



Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS 7)



Quality Residential Environments





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Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) set out the policies of the Department of the Environment on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their contents will be taken into account in preparing development plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.

This PPS sets out the Department's planning policies for achieving quality in new residential development and advises on the treatment of this issue in development plans. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development and the Quality Initiative.

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Preamble

The Department of the Environment is responsible for planning control in Northern Ireland. The Planning Service, an Agency within the Department, administers its planning functions.

The Department has a statutory duty, laid down in Article 3 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, to formulate and co-ordinate policy for securing the orderly and consistent development of land and the planning of that development. The Department's planning policies are normally issued through Planning Policy Statements and PPS 1 'General Principles' advises that:

"Planning Policy Statements set out the policies of the Department on particular aspects of land-use planning and apply to the whole of Northern Ireland. Their contents will be taken into account in preparing development plans and are also material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals."

This Planning Policy Statement, PPS 7 'Quality Residential Environments', sets out the Department's planning policies for achieving quality in new residential development and advises on the treatment of this issue in development plans. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development and the Quality Initiative.

The PPS is therefore of direct relevance to the public and those whose actions have a direct physical impact upon the natural or man-made environment including land owners, developers, government departments and agencies, district councils, other statutory undertakers and voluntary organisations.

The policies contained in this Statement apply to all residential development proposals with the exception of proposals for single dwellings in the countryside, which will continue to be assessed under the policies contained in the Department's 'A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland' published in September 1993.

Nothing in this document should be read as a commitment that public resources will be provided for any specific project. All proposals for expenditure by the Department are subject to economic appraisal and will also have to be considered having regard to the overall availability of resources.

1.0 Policy Context

Introduction

- 1.1 House-building has made a significant impact in Northern Ireland in the last decade and is likely to continue to be the most widespread urban land-use change for many years to come. While much of this recent house-building has taken place on greenfield sites the Government in future wishes to promote a more sustainable form of development through a two-pronged approach of:
 - encouraging compact urban forms; and
 - promoting more housing within existing urban areas.
- 1.2 New residential development, wherever it occurs, can however threaten local character and identity. A cumulative loss of environmental quality has already become apparent as substantial housing areas, often devised with little appreciation of surrounding context, local character, distinctiveness or a sense of place, have taken shape around the fringes of our cities, towns and villages. Such developments have tended to be designed around the requirements of the private car and often lack adequate provision of open space or landscaping.
- 1.3 There has also been a tendency for residential development within urban areas to ignore its immediate setting and to be similarly dominated by the requirements of the car. In certain cases redevelopment schemes in established residential areas have also resulted in a level of intensification which has adversely affected local townscape character and identity.
- 1.4 The promotion of more housing in urban areas should not be allowed to result in town cramming or damage to areas of distinctive townscape character. In established residential areas the overriding objective will be to avoid any significant erosion of the local character and the environmental quality, amenity and privacy enjoyed by existing residents.
- 1.5 This Statement seeks to achieve residential developments, on both brownfield and greenfield sites, which promote quality and sustainability in their design and layout, are more in harmony with their townscape or landscape setting and which ultimately will make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of our settlements. In essence the

Statement is about the creation of quality residential environments, as the housing we build today will not only help to shape our environment in the immediate future, it will also be a legacy determining the environmental quality of many areas throughout the 21st century.

- 1.6 The Statement, together with the advice contained in associated Supplementary Planning Guidance documents, complements existing Government policy and initiatives aimed at achieving attractive and sustainable places through better design. Through the Quality Initiative, the Regional Development Strategy, Planning Policy Statements and the Northern Ireland Transport Policy Statement the Government wishes to promote:
- more sustainable patterns of living, working and travelling;
 - more effective integration between land-use planning and transport;
 - the creation of attractive places in which people are happy to live, work and take their leisure.

In raising the overall quality of residential development the Department considers that the policies of the Statement will also help contribute to the achievement of other Government objectives, such as the promotion of Biodiversity.

The Quality Initiative

- 1.7 In January 1996 the Minister for the Environment introduced the Quality Initiative to Northern Ireland with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of good design and quality in the built environment. This Policy Initiative requires the Department to secure a higher quality of design, layout and landscaping for new residential development than that provided in the recent past, particularly on green-field sites. The Minister indicated that new housing layouts should incorporate formal open space, walks and cycleways and promote public transport provision. There should be more planting and a return to tree-lined avenues. The Initiative also highlights the need for comprehensive planning and design of sites, particularly for larger developments.

Regional Development Strategy

- 1.8 The importance of sustainability and quality in the design and layout of new residential environments is an integral feature of the Regional

Development Strategy (RDS) being prepared by the Department for Regional Development.

- 1.9 The Strategy will encourage the development of balanced local communities, characterised by development patterns which contribute to community spirit, neighbourliness and a sense of belonging to a particular place.
- 1.10 To help in the creation of quality built environments which will contribute to the achievement of safe, complete and balanced communities, the Strategy will promote the use of Local Development Guidelines which focus on Identity, Vitality, Proximity, Accessibility, Amenity and Quality (see Annex A).
- 1.11 The Strategy will also:
- promote the use of development briefs and concept statements to achieve quality developments;
 - encourage land pooling;
 - promote the use of appropriate planning obligations for the provision by developers of infrastructure and neighbourhood facilities; and
 - encourage the use of medium to high density housing schemes appropriate to their location which incorporate a mix of housing designs and sizes, while avoiding town cramming.

