

Harrietsham Residential Design Policy

November 2015

Introduction and Objectives

The objective of this Design Policy is to provide developers, Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council, and Harrietsham Parish Council with guidance in considering the design of new residential developments.

Having this Design Policy can strengthen the local authority's position when negotiating on design and at appeal.

The Design Policy should be referenced when preparing designs for new residential developments, renovations, extensions or alterations to existing buildings in the village regardless of scale.

The Design Policy is intended to supplement existing policies that exist at National, Regional and Local/Borough Level by providing a level of detail that is appropriate for Harrietsham, but which would not be included in the higher level documents.

Design Statements

1. Shape of the Settlement

There are specific areas within Harrietsham that give the village a distinctive character and form. These tend to be the more established parts of the village, around East Street and West Street.

What helps make these parts of Harrietsham special is the way the buildings line the edge of the street to help frame and enclose the space. Special buildings, such as the alms houses, are located on corners to create small but memorable landmarks.

New developments in Harrietsham should take inspiration from the East Street and West Street areas.

Harrietsham is also constrained in terms of how it can expand in the future; the northern part of the village is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where development is highly constrained, and the M20 motorway and High Speed Railway Line provide a physical barrier to the south. Development of the village must therefore result in a compact shape within these boundaries whilst avoiding urban sprawl along the A20.

- 1.1 Ribbon or other similar development along the A20, will not be supported and will be resisted by designated bands of existing open countryside between Harrietsham and Hollingbourne and between Harrietsham and Lenham as 'anti-coalescence' zones.
- 1.2 Developments must contribute to the integration of the village and the creation of a more compact form. Further extensions to the village urban boundary will not be supported.
- 1.3 New developments will be required to be sympathetic with their surroundings in respect of scale, design, siting and materials. There should not be tall buildings, such as blocks of flats, in close proximity to edge of village sites especially where they would be out of keeping with other building in the immediate area.
- 1.4 Small blocks of up to five terraced houses, in keeping with the rest of the village, may be considered.
- 1.5 Three-storey dwellings should be avoided, although two-storeys with a room in the roof will be considered, as these are in keeping with existing housing in the village.
- 1.6 Existing open spaces and gaps between buildings should be preserved. Specifically views of the Church, Listed Buildings, other Heritage assets, open farmland, Greensand Ridge and North Downs are vistas that should be protected.
- 1.7 Views of the village from the approaches are important. Any new building should respect these approaches, be of sympathetic design and sit comfortably within its surroundings. They should not be of a 'gateway' nature, which is defined as a building located at a gateway and that marks the entrance or transition through massing, extended height, use of arches or colonnades, or other distinguishing features.

2. Landscape

- 2.1 New buildings and infrastructure within and on the edge of Harrietsham need to be located to avoid loss of important offsite views towards features such as church towers and Listed Buildings or the wider landscape such as the North Downs and Greensand Ridge, avoiding intrusion onto the sensitive ridge lines, prominent slopes and damage to distinctive landscape settings.
- 2.2 Maintain a direct relationship between the old settlement core and the surrounding landscape, allowing views in and out.
- 2.3 New development should seek to retain key landscape features on development sites, such as woodland, shaws (narrow belts of woodland), hedgerows, orchards, mature trees, watercourses and ponds as a basis for the new landscape structure and setting of the site.
- 2.4 Landscape proposals must demonstrate how they not only conserve but enhance local biodiversity and conservation status. Use of Bat and Bird boxes, Hibernacula and Hedgehog housing is encouraged, in addition to any requirements arising from Habitat surveys.
- 2.5 Designs should integrate new development with local character, using open space and planting to provide a visual link to the countryside and an attractive backdrop to development.
- 2.6 Use new native and indigenous hedge species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, hazel and spindle and sympathetic grass mix verges where new sight lines are necessary. Where possible, use local provenance wildflower and grass-seed mixes.
- 2.7 Where a development gateway is on a major road, such as the A20, landscape proposals for the site entrance should be agreed with local village horticultural groups (suggest liaising with Harrietsham in Bloom).

