

Building for a Healthy Life Assessment, December 2020

Hall Green Road, West Bromwich



Introduction



Building for a Healthy Life is the latest edition of Building for Life 12, written in partnership with Homes England, NHS England and NHS Improvement. Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) updates England’s most widely used design tool for creating places that are better for people and nature. The original 12-point structure and underlying principles within Building for Life 12 are at the heart of BHL and the new name reflects changes in legislation as well as refinements made to the 12 considerations in response to good practice and user feedback.


BHL recognises the findings of the three-year Healthy New Towns Programme led by NHS England and NHS Improvement, incorporating the principles of ‘Putting Health into Place’. Many local authorities across the country have cited Building for Life 12 in their Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents.


Organised across 3 headings, 12 considerations are included within BHL to help those involved in new developments think about the qualities of successful places and how these can be best applied to the individual characteristics of a site and its wider context;

Integrated Neighbourhood	Distinctive Places	Streets for All
1. Natural Connections	5. Making the most of what’s there	9. Healthy Streets
2. Walking, cycling and public transport	6. A memorable place	10. Cycle and car parking
3. Facilities and services	7. Well defined streets	11. Green and Blue Infrastructure
4. Homes for everyone	8. Easy to find your way around	12. Back of pavement, front of home



BHL is foremost a design process structure, not a scoring system and a traffic light system (Red, Amber, Green – RAG) is used to assess proposals against the 12 considerations. Good practice highlighted by a green light and poor practice is highlighted with a red light. The objective is to minimise the number of amber lights and avoid red lights.


INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS		RAG
<p>1. Natural Connections</p> <p>Create places that are well integrated into the site and their wider natural and built surroundings. Avoid creating isolated and disconnected places that are not easy places to move through and around.</p>	<p>The scheme has been designed to integrate well into the surroundings, linking into several of the existing pedestrian connections and creating a permeable environment for pedestrians, cyclists and low speed traffic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The layout incorporates three new pedestrian and cycle paths which connect to residential areas to the south, southeast and east as well as the main access point onto Hall Green Road. There are a further 3 possible access points located on the north of the site which link onto a proposed footpath running adjacent to the Tame Valley Canal, (although it is noted that the levels in this area may prohibit this linear path). • A swathe of green space adjacent to the Tame Valley Canal allows retention of a corridor for nature and creates a buffer between the development and the canal itself. • The road layout within the site creates permeability by the use of perimeter blocks and the free flow of vehicles and the speed control measures ensure vehicles will travel at low speed. • Generally, private drives include pedestrian paths to allow continuous streets or they are linked so as not to prevent free flowing movement. • Sensitively designed landscaping will respond to the residential boundaries ensuring that visual amenity is not adversely affected. • When considering long distance views into the site, the appropriately scaled proposals would be seen against the backdrop of the wider townscape, allowing our scheme to integrate with the local context. 	
<p>2. Walking, Cycling and Public transport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wider footpath network along with the canal and associated towpaths accessed locally from both Cransbrooke Road and Crankhall Lane, form important pedestrian routes adjacent to the site for dog walkers in particular. We propose pedestrian links through to these key areas. 	



<p>Short trips of up to three miles can be easily made on foot or bicycle if the right infrastructure is in place, helping to improve public health and air quality whilst also reducing local congestion and carbon emissions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site is in an extremely sustainable location and can be accessed easily by car and public transport being located in close proximity to the M5/M6 interchange. There are existing bus stops on Hall Green Road immediately outside the site, served by bus route 410 which provides connections between Wednesbury and West Bromwich. Additional regular bus services are available on Walsall Road. In total, seven different bus services are accessible and within walking distance from the site providing public transport connections to local destinations as well as linking the site with Tame Bridge Parkway railway station and Walsall. • The proposals for development are accompanied by a Draft Travel Plan and a Travel Pack will be provided for each household upon occupation. This will provide information on public transport in the vicinity, incentives for use of public transport and walking and details of any car sharing groups in the neighbourhood and walking to School initiatives. There will be an appointed travel Plan Co-ordinator and annual monitoring by way of household survey will be undertaken with Travel Plan updates where necessary. • Within the local area, to the east, Hall Green Road adjoins the A4031 at a signalised junction which links West Bromwich and Walsall. Hall Green Road has a width of approximately 10m and there is currently no parking, waiting or loading restrictions in operation. • The closest railway station is Tame Bridge Parkway, located approximately 1.3km to the north east of the site. The station is managed by London Midland, providing services between Walsall and Wolverhampton as well as Rugeley Trent Valley and Birmingham. 	
<p>3. Facilities and Services</p> <p>Places that offer social, leisure and recreational opportunities a short walk or cycle from their homes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a brownfield site, the scheme forms an infill to an established residential neighbourhood and is within walking/cycling distance of Stone Cross local centre with its numerous essential services and amenities including schools, local doctors surgery, churches and community facilities. • There are several local convenience stores in walking distance from the site and the local primary school is within 500m opposite the site. • The surrounding area already benefits from excellent transport links and the development meets local accessibility criteria for walking distances. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme incorporates a central area of open space with a Locally Equipped Area for Play and will also include benches. There is a further rectangular ‘pocket park’ in the southwest corner which will benefit from retention of the mature trees and a new pathway linking to Hall Green Road. • Additional areas of open space include the landscaped buffer to the canal running the full length of the northern boundary, a landscaped bund to the west which also acts as acoustic mitigation for the neighbouring works and a smaller landscaped area in the far north western corner which also includes tree planting and a new pedestrian access. • All properties positioned on corners are dual aspect and all pedestrian paths are overlooked. 	
<p>4. Homes for everyone</p> <p>A range of homes that meet local community needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on our working knowledge of the West Midlands housing market and its demographics, we will create a medium density residential development providing a mix of 2, 3 and 4 bed homes to meet the needs of the local community. • Whilst endeavouring to make the best use of developable land, we have not over intensified the scheme and have chosen not to include apartments within the development as these do not reflect the character of the surrounding areas of semi-detached and detached family housing. • All proposed properties have private amenity space which achieves or exceeds Local Authority requirements and access to areas of public open space. • Tenures include Open Market homes and homes for private rent due to the level of remediation required to bring the site up to an appropriate standard and the costs associated with this. This is part of the reason why the site has remained undeveloped for many years despite having planning permissions in place. • Many of the homes will offer accommodation for individuals or families to move locally and within the development as lifestyles and aspirations change. The units will be wholly tenure-blind by virtue of making use of the same massing and landscaping together with similar design principles and criteria. 	

