Purpose of the study

A tool kit for applicants & development control

Barnsley is a place of ambition and its town centre is a showcase for its people, heritage, environment and architecture. Its cherished town centre skyline is made all the more dramatic due to its undulating setting and the majestic Town Hall set on a plinth at its heart, its recognisable Portland stone construction being a landmark visible far and wide. Tall building clusters and the Town Hall really emphasises the Pennine foothill topography, it is generally otherwise a town of low rise development. Following a resurgence of interest in development following the Remaking Barnsley Strategic Development Framework (2003-2033) there is a clear role for tall buildings, towers and spires within the town centre as part of the continuing evolution of its skyline. However, it is key that such development is appropriate in terms of location, impact, height, mass and design in order to protect and enhance the existing character. To support this, a vision for Barnsley’s skyline has been developed here to provide a strategic direction of travel.

The purpose of this study is to provide easy to use guidance on the appropriate height for development across the town centre to underpin policy in the Town Centre Action Area Plan (TCAAP). The guidance indicates where taller development will be appropriate and provides design criteria which will be effective in controlling the quality, height and massing of taller development where it arises.

Gillespies were commissioned by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) in December 2008 to carry out this study. As part of the process a formal four week consultation period was undertaken including a public exhibition in July 2009 (A ‘Community Consultation Report’ is available for further details).
This guidance is intended to advance the aspirations of the Remaking Barnsley Strategic Development Framework 2003-2033 (SDF). The SDF is a key part of the evidence base for the draft Barnsley Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP). The AAP is a Development Plan document and when it is adopted will form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF). In due course the LDF will become the statutory Development Plan for the Borough and will replace the Unitary Development Plan. The AAP will contain a Policy on building heights which will require proposals to comply with this guidance.

At the outset it is fundamental to note that the scope of this study is not primarily focused on exceptionally tall buildings or skyscrapers. There is relatively limited opportunity or need for such buildings and whilst the study provides guidance where the tallest of buildings are appropriate, this study is more focused on ensuring quality from new buildings of presence of which there are many opportunities. These are the buildings that will shape the townscape for years to come. In fact a building of 3 storeys may be defined as a tall building within the context of Barnsley Town Centre and this notion is key to the study’s recommendations. For clarity the definition of a tall building for Barnsley is fully defined on p10-11.

To establish whether the Building Heights guidance applies to any given development the following criteria are given:

**Declaration:**
- **Policy context & applicant requirements**

**When does the guidance apply?**

To establish whether the Building Heights guidance applies to any given development the following criteria are given:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the proposal considered a tall building?</td>
<td>Proposals must be sited with reference to the Strategy Plan (Section 3) and respond to the Design Principles and Guidance (Section 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Refer to definition of a ‘tall building’ for Barnsley, p10-11)</td>
<td>Guidance not applicable - No action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Applicant Requirements**

All other planning guidance and development plan requirements will apply, whether the guidance applies or not.

If the building heights study applies the emphasis is placed on the applicant to demonstrate compliance with its guidance to the satisfaction of BMBC planning department. In addition to normal requirements of a planning application the following should be included as part of a Design & Access Statement:

- Studies to demonstrate that the siting of the development is in accordance with the Strategy Plan (Section 3)
- Three dimensional studies to demonstrate the design/form of the development but also how this relates to the surrounding urban context. For example cross sections or 3d models.
- A description and illustration of how the proposed design responds to the design codes contained in the Design Principles and Guidance Section 5 and in particular the requirements of the associated Planning Checklist

Applicants are encouraged to engage in pre-application discussions initially to determine whether a tall building is potentially an option on the proposed site. In addition applicants are likely to be requested to present proposals to the Barnsley Urban Renaissance Design Advisory Panel. When deemed appropriate external review bodies such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) or English Heritage may be asked to become involved in the review of certain schemes.
The study area boundary is the Town Centre Area Action Plan boundary and in addition includes some areas of significance on its edge. The study area boundary forms the notional limits of the guidance, however BMBC may determine that certain developments outside the boundary are also subject to the guidance.

Study Area Boundary
April 2009

Barnsley Town Centre has received significant investment in recent years including a number of high profile buildings such as the Digital Media Centre, Barnsley Interchange and Westgate Plaza.

Westgate and Courthouse Campus contain uses and activities which combine to make them the strategic ‘knowledge hub’ of the town and indeed of the Borough. In particular this is the area where educational, administrative, cultural / media, law enforcement and judicial and regulatory functions take place. Over time it will be these areas which also become the focus for digital and creative industries. It is envisioned that the knowledge hub role will grow in size and importance through the plan period and it is in these areas where further similar uses will be particularly encouraged to locate. The knowledge hub is expressed as some of the larger, higher and more modern development in the town and in Westgate it occupies the highest ground in the town centre.
The building heights debate

The Debate

Although tall buildings have their origins in North America, they have become increasingly common throughout the urbanised world. In Europe they emerged only after the Second World War, and then their distribution was not widespread.

Now, after decades of being a maligned building typology, there has been a widespread resurgence in interest in taller building forms. It has been widely recognised that in appropriate locations, taller buildings are able to offer attractive, sustainable and exciting solutions to a range of contemporary urban issues.

Tall buildings are currently the focus of significant debate and investment in the UK. A growing public interest in the form and quality of our towns and cities combined with ever increasing development pressures is contributing to the intensity of the debate. However, each local authority has a different set of parameters with differing implications for the development of tall buildings within their urban fabric.

