Doncaster Council
Residential Backland and Infill Development:
Supplementary Planning Document

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Introduction
1.0 Introduction

Residential backland and infill developments have a role to play in delivering housing targets for the borough, however, they also have the potential of creating significant adverse impacts in the communities they are located. This document is intended to explain how backland and infill developments can be designed to protect and enhance existing residential areas.

This Residential Backland and Infill Development Supplementary Planning Document provides further policy guidance relating to saved Unitary Development Plan policies PH8, PH11, PH13 and ENV52. It is envisaged that these policies will be replaced by revised Local Development Framework policies contained in the Detailed Policy and Site Allocations Development Plan Document. Above all the objectives of this document are to:

- Encourage good urban design, landscape design and architecture,
- Improve the quality and performance of existing and new residential areas,
- Promote safe, attractive, pedestrian focused residential layouts,
- Encourage a good mix of well-designed homes,
- Promote the conservation and enhancement of local distinctiveness and identity,
- Minimise the environmental impacts of new housing.

The purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document is to provide design guidance, it is not intended to replace or ‘outweigh’ national planning policy. It is another consideration alongside the national guidance. The Supplementary Planning Document contains generic design principles. Whilst the weight afforded to each of these principles will vary according to the site in question, the Supplementary Planning Document provides greater clarity to applicants regarding the key issues that the Council will assess on a case by case basis. Applicants and their advisors can use this guidance to ascertain the most appropriate design response for their site. It is often the case that applicants do not afford enough weight to these design requirements when considering their own economic incentives to develop, hence one of the reasons for the Supplementary Planning Document. The impact of the Supplementary Planning Document will be monitored and any adverse experiences that arise in practice will be addressed through updates to the document.
Definition of ‘backland' development

Backland can usually be defined as development on land behind the rear building line of existing housing or other development, and is usually land that is formally used as gardens, or is partially enclosed by gardens. Not all of backland development is surrounded by residential, or proposes residential, however. It does not include sites where development, as opposed to access to the development, adjoins a public highway.

Definition of ‘infill' development

Development in a small gap (e.g. 1-5 properties) in an otherwise built up frontage, usually consisting of the frontage plots only.

The revised Planning Policy Statement 3 (June 2010), provides national planning guidance relating to housing. It categorises gardens as Greenfield land and removed the national indicative minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare. The guidance requires a balance to be reached between achieving the Borough’s housing targets and at the same time protecting the character of an area and improving the quality and attractiveness of existing communities. A recent appeal for an infill development in Doncaster clearly demonstrates this in the inspector’s report:

‘Planning Policy Statement 3, Housing seeks to make efficient use of land, but not at the expense of the environment. For the reasons given above…..I find that the proposals will have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area’ (para 5, appeal ref F4410/A/08/2087316).
Doncaster Borough’s residential areas will be typical of many residential areas throughout the country. Certain residential areas will now include development that at the time was deemed acceptable, in terms of design, quality and density. These developments were bound by policies that could be said, did not understand the future impacts that they would cause. A change in public opinion, a policy change requiring the improvement of local distinctiveness and the fostering of sustainable communities has altered present day decision making. If proposals in the past were assessed against present day criteria it would not be surprising that a number of these applications would be refused. Therefore development cannot now just mimic existing examples of our newest buildings within existing residential areas (last 10 years). Careful consideration is now required when designing backland or infill developments, and each application will be judged on its merits.

Building for Life

Building for Life is the national standard for residential design quality, which encompasses the objectives of good housing design (for more information see www.buildingforlife.org). Appendix 3 contains the 20 Building for Life criteria / questions which can be used to assess the design quality of a scheme. Most of the 20 Building for Life criteria are applicable regardless of the size of development, however some criteria are more challenging for smaller developments. Whilst some backland and infill schemes may not be expected to achieve all of the Building for Life criteria due to their scale. In order to ensure a good standard of design they will still be expected to meet the relevant questions. Throughout this Supplementary Planning Document the relevant Building for Life questions are highlighted at appropriate places in the text. These questions can be used by applicants and Development Control Officers as a checking mechanism to ensure key design objectives have been met.
How to use the Supplementary Planning Document

The Supplementary Planning Document is principally aimed at applicants, agents (or their designers) and Development Control Officers, however it can equally be used by members of the community when assessing development proposals in their area. The Supplementary Planning Document format generally follows the design process (see section 2). The flow chart below shows how the Supplementary Planning Document can be used at key stages of the design process. Pre-application discussions can take place with the relevant Development Control officer at any stage prior to the submission of an application, but they are usually more productive if schematic / sketch plans have been prepared.

![Flow chart showing how the Supplementary Planning Document can be used at key stages of the design process. Pre-application discussions can take place with the relevant Development Control officer at any stage prior to the submission of an application, but they are usually more productive if schematic / sketch plans have been prepared.]

Development Control Officers will check the submitted plans and the assumptions of the Design and Access Statement (refer to appendix 1) against the principles of this Supplementary Planning Document. The design checklist in section 6 provides an overview of some of the key considerations to be taken into account. Officers will also use the relevant Building for Life questions / criteria to appraise the design quality of a scheme.
The design process
2.0 The design process

The starting point for designing a new residential development is to assess the existing local surroundings. Even proposals that will not be visible from public view should be designed to complement the locality in which they are situated. Not all infill or backland development must be a copy or pastiche of existing buildings. Creative interpretation of the existing character is encouraged and the Council will consider contemporary design on its ability to respond positively to the site constraints and make a positive contribution to the surrounding area.

A backland or infill development should therefore make a contribution to the character of the existing locality. In broad terms, a proposal that fails to complement the local area in terms of design, density levels and layout will be refused.

