



Stony Stratford Town Council



# Thinking of Building?

How will your new building or extension look, fit into its surroundings, and effect other people?

- some guidance on design.



# Stony Stratford Design Guide

A working group appointed by the Council has overseen the preparation of this design statement.

Thanks are extended to Michael O'Sullivan, Pat Mortimer, Anne Dietz de Broise, Phil Butler, Paul Woodfield, Rosemary O'Sullivan and John Corbey for the time and effort they have put in as members of the working group.



Stony Stratford Town Council

April 2009

## A message from Stony Stratford Town Council

The Town Council is proud of its built and green environment. It is committed to caring for its buildings and spaces. It considers this document as one important way of maintaining its own uniqueness and individual character.

This design statement sets out guidance for building owners and developers who are looking at the possibility of carrying out development, whether new build, alterations or improvements. The aim is to ensure that new building works make a valid contribution to the environment of the town by relating sympathetically to the existing. New and innovatively designed buildings, setting an example for the future, are what are needed rather than poor imitations of past styles.

The character of the town has been formed by continuous development over nine centuries. When built, many of our older buildings were themselves radical in their design as the early timber-framed single-storey buildings were extended upwards and outwards and refurbished in stone and brick. Across the centuries, the key words for development in Stony Stratford have been innovation, continuity and quality.

The Town Council recognises that there is a need for a Design Statement to inform and guide future development, one that will address both the old and the new and provide a mechanism for managing the fabric of the town and the surrounding area.

The document is intended to ensure that the attractiveness and distinctiveness of Stony Stratford are maintained during a time of growth. The guide is intended to complement the Vision Statement in the earlier Healthcheck Action Plan endorsed by the community and the Stony Stratford Futures Group which is itself examining current and future issues facing the town.

The advice contained in this document is relevant for both new development and alterations. It is applicable to the entirety of the Town Council area incorporating Stony Stratford, Galley Hill and Fullers Slade. I would also like to thank the members of the Steering Group who have worked hard to complete it.

Rob Gifford - Chair  
Stony Stratford Town Council

## The **2** Character of the Place

### historical context

Stony Stratford and its surrounding area is a place that is still growing and changing. There will be a need to understand how to respond to the impact of growth as Milton Keynes is planned to become a major growth area.

Understanding the qualities of the existing buildings, places and landscape is the starting point for the design statement. A look back to see how the built areas have grown will help to explain the nature of the place that exists today. A brief historical analysis reveals five key periods of growth: The historic Town up to 1680; Canals and coaching up to 1822; The coming of the railway up to 1900; Post War years up to 1959 and finally the period of increased mobility and the new city up to the present time.

### character Areas

A number of simple character areas thus emerge. These reflect the historical pattern of development and phases of growth and are taken as setting the context for appropriate development. The qualities of these areas and the rich diversity that is an essential characteristic of the town will be used as a guide when considering an application. The four character areas are shown below.



**The River Plain**  
Strictly not a development area, the river plain represents a significant part of the Town Council area.



**The Suburbs**  
Areas spanning the two wars of 1914 and 39 and before the MK Development Corporation.

**The Historic Centre.**  
The historic town centre including the growth up to 1900's. The dark brown shows the extent of the Conservation Area.



**New City Growth**  
The areas developed under the time of MK Development Corporation, i.e. Galley Hill, Fullers Slade.

### Character Areas



## The Case for Good Design



what is design?

At the start of your project take a look at the spaces and buildings around you and ask yourself the question 'what works and why?' You are already thinking about design! So what is design and why should we be concerned about it?

why good design?

While our focus is on the appearance and sense of a building or place the definition of design goes beyond this and concerns a number of underlying factors that will have an impact on the environment and peoples' wellbeing. In part design is the thought that goes into balancing these often conflicting issues, thus good design can be defined as a bringing together of these varied aspects into a composition, often expressed as a plan or drawing, in a meaningful way for the benefit and enjoyment of the people that use the building or place.

benefits of design

Well-designed buildings and places will generate economic and social value. Good design will bring benefits for the property owner through increased value, and for the community from the ambience of the place. Businesses should benefit through increased trade.



old & new.  
Can mixing the old with the new work?

