



Chapter 1: Introduction to Streetscape Design Guide

Streetscape Design Guide 2025

Worcestershire County Council

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Streetscape Design Guide

Foreword

High-quality street design has a fundamental role to play in how we meet the challenges of growth in building new homes and generating jobs across Worcestershire. This Streetscape Design Guide emphasises the importance for Worcestershire to pride itself in having high-quality developments that incorporate safe, functioning, and attractive roads and public spaces that meet the needs of all users, while respecting the local character, environment and promoting sustainability, longevity, and easy maintenance for future generations.

Street design principles not only facilitate good connectivity and safety, but they also help to define a vibrant and attractive neighbourhood or community for the health and wellbeing of its residents and help encourage economic activity. All of these factors contribute to the four priorities of our Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027:

- Open for Business
- Children and Families
- The Environment
- Health and Wellbeing

With climate change, streets must cope with heavier rainfall, surface water flooding, and higher temperatures. Therefore, street design considerations to traffic speed, lighting, and planting, through to details of sustainable materials and their transportation can all have a significant impact on how streets function and contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions. These measures will help us collectively achieve a lower carbon economy, create opportunities for sustainable travel, promote healthier lifestyles and well-being, and protect the environment whilst unlocking economic aspirations.

In 2021, Worcestershire County Council declared a climate emergency and set a target for the county to be carbon neutral by 2050. This ambition extends into our role as the Local Highway Authority when advising and assessing new developments.

This document will be reviewed to support major changes in policy, legislation, or guidance at a national and local level. It is anticipated that this may be every five years, and changes will be published on Worcestershire County Council's website.

1. Introduction

New streets and public areas in Worcestershire need to be of a high-quality design and be well connected to play a vital role in leading to greater economic and social well-being with improved health for its residents. They need to be well-designed to:

- **Prioritise** the provision for people to safely walk, wheel and cycle more for shorter journeys and use public transport more instead of driving a private vehicle.
- **Mitigate** the impact of current and future climatic conditions by assessing, managing, and minimising risk through good design.
- **Be innovative** where possible, to use sustainable and low carbon materials to reduce the impact on the environment and carbon emissions.
- **Be respectful** of our heritage and natural environment to create vibrant and attractive places where people and nature can thrive alongside each other.
- **Being well integrated and connected** to existing areas, public rights of ways and services such as schools and shops so they can function well.
- **Use digital infrastructure and/or the use of technology** that will help future-proof solutions and services, reduce future maintenance costs, help asset management, reduce environmental impacts and improve physical connectivity through the ability to make decisions based on 'real time information'.

The Streetscape Design Guide (SDG) sets the standards and expectations on several technical issues such as street hierarchy, space allocation, active travel and parking. The aim of this document is to provide guidelines for developers to work towards, whilst simultaneously supporting innovation and originality further enriching an already diverse county that is rich in its heritage, urban areas and natural landscapes.

This document is intended for the use of all involved in designing, delivering and maintaining new and existing streetscapes, highways and public realm in Worcestershire. This includes development projects, capital projects, revenue projects and maintenance projects in public and private sectors. As such, its users will include developers, private sector interests, councils, the wider public sector, and communities including their agents and consultants.

It is essential that all layouts and street designs are vehicle tracked and assessed to ensure they can perform to a safe and satisfactory level. Therefore, early engagement with Worcestershire County Council is encouraged from the start of the design process through to construction. This would allow developers to benefit from a combined consultation from officers representing different disciplines such as highways, public transport and transport strategy, etc.

2. Purpose

Worcestershire County Council is responsible for ensuring that new streets (including its own schemes) meet certain design standards to ensure they function in a practical and safe manner and help deliver the aspirations of the county; to encourage high-quality developments with a strong

focus on creating options for safe, accessible, and sustainable modes of transport to reduce congestion and carbon emissions.

Currently, these standards are set out in various local and national guidance documents. Whilst these guides are important to communicate standards, they do not necessarily demonstrate how all the various disciplines might come together in a holistic manner to create streets and places.