Design is rarely a linear process. As ideas are brought forward they are tested against earlier assumptions, refined and developed. As new constraints are introduced opportunities may arise. In general terms, however, the design process usually follows five key stages:

• Undertaking a character appraisal,
• Developing the layout concept,
• Developing schematic designs,
• Detailed design,
• Implementation and review.

Applicants for new residential developments are encouraged to follow this process. The Council promote pre-application discussions with development control and design officers, during the early stages, to iron out issues beforehand. The aim should be to have the layout and design agreed as far as possible before the application is submitted. It is also useful for the applicant to prepare their Design and Access Statement in parallel to this process (see appendix 1 for further guidance). This will save time later and ensure that the design statement truly reflects the design process.
Undertaking a character appraisal

A character appraisal will be required to inform housing developments, and should be included within the Design and Access Statement. The level of detail the appraisal goes into will depend upon the nature of the site and surroundings and the scale of development proposed. An appraisal can contain text, photos, diagrams, plans and sketches to present the information.

A robust character appraisal will help to identify what kind of approach to undertake when designing a scheme, for example it will help to decide whether to;

- **Reflect** - should the development seek to reflect the character of the existing area?
- **Interpret** - should the new housing development interpret certain aspects of the surrounding character in new ways?
- **Contrast** - should the development contrast with the existing character? (only relevant in specific exceptional circumstances for example the creation of a new landmark. This requires a high level of design skill to successfully achieve).

**Sometimes in historically sensitive areas it may be better to reflect the existing vernacular as this new development does successfully.

**Contemporary interpretation of vernacular design is desirable and will be supported where it will make a positive contribution to the area.**
South Yorkshire Archaeology Service have undertaken a Historic Environment Characterisation Study which sets out the key characteristics for a range of environments in the Borough as a starting point resource for designers (http://www.sytimescapes.org.uk/zones/doncaster). This work will be further supplemented by ongoing character and context appraisals, including conservation area appraisals, baseline neighbourhood and local distinctiveness studies. The Council will continue the production and review of Conservation Area Appraisals, as tools for encouraging sensitive design in the Borough’s conservation areas. Council planning / design officers will be able to provide developers and designers with the latest information and advice during pre-application discussions.

Designers need to consider the characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood, so that the development can positively contribute to the character and function of the existing place. The following questions can be used as a checklist to guide and structure the character appraisal:

- How big are plot sizes in the area and what are their shapes?
- What proportion of the plot is developed?
- How does built development in the area respond to topography? Does it work with the slope or go against it? Step up or down?
- Are streets enclosed by continuous / straight building lines or are buildings, stepped, or set back from the street?
- Are there front gardens? How big are they?
- How tall are buildings generally in the surrounding area?
- Are buildings joined or standalone?
- Is the massing of buildings simple or are there joined elements and structures? What shapes do these create?
- What shape and type of roof is prevalent?
- What is the roofscape like? Are there defining features (e.g. chimney types)?
- What types of building / housing forms are most common: terraces, townhouses, detached, semi-detached, linked or separate?
- Are common materials used for walls, roofs, windows, or are there some common themes / predominant materials or building elements?
- What colour and texture are materials? What are their properties?
- What is the pattern of fenestration-horizontal or vertical? Are windows and doors placed symmetrically on elevations? What types of windows are used? Are they rectangular or squared? Are there dormer windows? Bay windows? Projecting / floating bay windows?
- What are interfaces like between the public and private realm? Are there porches / verandas, changes in material or steps?
- Do buildings have rich ornamentation and detailing or are they relatively plain?
- What are the surrounding land uses? How will they impact on the scheme?
- Therefore, is there a strongly defined character to the area? What is it? How can it be reflected / interpreted in the new development?

Relevant Building for Life questions

Q.7 Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape and topography?
General design requirements
3.0 General design requirements

Architectural features and building materials

When a developer has an understanding of the building elements (see previous section), and architectural features that characterise an area, it will then be possible to design a scheme that will sit in harmony with it. Doors, windows, bays, porches, roof forms, brick detailing and gable ends are all key building elements in an area that create a sense of place and an area’s identity. Developments should aim to replicate, or interpret, certain predominant features of the area to help the development blend within the surroundings and not appear alien. Building materials are also important to aid development to blend with its surroundings. The type, colour and texture of materials should usually complement those within the wider residential area. If the wider area has no predominant material then local materials should generally be sought.

A careful study of surrounding buildings, materials and detailing should inform material selections in a new development in order to re-enforce local distinctiveness.
Relevant Building for Life questions

Q.06  Is the design specific to the scheme?
Q.08  Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?
Q.17  Do buildings exhibit architectural quality?

This local distinctiveness can be seen in features throughout a specific area.
Designers are challenged to create and reinforce local distinctiveness through imaginative housing design which references local character in new and interesting ways. The images above show an example of how key building elements in Dunsville could be interpreted in a sympathetic, yet contemporary, way in a new infill development.
Plot size

The proposed building plot should generally be of similar dimensions, in size and shape to the existing plots within the immediate locality. Proposals that would lead to over-development of a site or the appearance of cramming will generally be resisted. In certain parts of the Borough, the plot size and shape are an important characteristic of the historical urban grain, or the relationship between plot size and the footprint of a property are a key element of the areas character. The images below show examples of why it is important to often retain the characteristics of development plots.

