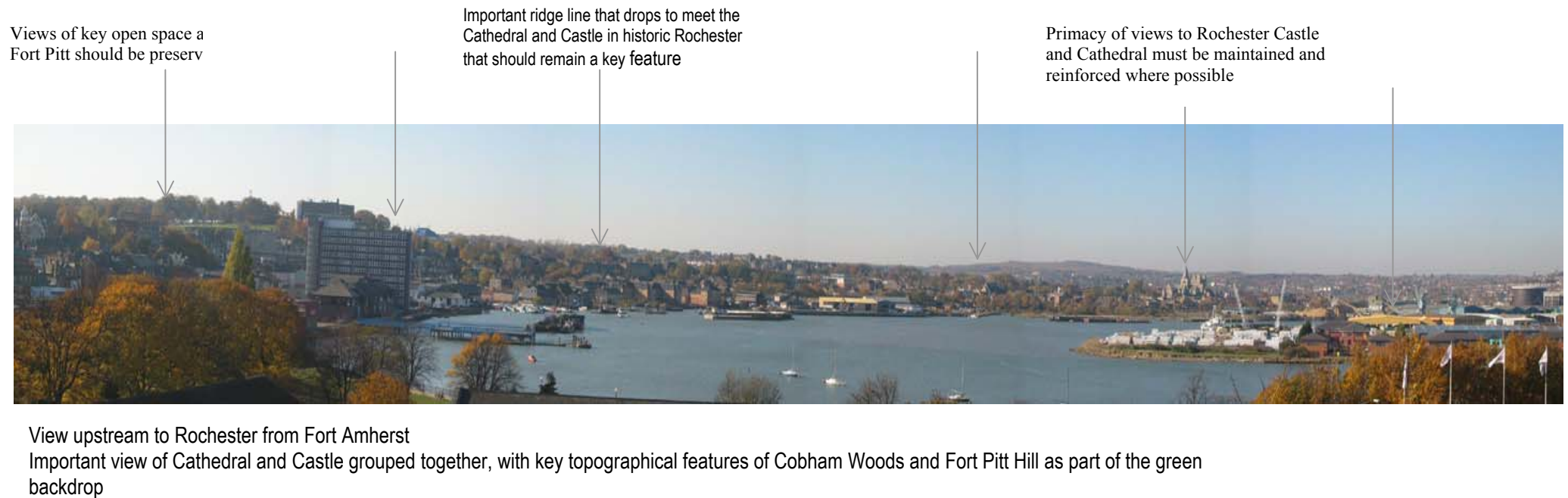


A building height policy for Medway

Part 1: general policy guidance
(Supplementary Planning Document)

Adopted May 2006





Part 1: general policy guidance

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1.0 Introduction: Building higher

- 1.1.1 High buildings are enjoying something of a resurgence. Whilst there has been an abundance of schemes in London, there have also been a number of recent higher buildings developed in provincial towns and cities. In general these buildings have been exemplars of quality and have provided high standards of living and working accommodation to meet modern lifestyles. In some cases recent higher buildings have been an effective catalyst for regeneration.
- 1.1.2 However, it is obvious that high buildings are by their nature assertive and dominant. In addition there are many examples of poor quality higher buildings, generally dating from the 60's or 70's, that have not been successful.
- 1.1.3 Encouraged by English Heritage and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), many cities within Britain are in the process of preparing policy guidance in relation to tall buildings.
- 1.1.4 Similarly in Medway there have been a number of recent applications for higher buildings. This trend is likely to continue. There is therefore a need to provide up to date guidance in order to ensure new high buildings within Medway are of the highest quality, are in the most appropriate locations, and to ensure that the mistakes of the previous eras are not repeated.

1.2 The Medway context

- 1.2.1 The next twenty years will see a genuine urban renaissance that establishes Medway as a thriving linear city within the Thames Gateway. It will be made up of a series of distinct but interrelated areas along the River Medway, with Chatham as its commercial centre.
- 1.2.2 Higher buildings are likely to be proposed as part of this growth. If they are in the right place, and are of the highest architectural quality, they could have a role in acting as landmarks that signify the urban renaissance, in forging a new and exciting image for Medway's waterfront regeneration sites, and in delivering more sustainable working and living environments.
- 1.2.3 However, great care will need to be taken to protect the historic built environment and the unique landscape and riverside setting of Medway. A prime objective of all new development must be to enhance the distinctiveness and sense of place that Medway offers. If this is to be achieved, higher buildings must be located with great sensitivity and only the highest quality of architecture and urban design will be acceptable.
- 1.2.4 In appropriate circumstances 'big' can indeed be 'beautiful' but only when designed with care and sensitivity to its surroundings.



Figure 1: Historic landmark buildings: Rochester Cathedral and Castle are key components of the Medway skyline and help determine Medway's 'sense of place'.

1.3 Using this guide

- 1.3.1 The purpose of this two-part guide is to ensure that any proposals for higher buildings are properly considered in the context of a clear long-term vision. The guide sets out proposals and principles on where higher buildings may be appropriate and where they are not, and lays down standards to ensure the highest quality of design.
- 1.3.2 The Guide is divided into two parts:
- 1.3.3 **Part 1** provides **general location and design policy criteria** for formulating and assessing high building proposals. The guide is relevant across the whole of the Medway area.
- 1.3.4 **Part 2** identifies **locations where high buildings are and are not appropriate** within the urban area broadly defined by the Medway Waterfront Renaissance Strategy (see figure 2). This area is where the major centres and regeneration sites are located and is the one that will see the most change over the next few years.