As part of this debate CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) and English Heritage have reviewed and updated their joint guidance on tall buildings to reflect changes to the planning system and their experience of evaluating planning applications for tall buildings. Guidance on Tall Buildings (CABE & English Heritage, July 2007) has formed the basis of this studies methodology along with various building height policies undertaken throughout the UK.

In Barnsley there is a historic precedent for taller buildings and spires/towers such as the landmark Town Hall tower, St Marys Church, Holyrood Church and the Former Barnsley Cooperative Society building. Newer additions include John Rideal house, the Digital Media Centre, the Councils Offices at Westgate Plaza 1, Sci Tech building and Barnsley College. This will shortly be added to by the developments at Gateway Plaza and Barnsley College’s redevelopment.

The Remaking Barnsley SDF aimed to “achieve a step change in the regeneration of the borough” and set a vision for the towns’ renaissance, which has led to significant new developments within the town centre. The SDF proposes a 21st Century Market Town and in particular reference to urban form describes “the best of iconic and high quality architecture and design alongside traditional, well-functioning and historically rooted market town” and the town centre “being defined by a living edge, a modern interpretation of a medieval wall”. Whilst no explicit reference is given, clearly there is a definite role for tall buildings in delivering the vision. The Building Heights Study takes forward a number of the SDF’s strands and considers their role.

In summary, it is crucial that as development pressure increases in Barnsley Town Centre that the cherished skyline is protected and enhanced. What can be gained by buildings of presence including tall buildings, towers and spires and importantly what could be lost if located inappropriately? In Barnsley the ethos is to sensitively encourage taller buildings gaining maximum benefit from them to leave a positive, well planned legacy. The philosophy should be to celebrate and integrate high quality tall buildings in appropriate locations.
A vision for Barnsley

Developing a vision for Barnsley’s Skyline

“Barnsley is a Tuscan hill village, there’s no doubt about it: Barnsley is a Tuscan hill village.”
(Remaking Barnsley SDF, 2003)

There are a great variety of precedents and models for skylines ranging from unapologetic and bold to more subtle and complex. The romance of Barnsley’s Yorkshire hill town characteristics were captured by Alsops Tuscan hill village concept, which evokes a recognisable image in all our minds. But what is it that creates a hill town skyline. On closer inspection it’s the subtle cascading nature of buildings, spires and towers set within the tumbling green topography, forming peaks and troughs coupled with and the unmistakable colour and style of buildings.

When analysing Barnsley it is the existing clusters and cascades that form the basis of the proposed vision. Distant glimpsed views towards Barnsley Town Centre unfold in places to reveal breathtaking panoramas, especially from the east and south. From these vantage points it’s easy to see the Town Hall perched centrally half way up the hillside with various strands of buildings cascading in relative unison down the towards lower ground. Taller buildings such as the Digital Media Centre create exclamation marks, but none stifles the Town Hall’s deserved dominance. To the north west of the Town Hall the hill continues to climb to a peak which is home to some of Barnsley’s tallest buildings exaggerated by their being on top of a hill. These include Westgate Plaza and the Gateway Plaza development. Even the high cranes beyond the Town Hall that signal Gateway Plaza’s construction demonstrate that this fledgling cluster of taller buildings does not detract but instead creates a backdrop to the Town Hall.

This skyline vision forms the basis for the policy:
- Safeguard views of the Town Hall centrepiece and limit and exclude taller buildings where necessary to protect sensitive townscape character.
- Encourage defined tall buildings clusters to frame and form a backdrop the Town Hall. Utilise the higher ground to exaggerate this effect and stretch higher ground upwards.
- Enhance the existing cascading effect of buildings along the hillside contours. Outside of clusters taller buildings are only appropriate to act as occasional exclamation marks and should not detract from the Town Hall.
- At low points tall buildings should be limited in number to form occasional landmarks to avoid effectively flattening the dramatic topography. This is especially important when developing the Living Wall (Alsops vision creates a bold ring of new development around the town centre evoking medieval city walls) which will provide a linear strong edge to the town centre but should not typically incorporate tall buildings.
- Sensitive located towers and spires should be encouraged to add richness and punctuation marks to the skyline.

Which model is right for Barnsley?

Gordes skyline is the epitomises the cascading hill town.

In contrast many cities are defined by the scale and mass of tall buildings.

Barnsley demonstrates the characteristics of the hill town model.
Definition of a ‘tall building’ for Barnsley

Definition

“The definition of a ‘tall building’ is extremely variable. The tallness of a building is a matter of a cultural perception; therefore, a qualitative definition of a tall building cannot be universally applied. Tall buildings have been the subject of a variety of definitions in recent times. In some instances the definition has been derived from the relationship of buildings to their surroundings, the way in which buildings relate to the height of natural features such as trees or ridgelines, or in some cases definitions have provided specific heights in response to quite specific areas. For example, in the UK ‘tall’ can mean as low as fifteen stories, although in world terms the expectation would be for them to be over fifty”. (Murray, 2002)

CABE and English Heritage, stated that “we do not think it is useful to or necessary to define rigorously what is and what is not a tall building. It is clearly the case that a ... will be thought of as a tall building by those affected, whereas in the centre of a large city it might not.’ (2007)

Within the consultation processes undertaken for previous similar studies, the majority of key stakeholders agreed that the issue of whether or not a building is tall is an issue of context and presence and that the relationship of particular proposals should be assessed in detail against their urban surroundings.

For the purposes of this study, however, the following definition for tall buildings has been developed taking into consideration CABE and English Heritage guidance:

‘Buildings or structures that are significantly taller than those around them and/or which will noticeably change the skyline’

The definition is a key element of the study as it will be the trigger for the location strategy (e.g. where a ‘tall building’ can and cannot be located) and design principles and guidance (e.g. good practice design codes). These components are in Sections 3 and 4.