Hatfield historic core - showing a clear planned medieval linear pattern of plots retained by piecemeal property replacement, set perpendicular to a main street

Harlington village is a good example of the extent to which historic character can be lost within late 20th century redevelopment. Suburbanisation has frequently reduced the legibility of historic forms. A common cause of this reduction of legibility is the amalgamation of historic plots in order to produce larger plots of land for the development of infill housing.
Layout and street-scene

The site layout should reflect the original development of the area. This is particularly important within older established residential areas where a uniformed plot layout and street-scene has been created. In circumstances when a site is to be cleared to create a cul-de-sac, the established street-scene needs to be respected and the house or houses at the entrance should face the original road frontage, and be similar to adjacent properties in terms of height, scale, massing, siting and appearance. Respect for established building lines is usually a key consideration when assessing a development’s impact on the street-scene. Developers may be requested to submit mock street-scenes or visualisations, to show how the development will assimilate into the street frontage.

Access and parking

Vehicle access to a backland or infill residential development can be problematic. Access by foot or by vehicle should not cause adverse amenity effects on neighbouring dwellings; the effects include noise, vibration, road safety and visual amenity. Access arrangements that will cause significant nuisance to these dwellings or cause safety problems to the existing road network will be resisted. Access to the site for emergency vehicles and refuse collection can also cause problems. Adequate turning circles and passing points may be required dependant on the size of development.

Neither backland nor infill development should lead to inadequate provision for car parking, or allow car parking to have negative effects on the areas character. If insufficient land is available within the plot to provide parking, the Council will need to be satisfied that a reasonable alternative location would not adversely effect or aggravate existing road safety of the locality or cause amenity or parking issues for existing residents. All access requirements will need to be explained within the access section of the Design and Access Statement. Only sites that are located on routes with good public transport infrastructure, or within town centres will be allowed to reduce car-parking requirements for that development. Highways development control officers will be able to provide site-specific highway design advice.
Relevant Building for Life questions

Q.08  Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?

Q.09  Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?

Q.11  Does building layout take priority over the streets and car parking, so that the highways do not dominate?

Q.12  Is the car parking well integrated and situated so it supports the street scene?

Q.14  Does the scheme integrate with existing streets, paths and surrounding development?

Garden amenity

New developments on parts of large gardens are becoming increasingly common. Gardens are often in excess of modern lifestyles, many are well beyond the needs of their existing owners and maintenance can be a burden not a pleasure. Notwithstanding this, in some areas large gardens are a defining characteristic of the place, usually where frontage development predominates. In these areas piecemeal backland development will usually be resisted.

The Council regard garden space to be an essential part of the delivery of new dwellings. The Council will try and ensure properties with larger gardens (which are increasingly becoming rare due to increased density demands and backland / infill developments) are delivered as part of the overall housing mix in the Borough. The garden size should reflect (in size and layout) the type of house that is to be delivered and its locality. The aim is to provide an area of recreational space that is private, sunlit and does not have excessive overshadowing. South facing gardens are desirable dwelling features and would be welcomed, where this does not compete against other design considerations. Gardens provide numerous health, social and physical benefits for homeowners, and make a contribution toward sustainable development by providing space for ecology, the drying of clothes, cycle storage, composting, rainwater collection, amongst other uses.
Gardens provide other functions at a neighbourhood level that the Council see important. They allow the infiltration of water into the ground, reducing the amount of surface water run off a site produces and with the inclusion of trees shrubs and flowers aid in the biodiversity of the area. In areas of flood risk, when large sites are proposed, or where significantly increased run off will be generated an assessment into the impact will be required. A flood risk assessment and Sustainable Urban Drainage System statement explaining all mitigation measures may be sought by the Council. Where a garden is rich in biodiversity an assessment will be required to ascertain the value of the flora and fauna. For further guidance on how biodiversity is measured, maintained or enhanced on a site, applicants should consult the Council’s Supplementary Planning Document: Planning for Nature on Development Sites in Doncaster (available online).

In order to meet these functions, it is essential that there is sufficient amenity space provided for a dwelling. The area of private garden space delivered should normally be at least that of the footprint of the house, i.e. if the house occupies a footprint of 100 square metres then the size of the private area of garden should be a minimum of 100 square metres. In some areas, for example in some conservation areas, the garden size should be much larger than the footprint of the house in order to retain the characteristics of that area.

Shared amenity areas are appropriate for the delivery of certain dwelling types, such as flats, particularly where there is a shortage of good quality open space within easy walking distance of the development. The private garden space requirement might be relaxed in certain town centre locations where higher development densities are warranted. In these situations alternative forms of open space may be more appropriate (e.g. roof terraces, balconies, courtyards, etc).
Front gardens

Front gardens are a valuable resource for many residents. The size of the front garden, its boundary treatment and building line set back are also all important aspects that help to determine the character of a street. Front boundary walls, hedgerows, and fences in particular make an important contribution to the street-scene in addition to demarcating the interface between public and semi-private space. The Council will resist proposals that will lead to the loss of a front garden, or will result in adverse impacts on its character, at odds with the prevalent street-scene.

A common issue in this respect relates to parking, specifically where developers wish to utilise front garden space as areas of hard-standing, or introduce garage blocks within this space. The Council will resist development in such instances, as it introduces alien elements to the street-scene forward of the building line, and reduces opportunities for natural surveillance from the host dwelling onto the street. Hard standing also contributes towards surface water flood risk. The government has removed permitted development rights to pave over front gardens. Householders wishing to lay impermeable surfaces over 5 square metres need to obtain specific planning permission.
Daylighting and overshadowing

Backland and infill development has the potential to badly affect neighbouring properties if development radically reduces the amount of daylight available through windows, or obstructs the path of direct sunlight to a once sunny garden or window.

Blocking direct sunlight from reaching neighbouring properties can be detrimental to the solar performance of that building (by overshadowing). The passive solar performance of development should not be underestimated, as energy costs for heating and lighting would be affected. Overshadowing is governed by the topography of the site and the size, position and orientation of the development within. Overshadowing is more likely to occur when taller buildings are positioned to the south of smaller buildings, in late afternoon and early evening, and times when the sun’s path is low (winter). The Council will assess the affect the proposal will have on the amount of daylight and overshadowing neighbouring properties receive. Similarly, the Council will assess the proposed building designs to ensure that each room receives an adequate amount of day-lighting. Developers may be requested to submit a sun path analysis to ensure that development does not seriously affect a neighbour’s daylight or outlook.

