Watlington
Neighbourhood
Development Plan

WATLINGTON DESIGN GUIDE 2017

This Design Guide has been prepared as part of Watlington's Neighbourhood Development Plan with the aim of securing the highest quality new development within the Parish. It is intended as a set of guidelines to assist professionals, developers and householders in preparation for proposals for development. It will promote good design practice by all those involved in the development process.

It has been prepared in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)2012 and the National Planning Practice Guidance for Design. We have also used the South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 issued by SODC and the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide published by the Chilterns Conservation Board. Reference has also been made to Building for Life 12, which is endorsed by government for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods and is published by Nottingham Trent University: CADBE(College of Art & Design and Built Environment) for the Building for Life Partnership. Sustainable development is at the heart of the Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan. The sustainability objectives are at Appendix A.
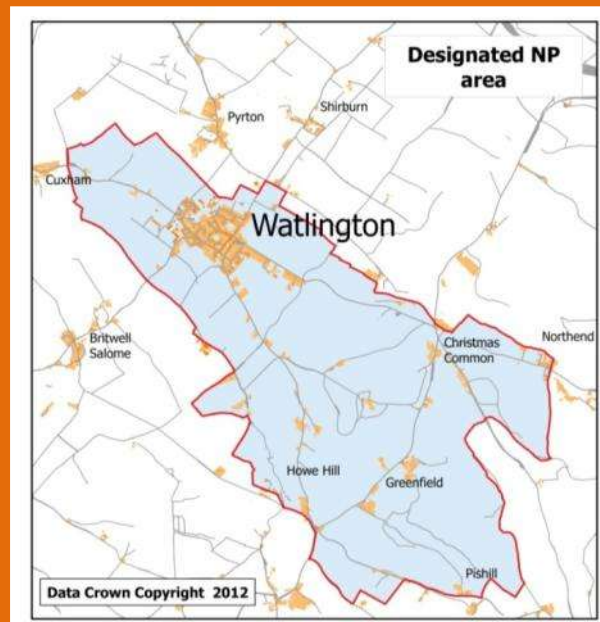
"Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

● will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

 ● establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;

 ● optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;

● respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;

● create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and

● are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping."
NPPF Para 58

Contents

What is the Watlington Parish Design Guide? A manual of important design principles and practical advice for making a successful planning application created to support the SODC Design Guide but with special consideration for the design principals needed in Watlington Parish specifically, enabling applicants and developers to consider the views of the local community.

As SODC 2016 Design Guide states "It is important to identify and involve those groups and individuals affected by a proposed development in order to increase the understanding of the development proposals and local priorities. Applicants and developers should discuss proposals with neighbours in all cases before making a formal application and consult more extensively with the community for applications that are likely to have a wider effect."

Why is the design guide important? Compliance with this design guide will help speed up the planning process by reducing the chance of objections due to poor design. The guide provides supporting information to the Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan and, as such, is a material consideration in all planning decisions which involve building work in Watlington Parish and adjoining areas that may have an impact on Watlington Parish. It carries weight in decision-making, having been arrived at through the Neighbourhood Plan process. Planning proposals would be expected to make reference to the Design Guide.

Who should read the design guide? Anyone considering carrying out new development in the Parish of Watlington or closely adjacent, householders, agents, developers and statutory authorities.

This design guide provides supporting information to the Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan amplifying and illustrating the policies set out in Watlington Neighbourhood Plan.

Relevant statutory authorities and council officers should be consulted to understand their policies, requirements and initial advice. Depending on the scale of a development, these can include the following:

South Oxfordshire District Council: • Development Management Officer. • Conservation and Design Officer. • Forestry Officer. • Countryside Officer. • Building Control Surveyor. • Waste/recycling Officer. • Environmental Services. • Planning Policy Officer • Urban Design Officer • Accessibility Officer • Sustainable Energy Office

Other organisations which may include • Oxfordshire County Council: highways, access, transport, rights of way. archaeology and cultural heritage, education, libraries, public health etc. • Environment Agency: flooding, rivers and pollution • Historic England • Natural England • Utility companies • Police service: Police Liaison and Crime Prevention Officer. • Fire service.

Note: All photographs credited to Terry Jackson unless otherwise stated.

Street Scene

Pic:Keith Jackson

Rows of terraced cottages, integrated with larger houses on narrow residential streets.