Planning Policy Statements

- 1.12 The Quality Initiative and the need for good design are incorporated into Planning Policy Statement 1 'General Principles'. Together with sustainable development and mixed use these are indicated as key themes which underlie the Department's approach to planning. PPS 1 advises that:

"Good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and will be encouraged everywhere. Good design can help promote sustainable development; improve the quality of the existing environment; attract business and investment; and reinforce civic pride and a sense of place. It can help secure continued public acceptance of necessary new development."

- 1.13 As regards the application of the Quality Initiative to new housing development, PPS 1 indicates that this will require:

“a more sensitive and responsive approach by developers, one which identifies and makes positive use of the assets of a site and the characteristics of its surroundings to determine the ultimate form of development.”

- 1.14 In order to meet this requirement, PPS 1 advises that:

“Applicants for planning permission will have to be able to demonstrate how they have taken account of the need for good design in their development proposals and that they have had regard to relevant development plan policies and supplementary design guidance. This should be done in a manner appropriate to the nature and scale of proposals.”

- 1.15 The need for provision of areas of open space in association with new residential development is incorporated into Planning Policy Statement 8 ‘Open Space, Sport and Recreation’. This highlights the importance of open space to the overall quality of residential development and indicates that regard should always be given to ways of integrating pleasant, attractive and landscaped open space as an intrinsic element of new housing.

- 1.16 A full list of the Department’s Planning Policy Statements is set out in Annex B.

Moving Forward: The Northern Ireland Transport Policy Statement

- 1.17 The Government is committed to greater integration of transport with land-use planning at national, regional and local level in order to support more sustainable transport choices and reduce the need to travel. By fostering forms of development which encourage walking, cycling and easy access to public transport, planning can complement other measures aimed at promoting greater use of public transport and reducing the environmental impact of transport. In this respect the location, design and layout of new residential development have a critical role to play in achieving more sustainable movement patterns.

Supplementary Planning Guidance for Residential Development

- 1.18 'Creating Places – Achieving Quality in Residential Developments' (May 2000) is the principal guide for use by intending developers in the design of all new housing areas. The guide is structured around the process of design and addresses the following matters:
- the analysis of a site and its context;
 - strategies for the overall design character of a proposal;
 - the main elements of good design; and
 - detailed design requirements.
- 1.19 In addition, the Department is preparing a revised version of Development Control Advice Note 8 'Small Unit Housing – New Development in Existing Residential Areas'. The purpose of the revised DCAN will be to provide specific guidance to intending developers on two main areas: the development of brownfield sites in urban areas; and housing development within established residential areas.
- 1.20 The advice contained in these guides supplements the Department's policies for quality development, in particular the policies of this Statement. Together the policies and guidance seek to achieve quality residential development that is imaginative and clearly based on an overall design concept, in order to promote attractive surroundings in which to live. The Department will respond positively to proposals where these are worked up comprehensively and are demonstrably well designed. A flexible approach will be considered for innovative design and layout features where it can be shown that such elements are central to the overall design concept for a scheme and will contribute to the creation of a quality, sustainable and safe residential environment.
- 1.21 The Department would stress however that the application alone of the good practice principles contained in its supplementary planning guidance documents will not make fundamentally unacceptable proposals acceptable, particularly in established residential areas.

2.0 Policy Objectives

2.1 The main objectives of this Statement are:

- To promote an integrated approach to achieving sustainable and quality residential environments.
- To promote quality residential development that:
 - creates places for people which are attractive, locally distinctive and appropriate to their surroundings, safe, convenient, adaptable and easy to maintain;
 - respects and enhances features of value and local character and promotes biodiversity; and
 - reduces reliance on the private car, supports movement by pedestrians and cyclists, provides adequate and convenient access to public transport and connects well with the wider locality.
- To promote the comprehensive planning and development of residential areas and ensure that adequate information accompanies planning applications which will enable the delivery of an improved design quality.
- To ensure that adequate provision is made for infrastructure and appropriate local neighbourhood facilities as an integral part of residential development.

3.0 Development Plans

Infrastructure Requirements

- 3.1 Development plans will set out the main infrastructure requirements that developers will be expected to meet for zoned residential sites. These may include access points, servicing arrangements, portions of land to be kept free from built development and known physical and infrastructural constraints to be overcome. Infrastructure works may include roads and footways, water, sewerage and land drainage, and other services such as electricity, gas or telecommunications. The specific requirements for each site will depend on local circumstances.

Local Design Requirements

- 3.2 Development plans may identify local design requirements for specific residential sites. Examples of such requirements include:
- indicating dwelling numbers, mix and types;
 - setting out requirements for the arrangement and appearance of new housing in particular urban areas whose distinctive character would benefit from being reinforced;
 - identifying locally important vistas, landmarks, landscape features and spaces for retention and possible enhancement;
 - identifying and protecting archaeological remains, listed buildings and other buildings / structures worthy of retention;
 - identifying existing site vegetation and tree groups worthy of retention;
 - identifying the need for additional planting;
 - identifying the need for, amount of and potential location(s) for communal open space, including provision of community woodland;
 - identifying the need for footpaths, cycle routes and bus access; and
 - highlighting how the public realm should be respected.
- 3.3 Development plans will also, where appropriate, identify sites where local requirements for design and layout will need to be addressed by a development brief drawn up in line with the policies of this Statement. Such briefs will be based on an assessment of the natural and built

environment of the area and the characteristics defining the sense of place. They will include detailed guidance on the overall scale, density, height, landscaping and layout expected of the new housing development.

