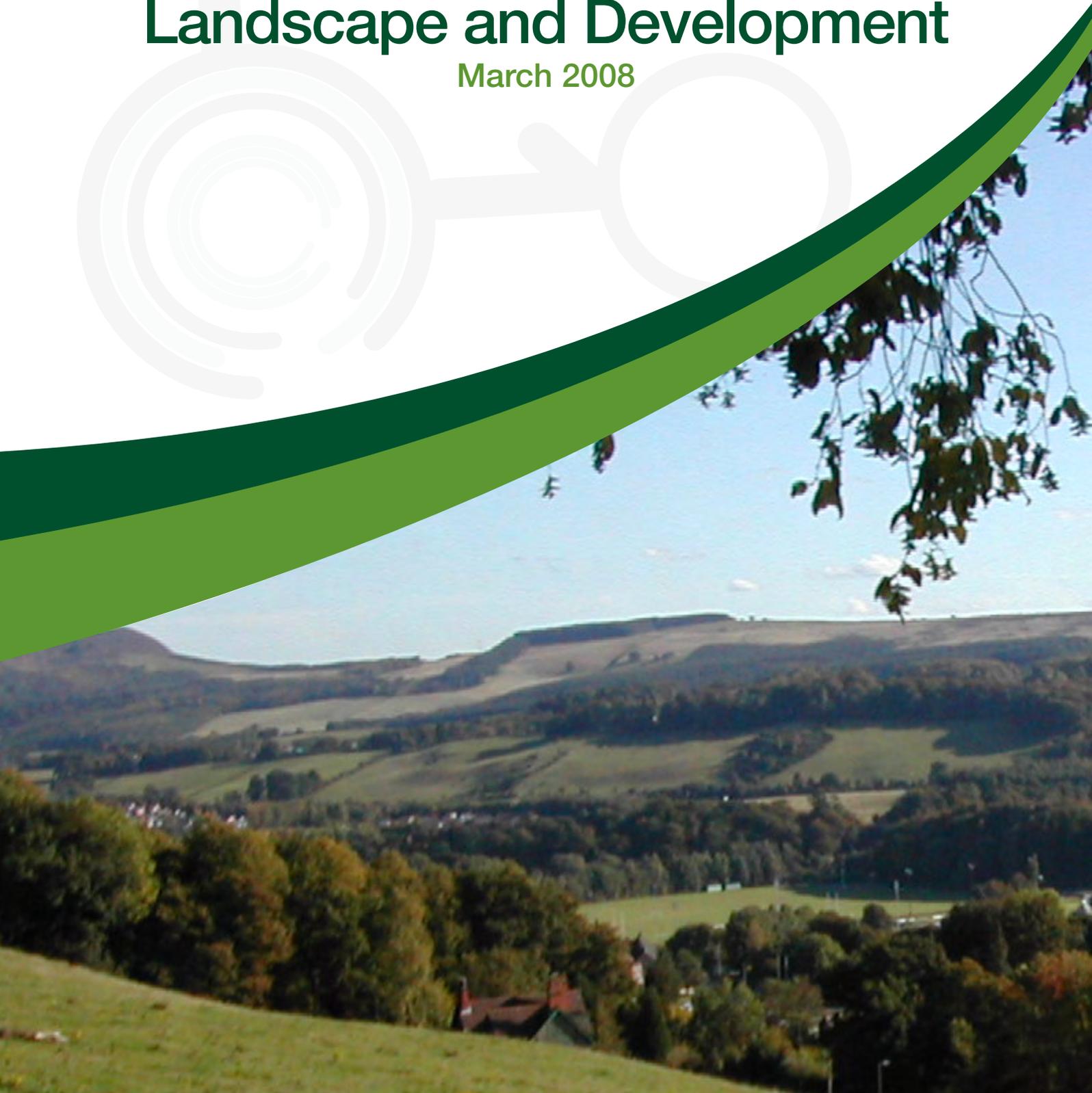


Scottish Borders Local Plan
Supplementary Planning Guidance on

Landscape and Development

March 2008





Landscape and Development

This is one of a series of supplementary planning guidance notes (SPGs) amplifying development plan proposals in a clear and concise format with the objective of improving design standards. In assessing planning applications both the design of buildings and their external environment and landscape are taken into account, and on many developments, the requirement to provide a landscape scheme to the Council's approval and to subsequently implement and maintain the scheme is a condition of planning permission. The note will form a material consideration in the determination of all relevant planning applications.