Street size, orientation and style should be widely varied to give opportunities for a good variety of journeys, experiences, situations, views and vistas.

Network of footpaths interlinking different areas are an integral characteristic of Watlington.

On- street high density houses (the High Street) also demonstrating the importance of street trees & planting.

Access off road to parking with homes arranged around the small access track.(High Street is through the arch)

Chalk Streams are a precious habitat. Avoid hiding the precious chalk streams in culverts or including as part of a garden.

Homes facing each other around a central point create a sense of community, also demonstrating the importance of street trees and planting.

Houses set in gardens set well back from edge road/wide street.

Barn style workshops/Business units

Plots

Pic:Rob Switzer

Pic:Keith Jackson

Some plots large enough to allow house to sit surrounded by garden in addition to being set well back from edge road.

Plots to allow for moderate semi-detached houses with variable garden sizes.

Pic:Keith Jackson

Some plots with little or no front garden either facing onto a small street or facing each other over a green space.

House Types

Small Detached cottage

Terrace of cottages with no front garden

Generally cottage style homes with low ridge heights will best reflect the type and scale of buildings in Watlington with a few possible exceptions as shown.

Detached house

Semi-detached Houses

Larger focal building which could be divided into flats with a communal park or garden, could also incorporate interesting access with arches, gateways, paths.

Walls

Walls in Watlington are predominantly dark red brick with partially glazed or completely grey 'Nettlebed' bricks. There are also a number of walls of plain render and small accent areas of weatherboarding. Although chalk walls are a feature developers would not be expected to attempt to replicate these.

Roofs & Chimneys

Roofs in Watlington are generally of slate or clay tile. Thatches are generally plain ridged not fancy and Chimneys generally reflect the building materials of the walls. Good honest design is encouraged – if there's a chimney it should have a function and not be simply a decorative afterthought. Generally lower ridge heights are preferred.

Windows and Dormers

Windows are the eyes of a home { and should reflect the rooms which lie behind them} In Watlington windows are generally sash or casement style and of painted timber. Dormers, with some exceptions tend to have apex roofs not flat.

Doors and Porches

The favoured style of door in Watlington is generally painted timber some being vertically slatted with a letter slot. They will sometimes have a small window as well. Porches are variable with some open, some enclosed and some little more than a canopy over the door. Enclosed porches will usually have a pitched roof.

Boundaries

Boundaries in Watlington characteristically are either brick or brick and flint walls, hedges, picket fences, or black wrought iron railings often used in combination with a hedge.

Walls of Brick, Flint, Chalk or a mix

Estate iron fences

Picket Fences

Iron Railing with hedge

Wall with hedging

Off street parking is a major problem in Watlington due to its historic character because many houses have no garage and only on street parking. Where parking is not visually dominant and there is ample provision this works very well with the character of the town.

Parking created in an old barn at the back of a house works well

In Lilacs Place the houses are built around a green with the parking areas adjacent to the development with a mix of open parking and barn style garages. Access is easy but visually attractive.

Another example of parking provided to the rear of the housing in a mix of open spaces and garages.

Identifying Development Constraints and Opportunities

The SODC 2016 Design Guide advises that local character, potential constraints, opportunities and the characteristics of a site and its setting with the surrounding neighbourhood and landscape that might influence design at all levels should be identified early in the process. The relationship of a site with its immediate neighbours and landscape setting should be examined and the planning history of the site reviewed. Designers should look beyond the boundary of the application site.

Issues to be considered could include:

• The character of Watlington as a small rural historic town at the foot of the Chilterns escarpment.
• Physical aspects of the site, for example, steep slopes, orientation to the sun, drainage, local microclimate.
• Important existing features to be retained, for example, trees, hedges, ponds, buildings, walls, including designated sites or features of ecological, archaeological or architectural importance.
• Views in and out of the site
• Presence and location of services, for example, drains, sewers, ducts, utilities, wayleaves, power cables.
• Access points and routes into and across the site from surrounding areas.
• Air Quality Management Areas.
• The presence of any contaminated land.
• When positioning buildings it may be necessary to take account of the existing noise climate and any noise or odour likely to be produced as a result of the development.

