

GUIDANCE NOTE A

Strategic landscape proposals, minimal requirements required as part of a planning application

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1.0 Requirements:

- 1.1 The following considerations need to be applied when drafting any strategic (concept) landscape proposals, generally required as part of a planning application:

2.0 Site specific design requirements:

- 2.1 Any strategic landscape proposals (for both major and minor applications) need to take account of, and generally complement, the existing structure, pattern and character of the landscape local to the site in question; this to ensure compatibility with the established wider landscape structure, particularly with relation to tree cover, external works and enclosure. Where the landscape is in a deteriorated condition proposals should look to strengthen and reintroduce relevant landscape characteristics.
- 2.2 When initial strategic landscape proposals are formally submitted to the Council they are checked by the Landscape Advisor to ensure the Council's design ambitions are met, and against any current requirements, i.e. the relevant policies, recommendations and guidelines at a national and a local level. This may result in amendments being required by the Council before the scheme can be fully agreed.
- 2.3 Generally, the services of a Landscape Consultant (preferably a member of the Landscape Institute) should be considered when compiling strategic landscape proposals required as part of a planning application.

3.0 Generic design requirements:

- 3.1 Where strategic landscape proposals are required these need, as a minimum, to comply with the Council's following baseline standard requirements (as applicable):
- 3.2 Proposals need to comprise copies of co-ordinated and numbered drawing(s) (plan(s) and if applicable sections) to a clearly readable scale, with a corresponding symbol key for each relevant drawing.
- 3.3 For full applications include an indicative layout clearly and concisely illustrating proposed landscape elements overlaid against the footprint of the proposed development (refer to guidance sheet for minimum requirements – see 3.2 above), this clearly identifying the proposed layout/location of (as applicable):
 1. Tree planting location(s) and preferably tree type (giving botanic ID) – see section 4 below for detail requirements.
 2. Shrub beds, hedges, grassed areas, and other areas of soft landscape.
 3. External works: including roads, footpaths, parking areas, hard surfacing, furniture, bollards and any other principal external works elements – see section 5 below for detail requirements.
 4. Enclosure: including fences, walls, railings and any other principal form of enclosure – see section 6 below for detail requirements.
 5. Boundary of the site and areas of proposed open space, both private and public (separately identified) – see section 7 below for detail requirements.
 6. Play areas by area and where possible by type (LEAP, NEAP, LAP, etc.) – see section 8 below for detail requirements.

4.0 Tree planting requirements for full applications:

- 4.1 Tree positions need to be cross-checked against the following 'rule of thumb' requirements to allow for development of a full mature crown spread and adequate light penetration in compliance with BS 5837:
 1. Larger principal trees should (unless variety specifically identified) be planted a minimum 6m from any building frontage requiring light penetration and 5m from any other (i.e. main stem to frontage).
 2. Secondary trees should (unless variety specifically identified) be planted a minimum 4m from any building frontage requiring light penetration and 3m from any other (i.e. main stem to frontage).Where relevant, other considerations, such as the leaving a safe distance between mature crowns and roads or services, need to also be considered.

- 4.2 Where tree types are identified, any tree type/position proposed needs to allow for an anticipated mature crown spread & height and be at a sufficient distance to avoid potential root damage to existing structures with, where applicable, allowance given for adequate light penetration, in compliance with BS 5837. Maturity should be considered as 25yr for trees used for early impact & fast establishment and as full maturity for principal trees proposed for their long-term impact and structural importance.
- 4.3 Hard copies of any proposal drawings including trees may need to be submitted in order to scale off and assess compatibility with the requirements as detailed under, and where relevant to, 4.1 or 4.2 above.
- 4.4 Any proposal needs to remove rather than retain tree(s) identified in any tree survey as BS 5837 'C' category in almost all cases, and removal of all 'R' category trees. This in order to ensure retention of these poorer quality trees does not compromise the envisaged developments long-term landscape quality/structure. In those rare cases where retention of 'C' category trees is proposed, a full justification will need to be given for consideration.
- 4.5 In order to maximise favourable conditions for establishment, any tree planting preferably needs to be designed to be within soft rather than hard landscape, i.e. within their own planting bed a minimum 1.5m wide (be it planted or with a permeable & self-binding hard surface) rather than a specialist tree pit in the hardscape.
- 4.6 Any tree type/position proposed need to:
1. Ensure main stem planting positions are proposed at least 1-1.5m away from enclosure/features over 1.8m high, this to allow the tree sufficient space to establish through to maturity.
It needs to be confirmed (verbatim) as drawing notes that:
 2. *'Lighting positions (columns) have/will been/be set outside the mature crown spread of existing and proposed trees'*, this to help avoid any future conflict between the two.
 3. *'Tree planting positions have/will been/be set away from principal service/drainage routes and mature spreads are set outside the impact zones of high-sided vehicles.'* This to help avoid any future conflict between these elements.

5.0 External Works requirements for full applications:

- 5.1 External works proposals need to be cross-checked against the Council's generic requirements, as follows:

- 5.2 The surface materials within the public and semi-public realm needs, in the interests of legibility, to have a simple structure with two/three basic colours and material types used. Generally one to define the pedestrian zones (principally: footpaths, crossovers and very narrow frontages) in paviors or a material complementary to the location (usually grey). A second defining minor roads and shared surfaces, e.g. a soft coloured tar and chip surface dressing or material complementary to the pedestrian zones and third for the principal vehicular realm zones usually in 'blacktop', (with overruns and ramps in granite sett); subject to Highways Authority agreement where relevant.

5.3

- 5.4 Any rear parking courts needs to take account of the standard requirement regarding vehicular manoeuvrability, i.e. 3m rather than 2.4m wide parking bays where they runs alongside a wall or other form of enclosure (including bollards).