Think of good design as an investment in the future. Take the positive attributes of the existing buildings and streetscape as a precedent. Nurture this richness but avoid the bland imitation of historic form and meaningless pastiche.

creative design

The challenge for the designer is to deliver a creative and imaginative design that in its interpretation will provide a solution that stands as an exemplar of its time.

New forms in Fullers Slade



design & policy

Take this document as a general introduction which augments local plan policy, and where the design interpretation should be made within the context of local planning policy and national guidance. Milton Keynes Council is the statutory planning authority and policy is informed through the Local Plan and its replacement, the Local Development Framework. The Local Plan provides a policy section on Design which is worthwhile looking at and covers the following three areas:-

- \* The impact of development proposals on locality
- \* Urban Design Aspects of New Development
- \* Design of buildings

Other documents on design that are worth looking at are shown below:-

design documents

- \* The Urban Design Compendium - English Partnerships, HC.
- \* Building in Context: New Development in Historic Areas - EH, Cabe.
- \* Manual for Streets - Communities & Local Government, DfT.
- \* Codes for Sustainable Homes - Communities and Local Government.
- \* Safer Places. The Planning System & Crime Prevention - ODPM, HO.

As soon as you have clarified your initial ideas, talk to the Town Council and the local authority to see how your ideas might fit in. More information on planning policy and procedures is given in Section 8.

# Stony Stratford Design Guide

# 4 Creating New Places

## place making

Larger proposals, whether infill or green land developments, should address any weaknesses in the fabric of the town. The Town Council will expect the applicant to show an understanding of the locality and for consideration to be given to :- existing paths and routes ; development uses and facilities and key spaces, and focal points.

## layout principles

The following five design principles will be used for assessing the soundness of a layout:- Creating Permeability; Making a Legible Place; Creating Appropriate Buildings and Spaces; Incorporating Variety and Community Safety.

Green spaces are part of the towns fabric and the opportunities for the enhancement of existing or the creation of new green spaces will be encouraged.

## infill sites

\* the provision of landmarks and features will create a legible place and help the pedestrian navigate through a space easily.

\* a permeable layout should be well-connected and include frequent points of access into and through the development and direct routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

\*different uses and amenities will provide the variety that will strengthen local identity.

parking

mews court housing

retail

new housing

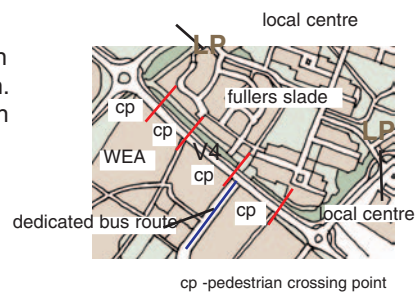
\* a sound layout will differentiate between public and private spaces, and demonstrate a clear hierarchy of streets, buildings and open spaces.

\* housing overlooking the street and pathways will contribute to a safer place

Indicative infill scheme

## edge conditions

The interface between the town edge and open space is important. The insert shows the relationship between the river Great Ouse and the western edge of the town. Consideration needs to be given to the views looking in and the impact of any inappropriate new development.



Improving the fabric of the town will benefit the local economy. For example the provision of safe and convenient connections across the V4 between Fullers Slade and the expansion area will improve the catchment areas for the existing local centres.