It is intended that this general guidance will clarify landscape information requirements and help applicants to have a better understanding of landscape issues. As these guidelines cannot cover all situations, applicants and agents are encouraged to discuss proposals with the landscape officer prior to the formal submission of an application. Information sheets are also available on a range of landscape topics. For larger or more complex sites, applicants are advised to employ a professionally qualified landscape specialist from the outset.

General Considerations

Careful and early consideration of design issues, and the provision of adequate landscape information, as described in this leaflet, can help to avoid costly delays at a later stage. In assessing the landscape implications of planning applications the site context, proposed layout, future uses and maintenance all need to be taken into account. It is an underlying assumption of this guidance that every effort will be made to minimise impacts by retaining existing trees, shrubs, boundary features etc. wherever possible.

There is a diverse landscape character and settlement pattern within the Scottish Borders, with rural landscapes of particularly high quality including National Scenic Areas (NSA) and Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) designated in the Councils Structure Plan and adopted Local Plan. In these areas it is especially important for any development to fit in with its surroundings. This does not rule out innovative design but does require that the existing features of the site or local area are given due recognition, e.g. the choice of the use of stone walls, hedges or fences on external boundaries will be influenced by what is found locally. Planning officers can advise applicants on appropriate and acceptable solutions for any rural or urban situation before an application is submitted.

Landscape information required for planning applications

Outline application

Landscape issues must be regarded as an integral part of the development process, with consideration given to the form and use of all spaces from the earliest stage. The factors listed below should be considered at any early stage by the applicant, so that information which would be helpful in assessing whether the proposal is acceptable in principle can be identified, as well as those matters of detail which can be 'reserved' for the detailed application:

- Existing boundaries, type and height
- The position of existing trees and whether they are to be retained or removed
- The intended uses and treatment of the external spaces
- The location of screening factors e.g. buildings, trees or other structures, within or outside the site
- The location of services and any other known constraints
- Any intended changes in landform or level
- The position and general type of any proposed planting

Some types of development would benefit from a Design Statement; e.g. those of a more complex nature or those where existing buildings are being developed. A detailed landscape and visual assessment may be needed for particularly prominent development proposals. Major proposals may be subject to formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures. Planning or landscape officers can advise on when these are needed, and at what stage.

Detailed application/ Reserved matters/ Landscape conditions attached to planning approval

Information provided should include where appropriate:

