Areas are so designated to protect the special architectural and historical value of these areas. When proposing development within or adjacent to a *Conservation Area*, applicants must demonstrate how the proposal will preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

The Council's *Conservation Area* and Appraisal and Management Plan for each *Conservation Area* provides guidance on what is deemed suitable development.

At the time of publishing the Council has four Article 4 Directions applicable to *Conservation Areas*, which may limit PD rights in these locations.

Listed buildings are subject to *Listed Building* Consent which is separate from planning permission. PD rights are limited to *listed buildings*.

The determination process will consider the potential harm to the features of *listed buildings* or their setting, and development which falls into these categories must be sensitively designed to respect the special architectural character or historic interest of the building.

The planning process and the benefits of the pre-application service

Given the intricacies often involved in developing small sites, utilising the Council's pre-application service is strongly recommended.

This service provides the opportunity to discuss design development with various, relevant Council officers who can offer clarity on what will be both expected and accepted upon planning submission.

The amount of information required with a planning application will vary according to the complexity and scale of development. This can be discussed with the Council during the pre-application process. To enable a smoother application process, submissions should comply with the Council's validation checklist which details the correct formats information should be submitted in.

One key required document is the *Design and Access Statement* (*DAS*) which is used to explain how the proposal has developed. Fig.07 outlines what information should be included in a *DAS* - note, this list is not exhaustive.

Making a planning submission

Where planning permission is required, applications must be submitted to the Local Planning Authority, and further information is available on the Council's website.

Summaries of key issues to be addressed and demonstrated in planning applications are provided at the end of each section for clarity.

Demonstrating an understanding the local context

In line with Bexley Local Plan Policy DP11 Achieving high quality design, D 01 of the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles sets out the importance of all proposals being informed by an understanding of the local context. This is especially important on small sites which are often faced with multiple constraints. Applicants should provide a Character Appraisal, as set out in D 01, presenting this during any pre-application discussions and the application stage.

Fig.07 *Typical information to be included in a Design and Access Statement (DAS) for small sites*

Information	Format
Define physical, technical and policy constraints	Maps, site photos
Assess the site and surrounding context	Site photos, plans and sections of existing site
Explain how these constraints and site conditions have informed design principles	Diagrams, maps
Demonstrate how the proposal follows the design principles defined above	Annotated plans and sections of proposed, townscape and streetscape visualisations, heights of proposed buildings indicated on drawings

Planning constraints

Whilst undertaking a Character Appraisal, applicants may identify a number of planning policy areas, or planning constraints, applicable to a site. These areas are defined zones where additional planning controls exist and will need to be considered during design development.

Applicants should refer to the key diagram in the Bexley Local Plan for significant planning constraints and the Bexley Local Plan Policies Map is a useful resource for identifying other constraints specific to a site. Fig.08 summarises some of these constraints and where applicants can find additional guidance and information. This list is not exhaustive and thorough research into a development site should be undertaken to determine any other controls.

Designing functional new homes

Applicants should refer to the Spatial Quality section of the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles which provides guidance on designing policy compliant housing that accounts for neighbouring homes by ensuring sufficient separation distances, privacy, outlook and access to light and amenity between existing and new homes.

Guidance includes prioritising the design of dual and triple aspect homes and the avoidance of single-aspect dwellings, especially those that are north facing or contain three or more bedrooms. It outlines how to meet internal space standards and provide suitably-sized and appropriately located communal and private amenity space alongside ancillary spaces such as cycle and refuse stores. Further, detailed guidance for refuse and cycle storage and cycle and car parking is provided in the Design Guide SPD Part 2 - Technical Handbook.

When developing proposals, applicants should consider how a community's specific cultural requirements can be addressed in the design, undertaking engagement with residents and local stakeholders to understand these requirements and how they can be embedded in the design.

Fig.08 *Planning constraints and where to find further information*

Planning policy area	Resource
Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)	Bexley Local Plan Policies Map
Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)	Bexley Local Plan Policies Map
Site allocations	Bexley Local Plan
Sustainable Development Locations	Bexley Local Plan
Flood zones	Government Flood Map for Planning
Archaeological Priority Areas (APAs)	Historic England Greater London Archaeological Priority Areas
Conservation Areas	Conservation and Heritage section of Council's website
Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL)	TfL Webcat Planning Tool
Article 4 Directions	Article 4 Directions section of Council's website
Tree Protection Orders (TPOs)	Questions about trees and hedges on the Council's website
Ancient Woodland	Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles

Similarly, applicants are encouraged to consider the different ways people may live and work, providing space for separation between home- and work-life, for example through the provision of a flexible room that can be used as a home office and a bedroom.

Designing for climate resilience

Several policies in the Development Plan require new developments to demonstrably mitigate against climate change. D 13 and D 14 in the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles provides guidance on how this can be achieved to ensure the energy hierarchy is followed.

The Council supports a *fabric first* approach to new development, and applicants must develop proposals that embed climatic sustainability within the architectural and landscape proposals.

This means making choices from the outset that will reduce operational energy consumption, such as incorporating external shading and overhangs, and avoiding overly large window openings that will result in overheating to minimise the reliance on mechanical equipment. Opening sizes should be balanced with ensuring sufficient daylight and sunlight to all homes.

Applications should prioritise the use of renewable energy generation sources that provide alternatives to traditional gas boilers. Justification should be provided where certain sources are considered and discounted.

Circular economy principles must be employed and, where possible, the reuse of materials and buildings should be considered. Robust building materials should be chosen to reduce the need for frequent maintenance. Sourcing local materials and therefore reducing the carbon emissions of a project should be a priority.

Where existing buildings form part of a development, upgrading the existing building to improve energy efficiency and reduce user reliance on resources should be explored. The Design Guide SPD Part 2 - Building Alterations and Extensions sets out guidance for *retrofitting* works.

Reducing the amount of water consumed by residents can be addressed by providing means for rainwater harvesting and promoting grey water reuse and installing water-saving kitchen and bathroom fixtures and fittings.

The greening of urban environments is vital to enhancing biodiversity, improving air quality and supporting Bexley's wildlife and natural habitats. A landscape-led approach to development is strongly encouraged, and the landscape design should be developed simultaneously with the architectural proposal.

1 Street-facing Sites

Street-facing development occurs when new dwellings have direct access onto an existing street.

Some street-facing sites may have frontages that are not street-facing and therefore fall into both the street-facing and off-street categories - in these cases advice from both sections should be followed.

S 01 Development on **street-facing** sites should positively respond to the prevailing heights and other characteristics of neighbouring sites

S 02 On primary elevations, **street-facing** development should generally follow established building lines and create active street frontages that contribute to the street scene

S 03 Rear elevations of **street-facing** proposals should avoid negatively affecting the daylight and sunlight to existing buildings and gardens

S 04 Parking and landscape design on **street-facing** sites should follow surrounding layout patterns

S 05 Waste storage on all street-facing sites should be placed to the front or side of new homes, either integrated into the frontage or in a suitable position near the highway

S 06 Chosen materials on **street-facing** sites should be informed by the local context

S 07 **Street infill** development should maintain the rhythm of the existing street, particularly where this is a consistent feature of the local area

S 08 **Street extension** development must maintain acceptable levels of outlook, privacy, access to light and amenity

S 09 **Freeform** sites should create a street frontage that responds to its surrounding context

S 10 **Corner** sites should address all streets that the site has frontage onto and appropriately respond to these frontages

S 11 **Vertical extensions** should ensure subservience to the host building in terms of scale, *massing*, form and architectural expression

S 12 **Vertical extensions** must demonstrate that access and facilities will be sufficiently accommodated

Types of street-facing development

1.1 Development through **addition** typically occurs on leftover pieces of land that have difficult constraints or irregularly-shaped plots. These plots are often best optimised through innovative approaches to built form, layout and appearance.

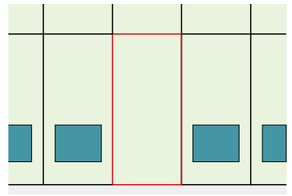
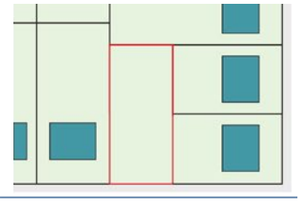
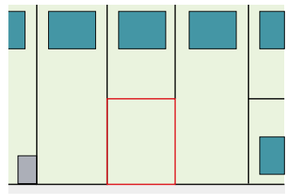
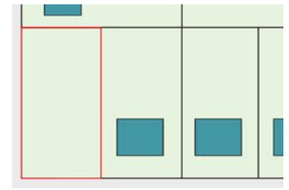
1.2 **Redevelopment** typically involves replacing existing structures with new development that can benefit from existing arrangements such as utilities connection. **Redevelopment** is encouraged when working with existing low-density typologies, such as bungalows, to optimise the site, particularly in **Enhance** areas.

1.3 Where the **redevelopment** of a single-storey dwelling does not result in a net gain in the number of homes e.g. replacing a bungalow with a two-storey family home - this Small Sites guidance will not apply and applicants should instead refer to guidance in the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles.

1.4 When **redevelopment** requires the demolition of existing buildings, applicants must consider the environmental impact of this and are encouraged to undertake a pre-demolition audit to determine whether existing structures can be retained and reused. Innovative approaches to the adaptive reuse of existing structures will be looked upon positively. Any new buildings will be expected to meet high standards of environmental sustainability.

1.5 In cases of both **addition** and **redevelopment**, coordinating development across adjacent plots can further optimise the provision of new homes and overcome challenges such as viability, access and shared services. This is especially important for street extension and corner sites where additional access points may not be permissible. Applicants are encouraged to consider this approach where opportunities arise.

Fig.09 *Examples of street-facing sites in Bexley*

Type	Diagram
Street infill Sites have street-facing buildings facing the same street on either side.	
Street extension Sites have street-facing buildings facing the same street on only one side.	
Freeform Sites do not have street-facing buildings facing the same street on either side.	
Corner Sites have at least two adjacent street frontages.	
Vertical extension Existing buildings are extended vertically to create new homes.	

General guidance

S01 Development on **street-facing** sites should positively respond to the prevailing heights and other characteristics of neighbouring sites

Applicants should refer to the Context and Townscape chapters in the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles for guidance on massing, height and character.

1.6 Street-facing plots inform the appearance of a street scene and contribute to an area's character. Building height, form and *massing*, layout and appearance should be informed by a clear and comprehensive understanding of the townscape, demonstrated through a Character Appraisal that evidences how analysis has informed the development approach.

1.7 Applicants should undertake the testing of different built forms to determine the optimal development on site and present these studies during the (pre-)application process to demonstrate how this exercise has shaped the proposal.

The appropriate *massing* will depend on the context and the principle of growth area:

In Maintain areas:

a. Proposals should closely reflect established features such as heights, roof forms, gaps between buildings and plot widths and depths, if these are consistent features
b. Proposals can respond to the heights of surrounding buildings with some flexibility if these are not consistent

In Enhance and Transform areas:

c. Proposals should closely reflect established features such as heights, roof forms, and gaps between buildings, if consistent
d. Proposals can generally exceed existing prevailing building heights, where no consistent approach exists

Fig.10 *In an area categorised as **Maintain**, where there is a consistent character, new developments should generally follow the parapet/eaves and ridge heights of the surrounding developments.*

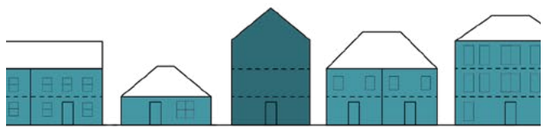


Fig.11 *In an area categorised as **Maintain**, where the character is varied, new developments should respond closely to the heights of the surrounding context, however there is increased flexibility in this regard.*

Maintain areas

1.8 Applicants should demonstrate how their development positively responds to the local context and existing neighbouring patterns of development. Where there are consistent heights in the surrounding area (including the *eaves*, *ridge* or *parapet* heights), developments should generally follow these.

1.9 Where there is no consistent character, there may be more flexibility in proposed building heights, however applicants must comply with Bexley Local Plan Policy DP12 Tall buildings and building heights.

1.10 Proposals must also respond to other consistent features such as the gaps between buildings, building lines and roof forms. Applicants should pay close attention to established datums, proportions and *massing*, rhythms of opening and façade arrangements.

1.11 Where deviation from the prevailing character is proposed, a strong justification should accompany an application and the Council will consider this on a case-by-case basis.

1.12 Supported by paragraph 139b of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), exemplary design that delivers site optimisation and demonstrates high levels of environmental sustainability, quality residential accommodation and makes a positive contribution to placemaking, amongst other aspects, should be central to this justification.

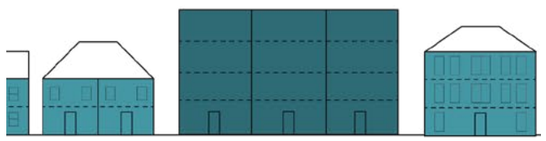


Fig.12 *In areas categorised as **Enhance** and **Transform** where the character is varied, there is generally more flexibility in building height. Proposals must follow Policy DP12 in the Bexley Local Plan.*

Enhance or Transform areas

1.13 New developments can generally build as tall as the immediate context, and in some instances may exceed this, subject to Bexley Local Plan Policy DP12.

1.14 However, where consistent heights are an important, positive feature of the local context, new development should respond to these prevailing building heights and character.

1.15 Pitched roofs which are tall enough to be inhabited will generally be considered a storey - whether occupied or not - in both existing and new buildings.

1.16 In locations identified as Suitable for Tall Buildings in the Bexley Local Plan, where tall buildings are an emerging character within the streetscape, proposed building heights should generally respond to the typical, prevailing context.

1.17 Some street-facing sites may have the potential to enable other development by providing an access route to backland spaces. New developments must not prejudice the potential future development of nearby sites and should take potential overlooking into consideration and ensure appropriate separation distances in line with those set out in the Design Principles.

1.18 Approval of access points to potential backland development should carefully consider how this access will be accommodated on-street - particularly where full details of the development are unknown, e.g. with outline planning permission - to ensure that the inability to agree such details does not preclude this future development.

General guidance

S 02 On primary elevations, **street-facing** development should generally follow established building lines and create active street frontages that contribute to the *street scene*

Bexley Local Plan Policies SP5 Placemaking through good design and DP11 Achieving high quality design set out the importance of development responding to its context and positively impacting the street scene.

1.19 Street-facing properties tend to have clear fronts and backs, with a primary elevation facing towards the street. These form important characteristics of street-facing development and define a streetscape, whether with generous setbacks from the street providing front gardens, or in sitting close to the footway line.