New backland or infill development which results in overshadowing of existing properties (or their private amenity space) will not be supported. This example sun-path analysis shows how a 3 storey backland apartment block will overshadow existing properties and their gardens. This image shows the sun position at 4pm in September. The Council may request a number of diagrams showing effects throughout the year.
Privacy and overlooking

High occupancy areas, such as living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, dining rooms and certain garden spaces are most sensitive to overlooking, whereas lower occupancy areas such as landings, hallways, utility rooms or less used garden areas are less sensitive. Although to a certain extent a degree of overlooking is unavoidable, the extent of overlooking to a certain space will be assessed in order to ascertain whether this will be acceptable or not.

There should be sufficient separation between the proposed development and existing dwellings to overcome the difficulties of overlooking and disturbance. It will not be acceptable for a proposal to have windows that overlook other dwellings high occupancy areas to an unreasonable degree.

A housing development’s greatest potential for unacceptable overlooking comes from the upper floor windows. The impact of overlooking alters by the distance (window to window), the positioning and angle of windows, the type of room the window is for, or overlooks, and the type of glazing installed. These factors will be assessed in order to protect neighbouring residents privacy. Planning permission could be granted subject to a number of conditions, such as the inclusion of obscure glazing, the positioning and angle of certain windows or preventing the future installation of windows by the removal of Permitted Development Rights. Obscure glazing to high occupancy rooms (such as bedrooms) should be avoided, as this can create a poor internal living environment. Overlooking from ground floor windows can usually be avoided. Careful screening by walls, fences or planting can sometimes solve these issues of ground floor privacy.

In order to maintain a reasonable relationship between the new dwelling and existing property, the following minimum distances will normally apply:

- Where high occupancy room windows of dwellings of two-storey face each other, they should be a minimum of 21 metres apart.
- Where a dwelling is more than two-storey in height, it will normally require a further 4 metres per extra storey between high occupancy room windows.
- Where high occupancy room windows face low occupancy room windows or a blank gable, they should normally be a minimum of 11 metres apart.
- Habitable room windows that overlook neighbouring garden space should normally be at least 10 metres from the boundary. Where a new property overlooks an existing garden these distances may need to be increased.
- Where first floor habitable rooms, face habitable rooms in a single storey dwelling, or the habitable rooms of two single storey dwellings face one another, this separation distance may be reduced at the discretion of the Development Control officer.
In respect to infill development, it may be appropriate to reduce these distances in certain instances in order to preserve the character of a street, for example in a historic village centre where medieval street widths are still prevalent it might be appropriate to have closer front to front distances across the street. In these instances designers need to carefully consider the internal layout of the property, window size and design to minimise overlooking.

The diagram above shows minimum separation distances between existing 2 storey (blue) and new 2 storey (red) properties in a backland scheme. There will be circumstances where these distances will need to be increased in response to the particular characteristics of a site or the wider character of the area.

**Amenity**

The planning system operates in the wider public interest. Over time, the owners of dwellings change and the requirements of people change. It is important to have a consistent approach in the determination of applications.

The fact that the occupier of an existing dwelling subject to backland or infill development would be prepared to tolerate a lower level of amenity than this Supplementary Planning Document requires would not come as a surprise. The financial incentives can outweigh amenity for some. This however is not sufficient reasoning to permit a proposal that would create substandard or unacceptable amenity for future owners of these properties. People spend a large proportion of their time at home and pleasant living conditions with some outdoor space are sought after. The Council must consider whether a proposal would affect amenity to an unacceptable level for the good of the local community.
Trees and hedgerows

Many large gardens accommodate mature trees or hedgerows which are important in shaping an area’s character. For example, in certain parts of the Borough, mature trees appear above rooflines and as a ‘green’ backcloth to frontage properties. The Council’s view is that where possible they should be retained.

Planting along boundaries to plots is also important as it often has high amenity value to local residents and helps to create privacy within plots. Trees and hedgerows also provide linear habitats for ecology and movement networks of wildlife corridors across residential areas. New development should not be sited close to existing trees, as it may result in overshadowing of the building or damage to the root structure. For further guidance on when it is possible to develop where sites have trees present, developers should consult the adopted Supplementary Planning Document Planning for Trees and Hedgerows on Development Sites. Where a proposal will be affecting existing or protected trees, the Council’s Tree Officer’s should be contacted from the outset.

Trees of sufficient age may also provide roosting opportunities for bats. A survey for bats may be necessary if buildings are to be demolished, particularly if there are records of bats in the area, suitable habitats nearby or the buildings contain access points for bats. A list of criteria that can help determine whether bats are present in buildings and trees, is provided in Natural England’s Bat Mitigation Guidelines - http://naturalengland.communisis.com/naturalenglandshop/docs/IN13.6.pdf.

Trees and hedgerows provide a variety of aesthetic and ecological functions within residential areas, therefore wherever possible the Council will seek to retain these features.
Conservation areas and listed buildings

Doncaster Council has a statutory duty to preserve and enhance the historic environment within the Borough. The Borough has a very significant built heritage and this makes a vital contribution to local character and quality of life to the local residents.