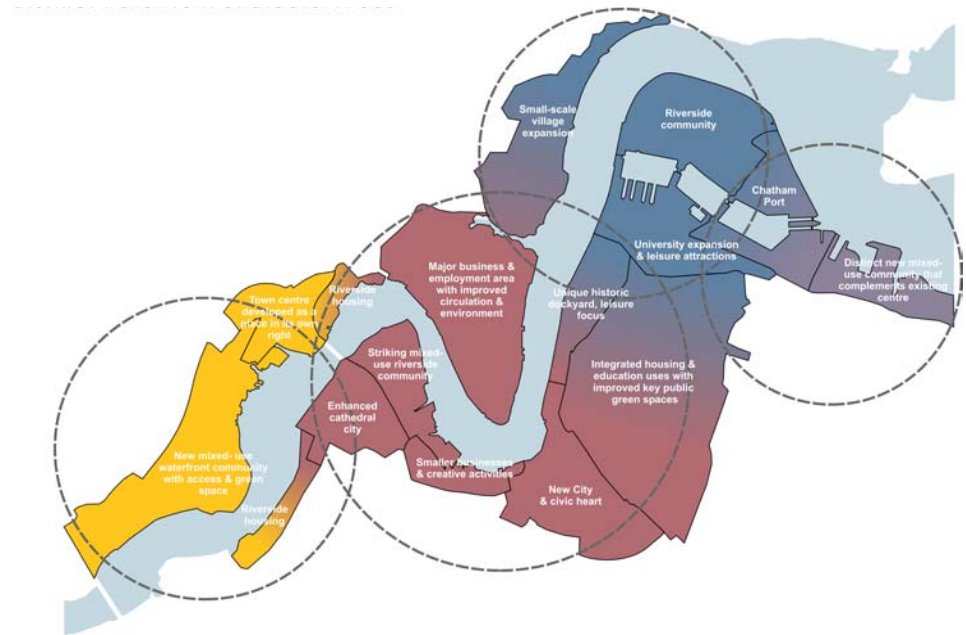


Figure 2: The Medway Waterfront Renaissance Strategy area. Part 2 of the higher buildings guidance will apply to this same area. See Part 2 for more detail.

2.0 Policy

- 2.0.1 *Guidance on Tall Buildings* published by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and English Heritage in March 2003 provides valuable policy advice relating to the location and design of tall buildings. It sets out criteria for the evaluation of tall building proposals and encourages local planning authorities to adopt “tall building” policies which identify sites that may or may not be appropriate for tall buildings. In general, the policy for building higher in Medway follows the approach advocated in the CABE / English Heritage document.
- 2.0.2 Other national planning policy guidance of relevance to building heights includes PPG13: *Transport*, place-specific guidance such as PPG15: *Planning and the historic environment* and PPG16: *Archaeology and planning*, PPS1: *Delivering Sustainable development*, and land use-specific guidance such as PPG3: *Housing*, and *Secure by Design* standards.
- 2.0.3 The principles set out in recent Government Guidance on urban design such as *By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System* (CABE/ DETR, 2000) and *Better Places to Live - a Companion Guide to PPG3* (DETR, 2002) will also be expected to inform the development of higher building proposals.
- 2.0.4 At a county level, The Kent Design Guide sets out many of the sustainable design principles that are used to assess development proposals.
- 2.0.5 At a more local level *Medway Waterfront Renaissance Strategy (2004)* sets out a development strategy for Medway Waterfront for the next 20-years and sets the general context within which proposals for higher buildings will be considered. It splits the waterfront into a number of quarters and outlines the future role of each quarter within a linear waterfront city.
- 2.0.6 Medway Local Plan Policy BNE1 sets out Principles for Built Environment at local level to ensure that new development is satisfactory in terms of use, mass, proportion, details, materials, layout and sitting.

3.0 Definition of higher buildings

- 3.0.1 “Higher buildings’ are buildings that are substantially higher than surrounding development. They do not only consist of landmark buildings and skyscrapers. Even a relatively low building could be considered “high” if it is located on elevated ground, breaks the established skyline, or impinges upon an established backdrop.
- 3.0.2 In the general Medway context of traditional townscape of three to five storey buildings, a higher building can be regarded as one that is two to three storeys higher than its neighbours.
- 3.0.3 The following thresholds will be used to trigger the application of this guidance:
- A) 6 storeys or 20 metres – whichever is lower (natural ground level)
 - B) In certain circumstances the council may choose to apply this guidance for proposals which are lower than 6 storeys. This particularly applies to conservation areas and other sensitive locations.
- 3.0.4 Since 6 storeys is not widely considered as “tall”, this guidance refers to “**higher buildings**”, as opposed to “tall buildings”, reflecting their impact in relative terms.



Figures 3 and 4: height is relative concept. The same building appears in both these pictures.

3.1 Higher Building Types

3.1.1 Higher buildings vary widely in form, function and their effect on the wider area. To better understand the issues relating to the design and location of higher buildings, three common types are identified and discussed below:

1. Townscape buildings
2. Landmark towers
3. Slab blocks

1) Townscape buildings

3.1.2 These are linear buildings arranged to form streets, squares and crescents. They define the character of a street, rather than standing out from a distance as isolated towers. In this sense they form areas of traditional townscape, albeit at an expanded scale (see figures 5 and 9).

3.1.3 High townscape buildings can have a role to play in the more sustainable shaping of our urban areas by allowing for a greater overall intensity of land use and hence:

- create new streets, squares and other public spaces
- support a greater mix of uses and services, and
- add to the vitality, interest and viability of an area.

3.1.4 Townscape buildings can be both long and bulky and can as a result have a considerable effect on the townscape. They require to be inserted into streetscapes in a sensitive way if they are not to be perceived as isolated slab blocks.

3.1.5 There are few existing areas within Medway where high townscape buildings exist. However, in seeking more sustainable urban forms that contribute vitality and life to their surroundings, it is recognised that certain regeneration areas may benefit from an overall increase in the height of the townscape.



Figure 5: Townscape buildings are placed to form the edges of a new square.

2) Landmark buildings

3.1.6 These are generally buildings that are tall and thin, and contrast substantially in height from the majority of buildings within the surrounding area. Landmark towers can add interest and drama to the skyline. In the right location landmark tower buildings can:

- draw attention to locations of civic or visual importance such as urban centres, important gateways and major public transport interchanges;
- terminate an important vista
- provide a focus or create a positive and memorable image for areas undergoing comprehensive regeneration
- enhance the skyline and views by acting as punctuation marks in the landscape (in the same way that traditional high buildings such as churches and cathedrals add distinction to townscapes)
- create areas of vitality and interest.

3.1.7 However, the visual impact and prominence of a landmark tower will be felt over a wider area than that of a townscape building. Because of this landmark buildings are usually the most difficult type of higher building to design and integrate sensitively into the landscape.