Specifically to Watlington:

- **Views to and from the Chilterns AONB especially Watlington Hill**
- **Rural nature of the town and its relationship to the surrounding landscape**
- **Access routes which maintain local rural character of existing routes i.e. predominantly hedge-lined and not too wide**
- **Retaining the character of having linking footpaths as in the Town Centre**
- **Any contributions that can be made to mitigate or improve poor air quality in the designated Watlington Air Quality Management Areas.**
- **Preserve and enhance bio-diversity in and around town.**
- **Preserve the town's Dark Skies i.e. avoid large expanses of windows, sky-lights, security lights, flood lights.**
- **Improve cycle access into and across the site from surrounding areas.**
- **Reflect the characteristic materials of the vernacular buildings.**

White Mark Viewed from location adjacent to Pyrton Lane

Building Materials

"Traditional building materials are typical of the Chilterns as whole, with a predominance of red and silver-grey brick and flint. Older houses were timber-framed in oak. Plain tiles were the rule on the larger roofs, with thatch on cottages with some slate introduced in Victorian times. Farmsteads are often characterised by large timber-framed barns, typically clad with black horizontal weatherboarding with gable walls constructed out of brick and flint."

SODC Landscape Character Assessment- Chilterns Escarpement

Historic Townscape and Listed Buildings

The centre of Watlington is designated as a Conservation Area and there are approximately 80 listed buildings in the parish. The Design Guide seeks to ensure that these heritage assets are both conserved and enhanced in line with the NPPF paragraph 132 and NPPG 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' April 2014.

Listed Building Consent is needed to alter or to extend a listed building in any way that affects its architectural or historic interest and any planning application in a Conservation Area is required to ensure that the proposals do not detract from its character.

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If we want to create a better quality of life, now and for future generations, we need to build more sustainably. To achieve this aim, design needs to become more integrated. It needs to include factors such as resources, carbon emissions, waste, health, culture and habitat and how these work together to shape new developments. Many design decisions are connected. For example providing public transport can reduce polluting emissions. This improves air quality, makes walking more desirable and requires less energy. Making a compact neighbourhood with attractive walking and cycling routes will provide better access and promote health. New planting can modify microclimate, create new habitats and provide recreational areas. The most resilient parts of a masterplan should be the streets and related infrastructure. These are long-term design decisions that can remain in place for generations. Within this infrastructure, buildings may be replaced over time, either in stages or all at once. Buildings that can change their use make more efficient use of resources. The built environment should allow for adaptive re-use.

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Promote mixed-use development to reduce the need to travel and to increase the vitality, health and economic welfare of communities. • Reduce car use by including local facilities close to public transport with safe pedestrian and cycle routes to residential areas. • During the construction process minimise waste in order to reduce the need for disposal and energy use for transportation. • Design buildings that are adaptable for different users and uses in order to help people remain in a community as their needs change. • Minimise domestic and commercial waste by promoting and helping with reuse of materials and recycling in both the home and at a neighbourhood scale.

Physical factors, such as slope, orientation, wind direction and drainage have traditionally shaped the form of settlements. Modifying microclimate by design to create comfortable interiors and a comfortable public realm is a basic requirement of all development and should be used before 'bolt-on' technologies. Existing trees, shrubs, hedges, surface water regimes and other wildlife habitats are valuable assets. Include them in new schemes and where possible enhance them by planting and creating new habitats.

Design principles:
In line with the South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 we want to encourage energy conservation and energy generation and the reduction of the use of water resources. In particular, we agree with Technical Document 4 which itemises tests for designs. These include:

4.1   the orientation of buildings to allow the use of solar technology on roofs and to maximise the potential for solar gain

4.4   the inclusion of renewable energy technologies to reduce the site's conventional energy needs

4.10   siting of any green or brown roofs or walls as well as rainwater harvesting to reduce overall water demand

4.11   re-use grey water which can be installed in new or existing properties and have the potential to meet a significant proportion of domestic demand for water

White Mark c 1907

Blackberrying on Hill Road 1907

View from Watlington Hill

White Mark c 2007

Mason's Wood

Watlington chalk stream adjacent to Industrial area

Establishing the Structure

In Watlington attention should be paid specifically to the tradiditional ambience such as is created at Lilacs Place, an excellent model of modern village architecture and structure of place. New areas of development need to work well as places where people want to live. They need to meet a diverse range of housing needs which are inclusive and easily accessible and where people feel confident and safe to move around. They need to have a good overall design where green spaces, streets and built areas are integrated in a way where each part of the development is an attractive space in itself but also contributes to an overall attractive design. Particular consideration should be given to how people will experience, use and move through the area.