In general terms, the key issue is in determining if a proposal for a new building or structure is ‘significantly taller than those around them’. One way of establishing this is to develop a process whereby applicants would be required to provide an assessment of the mean height of buildings immediately adjacent the proposed building and setting this against the height of the proposal. However this alone may not be definitive in all cases, such as on a slope or in an open area, therefore an element of judgment by the local authority is necessary as to what its urban context includes and also whether it noticeably changes the skyline.

In the context of Barnsley Town Centre, where the majority buildings are relatively low (3-5 storey), it is felt that a building even 1 storey higher than the surrounding development is deemed ‘significantly taller’. This would mean that a 3 storey building in a predominantly 2 storey context is significantly taller and is therefore considered a ‘tall building’ in planning terms and must comply with the location strategy and design principles and guidance. Whilst this policy does not put a specific limit on the overall height of tall buildings or structures such as towers and spires the applicant must demonstrate that the proposed height is appropriate to its function and urban context. Guidance for ‘aerial contours’ are shown within the Strategic Areas Principles (refer to p34-36).

Further to this, in all instances within the town centre where a 5 storey or higher building is proposed the design guidance and principles component of the study apply by default (Section 4). This has the effect of ensuring good practice high quality design where infill occurs on existing and future taller building runs or groupings when the proposals do not meet the definition of being ‘significantly taller’. This rationale cannot be used as justification for outward encroachment from existing and future runs and groupings of tall buildings.

The storey height given here includes the roof structure. This assumes a storey height of up to 3m. However proposals will need to be considered in terms of actual storey heights and the resulting height of the building. Associated plant, towers and spires are considered as part of the overall height of the building.
A proposed 4 storey building in a run of 3 storey buildings is considered significantly taller than its context. Therefore it is defined as a tall building and the location strategy and design principles and guidance is applicable. (If a 3 storey building was proposed in the same context it would not be considered a tall building).

A proposed 4 storey building in a run of 2, 3 and 4 storey buildings is considered significantly taller than its context. Therefore it is defined as a tall building and the location strategy and design principles and guidance is applicable.

A proposed 5 storey building in a run of 5 storey buildings is not significantly taller than its context, however the design guidance and principles component of the policy apply by default for all 5 storey buildings and above to ensure high quality design.

The above rationale cannot be used as justification for inappropriate outward encroachment from existing and future runs and groupings of tall buildings. The location strategy should be used as guidance.
• Topography

The Yorkshire Hill Town

Barnsley’s dramatic topography defines its urban and landscape character. There is a 35m fall across the study area and importantly in terms of the skyline, the wider landscape also has significant changes in topography creating an extra dimension to consider in terms of townscape and strategic views.

The majority of the influential taller buildings in Barnsley’s skyline are built on the higher ground and its undulating topography has a huge impact on the built environment.

The Topography Map shows 5m contours
If a two storey building is on the ridgeline of a hill it could potentially be as tall as a ten storey building built in a valley. This approach is often used to ‘hide’ taller buildings. However this should be deterred in Barnsley Town Centre as it effectively flattens the dramatic, distinctive topography.

Alternatively if a ten storey building was built on the top of the hill it would give it the authority of a much taller building. In Barnsley taller buildings are celebrated in this manner creating peaks with further buildings cascading down the hillside to troughs. This characteristic should be actively encouraged and emphasised.

Gateway Plaza cascades down towards Town End roundabout creating drama at a key gateway. The Town Hall tower is prominent from many locations due to being perched high within the town centre.
Barnsley’s urban form is rich, with a variety of architectural styles, block sizes and street patterns. This is often exaggerated and influenced by the hilly environment. The diagram shows the tight knit residential terraces to the northwest, the larger footprint commercial footprints and infrastructure of more recent years, the formality of the civic core surrounding the Town Hall and the historic network of winding streets and lanes at its heart.
Building Height

Barnsley has a number of taller buildings, notably the Town Hall, John Rideal house and the Digital Media Centre. These however are exceptions to the norm and notionally 3-5 storey is the typical building height within the town centre, (including roof structure). The diagram illustrates typical zones of height and importantly overlays topography. In addition a number of industrial towers/chimneys and church spires add a richness, which include St Mary’s Church and the Baths Chimney at Town End.

Area of Building heights Map
The Barnsley Skyline - visual experience

Strategic Views

As highlighted throughout this study the Barnsley Skyline is a key consideration of the policy. Future development should enhance and safeguard it with a common goal towards the vision set out in Section 1.

10 key strategic viewpoints have been identified by BMBC for the purposes of this study. Whilst not all encompassing this exercise is intended to provide a snapshot of the existing skyline from prominent strategic roads and residential areas and its findings underpin the policies approach.

Key findings:
From a distance as you circumnavigate clockwise round the town centre from the north east the Town Hall somehow manages to stay the central and defining landmark in the skyline, almost as if it is turning round to face you from any viewpoint. Its only when you reach the north west that it dips and disappears out of view due to the natural topography (view 10).

Views from within the town centre evoke the same characteristics such as from Jumble Lane. Here the Barnsley Interchange forms a horizontal plane in the foreground with old and new landmarks visible climbing up to the Town Hall and Gateway Plaza beyond.
View 1: Looking across the valley South Barnsley rises up the hill with the Town Hall sitting dominantly. This view illustrates the Yorkshire hill town character.

