

LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS ADVICE NOTE



*A guide for
developers*

Introduction

New development has a long lasting effect on the character and quality of an area. Therefore, it is important that the design of the landscape ensures that new developments fit in with their surroundings. In order to do this the landscape of a site should be designed alongside any planned development scheme. We ask that landscape schemes are submitted with planning applications in order that they can be considered as part of the proposals (refer to our General Landscape Advice Note and Advice Notes on Design Statements and Drawings to support planning applications in Wychavon).

This advice note is designed to guide you through the issues that you will need to consider, and information that you will need to provide regarding your landscape proposals. In certain cases where a landscape condition has been placed on a planning consent you will also need to provide this information.



'Built features and plant material together create a character to an area'

The purpose of a landscape scheme

Whether for a large industrial development or a private property the principles remain similar with a twofold requirement to: -

- Ensure that new developments blend successfully into their surroundings.
- Allow the landscape aspect of a scheme to be fully assessed by the District Council with accurate details of both hard and soft landscape.

Designing a Landscape Scheme

A professional landscape architect should normally be engaged to draw up more extensive schemes such as industrial development or large housing projects. For smaller schemes applicants following these guidelines should be able to draw up a satisfactory landscape plan to accompany their planning submission.

Before designing your new development you should have carried out a site survey and a site appraisal (refer to our General Landscape Advice Note) giving you information on the site constraints and opportunities. You should have also employed experienced professionals to carry out an ecological survey (refer to our General Landscape Advice Note) and a tree survey (Refer to our Planning for Trees Advice Note).

The information gained from these site surveys and evaluations should now be used in order to design your landscape proposals. The process should start by looking at the site as a whole, and will involve looking at the following points in turn and together:

- locating any **features** to be retained and left untouched by development
- locating **buildings** to make the best use of them and the space around them
- designing the **circulation system** of the site to tie into existing systems (roads, paths and cycleways)
- deciding on the **use of spaces**, for recreation, parking, to create views, to provide privacy
- designing in **sustainable objectives** (recycling, of water/ heat/ waste, reducing carbon dioxide emissions, for example through planting trees).

Landscape works can be split into three categories:

- **Hard landscape information** that includes all man made constructions on site, including earth works, boundary and surface treatment.
- **Soft landscape information** that includes all planting; and
- **Management information** that provides details of the ongoing care of a site to ensure it retains its' quality through the years.

When designing a landscape scheme you should consider all of these categories in turn. The following information may be useful as a guide:

Hard landscape information

Hard landscape creates the general layout of the scheme, it is used to:

- Reinforce the ground where areas are required for car parking, walking on and so on.
- Connect places together, especially areas of high use, where otherwise the ground would become bare and muddy.
- Designate public and private space, in certain cases instant security will be required and a hedge would not be practical.
- Make the site safe and convenient to use at all times, by providing services, signage, seating, lighting, and drainage.
- Provide landform suitable for its purpose, which may involve terracing or the creation of level access routes. Disturbance to the ground should generally be avoided, as it can create artificial landforms and difficult plant growth conditions.



'Paths and parking areas usually require hard landscape detailing'

Once you have decided on the functions of the hard landscape features, you should decide on the best materials to use and the locations of each:

- In order to integrate the development into the surroundings, materials that are **characteristic** of

the area should be chosen. Generally a **simple palette** of one or two types of material should be used in order to provide a **uniform effect**.

- Similarly, the types and quantity of street furniture should be designed to **avoid clutter**, while providing attractive places to use.
- The site should be as **safe, convenient** and **attractive** to use as possible. Materials should be chosen for each site individually, as each site has different requirements.
- Using better quality materials may **reduce maintenance costs** in the long run.
- Designing the type and locations of signage, lighting and services will be critical to the locations of existing and new planting. Therefore, they must be decided upon at the same time to **avoid conflicts**.
- Reducing the areas of hard landscape to only where they are needed allows more space for soft landscape features that in general have more **benefit to the environment** - providing habitat, reducing Carbon dioxide levels, and allowing rainwater to enter the soil. Soft landscape features should be used in preference to hard construction where possible. This includes hedging, and willow/bio-engineering options.



'The use of characteristic materials intergrates the new development in with its surroundings'

Soft Landscape Information

When designing the soft landscape on a site you will be expected to consider the character of the location and the type of planting that would be appropriate.

The function of the planting should be considered initially, alongside the function of the hard landscape:

- **Tall planting** of trees/tall shrubs or climbers may be required to screen development, block out unsightly views or provide interest to a wall or fence line.
- **Low planting** may be required on visibility splays, and to allow a degree of overlooking.
- **Native planting** appears more natural and may allow the movement of wildlife by joining areas of habitat.
- A **continuation** of a type of planting along a road boundary can tie the development in with its surroundings.
- Planting can be used to **improve the microclimate**, creating shade, shelter and filtering noise and other pollution.
- **Instant screen planting** to disguise a new development should be used as a last resort. Generally development should be designed well so that screening is not necessary. However where there is no other option fast growing broadleaf tree species may be planted at the same time as slower varieties in order to achieve a quicker tree screen. The idea being that the faster growing (perhaps less characteristic) species are removed as the slower (more characteristic) varieties mature. It is often better to plant a smaller size of tree as these often establish faster and overtake the growth of a new larger sized tree. Earth bunds are often used to provide instant screening. However, they create uncharacteristic landforms and plants won't establish as quickly as if they were planted into the existing soil structure. Advice says that planting should not take place on a newly created bund for at least one growing season.