1.20 Primary street-facing elevations must positively contribute to the streetscape. As façade patterns form prevailing building lines, applicants should take into account established patterns of development, and respond to these appropriately.

1.21 The design of front doors to homes should be informed by analysis of the surrounding context. These should typically face towards, and be clearly visible from, the public realm, creating an *active frontage* along the street.

1.22 Windows are also vital to creating an active street frontage and providing passive surveillance and an increased sense of security for both those inside homes and walking on the street. Openings should typically respond to neighbouring buildings, but importantly be designed to ensure adequate daylight and sunlight levels to habitable rooms, as well as privacy and outlook for inhabitants.

1.23 Applicants will be required to submit internal daylight and sunlight assessments to demonstrate that new habitable rooms will receive acceptable daylight and sunlight amenity.

1.24 Applicants should indicate separation distances on plan drawings to demonstrate that proposed building lines will comply with separation distances set out in the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles Spatial Quality chapter.

Purley Downs Road, Croydon
Harp & Harp

Seven new family homes replace one corner house which had a deep and long garden, enabling the design of two new terraces, providing three and four new homes respectively. Building lines take their cue from the existing street and neighbouring buildings and provide all new homes with a front and rear garden and shared parking courts. The architectural expression is a contemporary response to the arts and crafts character of the area.

© Adam Scott

S 03 Rear elevations of **street-facing** proposals should avoid negatively affecting the daylight and sunlight to existing buildings and gardens

The design of rear elevations of street-facing development should be informed by guidance in the Spatial Quality chapter in the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles, in particular D 20 in Comfort and wellbeing and the separation distances defined in Outlook and privacy.

1.25 To optimise development sites, it will typically be acceptable for rear-facing elevations to extend beyond established rear building lines.

1.26 Applicants should demonstrate how this meets the 45° angle principle set out in D 20 of the Design Principles and illustrated in Fig.13 below. Excessively stepping the proposed *massing* to achieve these requirements will not be supported by the Council.

1.27 If applicants wish to extend the building line beyond the 45° parameters, or if the parameters are unclear due to the arrangement of existing *habitable windows*, the applicant will be required to demonstrate that appropriate and acceptable levels of daylight, sunlight, privacy and outlook are achieved and maintained to both new and existing properties by submitting a Daylight and Sunlight Assessment.

1.28 The optimisation of some sites may be limited by the 45° angle guideline and therefore instances where the existing *urban grain* suggests a rigid 45° is not appropriate will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

1.29 Existing windows on flank walls may be considered in the same way as rear windows if they are the primary opening to a *habitable room*. Windows to bathrooms and circulation spaces on flank walls will generally not be treated as *habitable windows* for this purpose.

1.30 Where possible, bedrooms should be located on quieter frontages, typically to the rear of the site.

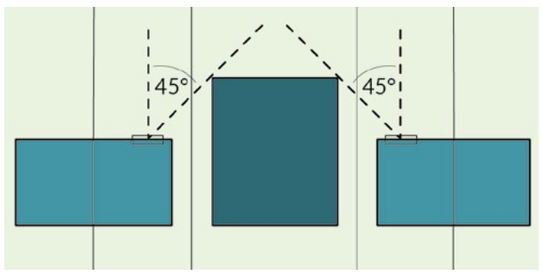


Fig.13 *Massing of new developments that extend beyond the building line should not obstruct a line drawn at a 45° angle from the horizontal centre of the habitable room window closest to the boundary.*

General guidance

S 04 Parking and landscape design on street-facing sites should follow surrounding layout patterns

Bexley Local Plan Policy DP23 Parking Management sets out the parking provision standards for both residential and industrial development and explains how this relates to the London Plan standards in Policy T6 Car Parking.

Policy DP33 Sustainable drainage systems requires all development proposals to management surface water through SuDS to minimise flood risk, improve water quality and enhance biodiversity and amenity.

Applicants should refer to the Layout section of the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles to inform the design and layout of car parking.

1.31 All new development must demonstrate that the site can accommodate the parking requirements for existing and proposed homes.

1.32 Where a development is not satisfying servicing and amenity needs, the overall number of homes may need to be reduced, even where a scheme of a larger size might otherwise be acceptable.

1.33 New development achieved by subdividing a plot may require layout changes to the space between the primary elevation and public highway. This may require altering existing, or adding separate, spaces for parking and access to serve new and existing homes. The cumulative effect on the public realm should be considered.

1.34 Where new parking is proposed between the main frontage and the street, it should be carefully designed to ensure that any potential loss of green space is not harmful to the character of the street. The introduction of parking should not negatively affect the biodiversity of the site by removing existing greening.

1.35 Where front gardens are a strong aspect of local character and front garden parking is proposed, applicants are encouraged to provide increased areas of planting alongside this parking to mitigate its effect.

1.36 High quality planting - specified for its visual amenity, ecological benefit and robustness - between the primary façade and the street is strongly encouraged, particularly the retention or planting of mature trees that contribute to biodiversity, canopy cover and can help create privacy for residents.

1.37 Surface water flood risk must be addressed on all sites and large areas of hard landscaping should be avoided. Where new hard landscaping is installed, permeable surfaces should be used. Applicants should refer to the Sustainable Drainage: Design and Evaluation Guide for guidance on incorporating SuDS, such as permeable paving, into new developments.

1.38 Where the gradient of permeable surfaces fall towards the highway, there will need to be a form of drainage interception and disposal within the site, as it is an offence to allow surface water run-off to discharge onto a footway or footpath.

1.39 As set out in the Bexley Local Plan, on-plot parking should typically be avoided to enable the future redevelopment of parking areas as parking demand reduces. However, on smaller sites where there is less likelihood of the future redevelopment of parking areas, on-plot parking may be deemed acceptable where it is well-designed.

1.40 On-plot parking should only be proposed where there is sufficient space and parking spaces should not overhang the highway, including any adjacent footway or footpath. The parking area must be a minimum size of 2.4m x 4.8m to avoid any potential overhang and shown on planning drawings.

1.41 On-plot parking may require a vehicle crossover on the footpath, if such access is allowed off the street, subject to Local Plan Policy SP10 Bexley's transport network. Parking assessments should consider the potential loss of on-street parking due to the creation of a new or altered vehicle access.

1.42 Applicants should refer to guidance in the Design Guide SPD Part 2 - Technical Handbook when designing new parking provision and discussions with the Highway Authority should take place early on during design development.

Signal Townhouses, Greenwich
AHMM

A forecourt is provided in front of each house for storage and parking without the development becoming car dominated. The forecourts are also used to define the defensible space, rather than solely functioning as parking spaces, and the low-height elements within the forecourts preserve visual connections along the street. The spaces also incorporate greenery for each home and clearly provide house numbers on the storage spaces, which aids wayfinding.

General guidance

S 05 Waste storage on all **street-facing** sites should be placed to the front or side of new homes, either integrated into the frontage or in a suitable position near the highway

Sections D28, D31 and D33 in the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles set out general guidance on waste storage.

The Design Guide SPD Part 2 - Technical Handbook provides detailed guidance on bin storage design and provision.

1.43 All new development must demonstrate that the site can meet its waste storage needs. If these requirements cannot be satisfied, the overall number of homes may need to be reduced.

1.44 Sufficient space for all required waste containers must be provided in designated refuse stores in line with information provided in the Technical Handbook on designing for the disposal, storage and collection of waste.

1.45 Waste storage must be located to support the ease of waste disposal and collection and be provided in line with the maximum drag distances set out in D 28 in the Design Principles.

1.46 The proposed location and layout of bin stores should be presented and discussed during the pre-application process and clearly shown on planning drawings to demonstrate that acceptable solutions, in line with relevant guidance, are proposed.

Goldsmith Street, Norwich
Mikhail Riches, Cathy Hawley

Waste storage is concealed to the front of each property in ventilated brick enclosures. The street design follows a Victorian street pattern with front gardens. Houses without front gardens have waste stores integrated into the frontage of the building.

© Tim Crocker

S 06 Chosen materials on **street-facing** sites should be informed by the local context

Bexley Local Plan Policy SP5 Placemaking through good design is robust in setting out the importance of high quality design that respects the existing character and context whilst supporting the evolution of that character over time.

The Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles provides further guidance on materiality considerations for new development and how this should respond to the local character.

1.47 The design of new developments must consider the existing setting and propose a suitable design response that exhibits high-quality materials and detailing.

1.48 Applicants need not replicate existing design features such as materiality, however it should be clearly evidenced, through the Character Appraisal, where the proposed material palette has evolved from and how it responds to the surrounding context.

1.49 Applicants are encouraged to follow the complementary or contrasting design approaches outlined opposite. These can be used independently or in combination.

1.50 With a planning application, a material specification should be provided detailing chosen materials across the development. Drawings, including elevations, sections and 3D *massing* images, should demonstrate how the chosen materials will sit within the context, allowing the Council to determine their suitability.

Applicants could use one of the following design approaches:

Complementary

a. Where the **complementary** approach is taken, materials are a close match and all details, arrangement of openings, and proportions of existing dwellings are reflected in the design. This approach is typically used in *Conservation Areas*.

Contrasting

b. With the **contrasting** approach, the proposal takes cues from the materials, details, arrangement of openings, and proportions of the original building and responds positively to these features by using a design that is visually distinct from existing buildings.

Street-facing Sites

S 07 Street infill development should maintain the rhythm of the existing street, particularly where this is a consistent feature of the local area

Context

1.51 Typical street-infill sites will vary depending on whether addition or redevelopment is proposed.

1.52 Development by addition is usually more relevant where the typical urban pattern is disrupted or irregular. This includes streets at slight angles which create a break in consistency of the plot rhythm, or where different forms of development or building typology meet with leftover space between.

1.53 Redevelopment can occur in a wider range of settings and tends to be most viable when replacing a building that is comparably smaller than the overall plot area.

1.54 For example, in **Enhance** areas, redevelopment may be used to replace a single storey building or bungalow with several homes. Similarly, conversion or redevelopment might be used to turn a large building into multiple flats.

1.55 A site is likely to be appropriate for redevelopment if it adheres with most, or all, of the following:

a. It is in an **Enhance** area

b. The existing building is one or more storeys lower that the height of a building on at least one directly adjacent side

c. The existing building makes inefficient use of its plot due to the existing built form, such as *habitable windows* to flank elevations, or a long garden that is largely inaccessible.

1.56 The redevelopment of sites occupied by single-storey properties can require new development to mediate between different scales, heights and *massing*, particularly in locations undergoing change. Proposals must not prejudice similar, future development on neighbouring sites, whilst also respecting neighbouring homes which may remain unchanged.

Fig.14 *A typical site suitable for street infill through either addition or redevelopment.*

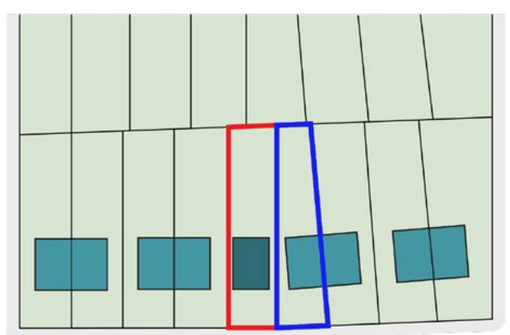


Fig.15 *The typical subdivided street infill site with an addition.*

Townscape

1.57 Maintaining the rhythm of the existing street is particularly relevant for street-infill sites, irrespective of dwelling type.

1.58 Where gaps between existing buildings are consistent, new developments should typically incorporate similar gaps or articulate the *massing* and primary street frontage to respond accordingly.

1.59 Where the existing rhythm cannot be maintained, proposals should typically be recessive to other buildings, in *massing*, building line, height and/or scale.

1.60 Exceptions will be considered on a case-by- case basis, such as where the prevailing character is incompatible with the wider context as evidenced through the Character Appraisal or where deviation is justified through exemplary design. Such deviation is less likely to be acceptable in **Maintain** areas.

1.61 Depending on site conditions, development might extend up to one or both boundaries and could be directly attached to the sides of an existing adjacent house as per Fig.17. Alternatively, the development might have gaps to the boundary on both sides of the property, as Fig.16.

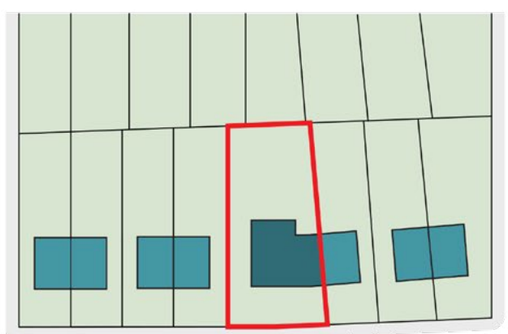


Fig.16 *The typical street infill site which has undergone redevelopment following the demolition of an existing single-storey dwelling.*

1.62 When building across existing boundaries, the proposal may need to reflect the historic rhythm of frontages through an appropriately stepped *massing* or in its architectural treatment. This is particularly relevant where gaps between buildings inform street character.

1.63 As with other site types, greater opportunities for optimisation can typically be found through collaboration between neighbouring properties and combining plots.

1.64 If multiple developments are planned within a street, where appropriate, applicants are encouraged to consider a joined-up design approach which could allow a greater increase in dwelling numbers compared to a series of separate planning applications.

Layout

1.65 Site additions and redevelopment will likely require the provision of car and cycle parking, servicing and amenity space(s). The provision of these may limit the overall number of homes a site can deliver, therefore it is important that sufficient space for these elements is identified and demonstrated early in design development.

Outdoor amenity

1.66 Applicants must demonstrate that, following development, existing neighbours will continue to benefit from use of their private amenity space in terms of privacy and daylight/sunlight levels, particularly within the *protected garden area*. Proposals that will negatively impact existing homes are unlikely to be supported.

Street infill example

This example demonstrates the potential for redevelopment of low density dwellings, such as bungalows, following the guidance in this document.

Development Scenario

Site type	Street facing - street infill
Policy context	Within a Sustainable Development Location
Immediate typology context	Bungalows with some detached/flats adjacent/opposite sites
Consistency of surrounding character	Varied
Site Area	0.25 ha
Size of development	2-5 homes
PTAL	3
Existing land use	Residential bungalows
Mixed use development	No

Context

The existing context is varied, with single-storey bungalows which are common within the borough found alongside larger two- and three-storey flatted developments. This variation results in a mixture of plot widths which can represent an opportunity for redevelopment and the creation of new homes through replacement and densification.

