

# STRATA PLACEMAKING POLICY

The logo for Strata, featuring the word "strata" in white lowercase letters on a red square background.

## 1. Purpose

Our purpose is to create places where people can live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives, and where communities can thrive for generations.

Placemaking is more than the design of individual homes. It is about creating the streets, spaces, landscapes, facilities, connections and community relationships that make a place feel distinctive, welcoming, safe and sustainable.

Our approach is informed by the principles of Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) and the principles of purposeful placemaking: understanding each place, designing for people, engaging communities, creating local benefit and supporting communities beyond completion.

BHL provides a recognised framework of principles for assessing placemaking through 12 considerations and is intended to inform design discussions throughout whole lifecycle of a development rather than operate as a simple tick-box exercise.

## 2. Policy Statement

We will:

- Understand the place before designing the place.
- Put people's health, wellbeing and quality of life at the heart of placemaking.
- Design every development considering its local context, character and community.
- Use Building for a Healthy Life as our core placemaking framework.
- Create connected, walkable, accessible and inclusive neighbourhoods.
- Integrate nature, biodiversity, trees, landscape and water into the structure of developments from the outset.
- Create distinctive places that people can identify with and feel proud to call home.
- Engage communities and relevant stakeholders early and meaningfully.
- Consider long-term stewardship, management and maintenance from the beginning.
- Measure outcomes and use learning to continually improve future developments.

## 3. Our Placemaking Principles

### Principle 1- Understand the Place

Every development should begin with a clear understanding of its context.

We will consider:

- Local communities and their needs;
- Existing housing and demographic needs;
- Local facilities, services and infrastructure;
- Landscape, ecology and biodiversity;
- Heritage and archaeology;
- Existing movement patterns;
- Local architectural and landscape character;
- Topography, water and natural systems;
- Opportunities and constraints;
- The relationship between the site and surrounding communities.

Site analysis will inform our designs rather than simply describe it & we will seek early dialogue with local authorities, communities, landowners, infrastructure providers, housing partners and other relevant stakeholders.

This reflects the principle that understanding the needs and characteristics of a community should be the starting point for purposeful placemaking.

## **Principle 2- Design for Healthy Lives**

Our developments should make healthy choices the easy and attractive choices, giving consideration to health and wellbeing at neighbourhood, street and individual home level.

Using Building for a Healthy Life, we will seek to create places that encourage:

- Walking and wheeling;
- Cycling;
- Access to nature;
- Social interaction;
- Play and informal recreation;
- Access to everyday facilities;
- Contact with green and blue infrastructure;
- Safe and attractive streets;
- Independence and accessibility;
- Connection with neighbours and the wider community.

## **Principle 3- Create Connected Neighbourhoods**

Developments should not operate as isolated residential enclaves.

We will seek to establish strong connectivity between:

- Existing and new communities;
- Homes and local facilities;
- Public transport and active travel routes;
- Green spaces and ecological networks;
- Streets, footways and cycleways;
- Community facilities and public spaces.

The movement hierarchy should prioritise people and place, with walking, wheeling and cycling designed into the development from the outset.

## **Principle 4- Create Distinctive Places**

Every development should have a clear identity rooted in its context.

We will:

- Make the most of existing landscape, trees, heritage and other assets;
- Respond positively to local character;
- Create memorable streets and spaces;
- Establish a clear hierarchy of streets and public spaces;
- Use buildings and landscape to define and enclose spaces;
- Create clear gateways, landmarks and focal points where appropriate;
- Use names, materials, planting, architecture and landscape to reinforce identity;
- Avoid generic layouts that could be located anywhere.

Character should come from the particular qualities of the place rather than superficial architectural styling.

## **Principle 5- Design Streets for People**

Streets are not simply routes for vehicles. They are important parts of the public realm and should contribute to the health, character and social life of the community.

We will seek to provide:

- Safe and attractive pedestrian routes;
- Connected cycle infrastructure;
- Appropriate traffic speeds and calming measures;
- Well-overlooked streets and spaces;
- Attractive street trees and planting;
- High-quality materials and details;
- Appropriately integrated parking;
- Convenient and secure cycle storage;
- Accessible routes for all;
- Streets that encourage people to spend time outside.

Character should come from the particular qualities of the place rather than superficial architectural styling.