Distinctive Places

<p>5. Making the most of what's there</p> <p>Understand and respond.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing site topography is relatively flat with some undulations changes and this presents few constraints to development. This was beneficial to the design of the site, allowing the proposed level of development to be easily accommodated in a way which enhances the existing context through several measures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Existing pedestrian links have been retained and enhanced b. Buildings have been oriented to take advantage of solar gain and to produce pleasant outdoor spaces, with the majority of properties having South facing gardens. c. Dwellings will face onto existing open space, keeping the backs of private space away from public realm. d. Promotes passive surveillance, making the public spaces feel safer and allowing potential for the community to adopt some sense of ownership over their respective spaces • Hall Green Road has uniform and regular positioning of street trees which are mature and add to the boulevard character of the area. This will be replicated within the development by incorporating semi-mature street trees and smaller trees within front gardens to allow a pleasant street scene and boulevard effect. • The urban grain of the proposed development mirrors that of the surrounding area and includes similar building heights, typologies and tenures. • The habitat along the Tame Valley Canal will be retained and enhanced combining new native tree planting, ornamental landscape features and more natural, informal wildflower meadow planting which will promote wildlife along this corridor. • The palette of materials proposed further reflects those in the surrounding streets combining a mix of red brick, render and hanging tiles. 	
<p>6. A memorable Place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The layout has evolved over time by considering the unique opportunities and constraints offered by the site and through pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority. 	

<p>Create places that are memorable.</p>	<p>This has produced a scheme which is permeable, connected and reflects the local character of the surrounding residential streets whilst also allowing a sense of place in its own right.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The position of the play area and POS which is located to the north of the first junction from the site entrance will provide the physical conditions for an immediate perception of community and activity as well as the aesthetic qualities associated with landscaping. The POS will be visible upon first entering the site (and for passers-by on Hall Green road itself) and alongside the boulevard effect created by the street trees, this will offer a strong and pleasant vista with the backdrop of the row of detached dwellings. • A simple, traditional elevational theme is proposed utilizing a variety of high quality materials which, when used in conjunction with variations in frontage width and height, provides the scheme with a distinctive character of its own. The layout and green infrastructure for the scheme responds well to its context and provides a distinctive character. • Street names within the development will be chosen in partnership with the Local Authority and the marketing name will have a connection to the locality. 	
<p>7. Well defined streets and Spaces</p> <p>Create a network of streets and spaces that are well enclosed by buildings and/or structural landscaping, taking care to ensure that front doors and the principal facades of buildings face streets and public spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All dwellings face onto the street with articulation of corners achieved by the use of distinctive materials, and additional windows to habitable rooms which ensure that blank gables to the street are avoided and the properties are dual aspect. • A comprehensive landscaping and boundary treatment scheme has been prepared, which includes ensuring that public and private spaces are clearly defined. Plot frontages will be demarcated by the use of landscaping and hoop top railings and differing hard landscaping. Brick walls will be used when viewed from the public realm to enclose side and rear gardens but always allowing a soft landscaping buffer between the wall and public realm to soften the feature. Close board fencing is used in rear gardens but not when this can be viewed in proximity from the public realm. • The design creates clear definition between the public and private realm and follows the principles of Secured by Design. • High quality landscaping between the buildings and the highway edge will complement the buildings and enhance the quality of the street scene. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuse and recycling storage has been considered, and all properties are provided with convenient paved bin storage areas, screened from view of the road and provided with gated access. 	
<p>8. Easy to find your way around</p> <p>Use legible features to help people find their way around a place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In our proposals we felt it important to create a network of well-defined streets that are logical and convenient. We have also ensured that new routes and spaces integrate well with the existing context as this enables people to find their way around easily and it also allows better access to existing local facilities and public transport links making places more sustainable. • Key nodal areas have been positioned to create a sense of place within the development and aid legibility. Vista stop dwellings, landscape features both retained and created further promote the uniqueness of these spaces and can be seen from a number of view points within the development. • Vehicular access is proposed via a single point from Hall Green Road. Footways of approximately 2 metres in width will be provided on both sides and will tie into the existing footway networks, thus providing a safe continuous walking route for residents. • The layout plan demonstrates a well-connected and free flowing, accessible by all users, which helps ensure that all areas of the development are easy to navigate, safe and secure. 	
STREETS FOR ALL		
<p>9. Healthy Streets</p> <p>Streets are different to roads. Streets are places where the need to accommodate the movement of motor vehicles is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All streets have been designed to accommodate the requirements of the local highway authority and with due consideration of Manual for Streets. All streets have footpaths on either side and street trees are incorporated where possible. Where this is not possible, trees have been included within front gardens to help facilitate the boulevard effect and provide additional aesthetics to the street scene. 	