- 2.8 Consider the need for lighting and where essential seek to minimise its impact in the landscape through choice of light source and control of light spillage. Sites within or within sight of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be expected to minimise lighting and promote dark skies.

3. Layout

- 3.1 New developments of more than 20 units should look like a series of small organic additions to the village, rather than a single uniform large extension.
- 3.2 Development should avoid straight lines of regimented buildings on the settlement edge for new development.
- 3.3 Development will only be approved if it has safe and suitable access to the site for all people using all forms of transport.
- 3.4 Development will only be approved if, as a result, no harm or hazard is caused to existing resident's accesses.
- 3.5 Any new developments should be encouraged to incorporate footpaths, giving access to the countryside and the remainder of the village, provided that they form safe routes for public use.
- 3.6 Seek to minimise the impact of new residential accesses by retaining existing hedgerows or traditional walls where possible.
- 3.7 Consider the impact of development on the Public Rights of Way network. Any development will be expected to maintain and enhance existing PROW and connections through the village.
- 3.8 Wherever possible, Public Rights of Way should be retained along existing routes. Proposed diversions should be carefully scrutinised and considered on their merit.
- 3.9 The treatment of space between buildings is of considerable importance to the village design and should be considered at the initial design stages.
- 3.10 Layout must include provisions of at least 2 car parking spaces per unit, due to the high reliance on car travel and car ownership in Harrietsham. Visitors parking must also be provided.
- 3.11 The design of open spaces should reflect a rural, rather than suburban, character and every opportunity should be taken to enhance their ecological potential.

4. Buildings

New housing must reference the local context through use of high-quality materials and styles. Design should avoid creating anonymous, anywhere suburban development and aim to leave a positive architectural legacy. This does not exclude innovative modern or contemporary architecture and this will be encouraged where appropriate.

- 4.1 Consider massing, form, height and colour, texture of buildings and structures, taking account of local distinctiveness and characteristics through the use of locally sympathetic materials. In the case of Harrietsham, this will include red brick, tile hanging, white weatherboarding, black stained timber cladding, white and cream render, flint and rag stone.
- 4.2 Coordinate building colour to secure a complementary effect between buildings and the surrounding landscape (e.g. Use of matt neutral colours to minimise reflectivity).
- 4.3 New developments are required to create a sense of 'village'. This means avoiding the 'uniformity' of many urban and suburban designs.
- 4.4 Symmetrical rows of houses are to be avoided and repetition of design (same few house styles repeated over and over) is to be avoided.
- 4.5 Building materials should in general be in keeping with the existing materials in the vicinity of the site. However, if the design of individual buildings can justify construction in a contrasting material, which may loosely still be in keeping with the others in the site and/or vicinity, then this should be acceptable.
- 4.6 Brick size and colour, mortar colour and roof materials will all be features to be considered.
- 4.7 Windows and doors made of traditional materials will be encouraged, although modern materials will be acceptable, provided that the door and window designs reflect those on the properties in the immediate vicinity.
- 4.8 Any new properties must be designed to fit sympathetically with the buildings in the immediate vicinity and to respect the local character.
- 4.9 Roofs of future developments should follow the example of the past i.e. constructed with slate or red tiles. Solar roof tiles or shingles are preferred to solid panels.
- 4.10 Roof heights of adjacent buildings should be of variable heights.
- 4.11 Chimneys will be required on new developments. Wherever possible, chimneys should be incorporated into gable end walls with details similar to those of older dwellings. Chimneys should be varying in height and designs.
- 4.12 Care should be taken when extending older properties, and when building new developments, to maintain the proportions of walls to windows and doors, as found in older style cottages. Larger windows do not fit alongside original small windows.
- 4.13 Thought should be given to materials used for replacement windows and doors so that they blend with the general appearance of the locality.
- 4.14 New developments should avoid featureless and windowless walls on buildings in prominent locations. Suitable traditional details should be incorporated, e.g. The use of false windows or other design features, where this does not adversely affect the amenity of adjoining residents.
- 4.15 Any housing developments on the edge of the village should be incorporated into the village as far a possible, linked by footpaths, so that they do not become self-contained and/or inward-looking.
- 4.16 Developments should avoid 'Standardised Designs'; individual and traditional styles that capture the distinctiveness of the village and reflect the building features found within and around Harrietsham will be encouraged.
- 4.17 Garages should be unobtrusive and not a prominent feature of the design. Where car ports are proposed as alternatives to garages there must be adequate enclosed external storage to avoid cluttering of car ports.
- 4.18 Removal of permitted development rights should be considered to prevent loss of garaging and to maintain visual character.
- 4.19 Developments that have covenants prohibiting the parking of commercial/signed vehicles must make provisions within the overall site for the parking of such vehicles to avoid anti-social parking on nearby public highways.
- 4.20 Provision for the unobtrusive storage of at least two refuse bins per property should be provided.