For Watlington, Developers should be looking towards improving public transport to employment hubs of Oxford, Didcot, Reading etc. in addition to making cycling and walking the preferred modes of transport within the town and to nearby villages.

Current main routes through Watlington

Planter with Bike rack

Key Design Principles:

- The development itself should have an obvious character and integrate well with its surroundings
- Important viewpoints should be identified and provided beyond the development but also within it to green spaces, end of streets, turns and curves and changing perspectives.
- The journey through from one area to another should be a pleasant series of experiences.
- Footways and paths should be linked to reflect the character of existing paths and alleyways in the town
- Good provision should be made for outdoor storage for every home to include bikes and garden equipment
- Car parking should not be a dominant visual feature but requires realistic space for residents and visitors and should avoid opportunities for anti social parking
- Streets and public spaces should be well connected within the development
- Hedges and trees are important features to include on streets as they create a natural environment and link with the surrounding countryside.

Landscape and Planting

The importance of landscape and planting

The importance of this section is immense for Watlington and the public consultations bear out the degree to which people care about the environment and local landscape.

The design of the public realm, landscape and external areas around buildings is at least as important as the design of the buildings themselves in defining the character and quality of places. Too frequently, however, these aspects are given much less attention. When the design of paving materials, boundaries and planting is done well it can make all the difference in creating a distinctive character for new places and integrating development with an existing settlement. Existing landscape features can be used to form the structure and character of new development and to create shelter and windbreaks, thereby limiting the effects of heat loss from buildings. They can also provide instant 'maturity' and can be a valuable asset to a development site.

External lighting should be avoided on new buildings unless it is absolutely necessary for reasons of security and safety. This will ensure that bat activity within the local area around the building is not adversely affected by artificial lighting. If lighting is required, it should be kept minimal, at low level and at low intensity, with hoods and baffles used to direct the light to where it is required (Bat Conservation Trust 2008, Emery 2008). To minimise the impact on bats, the use of low pressured sodium lamps is recommended in preference to mercury or metal halide lamps which have a UV element that can affect the distribution of insects and attract bats to the area, affecting their natural behaviour (Bat Conservation Trust 2008). Lighting around any integrated bat roost features within the new development should be completely avoided.

Trees at Willow Close

Chalk grassland on Watlington Hill

Environmental Design Principles:

• Wherever possible within the design, retain existing landscape features such as trees, hedges and water bodies on the site and allow sufficient space for them to grow.
• Biodiversity should be promoted and opportunities taken to re-open culverts, re-establish watercourses and enhance the wildlife value of them.
• Opportunities should also be taken to provide links between existing habitats and the creation of new ones – insuring a joined up network of green spaces.

Landform

In Watlington extra care needs to be taken because of the general sloping nature from Watlington Hill towards Cuxham. In some places the initial general impression is that it is flat and the same level as adjoining areas but this can be deceptive. The area has a number chalk streams which being internationally rare, diligence is required in their treatment. Views from and of the AONB are highly regarded in Watlington and care should be taken not to have an adverse impact on these.

Watlington Chalk Stream

View of town from Watlington Hill

The Willow Pond
[Photo: Rob Switzer]

Particular note should be taken of environmental sustainability. There have been issues locally with waste water in addition to episodes of flooding. The chalk streams are important and need protection.
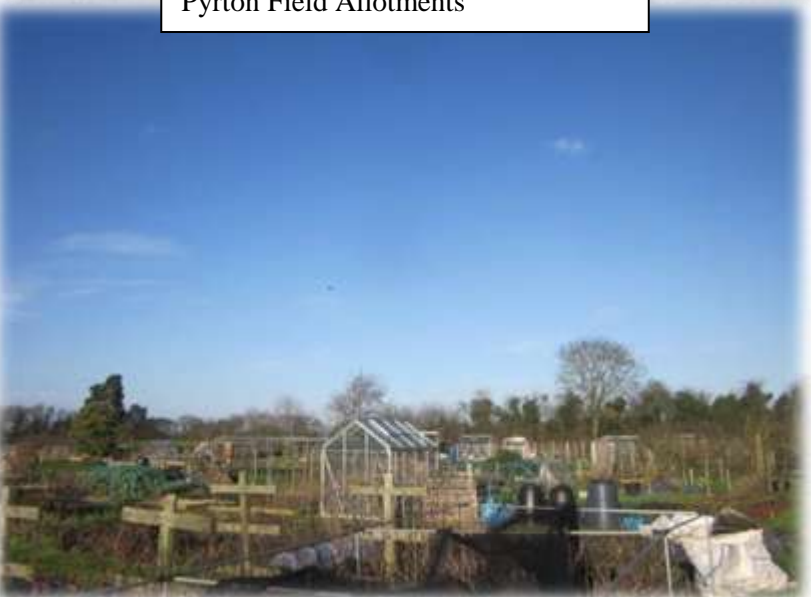
The allotments that already exist in Watlington are popular and so there is scope for further allotments, community orchards, community farm projects etc. to encourage local food production.