Concept Master Plans as Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 3.4 Development plans may on occasion include Concept Master Plans for major development sites as supplementary planning guidance to illustrate how the comprehensive development of such areas might be carried out. These plans will not, however, be prescriptive; rather they will seek to assist developers in responding to the requirement for quality design by indicating how such development could be achieved. Where developers wish to pursue alternative proposals, the Department will expect them to bring forward a Concept Master Plan of an equal, or higher, quality.

Requirements for Local Neighbourhood Facilities

- 3.5 Development plans will be the principal vehicle for the identification of any local neighbourhood facilities required as an integral part of the development of zoned housing sites. The Department will determine such need in consultation with other relevant bodies. In assessing the need for such facilities, the Department will have regard to:
- the location and scale of anticipated development;
 - the proposed type of housing;
 - the availability of, linkages to and capacity of existing facilities within the locality; and
 - community needs identified by other statutory bodies and agencies.

In some cases it may be necessary, when examining the consequence of a particular development, to view its effects in combination with other related development proposals.

- 3.6 In general the larger a development, the more likely it is that a wide range of facilities will be necessary. In particular, major development schemes on greenfield sites will normally require the provision of an appropriate level of facilities to meet the needs of the new community and secure more balanced and sustainable residential environments.

Policies for Established Residential Areas

- 3.7 Development plans may include specific policies for the control of housing development in established residential areas, particularly those which display considerable townscape character. These policies will seek to ensure that the form, density and character of new housing is in harmony with adjacent housing and does not detract from the environmental quality, residential amenity and established character of the wider housing area.

4.0 Planning Policies

In exercise of its responsibility for planning control in Northern Ireland the Department assesses development proposals against all planning policies and other material considerations that are relevant to it.

The planning policies of this Statement must therefore be read together and in conjunction with the relevant contents of the Department's development plans and other planning policy publications, including the Regional Development Strategy. The Department will also have regard to the contents of published supplementary planning guidance documents.

The following policies set out the main planning considerations that the Department will take into account in assessing the quality of proposals for new residential development. The provisions of these policies will prevail unless there are other overriding policy or material considerations which outweigh them and justify a contrary decision.

Policy QD 1 Quality in New Residential Development

Planning permission will only be granted for new residential development where it is demonstrated that the proposal will create a quality and sustainable residential environment. The design and layout of residential development should be based on an overall design concept that draws upon the positive aspects of the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

In established residential areas proposals for housing development will not be permitted where they would result in unacceptable damage to the local character, environmental quality or residential amenity of these areas.

In Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character housing proposals will be required to maintain or enhance their distinctive character and appearance. In the primarily residential parts of these designated areas proposals involving intensification of site usage or site coverage will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

All proposals for residential development will be expected to conform to all of the following criteria:

- (a) the development respects the surrounding context and is appropriate to the character and topography of the site in terms of layout, scale, proportions, massing and appearance of buildings, structures and landscaped and hard surfaced areas;
- (b) features of the archaeological and built heritage, and landscape features are identified and, where appropriate, protected and integrated in a suitable manner into the overall design and layout of the development;
- (c) adequate provision is made for public and private open space and landscaped areas as an integral part of the development. Where appropriate, planted areas or discrete groups of trees will be required along site boundaries in order to soften the visual impact of the development and assist in its integration with the surrounding area;
- (d) adequate provision is made for necessary local neighbourhood facilities, to be provided by the developer as an integral part of the development;
- (e) a movement pattern is provided that supports walking and cycling, meets the needs of people whose mobility is impaired, respects existing public rights of way, provides adequate and convenient access to public transport and incorporates traffic calming measures;
- (f) adequate and appropriate provision is made for parking;
- (g) the design of the development draws upon the best local traditions of form, materials and detailing;
- (h) the design and layout will not create conflict with adjacent land uses and there is no unacceptable adverse effect on existing or proposed properties in terms of overlooking, loss of light, overshadowing, noise or other disturbance; and
- (i) the development is designed to deter crime and promote personal safety.

Any proposal for residential development which fails to produce an appropriate quality of design will not be permitted, even on land identified for residential use in a development plan.

