

DESIGN  
PRINCIPLES



# Industrial Premises

New Buildings, External Alternations & Signage  
in Letchworth Garden City.



heritage  
foundation  
Letchworth Garden City

# Introduction

## The world's first Garden City

### LETCHWORTH IS SPECIAL...

It is the world's first Garden City, advocated by Ebenezer Howard as a solution to the poverty and squalor of England's cities and towns in the late 1800's. Garden Cities set out to achieve the perfect balance of town and country.

The approach of Howard's company to the ownership of land was special too: First Garden City Ltd insisted on retaining freehold ownership of its Estate. It did so in order to control developments on its land and create the necessary financial resources to fund future investment for the benefit of the town.

This guidance assists landowners, developers and investors when formulating proposals for alterations and new buildings. It only applies in cases where the Heritage Foundation is the Freeholder of the site and lease covenants mean that our approval is required for these works.

For confirmation of the details of the lease or your obligations under existing covenants, please contact our Managing Agents, Rapleys (helpline@rapleys.co.uk or 0800 9788 7021).

In cases where our formal approval is not required, we ask that you consider this guidance, but there will be no obligation to comply with its recommendations.



### PLEASE REMEMBER...

An approval under the terms of your lease confirms that the proposals comply with the Foundation's requirements on design and aesthetics and is not:

- A planning permission;
- Listed Building consent;
- Advertisement Consent.

Also:

- Building Regulations approval may be required

### WE'RE HERE TO HELP - FREE OF CHARGE

Contemplating development? Call us now on 01462 476007  
You are advised to utilise our professional advice when formulating your proposals.

#### Pre-application advice

The earlier you come to talk to us, the more guidance we can provide.

Whether your plans exist in your head or are hand drawn, we can informally discuss your ideas and help you develop a scheme that meets your needs. We encourage investment and new employment in Letchworth and also seek to ensure that new buildings and alterations are sympathetic. Before you submit a formal application to our managing agents, Rapleys, we would be happy to meet you and your architect/agent for preliminary discussions on your proposals. If you would like to commence these discussions, please contact our Property Services Team on 01462 476007.

# Background

The original Parker and Unwin plan was an early example of master planning a new community, with a zoned approach to industry, housing, leisure, agriculture and retailing. This approach influenced new settlements including the post war new towns.

The original master plan for Letchworth included the zoned industrial areas of Works Road and Icknield Way, which remain two of the main employment areas today. These areas still retain some buildings from these formative years of the Garden City.

Later development has resulted in a range of buildings of types. This includes post war brick and render buildings found in Pixmore Avenue, the 1960/70s development of Blackhorse Road, including brick, concrete and metal structures, and the more recent development in the Letchworth Business Park and at the western end of Works Road, which include later cladding techniques.

The proposed generic advice is equally applicable to all of these areas.

Proposals impacting on buildings, which are of heritage importance, must not detract from their character. The design of these applications will be more carefully scrutinised. The following buildings fall into this category:-

## **Birds Hill**

Gunmetal & Bronze, Letchworth Casting Co. Ltd, Casting House

Ogle

Lloyds & Co. Letchworth

Vantage Point, Tenement Factory

## **Bridge Street**

Spirella Building

## **Icknield Way**

Chater Lee

Jabsco UK Sales, Cleghorn Waring, Creative Press

Irvin House

## **Openshaw Way**

Fenner Building

## **Pixmore Avenue**

Pixmore Café

Safe Store

Team Works, Go Karting and rear loading bay (Garden City Press)

Apparel Masters (Garden City Laundry)

## **Ridge Road**

Leaderman's

## **Works Road**

Aztec Logistics Ltd

Author Services Technical

# Contents

General Design Approach	05
Layout	06
Scale	07
External Appearance	08
Signage	09
External Lighting for Buildings and Grounds	10
Sustainability	12
PV and Solar Panels	13
Contemplating Changes	14

# General Design Approach

All proposals for new buildings or alterations to existing buildings, will carefully consider the impact on existing buildings and the character of the site and its setting. It is recommended that in cases where approval is needed, the following general advice is considered:



- The operational design requirements and the relationship with the street scene should be assessed at the earliest stages.
- The external appearance of the buildings should respect the character and context, including the spacing between buildings.
- The scale, bulk and massing of the building should reflect the surrounding area and not be unduly prominent.
- Design and materials should be in line with local characteristics, although a strict adherence to the local vernacular is not always necessary and innovative design solutions will be considered.
- Energy efficient and sustainable buildings are encouraged. This should include consideration of items such as water recycling, green roofs and sustainable energy sources. Hard surfaced areas should be permeable and where possible Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems should be incorporated.
- Proposals should incorporate soft landscaping within the development and grasp opportunities for improved biodiversity by the inclusion of bee and butterfly friendly planting and bird boxes.
- Consideration should be given to the quality of the internal and external space for employees and visitors, this may, where appropriate, lead to the provision of amenity space, external seating areas and natural daylight to working areas.

# Layout

When reviewing the layout of any scheme, the following factors should be considered:



- The layout and building lines should be in keeping with neighbouring buildings and the local context and ensure that the building sits well within the street scene.
- Landscaping on the site frontage should be provided, along with additional planting areas on other available parts of the site.
- Parking should not normally be in prominent locations and is encouraged to the rear of buildings. Vehicle access and parking areas for commercial vehicles should not dominate impressions of the site.
- Sufficient car parking should be provided to meet operational needs.
- Vehicular access should be provided in accordance with the requirements of Hertfordshire Highways.
- The layout should ensure there is no loss of amenity to nearby occupiers, by reason of loss of daylight, sunlight, outlook or noise and general disturbance.
- The layout should ensure that more attractive elements of the buildings, such as reception areas, to the front or in most visible locations. Plant, storage and manufacturing elements should generally be to the rear or in locations not visible to the public.
- Spacing around buildings is important and should be retained where possible, to avoid a cramped impression and to preserve the identity of separate buildings.
- Consideration of passive solar gain.

# Scale

The scale, bulk and massing of the building is an essential component of the design process. Although tall buildings will be considered on a case by case basis, buildings should be respectful to their context. This will require consideration of the surrounding buildings and how the proposal will fit into the overall street scene. The following should be considered:



- The scale should positively respond to the surrounding context.
- Bulk should be minimised where possible, whilst responding to the functional needs of the proposed end user. There should be careful consideration of the design of the roof area and how this fits into the local roofscape.
- New buildings that are significantly taller than the local vernacular will only be considered as part of a landmark development, which is of the highest quality of design, detailing and materials.
- Extensions to existing buildings should respect the scale, bulk and massing of the existing building, as well as its context. In buildings of historic importance, the scale should ensure that the identity of the original building is not lost.

# External Appearance

External appearance will be influenced by the overall design approach taken, quality of detailing and the type of materials, and should incorporate the following factors:



- Design that harmonises with its surroundings will be supported. Well designed contrast buildings and more modern contemporary design solutions can also play a positive role within the street scene and will also be accepted within industrial areas.
  - Greater attention on the design and appearance of the building will be required for aspects of the building that are visible to the public.
  - Fenestration and openings are essential to good design. These should create interest and cohesion, particularly in prominent elevations. Modern materials for windows and doors will normally be supported, other than in buildings of historic importance, where original materials may be required.
  - External materials, particularly on parts of the building which are visible to the public, should normally be brick, with roof tiles. Modern materials may also be acceptable, but these should be respectful to the site context. These will be more acceptable in less visible parts of the building.
  - Materials should be of a good quality, weather well and minimise long term maintenance.
  - Detailing should be incorporated into building design, creating visual breaks to avoid an unduly bland appearance.
- This may include, where appropriate, the use of projections, material changes, brick courses, fenestration, signage and features such as pillars.
- Detailing should not be excessive or create a cluttered appearance and should be part of an overall cohesive approach.
  - In the case of extensions to existing buildings, the design should reflect the character and features of the existing building. Extensions to buildings of historic importance should ensure that the identity of the original building is not lost.



# Signage

Where approval for signage is required, it must be considered as part of a cohesive approach to the design of new buildings and extensions. Estate boards can assist creating this cohesion, which can be a preferred approach.