The primary purpose of this design guide is to bring together the key design principles from the multitude of disciplines covered by existing guidance. This document allows designers and developers to understand Worcestershire County Council's clear expectations for early engagement and advice, standards, including innovation. The Guide outlines guidance for the different streetscape components that need to be considered in the design and planning stages:

- Requirements on access, layout, and connectivity.
- Standards on road space allocation.
- Parking provision.
- Trees and landscaping.
- Street lighting.
- Active travel provision for walking, wheeling and cycling
- Passenger transport, bus stops, and school drop-off areas.
- Drainage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs).
- Requirements and processes for creating a streetscape suitable for adoption.

The SDG is intended to be used in conjunction with the relevant Local Planning Authority Design Codes to provide design solutions at the pre-application and planning application stages.

This guide refers to various national and local guidance, and it should be read in conjunction with these documents. These are shown in Appendices A and B.

3. Aims

Worcestershire County Council wants to deliver high-quality streets and places in Worcestershire for the benefit of the community. Good streetscape design should aim to create:

1. Accessible, safe, and practical space for all users.
2. Prioritised active and sustainable optimised travel options for walking, wheeling[1], and cycling and the use of public transport.
3. Attractive places using high-quality design which are easy to maintain and built to last with sustainable, climate resilient materials that can adapt to future changes in the climate in terms of adaptation to extremes in weather patterns from hot and dry spells to mild and wet ones.

4. Enhanced local areas that are respectful to existing conservation, historic, and heritage areas.
5. Green and blue spaces that make the most of green and blue infrastructure provide attractive areas for local communities and the mental and physical health and well-being of all ages.
6. Habitats for ecology and biodiversity, to protect and encourage nature to thrive.

^[1] *“An equivalent alternative to foot/pedestrian-based mobility. Includes wheeled mobilities such as manual self- or assistant-propelled wheelchairs, including wheelchairs with power attachments or all-terrain attachments (such as the “Freewheel”), powered wheelchairs, mobility scooters (three and four-wheeled) and rollators. Some people rely on their cycle to move (at a pedestrian’s pace) through pedestrianised environments when it is not physically possible to walk/push their cycle. Some people use their cycle as a walking aid; by leaning on it, some people use e-scooters (with or without a seat), to wheel/scoot through pedestrianised environment if they cannot walk unaided.” (Wheels for Wellbeing).*

As the Local Highway Authority, Worcestershire County Council adheres to this Streetscape Design Guide for its own Public Realm and highway infrastructure schemes.

4. Ethos

A high-quality streetscape can be achieved by many integrated factors:

1. Design of the buildings.
2. The scale and proportion of the spaces between the buildings.
3. Use and quality of robust and sustainable materials and where appropriate, to incorporate eco-friendly materials to reduce carbon, and consideration to use materials and texture that prevent anti-social behaviour such as graffiti.
4. Design of lighting and carefully designed street furniture. Street furniture is defined as a collective term for all functional furniture, fittings and objectives in streets such as seating, cycle storage, bins, etc.
5. Integrated Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) for flooding and surface run-off.
6. Green and blue spaces to complement and connect with existing residential, urban, and rural areas.

This Streetscape Design Guide sets out good practice design guidance for Worcestershire. The guide is to complement other national guidance and best practice documents. This document is not intended as a full specification and use of this document in no way relieves the works’ promoter of their responsibilities to provide a safe design compliant with the regulations, codes of practice and national recommendations in force at the time.

The National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring, and successful places (2021), published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, (Part 1 Para 1) states that:

“Places affect us all – they are where we live, work, and spend our leisure time. Well-designed places influence the quality of our experience as we spend time in them and move around them. We enjoy them, as occupants or users but also as passers-by and visitors. They can lift

our spirits by making us feel at home, giving us a buzz of excitement, or creating a sense of delight. They have been shown to affect our health and well-being, our feelings of safety, security, inclusion and belonging, and our sense of community cohesion.”

The National Design Guide also acknowledges that:

“Specific, detailed, and measurable criteria for good design are most appropriately set out at the local level. They may take the form of local authority design guides, or design guidance or design codes prepared by applicants to accompany planning applications.”