Justification and Amplification

- 4.1 The Department wishes to secure a high quality of design, layout and landscaping in all new housing developments to ensure more attractive and sustainable residential environments for present and future generations. This emphasis on quality and sustainability means that these matters are considered as important as the suitability of the site in deciding whether to grant planning permission.
- 4.2 The task of designing new places with a sense of quality and sustainability, and with local distinctiveness, requires considerable skill. There is no single or universal version of quality design. What is right in one place might be quite unsuitable in another.
- 4.3 Quality design comes from achieving a balanced response to all the factors influencing a scheme. It will require housing layouts with individuality and which respond to a local context by making the most of a site's characteristics and its landscape or townscape setting. Quality design also entails variety and contrast within developments, in layout, in boundaries and planting, and in adapting the buildings and spaces around them, to enhance local distinctiveness. It requires a greater attention to detail and consideration of other matters which contribute to a sense of place, such as the creation of landmarks and the use of public art. Quality design addresses the needs of residents, in particular those of children and the elderly. It encourages pedestrian and cycle movements, makes provision for increased use of public transport, promotes biodiversity and encourages wildlife, integrates open space and, where necessary, accommodates local neighbourhood facilities.
- 4.4 Quality design will help allow residents to develop a sense of ownership for new housing areas. In larger developments this can be a particular problem, and these should be divided into smaller neighbourhoods, each with its own character and easy access to necessary amenities and other uses.
- 4.5 The quality of a development resides not only on the design of its parts, but also the totality of what is created – its overall character. It is important therefore that new residential development is based on a clear design concept. Ideally this should be based on a network of spaces rather than a hierarchy of roads. This will help ensure the creation of surroundings with an attractive human scale and a distinctive overall sense of place.

Site Context

- 4.6 Proposals for new residential development must take account of the specific circumstances of each site. The Department will expect developers in preparing layouts to have greater regard to the site context, in particular the characteristics of land form and the townscape or landscape setting, and the need for these elements to be integrated into the overall design concept.
- 4.7 In recent years, many developers have ignored the local context and have failed to produce designs and layouts that draw inspiration from the special characteristics of an area. The design for a housing development should seek to reinforce and evolve local characteristics that are considered positive and attractive, while those urban design features that undermine the overall character of an area should not be replicated nor used as a precedent.
- 4.8 The Department considers that analysis of context is particularly important for infill housing, backland development or redevelopment schemes in established residential areas. While such development can usefully contribute to housing supply, great care will be needed to ensure that the individual or cumulative effects of such development proposals do not significantly erode the character and amenity of existing areas, for example through inappropriate design or over-development. Although the majority of residential areas do not have the distinctive character of Conservation Areas or Areas of Townscape Character, this does not mean that their quality of residential environment is unimportant. It will often be of great and legitimate concern to local residents. In assessing housing proposals in established residential areas the Department will therefore need to be satisfied that unacceptable harm will not be caused to the local character, environmental quality or residential amenity of the area. Particular account will be taken of the spacing between buildings, the safeguarding of privacy, the scale and massing of buildings, the use of materials, impact on existing vegetation and landscape design.
- 4.9 Infill housing in established residential areas will not always be appropriate, particularly in many older residential areas with distinctive townscapes, often dating from the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Here people are attracted by the high quality of these areas and developers will often seek to maximise the amount of floorspace that

they can fit onto any given plot. Intensifying the scale and massing of buildings in such areas can however adversely affect local character and lead to a loss of valued open garden spaces, mature trees and shrubs. When combined with the impact of ancillary activities such as car parking and refuse storage, such development, if unchecked, can undermine the qualities that people value, and damage our built heritage.

- 4.10 Accordingly in assessing housing proposals in Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character, the protection of the existing character and distinctive qualities of the area will be paramount. Notwithstanding the Department's broader policy to promote more housing within urban areas, proposals in the primarily residential parts of these designated areas which involve intensification of site usage or site coverage will not normally be acceptable. Such proposals usually involve demolition, plot sub-division or plot amalgamation which can be particularly detrimental to their character and appearance. Proposals involving intensification in these areas will only be permitted in the following exceptional circumstances:
- (a) an extension in keeping with the scale and character of the dwelling and its surroundings; or
 - (b) the sympathetic conversion of a large dwelling in appropriate locations to smaller units; or
 - (c) the development of a significant gap site within an otherwise substantial and continuously built up frontage provided this would be of a density and character prevailing in the area.
- 4.11 In all cases developers should note that the demolition of existing property will not create a presumption that permission for more intensive and high density development will be granted. Inappropriate development cannot be justified to remedy an eyesore caused by demolition and the deliberate creation of waste land.

Site Characteristics

- 4.12 Proposals must respect the individual characteristics and features of the site itself. These include topography, existing buildings, features of the archaeological or built heritage and landscape features such as rivers, streams, trees and hedgerows, which make an important contribution to the biodiversity and ecology of an area. Proposals should identify and, where appropriate, protect and integrate heritage and landscape

features into layouts in a suitable manner. Further information on the Department's policies for the protection of landscape and heritage features can be found in PPS 2 'Planning and Nature Conservation' and PPS 6 'Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage' respectively.

- 4.13 Particular care will be necessary in preparing layout proposals on sloping sites in order to minimise the impact of differences in level between adjoining properties, existing or proposed. The use of prominent retaining walls within and at the margins of sloping sites will be unacceptable. In such cases the Department is only likely to accept low density development which would entail minimal works of excavation. Developers may also wish to consider the use of specific house designs which respect topography, such as split level dwellings. Where changes in ground level between buildings are unavoidable the Department will generally expect these to be accommodated by the use of planted banks. In all cases developers will need to demonstrate that their proposals will avoid significant overshadowing, overlooking and loss of privacy.