6.0 Enclosure requirements for full applications:

- 6.1 Enclosure proposals need to be cross-checked against the Council's generic requirements, as follows:
- 6.2 Shallow plot frontages need to be proposed as a hard landscape (complementary with the adjacent footway) where they front main & principal access roads. Away from the principal routes this hard edge to narrow frontages should be softened through the inclusion of open soft frontages. Sufficient room needs to be left between the building face and any Highways boundary for windows to open without overhanging the Highway and to accommodate any private services within the private realm. Where plot frontages are set back (allowing for a frontages in excess of 2m+ deep) these can be laid out with soft or hard landscape but will generally need to be adequately enclosed ('wall, railing and/or hedge of at least waist height' i.e. 1m+). The design effect envisaged is essentially a uniform enclosed and/or hard approach to units fronting principal routes, with a generally an eclectic pallet of frontages to the development beyond these principal routes, this structure helping establish a sense of place, diversity and establishment.
- 6.3 Within the rural environment soft enclosure is generally required to the outer edge of plot frontages and plot enclosure (space permitting), this generally comprising hedging and, space permitting, tree(s). This soft enclose needs to be complementary to its setting.
- 6.4 Generally enclosure of private space facing public or semi-public space, e.g. onto rear parking courts, needs to be enclosed with walling to ensure

a suitable quality to the boundary between private space and public/semi-public space.

- 6.5 As a rule of thumb any proposed frontage railing enclosure generally needs to be in a vertical bar to complement the fenestration of the built form.

7.0 Public Open Space (POS) requirements for full applications:

- 7.1 POS proposals need to be cross-checked against the Council's generic requirements, as follows:
- 7.2 The boundaries and calculated square meterage for all POS scheduled for adoption by the Council needs to be clearly identified on any proposal, on plan.
- 7.3 All railings (including knee-rail), seating, lighting and other relevant external works need to be illustrated, or specified as set within a hard landscape strip to ease maintenance and prevent mower damage.
- 7.4 The footpaths network within areas of open space need to be a minimum 2.0m to allow adequate room for social transition of the space. Where paths meet the resulting angles should be rounded off and meeting and exit points broadened to prevent undue wear of any soft edges at these junctions.
- 7.5 Play areas need to be so orientated as to leave a minimum 2m grass edge between play area surface and planting (including tree), mounding, railings, paths, etc, this to allow sufficient space for mowing maintenance.
- 7.6 Seating needs to be included within the POS (particularly within play areas) and to be located a minimum 1m away from any railings or bins.
- 7.7 The location of POS maintenance gates and corresponding drop kerbs need to be clearly identified on plan (generally a minimum 1 per area of POS), these need to be of transit width and lead onto a reinforced apron (e.g. reinforced grass matting) of sufficient size to accommodate a maintenance vehicle (transit & trailer footprint), with space left within the design behind this reinforced area to safely unload maintenance equipment. These maintenance access points need to be accessible off the highway and located where there is sufficient tracking area on the highway to allow the maintenance vehicle to reverse safely onto the site, clearly illustrating the tracking on plan where the turning area appears constricted.

- 7.8 A suitable number of dog and litter bins need to be included to service each area of recreational POS.

8.0 Play area requirements for full applications:

- 8.1 Play area proposals need to be cross-checked against the Council's generic requirements, as follows:
- 8.2 The design of the play area to be broadly in accordance with the DCMS's 'Design for Play' guidelines and where appropriate 'Beyond the six Acre Standard'.
- 8.3 When play areas are enclosed this needs to be with a bow/hoop-top railing, with two access/egress points, self closing gates with proposed play equipment laid by the developer in line with the following general points:
1. The play area to be so orientated as to leave a minimum 2m grass edge between play area surface and any feature/border planting to allow for mowing maintenance.
 2. Seating within play areas to be set a minimum 1m away from any railings or bins.

9.0 Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Landscape Appraisal requirements:

- 9.1 Both LVIA & Landscape Appraisals need to be carried out and make reference to the Landscape Institutes Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA), they need to follow the guidelines in full for LVIAs where an Environmental Impact Assessment is required as part of a planning application, and the relevant sections of the guidelines for Landscape Appraisals (i.e. GLVIA paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 & table 3.1) for other planning applications where such an Appraisal is proposed. As a minimum any Appraisal should professionally and impartially:
1. Assess the proposed developments visibility. Dependant on the scale of the development this would be either:
 - Through digitally plotting on plan its precise Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (principally for major prominent development), or;
 - By approximately identifying potential visual envelope through professional desk and field evaluation/assessment (principally for minor, less prominent development).(See GLVIA clauses 6.2 to 6.7).
 2. ID principal public viewpoints within the ZTV/visual envelope (e.g. roads, footpaths and public rights of way) and illustrate views of the development site from them through photograph and, where there are

sensitive receptors, preferably photomontage (photographs and photomontage need to be carried out in accordance with and reference the Landscape Institute's Advice note 01/11 and be confirmed as such)

3. Assess sensitivity of receptors and relevant impacts on them.
 4. Propose any mitigation and preferably demonstrate through photomontage, particularly for screen planting at the plantings initial, intermediate and mature stages.
 5. Clearly assess and tabulate landscape and visual effects.
- 9.2 Both LVIA & Landscape Appraisals relating to the Borough's rural, rural/edge need to draw principal reference to landscape character from the Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment (CBLCA) unless agreed otherwise and landscape protection status from the Local Development Framework mapping. Any LVIA or Landscape Appraisal needs to identify the relevant CBLCA Character Area and describe clearly how the development proposal integrates with the relevant character definitions and follows/meets the planning & management guidelines therein.