

Policy 28

Local Character and Design Quality (Strategic Policy)

- A. The Council will require all development to be of high architectural and urban design quality. The character and heritage of the borough has been identified in the borough-wide characterisation work undertaken as part of the Urban Design Study. The 'places' as identified in the Study will need to be maintained and their character enhanced where opportunities arise. Development proposals will have to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the site and how it relates to its existing context, including character and appearance, and take opportunities to improve the quality and character of buildings, spaces and the local area.
- B. To ensure development respects, contributes to and maximises opportunities to enhance the local environment and character, proposals must reflect and demonstrate the following principles:
1. Ensure the proposal is compatible with the local character, including the relationship to existing townscape, development patterns, views, local urban grain and frontages as well as scale, height, massing, density, landscaping, proportions, form, materials and detailing;
 2. Ensure the development provides a high-quality sustainable design, construction and layout, including adaptability to climate change whilst responding positively to the local character as identified in the Urban Design Study and Conservation Area Appraisals/Statements;
 3. Use a design-led approach to optimise the potential of a development site through layout, siting and access arrangements, to ensure the development integrates positively with its surroundings;
 4. Ensure the development takes account of the existing urban grain and development patterns, including relationship of heights to widths;
 5. Sympathetically upgrading and reusing existing buildings, rather than demolishing and building new, allows a better response to the local character whilst also making substantial energy savings due to the embodied carbon in existing buildings that would otherwise be lost through demolition (see also Policy 4 'Minimising Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Promoting Energy Efficiency (Strategic Policy) ');
 6. Ensure the development responds to and where possible improves existing patterns of movement, permeability and street widths that encourage and promote active travel and well-being;
 7. Maximise opportunities for urban greening, and integrate existing and incorporate new natural features into a multifunctional network that supports quality of place and biodiversity, which address climate change and resilience;
 8. Ensure public realm is well-designed, safe, accessible, inclusive, attractive, well-connected, related to the local and historic context, and easy to understand, service and maintain (as set out in London Plan Policy D8);
 9. Ensure the design, layout and materials respect and respond to the historic environment and any relevant heritage assets;
 10. Ensure developments achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design, in accordance with London Plan Policy D5, with the aim of providing connectivity and permeability throughout (as such gated developments will not be permitted);
 11. Minimise opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour, based on an understanding of the locality and site-specific circumstances, utilising principles of natural surveillance and orientation of buildings as well as uses, with all major development expected to meet the standards and objectives of the Secured by Design initiative;
 12. Consider the holistic impact on the local suitable microclimate, including as a result of lighting features; and
 13. Ensure the development's proposed uses are suitable and compatible for the proposed location, providing a mix of uses including local services and facilities to support daily life and enable

communities to 'live locally' in accordance with Policy 1, taking account of any potential adverse impacts of the co-location of uses through the layout, design and management of the site.

- C. All proposals, including extensions, alterations and shopfronts, will be assessed against the policies contained within an adopted neighbourhood plan where applicable, and the advice set out in the Urban Design Study and the relevant Village Planning Guidance and other SPDs relating to character and design.

Shopfronts

- D. The Council will resist the removal of shopfronts of architectural or historic interest. Shopfronts, including signage and illumination, should complement the proportions, character, materials and detailing, surrounding streetscene and the building of which it forms part. Blinds, canopies or shutters, where acceptable in principle, must be appropriate to the character of the shopfront and the context within which it is located. External security grilles and large illuminated fascias will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. In sensitive areas, such as Conservation Areas and relevant Character Areas as identified in the Urban Design Study and the Village Planning Guidance SPDs, rigid and gloss finish blinds will generally be unacceptable.

Advertisements and hoardings

- E. The Council will exercise strict control over the design and siting of advertisements and hoardings to ensure the character of individual buildings and streets are not materially harmed, having regard to the interests of amenity and public safety (including highway safety).

