



Department of **Planning,**
Lands and Heritage



STATE PLANNING POLICY 7.0

DESIGN OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



For a Better
Built Environment

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of this land. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, their descendants who are with us today, and those who will follow in their footsteps.

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State Planning Policy 7.0

Design of the Built Environment

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1. Citation

This is a State Planning Policy made under Part 3 of the *Planning and Development Act 2005*. This policy may be cited as State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment (SPP 7.0).

2. Intent

This policy addresses design quality and built form outcomes in Western Australia. It seeks to deliver the broad economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits that derive from good design outcomes and supports consistent and robust design review and assessment processes across the State.

3. Background

The Government of Western Australia promotes the importance of design quality through the 'Better Places and Spaces: a policy for the built environment in Western Australia' (2013).

As the built environment evolves, it is appropriate that the planning system adapts to the increasing complexity of planning proposals by requiring a greater emphasis on design quality. Good design outcomes improve the urban environment, benefit local communities and leave a positive legacy for future generations.

This policy sets out the objectives, measures, principles and processes which apply to the design and assessment of built environment proposals through the planning system.

This policy provides the overarching framework for a range of supporting State Planning Policies that provide design quality guidance for specific types of planning and development proposals.

4. Application of policy

This policy provides the broad framework for design of the built environment across Western Australia. It applies to all levels of the planning hierarchy — from large-scale structure planning, and major public works projects to development applications and subdivision considerations. It also includes guidance for development that may impact on the public realm but not require planning approval.

This policy is to be used to inform and guide landowners, proponents, designers, reviewers, referral agencies and decision-makers to achieve good design outcomes in the built environment. It encourages early and ongoing discussion of design quality matters, during the concept, pre-lodgement and determination stages of a proposal.

This policy and complementary State Planning Policies, including their objectives, design criteria and design guidance (where relevant) apply to the preparation, review and assessment of:

- Activity centre plans
- Structure plans
- Local development plans
- Subdivision
- Development applications
- Public works

Supporting State Planning Policies and other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with other aspects of the State Planning Framework, including Perth and Peel @3.5 million sub-regional frameworks; State Planning Policy 3.0 Urban Growth and Settlements; State Planning Policy 4.2 Activity Centres for Perth and Peel; Liveable Neighbourhoods; Residential Design Codes; and Development Control Policy 1.6 Planning to Support Transit Use and Transit Oriented Development.

Other relevant instruments include:

- Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015
- local planning schemes
- National Construction Code
- other guides, codes and Acts that relate to that planning or development type

5. Objectives

This policy includes the following objectives:

1. A consistent framework to define the desired design quality outcomes from the planning and design of built environment projects across the State.
2. A coordinated strategy of design quality mechanisms to achieve design outcomes that meet government and community expectations, including:
 - Design Principles – performance-based approach to policy
 - Design review – skilled evaluation expertise
 - Design skills – skilled design expertise
3. Timely and efficient review of planning and development proposals against the Design Principles.



The coordination of design quality mechanisms, illustrated

6. Measures

Design Principles

The purpose of these Design Principles is to establish a definition of 'good design' that can inform the design, review and decision-making processes for built environment proposals across the State. The WAPC maintains the Design Principles, which are: context and character; landscape quality; built form and scale; functionality and build quality; sustainability; amenity; legibility; safety; community; and aesthetics. Schedule 1 includes a full description of each Design Principle.

Supporting State Planning Policies are used to provide detailed objectives, criteria or guidance relating to specific planning or development proposal types that are aligned with the Design Principles.

Design review

Design review is an independent and impartial evaluation process through which a panel of experts on the built environment assesses the design of a proposal. Design review benefits development proposals by providing informed opinions and guidance on the interpretation and application of design elements and principles, which can be particularly helpful for unique or complex development proposals. Design review can often assist in achieving efficient assessment and reduced approval times.

Design review is also beneficial for advising on design quality matters relating to strategies, policies, master plans, precinct plans, local development plans, structure plans, activity centre plans, and local planning schemes.

Whilst it is an advisory process, it is expected that decision-makers give due regard to the advice and any recommendations provided.

Planning authorities, including State and local government, should establish or arrange access to design review processes to review complex planning proposals, those proposals identified as benefitting from design review, or as set out in the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015* or recommended in the WAPC Design Review Guide.

Design review shall be scaled according to the complexity or significance of a proposal and shall generally follow the methodology outlined in the WAPC Design Review Guide to achieve consistency across jurisdictions.