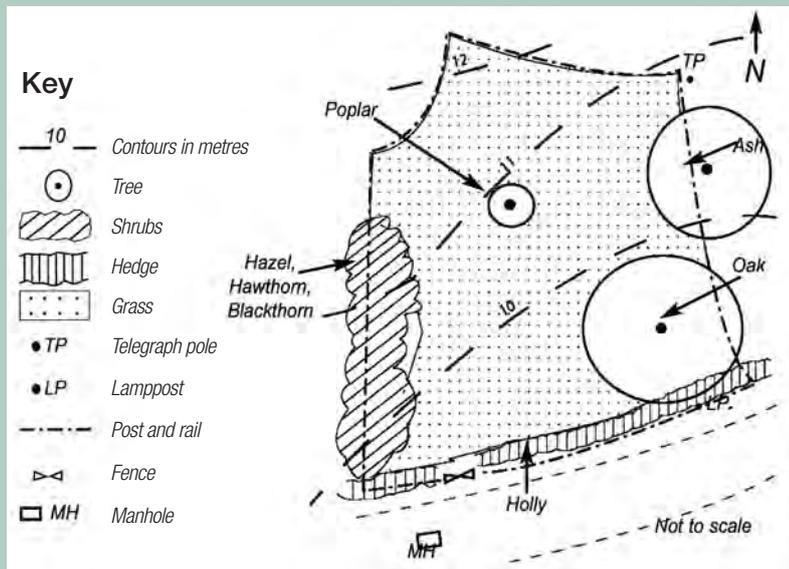
- Survey information on a separate drawing showing details of existing and proposed boundary treatments, including materials, height and location.
- Existing and proposed levels, including information on any surplus materials to be taken off site, or fill material to be imported.
- Existing trees including their species and condition and other soft landscape features to be removed and those to be retained, and methods of protection during construction.
- Details of all existing and proposed hard landscape materials, and their location.
- Species, numbers (or planting density), distribution and sizes of proposed new planting and mixes for grass and wildflower seeding.
- The location of any existing or proposed underground or overhead services which could affect existing or proposed planting including power, communications, water, sewerage and lighting proposals.
- Any areas which are required for adoption by the Council. Developers should refer to other planning guidelines for standards of public open space provision in new housing schemes.

Design Statements

A Design Statement for more complex sites, should include a site analysis and should set out the design principles, justify the design solution, and show how it responds to the wider context as well as the characteristics of the site. The format and level of detail required will depend on the scale and likely impact of the development, but written material would not normally exceed two sides of A4. Plans and diagrams can be included where helpful. Preparation of a Design Statement may help to reduce delays in processing applications.

