



# Dacorum Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

Executive Summary

February 2021







# Dacorum Strategic Design Guide

## Part 1: Design Process

Supplementary Planning Document  
February 2021



# Dacorum Strategic Design Guide

## Part 2: Design Principles

Supplementary Planning Document  
February 2021



# Dacorum Strategic Design Guide

## Part 3: Employment Uses Guidance

Supplementary Planning Document  
February 2021

# Introduction

The Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document was prepared by Dacorum Borough Council in collaboration with St Albans City & District Council, Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter, Proctor & Matthews Architects and David Lock Associates. The purpose of the Guide is to ensure that new development is of the highest quality, and contributes towards making distinctive, attractive and sustainable places to live and work that respond to local character and are adaptable for the future.

## Overview of the Guide

The Dacorum Strategic Design Guide sets out a design process and strategic design principles which apply to new development of all scales across Dacorum Borough. It also provides detailed guidance on the design of employment uses.

There are three parts to the Guide:

1. Design Process
2. Design Principles
3. Employment Uses Guidance

## Principle of 'Comply or Justify'

'Comply or Justify' applies to the whole guidance. This means that deviation from the principles and design processes set out will only be permitted with robust and evidence-based justification for doing so. In such cases, developers and their design teams must demonstrate that their proposals will deliver the very highest quality design that aligns with the aims of the Guide. Proposals that do not comply with the Guide's principles and which fail to provide compelling justification will be refused.

## The Guide within the planning process

As a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the Guide supports Dacorum's Local Plan policies and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The diagram on the right shows the stages in the planning pre-application and application process at which the Guide will be used by applicants, planning officers and elected Councillors.

The Guide is also intended to be used by statutory consultees, the Dacorum Community Review Panel and local communities who are consulted on planning applications.



Indicative planning process showing the Strategic Design Guide used throughout

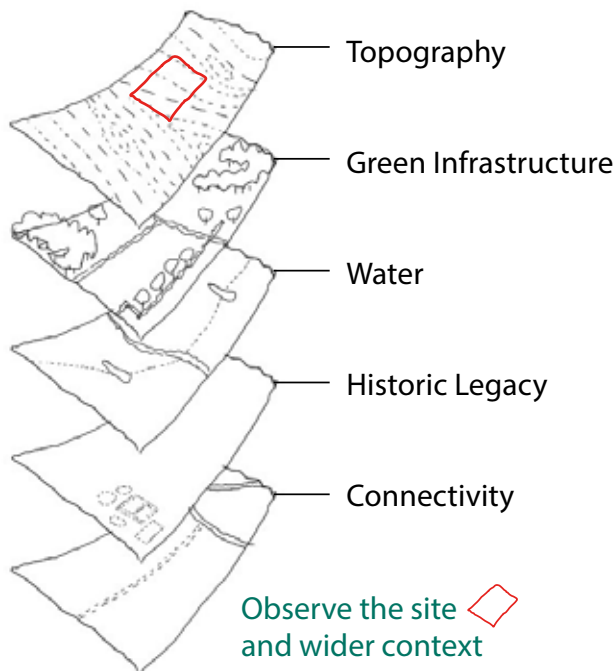


# Part 1 - The Design Process

The Design Process includes three stages that Dacorum Borough Council expects applicants to follow. These provide a route for planning applicants and their design teams to understand the specific character of this part of Hertfordshire and apply a character-led approach to design.