3.1.8 Existing landmark towers in Medway are generally blocks of poor quality late 20th century architectural design and are not integrated into the

surrounding townscape or wider landscape. The Bryant Street flats are a typical example of this.

3.1.9 Towers can be grouped in clusters to create a more defined impact on the overall skyline, which would be lost should the same buildings be dotted randomly throughout the area. Clusters can:

- mark out urban centres or new high-density areas
- provide densities that increase the viability of public transport
- mitigate or improve the appearance of an existing higher buildings.

3.1.10 Once again, clusters of landmark buildings can have a considerable visual impact over a wide area. It is not considered there is substantial scope for clusters of landmark buildings in Medway.



Figure 6: Landmark: Putney Wharf, West London.

3) Slab blocks

- 3.1.11 Like townscape buildings, slab block buildings are relatively broad in one direction and are often aligned along streets. However they are usually significantly taller than surrounding buildings and are extremely prominent as a result. Their greater bulk (as compared to towers) means that their capacity to block views and to dominate the skyline is far greater than that of a tower. Two prominent examples of high slab block buildings exist in Medway: Mountbatten House, in central Chatham (figure 8), and Anchorage House, close to Sun Pier.
- 3.1.12 The distinction between 'townscape blocks' and slab blocks may at times be slight, but it is the lack of integration with the surrounding streetscape and visual dominance that marks out slab blocks. For example, the 13 storey Mountbatten House (figure 8) sits within a predominantly 3 to 4-storey townscape. It appears as a tall isolated slab form that dominates its surroundings. The example in Antwerp (figure 9) is 8-storeys high. It can be described as a townscape building since it is designed to integrate into its surrounding area. Both examples can be described as 'high' but due to their different design, articulation and contexts, their visual impacts are very different.

4) Other categories

- 3.1.13 Not all high buildings will fit into the above categories. Some may combine both townscape and landmark tower forms. However, designers of high buildings should be clear about the character and role of their proposals and how these will fit into the wider urban context.



Figure 7: Mountbatten House Chatham's tallest and most dominant building. Its massing is slab-like and obstructs views across the valley.



Figure 8: An 8-storey 'townscape' building in Antwerp, Belgium. This does not seek to create a landmark but provides this wide street with a distinctive and attractive edge.

3.2 Role of High Buildings

- 3.2.1 By way of their size, high buildings result in an intensification of use of the plots on which they stand. This means that a greater mix of uses and services can be supported, this adding to the vitality, interest and economic health of an area. This particularly applies to townscape buildings which define or form streets and squares, but which may be higher than has been the norm to date in Medway.
- 3.2.2 Landmark buildings can draw attention to locations of civic or other symbolic importance. In addition, by their very prominence they can provide new, dynamic and memorable images for areas undergoing regeneration. This in itself has the potential to create a more positive image of Medway for both citizens and visitors which could lead to increased interest in investment in Medway by businesses and developers.
- 3.2.3 The corollary of the above is that higher buildings are appropriate in existing centres where they can strengthen and broaden the existing roles of these centres. They are also appropriate for regeneration areas where they can support a mix of uses which adds vitality and interest for people from the wider Medway area as well as for immediate residents and businesses.



Figure 9: Cluster of very high buildings at Canary Wharf, London. It is not envisaged that buildings of this scale will be appropriate for Medway.

4.0 Assessment Criteria for Higher Buildings

4.1 Design Criteria:

4.1.1 Criteria for assessing the design of higher building proposals are set out in this section. Although the different types of higher building (discussed in section 3) will call for different design considerations, most of the criteria are relevant to all types. Where an issue is more relevant to one type than the other this is noted.

4.1.2 In all cases, higher buildings must be of outstanding quality. This will demand skilled designers capable of analysing the existing environment and developing sophisticated architectural concepts in response to this. Applicants seeking planning permission for higher buildings should comply with the following guidance:

i. effect on the whole existing environment

4.1.3 It is essential that higher buildings contribute positively to the overall townscape and landscape, and they do not detract from their surroundings. Where appropriate they should respect and enhance an area's identity. This is especially important for proposals which may effect the following:

- key listed buildings and their settings, including the foregrounds and backdrops
 - existing landmark buildings
 - conservation areas and their settings (including the potential Chatham World Heritage Site);
 - historic parks, gardens, landscapes and their settings;
 - major public open spaces, including the River Medway and views; and
 - other views, prospects and panoramas.
- 4.1.4 Historic development tended to be located in valley bottoms and the River Medway flood plain, whilst some hilltops were left undeveloped for military purposes. This pattern is still evident and provides distinctive backdrops of particular importance. These and other sensitive locations are identified and mapped in Part 2 of this guidance.



Figure 12: Historic backdrop: Tree lined ridge around Fort Amherst from Fort Pitt

ii. effect on the **streetscape character and the public realm**

- 4.1.5 How buildings meet the ground is an important consideration in maximising their contribution to the public realm.
- 4.1.6 Greater levels of interest should be provided along ground floor frontages by 'active' uses such as retail, food, or leisure. This mix of uses and vitality can benefit an area, and is a key principle justification for higher townscape buildings (see figures 13, 14). Prominent focal point buildings in the streetscape must have active ground floor uses.
- 4.1.7 Well-defined, frequent entrances and transparency (through the use of full height glazing and well designed shop fronts) at ground level should be used to give a vital and welcoming appearance. Where this is not possible (as may be the case with cinemas and theatres, for example) the ground floor of the building should be carefully designed so as to be attractive and non-intimidating. This also applies to service entrances that may face onto streets.
- 4.1.8 The quality of the space defined by buildings is as important as the buildings themselves. No part should be treated as 'space left over after planning'. Opportunities should be taken to create attractive, interesting, safe, connected and uncluttered spaces. Proposals should include details of how these spaces are to be treated.

- 4.1.9 The distinction between public, semi private and private space should be clearly defined. Spaces in the public realm and private realm should have a distinctive character.

- 4.1.10 Higher townscape buildings generally have larger footprints than tower buildings. How they are positioned on site can be critical in ensuring that they do not create barriers to movement. Proposals for higher townscape buildings should good local pedestrian connections to other parts of the streetscape and to open spaces within the street system.



