

Annexe D: Non-Residential and Employment Design Standards

Tamworth Local Plan 2022–2041

Draft for Consultation

Status of this Annexe

This Annexe forms part of the Tamworth Local Plan. It provides detailed guidance to support:

- **Policy DE6:** Non-Residential and Employment Development
- **Policy HC8:** Public Realm
- **Policy EP1:** Safeguarding Amenity and Managing the Impacts of Development

It should be read alongside **Annexe A: Amenity Standards**, which provides detailed guidance on the assessment of noise, lighting, servicing and external operations, and alongside **Annexe C: Shopfronts, Advertisements and Signage** where shopfronts, advertisements or signage are proposed.

The standards and guidance set out in this Annexe will normally be expected to be met. Departures will be assessed against the test set out at paragraph 1.7.

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1. Purpose and Application

- 1.1. This Annexe provides detailed guidance to support Policy **DE6: Non-Residential and Employment Development** and supports the implementation of **Policy HC8: Public Realm** and Policy **EP1: Safeguarding Amenity and Managing the Impacts of Development**.
- 1.2. It applies to all non-residential development, including employment, industrial, storage and distribution uses, as well as community, education, healthcare, leisure, retail and other service uses. It applies both to new development and, proportionately, to extensions, alterations and changes of use.
- 1.3. Non-residential development often has specific operational and functional requirements, including servicing, storage, circulation, plant and security. While these requirements must be accommodated, development should still achieve a high standard of design and integrate effectively with its surroundings. Functional necessity is not, by itself, a justification for poor design.
- 1.4. The Annexe establishes a set of principles that will be used as a primary basis for assessing the design, layout and operation of non-residential development. Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have responded to this guidance.

Relationship with other parts of the Local Plan

- 1.5. Proposals should also have regard to:
 - **Policies SP8 and DE1**, which set out the Council's overarching approach to design quality and local distinctiveness;
 - **Policy DE2**, where a masterplan or design code is required;
 - **Policies DE7 and DE8 and Annexe C: Shopfronts, Advertisements and Signage**, where shopfronts, advertisements or signage are proposed;
 - **Policies TA1 and TA2 and Parking Standards Annexe**, in relation to parking, access and highway matters;
 - **Policies NE1 and NE6**, in relation to green and blue infrastructure, biodiversity and trees;
 - **Policy SP2**, in relation to climate change, energy and carbon; and
 - **Policies HE1, HE2 and HE3**, where a heritage asset or its setting is affected.

Status and departures

- 1.6. The standards and guidance set out in this Annexe will normally be expected to be met. A departure will only be supported where it can be clearly demonstrated that a

high-quality design solution is achieved and that no unacceptable harm would arise to the character of the area, the public realm or the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

- 1.7. In such cases, a robust justification must be provided demonstrating that:

Departure test

- the departure arises from a specific and identified operational requirement, site constraint or characteristic of the surrounding context that cannot reasonably be met by other means;
- a high quality design outcome would nevertheless be achieved; and
- no unacceptable harm would arise to the character of the area, the quality of the public realm or the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

The extent of justification required will be proportionate to the scale of the departure and to the sensitivity of the receiving context. A greater degree of justification will be expected where the site adjoins residential development, a heritage asset, a public space or a principal approach to the town centre.

2. General Approach

- 2.1. Non-residential development should be designed to balance operational requirements with high-quality design and integration into its surroundings. The layout, siting and form of development should be considered from the outset to minimise impacts and create coherent and functional places.
- 2.2. Development proposals will be expected to:
- respond positively to site context, including surrounding uses, character, topography and landscape setting;
 - provide a clear and coherent layout that integrates buildings, access, parking, servicing and external areas;
 - ensure that operational requirements do not dominate the site or the surrounding area;
 - identify the principal frontages and public-facing edges of the site at the outset and design them positively; and
 - contribute positively to the character, appearance and functionality of the area.
- 2.3. Development should be design-led and should not rely on mitigation alone. Where a site cannot accommodate the operational requirements of a proposed use without

unacceptable impacts on its surroundings, the quantum or nature of development should be reconsidered.