Layout Considerations

- 4.14 The design of house types and other buildings, the relationship between them, their relationship to streets and the spaces created around them will all strongly influence the character of the overall site and its surroundings and contribute significantly to the quality and identity of the new residential environment.
- 4.15 Many housing developments in recent years have been designed with little appreciation for local character or a sense of place and have tended to be dominated by roads considerations. Many have also failed to take account of the need to present an attractive outlook. Too often properties have backed onto nearby roads or other public areas and created unsightly views.
- 4.16 In future the Department will place more emphasis on the layout of houses and other buildings than on road layout in order to achieve an improved design quality and promote a sense of community, while continuing to ensure that standards of road safety are not compromised. All buildings should be located and orientated to front onto existing and proposed roads to present an attractive outlook. The Department will also expect to see greater variety introduced into schemes so that the

spaces between houses include tree-lined avenues, crescents, mews, courtyards, lanes and greens. Particular care will be required in the treatment of corner sites within layouts and these should contain specifically designed buildings. Such corner sites and other accessible nodes can often provide ideal opportunities for the use of landmark buildings.

Local Neighbourhood Facilities

- 4.17 The provision of local facilities within residential development is one of the means to increase vitality, provide a sense of community and enhance the social and economic sustainability of the development. Large scale housing schemes must provide necessary services and community infrastructure to enable new growth to be satisfactorily accommodated. Otherwise they will place further pressure on already overstretched facilities and services and increase the need to travel.
- 4.18 The need for local neighbourhood facilities to be provided in conjunction with proposals for new residential development will be assessed by the Department in consultation with relevant bodies, generally as part of the development plan process. Where such a need is identified it will be a requirement that the developer provides for this need as an integral part of the development. Any provision considered necessary will relate fairly and reasonably in scale and kind to the impact of the development proposed.
- 4.19 Local neighbourhood facilities include social and community uses such as schools, creches, surgeries, local shops and play facilities. Where these are required they should be incorporated into the overall design and layout of the development, designed to a high standard and located to provide focal points and landmark features. The location and design of such facilities should also respect the amenities of proposed and existing housing.
- 4.20 The Department is aware that the provision of local facilities and community buildings may impose additional costs on developers. However the Department considers it reasonable to expect that developers will contribute to the cost of provision of necessary facilities and/or set land aside for development and use by the local community. This may entail developers and landowners entering into a planning agreement with the Department (see paras 4.54 – 4.55).

Form, Materials and Detailing

- 4.21 The overall design concept for a new residential environment should seek to provide contrast and interest balanced by unifying elements to provide coherence and identity. As well as greater variety in the spatial form of development this will entail a greater diversity of dwelling form and type to help produce a lively street scene. For example terraced buildings may be used to enclose a space, while elsewhere a taller building may be used to create a landmark feature. Coherence can be created in the detailed design of the different dwelling types by following the best local traditions of form, materials and detailing. Developers will be required to provide details of the boundary treatment of buildings as this can significantly affect the overall quality and character of new housing areas. The Department will expect use of appropriate hedge planting and well designed walls or railings as opposed to the wholesale use of close boarded fencing.
- 4.22 In assessing schemes in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character, the Department will have particular regard to published design guidance.
- 4.23 Many villages and smaller settlements in Northern Ireland display an essentially rural character, and proposals for housing development in such locations should reflect this in their design, layout and detailing. The overall scale and density of development proposed should also respect the form and character of the settlement.
- 4.24 While the Department considers it important to ensure that all new development fits in well with its surroundings this will not preclude quality contemporary design using modern materials. Innovative design and layouts can achieve greater energy efficiency through the orientation of buildings to maximise passive solar gain and the use of renewable energy technologies and sustainable construction techniques. Greater consideration should also be given to the use of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) and more environmentally sound methods of disposing of effluent.

Density

- 4.25 Development plans may indicate a density requirement or a specific number of dwellings for particular housing sites. Where this is not the

case the Department will have regard to the location of the proposal in relation to its context and the overall quality of the residential environment to be created. In town and city centres or on sites which benefit from high accessibility to public transport facilities, where a high quality and frequent service is available, high density development, such as apartments or town houses, will normally be acceptable. In established residential areas, however, great care must be taken that development or redevelopment schemes do not unacceptably harm the local character, environmental quality or amenity of such areas (see paras 4.6 – 4.11).

- 4.26 On greenfield sites innovative layouts and higher density schemes will be encouraged where they will provide an attractive contrast to existing urban form and where it can be demonstrated that they will not detract from the residential amenity of adjoining developed areas. Site characteristics, the need to preserve existing site features and vegetation and the space requirements for the provision of communal open areas will all influence development densities. On large sites a range of densities, building forms and a mix of house types will be required to help enhance quality and sustainability. In all cases however the over-development of sites will not be acceptable.