Figure 13: A well-considered ground floor frontage-generous height, active frontages (shops) and public art. (Paternoster Square, London)



Figure 14: Generous public realm. The steps on the right lead to a performance area. (GLA Headquarters London).

- 4.1.11 For major regeneration sites coherency of design of the public realm should be secured by way of an agreed masterplan complete with a public realm strategy for the wider area. These could include the design of paving and street furniture. The design of the public realm should incorporate spaces which can be used for performance and temporary art exhibits. Where relevant legal agreements will be sought to improve spaces around buildings that are not within the curtilage of the site. The Council will seek, where appropriate, contributions towards the provision, improvement and maintenance of off-site open space.
- 4.1.12 It may be possible for the public to enjoy the views available from higher buildings through the use of viewing galleries and platforms. This will be strongly encouraged by the Council.

iii. relationship to transport, movement and parking

- 4.1.13 The success of any new development depends on how well it connects to existing areas, especially in terms of the capacity of public transport and local services. Transport and movement of people whether on foot, bicycle, bus, train, water (see figure 15) or car is especially important in relation to higher buildings because the amount of accommodation they contain generates greater traffic flows than would be the case with a smaller building.

- 4.1.14 Where appropriate, section 106 obligations and other agreements will be sought to improve public transport.
- 4.1.15 The spatial requirements of car parking will also be a major consideration and should be designed in a sensitive and non-intrusive manner, so that motor vehicles do not dominate the public realm. In some cases this may well be the major determinant of height. Car parks should be designed in accordance with secured by design guidelines.
- 4.1.16 It will not be acceptable for under-croft parking to dominate the ground floor facades of buildings, especially along major streets and pedestrian routes.
- 4.1.17 Part Two of this policy document provides further details of existing transport nodes and routes. This will be of use to designers and developers when they develop their proposals for higher buildings.



**Figure 15: Good quality public transport services are an important part of meeting the travel demands created by the intensification of land use associated with higher buildings.
(Canary Wharf Tube Station, London)**

iv. design quality

- 4.1.18 Proposals for higher buildings must be of outstanding architectural quality. This includes all building characteristics such as scale, form, massing, proportion and silhouette, openings and balconies, materials, lighting and relationship to other buildings - all of which must be carefully considered as part of a coherent overall design concept.
- 4.1.19 **Scale: Designers should be clear about the role of the building they are designing** - is it a major landmark tower, a smaller local landmark or a more integrated townscape building? This will have a direct bearing on its scale relative to surrounding buildings and the established skyline.
- 4.1.20 In general it will be appropriate for townscape buildings to be related in height to other buildings in the surrounding area, although higher features at corners and other prominent places within the street scene may be appropriate.
- 4.1.21 By their very nature landmark buildings contrast with their surroundings in terms of height and design. Never the less there will be a natural limit to the desirable height of the building. This is partly dependant upon the profile of the building and how this relates to the wider landscape (see paragraph 4.3.20) and partly dependant upon the site's capacity to absorb the intensity of use generated by a large building. This last point includes the issue of parking versus the requirement to achieve an attractive public realm.
- 4.1.22 **Form and silhouette and proportion:** The appropriate form, silhouette and proportion of higher buildings will depend on the building type - landmark or townscape, or other category.
- 4.1.23 *Landmark buildings* should be designed as attractive sculptural features, which enhance the wider composition of views, vistas and skylines. In order not to block these, it will in general be desirable for landmark buildings to have relatively slim profiles, tiered and stepped where necessary to further reduce bulk. This will also help integrate buildings into existing streetscapes without being overbearing.
- 4.1.24 The design of the top of a *landmark building* will be of particular importance when considering the effect on the skyline. The design of plant rooms, arials and masts on the roofs of buildings should be very carefully thought through in proposals. When conceived of as part of the overall design these can add drama to the top of landmark buildings in particular. However, it is also necessary to consider such items at an early stage in order to avoid the need for later unplanned additions.

- 4.1.25 The design of a *townscape building* should seek to integrate it with either existing or proposed buildings around it, for example, to create a continuous street frontage. In general, it will be appropriate for higher townscape buildings to be designed with a clearly distinguished top, middle and base. The base should have higher floor to ceiling height than subsequent floors, or should incorporate more than just the ground floor to emphasise its significance as a public frontage, and to improve proportions.
- 4.1.26 Setting back the top of a *townscape building* from the main façade or adding features such as overhanging projections can often separate the middle of a building from its top, and so improve proportions, break down apparent bulk, and improve integration of new higher buildings into the streetscape.
- 4.1.27 The treatment of prominent positions within the street system, for example the corners on major streets or junctions, should be given careful consideration. These can be celebrated by projections (small towers or hanging oriel bays) or recessions (creating a foreground).



Figure 16: The Brook, opposite Hyde Park, London, is a good example of a high townscape building. Openings, balconies, and materials are used to produce a building with well-balanced proportions and clearly defined top, middle and base.

- 4.1.28 **Articulation:** The arrangement of windows, and projecting balconies can often help to break down apparent bulk and add interest to a building's appearance. Their use should be carefully considered as part of the overall composition. The external elevations of higher buildings must avoid large areas of blank, excessively plain or relentless façades.
- 4.1.29 Modern buildings often have relatively low floor – to – ceiling heights as compared to older buildings. In addition, modern residential buildings tend to be divided into a large number of small flats. This produces a large number of small windows. Taken together these two factors can mean that modern buildings can look oddly proportioned. In order to overcome this problem designers should investigate grouping elements together (for example groups of windows and balconies) to form fewer but larger scaled compositional elements.
- 4.1.30 **Materials:** High buildings must use high quality materials and demonstrate a high standard of craftsmanship and detailing. This should take into account the building's prominence and distance from which they are seen. The reflectivity of building facades, for example, can have a significant impact on long-range views, with care being necessary to avoid intrusive daytime glare. The use of transparent materials can create an effective nighttime landmark.
- 4.1.31 **Lighting:** This is an important design consideration with a significant bearing on both near and distant views. Lighting can be used to the advantage of a building, to show off a particular sculptural form or to accentuate significant parts of the

building, such as its base or its top. Higher building proposals should include a carefully considered lighting design strategy.



