WEST LANCASHIRE REPLACEMENT LOCAL PLAN

Supplementary Planning Guidance

SITE PLANNING, LAYOUT AND DESIGN

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Executive Manager Planning/Development Services
West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan
Supplementary Planning Guidance
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Preface

This leaflet forms part of the Supplementary Planning Guidance for the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan which was adopted in July 2006. It provides supplementary guidance on Policy GD1 of the Replacement Local Plan. It provides assistance to developers and designers on the techniques of analysis and design which are required in order to comply with the policies of the Replacement Local Plan.

This guidance has been approved by West Lancashire District Council for development control purposes.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this guidance please contact Ian Bond, Heritage and Environment Manager – Telephone No. (01695) 585167.

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

**Aims**

1.1 To:

- Assist developers and designers in meeting the requirements of Replacement Local Plan Policy GD1 Design of Development.
- Provide guidance on techniques of analysis and design.
- Provide specific guidance relating to the main types of development.

**Scope of this Guidance**

1.2 This note provides guidance on the sorts of environmental issues that need to be considered and outlines a systematic approach to site planning, evaluation, analysis and design. This note has been produced as a guide and should not be seen as a substitute for professional advice where this is needed.

**Associated Guidance**

1.3 **Natural Areas and Areas of Landscape History Importance SPG (1996, updated August 2007)** – a guide to the visual, ecological and historical characteristics of each Natural Area and the mechanisms for reducing environmental impact.

1.4 **Landscape Design SPG (1998)** – detailed guidance on landscape design techniques.

1.5 **Trees and Development SPG (1998, updated July 2007)** – detailed guidance on the retention, protection and provision for trees on development sites.

**General Points**

1.6 Compliance with this guidance will reduce the need for lengthy negotiations on environmental matters.

1.7 Consideration of these matters at an early stage in site planning should help with more rapid consideration of these issues.

1.8 It will greatly assist the Council if applicants can demonstrate, through the quality of their development proposals, that these matters have been taken into account. Crucial to this process is the provision of sufficient information to enable the proposals to be assessed.

1.9 Failure to provide information may mean that the application cannot be determined, may be invalid or may be refused (Town and Country Planning (Applications) Regulations 1988).

1.10 On important sites and for certain types of development (e.g. golf courses) it will be necessary to employ an appropriate professional to carry out a more detailed assessment of the ecology, landscape history and visual quality of
the site and how these should be incorporated, removed or enhanced as part of the development.

**New development should:**

1.11 Be seen as an opportunity to contribute rather than detract from the environment.

1.12 Be sympathetic to its surroundings and take local distinctiveness into account.

1.13 Be sensitively located and designed.

1.14 Avoid standardised designs by adopting a systematic approach to site planning and design, based on an appreciation of environmental characteristics which are important locally.

**Local distinctiveness and design**

1.15 The interrelationship of landscape features defines landscape character.

1.16 Diversity in the landscape is the result of variance in character from one area to another, and imparts local distinctiveness.

1.17 Diversity and distinctiveness are under threat from change and standardised designs.

**Techniques of site planning and design**

1.18 Developers and designers should adopt the systematic approach of survey, analysis, design and assimilation.

**Survey**

1.19 The process of design must begin with an acknowledgement of the elements of the existing landscape and built environment in order to establish opportunities for enhancement and conservation.

1.20 Visit the site and observe the general character of wider area and specific features of the site.

1.21 All designs need to be based on an accurate, measured site survey.

1.22 Gather together information already available on the site.

**Analysis**

1.23 Involves the identification of constraints and opportunities.

1.24 Keep options open until an appropriate solution has evolved.

1.25 Carry out a simple evaluation of the local character by noting the ecological, historical and visual characteristics of the features.
1.26 If necessary engage specialists to advise on the relative importance of the features.

**Design and Assimilation**

1.27 Design is the creative search for a solution which solves all the requirements revealed by the analysis.

1.28 Keep options open until an appropriate design has evolved.

1.29 Relate the development in a sympathetic way to important features in the area by carefully matching the location, layout and materials to the local situation.