Example of Site Survey Details

Existing landscape



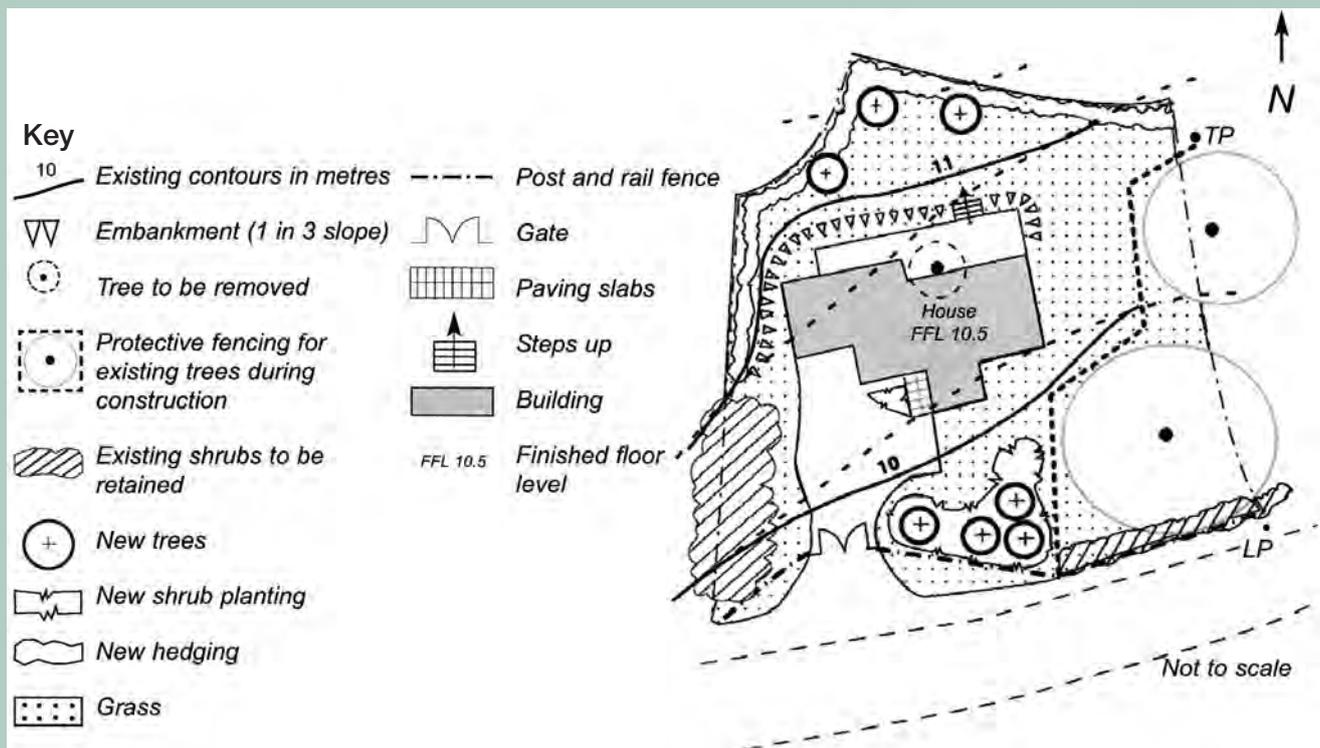
Site Survey

A detailed survey should be carried out before the design of any building or landscape is begun, noting:

- Context (e.g. adjacent land use, orientation of the site i.e. north point or grid lines, boundary trees, views)
- Soil type (e.g. clay, sandy, acid) or other surface material
- Topography (ground levels, often shown as contours or spot heights)
- Drainage, natural and/or artificial
- Services (e.g. public sewer, electricity, gas, etc.)
- Other significant factors (e.g. features of nature conservation or archaeological interest)
- Planning designations (e.g. Tree Preservation Orders, Designated Landscapes, Wildlife Sites)

Example of Site Layout Details

Proposed landscape



Landscape plans

Drawings showing landscape, whether existing or proposed, should be clearly legible whether drawn by hand or with the use of computers. Information can be separated onto different sheets if necessary for clarity. For sites which include changes of level, cross sections are useful, and for some schemes, illustrations may also be helpful. The scale of the drawings should be adequate for the purpose e.g. 1:100 or 1:50 for detailed landscape schemes. A north point and key to any symbols used on the drawings should be included. Where relevant, landscape plans must show other related works such as new footpaths, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) and street lighting equipment which influences the planting design.



Hard landscape

This includes all hard surfaces to be retained or formed within the site including paved areas, car park surfaces, steps, walls, fences, roads, paths, seating, lighting and other features. There is a wide variety of natural and manufactured materials available and advice can be provided on which are most appropriate for the purpose intended, and in character with the local landscape. As a general rule, simple design using a limited range of good quality and robust materials looks better and works better. Re-use or retention of existing original materials such as railings or stone walls is encouraged as these can help retain local landscape character. To control light pollution, lighting schemes must be designed to minimise light spillage and glare, especially where the site is in a rural area or on the edge of a settlement.

Hard landscape design should always take the needs of disabled people into account, as well as security and safety for all users.

Soft landscape

This refers to all vegetation which is to be retained or planted within the site including areas of grass, as well as to watercourses, ditches, ponds and wetlands. Some areas of existing soft landscape may be of nature conservation interest and some may contain statutory protected species and habitats under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. Advice is available from the Council's Ecologist if required.

Certain plants will be more suited to the physical conditions of the site and to the local landscape character than others. As a general rule, locally native species are preferable for countryside boundaries and for large scale planting. It is also recommended that large tree species which will make a long-term contribution to the rural or urban landscape are included in landscape schemes, where space permits. Advice on existing trees and on new tree planting can be provided by the Council's Tree Officer or Landscape Officer.

Implementation of approved landscape schemes

Where a landscape condition has been imposed it will usually require a scheme to be approved before any work commences. If work is started before agreement the planning permission may be invalidated.

The condition will state either that the scheme should normally be completed within six months of first use of the development, or by the end of the first planting season (November to March) following first use. Works on site must comply with the approved plans, and approval must be obtained first if amendments are proposed.