Design skills

Good design outcomes can be achieved when a competent and skilled architect or building designer is engaged for the design and planning process.

Preparation of a design statement by the architect or designer may be required for certain proposals where identified in the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015*, State Planning Policies relating to that planning proposal or any relevant local planning scheme or policy.

A design statement should:

- i. provide an explanation of how the proposal addresses the Design Principles (Schedule 1)
- ii. where supporting State Planning Policy relates to that planning proposal or development type, outline how design objectives, criteria and guidelines (if relevant) of that policy have been achieved.

7. Definitions

Unless otherwise noted, terms used in this policy have common meanings and include those defined in the *Planning and Development Act 2005*; *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015*; and the Residential Design Codes.

SCHEDULE 1 – DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. Context and character

Good design responds to and enhances the distinctive characteristics of a local area, contributing to a sense of place.

The distinctive characteristics of a local area include its prominent natural and built features, social, economic and environmental conditions, the overall qualities of its built environment, local Aboriginal culture and history and significant post-settlement heritage. Successful places are distinctive and memorable, with a character that people can appreciate easily.

Good design responds intelligently and sensitively to these factors in order to positively contribute to the identity of an area including adjacent sites, streetscapes and the surrounding neighbourhood. Interpretative responses to context are encouraged; imitation of existing features should be avoided. New development should integrate into its landscape/townscape setting, reinforcing local distinctiveness and responding sympathetically to local building forms and patterns of development. Building materials, construction techniques and details should, where appropriate, enhance local distinctiveness.

Good design also responds positively to the intended future character of an area. It delivers appropriate densities that are consistent with projected population growth, and able to be sustained by existing or proposed transport, green and social infrastructure.

Consideration of local context is particularly important for sites in established areas that are undergoing change or identified for change. Context is also important for greenfield development, to ensure a site-specific response to existing landscape and topographical features.

2. Landscape quality

Good design recognises that together landscape and buildings operate as an integrated and sustainable system, within a broader ecological context.

Outdoor spaces are important. Public spaces can include parks and nature reserves, as well as more formal squares, paved areas and streets. Designed with people in mind, they should be attractive and comfortable, offering opportunities for people to meet and socialise, bringing vitality and identity to a place.

Good landscape design protects existing environmental features and ecosystems, promotes biodiversity, offer a variety of habitats for flora and fauna, enhances the local environmental context and restores lost or damaged ecosystems, where possible. It considers environmental factors such as water and soil management, ground and site conditions, solar access, microclimate, tree canopy, urban heat island impacts, habitat creation and preservation of green infrastructure – balancing these against social, cultural and economic conditions.

Good landscape design employs hard and soft landscape and urban design elements to create external environments that interact in a considered manner with built form, resulting in well-integrated, engaging places that contribute to local identity and streetscape character.

Good landscape design provides optimal levels of external amenity, functionality and weather protection while encouraging social inclusion, equitable access and respect for the public and neighbours. Well-designed landscape environments ensure effective establishment and facilitate ease of long term management and maintenance.

3. Built form and scale

Good design ensures that the massing and height of development is appropriate to its setting and successfully negotiates between existing built form and the intended future character of the local area.

Buildings can define open spaces by enclosing them. Good design delivers buildings and places of a scale that responds to landform characteristics and existing built fabric in a considered manner, mitigating the potential for negative amenity impacts on both private land and the public realm.

The scale, massing and height of new development should respond positively to that of the adjoining buildings, the topography, the general pattern of heights, and the views, vistas and landmarks of the place, reinforcing a coherent local identity. The orientation, proportion, composition, and articulation of built form elements should deliver an outcome that is suited to the purpose, defines the public domain, contributes to the character of adjacent streetscapes and parks, and provides good amenity for people at ground level.

4. Functionality and build quality

Good design meets the needs of users efficiently and effectively, balancing functional requirements to perform well and deliver optimum benefit over the full life-cycle.

Well-designed functional environments provide spaces that are suited to their intended purpose and arranged to facilitate good relationships to other spaces, and ease of use. Good design provides flexible and adaptable spaces to maximise their utilisation and accommodate appropriate future requirements without the need for major modifications.

Good build quality is achieved by using durable materials, finishes, elements and systems that are easy to maintain and weather well over time. The outcome should be a development that is well-detailed, resilient to the wear and tear expected from its intended use, is easy to upgrade and without excessive maintenance requirements. Consideration should be given to the full life-cycle of the proposal and mitigation of potential climate change impacts.

Good design accommodates services in an integrated manner, without detriment to the appearance, functionality and serviceability of the final outcome.