Urban Design Study

20.1 As part of the development of the Local Plan, the Council has carried out an Urban Design Study, which shows a greater understanding and appreciation of the existing character of the different places of the borough. The Urban Design Study divides the borough into high-level 'Places' and lower level 'Character Areas', each with its own distinctive character, evolution and series of neighbourhoods. The identification of places has been informed by a comprehensive process involving the analysis of existing planning designations, built form characteristics and historical evolution of areas. The process has also been informed by the existing Village Planning Guidance SPDs.

20.2 The borough-wide characterisation work in the Urban Design Study considers what makes one area distinctive from another, what qualities are significant and critical to local character, and why is a particular townscape or landscape important, and to whom. The characterisation work creates a background against which new development can be balanced with protecting and

enhancing what makes Richmond as a borough so special in line with guidance on delivering good design through the planning process in Local Plan Policy 44. It is expected that applicants and developers follow the guidance and advice set out in the Urban Design Study and the Village Planning Guidance SPDs when considering the design- and character-led approach to development.

Village Planning Guidance SPDs and Conservation Area Appraisals

20.3 Village Planning Guidance SPDs were developed for all areas of the borough, (with the exception of Ham and Petersham, where there is an adopted Neighbourhood Plan for the area). The SPDs identify the key features and characteristics of the village areas that are valued by local communities. Within the SPDs, each area has been subdivided into Conservation Areas and Character Areas, and for each area the context, character and local features have been analysed and assessed.

20.4 ~~The Council has agreed a two year forward programme for prioritising reviews of the borough's existing Conservation Area Appraisals and developing new Appraisals for those areas that do not yet have an existing one, which commenced in 2021.~~

20.5 The Council has also developed a range of other SPDs, including on Design Quality, House Extensions and External Alterations, Small and Medium Housing Sites, ~~Front Gardens~~ and Shopfronts. These focus on protecting and improving the quality of the local built environment and provide the necessary detail to assess context, local character and design quality. The Council will consider producing further supplementary planning document(s) or toolkits to inform small site design expectations on residential-led projects, along with updates to the Design Quality SPD (2006) and Small and Medium Housing Sites SPD (2006).

Design quality and character

20.6 This policy requires developers and applicants to take a sensitive approach to the architectural design of new buildings, extensions and modifications to existing buildings, as well as landscape proposals. The Council does not wish to encourage a particular architectural style or approach but expects each scheme to be to a high-quality standard, with very high quality expected within Conservation Areas. Schemes should be based on a sound understanding of the site and its context, following the locally specific guidance set out in the Urban Design Study, complemented by the Village Planning Guidance SPDs. This locally based approach that is sensitive to an area's character can also contribute to achieving the Council's objectives relating to climate change, biodiversity and living locally.

20.7 Developments should demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of vernacular, local character and architectural precedents in the local area, whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation and design. Given the built-up nature of the borough, it is anticipated that most new buildings will be as a result of redevelopment where compatibility with the existing urban fabric is a key consideration. The purpose is

to maintain, reinforce and where possible enhance the local character and features that give the area its distinctive and clear identity. Opportunities should be taken to improve the general level of design of an area where appropriate. New development should respect existing street and development patterns.

20.8 Policy D1 of the London Plan addresses the issue of understanding character and context, noting that an understanding of the character of a place helps to ensure an appropriate balance is struck between existing fabric and any proposed change. As change is a fundamental characteristic of London, respecting character and accommodating change should not be seen as mutually exclusive.

Materials and façade design

20.9 The Council will expect the use of high-quality and sustainable materials, urban greening and biodiversity features as well as planting and landscaping reflecting the local character and distinctiveness of an area in all schemes where this contributes positively to the appearance and character of an area. The degree of symmetry, variety, colours as well as the pattern and proportions of windows and doors, materiality and their details together influence the design quality and character of a building and place.

20.10 The choice of building materials should mitigate the contribution to the urban heat island effect through thermal radiation as well as release of anthropogenic (waste) heat, having regard to Policy 4 Minimising Greenhouse gas emissions and promoting energy efficiency.

