



WEST FINCHLEY  
NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM



# West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan: Supporting Document B: Design Guide

November 2019

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Nethercourt Avenue. Image courtesy of Alan Douglas

# 1.0 Introduction

## Purpose of the Design Guide

- 1.1 The West Finchley Neighbourhood Forum has engaged Nexus Planning to prepare a Design Guide to support the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan. This Design Guide builds on the character and management principles as set out in the West Finchley Heritage and Character Assessment (HCA) and the West Finchley Evidence Base and Policy Development (EBPD) Report, both prepared by AECOM. It is expected that future development that comes forward within the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan area will be designed in accordance with the Design Guide.
- 1.2 In the preparation of this document, regard has also been had for Barnet's Residential Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The West Finchley Design Guide seeks to add further detail to the SPD, around a core set of issues that are of specific relevance to the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 1.3 Development allowed by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the 'GPO') is exempt from being assessed against the Neighbourhood Plan and this Design Guide. However, landowners, householders and developers are strongly encouraged to have due regard for the vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan and the design criteria of the Design Guide even if a planning application is not required.

## Structure of this Report

- 1.4 The Design Guide focuses on a number of key areas of design that are of particular relevance to the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan area and the changes that are expected to occur over the course of the Neighbourhood Plan period. In that regard, the remainder of this report is set out as follows:
  - Chapter 2 provides design guidance in relation to residential extensions to existing buildings within the Neighbourhood Plan area;
  - Chapter 3 provides guidance around the acceptable form for conversion of family homes to two or more self-contained units;
  - Chapter 4 provides a guide for the development of new buildings within the Neighbourhood Plan area to ensure that such new builds reflect and enhance the character of the area;
  - Chapter 5 provides guidance in relation to the off-street car parking and construction of driveways and hard standing surface areas at the front of properties;
  - Chapter 6 provides guidance in relation to home security and how these solutions can be incorporated into design;
  - Chapter 7 provides guidance for the design and upkeep of shop frontages.

## 2.0 Residential Extensions

- 2.1 This chapter of the Design Guide sets out the key design considerations for residential extensions within the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan area. The Design Guide provides additional design principles over and above that described in the Barnet Residential Design Guidance SPD, that “extensions should reflect the design of the original building, whilst having regard to the character of the area and the residential amenity enjoyed by neighbours.” London Borough of Barnet Residential Design Guidance (October 2016), 14.2 and addresses design considerations that are of particular relevance to the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 2.2 This guidance also builds on the conclusions drawn in the Heritage and Character Assessment prepared by AECOM. The HCA provides that extensions can make contrasts in otherwise consistent form of development, and that as a result, such features have the potential to detract from the coherent structure of the streets.
- 2.3 In addition to those forms of extension addressed in this chapter, there are other types of extension, including side and rear extensions, and garage conversions. Where alternate forms of extensions are proposed, reference should be made to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, and the design guidance provided in Part 3 of Barnet’s Residential Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document.

### Roof Extensions and Loft Conversions Design Guidance

***Roof and loft conversions should be sensitive to the overall composition of the building, and the street scene particularly when part of a semi-detached property.***

- 2.4 The following design criteria should be taken into account in future development relating to loft conversions and roof extensions:
- a. loft conversions should be carefully integrated;
  - b. modification to the front of the roof should be limited to roof lights;
  - c. the maximum height of a new loft should not exceed the existing ridge of house;
  - d. loft extensions should respect the scale, continuity, roof line and general appearance of the character of the area, including its topography. They should be examined on a case by case basis; and
  - e. materials used in extensions/conversions should be in keeping with prevailing materials that positively reflect the character of the area.



Image courtesy of AECOM



Image courtesy of AECOM

## Basement Development Design Guidance

### ***Basement development should be subtly integrated into buildings.***

2.5 The following design criteria should be taken into account in future basement development:

- a. basement development should be limited to excavation that 'levels off' a slope to create an additional storey at the rear of the property only;
- b. basements should be mostly invisible from the front of properties.