### **Principle 6- Put Nature at the Heart of the Place**

Green and blue infrastructure should be treated as integrated infrastructure rather than an afterthought.

As detailed in our Biodiversity & Nature Police, we will seek to:

- Retain and enhance existing landscape features;
- Create connected ecological networks;
- Provide high-quality public and private green space;
- Incorporate trees into streets and spaces;
- Integrate biodiversity into the development;
- Use sustainable drainage as a placemaking opportunity;
- Create attractive rain gardens, wetlands and other water features where appropriate;
- Design landscape for long-term resilience;
- Consider climate adaptation and overheating;
- Provide residents with meaningful access to nature.

Green infrastructure should perform multiple functions: biodiversity, drainage, cooling, recreation, character, health and wellbeing.

### **Principle 7- Create Homes and Frontages That Connect People**

The relationship between the home and the street is fundamental to successful placemaking.

We will seek to provide:

- Clear distinction between public and private space;
- Attractive and defensible frontages;
- Usable front gardens and thresholds where appropriate;
- Overlooked streets and spaces;
- Private outdoor space;
- Considered bin and cycle storage;
- Discreet utilities and servicing;
- Accessible entrances;
- Opportunities for residents to personalise their homes.

We will avoid leftover, ambiguous or unmanaged spaces.

The area between the pavement and the front door should be considered carefully because it contributes significantly to how safe, attractive and sociable a neighbourhood feels.

### **Principle 8- Design for Everyone**

Places should work for people of different ages, abilities, backgrounds, household types and circumstances.

We will seek to provide:

- A mix of housing types and sizes;
- Appropriate affordable housing;
- Accessible and adaptable homes where required;
- Safe and inclusive public spaces;
- Step-free and legible routes wherever possible;
- Opportunities for children and young people;
- Environments that support older people;
- Appropriate provision for specialist and supported housing;
- Equitable access to facilities, nature and transport.

Placemaking should help reduce social isolation and support independence.

### **Principle 9- Engage Communities**

Meaningful engagement should influence design rather than simply communicate decisions that have already been made.

We will:

- Engage communities as early as practicable;
- Use accessible and proportionate engagement methods;
- Seek to understand local priorities and concerns;
- Involve relevant community organisations and stakeholders;
- Explain how feedback has influenced proposals;
- Continue engagement where appropriate during construction and after occupation.

Engagement should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the development, but should always seek genuine two-way dialogue.

This builds on the purposeful placemaking principle of community learning and the use of consultation, exhibitions, digital engagement and community events to understand local needs.

### **Principle 10- Create a Positive Local Legacy**

A successful development should benefit more than the people who purchase or occupy the homes.

Where appropriate, we will seek to create wider local value through:

- Local employment;
- Apprenticeships and skills;
- Engagement with schools/further education;
- Local procurement;
- Support for local businesses;
- Community partnerships;
- Improvements to local infrastructure;
- Community facilities;
- Environmental enhancement;
- Volunteering and community initiatives.

The objective is to leave a positive social, environmental and economic legacy.

### **Principle 11- Design for Long-Term Stewardship**

A development becomes a successful place if it remains successful after construction is complete. Long term stewardship should therefore be considered from the earliest stages of design, to ensure a sustainable approach to the places management is taken.

We will establish:

- Clear ownership responsibilities;
- Appropriate management arrangements;
- Sustainable maintenance requirements;
- Realistic landscape management;
- Responsibilities for public open space;
- Long-term arrangements for SuDS and green infrastructure;
- Appropriate community management structures where relevant;
- Clear information for residents

The design should not create attractive spaces that are unaffordable, impractical or unclear to maintain.

Building for a Healthy Life specifically identifies long-term stewardship and the creation of a positive legacy as important parts of the design process.

## **Principle 12- Learn, Measure and Improve**

Placemaking should be an evidence-led and continually improving process.

We will seek to understand whether developments are achieving their intended outcomes by considering:

- Resident satisfaction;
- Community engagement;
- Use of public spaces;
- Walking and cycling;
- Access to facilities;
- Biodiversity and landscape performance;
- Maintenance and management;
- Community participation;
- Health and wellbeing indicators where appropriate.

Post-occupancy learning should inform the design of future developments.

## **4. Building for a Healthy Life Framework**

Building for a Healthy Life will provide the overarching design framework for assessing placemaking proposals.