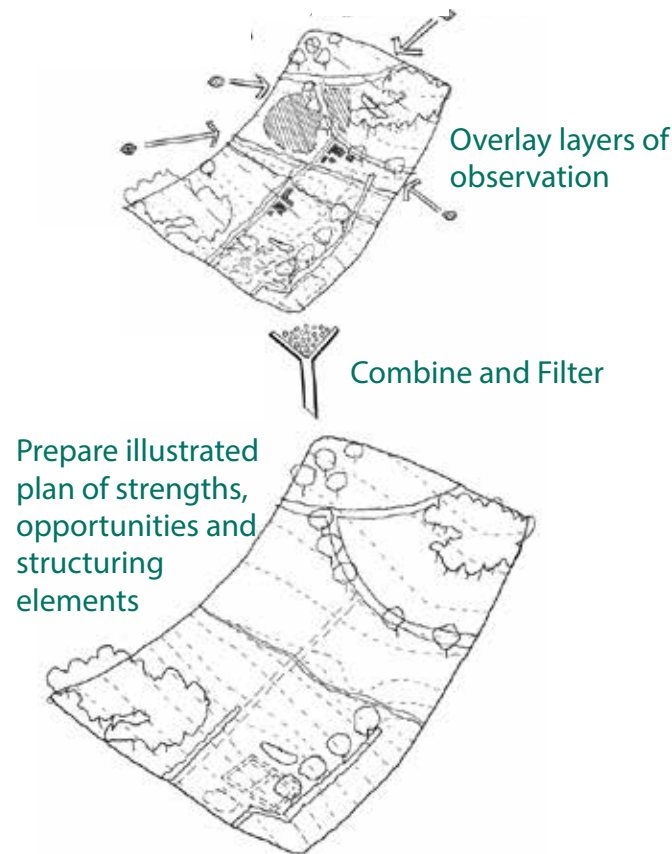
## Stage 1: Observing Place

This stage involves observing built and natural features of a site and its wider context. The Guide sets out a number of 'layers' to be observed, and identifies patterns in the relationship between built form and the natural environment. These provide a starting point for applicants to undertake their own observations, to understand and illustrate the characteristics of a site and its context.



## Stage 2: Evaluating Place

The second stage is evaluating the features identified during the observation stage to identify those that will be most influential to design. The Guide includes prompts to help applicants assess and illustrate their findings.



## Stage 3: Making a Place

The key strengths, opportunities and structuring elements are the foundations of a site-specific vision, which should provide an ambitious narrative about the future place, what makes it distinctive, how it will support communities and how it will integrate into neighbouring areas. For masterplanned development proposals, a series of frameworks covering areas such as land use, movement, landscape and urban design will need to be produced, all taking into account required space for housing, social and transport infrastructure and open space. These are brought together in an overarching illustrative masterplan.