Development proposals in Worcestershire should, therefore, consider the following principles to:

1. Respect and contribute towards a clear hierarchy of streets and spaces. The transport user hierarchy should be applied within all aspects of street design to consider the needs of pedestrians first, then wheelers and cyclists, followed by public transport users, and finally private vehicles.
2. Consider the impact of parking provision on connectivity. Parking arrangements should be integrated into the street scene, and large areas of surface parking should be avoided.
3. Ensure that car parking and highways design do not dominate the design of the development of a street scene or the public realm design to be safe for all users.
4. Be aligned with all relevant Public Realm design codes where applicable.
5. Design signage, lighting, and street furniture to minimise street clutter.
6. Design and plan open spaces to clearly delineate public and private areas, and with appropriate enclosures.
7. Plans for street trees and green spaces to contribute to a network of green and blue infrastructure. These should be carefully sited to promote connectivity and enjoyment for people and promote greater biodiversity.
8. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to cope with run-off and flood water.
9. Cross reference the local design codes and policies during the initial stages of pre-app planning and Master Planning.
10. Innovative designs which challenge the status quo (whilst meeting the requirements set out in relevant statutory legislation and non-statutory guidance), will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The Local Authority

As the Local Highway Authority (LHA), it is the statutory duty of Worcestershire County Council as outlined in Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980, to maintain highways that are adopted at public expense, ensuring they are safe and passable for all users, including dealing with snow and ice, as far as is reasonably practicable. The public highway network includes all adopted roads, footpaths, and verges (maintainable at the public expense). It does not include unadopted or privately owned roads. As the LHA, we must also take steps to prevent collisions from occurring on new roads when they come into use (Section 39 Road Traffic Act 1988).

The LHA plays a crucial role in streetscape design, ensuring that new developments and public realm improvements align with safety, functionality, and legal requirements. The LHA acts as a statutory consultee on planning applications, providing guidance on highway aspects and ensuring developments integrate well with the existing transportation network. In particular, the LHA reviews planning applications to ensure that proposed developments, particularly those impacting highways, are safe, efficient, and do not negatively affect the existing transport network.

The LHA also assesses proposals, approving submissions, and inspecting site works to ensure adherence to relevant standards and policies. Any deviations from established highway design standards are assessed for approval, ensuring that any departures are justified and do not compromise safety or functionality.

Worcestershire County Council is also the Planning Authority for minerals and waste planning, commonly referred to as 'County Matters.'

5.2 Hierarchy of road users

Manual for Streets 1 (2007) and Manual for Streets 2 (2010) aim to improve the quality of streets and public spaces by shifting the focus in street design from solely prioritising traffic movement to prioritising people and place. Manual for Streets 1 focuses on residential streets, whilst Manual for Streets 2 extends the principles to busier, urban and rural streets.

Manual for Streets 1 and Manual for Streets 2, state that the design of any new road or improvements to an existing road, should follow a user hierarchy as set out below in the preferred order of priority:

1. Pedestrians and wheelers
2. Cyclists and horse riders
3. Public transport users
4. Specialist service vehicles i.e. emergency services, waste etc.
5. Other motor traffic

As well as considering the hierarchy of road users, it is important to refer to the Department for Transport guidance published in 2021 called 'Inclusive Mobility. A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure' when designing all schemes.

Applicants are advised to discuss their proposed application at the pre-planning submission stage with the relevant Local Planning Authority and where there are highway and transportation issues, consult with Worcestershire County Council as the Local Highway Authority. Early engagement is advised to help resolve issues before they become more difficult to deal with.

As an overview to the role of the Local Highway Authority, Appendix D sets out the principal functions involved in the planning application and design process.

5.3 The Local Planning Authorities

The six Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in Worcestershire are as follows:

1. [Bromsgrove District Council](#)
2. [Malvern Hills District Council](#)
3. [Redditch Borough Council](#)
4. [Worcester City Council](#)
5. [Wychavon District Council](#)
6. [Wyre Forest District Council](#)

Each LPA is responsible for making the planning decisions within their District and each LPA has its own guidance and design principles to reflect the different and distinctive characteristics of the local area.

As part of the planning process, Worcestershire County Council as the Local Highway Authority is consulted by the LPAs on the highways and transportation implications of planning applications for which they are responsible as the planning authority. The LPAs are statutorily obliged to consult the Local Highway Authority. They are also obliged to consider any advice or recommendation that the Local Highway Authority may offer in response to the consultation.