'Existing and new planting ties a development in with its surroundings'

The species of the planting should be considered next:

- **Native species** will normally be appropriate in the countryside.
- Certain species may be **characteristic** of the area, and will help to tie the development into its surroundings. Characteristic species may also relate to soil type and climatic conditions, and therefore be more successful.
- In a small space a limited **mix of species** is usually a good idea rather than relying on one species, as then there is less likelihood of everything dying from one disease, while equally tying the development in with its surroundings.
- In a larger space a variety of species is usually more appropriate as this provides **habitat** for a wider variety of wildlife.
- There may be **constraints** on species due to the location of new planting, for example under trees in heavy shade.
- The planting of **conifer hedges** should generally be avoided as they are usually uncharacteristic and can be subject to the high hedges regulations if not maintained.
- There may be species that are **more suitable** for certain areas, for example, a low growing, robust, non-thorny variety may be necessary adjacent to car parking areas. Thorny species will be appropriate in situations where you want to stop the movement of people - such as adjacent to private boundaries and in hidden corners.
- Plants should generally be planted from **October to December** to be most successful. Container grown plants can be planted throughout the year provided they are regularly watered.



'Planting has to be designed for a purpose'

Maintenance & Management

The developer should consider who will be **responsible for the maintenance** of the development. In order to ensure that the development stays in good condition you should design the development in a way that allows maintenance to be carried out easily and quickly. This will often mean creating **meaningful public and private spaces**, rather than leaving lots of left over corners to which no ownership seems to be given.

All developers, with the exception of a private owner with a small garden, are now required to submit **maintenance programmes** as part of the supporting landscape submission.

The programme should indicate the duration for maintenance, details are usually required to be submitted covering the first 5 years. It should also allow for the replacement of failed stock on a yearly basis together with the frequency of site visits for:

- **weed control.**
- **litter removal;**
- **sweeping;**
- **watering; and**
- **general upkeep/ replacement.**

New planting requires certain conditions in order to establish well, and continue to grow into mature specimens. You should include details of the following items to enable us to assess whether sufficient management works have been included in your submission:

- **cultivation works** - The top soil should have a crumb structure. Compacted ground should be cultivated before planting in order to allow air to the roots, except in areas where there are existing tree roots. In these areas tree roots should not be harmed, and hand dug holes will only be allowed for new planting.
- **soil conditioning** - fertiliser may be needed to improve the soil prior to planting, and mulch may be necessary to suppress weeds and retain moisture.
- **plant protection** - stakes and ties, tree grilles, rabbit proof fencing and other forms of relevant

protection should be specified where appropriate.



'Plant protection such as tree grilles should be specified'

- **timetable of planting** - Planting should normally be undertaken from October to December. Planting at other times of year is likely to be less successful and would require more maintenance work. Planting should not be carried out when the soil is waterlogged or frozen.
- **plant establishment** - plants require watering after planting and until establishment as necessary. Tree stakes, plant canes and ties should be checked to make sure that no damage occurs. Any competitive weed growth should be controlled either manually or with pesticides.
- **plant replacements** - an allowance should usually be made based on the likelihood of vandalism, or harshness of the soil conditions and weather.
- **timetable of checks on tree's health and safety** - trees should be checked regularly, and work carried out as necessary in order to ensure their long-term survival.

The Landscape Plan

The Landscape Plan for submission with your planning application should be to scale (ideally 1:200) and based on an accurate site survey plan and your proposed site layout plan, showing existing and/or proposed locations of:

- **hard landscape features** - structures; play equipment; lighting; street furniture; signs; property boundaries; walls; fences; underground/ overhead services including poles and manholes; driveways, paths and surface materials, paving, gravel, tarmac and so on;

kerb lines; and existing and proposed ground level or contours; and

- **soft landscape features** - the location of existing trees, hedges and large shrubs to be retained/ removed, with their trunk location, accurate canopy spread and species, (including those overhanging from neighbouring properties); proposals for new planting including, species, size at planting and planting densities or numbers; habitats such as ponds, hedgerows; watercourses and woodland.

As well as:

- **construction details** - of the ground treatment within the root spread of the existing retained trees and hedgerows, for example hard surfacing, service runs, type of planting, ground preparations to be carried out, existing and proposed ground levels (this should demonstrate that ground levels will not be altered within the spread of existing tree's roots); and
- **site works information** - the location of protective fencing, site huts, storage areas and site access during construction works (Refer to our Planning for Trees Advice Note).

These extra pieces of information may be clearer if shown on separate plans. They should be to a scale suitable to the size of the site and so that the information is clearly readable.



'Existing vegetation and proposed hard and soft landscape features should all be included on the landscape plan'

Supporting Information

When submitting a planning application for development, you should provide the following supporting information where appropriate:

- 1 **An arboriculturalist's report**, clearly identifying (with reference to a plan): tree species, trees that are worthy or unworthy of retention, as well as any other work that is required from a health and safety point of view
- 2 **An ecological assessment**, by a qualified professional, including information regarding any protected species/ habitats.
- 3 **A design statement** setting out the design principles behind the proposed development scheme. This should be based on the site appraisal information, and include information as set out in our "Advice Notes on Design Statements and Drawings to support planning applications in Wychavon" booklet.
- 4 Details of the **site maintenance and management** of the scheme.

Help and Advice

For more detailed guidance and advice contact:

**The Heritage Section
Planning Services**
Wychavon District Council,
Civic Centre,
Queen Elizabeth Drive,
Pershore,
Worcs. WR10 1PT

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