

Housing Strategy and Development

West Dunbartonshire Design Standard for
Housing Supported by the Affordable Housing Supply
Programme

Agreed November 2015



Housing Strategy and Development

The Housing Strategy and Development section is responsible for:-

- Providing the statutory strategic housing authority role within the local authority area;
- The delivery of the Council House New Build Programme and the delivery of the affordable Housing supply programme:
- Strategic Housing Asset Management delivery;
- Ensuring all housing legislative and regulatory responsibilities are achieved.
- Supporting the development of a culture of continuous improvement in Housing services and to facilitate opportunities to excel;
- Developing and implementing effective strategies for Housing Services within West Dunbartonshire;
- Developing the Council's housing strategy to ensure that it supports the delivery of our strategic priorities;
- Service development within Housing Services; and
- Promoting effective management and the involvement of tenants across all aspects of Housing Services.

For further information on Housing Strategy and Development please telephone 01389 737889 or e-mail: housing.strategy@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Building Homes and Improving Communities



West Dunbartonshire Council

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1. Introduction

1.1 This paper outlines proposed design requirements for new affordable housing being delivered in West Dunbartonshire supported by the Affordable Housing Supply Programme. The West Dunbartonshire Design Standard will supplement and enhance existing local and national standards as detailed below.

2. Background

2.1 The current West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy¹ sets a housing supply target of 320 per annum. This figure reflects the Strategic Development Plan requirement and comprises 250 private sector and 70 affordable homes.

2.2 The Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) is a key means to deliver the affordable housing element of these ambitions. The West Dunbartonshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2015 - 2020² details the plans for the delivery affordable housing over the next five years. The SHIP is informed by the West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy and complements the Local Development Plan.

2.3 The Council has an ambition to exceed these targets and to develop 1,000 new affordable homes in West Dunbartonshire between 2012 and 2022. Whilst this exceeds the Strategic Development Plan requirement, there is sufficient land identified for progress to be made towards this target in the current Local Plan period to 2019.

¹ West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy 2011 – 2016 http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/media/753598/lhs_final_november_amended_electronic_version.pdf

² WDC Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2015 – 2020 November 2014
<http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/strategies,-plans-and-policies/housing/strategic-housing-investment-plan/>

2.4 WDC supports the Scottish Government's commitment to the provision of housing which meets high quality and design standards. This paper outlines the standards, statutory and otherwise, we aim to achieve in new housing which receives support funding through the AHSP.

3. Design Quality – National Planning Policy Context

3.1 The Scottish Government's planning policies on design highlight the importance of sustainable use of land, good design and protection of the natural and built environment. The principal sources of guidance are *Scottish Scottish Planning Policy* (June 2014), *Creating Places* (June 2013) and *Designing Streets* (March 2010)³. In addition, the Scottish Government's strategies on older people, *Age, Home and Community* (December 2011), and on learning disability, *The Keys to Life* (June 2013), provide valuable housing advice for their respective areas.

3.2 Scottish Planning Policy emphasises that Planning should support high quality development and lists six qualities of successful place:

- Distinctive
- Safe and pleasant
- Welcoming
- Adaptable
- Resource efficient
- Easy to move around and beyond.

3.3 *Creating Places* spells out the Scottish Government's vision to protect and enhance Scotland's built environment and to create future assets. It highlights the significant relationship between architecture and place to a range of policy areas which contribute to the National Outcomes.

3.4 As part of *Creating Places*, the Scottish Government is developing a Place Standard assessment tool, which will be the hallmark of well-designed places. This standard will be aimed at creating greater certainty around quality of place and it is intended to support the private and public sectors and communities. It will address quality in relation to places that support healthy and sustainable lifestyles.

3.5 *Designing Streets*, a Policy Document for Scotland, promotes a design led and site specific approach to street design which challenges the primacy of motorised vehicles and is more about successful places than traffic movement.

³ These papers can be found on the Scottish Government's site at : <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning>

3.6 *Age, Home And Community: A Strategy for Housing for Scotland's Older People: 2012 – 2021*⁴ includes advice on the contribution that housing can make towards meeting the older people's policy objectives. In particular, Chapter 7 on New Build Housing highlights some key issues including:

- It should not be assumed that that older will wish small one bedroom properties. People now reaching older age, who wish to downsize, are likely to want a reasonably-sized property with at least one spare bedroom, giving flexibility so that friends and relatives can visit, maintaining their social networks. A spare bedroom can also accommodate a carer. Good storage space is also important. Many older people spend most of their time at home and have a lifetime of possessions, and it supports their mental wellbeing to retain them.
- Housing that is suitable for older people should be well-located, with easy access to amenities and transport links.

