

# DESIGNGUIDE

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Procedural Guidance

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VOLUME 1

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# Foreword



Mid Devon District Council is pleased to have worked collaboratively with stakeholders, district and parish Councillors as well as Neighbourhood Plan Groups to prepare this Design Guide. This guide is provided to supplement the principles and objectives established in the Local Plan (2013-2033) with the intention of achieving the very highest levels of design quality in development of all scales across the district.

In July 2019 Mid Devon District Council adopted the statements of the Devon Climate Change Declaration, however, since the Council is significantly concerned that the environmental crises must be a priority, it's aim is for Mid Devon to be carbon neutral by 2030 and all decisions made by the council will be considered in light of the climate crisis.

This Design Guide, while formulated in the main before the Climate Change declaration was made, represents an approach to development and distinctive design which contributes to the long term sustainability of the district and its communities. It therefore provides a good basis for decision making in light of the climate crisis. Furthermore as an adopted SPD the Design Guide can provide immediate assistance (in development management as well as policy evolution), through many aspects of design, to address climate change and influence current as well as future planned developments.

*Signed:*





## ***The Principles of this Guide:***

This Design Guide is intended to be a readily accessible and easily usable tool to facilitate better quality design across the district.

Design Guidance is not just a document however. Many of the principles assisting the implementation of high quality design relate to the process of preparing the guide and the buy-in achieved evolving the guide through engagement with a wide variety of interested parties and stakeholders.

The overall aim of this Guide is to equip all parties in the planning process to more easily identify contextual factors which influence design response and prepare a coherent and evidenced response to these.

The National Design Guide published in October 2019 provides a common overarching framework for design based on ten characteristics reflecting the Government's priorities for design. It also highlights the important role of local Design Guides in setting out an understanding of the local context and analysis of local character and identity. The Mid Devon Design Guide complements the National Design Guide by doing this.

The core principles of this Design Guide which run through the document and which design guidance is aimed at achieving are:

- CP1. Supporting, through design, Mid Devon District Council's and Devon County Council's commitment to creating a carbon zero district and county by 2030;
- CP2. Identifying and facilitating local distinctiveness;
- CP3. Representing in design, the unique landscape and settlement form of Mid Devon and the interaction between the two;
- CP4. Providing a variety of non-prescriptive guidance usable in a range of ways;
- CP5. Facilitating and maintaining design conversation which remains focussed on, and is proportionate to relevant issues;
- CP6. Enabling continuity of approach and decision making;
- CP7. Labour saving (providing a rich source of contextual information and other analysis);
- CP8. Bringing political awareness

of distinctiveness and the tools available to uphold high quality design;

- CP9. Enabling a comprehensive design consideration through context appreciation;
- CP10. Enabling better, more evidenced, policy compliance;
- CP11. Enabling the preparation of evidenced Design & Access statements which demonstrate how planning proposals contribute positively to landscape and settlement distinctiveness by using the framework the Guide provides.





# BACKGROUND

**The importance of high quality, locally distinctive design is intrinsic to Mid Devon District Council's intention to deliver sustainable development across the district.**

Within this Design Guide, significant emphasis is placed upon discovering and contributing to the distinctive pattern and form displayed by Mid Devon settlements within the varied landscape across the district.

## **The importance of good design in Mid Devon**

This guide seeks to reveal how the identity of Mid Devon resides in its landscape, its settlement form and how these have shaped communities. In this way it places people at the heart of the identity of the place and results in putting people first in the development process. By maintaining distinctiveness and the inherent value this espouses in environmental, social and economic terms, coupled inextricably to the character of the landscape, this guide underpins the Local Plan vision for a prosperous and sustainable rural district and supports the Council's commitment to zero carbon by 2030.

The distinctiveness of the Mid Devon landscape is at the core of its identity within the county, let alone the country. This has influenced settlement form over time and to carry out development which ignores these unique characteristics is to miss opportunities which are important in creating identity and long lasting value.