In most cases, sites occupied by bungalows or other low-density dwellings will have a street frontage and access to the highway. Proposed redevelopment should be designed to maintain this relationship to the street, with active frontages and opportunities for passive surveillance embedded into the design.

Townscape

Any development plots with single-storey buildings with a taller building on at least one side will generally be deemed acceptable for redevelopment.

Combining the two plots on Site 1 into a larger development site could lead to a more efficient use of land, and be an opportunity to increase building height and *massing* to create a greater number of new homes. This height and *massing* should be guided by the surrounding context.

When incorporating larger blocks, applicants should still seek opportunities to respond to the rhythm of the existing buildings in the design of building frontages.

Layout

Site redevelopment will require the provision of additional space for car and cycle parking, waste storage and servicing, and amenity space, following guidance provided in the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles and the Design Guide SPD Part 2 - Technical Handbook. Accommodating these requirements can limit the overall number of new homes a site can deliver.

Outdoor amenity

For all proposed homes, applicants will need to demonstrate compliance with both private and communal amenity space standards set out in the London Plan and expanded upon in the Design Principles.

Proposals must ensure that *Biodiversity Net Gain* is considered from the outset and demonstrate how this will be achieved, with a preference for on-site improvement measures.

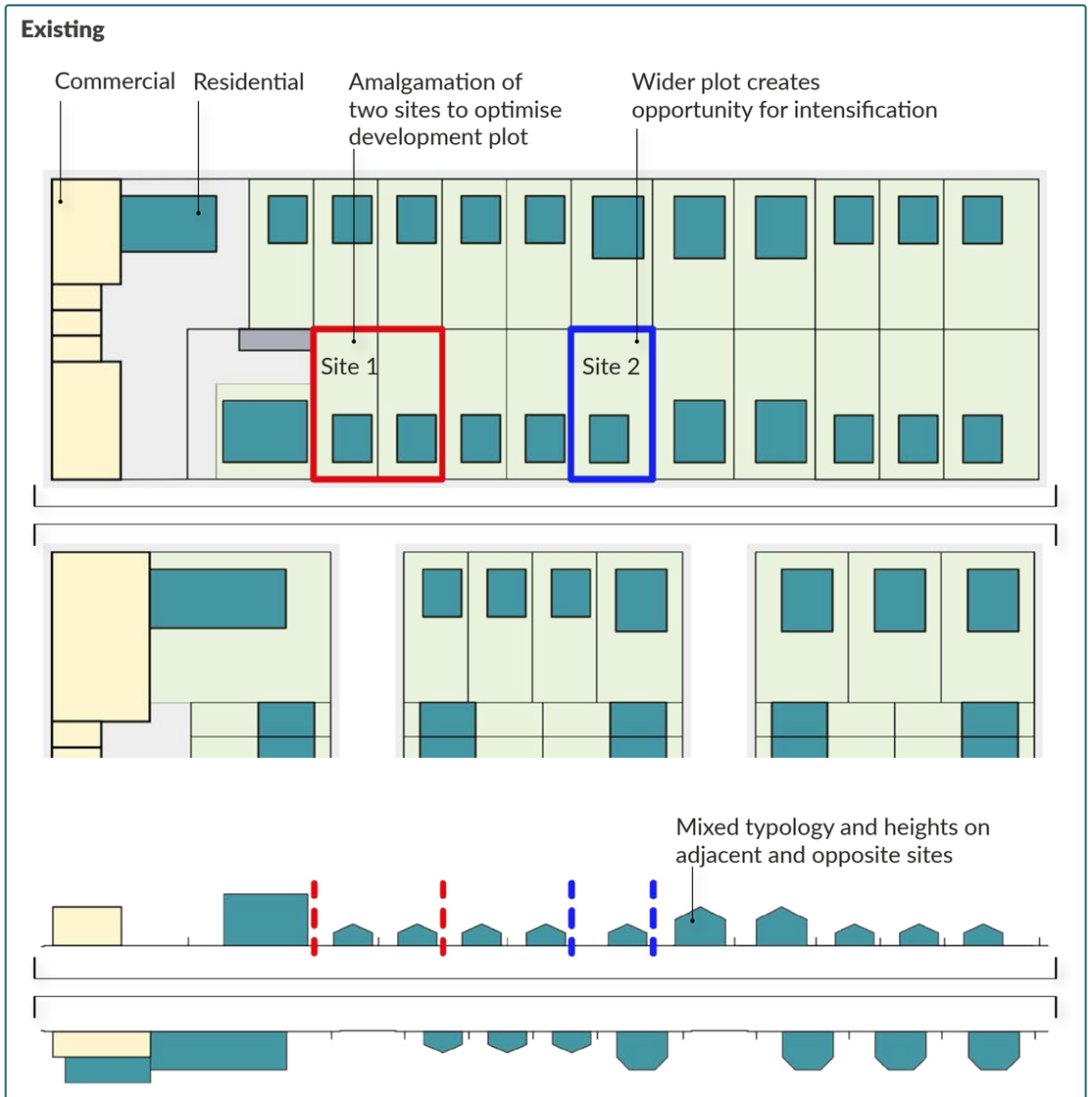


Fig.17 *Existing site plan showing streets of bungalows in close proximity to a local centre (in yellow) within a Sustainable Development Location. Two potential redevelopment sites are highlighted to demonstrate varied optimisation sceneries responding to their immediate site context. The butterfly elevations show the relationship between both sides of the street, with local centre buildings to the left (in yellow) and varied heights and dwelling types demonstrated along the street.*

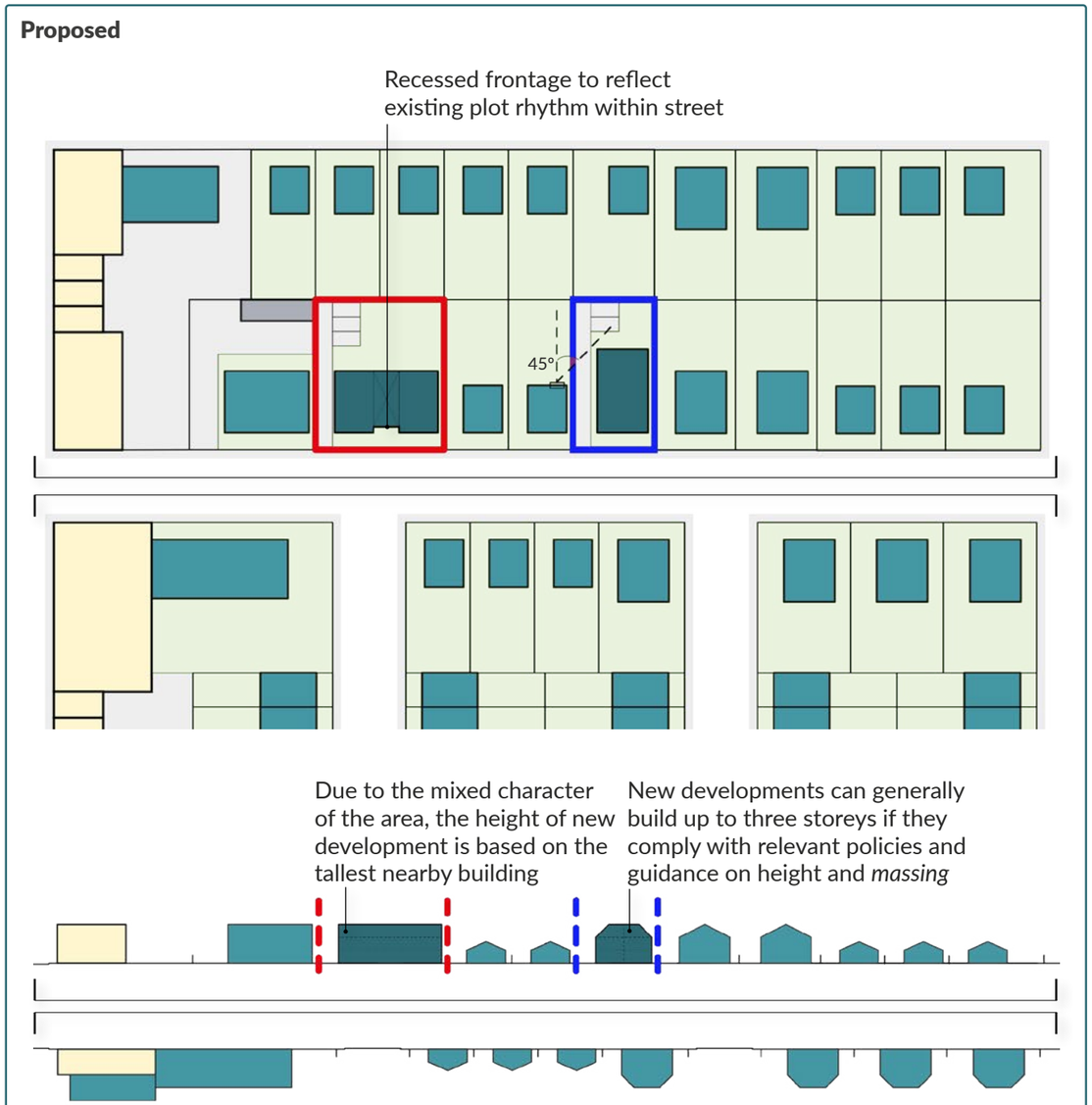


Fig. 18 *Proposed site plan showing two new developments: a joint venture with a new apartment building across two bungalow plots; and a single plot development replacing the existing bungalow with a multi-dwelling building. The butterfly elevations of both sides of the street show the proposed within the varied character of the street.*

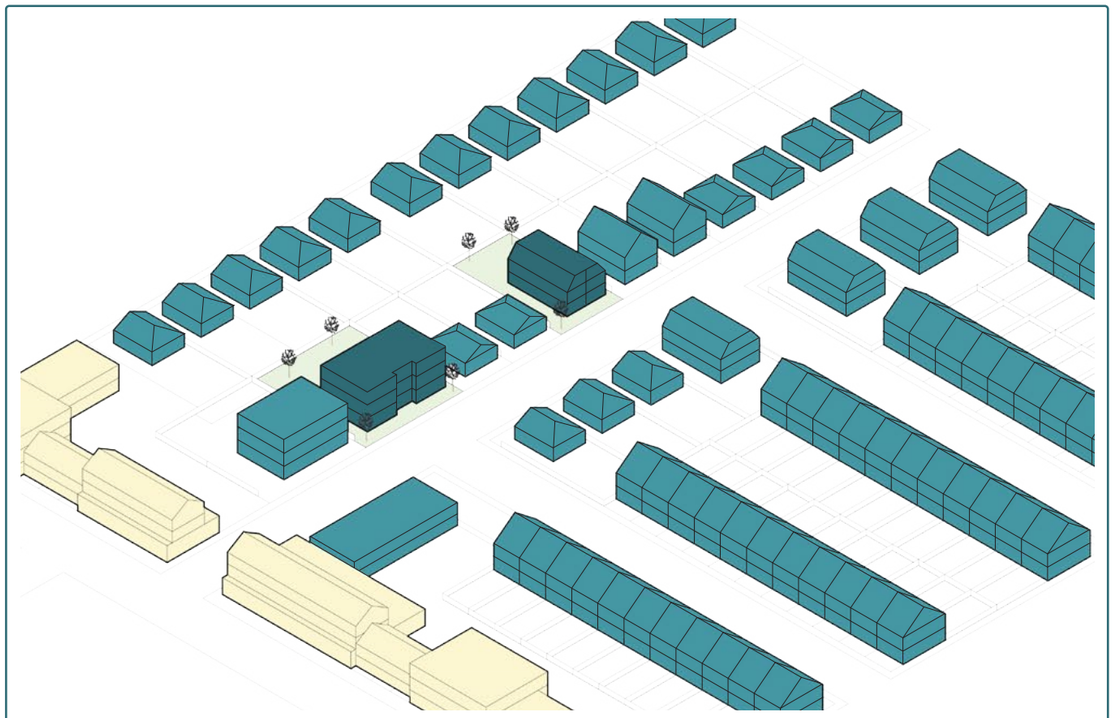


Fig. 19 *Axonometric view of the example proposed scheme*

Haddo Yard, Whitstable
Denizen Works

The scheme replaces an existing bungalow with seven flats across three storeys. The increased *massing* in relation to adjacent sites is achieved due to referencing the contextual vernacular style using pitched roof forms and proportions translated into a contemporary style. This is supported by well-considered detailing and robust materials.

Street-facing Sites

S 08 Street extension development must maintain acceptable levels of outlook, privacy, access to light and amenity

Context

1.67 As shown in Fig.20, street extension sites have a street-facing frontage onto a primary street where a neighbouring building on one side of the development site faces onto the same street.

1.68 These sites are often found at the end of an existing row of buildings where the site meets the rear garden of a dwelling oriented towards a perpendicular street.

1.69 Development sites can also be found at the end of long rear gardens where development retains the *protected garden area*.
A site does not, however, need to be associated with another residential property and could be an area occupied by underutilised garages or outbuildings which abut an existing street, presenting a development opportunity.

Townscape

1.70 When developing sites that follow an existing row of buildings, it is preferable that new buildings associate their *massing* with the buildings facing onto the same street, as Fig.21 shows. This helps to respond to the character of an area and is especially important within **Maintain** areas, or in areas where consistency in built form is a key characteristic.

1.71 Generally, building on these sites should not exceed the heights of the buildings on either side without strong justification.

1.72 The building line can either:

a. Respond to the building line of the buildings facing the same street as Fig.21

b. Or where this is not achievable, respond to the building line of the building facing the perpendicular street, and be recessive to that building

c. Or use a hybrid approach of both approaches, using a stepped *massing*.

1.73 When a development cannot continue the building line of dwellings facing the same street due to site constraints, the proposed development should be recessive to neighbouring homes on the facing, primary

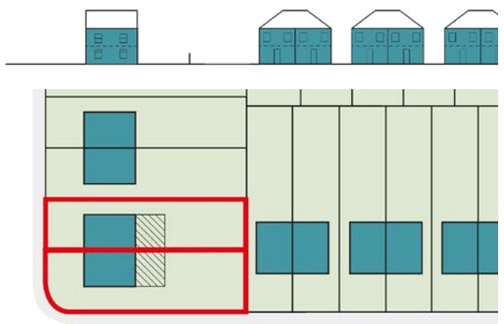


Fig.20 *A typical street extension site. The protected garden area (pga) is indicated with a diagonal hatch. Two different boundaries are shown depending on the available development mode.*

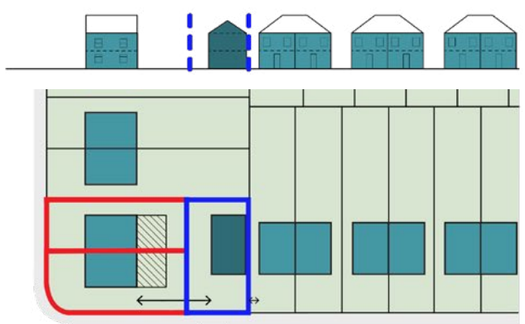


Fig.21 *Optimal development would create a plot across part of the two rear gardens, allowing the new building to relate to the adjacent row of houses, whilst preserving the pga of the existing homes.*

street. This is demonstrated in Fig.22 where the building height is reduced.