- 2.4. The level of detail expected in the design response should be proportionate to the scale, prominence and sensitivity of the proposal. For major development, and for development on principal frontages or in prominent locations, the Council may require the use of design review in accordance with **Policy DE1**.

3. Site Layout and Organisation

- 3.1. The layout of non-residential development is a key determinant of its overall quality and of its relationship with surrounding uses. Poorly planned layouts result in conflict between users, inefficient movement, and visually dominant servicing or parking areas.

- 3.2. Development proposals will be expected to:

- provide a clear, legible and functional site layout that can be understood by a first-time visitor;
- organise buildings and spaces to minimise conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and servicing, including through the separation of service and visitor access where the scale of development allows;

- locate buildings to define streets and spaces, with the building rather than the car park addressing the principal frontage;
- avoid layouts dominated by parking, servicing or hardstanding, particularly along principal frontages;
- locate the principal entrance so that it is visible and directly accessible from the street and from public transport stops, rather than only from the car park; and
- ensure that the layout supports safe, efficient and inclusive movement.

- 3.3. The difference between a layout that addresses the street and one dominated by servicing and parking is illustrated in **Figure D1**. On larger sites, the layout should establish a clear hierarchy of routes and spaces, with a defined arrival sequence, and should be capable of accommodating future phases without compromising the quality of what is built first.



Figure D1a: Site layout addressing the street

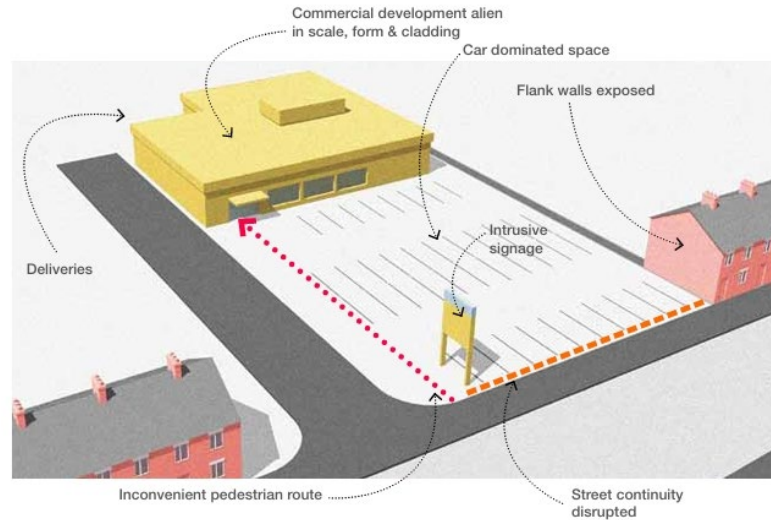


Figure D1b: Site layout dominated by servicing and parking

4. Relationship to Surroundings

- 4.1. Non-residential development should be carefully integrated with neighbouring uses. This is particularly important where sites adjoin residential areas or form part of mixed-use environments, and in Tamworth a number of the Borough's established employment areas share boundaries with residential development.
- 4.2. Development should be designed to minimise impacts arising from noise, disturbance, lighting and general activity, and to ensure that buildings are appropriately scaled and positioned in relation to their surroundings.
- 4.3. Development proposals will be expected to:
 - respond appropriately to adjacent land uses, particularly residential areas and other sensitive receptors including schools, care homes and healthcare facilities;
 - provide appropriate separation distances and layout arrangements, having regard to Annexe A: Amenity Standards A;
 - locate the most intensive operational activity (service yards, loading, external storage, plant and HGV circulation) away from sensitive boundaries;

- minimise impacts arising from noise, vibration, disturbance, lighting, odour, dust and general activity; and
- ensure that the scale, height and massing of development is appropriate to its context, with height stepped down towards residential boundaries where necessary.