The 12 considerations will be addressed:

- Integrated Neighbourhoods
- Natural connections
- Getting around
- Facilities, services and stewardship
- Homes for everyone
- Distinctive Places
- Making the most of what's there
- A memorable character
- Well-defined streets and spaces
- Easy to find your way around
- Streets for All
- Healthy streets
- Cycle and car parking
- Green and blue infrastructure
- Back of pavement, front of home.

BHL should be used as a design discussion and decision-making framework, not as a late-stage compliance exercise.

## **5. Development Lifecycle**

Placemaking should be embedded throughout the development process.

### **Stage 1- Site Identification**

Identify:

- Context and character;
- Community needs;
- Infrastructure;
- Landscape and ecology;
- Movement & connectivity;
- Heritage;
- Opportunities and constraints.

### **Stage 2- Vision and Concept**

Establish:

- A clear placemaking vision;
- Design principles;
- Movement hierarchy;
- Green and blue infrastructure strategy;
- Landscape principles;
- Character principles;
- Community priorities;
- BHL assessment.

### **Stage 3- Masterplanning**

Test proposals against the BHL framework and ensure that:

- Movement;
- Kandscape;
- Buildings;
- Public realm;
- Drainage;
- Parking;
- Ecology;
- Community facilities are designed as an integrated whole.

### **Stage 4- Planning**

The BHL assessment and placemaking principles should inform planning submissions and discussions with the Local Planning Authority.

Where appropriate, independent design review should be considered.

### **Stage 5- Detailed Design**

Ensure the principles established at masterplanning stage are retained through:

- House types;
- Streets;
- Landscape;
- Public realm;
- Parking;
- Boundaries;
- Utilities;
- Waste;
- Cycle storage;
- Play;
- Signage and wayfinding.

### **Stage 6- Construction**

Monitor delivery against the approved placemaking principles and protect key design commitments through value engineering and construction changes.

### **Stage 7- Completion and Handover**

Provide residents and management bodies with appropriate information relating to:

- Homes;
- Landscape;
- Sustainable living;
- Community facilities;
- Open spaces;
- Waste;
- Drainage;
- Maintenance.

### **Stage 8- Post-Occupation**

Where appropriate, undertake post-occupancy review to understand:

- What works well;
- What does not;
- How residents use the place;
- How public spaces perform;
- Whether community objectives have been achieved.

Learning should be captured and fed into future schemes.

## 6. Governance

Placemaking will be a shared responsibility across the organisation.

The project team should include appropriate expertise in:

- Urban design;
- Architecture;
- Landscape;
- Ecology;
- Highways and movement;
- Drainage;
- Planning;
- Sustainability;
- Community engagement;
- Development and delivery.

Key design decisions should be reviewed at defined project gateways.

No significant change to the masterplan should undermine the agreed placemaking principles without appropriate review.

## 7. Minimum Requirements

As a minimum, all applicable developments should demonstrate:

- A clear understanding of local context;
- A defined placemaking vision;
- Consideration of all 12 BHL considerations;
- Meaningful community and stakeholder engagement proportionate to the scheme;
- A connected movement network;
- Appropriate access to green and blue infrastructure;
- A clear approach to character and identity;
- Well-defined streets and spaces;
- Appropriate provision for walking, wheeling and cycling;
- Integrated parking and servicing;
- Clear public/private thresholds;
- Appropriate stewardship and maintenance arrangements;
- Consideration of long-term community legacy.

For larger or strategically significant developments, an independent design review or BHL assessment should be considered

## 8. What Good Placemaking Looks Like

A successful development will be one where:

- People can easily walk, wheel and cycle.
- Nature is visible, accessible and connected.
- Homes overlook attractive, safe and well-used streets and spaces.
- Children have opportunities to play and explore.
- People can meet their neighbours and feel part of a community.
- The development has a distinctive identity rooted in its location.
- Buildings, streets, landscape, drainage and infrastructure work together.
- Residents can understand who owns and maintains their environment.
- The place remains attractive, functional and resilient long after construction is complete.

Ultimately, our ambition is not simply to deliver housing. It is to create healthy, sustainable and distinctive places that people are proud to call home.

## 9. Strategic Outcome

Our measure of success is therefore not only:

***"Have we built the homes?"***

but:

***"Have we created a place where people can live well, connect with others, enjoy nature, make healthy choices and build a lasting community?"***