Figure 17: A carefully designed 6-storey townscape building- well-proportioned base, middle and top; generous frontages and public realm; considered lighting scheme. (Covent Garden, London)

v. effect on the local microclimate;

- 4.1.32 Higher building proposals must consider the impact on the microclimate and effects such as wind turbulence, noise reflection, overshadowing and night-time appearance as well as the amenity of those living or working and moving around in the vicinity of the building or group of buildings. Proposals must demonstrate measures to mitigate against any such negative impact they may have on the public realm. These issues will be especially relevant in designing and assessing proposals for landmark towers. See figure 18.

vi. sustainability;

- 4.1.33 Any higher building should be designed in line with sustainable development principles, taking into account its physical, social, economic and environmental impact based on whole life costs, benefits and adaptability to future changes in lifestyles.
- 4.1.34 All buildings will be expected to:
- have minimal embodied energy (amount of energy used in manufacturing)
 - use narrow rather than deep floor plates to maximise daylight, allow for natural ventilation and allow for flexibility of future use
 - contain well-designed services to minimise need for heating and cooling and be well insulated and effectively use the thermal mass of the building
 - demonstrate adaptability to accommodate other uses.

4.1.35 Use of the following will be encouraged:

- opening windows to increase daylight and natural ventilation
- automatic light control mechanisms
- Combined Heat and Power systems – increasingly used for individual office buildings
- locally-sourced materials which reduce transport costs and
- solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on roofs and facades.
- alternative micro renewable energy sources

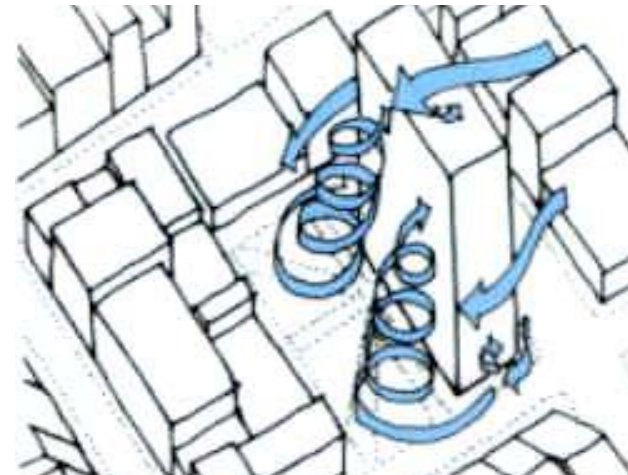


Figure 18: Tall buildings, particularly free-standing towers, can affect the quality of public space by channelling wind down and along streets or creating vortices in front of buildings (taken from the Urban Design Compendium)

4.2

- 41.1.36 A lifetime assessment of the building and construction materials should be carried out, along with a strategy for energy-saving in terms of heating, cooling and lighting. 'Tall Buildings and Sustainability' (March 2003) is a Corporation of London report addressing these issues. It contains useful advice which is applicable not only to the scale of higher buildings envisaged in the City of London, but to the more modest scale of building envisaged for Medway.
- 41.1.37 The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) 'Sustainability Checklist' (2003) is intended to guide and assess the relevant performance of different development proposals. Higher buildings proposals should consider the relevant parts of this checklist.
- 41.1.38 Higher buildings will be expected to achieve BREEAM or Eco-Homes 'very good' or 'excellent' rating.

vii maintenance and management

- 4.1.39 Careful consideration should be given to the long-term maintenance and management of public areas. A comprehensive plan should be prepared and agreed with the Council. This should detail the proposed maintenance and management strategy for the building itself, as well as surrounding public spaces and streets. Where it is appropriate for the Council to adopt spaces surrounding a high building, it may seek commuted sums for ongoing maintenance.

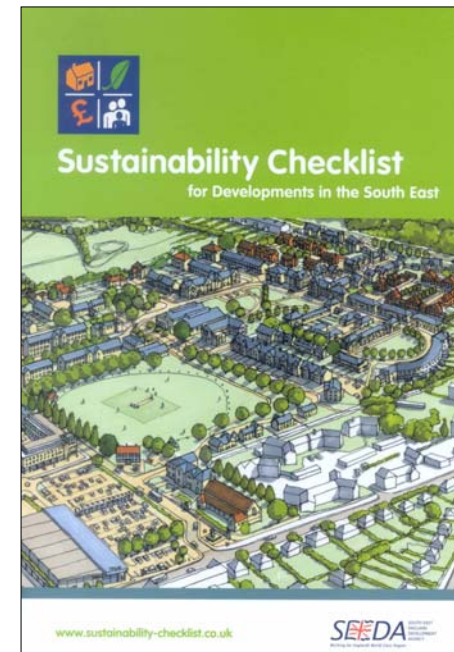


Figure 19: Guidance on sustainability issues and design produced by SEEDA

4.2 Location criteria- general guidance

4.2.1 The role of higher buildings is such that they may be appropriate in the following locations:

- Within a major brownfield regeneration site or and existing urban centre; or
- A key destination point within the townscape (landmark), for example an existing or planned focus of activity along the riverfront; or
- A key focal point within a high density regeneration area

4.2.2 However, insensitively located higher buildings, landmark towers in particular, can also obstruct strategic views and vistas and dominate surrounding areas. For these reasons higher buildings should only be located:

- Where it does not adversely affect or block strategic or important views and vistas and backdrops; and
- Where it can provide an attractive punctuation feature within the wider urban skyline.

4.2.3 At a more local level, particular attention should be paid to how taller buildings integrate into existing townscape or landscape. In general the guiding philosophy must be to place buildings such that they:

- Reinforce existing townscapes and street patterns or create new townscapes of attractive streets and spaces

- Take account of existing significant buildings of civic or historic importance by preserving views to them and by retaining their prominence within the streetscape and landscape
- Do not have an adverse impact on the character, amenity or microclimate of the surrounding area; and
- Preserve skylines and silhouettes of significant buildings or landscape features.

