



## 2. Planning for the Future

### 2.1 General

The City of York Council's Planning and Highway Departments are working together and seek to work with developers, architects and other agencies to bring about high quality residential developments. The objective is to create a residential environment that is safe, secure, pleasant and sustainable, reasonably economical to build and in harmony with its surroundings.

The revised version of *PPG3-Housing*, and its companion guide, *By Design – Better Places to Live*, reduces the emphasis on providing for cars and promotes good design in housing developments in order to create a more attractive environment for people to live.

The designer therefore needs to stimulate innovative road design by reducing the need to travel, particularly by car, and integrating transport modes that promote more sustainable forms of transport including walking, cycling and public transport. The implementation of such principles can promote social cohesion, reduce the demand for travel and improve the overall quality of the environment.

### 2.2 Consultation

Early consultation is strongly recommended and will often result in less abortive work and time wasting. The consultation should address the important issues such as assessing the surroundings, designing in features, scale and density, and how access and vehicles can be best integrated to achieve a pleasant environment.

An essential part of preparing any development will be the undertaking of a site appraisal by the developer which will include information on topography, existing land drainage arrangements, existing vegetation and other landscape and townscape features. It should indicate major views, and eyesores, show access links and desire lines. It should also indicate form, scale and character of the surrounding area and illustrate visual links to viewpoints and landmarks. The developer will no doubt have their own ideas on the mixture of uses and scale of the development; the appraisal therefore needs to



incorporate these so as to ensure that the potential and opportunities offered by the site are fully realised. This appraisal should be submitted with either a pre-development inquiry or a formal planning application in order to demonstrate that such issues have been given detailed consideration.

Most new developments will be an extension of an existing settlement, a 'brownfield' site or an infill into a built environment and thus the character of existing roads, open spaces and landscape will provide a starting point for the design. A few simple questions need to be asked:

- Is the existing area landscape or building dominated?
- What is the scale of the existing area?
- Is the pattern of the area formal or informal – linear or enclosed?
- Is the topography of the site a significant influence?
- Are there any important views or features that can benefit the new development or its surroundings?

It is not a case of what can the site do for the development, but what the development can do for its surroundings.

A walk round a historic town is usually a pleasurable and a thought-provoking experience. This is more often than not a result of a constantly changing pattern of small and large spaces, enclosure and openings, surprise and uncertainty. By using this approach to housing layouts it is possible to ensure new housing areas are both interesting and attractive.

All too often a new development does not relate to its landscape setting with large estates placed on 'greenfield' sites next to small-scale development. New housing areas on the edge of the towns and villages should respect the local landscape bringing out any special features, with special attention being paid to the boundaries of the site. Within the area the nature of the development is likely to be governed by its shape and the relationship to other buildings in terms of size, scale and form; also by the way surface treatment and landscape interact. Examples of a good relationship can often be found in urban areas where scale of design is more readily influenced by its immediate surroundings.

The function of a residential area is to provide a pleasant living environment. Designs that provide excessive penetration of these living areas by motor vehicles and encourage unnecessarily high vehicle speeds will create an unpleasant and dangerous environment. Such designs will not be supported by the Council.

Whilst homes can be modified to reflect the personalities of its occupants the layout cannot. One of the main aims of the developer must be to produce



layouts that reflect the relationship between buildings, landscape and space which characterise their locality. A useful tool in taking advantage of these elements, and enhancing vistas and visually attractive features, is the use of highways and pedestrian/cycle links to create the focus.

In the past it has often been the practise to determine the basic road layout first, then incorporate the houses and lastly consider speed restraint, public transport, cycling and walking. The emphasis must now change; the designer should endeavour to ensure a comprehensive framework in preparing and detailing the different elements that need to be incorporated including pedestrian and cycle facilities, bus requirements, traffic calming etc. as an integral part of the initial layout. The most successful layouts are those that from the outset ensure equal attention is paid to all aspects of design and which respect the context of the site.

The scale and density of any development is influenced by highway and parking considerations. Roads are visually prominent and parking can dominate a space thereby dictating townscape both positively and to its detriment. These requirements are directly, in turn, governed by the extent of the development being served. This must no longer be of incidental consideration as it has a fundamental effect on the quality of the place.