It is essential that protection is provided to any existing landscape features to be retained before any other work begins on site, and that this protection is maintained throughout the construction period, (refer to the appropriate guidance).

To ensure that the approved scheme is implemented satisfactorily the developer is advised, particularly on larger sites, to select a reputable landscape contractor and to retain the services of a landscape architect or employ a competent person to supervise work on site. In order to show how the scheme is to be achieved, detailed working drawings (not necessarily part of the planning application) may be needed. Such plans must be properly integrated within the design and construction teams to ensure that all are working to the same scheme details.

Landscape works must not be treated as an afterthought with inadequate time or resources allowed. It is advised that a cost estimate or tender price is obtained in advance for the approved scheme as it is essential that sufficient funds are set aside. Whilst the costs may often be a small proportion of total development costs, the overall success of a scheme can be reliant on the landscape setting. Enforcement action will be taken if planning conditions have not been met.

Maintenance of approved landscape schemes

Developers must also give consideration to the future uses of the site and the maintenance implications of their proposals. Provision may need to be made for: protection from grazing animals / rabbits, mowing regimes; hedge cutting, woodland and scrub management; watering; pruning; mulching; cleaning of surfaces; litter removal; repairs. N.B. Mowing equipment/strimmers can damage planting if used carelessly. If the Council is to adopt any land, a commuted sum will be required to assist in future maintenance and management.

Planning conditions require that an approved landscape scheme is maintained for a minimum period of 5 years to ensure establishment, with replacement of plants which fail to survive. A maintenance plan or schedule will be required. Where necessary, arrangements must be made to ensure ongoing maintenance of approved landscape works i.e. where ownership is transferred.

General landscape design advice

General design principles, including landscape design, will be covered in a forthcoming Supplementary Planning Guidance note on Design. Detailed landscape design topics such as planting and fencing are covered by separate landscape guidance notes. Landscape design does not have to be conventional to be acceptable, and developers are welcome to discuss non-standard design solutions before submitting an application.

Sustainable landscapes

The Council welcomes landscape design which incorporates principles of sustainability such as an ecological concept of design, use of local materials, low energy consumption for construction and maintenance, composting, and good pedestrian links/cycle facilities to reduce car use.

Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) should be incorporated as part of any large built development to provide surface water treatment and to attenuate rapid surface water run-off. They should be considered at the same stage and integrated into the overall landscape proposal for the site. The extent of hard surface should be minimised and porous concrete block paving is preferred where hard surfaces are required. SUDS ponds and wetlands must be incorporated where required and should be designed to complement the surrounding landscape context. For further guidance refer to 'Ponds, Pools and Lochans' which can be found on SEPA's website at; <http://www.sepa.org.uk/guidance/hei/guidance.htm>



For further information contact:

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Melrose, TD6 0SA
Tel: 01835 825060
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Email: ped@scotborders.gov.uk**

Other contacts:

Arboricultural Association

Web: www.trees.org.uk/

Produces a range of publications on tree care and tree management.

The Landscape Institute

Web: www.landscapeinstitute.org/

Provides a list of registered landscape practices.

BSI British Standards

Web: www.bsi-global.com/en/Contact-Us/

Scottish Natural Heritage

Web: www.snh.org.uk/

Useful Reading

- Arboricultural Association Leaflet No 9 Protection of Trees on Development Sites, Part 1: Drawing Board: Obtaining Planning Permission
- Arboricultural Association Leaflet No 9 Protection of Trees on Development Sites, Part 2: On site: Implementing Planning Consent
- Amenity Value of Trees and Woodland (Arboricultural Association)
- Tree Survey and Inspection (Arboricultural Association)
- BS 5837:2005: Trees in Relation to Construction (BSI)
- BS 3998:1989: Recommendations for Tree Work (BSI)
- NHBC Standards, Ch 4.2, Building near trees (October 1992)
- NJUG (National Joint Utilities Group) Publication No 10 (1995)