There are 46 conservation areas and over 800 Grade I and Grade II listed buildings within the Borough. Presently ‘conservation area appraisals’ are being carried out to explain these area’s special features and/or interests. It will be important that proposals take account of these appraisals when they have been adopted to ensure new development will be in sympathy with the surrounding area. The most up to date conservation area appraisals can be found on the Council’s website at: www.doncaster.gov.uk/conservationareas

In infill in conservation areas and other areas with character require an in depth appreciation of the character and qualities of the area, so that new buildings comfortably fit in. The example right is appropriate in terms of its form, but the materials (particularly the facing materials), are at odds with the prevalent stone used in the conservation area. The example below is better in terms of materials and detailing.
Any development proposal in a conservation area will be assessed for its impact on existing character and appearance. To aid our understanding of any proposal, the design and access statement should explain how the development will achieve the requirements set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15. To achieve an acceptable development that will affect a conservation area or listed building, views of the Council’s conservation officers should be sought. This process should happen at the earliest possible stage so as to avoid complications in the processing of the application.

Sustainable development

A number of brownfield sites are isolated from required services, such as bus or train routes, a variety of shops, schools, or by a lack of electric, gas or water utilities. It is reasonable for the Council to refuse such applications due to the site location. Proposals that address these issues, and can be conditioned through the granting of planning permission, could be looked at more favourably.

Flood risk is also an important consideration when assessing the sustainability of a site and can be used as a reason to refuse planning permission. If after careful consideration, a development is allowed to take place within a flood risk area, it must be safe and not cause flooding elsewhere.

Relevant Building for Life questions

Q.01 Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as a school, play areas, shops, pubs or cafes?

Q.04 Is the development have easy access to public transport?
**Sustainable construction**

We now live in a climate that is changing, and generally, all the research points that this is not for the better. Buildings are being expected to become more carbon neutral and to future proof against our predicted changing weather patterns, which may produce extremes of temperature and increased surface water run off. To achieve a low carbon building with more resilience to climate change requires using modern construction methods and technologies. Invariably proposals of this type can sometimes look different to existing housing. If the proposal brings a number of environmental and amenity benefits that outweigh a departure from local character, then these may be looked at favourably.

The Council will give support and encouragement to new and innovative designs which encapsulate sustainable construction techniques. Whilst the consistency of visual design and materials is an important consideration, outside conservation areas the Council may relax these requirements where new properties include techniques / materials that are conducive to energy efficient design. Many of the relevant design principles set out in this Supplementary Planning Document, such as those relating to access and parking, layout, scale, garden amenity, day-lighting, overshadowing, privacy and overlooking should remain unaffected by sustainable construction, but architectural features and building materials may need to change to a degree in order for sustainable principles to be incorporated.

The Council require that all new developments over 10 residential units provide 10% of their energy requirements through renewable energy, however this may change in the future to include smaller developments. The adopted Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document provides more guidance in relation to this area of design and should be read in conjunction with this Supplementary Planning Document. Council officers can advise applicants on the level of sustainability required of new development (using the Code for Sustainable Homes levels as benchmarks to be met). It is envisaged that these requirements will be set out in more detail within the Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents, which applicants are advised to consult at an early stage.

**Relevant Building for Life questions**

Q.05 Does the scheme have any features that reduce its environmental impact?

Q.19 Has the scheme made advances in construction or technology that enhances its performance, quality and attractiveness?

Q.20 Do Buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as building regulations?
Detailed design requirements for backland development
4.0 Detailed design requirements for backland development

It is often very difficult to design a satisfactory form of backland development, due to issues of scale, access, overlooking and separation distances. Removal of existing mature trees is often proposed which can also have negative impacts on an areas character. These developments are mainly planned in existing residential areas where residents and neighbours enjoy an certain level of amenity. In some instances a more satisfactory form of development can be achieved by packaging a number of land parcels together to develop a more appropriate scheme.

Design

Backland sites are generally landlocked, such as rear gardens and private open space. By its nature, backland development should largely be out of view and not dominate the frontage property, but still be partly visible so people can find it. This however cannot be an excuse for poor design. Designers should ensure a backland development or property is subservient (i.e. smaller in size, massing and scale) to the frontage property. Such development will also require particular care in its design and layout to avoid conflict with neighbouring residential development. This design process requires explanation through the design and access statement.

Piecemeal development

Given the value of backland sites in contributing to the delivery of the Borough’s supply of housing land, a development should not be delivered in a piecemeal manner. Proposals could hinder the future development of other adjoining brownfield land, creating an unsatisfactory outcome. Proposals that hinder the delivery of future housing need would be resisted.
Tandem development

A tandem development is a backland development, where new dwelling is placed immediately behind an existing dwelling, on sites that occupy smaller sized plots or share the same access. Due to the problems of overlooking, noise and traffic disturbance, loss of amenity, cramping and the adverse impact on local character, the Council would normally resist such proposals, unless in exceptional circumstances where all of these issues can be adequately addressed.

Example of tandem development
where a new property is placed immediately behind the existing property on the same plot

Backland properties should not be larger in height, massing, scale and volume than the host dwelling, as in this example where the property is highly visible behind the host bungalow and creates overlooking from first floor windows

Exceptionally, on very large plots, it may be possible to achieve sufficient separation between dwellings to overcome these difficulties. Similarly there will need to be sufficient separation distance between the host dwelling and access road as not to cause amenity issues. Tandem development will only be permitted provided that the amenities of the surrounding dwelling, together with the ‘host’ dwelling can be safeguarded, there is no possibility of a more comprehensive scheme, and the design of the tandem property is subservient to the host.
Site assembly

It may be possible to assemble sufficient land from a number of adjoining rear gardens to enable a small group of houses to be developed. In such an occasion, a small cul-de-sac or courtyard could achieve an acceptable separation between public and private space, and safeguard against unwanted overlooking. However, the Council will need to be convinced that the new development will not have any detrimental impacts on the amenity of neighbouring properties, including their private amenity space, and the access to the cul-de-sac will not impact negatively on the character of an existing street. In particularly sensitive areas, such as conservation areas, the principle of backland cul-de-sac development may be resisted particularly where this type of layout is not a common characteristic of the area.
Backland access

Backland development brings to it an instant problem of access, how can the new dwellings link with the existing road network? Access roads must be designed to avoid any adverse disruption to the appearance of the street-scene. Where possible existing access points should be used. The Council will resist backland development that creates multiple access points where this will have a detrimental appearance on the street frontage. Proposals for the demolition of existing buildings, or even parts of a building that would result in a gap between buildings can be possible allowing for circulation space. However, in areas that have a continual street frontage where this forms part of the character of the area, proposals that create gaps will generally be discouraged.