Relationship to other buildings

20.11 The space between buildings should be respected and development be in harmony with surrounding buildings. Elements such as windows, roofs, shopfronts and doors should relate to one another in such a way as to maintain or complement the proportions of the surroundings, particularly as expressed in the relationship between solids and voids. Landscape design (including hard and soft landscaping) and the intended use of any open spaces must form an integral part of

any proposals. Particular attention needs to be given to the interface between the public and private space and how a development will connect or relate to the wider open space network.

- 20.12** Modern shop and office layouts should be integrated with the proportions of surrounding development in order to reduce any potential visual impact. Development should be in scale with the adjoining buildings and in proportion with the average street width as defined by building frontages which reflect the urban grain, as required. Where uniform building heights are part of the character of a street it will not normally be appropriate to permit abrupt variations to the general roof line or eaves line, while in other areas irregular building heights may be appropriate.

Public realm

- 20.13** Developments should ensure the public realm is well-designed, safe, accessible, inclusive, attractive, well-connected, related to the local and historic context, and easy to understand, service and maintain, as set out in London Plan policy D8. Proposals should ensure that the public realm enhances the amenity and function of buildings and the design of buildings contributes to a vibrant public realm. This includes having active frontages at ground floor, with the main access provided along the frontage facing primary streets. Depending on the development and its location, public realm and public spaces should support a wide variety of activities and create places where people want to go to, meet and socialise. Public realm and public places directly contribute to local identity and character. Applicants should refer to the detailed guidance in the Council's Public Space Design Guide.

- 20.14** For a mixed-use scheme, it is preferred that the ground floor contains commercial or community uses, having regard to the location of the site. Where practicable, buildings with ground floor non-residential use should supplement the existing public realm through the incorporation of public spaces such as plazas at their entrance. In case of tall buildings located close to the street edge, proposals should incorporate measures to

soften their edges and provide positive public spaces at their base through the use of generous walkways and mature planting.

Access and layout

- 20.15** New development, including new routes and access arrangements, should be appropriately integrated with the existing area, street frontage and existing local routes. The applicant will have to demonstrate how new development relates to the existing public transport, pedestrian and cycle networks and how it fosters social inclusion. Where required, development proposals should maintain through-access for ease of pedestrian movement and permeability.
- 20.16** Gated developments, which prevent permeability of sites, will be resisted and pedestrian and cycle links through new development must be publicly accessible at all times.

Secured by Design

- 20.17** The Secured by Design scheme has proven results in reducing crime and fear of crime, resulting in significant reductions in burglaries and criminal damage on new build and major refurbishment projects. The scheme is also successful in reducing anti-social behaviour through a wide range of measures including robust communal door standards, access control and careful design and layout of new homes. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the Metropolitan Police designing out crime officers at the earliest opportunity and include details of security and Secured by Design compliance within Design and Access Statements.

Microclimate and lighting

- 20.18** Consideration should also be given to the local microclimate created by buildings. Well informed design decisions at an early stage, such as the orientation of a building, can reduce energy consumption through responding positively to climatic conditions. The design should avoid lighting features that negatively impact on biodiversity or surrounding buildings (particularly residential), as well as on night-time vistas and panoramas. The building façade design and

glazing should consider the building use at night and minimise light spill that can exacerbate light pollution, and should avoid any harsh solar glare onto any public areas as well as surrounding development. Where required, shade analysis should be carried out to ensure that the building shadow does not adversely impact solar gain and thermal comfort in key public spaces during times of busy use.

- 20.19** The lighting of the public realm needs careful consideration to ensure it is appropriate to address safety and security issues, and make night-time activity areas and access routes welcoming and safe, while also minimising light pollution and thereby impacts on biodiversity, protected species as well as residential amenity.

Co-location and compatibility

- 20.20** Proposals should demonstrate that the proposed uses and activities are suitable and compatible with each other and surrounding land uses. Providing a mix of uses including local services and facilities that support daily life are important to accord with the Policy 1 on Living Locally and the 20-minute neighbourhood. The Council will give consideration to the mix of uses proposed and how they will support and connect with the local area through the layout, design and management of the site. Suitable uses will depend on the location and could include a combination of residential, retail, office, leisure and entertainment uses. It is not always necessary to include residential within a mixed scheme, and in some circumstances the inclusion of residential might impact on the operation of other uses.