4.4. Where a proposal would introduce or intensify a use close to existing residential development, the applicant should demonstrate through the layout, not solely through mitigation, how impacts have been designed out. Detailed guidance on the assessment of noise, lighting and servicing impacts is set out in Sections 8, 9 and 10 of Annexe A: Amenity Standards.

4.5. Conversely, where residential development is proposed close to an existing non-residential use, the agent of change principle applies and the responsibility for mitigation rests with the applicant for the residential development. Existing lawful uses should not be placed at risk of restriction or curtailment as a result of new development in their vicinity.

5. Servicing, Access and Circulation

5.1. Servicing and access arrangements are a fundamental component of non-residential development and can have

significant impacts on both amenity and design quality. Poorly located or designed servicing areas dominate the site and harm the surrounding environment and are difficult to remedy once built.

5.2. Proposals will be expected to:

- provide safe and efficient access for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, people with disabilities, service and delivery vehicles and emergency vehicles;
- locate servicing, delivery and loading areas away from sensitive boundaries and principal frontages;
- accommodate all servicing and vehicle turning within the site, so that reversing, waiting and turning do not take place on the highway;
- minimise conflict between servicing and pedestrian movement, with pedestrian routes from the street and from parking areas to the entrance that do not cross the service yard;
- provide direct, level, well-lit and legible pedestrian and cycle routes through the site; and
- ensure that servicing arrangements do not dominate principal frontages or public spaces.

5.3. Applications should be accompanied by swept path analysis for the largest vehicle expected to service the site

and should demonstrate that the servicing arrangement works without requiring vehicles to obstruct parking, pedestrian routes or the highway.

- 5.4. Where servicing would take place outside normal daytime hours, or where the site adjoins residential development, the Council will have regard to the hours and frequency of servicing and may impose conditions controlling them.

6. Parking, Cycle Provision and Facilities for Users

- 6.1. Parking and cycle provision should be considered from the outset as part of the design process and integrated into the overall layout and form of development. Facilities should be conveniently located, safe and accessible, and should not appear as an afterthought or be relegated to leftover or poorly overlooked areas.

Car parking

- 6.2. Car parking should be provided in accordance with **Policy TA1** and **Parking Standards Annexe**, and should be:
- located to the side or rear of buildings, or otherwise arranged so that it does not dominate the principal frontage;

- broken into smaller bays or courts by tree planting, landscape structure and changes in surface, rather than provided as a single undifferentiated expanse;
- overlooked by the building and by activity within it;
- provided with accessible parking bays located closest to the principal accessible entrance, on a level surface and connected to it by a step-free route; and
- provided with electric vehicle charging infrastructure and passive provision for future expansion.

- 6.3. Surface car parks should incorporate tree planting at a density sufficient to provide meaningful canopy cover at maturity and should use permeable surfacing and sustainable drainage in accordance with **Policy FL1** where ground conditions permit.

Cycle parking and facilities for users

- 6.4. Cycle parking should be:

- located closer to the principal entrance than the nearest car parking space;
- secure, covered, well-lit and overlooked;
- provided using stands that support the frame of the cycle at two points, with adequate spacing between stands;

- provided in a form that accommodates non-standard cycles, including adapted cycles, cargo cycles and cycles with trailers; and
- separated between long-stay provision for staff and short-stay provision for visitors.

6.5. For employment, community, education, healthcare and leisure uses of a scale that will attract regular staff or user cycle trips, proposals should provide end-of-trip facilities including showers, changing facilities and lockers. These facilities are essential to making cycling a realistic option and should be shown on submitted plans.

6.6. Proposals should also make provision for the servicing of the site by cargo cycle and light freight where the nature of the use makes this practicable.

7. External Areas, Storage and Operations

7.1. External areas such as yards, storage and operational spaces can have a significant visual and amenity impact if not properly designed. These areas should be carefully located and integrated into the overall layout of the site from the outset, rather than occupying whatever land remains after the building has been positioned.