3.7 *The Keys to Life: Improving Quality of Life for People with Learning Disabilities*⁵ the Scottish Government's policy paper on people with learning disability highlights the need for an understanding of the housing needs of people with learning disabilities. The sections on Housing and on Independent Living provide advice.

4. Affordable Housing Supply Programme – Housing Quality and Design

4.1 In addition to the above noted national design advice, the Scottish Government's AHSP guidance contains references to design matters. Part 6.2 of the Scottish Government Housing Supply Division Guidance Note 2014/05 *AHSP – Process and Procedures* emphasises the importance of Housing Quality and Design⁶ and signposts the other relevant Scottish Government publications.

4.2 This guidance advises that all units supported by the programme must, as a minimum, be built to comply with all approved applicable Building Regulations as required by law and will include all Housing for Varying Needs (HfVN) Essential Features as set out in Communities Scotland Guidance Note 2004/12.⁷

⁴ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/12/16091323/1>

⁵ Scottish Government *The Keys to Life* June 2013

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/06/1123>

⁶ SG HSGN 2014/05 AHSP – Process and Procedures Guidance June 2014

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/investment/guidancenotes/GuidanceNotes2014/HSGN201405-AHSP-Process-and-Procedures>

⁷ CSGN 2004/12 Housing for Varying Needs Design Procedures

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/investment/guidancenotes/olderguidance/csgn200412>

4.3 The Guidance stresses the high importance attached by the Scottish Government to meeting a higher energy efficiency standard. Higher AHSP subsidy benchmarks apply to new homes which meet Section 7, *Silver Level*, of the 2011 Building Regulations⁸ in respect of both Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Energy for Space Heating.⁹ To incentivise delivery of new homes which would meet this greener standard, an additional subsidy of £4,000 per unit is available from a central resource held by the Scottish Government.¹⁰

5. Design Quality – Local Planning Context

5.1 The Council's draft Local Development Plan¹¹ is informed by *Residential Development: Principles for Good Design Supplementary Guidance*¹², which details the good design principles required of new housing developments and the criteria used by Planners to assess such proposals. The Plan provides general guidance on land use, creating successful places and sustainable design. Prospective developers are urged to take account of relevant guidance when preparing their proposals¹³.

5.2 Design is a material consideration in determining planning applications and there is a growing recognition of the added value that design contributes to development. The Residential Supplementary Guidance sets out what fundamental principles all schemes should demonstrate. There are six sections which cover:

- Character and Setting
- Layout and Plot Sizes

⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0039/00392411.pdf>

⁹ Please note that 2013 Technical Standards currently apply and this will change in October to the 2015 version, see here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Building/Building-standards/techbooks/s62015>

¹⁰ A report has been made to the Scottish Government by the 2015 Subsidy Working Group which recommends changes to the benchmark rates, including the greener higher subsidy element. Consideration of the report will form part of the SG spending review discussions which are due to conclude in autumn 2015.

¹¹ West Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan – Proposed Plan http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/media/3761560/ldp_as_modified_march_with_fc.pdf This Plan will replace the existing adopted West Dunbartonshire Local Plan:

<http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/strategies,-plans-and-policies/local-development-planning/local-plan/>

¹² Residential Development: Principles for Good Design. This will become Supplementary Guidance when the LDP is adopted:

http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/media/2589591/residential_development_principles_for_good_design_supplementary_guidance.pdf

- House Design
- Landscaping, Open Spaces and Play Areas
- Roads and Parking
- Community Safety.

Each section includes a checklist of the criteria to be considered. The fundamentals of any development should be that it: gives importance to the local context; is design-led, not standards-led; promotes the six qualities of good design; and is accompanied by appropriate supporting documents.

5.3 The proposed Local Development Plan contains an appendix on “Low and zero carbon generating technologies” (Appendix 1). This sets out sustainability standards requirements for new domestic and non-domestic buildings through the use of low and zero carbon generating technology. The emissions savings should form part of those emissions savings required by Building Standards regulations in force in the given year.

5.4 Another piece of Supplementary Guidance, on Our Green Network, is in preparation¹⁴. It will become part of the adopted LDP in time, and includes guidance on open space standards for residential development, embedding the green network within the design of new development and what the Council is looking for in terms of the design and layout of new development.

6. Greener Standard/Silver Level

6.1 The Council supports the Scottish Government’s efforts to promote energy efficient housing and wishes to make a higher energy efficiency level compulsory in new build housing supported through the AHSP.

6.2 As noted at 4.3 above, an additional subsidy is available to new homes meeting the greener standard, *Silver level*, of the 2015 Building Regulations (as amended). The Council has committed that all new WDC houses will be built to this standard.