5. Sustainability

Good design optimises the sustainability of the built environment, delivering positive environmental, social and economic outcomes.

Sustainable landscape and urban design adheres to established water-sensitive urban design principles, minimises negative impacts on existing natural features and ecological processes and facilitates green infrastructure at all project scales.

Sustainable built environments use passive environmental design measures at various scales, responding to local climate and site conditions by providing optimal orientation, shading, thermal performance and natural ventilation. Reducing reliance on technology for heating and cooling minimises energy use, resource consumption and operating costs over the life-cycle of the project.

Sustainable design also includes the use of sustainable construction materials, recycling, good waste management practices, re-use of materials and existing structures, harnessing of renewable energy sources, and total water cycle management.

6. Amenity

Good design provides successful places that offer a variety of uses and activities while optimising internal and external amenity for occupants, visitors and neighbours, providing environments that are comfortable, productive and healthy.

Places should incorporate a mix of uses that work together to create viable environments that respond to the diversity of the local community and its culture. New development should offer a range of uses and activities that contribute to the vitality of the place at different times of the day and week and provide choices of housing, shopping, employment and entertainment.

Well-designed external spaces provide welcoming, comfortable environments that are universally accessible, with effective shade as well as protection from unwanted wind, rain, traffic and noise. Good design mitigates negative impacts on surrounding buildings and places, including overshadowing, overlooking, glare, reflection and noise.

Good design provides internal rooms and spaces that are adequately sized, comfortable and easy to use and furnish, with good levels of daylight, natural ventilation and outlook. Delivering good levels of internal amenity also includes the provision of appropriate levels of acoustic protection and visual privacy, adequate storage space, and ease of access for all.

7. Legibility

Good design results in buildings and places that are legible, with clear connections and easily identifiable elements to help people find their way around.

Good urban design makes places easy to navigate, with recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks while being well-connected to existing movement networks. Sightlines are well-considered, with built form responding to important vantage points. Movement through a place should always be easy for everyone who uses it, whether they are on foot or by bicycle, public transport or private vehicle. Efforts should always be made to giving pedestrian movement priority over vehicular movement

Good design provides environments that are logical and intuitive to use, at the scales of building, site and precinct. Consideration should be given to how the urban design of street environments can provide visual cues as to the street hierarchy.

Access and circulation within developments should contribute to a fine-grain network of direct and connected routes within and beyond the site and avoid creating large non-permeable blocks.

Within buildings, legibility is served by a clear hierarchy of spaces with identifiable entries and clear wayfinding. Externally, buildings and spaces should allow their purpose to be easily understood, and provide clear distinction between public and private spaces.

8. Safety

Good design optimises safety and security, minimising the risk of personal harm and supporting safe behaviour and use.

Safety and security is promoted by maximising opportunities for passive surveillance of public and communal areas and providing clearly defined, well-lit, secure access points that are easily maintained and appropriate to the purpose of the development.

Good design provides a positive, clearly defined relationship between public and private spaces and addresses the need to provide optimal safety and security both within a development and to the adjacent public realm.

The design of vehicular transport routes should integrate safety requirements in a manner that mitigates negative impacts on pedestrian amenity.

9. Community

Good design responds to local community needs as well as the wider social context, providing environments that support a diverse range of people and facilitate social interaction.

Good design encourages social engagement and physical activity in an inclusive, equitable manner and considers how the activities inside buildings can bring life and activity to public spaces. Places should be able to accommodate change over time, create continuity with the past and respond to new social, market or environmental demands.

New development should have some capacity to adapt to changing demographics, an ageing population, new uses and people with disability. In residential proposals, good design achieves a mix of dwelling types, providing housing choice for different demographics, living needs and household budgets, and accommodating all ages and abilities.

10. Aesthetics

Good design is the product of a skilled, judicious design process that results in attractive and inviting buildings and places that engage the senses.

Good design resolves the many competing challenges of a project into an elegant and coherent outcome. At the precinct scale, good design delivers outcomes that are logical and guided by a consideration of the experiential qualities that it will provide. Consideration should be given to how the arrangement of built form and spaces can contribute to the setting of important buildings and landmarks, including public art. A well-conceived design addresses all scales, from the articulation of building form through to the selection and detailing of materials and building elements, enabling sophisticated, integrated responses to the character of the place.

In assessing design quality, consideration of aesthetics should not be limited to style and appearance; the coherence of the design concept and the cultural relevance of the proposal should also be taken into account.