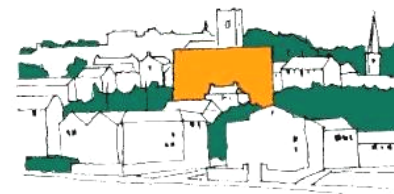


Figure 20: Medway has some sensitive skylines. It is important that these are protected and not obscured by inappropriate tall buildings that punctuate the ridge, sit in front of existing buildings of interest or spoil the silhouette of existing buildings by sitting behind them

(taken from By Design by DETR & CABE, 2000)

- 4.2.4 It should be noted that not all existing high buildings in Medway have been located with sensitivity and respect for the surrounding environment. With regard to this it should be noted that the existence of a higher building in a particular location does not necessarily justify its replacement with a new high building on the same site or in the same area. Where the opportunity arises the Council will seek the replacement of particularly insensitive high buildings with ones of a more appropriate design.
- 4.2.5 All proposals for high buildings should be accompanied by an urban design statement which:
- analyses the effect of proposals on their surroundings at a local and wider scale
 - explains the proposals in relation to the factors set out in Section 4 and part 2 of this guidance (see below)
- 4.2.6 Part 2 of this guidance takes the general criteria on location outlined in this section and applies them to the Medway Waterfront Renaissance area in order to provide more specific guidance on appropriate and inappropriate locations for higher buildings and on key sensitivities to be taken into account when developing proposals. It should be regarded as an essential reference for anyone developing proposals for higher buildings within the Medway Waterfront area.

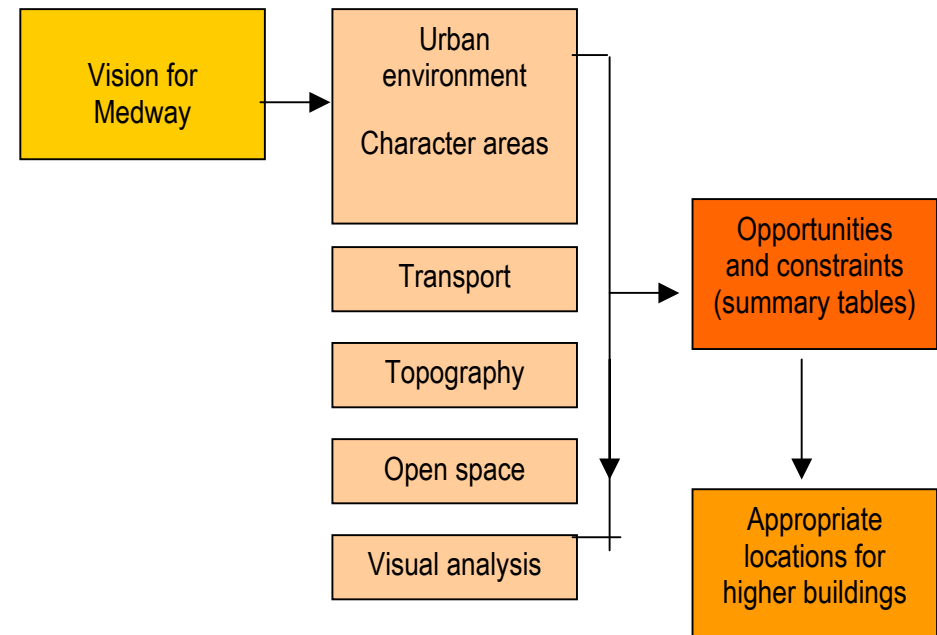


Figure 21: Methodology followed by Part 2 of 'A Building Height policy for Medway'.

5.0 Planning Context

- 5.0.1 All proposals for higher buildings submitted to the Council, whether for pre-application discussions, as part of a masterplan for the wider regeneration of the area, or as a planning application, should demonstrate an understanding of the area and its context. The checklist set out at the end of this document should be used as a starting point when developing proposals for higher buildings.
- 5.0.2 Adequate visual impact assessments, including accurate visual representations (AVR's) will be required as a component of all scheme proposals. Appendixes A and B give information on how these should be carried out and on the extent of visual information which will be appropriate at each stage in the planning process.
- 5.0.3 Applicants are encouraged to discuss their proposals with Council officers in advance of submitting an application. This will ensure that any issues raised by a particular proposal can be fully understood and dealt with as early as possible so as to avoid any unnecessary delays.

5.1 Development briefs and supplementary planning documents:

- 5.1.1 The Council has adopted development briefs or frameworks for many of the major or strategic development areas (Rochester Riverside and Chatham Centre and Waterfront). These set an overall context and vision for each area, identify

opportunities and constraints, and provide some advice on scale, massing, and heights and location of buildings.

- 5.1.2 The Council will (or will expect developers to) produce briefs for other sites, and will seek to adopt these as supplementary planning documents to guide the development of more detailed proposals. At this development brief stage the visual representation of higher buildings should be to at least AVR 1 standard (see appendix A)

5.2 Masterplans:

- 5.2.1 Where one or more higher buildings are proposed on part of a larger development site, applicants will be expected to produce a masterplan which clearly articulates a vision for the whole site and provides a rationale and justification for tall buildings in principle. The masterplan should provide a three dimensional framework for buildings and public spaces which
- Allows an understanding of the spaces between buildings
 - Shows how streets, squares and open spaces are connected
 - Defines heights, massing and bulk of buildings
 - Controls the relationship between buildings, public spaces and movement networks
 - Determines distribution of uses
 - Allows an understanding of how well a new development will be integrated into its context.

5.2.2 Masterplans that incorporate proposals for higher buildings will be expected to have visual representation to AVR 2 or 3 standard (see appendix B).

5.2.3 Dependant upon the precise process to be followed, and the scale of the development involved, the Council will either seek to adopt masterplans as supplementary planning document (to guide the preparation of future proposals) or will accept a masterplan as a component of an outline planning application for a specific proposal.

5.1 Planning Applications:

5.3.1 Higher buildings may have a considerable effect over a wide area. For this reason all planning applications, whether outline or full, require sufficient information to determine the effect of development on the environment.