6. Management of the Transport Network

Worcestershire County Council, as the Local Highway Authority (LHA) is responsible for the management of the following elements of the transport network:

- All public highways except for the Strategic Road Network, which is managed by National Highways
- Public Rights of Way
- On-street car parking
- Some public off-street car parking (where associated with Council-run facilities such as Country Parks)
- Some bus services
- Community Transport schemes

Any proposed new development within the county can, therefore, generate an increase in demand across Worcestershire on all modes of transport, the highway network, the public right of way network and can impact on existing communities, infrastructure and structures such as bridges and retaining walls.

To understand the impact of development proposals across the county and to prevent and mitigate any adverse effects, a number of several different teams participate in providing coordinated pre-application advice to developers:

- **Highways Development Management (HDM) Team:** On behalf of the Local Highway's Authority co-ordinate a highways response to new and amended development and infrastructure proposals (planning applications). The HDM team can advise on highways and transport matters, including the requirement for transport infrastructure. This team will coordinate responses from other teams within the County Council, such as Public Rights of Way, in providing highways recommendations to the Local Planning Authority when consulted on proposals. The team is also responsible for Legal Agreements (s106) with developers.
- **Highways Development Control (HDC) Team:** This team is responsible for managing the delivery of developer-led schemes using section 38 and section 278 legal agreements. The team is also responsible for reviewing the engineering detail of schemes to ensure that roads are built to adoptable standards to minimise the cost to the public purse for future maintenance.
- **Street Lighting Team:** This team provides advice for developers and designers about Worcestershire County Council's requirements for street lighting and ensures they meet national prescribed standards to satisfy road safety requirements.
- **Public Rights of Way Team:** It is important to ensure Public Rights of Ways have been fully considered when planning and constructing new developments and/or where existing public rights of way need to be changed or moved. To obtain advice and support, it is advisable to consult with the Public Rights of Way team as early as possible, particularly about consulting the Definitive Map and specifications for public rights of way. This is to ensure existing routes, and the safety of users are always protected. For further details please see Appendix O.

All these teams will consult internally with colleagues as required, subject to the application under consideration.

Worcestershire County Council strongly advocates that a coordinated design process is essential for successful development with all the teams above. The Local Highway Authority reinforces this approach and advocates for early engagement with Developers through pre-application discussions to ensure an integrated approach.

Please see [Planning applications | Worcestershire County Council](#) and [Highways pre-application advice](#) sections of the Worcestershire County Council website for further information on pre-application advice.

7. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

For large and significant scale developments such as new settlements and major urban extensions in Worcestershire, Masterplans and / or Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) play a crucial role

by setting design codes or standards for new developments. SPDs set out general requirements and specific aims to provide a framework for developers to achieve specific outcomes for the developments including goals including design objectives, layouts and specifications. SPDs play a vital role as they offer a distinct form of detailed design guidance to deliver improved quality developments. Where developed, these detailed SPDs are available from the relevant District Councils. Worcestershire County Council will consult accordingly with reference to these SPDs.

8. Net Zero

The UK is committed to reaching net zero by 2050. This means that the total greenhouse gas emissions would be equal to the emissions removed from the atmosphere, with the aim of limiting global warming and resultant climate change. To achieve this, the UK Government has adopted a suite of policies in order to reach net zero. WCC will comply with national legislation and policies relating to net zero where appropriate in its own operations. The Streetscape Design Guide follows the hierarchy of prioritising active and sustainable movement throughout in line with national policy.

9. Guiding Principles

Streetscape design guidance can be both flexible and fixed, depending on the context and the specific guidance being applied. While some aspects of streetscape design, like safety standards, are fixed to ensure public safety, other aspects, such as aesthetic choices and design, may be more flexible to allow for innovative and context-specific solutions.

This document sets out examples of how principles, be they guiding or technical, could be implemented across a variety of situations and places. In many cases, an application will need to be considered on its own merits. Please refer to Appendix A for useful contacts.

This Guide is underpinned by other Worcestershire County Council Plans and Policies which include:

1. [The Local Transport Plan](#)
2. [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans](#)
3. [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#)
4. [Green Infrastructure Strategy](#)
5. [Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#)