6.3 The Council has canvassed opinion among a number of developing organisations and there appears to be a consensus that the costs of meeting the standard are not necessarily onerous and the extra costs can be accommodated within the higher grant levels.

6.4 We propose making it compulsory for all schemes supported through the AHSP to be to the greener, *Silver Level*, standard through the introduction of the West Dunbartonshire Design Standard.

¹⁴ Consultation closed on 31st August 2015

<http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/public-consultations/our-green-network-guidance-consultation/>

6.5 Given the likely introduction of a requirement for Low or Zero Carbon Generating Technology (LZCGT) components in the near future as noted at 5.2 above, there may be value in introducing a requirement to achieve the *Silver Active* standard as part of this current exercise.

6.6 In accord with the AHSP Guidance, it is recognised that projects which use existing buildings may find it more difficult to meet the standards achievable in new build. In these circumstances, it is expected that the best measures possible are employed to improve energy efficiency.

7. West Dunbartonshire Design Standard

7.1 This guide is about promoting good design but it is not proposed to be prescriptive about the detail of new housing in West Dunbartonshire. All schemes should be design-led where the final proposal is based on a systematic assessment of the site and not the imposition of standards on a site. However, there are some features which we would wish to highlight and which should be included in all projects:

Greener Standard: *Silver/Silver Active* standard. See Section 6 above.

Accessibility: As noted at 4.2 above, the HfVN standard is a minimum requirement where AHSP funding is provided. The Council will encourage design solutions which would enhance this standard and will discuss with developers options for including an element of specialist housing in suitably located projects agreed in consultation with the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Kitchens: Kitchen designs should include a dining space suitable for the size of the property, and only in exceptional instances should this be omitted. In all cases, kitchens must have a window. There must be a clear space of at least 1200mm in front of all fittings and appliances to allow easy access and circulation space. A clear floor space which includes an area 1500 x 1500mm will allow the kitchen to be adapted for use by someone using a wheelchair.

Bathrooms: Building Regulations detail the requirements for bathrooms but developers will be encouraged to consider improving accessibility, particularly for wheelchair users and people with impaired mobility. Bathrooms must have a manoeuvring space that will allow a person to enter and close the door behind them. This should be at least 1.1m long by 800mm wide, oriented in the direction of entry, and clear of any door swing or other obstruction.

G/F hall/Passages: Where possible, space should be allowed in the G/F hall area for parking of a pushchair, wheelchair or bicycle. Passages must be at least 900mm wide and preferably wider. If a passage has a right angle turn a splay of 200-300mm at the corner will allow easier circulation. If the entrance to rooms involves a sharp turn, the corridor width at that point should be at least 1200mm wide.

External Layout: In consultation with Planning and Roads, *Designing Streets* principles will be encouraged in appropriately located developments.

8. WDC Design at Hill Street, Dumbarton

8.1 WDC is now building new houses through the Council House Building element of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme. The first of these to be designed in-house by the Council's Consultancy Services are those at Hill Street, Dumbarton and this may be viewed as an exemplar of the design standards we wish to achieve.

Notable aspects of this 37 unit project include:

- Energy Efficiency: *Silver* Standard will be achieved in all these properties.
 - Emit less Carbon Dioxide 21.4%
 - average 24.4% lower for houses
 - average 25.6% lower for flats
 - Have a maximum annual demand for space heating (40 kWh/m² for houses, 30 kWh/m² for flats)
 - average 24.6 kWh/m² for houses
 - average 16.65 kWh/m² for flats
 - Min 5% annual energy demand for water heating from heat recovery or renewables
 - Average 369.9 kWh/yr met by renewables for houses
 - average 238.5 kWh/yr met by renewables for flats
 - Use less water, and include a water butt for outdoor use
 - Have a quick start guide and resource use display so occupants can optimise performance
 - Include a home office space

- Have better noise separation between properties and rooms within properties, benefit from a higher standard of natural light, and include a fused spur for an intruder alarm
- Include for recycling by providing space internally
- Active Level – Include low and zero carbon generating technology to help achieve standard 1; in our case Photovoltaic Panels.
- Accessibility: All houses have been designed to HfVN standard. In addition, three of the houses will be designed to full wheelchair accessible standard and a further four will have level access showers on the ground floors.
- Design Flexibility: The design solution is one which can be adapted for other locations.
- Adaptability: The houses are designed to lend themselves to internal reconfiguration to suit the changing needs of tenants.
- Community Involvement: the project has been developed with the involvement of a steering group of local residents.

8.2 The Council is seeking to engage with potential housing developers over the possible use of this model in other locations with a view to achieving efficiencies in the delivery of new affordable housing.

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