View 2: Looking south-west the Barnsley skyline is prominent showcasing its recognisable roof lines.

View 3: Looking west through the residential area of Burton Bank this panorama shows how the Town Hall remains in view even when other key features become hidden.
View 4: Looking west over the Dearne Valley Park

View 5: Looking west from the main A635 road

View 6: Looking north

Primary building ‘cluster’ behind the Town Hall, forming the peak of the cascade

Secondary building ‘cluster’ forming at the college and sci tech buildings

View 6: Looking north

Existing tall building cluster
Gateway Plaza and its neighbours create peak at the town centre’s high point

Buffer Zone
To give the Town Hall and conservation area room to breathe

Town Hall
Landmark tower

Buffer Zone
Buildings remain between 3-5 storey and do not disturb views of the Town Hall.

Digital Media Centre creates an exclamation mark at a low point in topography
View 7: Looking west over Barnsley from the main A635 road

View 8: Looking north, this view highlights the dominance of the Town Hall

View 9: Looking north east, over playing fields, off the A6133. This shows the main cluster on top of the hill. Also highlighted are other buildings which create impact on the skyline
View 10: Looking east, the Town Centre begins to fall and eventually becomes hidden.

View from Westgate Offices, looking south over the Markets up to the Heelis Street Development showing the raise in topography away from the town centre.

Markets; potential for a taller gateway development.
As the topography falls opportunity for a taller development is created.

Buffer Zone
To highlight markets development. Potential development of the Alhambra shopping centre.

Heelis Street Development
to act as a peak for a new cascade.

The topography falls to the Heelis street development.

View from Westgate Offices, looking East over the Town Hall, highlights the level change and the buildings which have a strong impact on the skyline.

Barnsley College
St. Marys Church
Sci Tech Building
Digital Media Centre
Town Hall
Markets Development

The above views from the top floor of Westgate Plaza 1 are not identified as a strategic view as it is not publicly accessible, however it demonstrates that tall buildings bring new ways to experience the Town Centre skyline and its landscape. Views from new tall buildings are an important consideration.
• Townscape evolution

- 1885 Map of Barnsley
- 2009 Map of Barnsley
- Late 1800’s Early 1900’s
- Town Hall, Built 1933
- Extensive development 1960s and 70s
- Extensive re-development late 1990’s & 2000’s
**Townscape analysis**

**Experiencing the Town Centre**

Building have a significant effect on the way we experience our town centres. The Barnsley Town Centre Public Spaces Strategy (BMBC, 2009) contains detailed analysis and provides a strategy and guidance. It highlights the need to create a user friendly welcoming town centre environment with high quality public realm.

Public spaces are defined by adjacent buildings and have a significant effect on how they look, feel and function. Barnsley Town Centre benefits from a wide variety of spaces from its tight knit lanes to its wide civic streets and its network of squares and parks.

Tall buildings are often public destinations and also provide visual clues and points of reference within the town centre to aid way finding and legibility. They can end vistas or define spaces and should create a positive impact on the adjacent streetscape. In contrast poorly designed tall buildings can have a particularly negative impact on both views and the experience at ground level.

The Town Hall is the most visible landmark within the town centre but other buildings such as the Markets and Transport Interchange perhaps have more relevance to everyday users of the town centre.

Tall buildings and a change in scale help define the urban core. A key recommendation of the Public Spaces Strategy is to improve pedestrian and vehicular gateways into the town centre and in some cases landmark buildings are proposed to help announce arrival.
The following local views have been selected to consider how tall building currently effect the way we experience and use the town centre:

**View Point A**

Jumble Lane is a major pedestrian gateway into the town centre. In the distance large scale buildings announce arrival, however the route into town lacks definition, which could be provided by new development. This is one of few panoramic skylines visible from within the town centre and presents both the architectural scars of the past and glimpses of new development. From this location the Town Hall can be seen perched above with other taller buildings creating punctuation marks and the Transport Interchange creating a foreground.

**View Point B**

Regent Street creates a classical vista to the Town Hall and is defined by taller buildings on both sides, which are generally rich in architectural detail. This forms a clear route from the Transport Interchange to the town’s civic core.

**View Point C**

**View Point D**

Church Street connects the town centre core with Barnsley College and residential area beyond. St Mary’s Church sits to the east creating a dominant landmark and the proposed new Barnsley College building will create a landmark to end this vista.

**View Point E**

Market Hill forms the transition from high to low ground and its steep slope is edged by historic buildings creating a postcard view of the hills beyond.
The view from outside the Transport Interchange is defined by landmark tall buildings, celebrating old and new and the proposed Courthouse Campus development site beyond.

Along Market Street the tight knit buildings wind their way towards a clear destination marked by the Town Hall.

Town End Roundabout is a major vehicular gateway from the strategic highway network. Gateway Plaza creates a landmark and further tall buildings cascade down into the town centre core.
Architectural Character

Barnsley has a rich architectural heritage with numerous traditional buildings and more recent additions that demonstrate strong proportions.

Proportion is sometimes more important than architectural style. The new Civic building blends with a historic lane.

The skyline of Barnsley is punctuated by a series of taller buildings emphasised by the topography. e.g. the Town Hall and Westgate Plaza offices.

Development in recent years has resulted in a new, modern vernacular. The interchange is a bold addition with bright coloured render, structural glass and steel works.

1960’s/70’s monolithic architecture has left a negative impact on the townscape.