1.74 Developing in this way can be challenging, particularly as these sites can be small and constrained by the dimensions of the plot and result in a small built volume. In these instances and where possible, applicants are encouraged to collaborate with neighbouring sites to increase the depth of the site and developable area.

1.75 Where buildings do step forward from this prevailing building line these should typically align with another, nearby building line.

1.76 A recessive development will need to be:

d. No taller than neighbouring existing structures and ideally set back from the dominant building line on both the primary and secondary streets, or;

e. At least a full storey shorter than the buildings on either side, if not recessive in building line.

Spatial quality

1.77 Where sites are constrained and overlooking to neighbours and loss of privacy is a concern, proposals should demonstrate that guidance provided in the Spatial Quality chapter of the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles has been followed.

1.78 In particular, evidence of how the separation distances set out in the Spatial Quality chapter are achieved and how privacy within any neighbouring *protected garden areas* will be maintained should be provided during pre-application discussions and with a planning application using diagrams and plan and/or section drawings.

1.79 To adhere with this guidance, applicants should locate windows following the mitigation design solutions set out in Design Principles section D 17, such as avoiding windows in flank walls that would overlook neighbours and instead using rooflights where feasible. In these instances, applicants should demonstrate how blank façades are addressed through design.

Outdoor amenity

1.80 Due to some of the common constraints of such sites, it may not be possible to provide conventional rear gardens. In such instances, gardens to the side of properties may be deemed acceptable, but applicants need to consider how their proposal will create a clear frontage and concurrently protect the privacy and amenity of both new and existing homes.

1.81 Where rear gardens cannot be created, applicants should demonstrate why this is not possible, and in these cases, provide alternative forms of external amenity such as courtyards and roof terraces.

1.82 The provision of new external amenity space above ground floor should not compromise the privacy or amenity of existing neighbouring gardens, with applicants following guidance set out in the Design Principles Spatial Quality chapter. With a planning application, applicants should demonstrate how this guidance has been met.

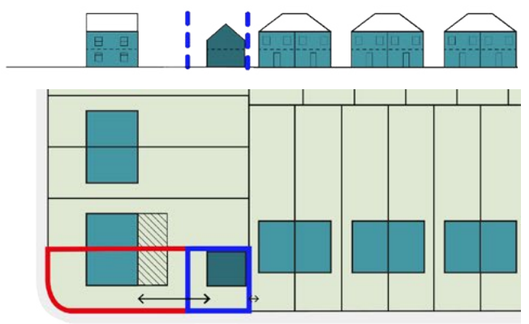


Fig.22 *If only one garden was available to develop, the proposal would need to step forward of the adjacent primary building line, reduce its massing and align with another neighbouring building line.*

Street-facing Sites

S09 Freeform sites should create a street frontage that responds to its surrounding context

Context

1.83 Freeform sites, like that shown in Fig.23, are often characterised by a lack of clear contextual reference points, such as prevailing building lines or heights which might otherwise inform a new development. Some sites may have clear reference points not directly adjacent to the site.

1.84 These sites are typically found in areas of mixed character and use, for example, where adjacent sites are used as garages, car parking or yards. These can also occasionally be found in other locations, such as on planned estates, and on side streets where two rear gardens meet one another with a public highway running along their side.

1.85 Introducing housing typologies that differ from the surrounding context can enable the optimisation of such sites, with exceptional design contributing to the local character, - particularly in **Enhance** or **Transform** areas.

Townscape

1.86 Adjacent sites may lack clear architectural references, however through the Character Appraisal, the wider contextual character should be assessed to inform development.

1.87 When proposing development on freeform sites with limited immediate context, the height of new buildings facing onto a street should generally be no more than the street width (when measured building line to building line). Developing beyond this height would require strong justification and proposed heights must always adhere to Bexley Local Plan Policy DP12 Tall buildings and building heights.

1.88 Buildings on the opposite side of a street can be used to inform a design, particularly in their use of scale in comparison to the street.

1.89 Within **Maintain** areas, *Conservation Areas* and those where there is a dominant typology or consistent character, there is a preference for new development to follow existing typologies and urban patterns.

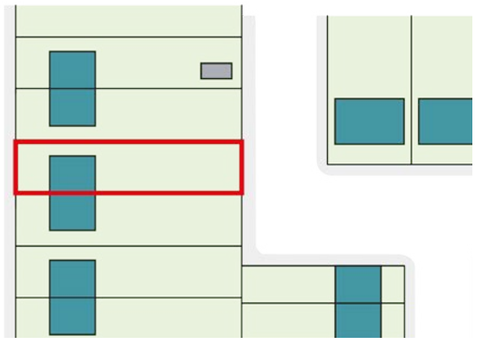


Fig.23 *A typical freeform site where an existing plot faces a secondary street at the end of the garden.*

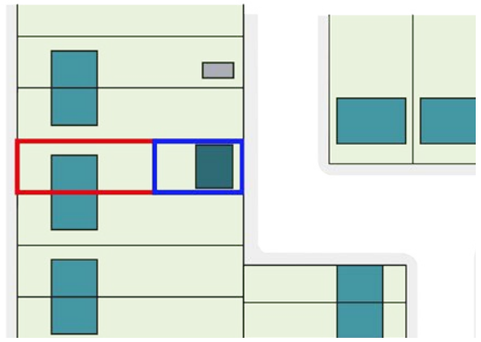


Fig.24 *A plot where a rear gardens has a street running along one end, allowing the site to be divided along its width for development.*

1.90 In **Enhance** and **Transform** areas, applicants should demonstrate that their chosen form of development represents site optimisation whilst positively impacting the local context.

1.91 On sites lacking a clearly-defined frontage, there is an opportunity for creative, innovative approaches to development that unlock street activity and create stronger street frontages. Windows onto a secondary street should be used to introduce passive surveillance onto the street.

1.92 Proposals should ensure the secondary street can accommodate such development through the design of street lighting that does not negatively impact existing neighbours and refuse storage which considers disposal and collection and landscaping.

1.93 Where front gardens are characteristic of the wider local context, applicants should incorporate front gardens into their proposals to contribute to the *street scene* and continue the language of existing homes.

1.94 This provision should be balanced with providing suitably located and sized private amenity space for each home as required by the London Plan.

1.95 Such developments are often the first of their kind, and can therefore set a precedent for future, similar developments. Applicants must demonstrate that the design of a new development considers how future development on adjacent plots might come forward over time, demonstrating that new development does not prejudice adjacent plots, as in Fig.25.

1.96 The cumulative effect of a series of developments of a similar nature within an area should be considered. Where it is possible to create a row of developments across several plots simultaneously, this approach will be preferred and encouraged.

1.97 In some instances, blank elevations near or on boundaries may be necessary to enable future development to come forward. In these instances, the applicant should use guidance set out in D 11 of the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles on how to design blank frontages that do not negatively impact the *street scene* in the intervening period.

Layout

1.98 Applicants must demonstrate their approach to waste management, engaging in conversations with the Council's Environmental Services team to ensure proposals are deemed suitable.

Spatial quality

1.99 Proposals must balance allowing sufficient daylight and sunlight into homes with protecting the privacy of existing neighbours. Applicants should demonstrate how elevations are designed to mitigate against overlooking whilst simultaneously providing suitable light levels and avoiding excessive blank façades.

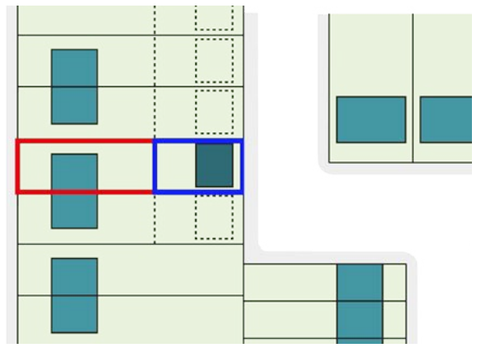


Fig.25 *New development on freeform sites should consider how incremental development might come forward on nearby sites to ensure the proposal does not preclude future development.*

Street-facing Sites

S 10 Corner sites should address all streets that the site has frontage onto and appropriately respond to these frontages

Context

1.100 Corner sites can occur with existing buildings on one or multiple sides of the site, as Fig.26. As such, these sites will share some characteristics with other street-facing site types, and should also follow the advice given in the relevant section.

1.101 Development on corner sites should demonstrate best practice in terms of the design approach to prominent sites as outlined in the Local Character chapter of the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles.

1.102 The *massing* of corner sites can typically be taller than the surrounding prevailing height or step forward from the typical building lines if it is an appropriately justified placemaking response and the amenity of neighbours is suitably protected.

1.103 Corner sites typically occur at the junctions between two streets, but can also occur when a street changes angle sharply. The Council typically deems streets to be different if they meet at an angle less than 135°, even if they have the same name.

1.104 In Bexley, it is common for streets to curve gently, but these should generally only be considered corner sites when the way that the street curves would make a building on that site particularly prominent in the *street scene*.

1.105 Where existing buildings on corner plots fail to address both frontages they often make less than optimal use of their plot, presenting an opportunity for either addition or redevelopment. As with other sites, corner sites can benefit from being combined, or collaborating, with adjacent plots to form a larger development, enhancing opportunities for optimisation and viability.

Townscape

1.106 Corner sites are often important visual nodes within the wider setting, and can act as markers for orientation, wayfinding and local identity, which should be expressed in the proposal's character.

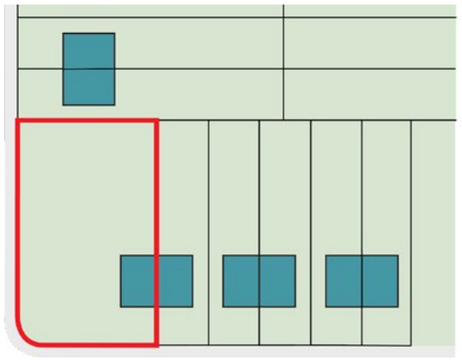


Fig.26 *This corner plot example has existing buildings on two sides and would be suitable for both addition or redevelopment.*

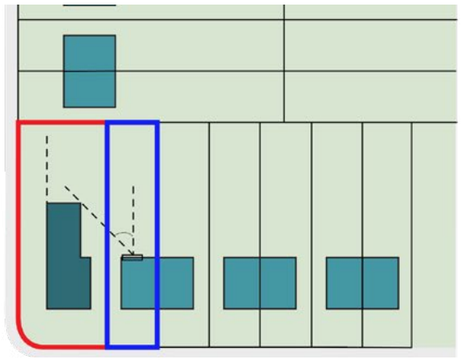


Fig.27 *Development by addition allows new massing on the corner by stepping forward of one existing building lines to ensure acceptable light levels to the host building.*

1.107 As these sites may respond to two different sets of constraints that are independent of the immediate context on each street, buildings on corners will have to mediate between these potentially contrasting styles and characters. This must be apparent in the design proposal and supported by a Character Appraisal.

1.108 Many corner developments are found on the junction between primary and secondary streets. Generally, new development should reinforce this condition and address both streets, whilst create a clear hierarchy across façades i.e. presenting a main frontage to the primary street and secondary frontages to the secondary street.

1.109 Elevations should positively address both streets by considering the placement of entrances and windows overlooking the streets.

1.110 In certain contexts, non-residential uses at ground floor may also be appropriate, especially where relationships to existing public uses are established. This acceptability will depend upon the policy context of the surrounding area.

1.111 Where development is taller than neighbouring buildings, the approach to height should be determined by the context. In **Maintain** areas, buildings may be marginally taller, but comprehensive justification is required. In **Enhance** and **Transform** areas, one storey taller is generally acceptable, but taller heights might be possible subject to specific site constraints.

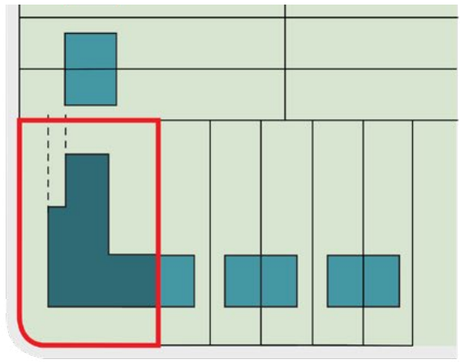


Fig.28 *As a redevelopment proposal, the new building could extend beyond the prevailing building on the secondary street to optimise the street.*

1.112 Utilising setbacks and material changes can help justify additional height, but in all cases where additional height is proposed, applicants should demonstrate how the amenity of nearby properties is protected. In all cases, proposed heights must comply with Bexley Local Plan Policy DP12 Tall buildings and building heights.

1.113 Where buildings extend existing rows of consistent buildings, development should act as "bookends" to the terrace with an appropriate response to the existing architectural expression and form.

1.114 In **Enhance** and **Transform** areas, it may be possible for building lines to marginally step forwards of adjacent building lines. When developments do step forward, it must be demonstrated that the amenity and privacy of new dwellings is protected, particularly in *habitable rooms* at ground floor level.

1.115 New corner development must demonstrate high design quality, particularly if building taller than the context, or extending beyond adjacent building lines. This applies to both the architectural and landscape design, which should be designed concurrently.

Layout

1.116 When building close to the highway, applicants should ensure sufficient space for footpaths to ensure generosity and comfort to pedestrians.

1.117 Where parking is provided in between the primary facade and the street, it should be well landscaped with mature planting, and with accesses to parking spaces kept away from the junction.

Freeform + corner example

This example illustrates a site occupied by an existing employment use within an area of inconsistent plot layout and character. The plot is large enough to allow a development comprising a mix of different housing types, and a lack of prevailing character will mean that there is not an obvious point of reference in terms of architectural design approach.

The site would be classed as "Freeform/Corner street-facing". Such sites can significantly vary in size, shape and the type of constraints which apply to them.

Due to the added complexity, anyone considering the development of such sites should demonstrate a high level of design quality within their planning application submission.