Access to the existing road network should be safe and convenient to cyclists, pedestrians and drivers; these roads should comply with standards outlined in Doncaster’s Design Guidance for Residential and Industrial Developments document and the Manual for Streets (2007).

Access routes should be located at an appropriate distance away from existing dwelling so not to have a detrimental effect through noise and visual disruption. Routes should usually have a minimum separation distance of 3 metres from the edge of the access road to the edge of the nearest effected house, together with the appropriate boundary treatment to screen the access road from dwellings. In some instances, for example where habitable rooms and windows are closest to the access, this minimum separation distance may need to be greater. In other instances, where the nearest part of the house contains non-habitable rooms (e.g. a garage) the planning officer may use their discretion regarding the separation distance. The access should also avoid excessive disturbances or loss of privacy to neighbouring residents, for example, an unreasonably close assess road passing too close to an adjoining dwelling. The likely frequency of use by vehicular traffic and the suitability of the access for service vehicles and the emergency services will also be material considerations.

Where access roads exclusively serve 5 dwellings or more the access road will need to be to an adoptable standard as agreed by the Local Highways Authority. A private drive serving 5 dwellings or less must take account of the servicing requirements of refuse collection and emergency vehicles. Shared drives can be a solution for particularly constrained sites, however in general the Council will resist such proposals as they can lead to domestic disputes and legal issues between the host dwelling and the backland property over which the Council has no authority to intervene. Proposals for shared drive solutions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. In some instances the Council will request that a bin collection area for the backland development is provided to the front of the host dwelling, to enable easy refuse / recycling collection. The bin collection areas need to be carefully sited and designed so as not to have a detrimental effect on the street-scene or create amenity issues.
Two poor quality piecemeal, backland developments have created multiple access points on this street frontage, increasing the prominence of the properties to the rear. The access road to the development on the right is located too close to the host property. In both developments, the new backland properties are significantly taller than the host properties and have little relevance to the traditional architectural qualities of this part of Doncaster. A comprehensive scheme consisting of a traditional 'courtyard' layout of smaller-scale properties may have been a more sympathetic response.

Developments serviced by backways
Doncaster has a number of areas that include backways. It is normally terrace housing that were built with these small access roads that run at the rear of gardens, some properties have existing garages, parking spaces or fencing present. Backland development where parking spaces rely solely on accessing these backways will generally be resisted on highways safety and amenity grounds.

Mixed uses
Backland sites can deliver more than just residential development, in certain circumstances they can accommodate different uses, for example new workspace, live/work units or community facilities. Each proposal will be assessed on the amenity of the existing area and whether the proposal has benefits for the community that would outweigh detrimental effects.

Good quality public and semi-private spaces
Access ways and other public or semi-private areas within a development plot should be pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly, and be designed to encourage low traffic speeds. Buildings should be sited to encourage natural surveillance of these spaces from adjacent properties. These spaces should be laid out so it is clear which property is responsible for managing what area. Any shared areas can often be maintained collectively on behalf of residents by a management company. It is unlikely the Council will wish to adopt these areas unless they serve 5 dwellings or more and are designed to an adoptable specification.

Relevant Building for Life questions
Q.13 Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?
Q.15 Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?
Q.16 Is the public space well designed as does it have suitable management arrangements in place?
Detailed design requirements for infill development
5.0 Detailed design requirements for infill development

As infill development will be visible and will not be obscured by other dwellings all infill developments should respect the character of the surrounding area and the amenity of the neighbours. It should re-enforce the uniformity of the street by developing in proportion to its neighbouring properties, where architectural features and building materials should be reflected. This is important in re-enforcing the local context and ensuring that the character of the street-scene is not adversely compromised. Section 2 of this document sets out how to undertake a character appraisal. Key factors in the local area that should be assessed and reflected in new infill developments, include:

- Plot Width
- Building Line Build Up
- Building Set Back
- Front Boundary
- Landscape Setting and Features
- Plot Format
- Parking
- Plot Access
- Building Format
- Key Dimensions
- Key Features
- Roofing Materials
- Wall Materials
- Window Format
- Typical Details

Below are some of the key considerations which will be taken into account when appraising an infill development proposal.

**Plot width**

Plots must be sufficiently wide enough to site a building or buildings of an appropriate size that allows adequate separation between dwellings. The width of the plot and the width of the proposed development should be similar to that prevailing within the immediate local area. There is a need to provide adequate circulation space between properties for rear access and maintenance.

In the example left, the infill property is too wide for the plot, and the rear extension causes overlooking and overshadowing of the neighbouring property. The width of the property results in parking and garaging to the front, which is out of character with the street. The example right shows a more sympathetic form of development.
**Building conformity**

The height, form and construction materials should reflect that of the prevailing street frontage. This is particularly important on main roads and areas of special designation (e.g. conservation areas).

**Visual separation**

New dwellings must retain similar spacing between dwellings to that commonly found on the street frontage. Similarly, when there are no separations on the street, for example terrace housing. The new development should either have a small separation distance (e.g. 1 metre) or join the existing property to continue the streetscape.
Established building line
Where it is a particular feature of the area that there is a prevailing depth of frontage, new development should respect and conform to the appearance. If a street has varying depths of frontage then the neighbouring properties frontage, which is closed to the road will be used as a level.