In reviewing proposals for signage, the following will be considered:

- Signage must respect the character and context of the surrounding area.
- Cluttered signage with multiple signs serving the same building will not be supported. Therefore, more than one sign per elevation will normally be discouraged.
- Signage should not dominate the elevation or its setting. Where new signage has been agreed, panels of 1.5m x 0.75m will normally be acceptable. Larger signage will only be accepted where this will not be unduly dominant.
- Signs above reception or entrance areas will generally be supported.
- Letters applied to buildings will be encouraged, although fascia panels will also be accepted.
- Non illuminated signage is preferred. Illuminated signage will only be accepted where it can be demonstrated to be necessary, will not be unduly prominent and is either externally illuminated or has letters only internal illumination.
- Internally illuminated box fascias will not normally be accepted.
- The colour scheme for signs should respect the building and its context.
- Totem signs will only be accepted where they will not dominate the surrounding area, the site is of sufficient size, and they are appropriate for the business (for example petrol filling stations).
- Where approval is required, 'A' boards outside business premises will normally be discouraged.

# External Lighting for Buildings and Grounds

Some leases require approval for external lighting. There are examples of businesses that require external lighting as part of their operation, but in some cases it can be inefficient and cause disturbance to nearby residents. When approval for external lighting is required, the following will be considered:



- A demonstration will be required indicating that the lighting is necessary to meet the needs of the business.
- The lighting must not harm the amenity of nearby residential occupiers.
- The most energy efficient option, including, where practicable, consideration of solar alternatives, will be encouraged.
- Bollard (of up to 1m in height) or ground level lighting is preferred to lighting on large posts or on buildings.
- Uncontrolled external lighting will not be supported. An hours of use restriction will be applied where appropriate, alternatively sensor lighting may be more acceptable.
- The lowest practicable lux levels will be sought and details of light spillage will be requested for consideration.

# Landscaping and Fencing

As the World's First Garden City, the quality of soft and hard landscaping is an essential component of any scheme. Where approval is required, we will strongly encourage planting to form part of all development proposals. Some leases also have covenants, which require the retention of existing trees.



Trees on verges and frontages play an important role in the visual structure of our streets and are a key element of the original master plan. We will therefore encourage the reinstatement of trees, which have been removed over time. Planting within sites can often soften the impact of employment buildings, providing an effective visual enhancement to the building, noise attenuation and screen parking areas, without necessarily being of high maintenance. Planting can also have a significant positive biodiversity impact.

Front fencing can also require approvals and have a significant impact on the street scene and security requirements should be balanced with the resulting appearance.

The following factors will be assessed:

- Schemes must include a comprehensive landscaping scheme and strategy, which should seek opportunities to provide additional soft landscaping.
- Frontage planting is encouraged. New planting should be of native species with trees as well as shrubs.

- Front hedges will be encouraged.
- Planting will be encouraged on parts of sites that are not required for vehicles or buildings.
- New landscaping schemes should include plants of reasonable maturity.
- Any plant failures in the first five years should be replaced.
- New fencing on frontages will only be supported where this is an established feature in the street scene, or is required for site security. This should, where possible, allow open views into the site and be accompanied by a planting scheme to soften the impact.
- The removal of existing trees and hedges will only be permitted, where they are dead, dying or dangerous or where there is a strong justification. Replacement planting should normally be provided when trees or hedges are removed.

- Landscaping schemes should encourage improved biodiversity, particularly in terms of supporting butterflies and bees.
- Hard landscaping, including car parking, should incorporate permeable surfacing and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems are encouraged.



# Sustainability

Energy efficiency and other sustainability measures are an essential component of the design process. We are committed to encouraging new buildings to meet the highest standards of sustainability, whilst ensuring new development and investment remain viable and is not prejudiced.