Development scenario

Site type	Street facing - freeform/ corner
Policy context	Within Sustainable Development Location
Immediate typology context	Mixed typology and use
Consistency of surrounding character	Varied
Site Area	0.23 ha
Size of development	10+ homes
PTAL	3
Existing land use	Employment uses
Mixed use development	Yes

Context

A lack of consistent context coupled with no established pattern of urban form means that applications will require high quality design and placemaking to make a scheme successful.

As a consequence, it will be more difficult to demonstrate that a development has made the most effective use of the site.

It will be necessary to undertake a wider townscape assessment and to demonstrate how the proposed layout and design responds to the specific requirements, setting and character of the site.

Proposals of 10 or more homes are classed as major development and must meet additional requirements, such as affordable housing and Urban Greening Factor in accordance with London Plan Policy G5 Urban greening.

Existing adjacent non-residential uses must not be negatively affected by the introduction of new residential uses, and therefore development must adhere to the London Plan Policy D13 Agent of Change.

Designers should work with the sites inconsistent plot usages and character on adjacent sites. Opportunities may exist to create a more successful relationship to the street, enhance pedestrian routes to front doors, provide high-quality shared amenity space, and improve access for servicing.

Townscape

New development can enhance the character of an area by reinstating or reinforcing a prevailing building line.

Sites with existing employment uses might choose to reintegrate these within a mixed-use development. This approach must be considered alongside the Bexley Local Plan policies on Town Centre development and industrial land.

Existing

Fig.29 *Existing site plan showing employment uses varied patterns of development on adjacent sites.*

Proposed

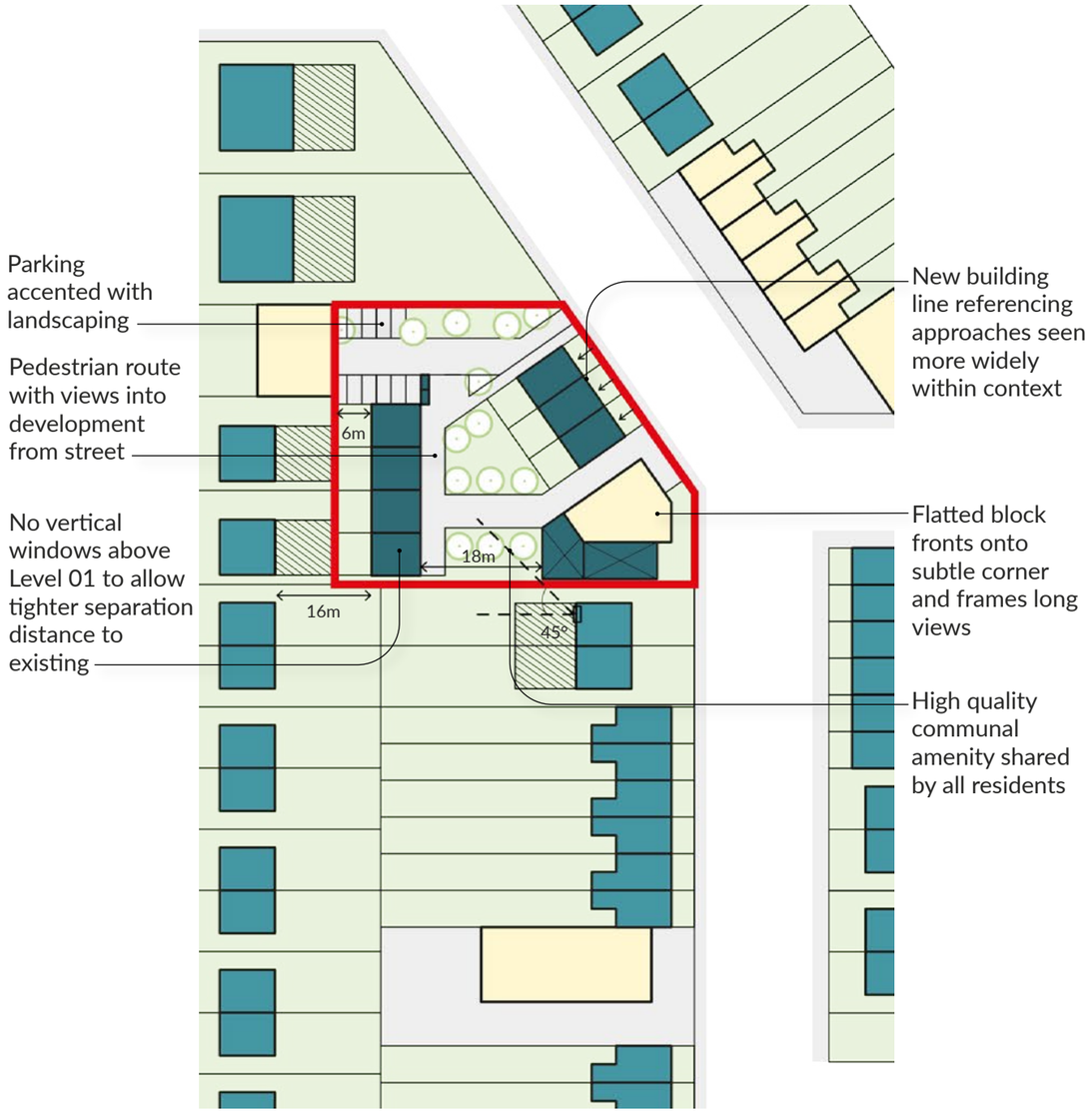


Fig.30 *Proposed site plan showing new development made up of a range of typologies suited to their site specific constraints, with segregated access (car/pedestrian) and shared amenity landscape.*

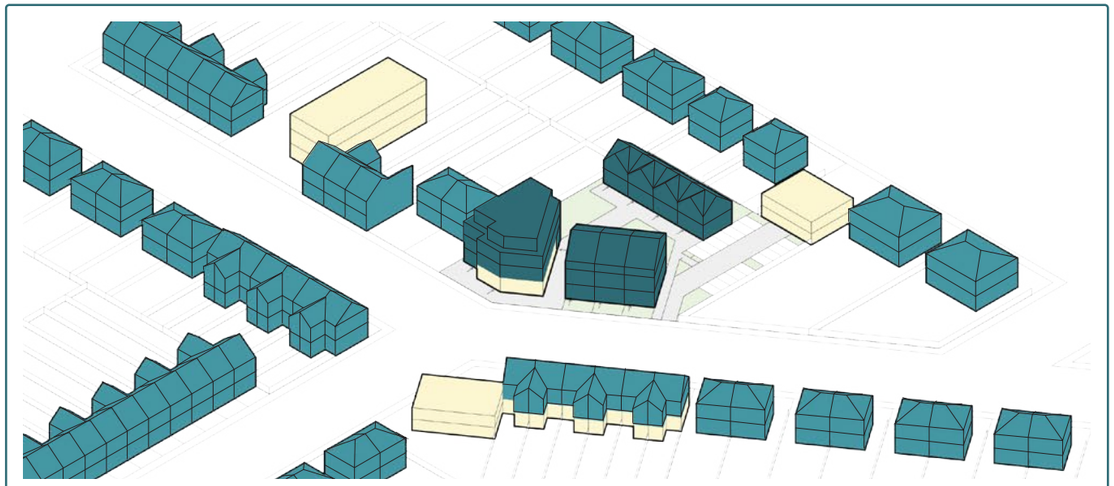


Fig.31 *Axonometric view of the example proposed scheme*

Suburban Housing, Aldershot
Sergison Bates Architects

An irregular site arrangement and use of unconventional house types helps to create an interesting relationship between buildings and a street prioritised for pedestrians.

© Kristien Daem

Gistel Housing, Belgium
Witherford Watson Mann

This site layout is focused on creating spaces for communal activity. Buildings sensitively stitch into wider urban form and frame shared external spaces. Low-level buildings ensure outside areas receive high levels of sunlight, which is important for encouraging use and a sense of community.

© Witherford Watson Mann

Street-facing Sites

S 11 Vertical extensions should ensure subservience to the host building in the terms of scale, *massing*, form and architectural expression

Context

1.118 The following advice applies to the creation of new dwellings and does not include the enlargement of an existing property where there is no net increase in the total number of dwellings. In these instances, refer to guidance in the Design Guide Part 2 - Building Alterations and Extensions.

1.119 Where relevant, guidance should be read in conjunction with that set out in previous street-facing categories.

1.120 In some instances, vertical extensions may have permitted development (PD) rights and applicants can submit a prior approval application to the Local Planning Authority. Applicants should note that there are limitations on the extent and nature of development allowed under PD.

1.121 Vertical extensions should respond to the existing building and be designed as *subservient* to the *host building*. Proposals should also respond to the scale and roof form of neighbouring and opposite buildings to ensure proposals are in keeping with the context. Applicants should evidence how this is achieved using the Character Appraisal.

1.122 Vertical extensions should, unless strong justification is provided, only occur:

a. In **Enhance** or **Transform** areas
b. And/or in areas of mixed character
c. And/or above purpose-built blocks of flats or non-residential uses.

1.123 Addition through vertical extension can be effective when the existing uses, such as ground floor Class E uses, need to remain in place during construction. The Design Guide SPD Part 2 - Area Types provides further guidance on the redevelopment and/or replacement of shop parades.

1.124 When the existing building is relatively small compared to the extension, the redevelopment of a whole site may be more efficient than addition.

1.125 Vertical extensions can set a precedent for neighbouring sites and applicants may be required to demonstrate how potential cumulative development might impact an area.

1.126 Proposals in areas with poor connectivity should respond by limiting the number of additional homes proposed to minimise the potentially negative impact of development upon existing amenities such as parking.

Townscape

1.127 Vertical extensions can have a significant effect on the street scene. Where an area has a consistent character, particularly where defined by building heights, or in sensitive locations categorised as **Maintain**, vertical extensions are typically less likely to be supported and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

1.128 In **Enhance** or **Transform** areas where the street has a varied character and inconsistent heights, existing properties can generally be extended to become one storey higher than the tallest property in the street, excluding corner buildings.

1.129 In all instances, vertical extensions must comply with Policy DP12 Building heights and tall buildings in the Bexley Local Plan.

1.130 Applicants should demonstrate that the development will not negatively impact the local environmental conditions, especially in terms of wind and overshadowing.

1.131 Vertical extensions should typically be set back from the building line below to ensure subordination to the *host building* and preserve the scale of the street.

1.132 Where it can be demonstrated that following existing building lines would not negatively impact the streetscape, this approach may be acceptable. In these instances, applicants should ensure distinction between old and new, for example through the material specification or specification and layout of openings.

1.133 The *massing* of additional storeys should be proportionate to the building below to avoid creating top heavy developments that unbalance the existing building, particularly when viewed within the context of neighbouring buildings.

1.134 Where new vertical circulation falls outside the curtilage of the existing building, it should be integrated into the overall design.

1.135 Where plant equipment is required at roof level, applicants should ensure this is located away from the building's perimeter to minimise visibility from ground level.

1.136 In all instances, contextual elevations, sections and 3D *massing* views showing the proposal in its context should be provided to allow the Council to assess the potential impact of development on the *street scene* and wider context.

Materials and details

1.137 Design proposals should holistically consider the resultant appearance of the building and the relationship between the existing and extension.

1.138 The Materials and details chapter of the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles sets out principles to consider when developing proposals. Whilst new materials need not directly match the existing building, applicants must propose materials that respond positively to the existing building and surrounding area.

1.139 In some cases, over-cladding the existing building may create a consistent façade and to unify the entire building. If adopting this strategy, applicants should take the opportunity to enhance the thermal performance of the existing building.

1.140 Junctions between the extended and neighbouring buildings should be well detailed, both in terms of aesthetics and weather proofing. The locations of drainage pipes and other servicing equipment should be shown on submitted drawings.

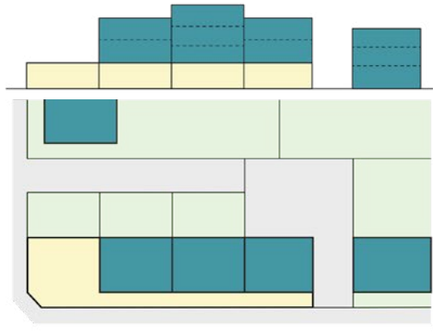


Fig.32 *Commercial buildings (shown in yellow) are often suitable for vertical extension, particularly where existing uses remain in place throughout.*

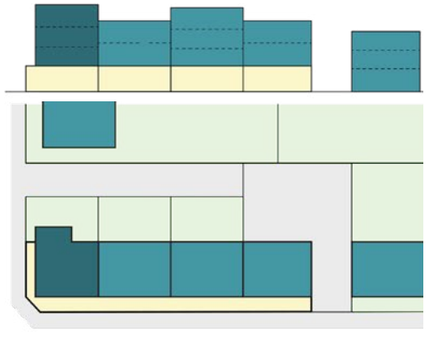


Fig.33 *In this case the extension should also use advice set out in S 10. New homes can be accessed by new circulation at ground floor.*

Street-facing Sites

S 12 Vertical extensions must demonstrate that access and facilities will be sufficiently accommodated

Outlook and privacy

1.141 Applicants must demonstrate that proposals will not negatively impact the outlook and privacy or amenity of existing, neighbouring homes. Where communal amenity space is required, applicants should ensure this is suitably located to avoid impacts to neighbours.

Comfort and wellbeing

1.142 Applicants should aim to provide 100% dual, or triple, aspect homes within upward extensions and refer to guidance D 21 and D22 in the Design Principles for guidance on delivering high-quality homes. All new homes must be provided with access to private amenity space. Daylight and sunlight analysis must be undertaken, with the applicant evidencing that residents will benefit from sufficient levels.

1.143 Where new development involves upward extensions above existing block of flats, and/or is located within an estate, it should be evident how the development will positively impact existing residents.

1.144 This might include thermal upgrades throughout the existing building, enhancing the communal amenity provision or the provision of new lift access to serve all existing dwellings above ground floor where this does not already exist. Proposals that provide wider benefits for existing residents will be looked upon favourably.

1.145 When extending an existing building, applicants should consult existing occupants and applicants evidence how this has informed the proposal.

1.146 If residents are proposed to remain in the building throughout construction, applicants should submit a comprehensive construction plan, demonstrating how disruption and disturbance will be kept to a minimum. Applicants should consider modular construction methods to reduce construction time and lessen the impact on existing residents.