Building fenestration and rhythm
The established pattern of windows, projecting bays and recesses should generally be respected, to continue the repetition and pattern of frontage character along a street.

Access Requirements
Satisfactory arrangements need to be made for parking and access. Where possible, existing access arrangements should be used to serve new developments, this will aid in reenforcing the appearance of the street-scene. It may be possible for new dwellings to share driveways.

Parking requirements
Parking areas (particularly those to the front of the property- e.g. on front gardens) will be avoided where these are detrimental to the character of the area. Areas of hard-standing are often at odds with the open nature of soft landscaped gardens.

Boundary treatment
Boundary treatment along the frontage will be required to closely match the prevailing within the street-scene, for example, if there are low walls along a street then this should be replicated.
Design checklist
6.0 Design checklist

The following key questions can be used by designers and Development Management Officers as a checklist when considering new backland or infill developments:

- Has there been a robust analysis of the site and surrounding area, have the findings been related to the new development?
- Has the scheme been designed in response to the context?
- Does the development affect the plot size and shape, is the scale of development appropriate to the plot size without resulting in over-development?
- Are buildings positioned within the plot to allow sufficient separation between properties and avoid problems with overlooking and overshadowing?
- Does the development respect established building lines and heights, property spacing, fenestration materials and boundary treatments?
- Will properties have decent private amenity areas that benefit from good daylighting?
- If a backland development is proposed, is there scope for a more comprehensive scheme? Are properties to the rear of the plot subservient to the host dwelling and is there sufficient separation between them?
- Are access points well located? Will the access point(s) result in damage to the street frontage?
- Are parking areas and garages well designed and discreetly located?
- Does the scheme retain and enhance existing trees, hedgerows and other boundary planting?
- Is a flood risk assessment and / or ecological / bat survey required?
- How does the scheme perform against the 20 Building for Life criteria?

The Building for Life questions (contained in appendix 3) can also be used to assess the design quality of a scheme.
Further reading

A number of urban design guidance documents have been published in recent years which will be helpful in developing proposals and drawing up design statements, including:

• By Design; urban design in the planning system (2000), http://www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=446
• Urban Design Compendium (English Partnerships), http://www.urbandesigncompendium.co.uk/
• Building in Context - New Development in Historic Areas (English Heritage & CABE, 2001) http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.1483
• Building for Life www.buildingforlife.org.uk
• Better Places to Live in South Yorkshire, (available online from DMBC),
• Supplementary Planning Documents on Sustainable Construction, Environmental Planning, Landscaping, Trees and Hedgerows, www.doncaster.gov.uk/Supplementary Planning Document
• Code for Sustainable Homes assessment info http://www.breeam.org/
## Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amenity</td>
<td>A feature or benefit of a property which makes life more pleasant for a resident, e.g. private amenity space is a private garden space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownfield</td>
<td>Describes an area of land in a town or city that was previously used for other uses and where new buildings can normally be built. From the adoption of PPG3: Housing in March 2000, gardens were categorised as brown-field land and the general presumption was that gardens in residential areas were acceptable for development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary treatment</td>
<td>How a boundary of a property is treated, e.g. a wall, fence, or hedgerow are examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building line</td>
<td>A line established by the front of properties along a street usually parallel to a property line, beyond which a structure should not extend forward or backward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character appraisal</td>
<td>An appraisal or assessment of an area’s character, including its buildings, spaces, landscape and streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation area</td>
<td>Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to which stronger planning controls are applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and Access Statements</td>
<td>Are documents that explain the design thinking behind a planning application and are required as part of an application submission. Statements should include a written description and justification of the planning application. Sometimes photos, maps and drawings may be needed to further illustrate the points made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development density</td>
<td>The amount of built development in an area, usually applied to housing e.g. 50 dwellings per hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenestration</td>
<td>The design and patterning / disposition of windows and doors of a building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora and fauna</td>
<td>Plants and animals, sometimes collectively referred to as ‘biodiversity’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Greenfield  
A site which has not previously been built upon

High occupancy room  
A habitable room which is used regularly as a living space, therefore includes kitchens, dining rooms, bedrooms. Excludes bathrooms, circulation space, etc

Local distinctiveness  
The Genus Loci or distinctive character of a place. That what is distinctive about a local area

Massing  
The physical volume or bulk of a building

Natural surveillance  
Natural surveillance occurs by designing the placement of physical features, activities and people in such a way as to maximise visibility and foster positive social interaction among legitimate users of private and public space, so that potential offenders feel increased scrutiny and limitations on their escape route e.g. placing windows so they overlook pavements and parking areas increases natural surveillance, and hence the security, of these areas

Orientation  
The positioning of the building in relation to true north. Often used to describe a building’s position in relation to the sun

Ornamentation  
Adding extraneous decorations, adornment or details to a building

Overlooking  
Where privacy or amenity is detrimentally reduced by people being able to see into a property or its grounds

Overshadowing  
Where the shadow cast by a property detrimentally reduces the amenity of a neighbouring property or its levels of daylighting

Permitted Development Rights  
rights to carry out certain limited forms of development without the need to make an application for planning permission, as granted under the General Permitted Development Order 1995

Plot  
A parcel of land usually bounded / defined at its edges includes property, garden, etc

Public realm  
Outdoor areas accessible to the public e.g. streets or parks
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private realm</td>
<td>Outdoor areas not accessible to the public e.g. private gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roofscape</td>
<td>What the form, shape, materials, fenestration and detailing of the roofs of a collection of buildings look like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation distance</td>
<td>The clear distance between two properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun-path analysis</td>
<td>Analysis of the path of the sun in relation to a building, to assess the effects of daylighting and shadowing in relation to a building orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary Planning Document</td>
<td>A document that provides more detailed guidance to support an adopted planning policy or document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable development</td>
<td>Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topography</td>
<td>The three-dimensional arrangement of physical attributes (such as shape, height, and depth) of a land surface in a place. Physical features that make up the topography of an area include hills, valleys, plains, and bodies of water. Human-made features such as roads, railroads, and landfills are also often considered part of an area’s topography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1
Guidance on producing Design and Access Statements

A Design and Access Statement must accompany applications for both outline and full applications for planning and listed building consent.