# Composing the Streetscape 5

spaces and faces

Achieving a coherent streetscape is an important part of the design objective. Designs for both new and infill sites should look at the street spaces as well as the streetface. The design for the streetspace should consider aspects such as enclosure; access, materials for paths and roads, open spaces, planting and street furniture. The design for the streetface should follow a number of basic rules that will help with the overall composition and show how new build fits into the street.

area character

The Town Council will expect the character of the existing areas to be respected and design rules concerning scale; symmetry; variety; patterns and groupings to be considered to ensure that an appropriate and interesting building frontage is achieved. The key aspects that influence the qualities and character of the streetscape will vary according to the character areas, these should be taken as a reference including where building alterations and additions are concerned.

the historic centre



market square

high street

### The Historic Centre.

An urban street-scene with narrow street widths and minimum set backs, predominately terrace houses and dominated by hard materials for roads, paths and walls and little planting.

the suburbs



woodside

egmont

### The Suburbs

more generous street widths and setbacks, verges and pockets of open space allowing street planting and front gardens. Semi and detached houses.

new city growth



clailey court

weavers hill

### New City Growth

Looser street patterns, generous areas of open space and planting. Local spaces created by building groups. A variety of housing forms.



# 6 The Face of the Building

building elevations

What are the key aspects when considering the design of a building elevation? As with the streetface, the same design rules should be followed when articulating the elevation, consider the:-

- \* The proportion of the facade and ordering of the opening to the whole;
- \* The use and composition of detailed elements, materials and colours.

and then assess the four following aspects of the design:-

scale

\* Scale is a factor of size and the proportional relationship of one building or element to another that makes up the composition. Ratios can be applied (try playing with the golden proportion of 1:1.62 ) but the starting point is what looks right.

\* setting back the upper floor and roof can help to reduce the impact of a larger scale building.

\* stepping back the face of the new building can help the transition from old to new.

\* the scale of the new building should respond to the existing. The case for its size and dominance should be

symmetry

\* The extent to which symmetry is designed into a building frontage tends to influence the character of the street. The level of symmetry tends to reinforce the sense of urbanity.

variety

\* How the elements of the buildings are arranged will influence the level of formality. For example variations in the storey heights; frontage widths will provide variety.

\* parapet lines and face lines like the string course can be used as a reference to strengthen the relationship

\* the use of contrasting materials, surface finishes and colours as in the windows can often help to liven an elevation

patterns

\* The character of a building can be altered by the arrangement of the elements such as windows; doors; colour and materials, and how these are grouped. This is another way of enhancing the composition.

\* the facade is articulated in an abstract way and complements the older building. Window proportions respect those of the existing.

**Indicative elevation**

The design approach addresses the possibility of change and a contemporary building. With this comes a variety of construction forms and a wider choice of materials.



oxford castle and prison redevelopment

Characteristics typical to each of the character areas should be taken as a reference. The Town Council is looking for creative design solutions that could include a contemporary solution and not simply poor pastiche imitations of the existing.



# Details. materials & colours

# 7

## building elements

The main building elements that contribute to the composition of the building elevation are shown below. A selection should be made that responds to each character area. However this can include the careful matching of new materials against the traditional : -

## walls



- \* Primary and secondary walling materials  
Construction forms and detailing
- \* Brick patterns & bonds, mortars profiles & colours
- \* String courses, opening details, jambs, heads, & cills.
- \* Detailing at eaves and gables and plinth level

## roofs



- \* Primary and secondary roofing materials  
Construction form and detailing
- \* Roof pitch and shape such as plain, gable or hip
- \* Eaves, fascias, bargeboards and overhang
- \* Dormers and roof lights
- \* Chimneys, parapets, rainwater goods, ventilation outlets

## openings



- \* Window and door types, openings and proportion
- \* Window reveals and glazing details
- \* Feature windows, bay and oriel windows
- \* Door reveals, Infill and panel details
- \* Decorative and feature doors, surrounds
- \* Balconies, porches, head and cill details, finishes.

## applied details



- \* Balconies, railings, porches, canopies, rainwater goods, chimney pots, flue outlets, decorative ridge tiles, solar and pv panels, thresholds, signage, lights and door numbers, bin stores, meter cupboards and fences.

Graphics: Mason Edwards.

## material selection

Take a look at the diversity of the materials around you before making your choice. Consider new demands on the fabric of the building and the impact of new technologies and how these might fit in with planning policy.

A detailed statement covering the construction details, materials and colours will be required. Historically materials were sourced locally. This approach will be encouraged as a means of demonstrating a sustainable approach and lower fuel consumption as well as the use of materials with a low embodied energy rating.