Example illustrated land use and density strategy

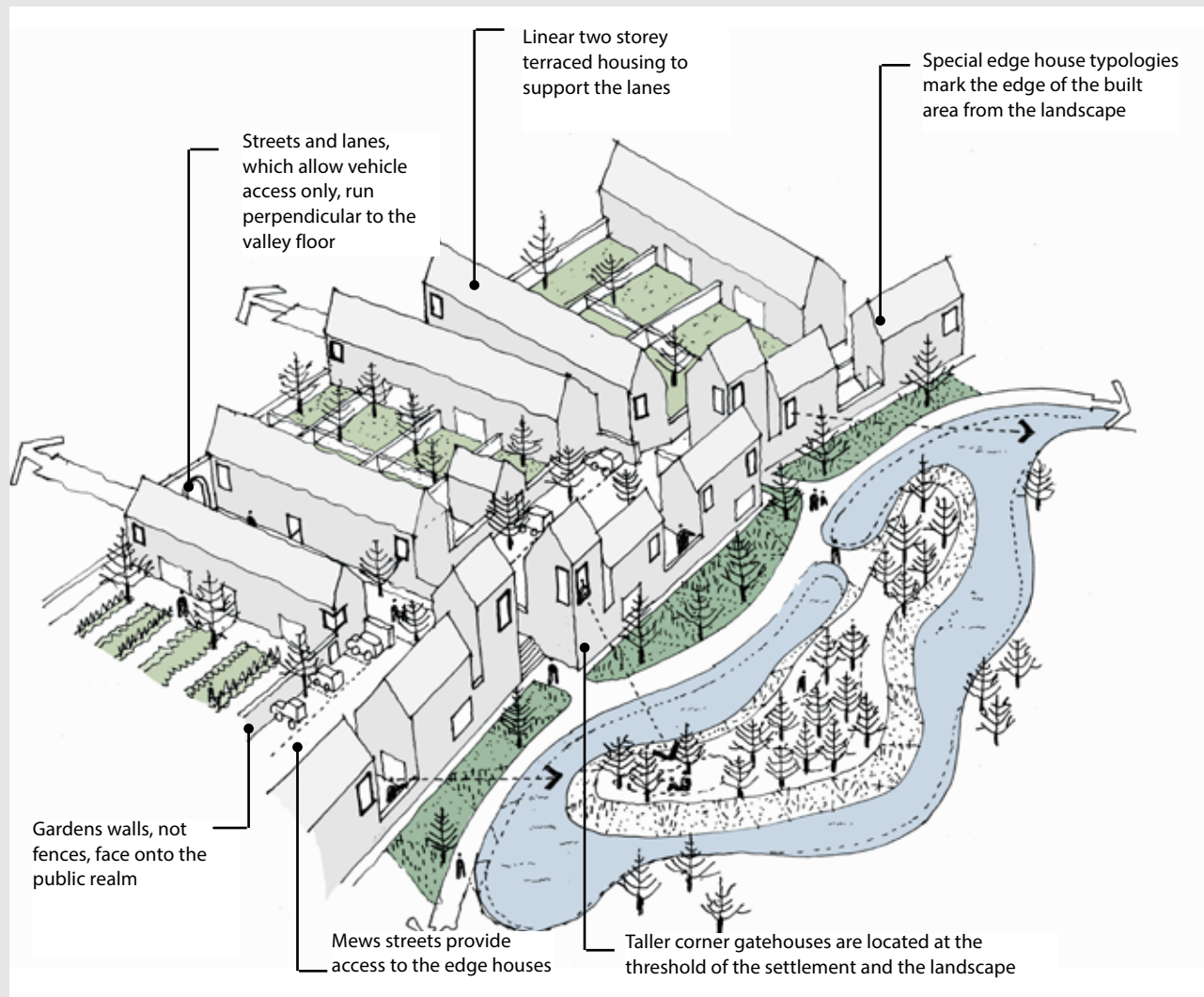
Urban design framework plan excerpt

## Spatial Typologies

To dig deeper into what makes places distinctive, the Guide identifies patterns of built and natural form - 'spatial typologies' - found in Dacorum and St Albans. The purpose is to encourage applicants to follow a similar approach: identifying sets of patterns and categorising them into spatial typologies during the Observing Place Stage, and using them to inform contemporary design whilst Making a Place.



Stage 1: Observing Place - Bourne / End typology (located in a valley) - Typically long houses situated along the contours with extended views across marshland landscape



Stage 3: Making a Place - Arrangement of streets and buildings for a contemporary interpretation of the Bourne / End typology

## Part 2 - Design Principles

The Design Principles set ambitious, high standards for all scales and types of new development in Dacorum. The principles are arranged under 10 themes, each linking strategic aims to a checklist of practical, measurable principles which designers and applicants can implement and planning officers can assess. The Design Process in Part 1 supports meeting these principles.

**1. A Distinctive Place** - principles to build a narrative of place to inform design which reinforces local character and meets future needs through innovative use of layouts, built forms, materials and other features of local development patterns.



**2. A Compact Place** - principles to create walkable, mixed use, vibrant neighbourhoods which make efficient use of land.



**3. A Place for All** - principles to create a place which is inclusive to people of varying backgrounds, socio-economic groups, ages and abilities, including by providing a mix of housing tenures, ensuring accessibility, and integrating play into public spaces.



**4. A Connected Place** - principles to integrate new development physically and socially with existing places, including with routes, job opportunities, social and community infrastructure and heritage.



**5. Great Streets and Public Spaces** - principles to create or contribute to pedestrian-friendly public space, promoting wayfinding, social interaction, safety and attractiveness, and minimising the impact of cars.



**6. Great Homes** - principles to create attractive homes that are fit for the 21st century: with generous internal and external spaces, light, privacy and a positive relationship to the street.



**7. Active and Healthy** - principles to contribute to local communities' health and wellbeing by encouraging walking and cycling, providing access to sport, healthcare facilities and food growing, and protecting against pollution.



**8. Facing the Climate Crisis** - principles to embed sustainability through design including reducing carbon footprint, conserving water and energy, and enhancing biodiversity, sustainable energy production and resilience to extreme weather and climate change.



**9. Flexible and Adaptable** - principles to ensure that the built environment can accommodate or easily adapt to future changes in utilities, mobility and needs of local communities.



**10. For the Long Term** - principles to sustain quality and delivery of a vision through community building and stewardship, planning measures and early consideration of maintenance.

## Part 3 - Employment Uses Guidance

The Employment Uses Guidance helps to secure environmentally sustainable, diverse and flexible range commercial spaces catering for a range of different businesses, and connected with coherent, attractive public spaces and streets to encourage healthy working lifestyles and social interaction.

### Employment Design Principles

Employment Design Principles apply to any applications for Business (B1), General Industrial (B2) and Storage or Distribution (B8) uses in excess of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> Gross Internal Area. The Employment Design Principles will need to be met in addition to the general Design Principles contained in Part 2 of the Guide.