This Design Guide provides a step by step process to identifying the unique characteristics of the district and how to respond to them in a way that maintains contrast and establishes

successful places which are based on broadly recognised design principles for good placemaking of connecting places, creating a vibrant mix of uses and diverse housing mix to support a diverse community and economy and to establish a structure of safe streets and spaces which become public places.

Good design seeks to meet current demand while also considering future needs, and addressing climate change in the process. It should allow for the adaptability of physical space and as far as possible not prohibit the adoption of future technologies.

## **Understanding the District**

Identifying sustainable locations for growth across the district has been the responsibility of the Local Plan Review 2013-2033 which has defined the distribution, accessibility and availability of land for development of a variety of types by a series of allocations and other policies.

Mid Devon has a diverse landscape ranging from high plateaux to steep valley incisions. Spread among this variety of settings are an equally varied series of settlements whose form is heavily influenced by the topography, the geology and the constraints on the pattern of use of the land by communities over a long history.

## **Design and the Local Plan**

As a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) this Design Guide sits alongside the Local Plan and elaborates

on the approach to design outlined in Policy DM1: High Quality Design.

The Local Plan establishes a broad structure which defines the development pattern across this rural district:

- **Main Towns** (Tiverton, Cullompton & Crediton);
- **Rural Settlements** (a list of 22 villages meeting a set criteria defining their sustainability);
- **Countryside** land outside of main towns or villages.

It remains for this Design Guide to encourage and facilitate a design led approach to development across the district in accordance with the Local Plan policies, allocations and commitment to addressing climate change. Design Guidance is structured according to the development hierarchy described above and should be read in conjunction with the policies relating to these areas.

## **Responding to Character**

The Design Guide follows a sequential process to identifying and then responding to character beginning with an appreciation of the landscape character. It then identifies the influence this has had on settlement form and the role sites have within the settlement form. The detail comes later, considering how architecture, materials and other features help reinforce the characteristic structure of a place.



# USING THIS GUIDE

*The Design Guide provides easy steps to ensure the design of sites throughout the district are influenced and respond to the district's contrasting distinctiveness:*

## References:

### Local Plan

Main Towns (Policies S10-S12)  
Rural Settlements (Policy S13)  
Countryside (Policy S14)  
Site allocations (various policies)  
High Quality Design (Policy DM1)

### Evidence Base

References including, but not restricted to:  
Landscape Character Assessment  
Towns & Villages Character Assessment  
Employment Land Review (2013)  
Retail Study (2012)

### Neighbourhood Plans

At the time of writing: Tiverton, Cullompton, Crediton and Silverton are in draft form.

### Other Publications

The National Design Guide (2019)  
By Design: Towards Better Practice (2000)  
Urban Design Compendium (3rd ed 2013)  
Characterising Neighbourhoods (2018)  
Manual for Streets 1&2 (2007/2010)  
Streets for All, Historic England (2018)  
Building for Life 12, CABE (2012)

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## How does the landscape influence the design?

*Which Character Area are the site and settlement in?*

*Use the guide to identify in which character area the site is located and the characteristics of both the landscape and the settlements found in this area:*

*With reference to existing Mid Devon District Council, Devon County Council and National assessments, the Design Guide indicates the varying characteristics across the district which may affect the design of development.*



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## Understand the settlement form.

Identify 1 or more **Settlement Typologies** which demonstrate characteristics which can be recognised in the location of the proposed site. The Design Guide outlines the influences the settlement has on design.

### Main Towns:

Use the **Design Guide Framework Plans** for Tiverton, Cullompton and Cridton to indicate the role a site may have in contributing to the Local Plan policy objectives for the town.

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## What role does the site play in the settlement?

Identify the **Site Situation** within a settlement and the parameters associated with development in this location.

The Design Guide identifies 13 typical site situations which occur across the range of settlement typologies.

A series of design parameters are provided to help identify how the design of each particular situation can best contribute to the form and character of the settlement.

Volume 2



## The Compendium of District Design

Use Volume 3 of the guide to identify how design features can be used in support of Site Situation and Settlement Form.

Volume 3

## Special Topics:

Other ways in which design can help achieve Local Plan objectives.