1.30 The design should fit comfortably into the landscape, townscape or streetscene.

1.31 If there is any adverse impact, include proposals as to how this can be minimised by additional works such as landscape treatments or habitat enhancement.

**Details of method**

1.32 The attached checklist indicates the kind of information and approaches.

1.33 The list is neither exhaustive, nor will all the items on the list be appropriate to all sites.

1.24 Refer to the guidance note on the Natural Area(s) in which the development is located. This indicates the specific ecological, historical and visual features within each natural area. Use this information to inform the analysis and design processes.

2. **SURVEY**

**ECOLOGICAL FEATURES**

2.1 Includes geological features.

2.2 Existing wildlife protection comes in two forms:

- Site (or habitat) based
- Species based

- Planning Context

2.3 Applies if the development is either on or adjacent to a designated site.

2.4 Refer to the Replacement Local Plan Proposals Map. Check for statutory and non statutory sites. For specific details of statutory sites (Ramsars, SAC’s, SPA’s and SSSI’s contact Natural England).

2.5 For information on Biological Heritage Sites contact Lancashire County Council.
2.6 For information on RIGS contact the Local RIGS Group.

2.7 For information on Local Nature Conservation Sites contact this Council.

2.8 Protected species may be present on unprotected sites. English Nature should be contacted when these are known of or discovered.

2.9 (see appendix 1 for addresses)

- **Site Survey**

2.10 Accurate and measured survey of the location of habitats and natural features within, and if appropriate, immediately adjacent to the site:

- Hedges.
- Trees.
- Woodland.
- Water bodies – ponds, streams, ditches, springs etc.
- Unimproved or semi-improved grassland (pasture).
- Buildings (e.g. potential bat roosts, barn owl nesting sites)
- Geological features.
- Physical characteristics which influence the ecology of the site, such as soil climate, hydrology.

**HISTORICAL FEATURES**

- **Planning Context**

2.11 Information on Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings – contact the Council’s Conservation Officer, Cyllene Griffiths on 01695 585102.

2.12 Information on schedules and unscheduled sites and monuments – contact the County Archaeologist.

2.13 Refer to the Replacement Local Plan Proposals Map for Areas of Landscape History importance and particular attention will be paid to the retention of historic features in these areas.

2.14 For history of the area, check The Landscape History of West Lancashire by Dr Alan Crosby.

- **Site Survey**

2.15 Historical features range from field boundaries and embankments to historic buildings and monuments.

2.16 Accurate measured survey of:

- Historic features including buildings, walls, field patterns, property and plot boundaries, tracks, buildings, trees, woodland and ponds.
- Existing spacing, setting, orientation and positioning of buildings and landscape features, including their condition.
- Location, type and condition of field boundaries.
- Traditional building materials and vernacular building styles, including form, mass, details of fenestration and other architectural details of the area.
- Landmark buildings outside of the site.
- Consider the potential for archaeological investigation, as set out in the Replacement Local Plan policies. Refer to appendix 2 which shows areas of specific archaeological potential.

**VISUAL FEATURES**

2.17 Visual or aesthetic considerations are inextricably linked with the historical and ecological issues. Aesthetic gains are best achieved through these channels and this helps to avoid a further level of subjectivity. However, the character of the landscape will determine how to assimilate the development with its surroundings.

2.18 Record:
- Openness of site and surrounding area.
- Topography and landform.
- Visibility of the site – views into and out of the site.
- The dominant visual characteristics and assess whether these are desirable for retention, removal or enhancement.
- Important relationships between the landscape and built environment.
- The character of spaces and corridors – are they open or enclosed?
- The dominant visual forces – look for form and line, texture, colour and seasonal changes.

3. **ANALYSIS**

**ECOLOGICAL FEATURES**

3.1 Look for how different habitats relate to each other and to habitats adjacent to the site.

3.2 Evaluate the condition and relative value of habitats.

3.3 Assess the interconnectedness of features, identify fragmented habitats and opportunities for links.

3.4 Get advice on the essential habitat components for any protected species that use or are very likely to use the site (see Appendix 1 for address).

**HISTORICAL FEATURES**

3.5 Assess the degree of landscape change and the quality of the historical record.

3.6 Use this to identify:
- Important features for retention.
- Features which need upgrading or management.
- Opportunities for restoration and interpretation.

**VISUAL CONSIDERATIONS**

3.7 Assess the ability of the landscape to absorb the development and modification – in some areas the flat, open nature of the landscape, with few
vertical features means that special attention needs to be paid to appropriateness of location, design and materials. Look for features in the landscape which can be used to blend the development into the landscape.

3.8 Evaluate the visual impact of the development – which views into or out of the site need to be enhanced or screened.

3.9 Evaluated the feeling of space – is there a need to introduce human-scale spaces?

4. DESIGN

ECOLOGICAL

4.1 Aim to retain as many habitats as possible and maximise their value by the careful addition of appropriate new habitats or through habitat management. In particular:

- Retain linked habitats and important habitat associations.
- Design in habitat links where these would be beneficial.
- Retain the variety of habitats.
- Provide new links between habitats (but see notes on adding new landscape features under ‘Historical’).
- Use plant species which are locally indigenous and appropriate to the area (see appendix 3).
- Wherever possible use stock from a local seed source.
- Think about the relative importance of habitats before drawing up proposals – for instance, in biological terms a grassland may be more important than a copse.
- Take up opportunities for interpretation and community benefit where these exist.

HISTORICAL

4.2 Use clues from the past to influence the design of the development.

4.3 Historical features can add an aesthetically pleasing sense of maturity to a new development.

4.4 Aim to include the most important features in the design of the development, paying particular attention to those listed in setting, context and relationship with other historical features may be important.

4.5 Utilise the existing pattern of features, particularly tracks, footpaths and boundary lines, as a framework for the development.

VISUAL (including assimilation techniques)

4.6 Vernacular building style and use of materials in keeping with the traditional local style minimises the negative visual impact of a development.

4.7 Screening, if necessary, should not be incongruous – it should not draw attention to the development. If this is not possible look again at location, design and materials.
4.8 In flat open areas, landscaping may draw attention to, rather than help to assimilate new development.

4.9 The use of mounding is not normally acceptable. It may confuse the historical record, and is usually alien to the landscape and visually intrusive. Mounding should not be used as a substitute for landscaping.

4.10 Include planting proposals where needed to screen the development, enhance the setting of the development or to provide a habitat for wildlife.

4.11 Setting buildings against a back cloth of trees helps to blend the development into the landscape.

4.12 Use locally indigenous species in landscape schemes (see appendix 3).

4.13 Avoid skyline development.

4.14 Include substantial landscape strips able to support large trees which can break up expanses of roof-tops.

4.15 On sloping sites roads should relate to contours – i.e. travel parallel rather than at right angles to contours.

4.16 In open landscapes avoid prominent sites – locate large buildings and dense development where it will have least affect.

4.17 Relate boundary treatments to traditional local materials and designs.

4.18 Visual improvement or removal of landscape detractors may result in environmental gains.

5. ASSIMILATION

ECOLOGICAL

5.1 Adverse ecological impacts can be offset by incorporating measures into the design. Important principles are:

- It is not possible to recreate many habitats – especially those that have acquired their biological interest over many hundreds of years such as ancient woodlands, hedgerows and pastures. In such instances the emphasis must always be on conservation and management rather than removal and attempted recreation elsewhere on the site.
- Use the information from the survey of the physical characteristics of the site to inform proposals for habitat creation and landscaping.
- Clearly show any ecological gains resulting from the development.
- Environmental gains will include the incorporation habitat management plans.
- Any planned new habitats should be in keeping with the characteristics of the Natural Area.
- Use locally indigenous species appropriate to the Natural Area for new planting (see appendix 3).
HISTORICAL

5.2 In areas where there is traditionally little planting particular care needs to be taken in the design and use of materials in buildings and landscapes rather than looking to landscaping as a method of integration.

5.3 The best form of assimilation is the use of sympathetic, usually traditional hard materials in buildings, enclosure and hard surfaces. This approach minimises and may negate the need for expensive landscape schemes which are needed to hide unattractive development.

5.4 Don’t complicate the historical landscape record by introducing mounding to try and screen the development or to simply dispose of excavated material.

VISUAL – see visual issues in Design.

5.5 Visual assimilation issues are closely linked to the design considerations. Guidance on these matters is therefore combined under Design.
APPENDIX 1

Useful addresses

For information on Biological Heritage Sites:
Peter Jepson  
Lancashire County Council  
Natural and Historic Environment Service  
Highways and Environmental Management  
PO Box 9  
Guild House  
Cross Street  
Preston  
PR1 8RD

Tel: 01772 533423

For information on Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)

The Lancashire RIGS Group  
Lancashire RIGS Secretary  
J.K. Williams  
Bank Cottage  
Whins Lane  
Wheelton  
Chorley  
PR6 8HN

Tel: 01254 830655

Statutory nature conservation sites (Ramsars, SACs, SPAs, SSSIs) and protected species:

Natural England  
North West Team  
Pier House  
Wallgate  
Wigan  
WN3 4AL

Tel: 01942 820342
APPENDIX 2

Areas of archaeological potential

[Diagram showing areas with different potential levels: Outstanding Potential, Major Potential, Significant Potential, Limited or no Potential]
APPENDIX 3

Tree and shrub species indigenous to West Lancashire

This list should be used as an initial guide and should not be used as a substitute for professional advice on the suitability of a species for any one location.

### Large to medium sized trees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Soils/location (see key below)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alnus glutinosa</td>
<td>Alder</td>
<td>w, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betula pendula</td>
<td>Silver Birch</td>
<td>d, h, a, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betula pubescens</td>
<td>Downy Birch</td>
<td>w, d, h, a, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraxinus excelsior</td>
<td>Ash</td>
<td>w, d, h, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malus sylvestris spp. Sylvestris</td>
<td>Crab Apple</td>
<td>d, h, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populus tremula</td>
<td>Aspen</td>
<td>d, h, a, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prunus avium</td>
<td>Wild Cherry</td>
<td>h, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prunus padus</td>
<td>Bird Cherry</td>
<td>w, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quercus petraea</td>
<td>Sessile Oak</td>
<td>d, a, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quercus robur</td>
<td>Pedunculate Oak</td>
<td>w, h, a, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salix caprea</td>
<td>Goat Willow</td>
<td>w, h, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salix fragilis</td>
<td>Crack Willow</td>
<td>w, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorbus aucuparia</td>
<td>Rowan</td>
<td>d, a, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilia cordata*</td>
<td>Small-leaved Lime, *</td>
<td>d, h, a, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilia platyphylos*</td>
<td>Large-leaved Lime, *</td>
<td>h, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulmus glabra</td>
<td>Wych Elm</td>
<td>h, n, x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Small trees and shrubs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Soils/location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corylus avellana</td>
<td>Hazel</td>
<td>d, h, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crataegus monogyna</td>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>d, h, a, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cytisus scoparius</td>
<td>Broom</td>
<td>d, a, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frangula alnus</td>
<td>Alder Buckthorn</td>
<td>w, a, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilex aquifolium</td>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>d, a, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prunus spinosa</td>
<td>Blackthorn</td>
<td>w, d, h, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa arvensis</td>
<td>Field-rose</td>
<td>h, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa canina</td>
<td>Dog-rose</td>
<td>d, h, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salix cinerea</td>
<td>Grey Willow</td>
<td>w, a, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salix purpurea</td>
<td>Purple Willow</td>
<td>w, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salix viminalis</td>
<td>Osier</td>
<td>w, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sambucus nigra</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>d, h, n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulex europaeus</td>
<td>Gorse</td>
<td>d, a, n, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viburnum opulus</td>
<td>Guelder - rose</td>
<td>w, h, n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Large tree species native to Britain, not locally native, but may be acceptable in order to aid Red Squirrel conservation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Soils/location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pinus sylvestris</td>
<td>Scots pine</td>
<td>d, a, x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = only stock of local origin should be used
All other plants should be of British origin

Key to soils/location requirements:  w = wet; d = light, dry; h = heavy; a = acid; n = neutral, alkaline; x = exposed sites
Guidance also available in Forestry Commission Bulletin 112 Creating New Native Woodlands.