Landscape Design

- 4.27 The Department attaches particular importance to using 'greening' to raise the quality of residential development and assist in the promotion of biodiversity. As already indicated, existing landscape features such as streams, hedgerows or trees should be identified and, where appropriate, retained and suitably integrated into developments, together with the provision of adequate open space in their vicinity to ensure they and their visual setting are protected. Where existing trees are removed the Department will expect the layout to include proposals for compensatory tree planting.
- 4.28 The Department will expect to see a greater use of vegetation within developments including a hierarchy of different types of planting such as street trees, garden trees and hedge planting, specimen trees and amenity planting in open spaces. The integration of development at the edges of settlements is also important and buffer planting, generally of indigenous species (around 8-10 metres in depth), will be required to help assimilate and soften its impact on the countryside. In addition, all

hard landscape design, including paving areas, means of enclosure and street furniture should be carefully considered and the use of high quality materials will be required.

- 4.29 Developers will be required to carry out all landscape works associated with their schemes and must provide establishment maintenance and on-going long term management, unless this responsibility is transferred to another appropriate body in a manner formally agreed with the Department.

Public Open Space

- 4.30 Regard should always be given to ways of integrating pleasant, attractive and landscaped areas of public open space, including children's playspaces, as an intrinsic element of any new residential development to meet the needs generated by that development. Open space not only has recreational and social value but is also considered vital to the overall design quality of the development. It can help promote biodiversity and contributes to the creation of an attractive, sustainable and varied residential environment, helping to 'green' an area, soften any environmental impact and foster a sense of community. All open space areas should be suitably located, proportioned and planted. Narrow or peripheral tracts which are difficult to manage will not be acceptable. Further information on the Department's policy on provision of public open space in new residential development can be found in PPS 8 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation'.

Private Open Space

- 4.31 Well-designed space around buildings can add greatly to the attractiveness of a development, especially where the principles of defensible space are applied. A variety of garden sizes and usable open spaces will promote diversity and give greater choice for potential residents. Developers should therefore make adequate provision for private open space in the form of gardens, patios, balconies or terraces, depending on the characteristics of the development proposed and the surrounding context. All houses will need to provide some in-curtilage open space. The provision of adequate private garden space is particularly important for new family dwellings – generally dwellings with 3 or more bedrooms. For apartment developments private open space may be provided in the form of communal gardens where appropriate management arrangements are agreed.

Movement

- 4.32 The Department will expect layouts to have greater regard for sustainable movement patterns. They should seek to reduce reliance on the private car, foster movement by pedestrians and cyclists, respect existing public rights of way and provide convenient access to public transport and existing or proposed facilities in the vicinity. Such matters must be built into the design from the outset as the adaptation of the layout, for example to fit in routes for pedestrians and cyclists, will be difficult if not impossible at a later date.
- 4.33 Roads are public space and are therefore an important element in the design of a development. All roads should be planned and designed to contribute to the overall quality of the development. This can be facilitated by a permeable layout with a network of interconnected carriageways and, where appropriate, a number of access points to the development. Residential developments will be required to incorporate traffic calming measures to keep traffic speeds low, improve safety and help create a better environment. The Department will therefore generally wish to see all access roads within a development designed to a 20mph maximum speed. On minor access roads favourable consideration will be given to the use of sub 10mph 'Home Zones'.
- 4.34 Road layouts which meet the Department's technical requirements but which do not pay due regard to the quality of the residential development and the need to foster sustainable movement patterns will be unacceptable.
- 4.35 The Department will also assess the need for the design of layouts to safeguard access to adjoining lands to ensure that the comprehensive development of a site or future development potential is not prejudiced.

Parking

- 4.36 The amount of car parking required in any development will be negotiated with developers according to the specific characteristics of the development and its location and having regard to the Department's published standards. All car parking should be well designed, convenient and located to allow for informal surveillance. It should not, however, dominate the residential environment to be created. In instances where car parking is proposed within the built fabric of a building, such as apartment development, this will only be acceptable where it will not result in a negative impact on the street scene at ground level.

- 4.37 Developers will also need to indicate what arrangements have been made within the development for secure bicycle parking. For apartment developments communal bicycle stands will often be required.

Privacy

- 4.38 The protection of the privacy of the occupants of residential properties is an important element of the quality of a residential environment. It is a particularly important consideration where new development is proposed adjacent to existing properties. Proposals should therefore seek to provide reasonable space between buildings in order to minimise overlooking. This will also assist in providing acceptable levels of daylight to properties.

Security from Crime

- 4.39 The design of new developments should seek to provide a feeling of security and a sense of vitality in all parts of the layout. To enhance security from crime, the back gardens of dwellings should be enclosed and back onto each other. Public areas such as open spaces, pedestrian routes and cycle linkages should be overlooked by the fronts of dwellings and other buildings to provide maximum surveillance. Narrow, potentially unfrequented or unsupervised routes for pedestrians and cyclists will not be acceptable.
- 4.40 'Secured by Design' is a UK project for promoting the principles of designing out crime from the built environment. Developers and their professional advisers should take account of these principles in preparing schemes and further advice can be obtained from the Police Architectural Liaison Service.

Policy QD 2

Design Concept Statements, Concept Master Plans and Comprehensive Planning

The Department will require the submission of a Design Concept Statement, or where appropriate a Concept Master Plan, to accompany all planning applications for residential development.

A Concept Master Plan will be required for planning applications involving:

- (a) 300 dwellings or more; or
- (b) the development, in part or full, of sites of 15 hectares or more zoned for housing in development plans; or
- (c) housing development on any other site of 15 hectares or more.