Volume 4

# THE DESIGN PROCESS

***While represented here in linear form, the design process in reality is an iterative one. Regardless of this, each of the individual stages below should be included even if they are repeated or revisited later.***

## **Site & Context Appraisal**

Thorough analysis includes looking at the wider picture as well as site features.

The Design Guide offers already established general analysis of settlement form for rural settlements and main towns. Carried out across the district this can provide a body of ready made analysis to be adopted by any party as a labour saving device.

Form a view based on your impression of the whole place not just the site and include multi dimensional observations which include appreciation of social and economic factors as well as physical form.

Conservation area assessments and Heritage appraisals may be required in historic environments.

## **Review of Planning Policy**

Consult the various tiers of planning policy to determine the relevant requirements and restrictions on development and design as a whole:

**The National Planning Policy Framework.**  
available at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

**The Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033.**  
available on MDDC's website

**Neighbourhood Plans** for specific areas of the district.  
Details can be found on the MDDC website.

## **Early Engagement**

Establishing common ground at an early stage in the process is key to developing a design which at a later date does not suffer unnecessary objection. The guide can encourage and facilitate effective pre-application discussion

Use the Design Guide at this stage to identify and agree upon the factors influencing the design of the site: Landscape Character, Settlement Form and Site Situation; and form an initial design brief for site.

Check for other local advisory groups such as Design Review Panels, Heritage, Community or local interest groups who usually welcome early engagement and can be a valuable source of assistance and information.

Where to use the Design Guide in the process:

**Landscape Character, Settlement Form & Site Situation** (Design Guide Volume 1: Landscape Character)

**The features which shape a place** (Design Guide Volume 3: Compendium of District Features)

## **Community, Stakeholder and Local Authority Engagement**

*Include a process of engagement which establishes continuous participation in design. Avoid a single event which 'consults' the community. Involving the Community can bring value in providing a much greater depth of analysis, more rigorous design proposals, and a more informed decision. Early engagement at a Pre-Application stage with the Local Authority and with a Design Review Panel reduces risks and surpluses.*

*The Mid Devon District Design Guide supports an iterative design process and can be on hand as a tool to assist in each of the stages below. It does not negate the need for design input, and it is not prescriptive. Effective use of the guide relies on willing engagement in the discovery of solutions which are distinctive to Mid Devon and in doing so achieve mutual value and benefits .*

## Constraints & Opportunities

Before coming up with ideas for the design of the site it can be useful to summarise the existing situation in a series of constraints and opportunities.

These can be represented in a variety of ways graphically, and accompanied by written description.

Agreement on this summary is a good way to create a foundation for forthcoming design ideas.

In their commitment to zero carbon by 2030, Mid Devon District Council welcome identification of opportunities to address climate change through the design of places and buildings and appreciate this commitment is likely to be realised through a variety of methods.

## Initial Plans & Proposals

Preliminary thoughts on how the layout of the site can address the constraints and opportunities.

Concentrate on how the design can enable good relationships with its surroundings, create connections, the scale and form of buildings and the spaces between them and ensure that the site fulfills its role relative to the settlement form (see Site Situations guidance in Volume 2).

At this stage avoid getting into too much detail about materials or other features. Use the Compendium of District Design to identify how features can help reinforce the broader principles the guide.

It is helpful to maintain a variety of options and use the engagement process to discuss the pros and cons of one approach compared to another.

## Refining the design and submitting a planning application

Evolve the design with reference to various comments and contributions.

Liaise with the Local Authority to ensure all requirements have been met to register a Planning Application. Use the Design Guide as a checklist of design considerations.

The preparation of a Design & Access statement is an opportunity to commentate on the design process and provide justification, supported by the Design Guide, for how the design contributes to settlement form and responds to its site situation.

Cabe (now the Design Council) have published more general advice on preparing Design & Access statements.

Guide **Volume 2: Designing for Landscape and Settlement Form**)

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' on predetermined ideas.

nd can result in much greater integration and cohesion as a place grows.

prises and provides the basis for a common language when it comes to presenting a proposal.