Where a planning application is required for a proposed basement, the proposal must:

- i. be of reasonable proportion in comparison to the subject dwelling, covering less than 50% of the existing building footprint and of no more than one storey;
- ii. have an acceptable impact on the character of the West Finchley area, retaining the traditional appearance of properties when viewed from street level;
- iii. be supported by a Basement Impact Assessment (BIA), comprising:
  - A. a desktop study of existing geological and hydrological conditions of the site and the wider area in order to identify areas susceptible to instability (ground and water movement) and localised flooding;
  - B. a detailed engineering study undertaken by a chartered engineer/geologist to assess local ground conditions, water movement, subsidence and drainage including through the use of boreholes,

potential impacts on adjoining/nearby properties;

- C. a Basement Construction Method Statement, setting out suitable construction methods and mitigation measures for developments which may affect the stability of the host and neighbouring buildings and/or nearby structures, and hydrology (at the site and within the area), without placing additional pressure on other areas or on the local combined sewer network;
- D. a Monitoring Statement, setting out a method for monitoring local ground conditions, water movement, subsidence and drainage following completion;
- iv. include proportionate Sustainable Drainage Systems that would mitigate impact on surface water flood risk.
- v. provide details of construction, especially noise levels and times, to ensure minimal disruption to neighbours.

2.6 Basement development should be in accordance with Policy RD5 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

## 3.0 Residential Conversions

- 3.1 The Heritage and Character Assessment identifies that residential development throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area generally comprises interwar, semi-detached and terraced housing with a uniform character. Properties are typically two storeys with generous roof space. Frontal projections are common, in particular entrance porches and bay windows extending into the roof space terminating in a pitched roof. It is important that any future conversions retain the character of the street-scene and wider area.
- 3.2 Residential conversions refer to the conversion of single family homes into two or more self-contained flats or houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Paragraph 15.1 of Barnet's Residential Design Guide sets out that '...the conversion of dwellings into flats in roads characterised by houses will not normally be appropriate.' However, where residential conversions are deemed to

be appropriate, for example in parts of Nether Street, it is integral that the proposal reflects the prevailing local character, and does not disrupt the streetscape. It is important to ensure that conversions do not further exacerbate existing pressures in the neighbourhood, particularly in relation to car parking. Car parking should be designed into new development in a way that does not dominate the street scene.

- 3.3 This chapter of the Design Guide sets out the key design considerations for residential conversions within the Neighbourhood Plan area where they are deemed appropriate. The Design Guide provides additional design commentary to that described in the Barnet Residential Design Guidance SPD. Reference should be made to Chapter 15 of the Residential Design Guidance SPD.



Consistent building line. Image courtesy of AECOM

## Residential Conversions Design Guidance

***Residential conversions should reflect the prevailing character of the street scene, and should not cause undue negative impacts to adjoining and nearby dwellings.***

- 3.4 The following design criteria should be considered in any future development relating to residential conversions:
- conversions should only be allowed within existing buildings that are large enough to

- accommodate the proposed number of units with appropriate size standards and density;
- b. when conversions seek new exterior alterations, such as replacement windows, doors or porches, these should reflect and enhance the local character;
- c. conversions in appropriate locations should not have a detrimental impact on adjoining or nearby properties; and
- d. conversions should be designed in a manner that does not raise privacy issues or have an adverse impact on residential amenity.



Regular frontal projections. Image courtesy of AECOM

## 4.0 New Residential Development

- 4.1 While there are currently limited development sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area, it is likely that some new residential development will occur over the course of the Neighbourhood Plan period. It is therefore important that future new build residential development complements and enhances the existing street scene. Paragraph 6.2 of Barnet's Residential Design Guidance SPD states that "*New residential development provides the opportunity to reinforce the character of an area by contributing and adding to the positive aspects of the built and natural environment.*"
- 4.2 The rhythm of the streets within the West Finchley Neighbourhood Plan area results from the standardised widths of plots and buildings. The introduction of wider or narrower buildings would threaten to erode this characteristic. New buildings should therefore respond to the widths and proportions of existing plots and avoid facades that extend beyond the width of a typical plot. New buildings should also respond to the heights of neighbouring properties. The standard height of buildings establishes a clear identity and preserves a human scale and sense of domesticity across the area.



Consistent building width. Image courtesy of AECOM

- 4.3 Nether Street between Howcroft Crescent and Finchley Way has some small, low rise (three and four storey) residential blocks. Small flatted developments in keeping with the existing scale of height and width may be acceptable in appropriate locations.
- 4.4 Buildings should not be designed in isolation. Whether they are of traditional or contemporary style, the proportions of buildings should be designed in response to the prevailing character of the area.