# Stony Stratford Design Guide

## The next step & what to do

project steps

As you firm up your ideas these will need to be put together in a form that will allow you to communicate them accurately to other people. You have already thought about the site and locality and have some initial ideas and an outline brief. So now is the time to start talking to the Town Council and Milton Keynes Council and to start making plans and drawings and considering a planning application.

design advice

Professional help will make this process much easier for you. The involvement of an architect is encouraged by the Town Council, especially one who is skilled in historic townscapes for work within the older part of the town.

small developments

There are statutory rules to comply with when carrying out development, this usually involves an application. There are some exceptions where minor developments like a small single storey rear extension could be permitted. Always talk to a planning officer to establish what is acceptable, particularly as this situation could change within the Conservation Area.

planning authority

Milton Keynes Council is the statutory planning authority. As a statutory consultee the Town Council receives notification of all local planning applications and runs a planning sub-committee to consider and report back to MKC on these local submissions.

town council

Generally, the advice given by Stony Stratford Town Council will guide the Milton Keynes Council's planning officers and committee when the application is being considered. This has to be consistent with policy.

policy documents

Development is informed by a number of policy and supplementary planning documents (SPD's) of these, MK Local Plan 2001 - 2011 and the Stony Stratford Conservation Area Document together with the Statutory Listings are a good starting point.

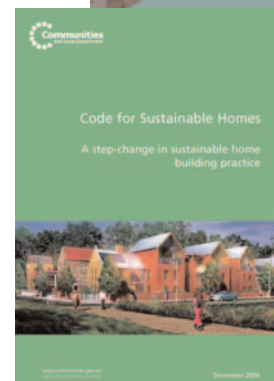
conservation area

The Conservation Area is shown in Section 2. Take this as indicative as a review of the boundary is forthcoming. Development controls in the conservation area are more stringent and permission is required for demolition. With listed buildings, the interior of the building is covered by legislation as well as the outside, any changes will need permission.

other documents

Depending on the size and kind of development there might be further supporting information required like a design and access statement, or a sustainability appraisal. There are a number of other documents that will help with planning and process procedures:

- \* Design and Access Statements. How to write, read and use them. - Cabe
- \* Planning Policy Statement 1: 'Delivering Sustainable Development & 3 'Housing'
- \* Design Review. How Cabe evaluates Quality in Architecture & Urban Design - Cabe
- \* By Design. Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice- DTLR, Cabe
- \* Conservation Principles. Policies and Guidance - English Heritage.



# Stony Stratford Design Guide

## contacts & links



### SSTC contact

Speak to the Stony Stratford Town Council about your proposal at an early stage but remember Milton Keynes Council is the statutory planning authority. If you want to write to the Town Council about a proposal or this design guide please contact:-

The Town Council Clerk  
Stony Stratford Town Council  
c/o The Library, 5-7 Church Street,  
Stony Stratford. MK11BD

or by using the following e-mail:-

[office@stonystratford.gov.uk](mailto:office@stonystratford.gov.uk)

### MKC contact

When you are ready to proceed with your project and an application needs to be submitted to Milton Keynes Council then application forms are available from the MK Council's Development Control Department.

For further advice from the local authority please contact:-

Development Control  
Environment Directorate  
Milton Keynes Council  
Civic Offices  
1 Saxon Gate East  
Central Milton Keynes  
MK9 3ZL

Alternatively go to the MKC web site, more information on the conservation area is also found here:-

<http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/environment%2Dplanning/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=36587>

### Other links

Here are some other useful links:-

<http://www.architecture.com/>  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/>  
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/>  
<http://www.cabe.org.uk/>  
[www.civictrust.org.uk/](http://www.civictrust.org.uk/)  
<http://www.spab.org.uk/>  
<http://www.ihbc.org.uk/>  
<http://www.rudi.net/>

# Stony Stratford Design Guide



Stony Stratford wall mural by Brian Jarvis.

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