



RBWM Design Guide

Comments on the Points and Principles

Overall, we warmly welcome the draft for both its aims and its clarity. It's an impressive piece of work which gives clear guidance on achieving high quality design in new development.

We are concerned that developers may seek to water down aspects of the guidelines, so below we have listed a number of key points and principles which we feel should be retained unchanged, along with a few other comments.

We also have just two suggested amendments:

1. Section 6 – Parking: Self-sufficiency in parking should be encouraged in any new development and in the town centre this would be preferably underground.
2. Section 12 – Guidance for non-Residential Development: This could usefully include a reference to the Maidenhead Business and Shopfront Design Guide (2013)

3.1 Key Principles

To be retained:

- Putting people first
- Creating a Sense of Place
“Every development should draw on the opportunities presented by the immediate local context to create a sense of place but also reflect the overarching themes of Royalty, River and Green.”
- Delivering Sustainable places
- Improving Quality

5.0 Character

To be retained:

5.4 “Unfortunately many recent development in the borough are similarly bland and could be anywhere in the UK”

Designers should choose to:

- Blend in
- be sympathetic, or
- create something new and distinctive.

6.0 Layouts

To be retained:

6.2 “To ensure beautiful places, considerations should include: Connectivity, Street design, Open Spaces, Parking, Defining public/private space.”

Street Design

To be retained:

6.5 (p30) "The council wishes to perpetuate and enhance this green and blue character in its streets to reinforce the special characteristics and identity of the borough."

6.6 (p31) "designers should seek to include space for street trees."

Parking

Comments:

- Detailed guidance includes "no more than 3 spaces without intervening landscaping" (p46)
- But there's no info on space standards - Readers are referred to Parking Strategy SPD for those.

To be retained:

- "On-plot parking should generally be provided to the side or rear of the property or underground."

And add:

- Ideally underground in the town centre

Comment:

- Underground parking is "encouraged" only on sites without flood risk. We'd like to see this strengthened.

To be retained:

- Front of plot parking should not: "dominate the appearance, or allow vehicles to overhang the pavement".
- On-street parking must be "purposefully designed", using hard and soft landscaping features of "very high quality"

Backland Development

To be retained:

Principle 6.11: All backland development "should be subordinate" and not harm existing character, e.g loss of green or blue.

7.0 Built Form

Density

To be retained:

Para 7.4 calls on developers to provide a mix of Green infrastructure in denser development.

Uses & Mix

To be retained:

Principle 7.2: Encourages a mix of densities, uses, type, sizes and tenures. Says that developments with similar tenures and sizes will be resisted. And housing developments of 100+ units should include non-resi uses like shops, schools, health leisure and community facilities.

Positioning

To be retained:

Principle 7.3: Underlines the sense in adhering to building lines.

Solar design & climate change

To be retained:

Principle 7.4: Advises on use of solar panels and benefits of dual aspect accommodation.

Building scale, massing & form (p.58)

Comment:

We strongly support the idea of maintaining the norm of 2-storey (occasionally 3) in rural and suburban areas.

We agree that Town centre heights can be more varied, subject to certain conditions, but that upper storeys should be set back wherever possible.

Tall buildings

To be retained:

Maidenhead town centre is experiencing increasing number of proposals for buildings above the prevailing height and these could significantly change its character, it says. (p.59) Unless carefully designed and of exemplar quality, these could have significant negative impact.

To be retained:

Principle 7.5: In suburban and rural areas 2 to 3 storeys should be the norm with occasional taller focal points. Higher buildings will be acceptable in tight urban locations. But over 10 storeys will be resisted unless of exemplar design and accord with the separate Tall Buildings Strategy SPD.

Scale and massing (p.62)

To be retained unchanged:

This section urges developers to consider the context when planning large, bulky buildings and take account of streetscene, character and neighbouring amenities.

Roofscapes (p.63)

Comment:

We endorse the aim for in-keeping with local character.

Minimum internal space standards

We are very keen to see this retained, in view of the plethora of new-build flats and office conversions:

Principle 7.8: Expects developers to comply with national internal space standards as a minimum. (p.68)

Adaptable Development

To be retained unchanged:

To account for changing needs over time, this section suggests applying Lifetime Homes Standards and considering criteria for the Design Council's Building for Life. (p.68)

Architectural detailing (p.70)

Comment: An important section to be retained:

Windows (p.71)

To be retained:

Window size, position and appearance are particularly important features. Window to wall ratios should also be considered. Recessed or projecting windows will articulate a façade and add visual richness.

Materials and Colour

To be retained:

Principle 7.11: Choice of materials must be careful and justified. Materials needing little maintenance are preferred, e.g. brick. Materials and details used to reflect traditional or vernacular architecture should be genuine, not stuck-on.

8.0 Amenity

Comment: Another important section which we would like to see retained unchanged in its entirety.

Light, privacy, outlook and amenity space are important considerations in residential developments. Natural light and access to amenity space are important design matters in the workplace.

Principle 8.1: Captures the above and says developments providing poor privacy for occupants or neighbours will be resisted.

Outlook (p.78)

To be retained:

Although there is no right to a view, all habitable rooms should have at least one main window with adequate outlook.

Daylight & Sunlight (p79)

To be retained:

Underlines importance of maintaining adequately lit outdoor spaces as well as the amount of light reaching habitable rooms. Offers detailed design solutions. Also covers Sunlight Access and Day light in Workplaces.

Private Outdoor Amenity Space (p.84)

Comment: A welcome inclusion which says the provision of high quality private open space is a necessity and sets out minimum space standards, starting at 40 sqm for a 1-bed dwelling. Homes with north-facing gardens will need to provide larger gardens than those facing south.

It follows that we'd like to see the following retained unchanged:

- **Principle 8.4** (p.85)
- **Principle 8.5** (p.87)
- **Principle 8.6** (p.89)

Also the similar requirement of employment development to provide space for workers as set out in **Principle 8.7** (p.90)

12.0 Guidance for Non-Residential Development

Comment: We applaud the guidance given in this section, however it could also usefully include a reference to the existing Shopfronts Design Guidelines.

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