Aim 8: A well-designed city with a reputation for quality buildings with a strong local identity

Sheffield is a distinctive city with an urban form that in many places reflects its early industrial heritage, specifically the metal trades, and a unique topography that has resulted in the city’s townscape. Heritage assets are an integral element of the character of many areas of the city and conserving them alongside new development will have benefits for the wider culture and economy of the city, as well as creating a more individual sense of place. Much of the city’s character is also defined by the distinctive landscape of river valleys, dramatic hillsides, extensive tree cover and views out to the city’s Peak District setting.

The city has many attractive Victorian, Edwardian and Garden City-style suburbs where the quality of life is good. But that is not true everywhere; there are areas where new development and environmental improvements can make a positive contribution to local identity, helping to transform the character of physical environments that have become run down and are lacking in distinctiveness.

National planning policy recognises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and an integral part of good planning. Sheffield has done much to promote high quality design across the built environment and the new Sheffield Plan needs to help maintain these achievements. High quality design also means ensuring that all places of employment, public buildings and the spaces between them are safe and accessible to all (and so impacts on Aim 1). Building design also has a significant impact on the environment through, for example, energy conservation and recycling of building materials (and therefore also impacts on Aim 2).

In the Sheffield Plan, we are proposing that design of buildings, streets and spaces should be sustainable and high quality, whilst respecting and enhancing the characteristic features of the city. However, this consultation also provides an opportunity for respondents to suggest how current design policies should be revised to respond to future challenges, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been suggestions, for example, that all new apartments should have access to private outdoor space such as a roof garden or a balcony.

Draft objectives for a well-designed city

- To create attractive, safe places with distinct identities, and to enhance the character of urban and rural areas in Sheffield by requiring high quality design of new neighbourhoods, buildings, public spaces, and streets
- To achieve inclusive design of buildings, streets and public spaces so that they can be easily accessed and used by everyone, regardless of health, age or disability
- To protect, conserve and enhance buildings, landmarks and areas that are attractive, distinctive and/or of heritage or archaeological value
Consultation questions

Q21: How should the requirements relating to the design of new developments be changed to respond to future challenges such as climate change or pandemics?