What should a Design and Access Statement cover?
Design and Access Statements are documents that explain the design thinking behind an application, to show that the applicant has thought carefully about how everyone, including disabled people, older people and young children will be able to use the places they want to build. They provide an opportunity for the applicant to demonstrate their commitment to achieving good design and ensuring accessibility for all. The Design and Access Statement should describe the following (the headings can be used to structure the document):

- **The design process** - explain the surrounding context, design principles and concepts,
- **Amount of development** - how much will be built on site including number of units/floor space,
- **Use** - what buildings and spaces will be used for,
- **Layout** - how the buildings, private/public spaces are to be arranged on site and their relationship to existing buildings and each other,
- **Scale** - how big the buildings and spaces will be in terms of their height/width/length,
- **Appearance** - details of materials and architectural features,
- **Landscaping** - treatment of private and public spaces (hard and soft landscaping),
- **Access** - access to the development to ensure equal; and convenient access to buildings and spaces and the public transport network, and access for emergency services where relevant.

How do I prepare a Design and Access Statement?
For complex, sensitive or larger sites the Council will require a more rigorous design statement to explain how the proposed design relates to the site, how it relates to its surroundings and how it helps to create a sense of place. The statement should explain factors that have led to the scheme being like it is. Therefore, it is recommended that those who take a lead role in the design of the development, also take a lead role in the drafting of the Design and Access Statement.
The Design and Access Statement should consist of annotated drawings with supporting text and should:

- Include site and area diagrams, include photos - showing analysis of existing features and characteristics and constraints in the area.
- Contain design objectives and explore layout principles.
- Explain how the development will integrate with existing built form and spaces to enhance character.
- Explain what has been done to ensure the elevations and ground surfaces will look good.
- Show how the siting, scale and massing of buildings relates well to adjoining sites.
- Illustrate how the site layout of access, buildings, spaces and parking works well and makes best use of the site.
- Describe the steps that have been taken to ensure the design is energy efficient, long lasting, accessible to all, safe and easy to maintain.

Access should be considered and described in terms of:

- Movement within the wider locality,
- Access or egress to the site,
- Movement around the site,
- Provision that has been made for disabled access.

Further information relating to Design and Access Statements can be found at:
www.doncaster.gov.uk/designandaccess
Appendix 2
Relevant saved UDP policies

Doncaster Unitary Development Plan, adopted July 1998

Policy PH8:
Infill and small scale housing developments will normally be allowed so far as they conform with other policies and criteria set out in the UDP.

Policy PH11:
Within residential policy areas development for housing will normally be permitted except where:

A) the development would be at a density or of a form which would be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area or would result in an over-intensive development of the site;
B) the effect of the development on the amenities of occupiers of nearby properties would be unacceptable;
C) tandem or backland development would result in an unsatisfactory access, overlooking or over-intensive development;
D) the development would result in the loss of social, community and recreational or other local facilities for which there is a demonstrated need.

Policy PH13
The borough council will seek to promote the highest standards of residential development through the following:

A) resisting new development where it would be affected by excessive traffic, noise, fumes, smells, unsightliness or risks to health. In particular residential development within 400 metres of a sewage treatment works or where overhead power lines could have a detrimental effect will not normally be allowed;
B) requiring a comprehensive landscaping treatment as part of major developments or where there is a sensitive boundary or adjacent land use;
C) consideration of the requirements of disabled people;
D) consideration of safety particularly in relation to the night time environment, the provision of adequate and safe access, and lighting;
E) full consideration of other design issues, including layout, privacy, aspect, and the provision of private and or communal garden space, and parking / garage space;
F) consideration of the provision of community, recreation and open space facilities in relation to new residential development.
G) consideration and promotion of energy conservation in residential developments.

**Policy ENV52**

New buildings should respect their townscape and landscape setting with layout, siting, form, scale, detailing and materials being appropriate to the character of the surrounding area and any adjoining properties. The borough council will reject obviously poor designs which are out of scale or character with their surroundings.

All buildings should be designed and located to ensure adequate standards of privacy, daylight, sunlight, energy conservation and noise attenuation for occupiers of nearby properties and for occupiers of the proposed development. Where appropriate, the borough council will prepare planning briefs for particular sites.
## Appendix 3
Building for Life criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building for Life Questions</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment and Community</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as a school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafés?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is there an accommodation mix that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is there a tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does the development have easy access to public transport?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Does the development have any features that reduce its environmental impact?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Character</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is the design specific to the scheme?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape or topography?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Does the scheme feel like a place with a distinctive character?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Are streets defined by a well-structured building layout?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Streets Parking and Pedestrianisation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Does the building layout take priority over the roads and car parking, so that the highways do not dominate?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Is the car parking well integrated and situated so it supports the street scene?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Does the scheme integrate with existing roads, paths and surrounding development?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Is public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements in place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Do buildings exhibit architectural quality?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Do internal spaces and layout allow for adaptation, conversion or extension?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology that enhance its performance, quality and attractiveness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Do buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as Building Regulations?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**  
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\text{?} / 20
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