<p>balanced alongside the need for people to move along and cross streets with ease. Activity in the street is an essential part of a successful public realm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The POS area will incorporate benches where people will be able to sit and chat and watch over their children. • The pedestrian pathways which link to off-site areas are positioned on natural desire lines providing direct routes for pedestrians and cyclists and integrating the development with the surrounding neighbourhood. • Variations in plot frontages along the spine road assist in natural traffic calming to slow traffic speeds, which enhances the environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Streets are well lit and benefit from natural surveillance, promoting social interaction. 	
<p>10. Cycle and car parking</p> <p>Well-designed developments will make it more attractive for people to choose to walk or cycle for short trips helping to improve levels of physical activity, air quality, local congestion, and the quality of the street scene. Well-designed streets will also provide sufficient and well-integrated car parking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking is in curtilage and follows the principles of Manual for Streets. • Parking provision has been designed at 200%, which meets the requirements of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council in terms of quantum and size. • Areas which feature more frontage parking bays are split by gardens and landscaping where possible. • Rear courtyard parking is avoided thereby addressing any potential for anti-social behaviour. • Many of the properties include garages for cycle storage and those which do not have rear access to private amenity space where bicycles can be stored securely. • All properties will have provision for electric car charging facilities. 	
<p>11. Green and Blue Infrastructure</p> <p>Creative surface water management such as rills, brooks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape plays a fundamental role in the development of the scheme, enhancing the quality of the space and creating strong distinctive character. Pedestrian links are conceived as natural walking routes and the canal to the north of the site strengthens the habitat for a range of flora and fauna; creating the opportunity to enrich the public realm, improve the sense of wellbeing 	

<p>and ponds enrich the public realm and help improve a sense of wellbeing and offer an interaction with nature. As the richest habitat for a range of flora and fauna, they are also a key play in achieving the net gain in biodiversity sought by the 2020 Environment Bill.</p>	<p>and offering a direct interaction with nature. These features contribute to the creation of a network of different but integrated, spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All dwellings face onto the street and blank gables facing into the public realm are avoided. This helps create a safe environment and promotes natural surveillance. • Private spaces are well defined by landscaping, railings, walls or fences and public areas of open space will be well maintained. Tree and shrub planting throughout will help to ensure an attractive environment throughout the seasons. • Ecological enhancements will be achieved by replacement native planting, habitat creation, incorporation of bat and bird boxes, inclusion of bee bricks in the construction, retaining and enhancing the buffer to the canal. 	
<p>12. Back of pavement, front of home</p> <p>Garden cities, towns and suburbs used hedges to define public and private spaces, helping to create characterful and biodiverse places. The space between the back of the pavement and the face of buildings has a significant impact on the quality of a place. Clear demarcations between public and private spaces can encourage people to personalise the front of their homes whilst also offering opportunities to integrate level changes, utility boxes and waste storage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The private spaces are well defined by planting, landscape features and attractive boundary treatment. This demarcation helps people to personalize the private space in front of their houses which is large enough for homeowners to take an active interest and in turn improves the aesthetic quality of external space and the overall street scene. External space to the front of properties are not distanced nor segregated by high boundaries thereby encouraging social interaction between neighbours. • Appropriate bin storage / collection areas are provided to ensure all bins are presented neatly for collection. All properties have secure and private rear garden space with hardstanding areas and gated side access. • There are no areas of public open space which are not overlooked in some form by the dual aspect properties on corner plots and properties all facing the public realm. 	