Where approval is required, we will encourage the design of new buildings, extensions and conversions to seek to take every opportunity to meet the current sustainability agenda in the following ways:

- An energy assessment should accompany proposals for new buildings. This should include details of renewable energy sources and building efficiency and a review of the development against BREEAM criteria.
- New employment buildings should normally meet BREEAM – Excellent and conversion schemes should meet BREEAM – Very Good. Where this is not possible, a justification should accompany an application for Landlord's consent.
- Renewable energy generation is strongly encouraged as part of all new buildings. This should include consideration of PV and solar panels, and ground source heat pumps. A review of renewable energy alternatives should accompany an application for Landlord's consent.
- Living green roofs are encouraged on all new buildings.
- A scheme outlining the collection and re-use of rainwater should be included with proposals for new buildings.
- A Green Travel Plan, indicating how non-car transport modes are encouraged, should accompany applications.
- All new buildings shall have covered cycle parking.
- On developments incorporating a single or group of new buildings, where average heat demand is over 500,000 kw/ annum, a review should be undertaken to determine whether this can be part of a District Heating system.
- All developments should demonstrate the maximisation of passive solar gain.
- A strategy to reduce water demand to serve the development should accompany an application for Landlord's consent. This should include consideration of water recycling, storage and water use minimisation measures.
- All materials should be from accredited sustainable sources and recycled materials will be encouraged.
- If domestic appliances are included in the buildings, they should have a minimum energy rating of A, although a higher rating is encouraged.
- Buildings should be designed to be flexible in order to ensure that the design extends their lifetime and they can be used for a range of uses in the future.
- The building contract must include training opportunities for local people provided by local apprentice schemes.

# PV and Solar Panels

The addition of PV panels on existing and proposed buildings in the industrial area does create an opportunity to generate renewable energy to serve the building, and also be sold to the National Grid.



With the exception of buildings of heritage importance, the installation of solar panels/PV cells on existing buildings is normally acceptable. Due to the difference in the size of buildings in the industrial area, each case will be considered on its merits, but as a guide the following criteria will be applied:

- The structure of the building must be capable of accommodating panels.
- PV and solar panels that integrate into the roof tiles, will normally be supported.
- PV and solar panels on top of roofs, should not normally cover more than 60% of a roof plane area, although this may be increased if it can be demonstrated that this will not be harmful to the character and quality of the building and its setting.
- All panels must be 0.6 metres from the edge of any roof plane.
- The arrangement of panels must be rectangular to avoid fragmented edges.
- Metal reflector paint behind vacuum tubes is not acceptable.
- Wall mounted panels are not acceptable on elevations visible from the street.
- In the case of proposals for new buildings, we would welcome proposals for PV and/or solar panels to be incorporated into the scheme design.

# Help and Advice

## We're here to help

In the first instance, you are advised to contact our managing agents, Rapleys (helpline@rapleys.co.uk or 0800 988 7021) to clarify if your proposal requires our approval under the terms of your lease.

### Pre – application advice

The earlier you come to talk to us, the more guidance we can provide.

Whether your plans exist in your head or are hand drawn, we can informally discuss your ideas and help you develop a scheme that meets your needs. We encourage investment and new employment in Letchworth and also seek to ensure that new buildings and alterations are sympathetic. Before you submit a formal application to our managing agents, Rapleys, we would be happy to meet you and your architect/agent for preliminary discussions on your proposals. If you would like to commence these discussions, please contact our Property Services Team on 01462 476007.

### Obtaining necessary consents

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation owns and/or manages much of the land on which the town is built. As part of our responsibilities we have to ensure that the quality of works carried out on properties within the town enhances rather than detracts from the built environment.

In cases where approval is required, leaseholders must apply direct to our managing agents, Rapleys, for Landlord's consent prior to any works being undertaken on site. Further information is available from:

Rapleys  
Falcon Road  
Hinchingsbrooke Business Park  
Huntingdon  
PE29 6FG  
Tel: 0800 988 7021  
Or email: helpline@rapleys.co.uk

Please note that Letchworth Garden City is unusual in that it has two separate bodies that control development in the Town – The Foundation, which considers applications for “Landlord’s Consent” under the terms of leases, and North Hertfordshire District Council, which is responsible for all applications for planning permission, Listed Building Consent and Advertisement Consent. Therefore, before carrying out any works the tenant or agent should also contact North Hertfordshire District Council on 01462 474000 to establish if permission from the Council is required.

**Web:** [www.letchworth.com/designprinciples](http://www.letchworth.com/designprinciples)

**Email:** [home@letchworth.com](mailto:home@letchworth.com)

**Tel:** 01462 476017

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation  
Heritage Advisory Team, Community Hub,  
43 Station Road, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3BQ

Published August 2015



**heritage  
foundation**  
Letchworth Garden City