Current Developments:
1. Gateway Plaza (under construction)
2. Barnsley College (planning permission granted)
3. Heelis Street (under construction)
Opportunities & constraints

Developing a rationale

The information on the urban design analysis layers described throughout Section 2 of the report is brought together to create an Opportunities and Constraints assessment that highlights areas for further investigation. It identifies the broad parameters and the rationale and is then refined to produce the Strategy Plan for Barnsley Town Centre (Refer to Section 3). Therefore this diagram demonstrates the thought process behind the strategy and the resulting Strategy Plan provides clarity and guidance.

- Obscured view corridor, opportunity for tall buildings.
- Area with significant potential for tall buildings
- Tall Building areas on hill tops
- Areas not appropriate for tall buildings
- Sensitive areas with limited potential for tall buildings
- Key Distant Views of Barnsley skyline and the Town Hall
- Key Internal Views

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A Strategy for Barnsley Town Centre

This section of the report represents the culmination of the first two main sections of the study and describes the areas of Barnsley Town Centre that are either suitable or not suitable for tall buildings.

Following the identification of areas of opportunity for tall buildings set out in the previous section a process of refinement was undertaken to ensure that the areas identified are as focused as possible. In addition the plan identifies a series of ‘tall building clusters’ and the ‘Living Wall’ as an aspiration.
Strategic Area of Opportunity for Tall Buildings

Strategic Areas of Opportunity identified on the Strategy Plan indicate a general area of search that has potential for the siting of development that is defined as a tall building. The boundaries do not however indicate that the whole area should be developed with tall buildings.

A strong urban design case should be made by the applicant for each tall building which clearly explains the rationale for the development and how it integrates with the surrounding urban context.

Each Strategic Area of Opportunity for Tall Buildings is described in further detail in the Strategic Area Principles which follow and guidance is given on ‘aerial contours’ through indicative cross sections. Consideration of these in addition the Design Guidelines and Principles in Section 4 must be demonstrated in any application.

Sensitive Area of Opportunity for Tall Buildings

Generally these include all the areas outside the boundaries previously mentioned (i.e. Strategic Areas of Opportunity and Areas of Exclusion) and are considered sensitive to the insertion of tall buildings.

There should be a presumption against tall building development, however opportunity for tall buildings to create accents, groupings or punctuate the skyline may be deemed appropriate. A case would have to be made by an applicant to demonstrate the appropriateness of such development and particularly that its location and design will enhance the skyline and particularly the key views identified in the Opportunities and Constraints Plan (refer to p29).

Tall Building Clusters

Three Tall Building Clusters have been identified within the Strategic Area of Opportunity for Tall Buildings. This concept emerged through the development of a vision for Barnsley’s skyline set out in Section 1 of this document. The guidance for these are the same as for the ‘Strategic Area of Opportunity for Tall Buildings’ however the local authority will actively promote these areas to create clusters and expect exceptional design quality for what may become the highest concentration of tall buildings as well as including the tallest buildings individually. Buildings which do not support the establishment of the building cluster will be discouraged.

Area of Exclusion

Areas of Exclusion are predominantly defined by Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. In addition they are arranged to safeguard key views of the Town Hall and skyline. Tall buildings are generally excluded from these areas and applications for tall buildings will be deemed inappropriate.

Living Wall

Remaking Barnsley SDF, 2003 proposed the Living Wall, which is intended to create a bold ring of new development/open space around the town centre evoking medieval city walls. Its purpose being to create “a point of animation” and not a barrier, a strong sense of arrival and a clear definition between urban centre and green sites outside the wall. It also creates the potential to create a recreational resource in the form of a green, accessible ribbon. From both the roof top public realm and the buildings themselves spectacular views in and out can be realised.

The SDF does not specifically promote the use of taller buildings within the Living Wall, instead its illustrations describe a relative consistency of height within the band of development. This study takes this idea forward and integrates the Living Wall to create a framework for where tall buildings are and are not appropriate along its extent. A number of gateway sites have been identified to be marked by tall development. A case would have to be made by an applicant to demonstrate the appropriateness of tall buildings within the Living Wall.

The Living Wall will create a distinctive ‘foreground’ for the Barnsley townscape and can be used to both hide and reveal the skyline beyond. The Vision set out in this document aims to vertically elongate and emphasise the dramatic topography by clustering landmark buildings at high points. Therefore crucially tall buildings within the Living Wall should not counteract this vision and flatten the skyline.
- Strategic area principles

Knowledge Hub / Town End

1. Town Hall
2. Court House
3. Magistrates Court
4. Police Headquarters
5. Westgate Offices
6. Gateway Development
7. Proposed Development Site - Dunnes Mixed use site
8. Redevelopment site (former supermarket)
9. Digital Media Centre

The following principles apply:
- Gateway Plaza creates a strong cascading landmark to highlight the Town End Gateway
- Tall buildings should be discouraged at the base of the slope to avoid flattening the topography and the existing cascade of buildings. (High quality gateway buildings are to be encouraged adjacent to the Town End roundabout, however these should not be tall).
- Gateway Plaza creates a peak in terms of development with existing and future development stepping down from this in all directions
- Whilst the existing tall building cluster is relatively built out, any future opportunities shall emphasise the cluster, respect the Gateway Plaza peak and the scale of adjacent residential use.
- This strategic area is situated at the highest point in the Town centre boundary.