- 4.21 Where new developments require the provision of new service infrastructure, such as electricity sub-stations or wastewater pumping stations, these should be designed to have a minimal visual impact and landscaping should be used to provide screening.
- 4.22 All new homes should be built to the local authorities required sustainability code.

5. Boundaries

- 5.1 Traditional boundaries should be preserved wherever possible and new developments should aim to retain existing walls or hedges, and any gaps in the hedges filled in.
- 5.2 Consider the need for fencing. Where security is required, use wooden posts and galvanised wire and screen with thorny hedges of native plants.
- 5.3 Avoid the introduction of features such as close board fencing, suburban style walls and fast-growing conifers, particularly on the boundaries with rural lanes or with the wider landscape.
- 5.4 New development sites should use temporary hoarding for both security and local aesthetic reasons during the construction stage.
- 5.5 Where hedging is planted, repaired or replaced, it should be with native species that are common within the area and if possible of local stock.
- 5.6 New planting of native/indigenous hedging is to be encouraged in new developments as a form of boundary treatment to properties.
- 5.7 The style, height and materials used in new boundaries should be in keeping with the property itself and its immediate neighbours, i.e. designed to harmonise with its surroundings, rather than stand out as a landmark. Walls should be in keeping with the property and the locality.
- 5.8 Gardens open to the main highways are not appropriate and new developments should incorporate enclosed boundaries to reflect this. Close boarded fencing above 1 metre height will not be permitted for boundaries on the highway.
- 5.9 Walls should carry forward the heritage of a working villager, i.e. finished with no unnecessary decorative treatment.

6. Street Furniture

Care should be taken to preserve the rural nature of the village; street furniture should be carefully located, of good quality, traditional in design and in keeping with the character of the village.

- 6.1 Street lighting for new developments will be encouraged to be of a design that is in keeping with the rural character of the village.
- 6.2 Consider the need for lighting, and to minimise the impact, using high pressure sodium lights.
- 6.3 To minimise the effects of light pollution, softer yellow lighting is preferred where this does not compromise personal safety.
- 6.4 Private security lighting should be carefully sited to illuminate the required area, whilst minimising light pollution and any nuisance to road users or adjacent properties.
- 6.5 Where a development is within the setting of the Kent Downs AONB, and where dark skies are a requirement, street lighting is to be avoided and conditions imposed to restrict future residents from adding external lighting to their properties.
- 6.6 Use local stone and 'conservation' kerbs and surface dressings to complement local materials for carriageways and pavements.
- 6.7 Avoid the introduction of urban bollards, concrete block paving and highly coloured signage.

6.8 All signage should be kept to a minimum. Redundant sign should be removed and every effort made to avoid duplicate signage.

7. Reference

- Census 2011 - Car Ownership for Harrietsham
- Census 2011 - Method of Travel to Work for Harrietsham
- Harrietsham Draft Neighbourhood Regulation 15 Submission Plan
- Kent County Council Kent Design Guide 2005/6
- Maidstone Borough Council Local Plan 2000 saved policies
- Maidstone Borough Council Draft Local Plan Reg. 18 2015
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019