Shopfronts and shop signs

- 20.21** Shopfronts of architectural or historic interest make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the borough. Therefore, the Council will resist the removal of shopfronts of architectural or historic interest. The design of new, and alterations to existing, shopfronts is important both to the appearance of the individual property and to the character and appearance of its local area. Any proposal will therefore be assessed

against relevant guidance in the Urban Design Study and Village Planning Guidance SPDs, as well as the Shopfronts SPD.

- 20.22** Poorly sited or badly designed shop signs, including projecting signs, and illumination can have a detrimental effect on the amenity (including character and appearance) of an area; on the living conditions of residents; on biodiversity and protected species, and may raise issues of public safety. Security shutters can impact on the visual appearance of an area and can create a hostile environment. The Council will welcome proposals from groups of shops to add character to the street scene by the use of harmonious high- quality design, colours and materials for their shopfronts.

Advertisements and hoardings

- 20.23** Advertising can enhance the appearance and vitality of a street. However, it can also cause considerable damage to visual amenity by cluttering the built environment and detracting from the quality of the area. Advertisements (defined under the Town and Country Planning Control of Advertisements Regulations) include not only hoardings, but also devices such as blinds and canopies with lettering, flags with logos and balloons. In considering proposals for an advertising hoarding or other advertisement, including blinds and canopies where relevant, or in deciding whether to take action to remove an existing advertisement, the Council will have regard to the following criteria:

1. hoardings should be of good design and in scale with their surroundings and be of a temporary nature only;
2. any advertisement display must not have an adverse effect upon road traffic conditions and public safety;
3. advertising displays will not be permitted where they would have an adverse effect upon:
 - a Conservation Area;
 - listed buildings or Buildings of Townscape Merit;
 - views from or within open spaces or along the Thames riverside and its tributaries;

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 - predominantly residential areas;
4. high level, brightly illuminated, or flashing advertisements will not normally be permitted, especially where they might disturb residents;
5. proposals for digital advertising displays are encouraged to maximise energy efficiency.
- 20.24** As a general rule, advertisement displays will be restricted to shopping, commercial, industrial or transport locations, where they comply with the above criteria and do not cause excessive visual clutter. It must be borne in mind that the Council's level of control is limited and that a number of advertisements do not require formal consent.
- 20.25** The Council will use its powers to remove any harmful advertisement or hoarding erected without consent and where appropriate and practical, to challenge existing hoardings and advertisements that cause demonstrable harm to amenity or public safety.

Policy 29

Designated Heritage Assets

- A. The Council will require development to conserve and, where possible, take opportunities to make a positive contribution to, the historic environment of the borough. Development proposals likely to adversely affect the significance of heritage assets will be assessed against the requirement to seek to avoid harm and the justification for the proposal. The significance (including the settings) of the borough's designated heritage assets, encompassing Conservation Areas, listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments as well as the Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, will be conserved and enhanced by the following means:
1. Give great weight to the conservation of the heritage asset when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of the asset.
 2. Total loss of or substantial harm to a listed building should be wholly exceptional and will therefore be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss in line with national policy requirements.
 3. Resist the change of use of listed buildings where their significance would be harmed, particularly where the current use contributes to the character of the surrounding area and to its sense of place, unless it secures the optimum viable use and/or there are public benefits to outweigh the harm.
 4. Resist the removal or modification of features such as original structure, layout, architectural features, materials as well as later features that contribute to the significance of the listed buildings.
 5. Demolitions (in whole or in part), alterations, extensions and any other modifications to listed buildings should be based on a proportionate understanding of the significance of the heritage asset.
 6. Require, where appropriate, the reinstatement of internal and external features of special architectural or historic significance within listed buildings, and the removal of internal and external features that harm the significance of the asset, commensurate with the extent of proposed development.
 7. Require the use of appropriate materials and techniques and strongly encourage any works or repairs to a designated heritage asset to be carried out in a correct, scholarly manner by appropriate specialists.