

BfL12 comprises of 12 easy to understand questions that are designed to be used as a way of structuring discussions about a proposed development. There are four questions in each of the three chapters:

- Integrating into the neighbourhood;
- Creating a place; and
- Street and home.

Based on a simple ‘traffic light’ system (red, amber and green) we recommend that proposed new developments aim to:

- Secure as many ‘greens’ as possible,
- Minimise the number of ‘ambers’ and;
- Avoid ‘reds’.

The more ‘greens’ that are achieved, the better a development will be. A red light gives warning that a particular aspect of a proposed development needs to be reconsidered.

A proposed development might not achieve 12 ‘greens’ for a variety of reasons. What is important is to always avoid ‘reds’ and challenge ‘ambers’ - can they be raised to a ‘green’? Local circumstances relating to viability or the need for housing for local people in rural locations (for example, rural exception sites) may justify waiving the requirement for ‘greens’ against the relevant questions.

Third party land ownership issues may prevent ideal connectivity from being achieved, however all developments should seek to ‘future proof’ connections to allow the opportunity to provide these links at some point in the future.

Waivers should be supported by the local planning authority and highlighted early in the design process. We would not recommend that any scheme is permitted a waiver against any questions within the ‘Creating a place’ and ‘Street and home’ chapters.

For these reasons, whilst we encourage local authorities to adopt BfL12, we recommend that they avoid explicitly setting a requirement for all proposed developments to achieve 12 ‘greens’. Instead, we recommend that local policies require all proposed developments to use BfL12 as a design tool throughout the planning process with schemes performing ‘positively’ against it.

We also recommend that local authorities consider expecting developments to demonstrate they are targeting BfL12 where outline planning permission is granted. A useful way to express this expectation is t

Simpler, easier and better

Each headline question is followed by a series of additional questions that we suggest are useful to ask at the start of the design process. We’ve also provided five recommendations for how you might respond with the aim of offering a range of responses.

Recommendations are designed to stimulate discussion with local communities, the project team, the local authority and other stakeholders to help you find the right solution locally.

We've travelled the country visiting hundreds of residential developments. During these visits, we found common problems. Our avoidance tips help you avoid these pitfalls. We also discovered many well-designed developments, their qualities have been captured in our recommendations.

Finally, we've added endnotes providing further detail, clarity and where appropriate, references that you may find useful.

Integrating into the neighbourhood

1 Connections

Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones; whilst also respecting existing buildings and land uses along the boundaries of the development site?

2 Facilities and services

Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?

3 Public transport

Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?

4 Meeting local housing requirements

Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?

Creating a place

5 Character

Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?

6 Working with the site and its context

Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates?

7 Creating well defined streets and spaces

Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?

8 Easy to find your way around

Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?

Street & home

9 Streets for all

Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?

10 Car parking

Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?

11 Public and private spaces

Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?

12 External storage and amenity space

Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles?