5. access and space between buildings

Market day, Bakewell - new commercial and residential development within town centre
5.1 So far we have concentrated on the design of individual buildings and related this to the local tradition. What happens however when the design involves more than one building? This section will look in summary at four interrelated aspects:

- Urban design
- Amenity
- Safe streets
- Inclusive access

_Detailed Design Guidance Note: Access and Space Between Buildings_ gives further information on each topic.

Urban Design

5.2 This term relates to the design of the spaces between buildings, be it a town, village or even a farmstead context. It is therefore as valid a design consideration in the National Park as it is in cities. Urban design is the art of making attractive, lively and above all distinctive places for people to use and identify with. Responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development in a town or village is the obvious starting point. Some places have a very enclosed, urban feel; others are more open in character with the surrounding landscape flowing in between the buildings courtesy of open paddocks. In both places, the continuity of street frontage, or lack of it, needs to be maintained.
5.3 What happens when development fails to respond to its context is only too obvious in the suburban estates that were added to settlements in the 1960s and 1970s. Here the layout is standardised and takes little account of the site.

5.4 Compare this with a traditional village where the complex arrangement of streets, spaces and enclosing buildings creates a sense of place and individuality.

5.5 New development needs to be integrated with the old if the character of our towns and villages is to be maintained and strengthened. Some of our greatest challenges come from public infrastructure such as highway improvements and the accretion of clutter in the public domain. With care however, these can be integrated satisfactorily into the rural and urban scene.
5.6 Successful places are characterised by the following qualities:

- **Character** - a place should have its own identity
- **Continuity and enclosure** - public and private spaces should be clearly distinguished
- **Quality of the public realm** - a place should have attractive and successful outdoor areas
- **Ease of movement** - a place should be easy to get to and move through
- **Legibility** - a place should have a clear image and be easy to understand
- **Adaptability** - a place should be able to change easily
- **Diversity** - a place should have variety and choice

These are taken from By Design: urban design in the planning system – towards better practice and is the companion guide to PPS1. They are qualities readily found in most Peak District settlements. The challenge is to reinforce and build on these for the future.

### Amenity

5.7 Amenity relates to fundamental design considerations such as a sense of well being or the avoidance of overlooking, overshadowing or unneighbourliness. It has also to do with how settlements and sites are lit, serviced and how traffic/parking is dealt with. Developments, which have high amenity value, are pleasant and agreeable. A well planned scheme works well and adds to the economic attractiveness of an area.

5.8 The challenge is to retain high amenity without sacrificing density. This is what often occurred traditionally in towns and villages through good urban design and is characterised by:

- Strong local identity which is publicly celebrated.
- Valued public buildings.
- A mix of compatible land uses such as shops, residential and quiet businesses.
- Well positioned trees and landscape features with associated high levels of biodiversity.
- High levels of personal privacy within houses and an element of private outdoor space.
- Pleasant views, especially from domestic buildings.
- Appropriate lighting.
- Safe and accessible environments.

5.9 In the Peak District National Park most settlements have a high amenity value and meet the above criteria. Many traditional houses are situated close to a road or footpath but small or vertically proportioned windows afford privacy, as do walled rear gardens and yards. By contrast suburban houses can have high amenity value but often achieve privacy through a greater distancing between buildings. The resultant lower densities are out of keeping with the local building tradition.
Safe Streets

5.10 Designing out crime is a valid planning consideration. Government advice: Safer Places – the Planning System and Crime Prevention\(^\text{10}\) (ODPM/Home Office 2004) is relevant here (see also Designing out Crime in Derbyshire)\(^\text{11}\). PPS 1 makes it clear that a key objective for new developments should be that they create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.

5.11 The Authority has adopted the Derbyshire Constabulary’s protocol for planning and crime, and consults constituent police forces on certain types of planning application. Essentially, individual buildings should have windows that overlook their curtilage.

5.12 Streets should be designed to ensure that everyone can use them safely. Gated communities are neither justified nor appropriate in the Peak District. Public areas and especially places where people gather need to be designed to be overlooked without undue loss of privacy to the buildings involved.

5.13 It will be expected that where appropriate, pedestrians and cyclists will be given precedence over vehicles. Careful landscaping can help to achieve these objectives. For example, the use of stone setts at junctions can slow vehicles and define pedestrian routes.
Inclusive Access

5.14 An inclusive environment is one that can be used by everyone regardless of age, gender or disability. The aim should be to design buildings, streets and public spaces which allow equal, independent and dignified access for all. Everyone should be able to use the same entrances, corridors and rooms irrespective of their mobility.

5.15 With an estimated 20% of the adult population having a disability, and that percentage set to rise, it is essential that new development takes account of access issues at the design stage. The delivery of an inclusive environment will contribute to wider social objectives as well as adding value to new development.

5.16 Design and Access Statements are now required for all but minor planning applications. These must show how access issues have been dealt with, both from the point of view of vehicular and transport links as well as inclusive access. See Appendix 1 for more details.

5.17 The Council for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE): The Principles of Inclusive Design,12 (They include you) calls for places to be:

- Inclusive - so everyone can use them safely, easily and with dignity.
- Responsive - taking account of what people say they need and want.
- Flexible - so different people can use them in different ways.
- Convenient - so everyone can use them without too much effort or separation.
- Accommodating - for all people, regardless of their age, gender, mobility, ethnicity or circumstances.
- Welcoming - with no disabling barriers that might exclude some people.
- Realistic - offering more than one solution to help balance everyone’s needs and recognising that one solution may not work for all.
- Understandable - everyone knows where they are and can locate their destination.