

Ledbury NDP – Design Guide: Initial thoughts

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The following represent what I see as challenges to achieving good design (put together relatively quickly I admit). Some of this has direct crossover with Patrick's design guide ideas. This may appear focused on housing but it certainly can all apply across all uses if developed properly.

I think that in order to develop a robust and focussed design guide, we need to develop an evidence study document in effect (which could be used as an appendix to the NDP for further explanation) but with the ultimate objective of developing a concise and supported set of design principles for new development in Ledbury for inclusion as part of the NDP (likely no longer than a page or 2).

The key areas that I think should be addressed are:

Connectivity and creation of place

- Hierarchy of street (thoroughfare / boulevard / street / lane / passage – this exercise is developed quite effectively in the Hereford Design Guide).
- Character of each typology (i.e. tight lanes with buildings, street trees, progression into other types).
- Connectivity with adjacent 'streets' – aspiring for a better-connected town without dominance of car use.
- Incorporation of public open space along routes.

EVIDENCE: This could be informed by developing a plan of Ledbury (or just an area) which is used to define and highlight the different types and then a quick analysis of each type in the context of Ledbury with photos and diagrams. Once the settlement boundary is established, a plan could be extended or developed showing how new sites should connect with the town – possibly with the identification of target parcels of land that could be acquired to create considered connectivity (such as extension of the town trail or connections to viaduct site).

Scale

- Typically no more than 3 storey
- Roofs characterised by varied heights, interconnecting pitches, varied angles, tightly grouped.
- Varied density (housing developments should have variety of densities within proposed layouts (if of a certain scale) so that they don't read as monotonous suburbia).

EVIDENCE: Assessment of varied scales within developments, assessment of roofscapes and height variance in Ledbury (possibly including materiality).

Design

- An appropriate response with reference to typical styles, forms, materiality, details etc. (i.e. not using modern bland housing developments or inappropriate shop fronts as precedent).

EVIDENCE: Undertake urban character assessment which could also include reference to work already undertaken or published by others). Certainly worth supporting with examples of where this has been done elsewhere in the country.

Sustainability/Performance

- Fabric first approach to construction (Passivhaus, AECB Building Standard..... - how do you get this to be a target?!)
- Renewables (PV, air source, ground source..... , car charging for each home.....?)

EVIDENCE: This will be tougher to evidence or back up in a design guide, we can no doubt set aspirations but I have no idea how we can set this as a realistic requirement – unless to say that sites are more likely to be supported or that higher densities may be considered?

Creating Communities

- Tenure Blind
- Integrated mix of accommodation suitable for: families, elderly, professionals, private ownership, rented, council – the best communities are made of people from all demographics together. This could even include community housing, self-build, live work etc.

EVIDENCE: Develop study to support this – and possibly how this could support other objectives.