There are five themes for Employment Design Principles. Each is illustrated with case studies showing best practice. The themes are:

**E1. A Healthy Place to Work and Socialise** - principles for placemaking and health and wellbeing, including case studies of WELL building certification and public spaces.



Photo: Stace LLP

**E2. A Multi-Functional, Natural Environment** - principles for environmental sustainability and biodiversity, including case studies of rainwater management and habitat creation.



Photo: Paul Grudy, Place Design Planning

**E3. A Sustainable Built Environment** - principles for energy and resource use efficiency, including energy generation and conservation case studies.



Photo: Martin Charles

**E4. A Well Connected, Integrated Place** - principles for connectivity and smart mobility, including case studies of pedestrian and cycle links and dedicated shuttle bus services.



Photo: CG Archard

**E5. A Pedestrian Focused Place** - principles and case studies relating to access, circulation and parking, with the aim of creating a pedestrian-focused place.



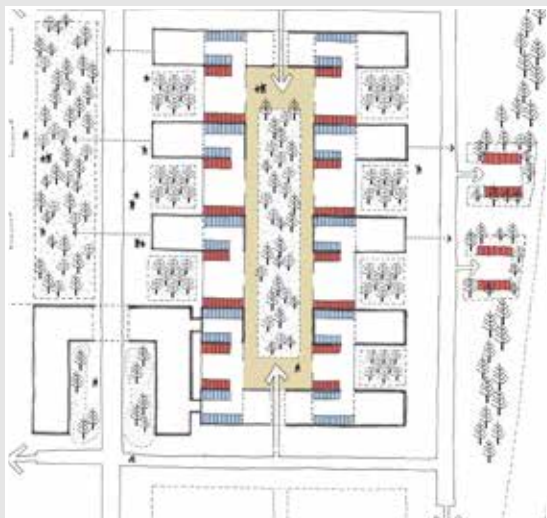


## Employment Typologies

The second part of the Employment Uses Guidance provides design solutions and case studies, tailored to large and small business and industrial units. The solutions address commonly-encountered challenges with each unit type, to ensure that the employment design principles can be achieved.

The following challenges are covered:

### Parking and Servicing



This diagram shows an example of how parking and servicing for smaller industrial units can be concealed to help reduce the visual impact of it on the public realm.

### Integrated and Activated Public Realm

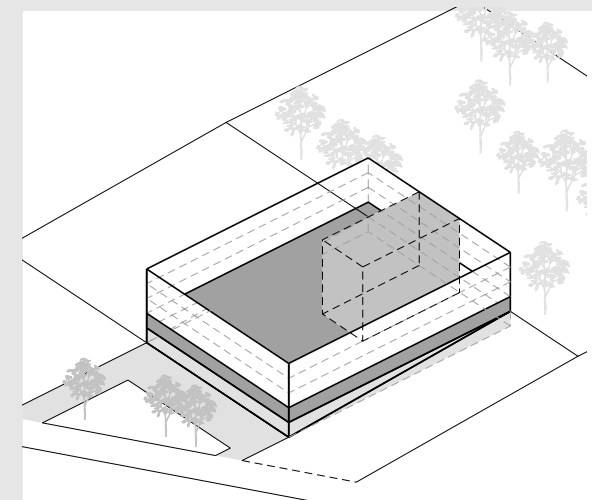
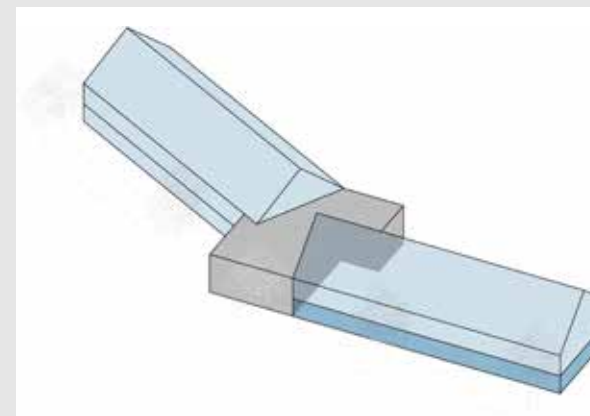


Photo: DBC



The above diagram and photograph show examples of how entrances to large industrial units can be positioned and designed to create an interface with the street and public spaces.

### Flexible and Adaptable Buildings



The above diagrams give examples of how to achieve flexible and adaptable office units, by stacking different types of uses and including shared spaces where people working in separate offices can mix.