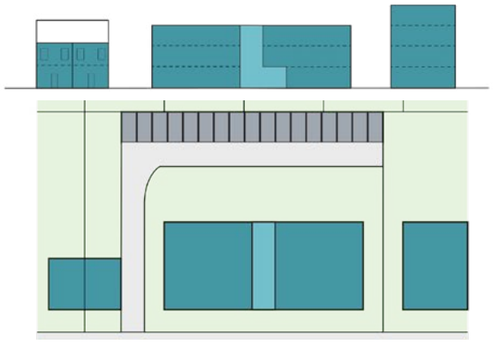


Fig.34 *Existing blocks of flats in areas of varied context often have structural capacity for lightweight extensions and circulation that lends itself to extension.*

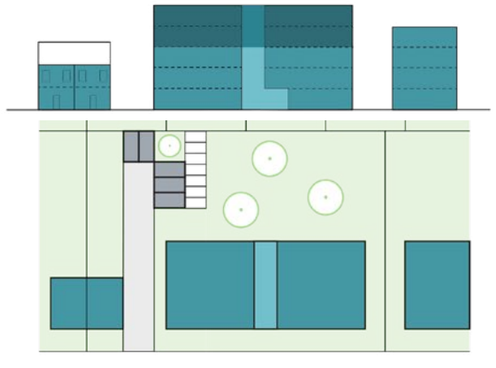


Fig.35 *Proposals present opportunities to redevelop ground floor layouts and must ensure that sufficient space is provided for existing and proposed bins, bikes, parking and amenity.*

Access and servicing

1.147 Subject to the proposed height, new homes may be accessed through existing circulation spaces, or by providing a new separate access core. Where buildings heights would exceed 18m, two means of escape and access must be provided in accordance with Approved Document Part B.

1.148 Access and safety measures, particularly in the case of fire escape, must be set out in the application, including how fire safety for existing and new residents will be achieved and maintained.

1.149 Access arrangements should be considered early in the design process. When new residential accommodation is located above existing commercial uses, a separate, street-fronting, clearly defined residential entrance should be provided with clear signage.

1.150 Upward extensions must provide sufficient capacity for cycle and refuse storage is accommodated within the design. Where sufficient capacity cannot be achieved, the number of homes proposed should be adjusted to meet requirements.

1.151 Along busy high streets, and in other locations where access to the building is difficult, some existing homes above shops use informal kerbside collections rather than storage within a dedicated store. Vertical extensions to these buildings should provide formal waste storage for all homes at ground floor. Development that would result in an increase in informal kerbside collections will not be supported.

1.152 For complex applications, a Recycling and Waste Management Strategy may be required. Applicants should refer to the Re:London Template Recycling and Waste Management Strategy for guidance on preparing this.

Arklow Road, Deptford
RCKa

A 1920s commercial building was refurbished and transformed to provide 44 new homes. The architect had to reconcile the design of efficient new homes, within the envelope of the existing building and whilst maintaining the character of the existing building. Shared amenity spaces are dispersed throughout the scheme to promote social cohesion between residents.

© RCKa/Jakob Spriestersbach

Street-facing Sites Checklist

In addition to the relevant general guidance chapter (shown in brackets), applicants should ensure guidance under each specific site type is followed to demonstrate the below:

- [ ] **Show that engagement and consultation has been undertaken, and is proposed, throughout design development and all key RIBA Stages of Work (Preparing Development Proposals)**
  This could be achieved by presenting an engagement and consultation strategy, followed by supporting evidence to illustrate how local stakeholder insights have shaped the development proposal.

- [ ] **Show that the proposed scale, *massing* and form are appropriate to the growth area (S01/S02/S03)**
  This should be achieved using a Character Appraisal to evidence the site and its surroundings. A set of diagrams and drawings that illustrate how the scale, massing and form of the proposal have been informed by, and respond to, the surrounding context and relevant site constraints.

- [ ] **Show how the proposal have been designed to respond to site-specific constraints, where appropriate, maximise active frontage and protect neighbouring amenity, outlook and privacy and access to daylight and sunlight (S01/S02/S03)**
  This should be achieved using a set of drawings to evidence how the proposal sits within its surroundings and demonstrate how the impact on neighbouring properties has been considered during design development.

- [ ] **Show how the proposal has been designed to make a positive impact to the streetscape, townscape and immediate context (S01/S02/S03)**
  This should be achieved using a Character Appraisal to evidence site-specific opportunities, constraints and significant townscape features that have informed the architectural expression. A set of diagrams and drawings should be developed to communicate how the elevations have evolved in response to the setting, details of the material palette and specification (including material reference images) and soft and hard landscaping layouts and specifications.

- [ ] **Show that high-quality, functional homes, private and communal amenity space will be provided (Preparing Development Proposals)**
  This should be achieved by presenting a set of drawings illustrating internal layouts, all amenity spaces and soft and hard landscape layouts and specifications.

- [ ] **Show how the development has been designed to enable the safe movement of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, with access and servicing duly considered (S04/S05)**
  This should be achieved by developing a set of diagrams and drawings that show proposed movement routes and access for different users, the location of waste storage, cycle and car parking and soft and hard landscape layouts and specifications.

- [ ] **Where relevant, show how the proposal will unlock improvements to the setting for existing, neighbouring residents (S04)**
  This should be achieved using a set of drawings and supporting information that identify what has informed the proposed improvements and where they are located within the site.

- [ ] **Where appropriate, show how the proposal has been developed to protect and/or enhance existing biodiversity, ecology and habitats (Preparing Development Proposals/S04)**
  This should be achieved using a Character Appraisal to evidence ecological features and habitats that the project seeks to protect and/or enhance. A set of diagrams and drawings showing how the proposal connects into existing green and blue networks and the layout and specification of the soft and hard landscape design should then be developed.

- [ ] **Show how surface water flooding has been duly considered and mitigated through design (S04)**
  A set of drawings should be developed to illustrate the proposed soft and hard landscape layouts and specification.

- [ ] **Show how the proposal follows the energy hierarchy and embeds climatic sustainability (Preparing Development Proposals/S04)**
  This should be achieved by developing a set of drawings and specifications demonstrating how the proposal responds to site-specific environmental conditions, promotes a circular economy and follows the energy hierarchy. Information on the proposed materials, soft and hard landscape design should be included.

2 Off-street Sites

Off-street development typically occurs when either:

- Additional homes are built on spaces to the rear of street-facing properties, or
- Homes are developed on sites in the centre of urban blocks where there is a new or existing access route to the street.

Development on off-street sites will vary depending on their location, context and site features. This type of development tends to have a relatively low influence on the character of a street, but can have a significant effect on the character and amenity of gardens and the privacy of existing homes.

S 13 The *massing* of development on all **off-street** sites should respond closely to the surrounding buildings and adequately protect the privacy and amenity of existing homes and gardens

S 14 **Off-street** sites must provide safe, legible access arrangements. Where access for vehicles is provided this must not impede the safety of pedestrians

S 15 **Communal rear space** development should demonstrate improvements to the existing condition

S 16 **Private rear spaces** should not detrimentally impact the privacy, outlook and access to light and amenity of existing residents

S 17 **Backland development** should explore opportunities to create a new street-facing development

Types of off-street development

All off-street development must comply with Bexley Local Plan Policy DP2 Residential development on backland and infill sites. This sets out that such development will typically be encouraged within Sustainable Development Locations, and only accepted beyond these where development complies with all relevant Development Plan policies. The policy sets out the requirement for all proposals to optimise the site and provide well-designed housing and amenities which positively contribute to the area.

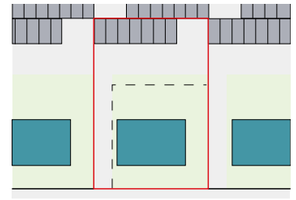
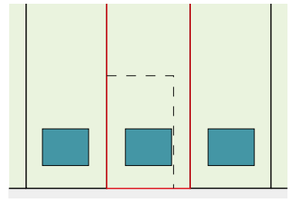
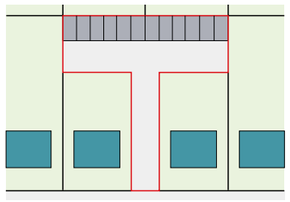
2.1 Off-street sites occur where a development on that site does not have a street-facing frontage onto an existing road. Many off-street developments will result in the creation of new streets, and thus, street-facing buildings.
This document organises its advice based on the existing site condition, but, where relevant, guidance affecting the resultant development should also be followed.

2.2 Some off-street sites will form part of a wider site that does benefit from a street frontage. Where schemes include development both at the street-facing area, and at a distinct area that is not street-facing, advice from both street-facing and off-street sections will be relevant.

2.3 Off-street sites can vary significantly in size. An off-street site will be suitable for development when large enough to accommodate one or more new residential dwellings, the associated amenity space, access, appropriate separation distances and day- and sunlight requirements.

2.4 Given the potentially sensitive nature of neighbouring sites, which may be in one or several ownerships, applicants should engage neighbours from the outset of the design process. Where applicants can demonstrate consultation and support from neighbours at planning submission, it will be looked upon favourably by the Council.

Fig.36 *Examples of typical off-street sites in Bexley (dotted lines indicate land remaining in the ownership of the host building)*

Type	Diagram
Communal rear space Sites to the rear of a building with multiple dwellings such as a block of flats	
Private rear space Sites to the rear of a plot that contains a single dwelling such as a house	
Backlands Sites with no host building or street frontage, with an access route connecting to the street	

General guidance

S 13 The *massing* of development on all **off-street** sites should respond closely to the surrounding buildings and adequately protect the privacy and amenity of existing homes and gardens

The massing of off-street development will depend on the type of site, the character of the surrounding area, as well as the principle of growth. The Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles section D08 provides guidance on how to identify which principle of growth (Maintain, Enhance or Transform) applies. Refer to the Context and Townscape chapters for guidance on massing, height and character.

Height

2.5 The height and visual mass of new development should be proportionate to existing surrounding development. Site sections should demonstrate how the proposed height sits within in context.

2.6 As illustrated in Fig.37, in **Maintain** areas where perimeter street-facing properties are three storeys or taller, developments should be at least one storey lower.

The appropriate *massing* will depend on the context and the principle of growth area:

Maintain areas

a. Proposals should be at least one storey lower than surrounding street-facing buildings if those buildings are three storeys or taller
b. Where surrounding street-facing buildings are two storeys or lower then the proposal should generally be limited to an equivalent height and be visually *subservient* to them

Enhance and Transform areas

c. The *massing* should be visually *subservient* to the surrounding buildings and be limited to an equivalent height

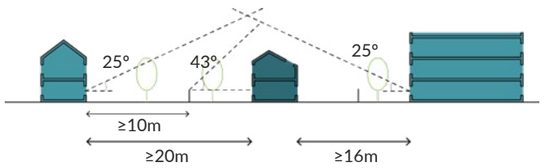


Fig.37 *An example of off-street development in a **Maintain** area, where the flat roofed building is a host building. A closer, 16m separation distance between host and new building can be achieved through facing windows only being provided at ground floor with mitigating measures such as staggering windows to upper floors avoiding direct overlooking to neighbours.*

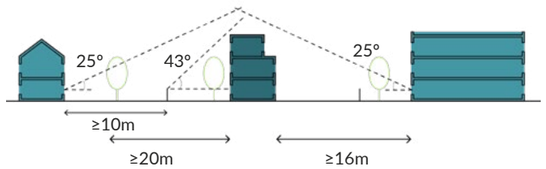


Fig.38 *On an off-street site in an **Enhance** area where the flat-roofed host building is located on the right of the proposed development. A 16m separation distance between host and new building is achieved due mitigating privacy measures for upper storey windows such as obscuring openings with louvres.*

2.7 For the purpose of this definition, where existing buildings have pitched roofs, those which are significantly sized and can accommodate a habitable room(s) will typically be counted as a storey.

2.8 Where new buildings are not at least a storey lower than adjacent street-facing buildings, evidence why this cannot be achieved should be provided.

Context

2.9 Unless visible from the street, development in rear spaces typically has a limited effect on the *street scene*, but can influence the nature and character of rear garden spaces.

2.10 When an off-street development is visible from the street, applicants should set out how it responds to the wider *street scene*. This should include analysis of:

- Whether the street has a pattern of regular gaps between buildings, if greenery can be seen in these gaps, and how the proposal will impact this
- How the new building(s) will be distinguished from those fronting the street, i.e. whether a complementary or contrasting architectural expression is used
- How the entrance sequence works for the new dwellings - whether it is *legible* and safe, and if it is combined with the entrance of any *host building*, or distinct from it.

2.11 Applicants should provide contextual street elevations and 3D streetscape views to demonstrate how the new development will be viewed within the street.

2.12 Where new development is in an area generally occupied by gardens, the development should respond positively to, and complement, this setting, taking a landscape-led approach by enhancing greenery, particularly where this can provide screening between new and existing development.

Amenity

2.13 Developments must maintain adequate levels of privacy and daylight and sunlight to both new and existing dwellings. Roof lights, oblique windows and mature planting can often help to overcome constraints associated with site boundaries, and close proximities. As shown in Fig.37-Fig.39, using mitigating measures such as using rooflights can reduce separation distances in line with guidance provided in the Design Principles and optimise sites.

2.14 In areas categorised as **Maintain**, proposals will be considered on the basis of the likely impact upon existing residential amenity, particularly the protected garden area. It should be demonstrated how the development has been designed to minimise the potential impact on neighbours.

2.15 In **Enhance** or **Transform** areas, a more significant evolution of the existing condition may be possible. Application drawings and the *DAS* should demonstrate how guidance in the Spatial Quality chapter of the Design Principles has been followed.

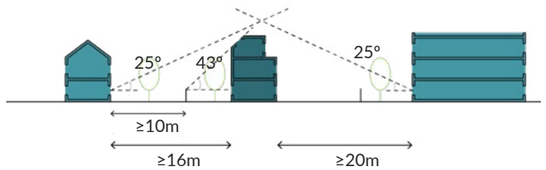


Fig.39 *An off-street development in an **Enhance** area achieves a 16m separation distance to the existing neighbouring dwelling by having no facing windows above ground floor, with first floor windows on flank walls, and windows in the roof slope at top floor. In this case, any resultant blank frontages would need to be appropriately addressed through design.*

General guidance

S 14 Off-street sites must provide safe, legible access arrangements. Where access for vehicles is provided this must not impede the safety of pedestrians

Bexley Local Plan Policy DP2 Residential development on backland and infill sites sets out the exceptions that apply to enable development on residential gardens and/or communal amenity areas including green spaces.

Layout

2.16 The provision of safe access for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, including waste collection, deliveries and the emergency services, is vital to a successful off-street development. This must be considered from the outset alongside setting out parking provision, where parking is required.