### New Build Residential Development Design Guidance

***Buildings should integrate with the character of West Finchley, responding to the scale, height and massing of the original buildings within the area.***

- 4.5 The following design criteria should be considered in future development:
  - a. new houses should respect the existing height and follow the roofline of adjacent houses;
  - b. new properties should face towards the street;
  - c. development of backland sites should be avoided. Where backland development is proposed, any access roadway should as a minimum be 2.75m in width in order to allow for occasional large vehicles access i.e. bin lorry or emergency vehicle. In instances of a cul-de-sac, an appropriate turning area should also be provided;
  - d. new residential development should continue the existing building lines;
  - e. windows should complement the vertical pattern and scale of windows reflected in local architectural detailing;

- f. new buildings should include architectural detailing proportionate to the detailing that is characteristic of the area including, but not limited to, feature windows, metal work and brick work;
- g. new building frontages should propose a level of detail based on the detail used on existing original buildings within the area and where period details are proposed it is advised they are based on a local historical precedent;
- h. infill development should not disrupt the existing character of individual streets; and
- i. gaps between buildings to be retained.



Architectural detailing. Image courtesy of AECOM

## 5.0 Driveways

- 5.1 This chapter of the Design Guide addresses the incorporation of driveways into residential properties within the Neighbourhood Plan area. This Design Guide provides additional design commentary to that included within the Barnet Residential Design Guidance SPD.
- 5.2 Front and rear gardens, as well as soft landscaping, are a historic characteristic of 1930's suburban development and provide a high proportion of green space in the area. As such, they should be retained and incorporated into new development wherever possible.

### Driveways Design Guidance

***Car parking should be integrated into development in such a way as to ensure that it does not dominate the street scene. Driveways should be sensitively integrated into front gardens, retaining some planting and boundary treatment.***

- 5.3 The following design criteria should be considered in future development of driveways:
  - a. provision of off-street car parking should not dominate the street scene, with priority given to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport;
  - b. where driveways are incorporated into front gardens, planting and boundary treatments should be retained to ensure an attractive setting;
  - c. boundary treatments on either side of the residential plots should be retained and enhanced;
  - d. where hard-surfacing for car parking in front gardens is necessary, its appearance should be softened by trees and hedge planting;

- e. the cumulative effect of adjacent driveways should be considered, particularly in relation to water run off;
  - f. where paving is proposed, permeable materials should be used and drainage considered; and
  - g. use of lighting, trees and planting, and street furniture should be integrated into public realm to reduce the visual impact and dominance of cars.
- 5.4 Provision of driveways should be in accordance with Policy RD4 of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Royal Horticultural Society's publication 'Front Garden Guide'. Regard should also be had for Policy T2 of the Neighbourhood Plan.



Westbury Road. Image courtesy of Alan Douglas

# 6.0 Home Security

6.1 Natural surveillance takes place when residents are able to passively observe public spaces such as roads and footpaths, from their homes. This results in neighbourhoods being less susceptible to crime. Design solutions can be used to improve natural surveillance and safety in residential areas. In particular, this chapter of the Design Guide considers how boundary treatments can ensure that natural surveillance is considered within development proposals. In this respect, regard should be had for the Barnet Residential Design Guide SPD which provides general guidance in relation to security and safety. Further commentary is also provided in the West Finchley Evidence Base and Policy Development Report (Evidence Base Document G), prepared by AECOM. Help and technical specifications can be obtained from Secured by Design, a police organisation, which has produced a series of Design Guides.

## Home Security Design Guidance

***Existing sight lines should be retained and new development should seek to encourage natural surveillance.***

- 6.2 The following design criteria should be considered in future development where sight lines are a key factor:
- maximise opportunities for natural surveillance through the inclusion of low boundary treatments to the street;
  - where hedges and planting are used as part of front boundary treatments, these are maintained at an appropriate height; and
  - low boundary treatments to the street, such as brick walls and hedgerows, provide a clear delineation between public and private realm whilst retaining a sense of openness and natural surveillance.

6.3 Reference should also be made to Policy RD2 of the Neighbourhood Plan.



Low boundary treatments afford natural surveillance. Image courtesy of AECOM

## 7.0 Shop Frontages

- 7.1 This Chapter of the Design Guide should be used when changes to commercial shopfronts in the Neighbourhood Plan Area are proposed.

### Shop Front Design Guidance

***Shop fronts should result in a coherent character and provide an attractive gateway into West Finchley.***

- 7.2 The following design criteria should be considered in future development relating to the shop fronts of commercial premises:
- shop frontages should be kept in a good state of repair;
  - the design of shop frontages should consider the character of the shop parade as a whole;
  - where possible, original features of the buildings should be retained;
  - shops should be conscious of their effect on the streetscape and the flow of pedestrians, and portable standing signs should not create a cluttered streetscape;
  - external illuminated signage should be avoided;
  - the size of shop names should be proportionate to the size of the frontage.



Shop frontages, North End