A Chiltern Gentian

Pyrton Field Allotments

Surface water and sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS)

Recharge ground water by using permeable surfaces rather than piping water away from a site. Where it is necessary to channel rain water, create streams, swales or rills. This will express the topography better than underground pipes. Keep rainwater in balancing ponds which maintain a minimum depth of water all year round to provide habitat and amenity value. Run-off from roads can carry tar or tyre residues which can be cleaned by passing the water through traps or reed beds.

Design principles
• Use porous surfaces and minimise hard ground surfaces this includes roads. • Expose surface water regimes at ground level.
• Use balancing ponds to attenuate run-off.
• Use traps and reed beds to clean run-off from streets. • Collect rainwater from individual roofs in on-site tanks for re-use.

Food

It is possible to grow a wide range of fruit and vegetables in quite small gardens or in pots where balconies or terraces have been provided. Community orchards are becoming more popular and can provide a community focus. A developer could leave a legacy of fruit trees in individual gardens or in a communal orchard.

Design principles
• Include edible fruit species when planting trees and shrubs.
• Make land available for community orchards and allotments, in close proximity to residential developments.

#	Sustainability Objective
1	To help to provide a good mix of housing types to meet the identified needs of Watlington residents and to provide the opportunity for people to live in a decent home which is affordable within their means
2	The help to create a safe environment through well designed development in which people can live and work and which is attractive and welcoming to visitors
3	To enable everyone to contribute to decisions affecting the community and to support community initiatives that will benefit local residents
4	To promote people's health and wellbeing by making sure that everyone has good access to local green spaces, to the countryside and to surrounding villages via attractive pedestrian and cycle routes
5	To improve accessibility for people of all abilities to local services and facilities and to promote improved opportunities for public transport
6	To reduce the negative impact of traffic on the environment caused by noise, vibration, and congestion by promoting effective traffic management strategies
7	To support action to improve air quality
8	To conserve and enhance biodiversity and geo-diversity, maximising opportunities for biodiversity within all new development, and paying particular attention to habitat linkage and wildlife corridors
9	To protect and enhance the town's landscape setting and the countryside around it with special regard to the Chilterns AONB
10	To protect the rural character of the parish by minimising light encroachment in order to preserve dark skies
11	To protect and enhance the town's historic environment, Conservation Area and heritage features including archaeological sites
12	To ensure that new development reflects the distinctiveness of the built form of Watlington by using high quality design and materials
13	To ensure that the location and design of new development is resilient to the effects of climate change and to mitigate and adapt to climate change by securing sustainable building practices which conserve energy, water resources and materials
14	To support energy generation projects from renewable sources
15	To protect, enhance and manage the parish's watercourses, springs and ponds. To safeguard their margins and groundwater sources, restoring naturalised sections and creating wetland features where appropriate & improve water quality
16	To reduce the risk of damaging groundwater or fluvial flooding by taking advantage of natural processes in the way flows are managed and ensuring that sustainable drainage systems are used on sites which are developed.
17	To support the reduction of waste through recycling, composting and energy recovery
18	To improve efficiency in land use through re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings and to protect minerals and other natural resources
19	To safeguard and enhance opportunities for local food production by protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land, small holdings and allotments and facilitating other initiatives such as community orchards and gardens
20	To promote the development of local businesses which are appropriate in scale to the rural context of Watlington and provide increased employment opportunity
21	To support provision for home workers together with support networks for small businesses
22	To support the growth of Watlington as a thriving commercial hub in maintaining and enhancing the vitality of our settlements within the Parish and other nearby communities

From the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report 2017 (available on www.watlingtonnp.org.uk)