5.3.2 In addition to the normal requirements in relation to planning applications, applications for new higher buildings must be accompanied by the following:

- A **design statement** setting out the design approach. This should include the overall design philosophy (outline and detailed applications)
- An **urban design analysis** that assesses the proposal in relation to the surrounding environment. This should include aspects such as streetscape, topography, skyline, local amenity, the historic environment,

landmarks and other buildings and areas of special consideration; connections to streets, open spaces and transport nodes (outline and detailed applications)

- A **public realm statement** should accompany major applications. This should outline how the space around buildings is to be landscaped and used. Where necessary this should extend well beyond the actual boundaries of the site itself and should form the basis of future agreements to improve the surrounding streetscape or public spaces
- **Accurate drawings** showing the development in context - this must include building heights and topographical features as appropriate (outline and detailed applications)
- A **visual impact assessment** - if substantially bigger or higher than other development in the vicinity (**see appendix A for further details**). This must be accompanied by accurate representations of the appearance of building(s) in all significant views affected - near, middle and distant, including the streets around the base of the building (**this will require methodical, verifiable 360° view analysis, from co-ordinates agreed with the Council** – to AVR 3 /4 standard (outline applications) or AVR 5 standard - (detailed application) **see appendix B**
- A **Daylight and Overshadowing Study** will help to assess whether proposal could block light to key windows or cause overshadowing to open spaces or adversely affect the existing environment

- A **transport assessment** (outline and detailed applications)
- A **sustainability statement** that sets out how the building addresses key principles in the 'Kent Design Guide' and the SEEDA 'Sustainability Checklist' (outline and detailed applications).

5.3.3 Outline applications for extensive sites may have to be accompanied by **design codes** that guide the architectural design of more detailed proposals and supply outline information on detailing and the use of materials

5.3.4 In addition, detailed planning applications will require:

- Information on **servicing and management** of the building(s)
- A **microclimate study** (if substantially higher than neighbouring buildings). These studies should consider the impact of higher buildings on microclimate in terms of daylight and sunlight overshadowing, noise, heat reflection and wind. The Council will seek developments to meet BRE standards.
- Full details of all **materials and key details** including landscape and public realm treatment.

5.3.5 **Three-dimensional models** of the proposal and the surrounding area may be necessary in order to fully understand the effect of the proposals.

5.3.6 Where it is considered appropriate, Medway Council will make a formal determination (screening opinion) of whether or not a proposal constitutes

Schedule 2 development (Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999) thus requiring an **Environmental Impact Assessment**.

5.3.71 Irrespective of the above, it should be borne in mind that the acceptability (or not) of a proposal that is likely to have a wide impact on an area is often a very fine judgement. Conclusion can sometimes only be drawn once the design has reached a relatively refined stage.

5.4 Planning agreements

5.4.1 Section 106 agreements are an important mechanism for delivering public benefits relevant to the scheme in question. This is particularly the case with large scale development which will have an impact on the wider environment.



Figure 22: Models are a particularly useful way of communicating to people how development will appear in the immediate and wider context (Broadway Malyan Architects)

6.0 Consultation

- 6.0.1 **The South East Regional Design Panel (SERDP)** is a panel of individuals with a design and development expertise in a number of fields. The panel meets regularly providing independent and without prejudice design advice in order to assist in encouraging high standards of design. The panel is sponsored by the South - East Development Agency and is managed by the Kent Architecture Centre.
- 6.02 The Council will seek to consult SERDP on significant higher building proposals within Medway.
- 6.03 The Council will consult with **English Heritage** on major higher building proposals where they can be judged to have an impact on the character of the historic areas, townscape and landscape.
- 6.04 It will be appropriate for major higher building proposals to be subject to extensive public consultation. Developers will be expected, as a minimum, to organise a public exhibition of the proposals at an easily accessible venue and to assist in collecting responses to the proposals.

The South East Regional Design Panel can be contacted at:

**Kent Architecture Centre
Chatham Historic Dockyard
Chatham
Kent ME4 4TQ**

Tel. 01634 401166

7.0 A checklist for developing proposals for higher buildings

Issues		Relevance
I	Analysis of context & setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has the proposal been informed by a comprehensive urban design analysis? Does this cover all issues covered in the Part 2 methodology in order to demonstrate appropriate location? - How does the proposal respond to its context in terms of topography, natural features, skyline, scale, height, urban grain, grouping, streetscape, built form, microclimate and patterns of land use and movement? - If more than one higher structure is proposed, how do they relate to each other and to existing built environment?
ii	Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the proposal within an area identified by Part 2 as appropriate for higher buildings? - Does the proposed location accord with the criteria set out in section 4.2?
iii	Effect on the whole existing environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the proposal respect & enhance the area's identity? - How will the proposed building(s) contribute to the life of the area? - Does the building make a positive contribution to framing & enhancing protected views & sensitive areas such as potential World Heritage Site & buffer zones, listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks & gardens, major public spaces, river, other important views, prospects, panoramas & their settings?
iv	Effect on the streetscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the building contribute positively to the street character? - Is the impact of building height upon the streetscape mitigated through sensitive design? - Does the building and its proposed uses relate positively to the public realm at ground level? - Are entrances obviously visible and easy to access? - Are negative or 'dead' frontages avoided at ground level? - How are any differences between daytime & evening use addressed? - Is the ground floor given over to public use and access?

v	Relationship to transport & movement networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well is the proposal related to the capacity of public transport & local services? • What is the approach to car parking provision? • Does the development provide for all types of movement, in particular pedestrian desire lines? • Are opportunities to forge new links & routes taken? • Would access to a public viewing platform be possible?
vi	Design quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal demonstrate outstanding architectural & design quality? • Are the main objectives for the higher building clear? For example, does it have a local or wider landmark function, or does it form part of a generally higher townscape? Is the scale proposed fully justified? • Is the proposed building form sensitive to its setting? Does it take account of important views and vistas? • Does the massing proposed relate sensitively to neighbouring buildings, surrounding public spaces and to the wider skyline? • Are slab block forms avoided? • Does the building have a clearly distinguished top, middle and base? • If this is a landmark building, does it create an attractive and memorable silhouette? • How well considered is the roofline? (e.g. to add interest and to avoid clutter) • Is the building well articulated, avoiding the creation of blank and uninteresting elevations? • Are high quality materials proposed? Is their effect on their surroundings clearly understood and demonstrably sensitive? • Does the lighting strategy positively emphasise the building while showing consideration for the surrounding buildings and spaces?
vii	Design of the public realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear distinction between public, semi-public & private spaces? • Are frontages that add to the vitality of the public realm encouraged? • Are all parts of the site or area assigned a positive use that relates to adjacent uses? • Is legibility of the local townscape improved? • Is landscape recognised as an integral part of the overall design concept?

vii i	Effect on the local microclimate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the impact on the microclimate been properly assessed in terms of wind effects, noise reflection, overshadowing, and nighttime appearance? • How is the amenity of those in the vicinity of the building or group of buildings affected?
ix	Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the layout and design allow for future adaptation to meet changing demands? • Is there scope for conversion to different uses in the future? • Has energy saving influenced the construction, materials (including the sourcing of materials), servicing and the overall lifecycle costing of the building? • Is the proposal mixed use or is it single use (Vertical / horizontal mix)? Is the range of uses / single use appropriate to its location? • Is the proposal economically viable?
x	Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have means of escape and public safety requirements been considered?
xi	Maintenance and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has future building maintenance been properly considered? • Have maintenance and management plans been prepared for approval with the council?