2.17 Developments will typically require the creation of a new route to enable site access. Buildings should be orientated to be *legible* from the new street, with clear pedestrian route(s) leading to the main entrance of each home. The layout of the site should avoid "leftover" spaces, i.e. those where ownership, maintenance liability and purpose is unclear.

2.18 Applicants should consider the sense of arrival towards off-street sites, especially those not visible from the street. Pedestrian access should be provided with appropriate lighting and level surfaces, and benefit from passive surveillance. Planning submissions should include access plans and/or diagrams and an ecologically sensitive lighting strategy.

2.19 Where one route into the site is provided, this should be clearly demarcated to ensure the safe and simultaneous passage of all users. This could be providing a footpath, different ground surface treatments, or hard or soft landscape features. Details of proposed surface treatments should be provided with during pre-application discussions and with a planning submission.

2.20 Alternatively, applicants could explore the use of shared surfaces where pedestrians take priority and access for vehicles is more restricted. Where proposed, transport consultants should demonstrate how this will be achieved safely, for example by using suitable road widths and vehicle speed reducing measures.

2.21 In some instances, vehicular access may be provided via existing streets, although these may need to be upgraded to accommodate heavier vehicles. Where a scheme involves alterations to a street, the Highway Authority may require a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit to be completed before planning permission is granted. Completing this audit is also advocated for shared surfaces.

2.22 Where servicing or emergency vehicles will enter the site, vehicle routes must be developed to an adoptable standard, with sufficient space for turning. Applicants should refer to the Design Guide SPD Part 2 - Technical Handbook for details of these requirements.

2.23 Developments must comply with the London Plan and the Council's parking policies set out in the Bexley Local Plan, and refer to guidance in the Movement chapter of the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles. Applicants should demonstrate that the proposal will not result in unacceptable overspill of on-street parking in the area.

2.24 In all cases, gated developments are discouraged, especially where the inclusion of access control measures might result in vehicles waiting on the highway. Applicants should note it is an offence for gates (or doors) to open outwards onto the highway.

2.25 Strategies such as moveable bollards may be acceptable but will require strict management to avoid them being left open and allowing unauthorised vehicle use. Where utilised, these must not impede access for delivery or emergency vehicles or create a build-up of traffic along the highway.

2.26 In all instances, early consultation with the Highway Authority should be undertaken to ensure that new or upgraded vehicle access does not compromise or endanger pedestrians passing on the highway or worsen traffic conditions. The Technical Handbook provides details of the highways agreements required.

2.27 A parking assessment, as outlined in the Technical Handbook, should be undertaken to accurately determine the level of parking provision required on site as, where it is still required, existing on-site parking will need to be re-provided.

2.28 Early consideration should be given to managing waste collection, with guidance in the Technical Handbook on waste storage followed to ensure appropriate design solutions.

2.29 Applicants should engage the Council's Environmental Services team early to discuss their proposed waste management solution and information should be available during any pre-application discussions. Drawings showing the waste storage and collection proposal, including the proposed location, access and visual appearance, must accompany a planning submission.

Utilities and servicing

2.30 Applicants should consider the cost and time required to connect utility services and investigate requirements early on in the design process.

Natural environment

2.31 Applicants must investigate whether any Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) apply to their site before proposing any works. Irrespective of any live TPOs, as set out in Bexley Local Plan Policy DP2 Residential development on backland and infill sites, proposals must demonstrate the retention and enhancement of distinctive landscape and nature conservation features.

2.32 Development on existing green space must demonstrate compliance with *Biodiversity Net Gain*, unless exempt. Where schemes are exempt, demonstrating an increase in the biodiversity will be looked upon favourably and all applicants must comply with Bexley Local Plan Policy DP21 Greening of development sites.

2.33 Applicants must present a high quality and cohesive landscape proposal, especially where changes to an existing site will result in changes to the extent of soft and hard landscaping on site.

2.34 New green infrastructure, such as planting new trees, has the potential to mitigate against the *urban heat island effect*, preventing built up areas becoming uncomfortably warm for residents. Increasing the amount of soft landscaping - suitable for the context - will therefore be favourably viewed by the Council, subject to a sufficient accompanying maintenance and management plan.

2.35 Surface water flood risk must be addressed using *sustainable drainage systems* (SuDS) as required by Bexley Local Plan Policy DP33 *Sustainable drainage systems*. Applicants should present site-appropriate approaches such as the use of permeable surfaces and increased planting such as rain gardens that form part of a holistic soft landscaping proposal.

Off-street Sites

S 15 Communal rear space development should demonstrate improvements to the existing condition

Context

2.36 Communal rear spaces are usually found behind street-facing blocks of flats, often serving as redundant parking and amenity space.

2.37 Given the impact such development can have on existing residents, early and ongoing engagement is essential, and demonstrable evidence of how this engagement has evolved the scheme will be required. Significant engagement and existing resident support for these changes will be looked upon favourably.

Townscape

2.38 On such sites, applicants may be required to relocate existing cycle and vehicular parking, waste storage and communal amenity space to enable site development. When relocating these amenities, applicants should consider consolidating these amenities to optimise use of the site by providing sufficient shared amenities for existing and new residents.

2.39 The *massing*, form and location of building(s) is likely to be dictated by the provision of these amenities, boundary and edge conditions and distances to *host* and neighbouring buildings.

Outlook and privacy

2.40 As set out in the Spatial Quality section of the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles, the relationship between existing and new buildings is considered differently to the relationship between new buildings within the same development, with different metrics for separation distances applicable depending on the development scenario.

2.41 Where a site strategy will make new and existing dwellings part of one development, *host buildings* can be considered similarly to new buildings, meaning smaller separation distances will typically be acceptable.

2.42 In these instances, applicants should demonstrate one or more of the following:

a. Changes and upgrades as part of the works that benefit both existing and new residents

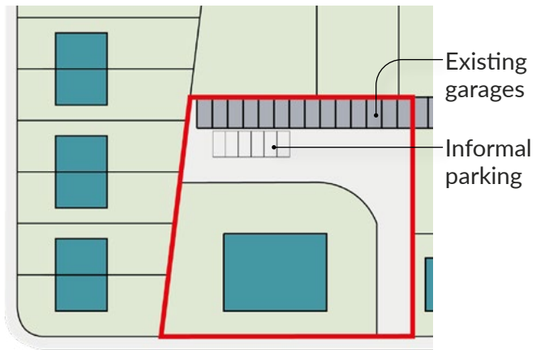


Fig.40 *A potential communal rear space development in its existing condition.*

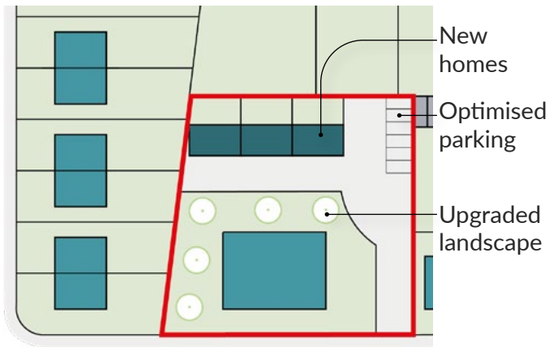


Fig.41 *A developed communal rear space development where new home are provided as well as improved soft and hard landscaping and parking arrangement.*

b. The provision of communal spaces and facilities that are shared between existing and new residents, and

c. Upgrades to the servicing, amenity and quality of the existing homes as part of the works.

2.43 Where new development has distinct access, separate to the *host building(s)*, it should be considered as an existing, neighbouring building(s) and larger separation distances will apply.

Outdoor amenity

2.44 Outdoor amenity should be designed to mitigate the potential negative impact on the privacy of neighbouring homes, both in and outside the red line boundary. Amenity should typically come forward in the form of private gardens, courtyards and inward-facing terraces.

2.45 Site diagrams and drawings should demonstrate how any balconies and terraces providing private amenity space have been designed to prevent intrusive overlooking to and from neighbours.

2.46 When there are ground floor dwellings within existing block(s) of flats and routes through the site are moved/introduced to enable development, or if communal space and landscaping at ground floor is relocated close to the *host building(s)*, applicants should ensure defensible space is provided to these dwellings to protect residents' privacy.

2.47 Where existing communal amenity space is altered, developments should demonstrate improvements to the quality of remaining space and that sufficient space has been retained to accommodate existing residents.

2.48 Communal amenity spaces should be orientated to maximise day- and sunlight entering the space and be well landscaped for visual and ecological amenity. Spaces should be designed to be inclusive and accessible to all and provide opportunities for intergenerational interaction.

2.49 Play space must be well-located and benefit from passive surveillance from surrounding homes, whilst ensuring neighbouring privacy and amenity is protected. The Design Guide SPD Part 2 - Technical Handbook provides guidance on the design and delivery of inclusive, accessible play provision.

Chowdhury Walk, Hackney
Al-Jawad Pike

Replacing garages and adhoc parking that previously filled the site, 11 new homes were delivered on site. The new dwellings follow the existing urban grain, with the staggering plan designed to mitigate overlooking to neighbouring homes.

© Rory Gardiner

Communal rear space example

In this example, the site backs onto two street-facing apartment buildings, where a large space to the rear is occupied by low-quality amenity areas and redundant garages.

Rear space sites are a common condition found in Bexley. This example scenario demonstrates one way in which such sites might be appropriately developed.

Development scenario

Site type	Off-street: communal rear space
Policy context	Within Sustainable Development Location
Immediate typology context	Flats
Consistency of surrounding character	Varied
Site Area	0.25 ha
Size of development	3-5 homes
PTAL	2
Existing land use	Garages and communal gardens associated with residential host buildings
Mixed use development	No

Context

Existing site uses are reorganised to function more efficiently within a smaller space. Genuinely redundant garages on site provide a redevelopment opportunity, with new homes provided in their place.

Poorly defined communal spaces can be improved to enhance the spatial experience for all residents and enable development.

Townscape

Developments in rear spaces need to comply with guidance which seeks to protect the amenity of any existing dwellings on the site, and those in neighbouring properties.

New development is an opportunity to improve vehicle and pedestrian access and servicing, including waste and recycling collection, emergency access, and deliveries. It is likely that service utilities such as water, electricity, and foul and surface water, will need to be extended from the street, or to existing connections within the site.

Similar rear space development opportunities are commonly found on adjacent sites and can often be improved through collaboration, for example, by sharing access or utilities. Applicants should consider the benefits of bringing developments forward in tandem with neighbouring owners.

Layout

Pedestrian and vehicular routes should be segregated, with vehicular access provided adjacent to redefined parking, which is laid with permeable paving to mitigate surface water flooding.

As existing and new homes will use the same access, separation distances between the two are reduced, whilst maintaining adequate outlook and privacy for all residents. New residents are provided with rear gardens.

Natural environment

Mature trees are retained and provide the new pedestrian access route, and are supplemented with new planting.

Existing

Fig.42 *Existing site plan showing car-dominated rear space.*

Proposed

Fig.43 *Proposed site plan showing new mews development with segregated access (car/pedestrian) and improvements to the existing amenity spaces. The section shows separation distance between the existing context and the new development and massing principles and window strategies.*

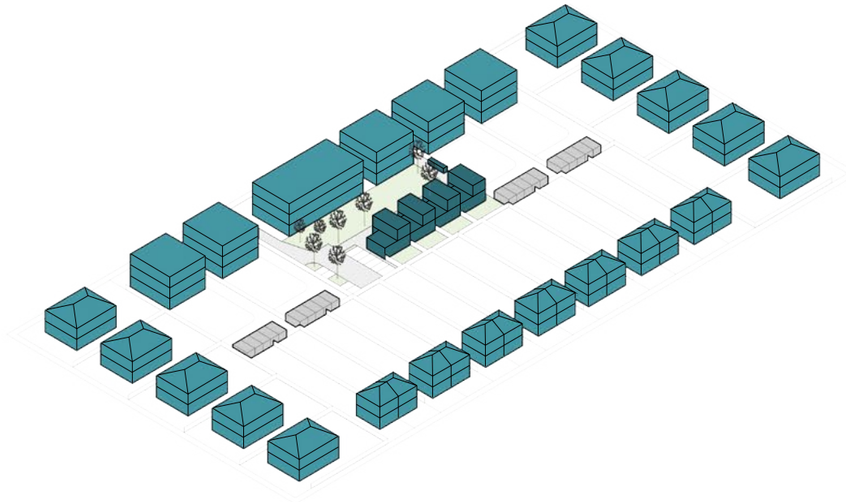


Fig.44 *Axonometric view of the example proposed scheme*

Moray Mews, Islington
Peter Barber Architects

The use of a stepped form and the careful orientation of window openings helps to overcome privacy constraints. Breaking down the *massing* increases light levels within internal rooms and external spaces, allowing a higher density of development suitable for shallow rear space sites.

© Morley Von Sternberg

Wildernesse Mews, Sevenoaks
Morris + Company

New buildings form a positive relationship to an existing *host building* (shown on the left) through using a *subservient* scale and form. The relationship is supported by pairing a contemporary architectural expression with traditional materials. Well-designed entrances face onto the street, providing an active frontage.

© Historic England Archive

Off-street Sites

S 16 Private rear spaces should not detrimentally impact the privacy, outlook and access to light and amenity of existing residents

Context

2.50 Often found to the rear of larger properties, behind buildings with generous plots and in locations with long gardens, private rear space sites have limited visibility from the street. These garden spaces are often important features of the character of an area, so development should respond accordingly to this setting.

2.51 Unlike communal rear space in S 15, private rear space typically sits within a single existing ownership enabling the subdivision of the site into distinct and separate sites, or the creation of a communal arrangement.

2.52 Schemes should allow for the subdivision of the plot into a *host building* with reduced, but sufficient amenity space, provided alongside the new development and the amenity required to support the development.

2.53 Sites should create access to the rear which is independent to the *host building*.

Townscape

2.54 Due to the added importance of the existing garden character of such sites, applicants must demonstrate their consideration for the effects of the proposed *massing* and location of buildings within the site. New development must consider the quality of natural light within outdoor spaces and the retention of mature trees and other soft landscaping features.

2.55 New buildings should be demonstrably *subservient* to the *host* and neighbouring buildings in terms of *massing*, and generally be one storey lower than the *host building*.

Outlook and privacy

2.56 As with S 15, the relationship between the new development and *host building(s)* is especially important and should be developed to provide suitable privacy and quality to spaces between the buildings.

2.57 When developing such a site, new dwellings will establish a relationship with the surrounding buildings and their gardens. Separation distances should reflect guidance provided in the Spatial Quality section of the Design Guide SPD Part 1 - Design Principles.