In the case of proposals for the partial development of a site zoned for housing the Concept Master Plan will be expected to demonstrate how the comprehensive planning of the entire zoned area is to be undertaken.

Any proposal for housing that would result in unsatisfactory piecemeal development will not be permitted, even on land identified for residential use in a development plan.

Justification and Amplification

- 4.41 The Quality Initiative demands a design-led approach in which the quality and sustainability of the development is as important as the nature of the site itself. Such an approach brings important benefits by establishing the parameters and requirements for the delivery of a quality residential environment early in the planning process.
- 4.42 The submission of Design Concept Statements and, where appropriate, Concept Master Plans will therefore be required to support all planning applications for residential development. Such information is necessary to accompany outline as well as full planning applications, to show how the developer will deliver a quality residential environment on a particular site. It will indicate how the design concept has evolved and provide a clear idea of what is intended for the site without the need for fully detailed plans. Without the submission of this information at outline stage the Department considers that a satisfactory layout and design that meets acceptable quality standards cannot be guaranteed.

- 4.43 Quality design proposals should emerge from a careful analysis of the site's location, surrounding context and the specific characteristics of the site itself. The Department will expect to see a clear demonstration of the design thinking behind the scheme and how this has developed from the analysis. Pre-application discussions with the Department can be helpful when this analysis has been completed and design options are being evaluated. Following this, discussions with other bodies, including District Councils and local community representatives and groups, may also be useful. All such discussions can help avoid unnecessary or abortive work.

Design Concept Statements

- 4.44 A Design Concept Statement is necessary to demonstrate how the proposed scheme has taken account of the main features of the site and its context and how it will meet the criteria set out in Policy QD 1, thereby contributing to the promotion of a quality residential environment.
- 4.45 The Statement should outline in writing the overall design concept and objectives for the site and include an indicative concept plan, based on the appraisal of the site and its context. The amount of information and level of detail required will depend on the nature, scale and location of the proposed development. Where necessary the Statement should also address any local design considerations identified in development plans or supplementary planning guidance and provide information on any improvements to infrastructure required to facilitate the proposed development.
- 4.46 For a large scheme or a site in a sensitive location, such as a Conservation Area, Area of Townscape Character or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the type of information and detail required for the Design Concept Statement will include some or all of the following:
- an appraisal of the site context highlighting those features in the vicinity of the site which influence the design of the scheme;
 - an appraisal of the characteristics of the site - identifying features within the site and how they influence the design of the scheme. This should include landscape features, an analysis of existing flora and fauna and the location of any archaeological or built heritage features or sites of nature conservation importance;

- an indicative layout of the proposed scheme including for example the siting of buildings, existing and proposed public transport facilities, pedestrian and cycle routes, the layout of streets, access arrangements and traffic calming measures proposed;
- sketch details of the design of buildings;
- a comprehensive and readily understood structure to the open space and landscape elements of the scheme including proposals for subsequent management and maintenance; and
- the type and location of any necessary local neighbourhood facilities.

4.47 For small housing schemes outside sensitive locations, involving the development of a site of up to 0.25 of a hectare or 5 dwellings or less, a short written statement and a diagrammatic layout will generally suffice.

Concept Master Plans

4.48 Where a Concept Master Plan is required, this will need to indicate in graphic form a scheme for the comprehensive development of the whole area, and include a written statement, detailed appraisals, sketches, plans and other illustrative materials to address all of the relevant matters set out in this Statement and its associated supplementary planning guidance. The Concept Master Plan should also clearly demonstrate how it is intended to implement the scheme.

Additional Information

4.49 Advice and guidance on site appraisal and the type of information that will be required to accompany Concept Master Plans and Design Concept Statements is contained in 'Creating Places – Achieving Quality in Residential Developments'. Developers may also find helpful the information contained in 'Improving the Quality of Housing Layouts in Northern Ireland'.¹

4.50 The submission of a Design Concept Statement or a Concept Master Plan will not preclude the need for other detailed assessments or information in support of a planning application, for example a Transport Assessment or an Environmental Impact Assessment.

¹ 'Improving the Quality of Housing Layouts in Northern Ireland' is a document co-sponsored by the Planning Service, the Roads Service, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Construction Employers Federation and was published in May 2000.

- 4.51 The Department will use its powers contained in the Planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1993 to request applicants to supply such additional information as is considered necessary to allow proper determination of planning applications. Where the Department grants outline planning permission for residential development based on indicative plans, a condition will be imposed requiring that any reserved matters application be based broadly on such plans.

Comprehensive Planning

- 4.52 The comprehensive planning of new or extended housing areas is considered to be of vital importance in pursuit of an improved quality standard. Piecemeal development may result in the undesirable fragmentation of a new neighbourhood and fail to secure the proper phasing of development with associated infrastructure and facilities.
- 4.53 The Department would encourage land pooling by owners and developers to facilitate the comprehensive development of residential sites. Where this cannot be achieved, and comprehensive development of the site would be prejudiced, the Department will refuse the application.

