

8. Design

Relevant Evidence Base

- Coventry Urban Design Guidance (2004)
- Coventry Green Space Strategy (2008)
- Coventry Green Infrastructure Study (2008)
- Coventry Historic Environment Record (HER)
- Coventry Spires View Management Framework – Technical Guidance (2015)

Introduction

The city's built and natural environments reflect the public realm or public face of Coventry. They are integral in creating a positive image and help create a sense of place, shaping cultural identities and helping to instil civic pride. They play an important part in improving the health and wellbeing of the population and can help mitigate the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, they can play an important role in helping to attract investment, visitors and encourage tourism.

The public realm is essentially the network of routes and spaces that connect the city together. They are like the arteries of the city and the better they operate the better the city functions. These routes and spaces are usually but not always fronted or bounded by development and they contribute to the city in different ways. Whatever the type of route they all need to be designed to ensure they are attractive and pleasant to use. Through-city and city-wide routes are very important at conveying the image of the city to those merely passing through and creating good first impressions of the city to vehicle-borne visitors alike. Whilst local and neighbourhood routes are fundamental in ensuring that the city is a pleasant and attractive place to live and work.

In all cases well designed and maintained streets and public spaces can help encourage walking and cycling and can reduce anti-social behaviour and crime including the perception and fear of crime. Furthermore, creating routes and spaces that are green, through the use of trees, living walls, green roofs and, other types of green infrastructure, will not only enhance the quality and attractiveness of the city but will also contribute to ecological diversity.

High Quality Design

The Council wants to significantly raise the standard of design in the built and green environments as good design assists in the creation of sustainable and inclusive communities and can improve the quality of people's lives. Furthermore, good design can help to reduce some of the environmental inequalities between the more deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the city.

This Local Plan will ensure that development follows an effective design process, which assesses the physical, social and economic context, evaluates options and involves affected groups of people.

Policy DE1: Ensuring High Quality Design

1. All development proposals must respect and enhance their surroundings and positively contribute towards the local identity and character of an area.
2. The setting, integrity and character of heritage assets will be protected in accordance with Policy HE2.
3. All development will be expected to meet the following key principles:
 - a) respond to the physical context of the site;
 - b) consider the local distinctiveness and identity of the site but also have regard to opportunities to enhance the local built and natural environment through new development and enhanced design;
 - c) where appropriate, retain and incorporate into the layout the protection of important views, including key views of the three spires;
 - d) preserve or enhance the character and setting of the historic built, landscape and where appropriate archaeological environment;
 - e) preserve or enhance the character and setting of major road, rail and canal corridors;
 - f) clearly define the boundaries between public and private spaces and enclosure of space;
 - g) provide attractive, safe, uncluttered, active and easily identifiable, high quality public spaces;
 - h) make places that inter-connect and are easy to move through;
 - i) ensure places are easily understood by users, with clear routes and distinct physical features;
 - j) seek high quality design and attention to detail in the layout of developments, individual buildings and infrastructure in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term, but over the lifetime of the development;
 - k) be adaptable to changing social, technological, economic and market conditions and ensure that developments maximise the use of the site;
 - l) promote diversity through mixes of uses within a site or building, which work together to create vital and viable places;
 - m) be proactive in responding to climate change and adopt sustainable and low carbon construction principles in terms of their design, layout and density;
 - n) consider green infrastructure at the earliest stage in the design process, to ensure that it is well planned, designed, managed and maintained. It should also be well integrated and serve multiple purposes (as appropriate);
 - o) support the integration of through routes for public transport and incorporate suitable bus priority measures as appropriate;
 - p) minimise adverse impact on important natural resources;
 - q) conserve, restore or enhance biodiversity; and
 - r) respect and enhance landscape quality including trees, hedges and other landscape features of value.

Opportunities to reflect existing materials and characteristics as part of new developments should be the starting point of any design proposals. Where there is no established character, or the character is poor quality there will be a clear and justifiable need to bring about improvements and enhancement to the existing built and natural environment. As such, proposals which demonstrate high quality design; reflect the requirements of policy DE1 and would reflect a significant enhancement of the built environment may be considered acceptable even where they divert from current characteristics.

Wherever possible, development proposals should look to incorporate existing landscape features – landform, trees, hedges, water bodies etc. These should be used to inform and guide how a development is designed, and they should be incorporated in a way that ensures they will contribute positively to the development and surrounding area.

Like the routes and spaces, the buildings that front them must positively contribute to the built environment. They need to be designed to enhance their immediate location and the city as a whole. They should be energy efficient and incorporate sustainable technologies to help combat climate change. They should also be designed to be safe and easy to use by all members of the community, including people with restricted mobility.

Design proposals relating to landscaping, public realm and green spaces should also be prepared in accordance with the Green Environment and Environmental Management policies of this plan. Any sites brought forward within or immediately adjacent to a Conservation Area or which has an impact on the setting of a listed building should also be considered in accordance with the heritage policies of this plan.

To support the importance of promoting high quality design across Coventry and within specific development proposals, Supplementary Planning Documents will be prepared. These will include specific guidance relating to:

- The city centre;
- The 2 Sustainable Urban Extensions at Keresley and Eastern Green; and
- City wide Design Guidance.