7.2. Development proposals will be expected to:

- minimise the visual prominence of external storage and operational areas;
- locate such areas away from key frontages and sensitive boundaries;
- define the extent of any permitted external storage, and its maximum height, on the submitted plans;
- incorporate appropriate screening through the arrangement of buildings, walls or landscaping, designed as part of the scheme rather than added later;
- provide purpose-designed enclosures for refuse, recycling and waste storage, sized for the operational needs of the use and accessible for collection; and
- ensure that external operations do not result in unacceptable impacts on neighbouring uses.

7.3. Screening should be effective in the winter months as well as in summer, and reliance on deciduous planting alone will not normally be sufficient where a year-round screen is required. Where screening is provided by landscape, planting should be of a species, size and density capable of performing that function within a reasonable period and should be secured by condition together with a maintenance and replacement obligation.

7.4. Where the operational requirements of a use are such that external storage will inevitably be visible, the design

should address this directly, for example by treating the storage area as part of the architectural composition through a designed enclosure, rather than relying on a screen that will not conceal it.

8. Building Design and Appearance

8.1. The design and appearance of non-residential buildings contribute significantly to the quality of the built environment. Large or functional buildings should be carefully designed to reduce their visual impact and respond positively to their context. The scale of many employment and distribution buildings means that a poorly designed building has a disproportionate effect on its surroundings and on views into and across the Borough.

8.2. Development proposals will be expected to:

- use materials and detailing appropriate to the context, and of a quality and durability that will weather well over the life of the building;
- avoid overly utilitarian or monotonous building forms;
- break up large building masses through articulation, variation in form, changes in material, recesses and projections, and considered façade treatment;

- use colour deliberately, with recessive tones for large expanses of cladding and stronger accents reserved for entrances and areas of activity;
- express the entrance clearly within the elevation, so that the building can be understood and approached without signage;
- locate any office or ancillary accommodation so that it addresses the principal frontage; and
- provide well-composed and visually interesting elevations, particularly on public frontages and on elevations visible in longer views.

8.3. **Figure D2** illustrates a well-articulated elevation of a large-format building; the same standard should be applied to all elevations, including those facing a boundary, a car park, an adjoining site or open countryside, which should receive the same consideration as the principal frontage, particularly where the adjoining land may itself be developed in future.

8.4. Proposals for buildings of substantial footprint or height should be supported by a townscape and visual assessment proportionate to the scale of the development, illustrating the effect of the building in views from the surrounding area.

D2 - Photo in due course

Photo of a large-format employment or distribution building, with massing broken by changes in material, recessed bays, a clearly expressed office and entrance element and a graduated colour treatment.

Figure D2: Articulating large building masses

9. Roofscape, Plant and Renewable Energy

9.1. The roofs of non-residential buildings are frequently large and in a Borough with varied topography and elevated vantage points, are often visible from surrounding areas. Roofscape should be treated as a designed element rather than as residual space.

9.2. Development proposals will be expected to:

- integrate plant, flues, extract and ventilation equipment within the building envelope or within a purpose-designed enclosure forming part of the architectural composition, rather than as separate additions;
- locate roof-mounted plant away from the perimeter of the roof and away from sensitive boundaries, and screen it where it would be visible;

- control the noise output of plant at the nearest sensitive receptor in accordance with Annex A: Amenity Standards;
 - demonstrate that adequate provision has been made for roof-mounted solar photovoltaic installation, in accordance with **Policy SP2**, with the roof structure designed to accommodate the loading; and
 - consider the incorporation of green or blue roofs where these would contribute to drainage, biodiversity, urban cooling and the performance of solar installations.
- 9.3. Large roof areas represent a significant opportunity for renewable energy generation, and proposals for major non-residential development should demonstrate how that opportunity has been taken. Where solar photovoltaic panels are not proposed at the outset, the applicant should explain why and demonstrate that the building has been designed so that installation remains possible.
- 9.4. Applications should include a roof plan showing the location of all plant, flues, vents, safety and access equipment and any proposed renewable energy installation.