Planning Agreements

- 4.54 The Department may be unable to grant permission for major housing schemes, and some smaller developments, in the absence of a Planning Agreement made under Article 40 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991. Such agreements may be required for a number of reasons, for instance to secure any local facilities and infrastructure needed as a result of the development or the provision of open space and its long term maintenance. These agreements will need to be established prior to permissions being issued to ensure that necessary facilities and works are provided and to help guarantee the quality of development required. Developers should therefore consider this matter early in the design process.
- 4.55 Further information on the Department's policy for developer contributions and planning agreements is contained in PPS 1 'General Principles'.

Annex A: Local Community Development Guidelines for Urban and Rural Areas

- Identity:** Encouraging community participation in the planning process. Reinforcing a sense of belonging and sense of place by maintaining distinctive places throughout local communities and in local landscape character areas, including places of public assembly and community interaction, focal points, landmarks and a continuity of urban and rural traditions.
- Vitality:** Continuously caring for, restoring and renewing the physical fabric of towns and villages by a strong emphasis on the imaginative re-use of older buildings and the use of previously developed land as a fundamental component of the regeneration process for towns, villages and rural areas.
- Proximity:** Providing compatible mixed use developments extending local community choice and opportunity in relation to jobs, commercial facilities and services.
- Accessibility:** Developing multi-modal systems of urban and rural transport which would enhance accessibility for local communities to the full range of urban activities and meet the needs of people with disabilities. This would be achieved by integrating public transport, cycling and walking with a more responsible use of the private car, whilst facilitating the movement of goods.
- Amenity:** Providing Community Greenways to establish connections with nature and the countryside, and local historic features, for residents in urban and rural areas by maintaining and building up an interlinked pattern of public open spaces, play facilities and landscaped areas, woodlands and wildlife habitats, pedestrian and cycle routes, linking to rivers, canals, coastal and inland waters, as well as respecting the rural setting of towns and villages.
- Quality:** Fostering an imaginative and resource efficient quality of design which respects existing rural or urban character, local tradition and human scale.

Annex B: Planning Policy Statements

PPS 1 - General Principles (Mar 98)

PPS 2 - Planning and Nature Conservation (Jun 97)

PPS 3 - Development Control: Roads Considerations (May 96)

PPS 4 - Industrial Development (Mar 97)

PPS 5 - Retailing and Town Centres (Jun 96)

PPS 6 - Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage (Mar 99)

PPS 7 - Quality Residential Environments (Jun 01)

PPS 8 - Open Space, Sport and Recreation (Consultation Draft) (Mar 99)

PPS 9 - The Enforcement of Planning Control (Mar 00)

PPS 10 - Telecommunications (Consultation Draft) (Nov 00)

PPS 11 - Planning and Waste Management (Consultation Draft) (May 01)

Annex C: Planning Service Offices

District Council Area	Divisional Planning Office
Antrim Ballymena Carrickfergus Larne Magherafelt	Ballymena Divisional Planning Office County Hall 182 Galgorm Road BALLYMENA BT42 1QF Tel No: (028) 2565 3333 Fax No: (028) 2566 2127 E-mail: divisional.planning.office.ballymena@nics.gov.uk
Armagh Banbridge Craigavon Newry & Mourne	Craigavon Divisional Planning Office Marlborough House Central Way CRAIGAVON BT64 1AD Tel No: (028) 3834 1144 Fax No: (028) 3834 1065 E-mail: divisional.planning.office.craigavon@nics.gov.uk
Derry Limavady	Londonderry Divisional Planning Office Orchard House 40 Foyle Street LONDONDERRY BT46 6AT Tel No: (028) 7131 9900 Fax No: (028) 7131 9777 E-mail: divisional.planning.office.londonderry@nics.gov.uk
Belfast Castlereagh Newtownabbey	Belfast Divisional Planning Office Bedford House 16 – 22 Bedford Street BELFAST BT2 7FD Tel No: (028) 9025 2800 Fax No: (028) 9025 2828 E-mail: divisional.planning.office.belfast@nics.gov.uk
Ards Down Lisburn North Down	Downpatrick Divisional Planning Office Rathkeltair House Market Street DOWNPATRICK BT30 6EJ Tel No: (028) 4461 2211 Fax No: (028) 4461 8196 E-mail: divisional.planning.office.downpatrick@nics.gov.uk

District Council Area	Divisional Planning Office
Cookstown Dungannon Omagh Strabane	Omagh Divisional Planning Office County Hall Drumragh Avenue OMAGH BT79 7AE Tel No: (028) 8225 4000 Fax No: (028) 8225 4010 E-mail: divisional.planning.office.omagh@nics.gov.uk
Ballymoney Coleraine Moyle	Coleraine Sub-Divisional Planning Office County Hall Castlerock Road COLERAINE BT51 3HS Tel No: (028) 7034 1300 Fax No: (028) 7034 1434 E-mail: divisional.planning.office.coleraine@nics.gov.uk
Fermanagh	Enniskillen Sub-Divisional Planning Office County Buildings 15 East Bridge Street ENNISKILLEN BT74 7BW Tel No: (028) 6634 6555 Fax No: (028) 6634 6550 E-mail: divisional.planning.office.enniskillen@nics.gov.uk
	Planning Service Headquarters Clarence Court 10-18 Adelaide Street BELFAST BT2 8GB Tel No: (028) 9054 0540 Fax No: (028) 9054 0665 E-mail: planning.service.headquarters@nics.gov.uk