The indicative sections describes the proposed aerial contours to guide the height of future developments.
Knowledge Hub / Courthouse Campus

1. Proposed College Building
2. Telephone Interchange Building
3. Sci-Tech Building
4. Voluntary Action Barnsley (The Core) - Under Construction
5. Digital Media Centre
6. Interchange, Bus Station / Railway Station
7. Town Hall
8. Proposed Black and Ethnic Minorities Initiative building

The following principles apply:

- A fledgling tall building cluster occurs to the north west of the Courthouse Campus development site, which should be encouraged through further development
- The proposed Barnsley College building will create a peak in terms of development height. This presents the opportunity for new buildings to cascade down towards the railway, using the existing topography
- New development should respond to and safeguard the residential scale to the north of Old Mill Lane
- New development should safeguard and frame distant views of the Town Hall
- New development should avoid visual impact on the conservation area
- Whilst there is clearly a role for taller development in the southern half of the Courthouse site in response to the Digital Media Centre, development here must be sensitively located in order to safeguard and emphasise strategic views from the north east of the town centre towards the Town Hall.

The indicative section describes the proposed aerial contours to guide the height of future developments
Markets / Alhambra / Heelis Street

1. Proposed Markets Development Site
2. Proposed Markets Car Park
3. Alhambra Shopping Centre
4. Heelis Street Development
5. Joseph Locke House

The following principles apply:

- As the topography falls towards the proposed Markets site the Heelis Street building creates a high point. From here the building heights should fall, as an extrusion of the falling topography.
- The new markets building will be incorporated in the building cascade. There is potential for an exclamation mark feature within the markets development, as proposed.
- All new developments should relative to the topography with the Heelis Street building forming a peak.
- Continuing along Heelis Street to the south there is opportunity for development, it is strongly emphasised that this area could be used as an example of the towns cascade.
- To the south of the Heelis Street development there is opportunity to have tall buildings, which will cascade towards the market development site.
- Careful considerations regarding over shadowing for example will need to be carried out not to have an impact on existing townscape.
DESIGN PRINCIPLES & GUIDELINES
• Design quality

Code 1: Design Quality

New tall buildings within Barnsley Town Centre must be of the highest design quality. Recent architecture such as the Digital Media Centre and Westgate Plaza have set a benchmark for quality taller development. The Vision for Barnsley aims to celebrate rather than conceal tall buildings and therefore this approach demands excellence in design to ensure their positive contribution to the skyline, to maximise their ability to attract investment, and to generate a positive emotional response.

Investment in good design, detailing and materials is crucial in achieving quality architecture and place making. Tall buildings in Barnsley should be proud, functional and beautiful whether they are futuristic or traditional in style. They should evoke cultural and community importance and improve the human experience of the town centre. At best tall buildings can capture public imagination, promote civic pride and become well recognised landmarks.

Planning Checklist:

Applicants will be generally required to:
- Provide a design statement which clearly outlines the rationale, architectural intent and design quality of the proposal
- Demonstrate how the proposals support the vision set out in this study and Barnsley’s wider Renaissance goals.
- Enter into pre-application discussions with the council and present emerging proposals to the Barnsley Urban Renaissance Design Advisory Panel. In addition, depending on the scale and impact of the proposal, BMBC may insist that the applicant should consult with external review organisations such as CABE and English Heritage.

The Interchange building is a new and brave addition to the townscape. This colourful, asymmetric building gives Barnsley a welcoming feel from the moment you arrive. Its apparent user friendliness helps transcend public debate over its modern design.

The Digital Media Centre is one of a number of recent additions to Barnsley’s townscape which inspire and set a precedent for high quality architecture.

The Digital Media Centre is one of a number of recent additions to Barnsley’s townscape which inspire and set a precedent for high quality architecture.

The Sage Building in Gateshead/Newcastle is a symbol of regeneration on the landmark riverside.

Large scale, high quality new development in London provides a sense of place within the capital.
Issues of visual impact and intrusion are the most frequent reason for objections to tall building proposals in the UK. As a result, applicants will be required to demonstrate how their proposal maximises its positive visual aspects, such as vista termination and way finding, and mitigates any negative visual impacts.

Views
Retaining and enhancing strategic and local views through the sensitive siting of tall buildings is a key objective. Consideration should also be given to what is 'lost' and 'gained' in terms of views both to and from a proposed building.

Landform
Wherever possible buildings should align to follow slope contours to work with the topographical grain of the landscape therefore creating complementary ‘aerial contours’. This will help create peaks, troughs and the ‘cascading’ effect.

Well designed tall buildings do not need to be ‘hidden’ and this approach is highlighted by the vision which suggests that tall buildings in Barnsley should be celebrated and can help emphasise the distinctive hill town topography. That said the strategy plan does not exclude taller buildings from low points and sets out a number of opportunities. These include gateway sites or areas where punctuation marks can add to the skyline whilst safeguarding strategic views.

Spires and Towers & Plant
Vertical elements within the townscape adds richness and detail to the skyline and should be encouraged. Spikes and towers should add accents and punctuation using elegant slender forms. Plant shall be where possible incorporated within the building form. In other cases the form of the roof line or containment of plant shall effectively screen it from view to avoid negative visual impact.

Planning Checklist:
Applicants will be generally required to:
- Demonstrate how the proposal sits within the existing townscape and landform. The applicant must provide 360 degree evaluations of the potential visual impact of the proposal on the urban context. This should include statements and illustrations that analyse impacts on:
  - The built and natural environment;
  - Key strategic and local views, approaches and gateways;
  - The setting of conservation areas and listed buildings;
  - The contribution that the proposal would make to the visual quality of the area.
- Describe the extent to which the proposal supports the creation of tall building clusters and cascades as set out in the vision.
- Produce an appropriate strategy for plant and masts for all buildings as required. Where plant and masts cannot be included within the roofline the applicant must demonstrate that they do not detract from the aesthetics of the building and its context.
• Urban integration

Code 3: Urban Integration

New tall buildings in Barnsley must respect the distinctive character and urban context. They should take opportunities to enhance the quality of the surrounding area.