Appendix A – Visual impact assessment

This should be prepared in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment 2nd Edition' published by the Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment.

The process can be summarised as follows.

Stage 1- Baseline study

Determine approximate visibility of the development through topographic analysis. The actual extent should be checked on site taking into account the localised screening or filtering effects of buildings, trees etc. Define Zone of Visual Influence or Visual Envelope.

Identify principal viewpoints – these should reflect the strategic views and approach experiences identified in part two.

Stage 2- Sensitivity

Identify sensitive visual receptors e.g. residents, visitors, other groups of viewers, including type of viewer affected, estimate of numbers and potential seasonal effects for each viewpoint. Analyse distribution of visual receptors, their tolerance to change and principal sensitivities

Receptor sensitivity

Receptor sensitivity	Description
HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occupiers of residential properties.• Users of outdoor recreational facilities, including public rights of way, whose attention or interest may be focused on the landscape.• Communities where the development results in changes in the landscape setting or valued views enjoyed by the community.
MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People travelling through or past the affected landscape in cars, on trains or other transport routes where higher speeds are involved and views sporadic and short-lived.• People engaged in outdoor recreation where enjoyment of the landscape is incidental rather than the main interest.
LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People at their place of work• Industrial facilities

Appendix A – Visual impact assessment

Stage 3-magnitude of visual impact

For each viewpoint, identify potential impacts, predict their magnitude, and assess their significance. Assessment should describe the changes in the character and quality of the visual resources that are expected to result from the development – changes in available views and effect of those changes on people.

It should be remembered that a visual impact is not always a negative one, and a change in view is not automatically wrong. The visual impact assessment process provides an objective framework for assessing higher buildings but some degree of subjectivity will be evident in deciding if a building has a high, yet positive, visual impact.

Magnitude of visual impact

Magnitude	Description
HIGH	The development would appear large scale and become a dominant feature in the view. Would result in a significant change in the existing view.
MEDIUM	The development would result in a noticeable change in the existing view. The development would form a recognisable new element within the overall view and would be readily noticeable by the observer or receptor.
LOW	The development would result in a barely perceptible change in the existing view or would form an inconspicuous element in the wider landscape, which may be missed by the observer or receptor.
NEGLIGIBLE	Only a small part of the development would be discernible and/or it is at such a distance that no change to the existing view can be appreciated.

Appendix A – Visual impact assessment

Stage 4- significance of visual impact

Significance thresholds are then determined from different combinations of sensitivity and magnitude. These thresholds provide standardised conclusions to the visual impact assessment.

For each viewpoint the assessment should be accompanied by a written description of the effect of the development.

Significance of visual impact

MAGNITUDE	HIGH	MODERATE	MODERATE/MAJOR	MAJOR
	MEDIUM	MINOR/MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE/MAJOR
	LOW	MINOR	MINOR/MODERATE	MINOR/MODERATE
	NEGILIGIBLE	NEGLIGIBLE	NEGLIGIBLE/MINOR	NEGLIGIBLE/MINOR
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH

SENSITIVITY

Appendix B – Accurate visual representations (AVRs)

To allow for an informed assessment of new developments, applicants will be expected to provide AVRs as part of the visual impact assessment. An AVR is a picture that shows a proposed building alongside what already exists.

This study separates AVR's into five levels of detail from AVR 1 (simple, but accurate depiction of shape) to AVR 5 (accurate photo reality). As a proposal develops from concept to detail the Council will expect a higher level of accompanying visual representation. In general the following will be appropriate:

Pre-application discussions	AVRs 1/2/3
Outline planning application	AVRs 3/4
Full planning application	AVRs 4/5

The number of AVRs required for a proposal should be determined by discussion with the Council and will vary depending on the location and size of the building. For example, a number of AVR1s will be useful in order to check where a proposal can be seen from and so help to identify viewing points for further work and feed into the Visual Impact Assessment. For major proposals, the Council will insist on as many AVR4s or AVR5s as it feels is necessary to fully understand the proposal.

Sufficient technical information should be provided to enable the images to be independently verified.

AVR 1 Visibility Study	A simple depiction of the shape of a proposal shown on digital photographs
AVR 2 Approximate photomontage	A rendered computer image of a proposed building combined with a photograph of its surroundings
AVR 3 Accurate silhouette	An accurate depiction of the position, shape and size of the proposal shown on a high resolution photograph
AVR 4 Accurate photomontage	As AVR 3, with indicative rendering of selected architectural details
AVR 5 Accurate photo-reality	As AVR 4, with accurate depiction of external appearance

Appendix B – Accurate visual representations (AVR's)

Technical notes:

The following information must be supplied to allow for the independent checking or verification of a picture's accuracy:

- Position – XYZ co-ordinates of viewing point (must be agreed in advance with the council), camera location and building location.
- Image size – resolution and picture size.
- Lens used – focal length and film dimension (must use a non-distorting regular lens i.e. 50mm lens on a 35mm camera).
- View direction – direction in horizontal and vertical planes as XYZ co-ordinates.

The focal length used and size of picture produced should relate to the way the human eye perceives distance. Enlarged or reduced AVRs distort accuracy and will not be acceptable (a 1:1 scale line should be included on the AVR).

The type of AVR must be clearly shown on the image and it should be cross-referenced to the correct architectural drawings.

This information is available in other formats from
(01634) 333333

If you want to speak to someone in your own language the Community Interpreting Service can help. Please ring **(01634) 335577**.

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