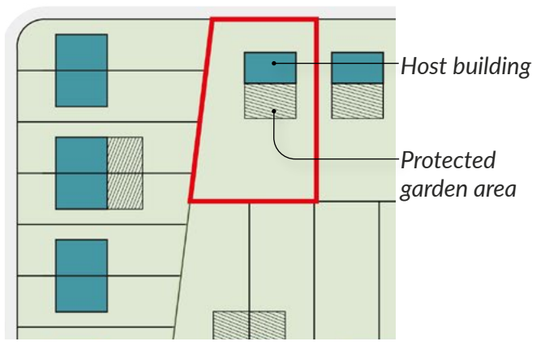


Fig.45 *A typical site where private rear space development might be possible.*

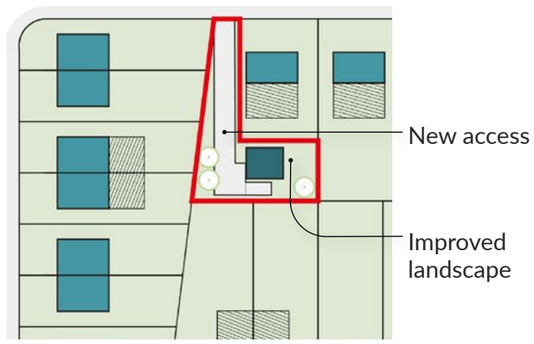


Fig.46 *Plan diagram showing how that typical site might be developed as a private rear space development.*

2.58 Reduced separation distances may be possible where applicants demonstrate that no facing windows will be provided towards the host and neighbouring buildings, with natural light provided through windows at high level or in the roof.

2.59 Accommodation above first floor level is unlikely to be supported unless it can be demonstrated that negative effects upon neighbouring *habitable rooms* and amenity space can be mitigated, such as those measures detailed in 2.60 and 2.61.

2.60 In all instances, new development should avoid overlooking or negatively impact the amenity of the neighbouring gardens. Where windows are provided in elevation, these should ideally be orientated towards rear boundaries to avoid overlooking.

2.61 Wider plots may be able to accommodate flank windows if set back sufficiently from the boundary and it can be demonstrated that separation distances to neighbouring *habitable windows* are sufficient. Applicants should refer to the Spatial Quality section of the Design Principles guidance for further guidance on protecting neighbouring privacy and amenity.

Layout

2.62 Depending on the distance to the rear plot, a new vehicular access route may be required to facilitate development, and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Natural environment

2.63 Whilst policy sets out a presumption in favour of the retention and enhancement of existing greenery, if the limited removal of some existing trees and planting can be shown to optimise the provision of new dwellings, a one-for-one replacement may be considered acceptable.

2.64 This acceptability will be subject to the proposed size and species and subject to the value of the trees to be removed, as set out in D 34 of the Design Principles. Applicants should refer to this guidance when developing proposals.

Garden House, De Beauvoir
Hayhurst & Co

The house strikes a balance in maximising its footprint, whilst protecting the outlook from and privacy of neighbouring properties. The building responds to the scale of its neighbours and the depths of the existing garden, where new access to the rear plot was created alongside the existing terraced house. The owners installed a green roof by planting over 800 plants, creating a unique pitched roof that is punctuated by rooflights bringing light down into the home and responding to the existing garden setting.

© Kilian O'Sullivan

Off-street Sites

S 17 Backland development should explore opportunities to create a new street-facing development

Backland development can fulfil one of the following:

Create a new **street-facing** condition. This type of development should:

a. Provides a new vehicular and pedestrian access to an adoptable standard
b. Creates **street-facing** homes that follow the advice set out in that chapter and its subcategories

Create an **off-street** condition. This type of development should:

c. Be visually *subservient* to the surrounding **street-facing** buildings
d. Provide justification for how the design does not negatively affect the townscape and public realm if the proposal is visible from the street

Context

2.65 Backland sites have no street frontage and are surrounded by existing development, typically under separate ownerships. They are commonly found in the centre of large urban or suburban blocks, particularly those with deep or non-regular geometries. Sites are typically bounded by rear gardens or in areas where different patterns of development meet. Such sites are commonly considered brownfield, hosting clusters of underused or redundant garages or yards.

2.66 These sites are usually accessed by a single route from the highway and differ from other rear space sites as they are independent of larger plots that have a street frontage.

2.67 Given the likely close proximity of surrounding dwellings, such sites require careful planning to manage the sensitive relationships between new and existing homes.

Townscape

2.68 Backland development should form a legible and appropriate urban layout. Where possible, there is a preference for the creation of new street-based development within backland sites, as demonstrated in Fig.49 below. However, this can require a significant amount of space, and therefore many backland developments may need to adopt an alternative approach.

2.69 If creating a new street is feasible, new buildings should be considered as equal to existing street-facing buildings, and do not need to be *subservient*, both visually or in *massing* terms. Proposals should comply with the guidance in the relevant street-facing section of this document.

2.70 Where a street-facing developments cannot be created, new development should be visually *subservient* to the existing street-facing buildings and guidance in S 14 should be followed when establishing the appropriate *massing*.

Layout

2.71 Providing access for pedestrians and emergency and servicing vehicles is typically a key constraint for development. Safe access should be considered from the outset of the design process, with pedestrian access prioritised.

2.72 New streets should allow emergency and servicing vehicles to turn unless a through route can be provided.

Natural environment

2.73 Where backland sites have been undeveloped, these can be ecological havens for local wildlife and developments have the potential to impact upon existing habitats. Development must be designed to preserve and enhance on site biodiversity and ecology.

2.74 Where new streets are created, in line with Bexley Local Plan Policy DP33 *Sustainable drainage systems*, applicants must demonstrate how surface water will be managed.

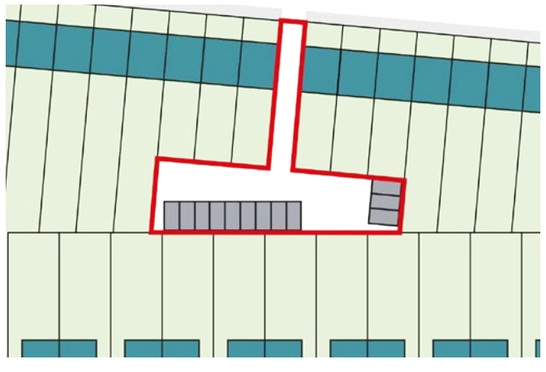


Fig.47 *A typical backland site, in this case a redundant garage site with a narrow vehicular access to the highway.*

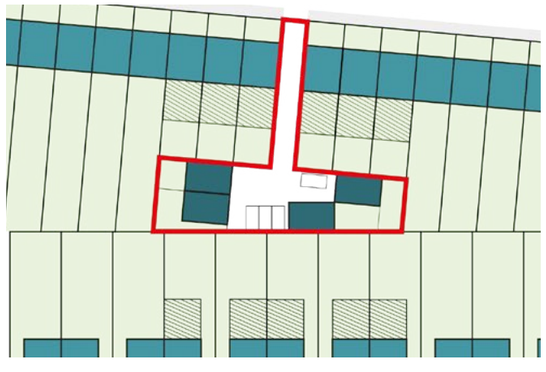


Fig.48 *A developed, off-street backland site that provides four new homes that are designed to be subservient to the existing street-facing development.*

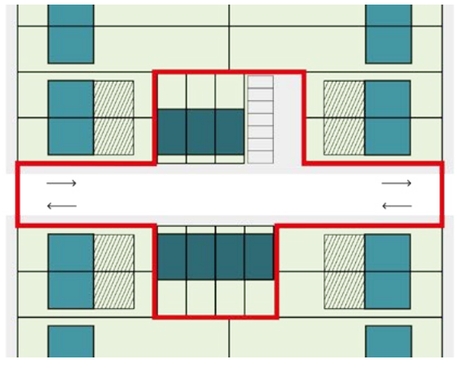


Fig.49 *Plan diagram showing a new street-facing backland development site which provides footpaths and a vehicular route to an adoptable standard.*

Off-street Sites Checklist

In addition to the relevant general guidance chapter (shown in brackets), applicants should ensure guidance under each specific site type is followed to demonstrate the below:

- [ ] **Show that engagement and consultation has been undertaken, and is proposed, throughout design development and all key RIBA Stages of Work (Preparing Development Proposals)**
  This could be achieved by presenting an engagement and consultation strategy, followed by supporting evidence to illustrate how local stakeholder insights have shaped the development proposal.

- [ ] **Show that the proposed scale, *massing* and form are appropriate to the growth area (S 13)**
  This should be achieved using a Character Appraisal to evidence the site and its surroundings. A set of diagrams and drawings that illustrate how the scale, massing and form of the proposal have been informed by, and responds to, the surrounding context and relevant site constraints.

- [ ] **Show how the proposal have been designed to respond to site-specific constraints, where appropriate, maximise active frontage and protect neighbouring amenity, outlook and privacy and access to daylight and sunlight (S 13)**
  This should be achieved using a set of drawings to evidence how the proposal sits within its surroundings and demonstrate how the impact on neighbouring properties has been considered during design development.

- [ ] **Show how the proposal has been designed to make a positive impact to the immediate context (S 13/S 14)**
  This should be achieved using a Character Appraisal to evidence site-specific opportunities, constraints and significant townscape features that have informed the architectural expression. A set of diagrams and drawings should be developed to communicate how the elevations have evolved in response to the setting, details of the material palette and specification (including material reference images) and soft and hard landscaping layouts and specifications.

- [ ] **Show that high-quality, functional homes, private and communal amenity space will be provided (Preparing Development Proposals)**
  This should be achieved by presenting a set of drawings illustrating internal layouts, all amenity spaces and soft and hard landscaping layouts and specifications.

- [ ] **Show how the development has been designed to enable the safe movement of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, with access and servicing duly considered (S 14)**
  This should be achieved by developing a set of diagrams and drawings that show proposed movement and access routes for different users, the location of waste storage, cycle and car parking and soft and hard landscaping layouts and specifications.

- [ ] **Show how new streets have been designed to an adoptable standard (S 14)**
  This should be achieved using a set of drawings, soft and hard landscaping layouts and specifications and other relevant supporting information.

- [ ] **Where appropriate, show how the proposal has been developed to protect and/or enhance existing biodiversity, ecology and habitats (Preparing Development Proposals/S 14)**
  This should be achieved using a Character Appraisal to evidence ecological features and habitats that the project seeks to protect and/or enhance. A set of diagrams and drawings showing how the proposal connects into existing green and blue networks and the layout and specification of the soft and hard landscaping design should then be developed.

- [ ] **Show how surface water flooding has been duly considered and mitigated through design (S 14)**
  A set of drawings should be developed to illustrate the proposed soft and hard landscaping layouts and specification.

- [ ] **Show how the proposal follows the energy hierarchy and embeds climatic sustainability (Preparing Development Proposals)**
  This should be achieved by developing a set of drawings and specifications demonstrating how the proposal responds to site-specific environmental conditions, promotes a circular economy and follows the energy hierarchy. Information on the proposed materials, soft and hard landscaping design should be included.

Glossary

Active frontage

The design of frontages can add interest, life and vitality to the street and public realm. Frontages are considered active if they have:

- Frequent doors and windows without blank walls
- Articulated façades with bays and porches
- Lively internal uses visible from the outside, or spilling onto the street
- Concentrations of activity at particular points.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Biodiversity Net Gain delivers measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Biodiversity Net Gain can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures.

Conservation Area

Areas identified as being of special architectural or historic interest.

The London Borough of Bexley has 23 Conservation Areas, please check with Development Management to ascertain if your proposals is located within one.

Design and Access Statement

A report submitted to accompany and support a planning application that outlines the social, visual and physical impact of a proposed development, with reference to how the development sits within, and draws from, its context.

Dual aspect

A dual aspect dwelling is one with opening windows on two external walls, which may be on opposite sides of a dwelling or on adjacent sides of a dwelling where the external walls of the dwelling wrap around the corner of a building.

- Source: Housing Design Standards LPG

Eaves

The part of the roof that meets or overhangs the walls of the building.

Green infrastructure

A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Habitable room

A habitable room is one used, or intended to be used, for dwelling and domestic purposes. *The use of habitable room is subject to its context and applicants should refer to individual Building Regulation Approved Documents for clarity.*

Habitable windows

A window to a room used, or intended to be used, for dwelling and domestic purposes.

Host building

An existing building within a development site which is normally positioned within in a street facing location.

Highway

A way over which members of the public have a right to pass and repass, either on foot or dependent on suitability, in a vehicle motorised or otherwise.

Listed Building

A listed building, or structure, which has been placed on the statutory list (the National Heritage List for England - NHLE) which is maintained by Historic England.

Statutory listing covers 3 grades, being Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II. Grade I listed buildings are of exceptional interest; Grade II* are particularly important buildings which are of more than special interest; and, Grade II are of special interest. Most buildings and structures are Grade II, with examples which are of particular historic or architectural interest being graded higher.

Any works, generally speaking, which would involve the alteration or extension to a listed building would require the benefit of Listed Building Consent.

Legibility

How easy it is for people to understand and find their way around a place and how memorable it is.

Massing

A building's three dimensional shape, made up by its height, width, depth and form.

Parapet

The uppermost part of a wall that extends above the edge of the roof.

Private amenity space

This can take the form of gardens, roof terraces or balconies.

Protected garden area

The primary areas of use within a rear garden which should be afforded privacy from neighbouring gardens and properties.

Retrofit

The process of adding new or modified components or systems to an existing building to improve its performance, efficiency or safety.

Ridge

The top-most horizontal part of the roof formed where two slopes meet.

Roofscape

A view of roofs, particularly in terms of its aesthetic appeal.

Spatial hierarchy

The relationships between buildings and the spaces between them created by the scale, layout and architectural expression of buildings and the spatial qualities of the public realm.

Standard window

Vertically aligned windows with clear glass.

Street scene

The appearance of all of the elements of a street, including the carriageway, footway, cycle paths, street furniture, planting, trees, and the buildings or structures along its edges, particularly the composition of buildings on each side of the street.

Subservient

A development that is secondary or subordinate to the original building in terms of height, scale, massing, form and overall impact on the existing building.

Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)

Features designed to reduce flood risk, which are built to receive surface water run-off, such as constructed wetlands, permeable surfaces, retention ponds, green roofs and swales.

Urban grain

The established street patterns and the arrangement of buildings within the streets.

Urban heat island effect

A phenomenon describing the elevated temperatures felt in towns and cities compared to rural surroundings.