Form & Proportion
The highest quality architecture and form is expected of new tall buildings in Barnsley Town Centre. The form of any proposed tall building not only must sit well within its urban context but also add something. Its proportions should be elegant and articulated to respond to its surroundings. The building footprint and development density must not overwhelm the site and allow sufficient space to provide for the buildings functions (access, open space, parking etc.)

Massing and Scale
Massing and the manipulation of the perception of the scale of tall buildings is important in integrating new development into the established urban pattern of the town centre. New tall buildings need to respect surrounding building heights, depths and street frontage and avoid exacerbating the difference in scale with neighbouring built form. In general, boxy and slab like massing should be avoided. Where taller landmarks are proposed there is a strong preference for massing that reflects a slender and elegant form that is able to contribute to an attractive skyline as well as present a more human scale at street level.

Alignment
New tall buildings need to make reference to their surroundings through the proportions of their footprint, and its relationship with the existing alignment of development in the area. In addition, aligning tall buildings to terminate visual axes or to frame scenes, can maximise the positive aspects of the buildings scale and contribute to improved legibility and navigation of the urban environment.

Planning Checklist:

Applicants will be generally required to;
• Provide a statement that describes in detail the rationale for the form of the proposal. The statement should take into account its response and contribution to its urban context and the skyline through form, proportion, articulation, massing, scale and landmark status (if appropriate)
Tall buildings should be welcoming, highly accessible and user friendly. In addition to providing access and social infrastructure that responds to the use/s (retail, commercial, civic, residential etc) they should maximise their benefit to surrounding communities and their integration to the local area. In particular, high quality open space, recreation, restaurants, leisure and educational facilities could be included within schemes.

Accessibility
To meet highest standards of public accessibility new tall buildings in Barnsley must comply with current building codes, current building legislation and must also be fully compliant with all aspects of disability discrimination (DDA) legislation. New tall developments should strive to be as accessible as possible to all people through the provision of ramps, lifts, gentle rising steps with landings, clear signage & branding, sensitive & appropriate lighting schemes, non slip surfaces, contrasting colour & texture schemes, automatic opening doors, appropriately placed seating and clear & legible internal layouts.

Social Infrastructure
All new tall building proposals must assess the current capacity of local infrastructure and facilities such as road networks, public transport, open space, playgrounds, schools and child care, and health care and then identify what additional amenities and services are needed to support the new development. Proposals should outline the potential to incorporate facilities within the building or contribute to the capacity of social infrastructure and facilities in the local area. Pre-application discussions are recommended with the planning authority to determine whether deficiencies have been identified in the areas’ social infrastructure. Tall buildings proposals should demonstrate quality of life issues for both the users and wider community.
Sustainability and environment

Code 5: Sustainability and Environment

A heightened public awareness of environmental issues, advancements in construction technology and a raised awareness of design in general have paved the way for sustainability to be recognised as a crucial element in the future planning and development of our cities. Tall buildings have a strong role to play in the delivery of sustainable communities.

Planning Checklist:

Applicants will be generally required to;

- Describe how the proposal contributes to social inclusion, environmental health and economic vitality of its local area.
- Provide a statement outlining how the proposal will achieve best practice in sustainability. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate how proposals will achieve Excellent ratings in the BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) or EcoHomes, or a similar approved environmental rating scheme. Particular consideration should be given to issues of:
  - Energy management, including production from alternative sources
  - Resource conservation
  - Materials specification
  - Waste management
  - Climatic considerations
  - Adaptability
- Demonstrate how the scheme addresses environmental issues related to shade, light and wind.

Shade, Light and Wind

Tall buildings over a certain height can adversely effect the environmental quality of surrounding areas through the diversion of high speed winds to ground level and through the overshadowing of adjacent development and public spaces. The impact of both of these elements can be mitigated through good design and sensitive siting. The use of architectural devices such as screens, terraces and awnings and also facade set backs can be adopted to minimise the effects of high speed wind at the bases of tall buildings. Individual proposals should seek to create well orientated and lively spaces that positively contribute to the wider public realm.

BedZed (Beddington Zero Energy Development), Sutton Surrey, is the UK’s first successful environmentally-friendly, energy-efficient mixed-use development.

Kendry Street, highlighting the problem with overshadowing, creating an unpleasant experience for pedestrians on this street.

Extreme overshadowing of surrounding buildings significantly compromises the quality of the public realm below.

Buildings should maximise south facing facades to utilise natural lighting and solar gain. Such as the Westgate Plaza office building.
• Streetscape and Open Space

Code 6: Streetscape and Open Space

Tall buildings should reflect their surroundings and enhance the streetscape and associated public/private space. Their footprint and plot layout should create high quality usable exterior space.

Parking & Servicing
Parking provision shall meet BMBC requirements. In general, parking should have natural surveillance and be contained within the development or located behind the building and not in front. Servicing and associated infrastructure such as bin storage shall well integrated, functional and if possible hidden.

Streetscape Integration and Building Reception Space
Tall buildings should be designed in such a way as to ensure safe, attractive and comfortable spaces, both outside and inside of the building. Entrances should be welcoming and legible. Building setbacks may be appropriate to create an associated public space. Frontages and ground floor uses should enliven the streetscape. Public realm associated with tall buildings shall be of the highest quality and be developed in reference to the Barnsley Town Centre Public Spaces Strategy (2009).

