

LEDBURY NDP DESIGN CODE : SUGGESTED OUTLINE
28 June 2019 version

Dear NDP Committee,

The suggested outline is for a Design Code to be integrated into the main document of the Ledbury NDP, as section HO2.3. For the most part it is a precis of the *Ledbury Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide* (Version dated 26th January 2018), by Paul Neep, and I would like to make clear my indebtedness to that document.

I have read the design code sections of three NDPs : Colwall, Wellington Heath, Weston under Penyard. Although they are not directly relevant, because these are much smaller than Ledbury, they are clear and well written – worth reading.

I suggest organising the design code around three areas : housing / townscape / employment. This outline is itself probably too long, but could easily be reduced to half its length.

L = *Ledbury NDP*

HO2.3 Design Code

Double brackets (()) denote points *possibly* for inclusion/ further discussion

Housing

Housing in all the areas covered by the NDP should further the aim of Sustainable Development, as set out in Objective SD1 ('To develop Ledbury as a forward thinking, self-reliant and sustainable lifestyle community to reflect increasing climate challenges.').

Therefore it is desirable that all applications for new residential developments be encouraged to demonstrate in the Design and Access Statement :

how measures have been taken to design energy efficient dwellings and developments, the ideal being to achieve Passivhaus certification.

that consideration has been given to renewable energy sources

how sustainable transport methods have been considered and implemented in the layout and design of the site

(L LDG 3.1 and LDG 3.2).

In all areas, the Design and Access Statement for new residential areas should demonstrate how the public realm has been designed, so that :

outdoor spaces enhance the public realm – in particular, that these spaces are not dominated by parking

consideration has been given to encouraging wildlife friendly habitats and diversity

Tree planting and lighting makes a dual contribution, i.e. not only to householders' amenity, but also to create an attractive experience for the public

(L Ledbury Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide 26 January 2018 LDG 1.2)

All residential developments should fully integrate 'affordable housing' into the development sites, without grouping in specific areas, and in effect should be 'tenure blind'.

(L Ledbury Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide 26 January 2018 1.3.3. and 1.3.4).

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The NDP suggests that the design code should distinguish between houses which are within the core areas of the settlement plan, and, the areas on the borders of the settlement plan.

Within the core areas, the design of new residential developments should reflect local and historical context. The characteristic range of materials in Ledbury consists of red brick, exposed oak (unpainted or painted black), and, to a much lesser extent, local limestone; buildings depend for their effect on calculated proportions, rather than decoration or striking colour effects. Of these materials, red brick is the most dominant, buff colour is not found, and blue bricks not before the 1860s. Ledbury is not an 'oak' town in the way that Eardisland and Weobley are, because the pre-existing oak buildings were re-clad in the 18th century. Three other defining characteristics are that roofs are not steeply pitched, windows form a generous portion of the façade, and that buildings are very rarely taller than three storeys. Development proposals will be favourably considered if they aim to fit into this context.

((The problem here : the historic core is quite small; there is an 'inner' ring where most houses are located. In some ways, the Deer Park estate has some interesting 1970s houses - cross wall construction, textured or different brick colours facade/ the New Mills estate generous landscape spaces))

EVIDENCE : Hillaby, J G *Ledbury* 2005; James, Duncan *An Analysis of the Historic Fabric...of Ledbury* 2007

Housing on the borders of the settlement plan are not visually located within the core area, so that different considerations apply. Greater latitude could be given to architecture which is not required to fit into the local and historical context. Herefordshire has an acute shortage of buildings of recognisably modern design, a weakness which could be remedied at this point in the plan. A possible prototype could be the Accordia Housing development in Cambridge (2007), which uses traditional materials (brick), but in a recognisably modern manner.

But whatever type of design is chosen, other considerations may also apply. If the housing is at an entrance point to the town, it should be distinctive in character, without pastiche or neo-vernacular. If it looks out into the country, the apparent mass of the building should be reduced (low pitched/flat roof; non-intrusive colours) so that seen from a distance, it is not too obtrusive. The façade could have a more generous allocation of window space, with the sightlines oriented on particular features in the landscape.

EVIDENCE Academy of Urbanism, Great Neighbourhood Award 2012

Townscape

The historic buildings of the town centre in which the oak frame is still visible, are interspersed with brick rebuildings (see three paragraphs above) and some modern infill. It has to be recognised that the buildings, though some are Listed, are not of the highest quality as individual buildings, with the exception of Ledbury Park (c. 1600 '...the grandest black and white house in the county and the only one vie with the houses of Shrewsbury.' Pevsner, p219). It is the urban setting which of significant quality, for its changes of level and for its widening at the central point - nationally, only a small number of towns (e.g. Marlborough) have similar conformation.. The setting even transcends some unremarkable or even ugly buildings (e.g. The Barrett Browning Memorial Institute 'Really terrible' (Pevsner p218). Therefore, it is important to preserve this townscape, by paying attention to the appearance of shop fronts and fascias (SEE : Core Strategy document)

EVIDENCE : Core Strategy documents : Ledbury Rapid Townscape; Shop Front Design Guide : attached; Pevsner, *The Buildings of England* 1963)

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If there are planning proposals to convert commercial or shop buildings into residential ((currently there are two buildings in this category – the Methodist church in the Homend, but perhaps as internet shopping tightens its grip, there may be more)), it would be advisable if the re-conversion into residential premises

Employment

1. In the currently existing industrial states, many of the current buildings are low, one story only. Favourable consideration would be given to closer grouping, and taller buildings, of more than one storey. Though it is difficult to find examples of well-designed industrial estates, perhaps the model of science parks could be followed (especially in terms of landscape design), and if possible, the type of non-designed 'shed' should be avoided.

EVIDENCE : The Jonas Driver document in the Core Strategy for recommended guidelines has some recommendations. ((2. schools / polyclinics : perhaps too early to mention?))

Patrick Goode

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