10. Boundary Treatments, Security and Landscaping

10.1. Boundary treatments and landscaping play an important role in integrating development into its surroundings and mitigating visual impacts. They also contribute to environmental quality, biodiversity and community safety.

10.2. Development proposals will be expected to:

- provide high-quality boundary treatments appropriate to the context, using walls, railings, hedges and structural planting in preference to standard security fencing on public-facing boundaries;
- avoid excessive or visually intrusive fencing along public frontages, and avoid palisade fencing, razor and barbed wire and similar treatments where visible from the public realm;
- set security fencing behind a landscape buffer where it is required on a frontage, and select a fence type, colour and detail that recedes visually;
- incorporate landscaping to soften development and to provide screening where necessary; and
- integrate green and blue infrastructure to support biodiversity, environmental quality and climate resilience, in accordance with **Policies NE1, NE4 and NE6**.

10.3. The treatment of a public-facing boundary is illustrated in **Figure D3**. Security should in the first instance be achieved through the layout of the site, through natural surveillance, defensible space, the arrangement of buildings and the control of access points, rather than through the addition of security apparatus to a layout that does not provide it. Proposals should be informed by recognised principles of crime prevention, including Secured by Design or equivalent standards, and by Section 3 of Annexe A: Amenity Standards A.

10.4. Landscape proposals should be prepared by a suitably qualified professional, should be based on a survey of existing trees and vegetation, and should be accompanied by a landscape and ecological management plan for schemes of any scale. Existing trees, hedgerows and watercourses should be retained and incorporated wherever possible.

D3 Photos in due course

Comparative sections through a site frontage showing security fencing set behind a landscape buffer of structural planting and trees with a low wall to the back of footway, against palisade fencing on the back of footway with no planting.

Figure D3: Boundary treatment on a public-facing frontage

11. Relationship to the Public Realm

- 11.1. Non-residential development often forms part of, or interfaces with, the public realm. The design of buildings, frontages and external areas should contribute positively to the character and function of streets and spaces.
- 11.2. Development should ensure that the public realm is not dominated by parking, servicing or inactive frontages, and that buildings provide a positive and active relationship with streets and public spaces.
- 11.3. Development proposals will be expected to:
- provide a positive and active relationship with streets and public spaces;
 - avoid blank or inactive frontages where these would harm the character of the area, and where a blank elevation is unavoidable, treat it as a designed surface through modelling, material change, planting or public art;
 - ensure that building frontages, entrances and windows contribute to natural surveillance;
 - avoid the dominance of parking, servicing, storage or hardstanding on principal frontages;
 - ensure that the layout supports safe, legible and inclusive movement, with pedestrian routes continuing through the site to connect with the wider

network rather than terminating at the site boundary; and

- integrate external areas so that they do not detract from the quality of the public realm.

- 11.4. Proposals should have regard to **Policy HC8**, which sets out the Council's detailed expectations for streets and public spaces.

12. Inclusive Access and User Wellbeing

- 12.1. Non-residential buildings are places of work, learning, care, worship, leisure and service, and should be designed so that they can be used comfortably and independently by people of all ages and abilities. Inclusive design should be integrated from the outset in accordance with **Policy DE1** and should not be reduced to compliance with Building Regulations at a later stage.

- 12.2. Development proposals will be expected to:

- provide a step-free, level and legible approach from the street, from public transport stops and from accessible parking to the principal entrance;
- use the principal entrance as the accessible entrance, rather than providing a separate secondary route;
- provide clear wayfinding, good visual contrast and appropriate lighting to routes and entrances;

- consider the needs of neurodivergent users, including the provision of quieter spaces and the avoidance of excessive noise, reflection and visual complexity in circulation areas, particularly in community, education, healthcare and leisure buildings;
- provide accessible WC facilities and, in buildings expected to attract significant numbers of visitors, consider the provision of a Changing Places facility; and
- provide seating and rest points along longer approach routes.