Open Space Provision
Spaces should have their edges well defined by development and be enlivened by adjacent uses. Proposals should seek to create functional and lively spaces that positively contribute, and serve both the users of the building and where appropriate the wider community. For example a mixed use residential/retail development will require a different approach to that of a civic building. Tall buildings can successfully integrate a variety of public and private spaces within the envelope of the building. Proposed developments are encouraged to explore these options which might include private or public courtyards, roof terraces, large private balconies or viewing platforms.

Planning Checklist:
Applicants will be generally required to:
• Describe the developments approach to parking and servicing
• Describe how the proposal contributes to the streetscape and the aims of the Barnsley Town Centre Public Spaces Strategy. Key issues for consideration include active frontages and natural surveillance, legible entrances, the relationship of the proposal to the existing streetscape and defining and animating the public realm.
• Consider how the scheme contributes towards high quality public and private spaces with particular consideration for:
  - Use
  - High design quality
  - Climatic comfort
  - Solar access
  - Adjacent uses
  - Quality of materials.
  - long term maintenance and management of open space.

Active ground floor frontages can be important in creating activity and continuity in the streetscape.

Proposals should provide both public and private space and explore a variety of methods to deliver the appropriate mix and type.

Quality public space helps create communities in our urban centres.
• Planning Checklist

In Section 1 (p.5) the full application requirements are set out. The following checklist should be used as a tool to demonstrate compliance with the design code components.

**CODE 1**

**Design quality**

Planning Checklist:

☐ Provide a design statement which clearly outlines the rationale, architectural intent and design quality of the proposal.

☐ Demonstrate how the proposals support the vision set out in this study and Barnsley’s wider Renaissance goals.

☐ To increase the probability of approval being granted the applicant is encouraged to enter into pre-application discussions with the council and may be required to present emerging proposals to the Barnsley Urban Renaissance Design Advisory Panel. In addition, depending on the scale and impact of the proposal, BMBC may insist that the applicant consult with external review organisations such as CABE and English Heritage.

**CODE 2**

**Visual impact**

Planning Checklist:

☐ Demonstrate how the proposal sits within the existing townscape and landform. The applicant must provide 360 degree evaluations of the potential visual impact of the proposal on the urban context. This should include statements and illustrations that analyse impacts on:

- The built and natural environment;
- Key strategic and local views, approaches and gateways;
- The setting of conservation areas and listed buildings;
- The contribution that the proposal would make to the visual quality of the area.

☐ Where applicable describe the extent to which the proposal supports the creation of tall building clusters and cascades as set out in the vision.

☐ All buildings must produce an appropriate strategy for plant and masts. Where plant and masts cannot be included within the roofline the applicant must demonstrate that they do not detract from the aesthetics of the building and its context.

**CODE 3**

**Urban integration**

Planning Checklist:

☐ Provide a statement that describes in detail the rationale for the form of the proposal. The statement should take into account its response and contribution to its urban context and the skyline through form, proportion, articulation, massing, scale and landmark status (if appropriate).
Access and social infrastructure

Planning Checklist:
- In what way does the proposed building consider quality of life issues for users of the development?
- Demonstrate that the proposal meets or exceeds accessibility requirements and ensure that the building provides suitable access for all.
- Provide an assessment of the current capacity of social public infrastructure and facilities and identify what additional infrastructure and facilities are required as a result of the proposed development.
- If additional infrastructure is required can it be incorporated within the proposal? Or are contributions to off-site infrastructure required?

Sustainability and environment

Planning Checklist:
- Describe how the proposal contributes to social inclusion, environmental health and economic vitality of its local area.
- Provide a statement outlining how the proposal will achieve best practice in sustainability. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate how proposals will achieve Excellent ratings in the BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) or EcoHomes, or a similar approved environmental rating scheme. Particular consideration should be given to issues of:
  - Energy management, including production from alternative sources
  - Resource conservation
  - Materials specification
  - Waste management
  - Climatic considerations
  - Adaptability
- Demonstrate how the scheme addresses environmental issues related to shade, light and wind.

Streetscape and Open Space

Planning Checklist:
- Describe the development’s approach to parking and servicing.
- Describe how the proposal contributes to the streetscape and the aims of the Barnsley Town Centre Public Spaces Strategy. Key issues for consideration include active frontages and natural surveillance, legible entrances, the relationship of the proposal to the existing streetscape and defining and animating the public realm.
- How has the scheme been designed to create high quality public and private spaces? Particular consideration should be given to:
  - Use
  - High design quality
  - Climatic comfort
  - Solar access
  - Adjacent uses
  - Quality of materials
  - Long term maintenance and management of open space.
CONCLUSION
**Conclusion**

This guidance represents the beginning for Barnsley Town Centre’s new vision for tall buildings and the following recommendations are made for future consideration:

- BMBC to carry out periodic assessments to evaluate the evolving townscape and refresh the guidance contained within Building Heights Study to meet current needs.
- BMBC to explore opportunity to build a digital 3d model of the town centre containing building blocks and topography to accompany the Building Heights Study for development control purposes. This tool would allow proposed new developments to be illustrated and tested within the context of the town centre and to track the resulting townscape as it evolves.

The guidance is designed to strongly encourage the ‘Cascading hill side town’ for Barnsley. By guiding the heights of building around the town centre area Barnsley can be developed to have a recognisable skyline which fits well with the surrounding topography and builds up existing assets.

**The Barnsley Skyline Vision**, showing the Cascade of building down the topography, highlighting the building cluster on the top of the ridgeline and the exclamation marks of a couple of exceptions to the cascade.