12.3. Where appropriate to the nature and scale of the development, proposals should provide usable, accessible and well-designed external spaces that support the function of the development and the wellbeing of its users, including places to sit outside, eat and take breaks. These spaces should be genuinely usable: sheltered, sunlit, away from servicing and vehicle circulation, and not simply the residual area between the building and the car park.

13. Lighting and Environmental Considerations

13.1. Lighting and environmental impacts should be carefully considered as part of the design process. Poorly designed

lighting or unmanaged environmental impacts harm amenity, biodiversity and the character of an area, and are a frequent source of conflict where employment uses adjoin residential areas.

13.2. Development proposals will be expected to:

- minimise light spill, glare, sky glow and visual intrusion, using full cut-off luminaires at appropriate mounting heights;
- ensure lighting is appropriate to the context and function of the development, and is capable of being dimmed or switched off when the site is not operational;
- avoid lighting of areas that do not require it, and avoid the illumination of watercourses, green corridors, tree lines and other features used by wildlife;
- consider impacts arising from noise, vibration, odour, dust and emissions, at both construction and operational stages; and
- incorporate design measures to reduce environmental impacts at source rather than relying on mitigation.

13.3. Where external lighting is proposed, or is likely to be required to serve car parks, service yards or external operations, a lighting scheme should be submitted in accordance with paragraph 9.4 of **Annexe A: Amenity Standards A**.

13.4. Where a proposal includes illuminated advertisements or signage, this should be designed in accordance with the illumination standards set out in Section 10 of **Annexe C: Shopfronts, Advertisements and Signage**.

14. Adaptability and Future Change

14.1. Non-residential buildings frequently change occupier, and often change use, several times within their life. Buildings that are designed only for the requirements of a first occupier are more likely to become vacant, to be poorly adapted, or to be demolished prematurely. Given the Borough's constrained land supply, the adaptability of employment and commercial floorspace is of particular importance.

14.2. Development proposals should demonstrate that they have considered:

- the potential for subdivision into smaller units, including the location of cores, services and access points to make subdivision practicable;
- floor-to-ceiling heights and structural grids capable of accommodating a range of uses;
- the ability to accommodate future changes in servicing and access requirements;

- the retention and reuse of existing buildings and structures in preference to demolition, and the carbon implications of that choice in accordance with **Policy SP2**; and
- the specification of materials and components so that they can be maintained, repaired and replaced.

14.3. Where a building is designed to a bespoke specification for a known occupier, the applicant should explain how the building could reasonably be adapted for an alternative occupier or use.

15. Application and Design Judgement

15.1. This Annexe establishes clear expectations for non-residential design quality. Development proposals will be expected to comply with the standards and principles set out.

15.2. A flexible approach will only be applied in the circumstances set out in the departure test at paragraph 1.7, where a robust justification is provided and a high quality design outcome is demonstrably achieved.

15.3. A balanced planning judgement will be applied in all cases, having regard to:

- the context of the site and surrounding area;
- the operational requirements of the development;

- the amenity of neighbouring occupiers;
- the quality of the public realm; and
- the quality of the proposed design.

Submission requirements

15.4. Applications for non-residential development should be accompanied by information proportionate to the scale and sensitivity of the proposal, which may include:

- a design and access statement explaining how the layout, form, scale, appearance and landscaping have been derived from an analysis of the site and its context;
- existing and proposed site plans, showing all parking, servicing, external storage, plant, refuse, cycle provision and boundary treatments;
- all elevations, including those facing boundaries and adjoining sites, with a schedule of materials and finishes;
- a roof plan showing plant and any renewable energy installation;
- swept path analysis for the largest servicing vehicle;
- a landscape scheme and landscape and ecological management plan;

- a lighting scheme, noise assessment and, where relevant, air quality and odour assessments; and
- a townscape and visual assessment where the scale or prominence of the building warrants it.

15.5. Applicants are encouraged to make use of the Council's pre-application advice service, particularly for major development and for development on sites adjoining residential areas or forming part of a principal approach to the town centre.