NEW ADDITION TO THE DHA GROUP

With an ever uncertain environmental and political climate, change is inevitable. As part of the DHA Group, DHA Transport specialises in exploring scenarios and creating flexible transport options to minimise future costs and provide sustainable results.

Established in December 2009 by Jason Lewis and Alex Hicken, DHA Transport prides itself on innovation in order to provide optimum development scenarios. We use a wide range of technical and practical techniques to create the best strategies for managing transport problems and meeting our clients’ needs.

Jason Lewis, Transport Director, has over 20 years experience in the sector, having previously held posts at Scott Wilson, WSP and Kent Highways and is ably assisted by an Auto CAD technician and junior transport planner.

Using our detailed knowledge and understanding of transport planning, the Highways Act and Government processes, we are able to offer a wide range of expertise in the following areas: Integrated Transport Planning; Transport Assessments; Traffic Modelling and Travel Plans. For further information about DHA Transport and its services, please contact Jason Lewis.

SUPERSEDED KENT & MEDWAY STRUCTURE PLAN
TRANSPORT POLICIES RESURRECTED

Kent Highway Services are currently drafting new transport policy guidance to replace those policies lost when the Kent and Medway Structure Plan (KMSP) was superseded by the South East Plan. Of note is the KMSP policy restricting development access creation on the primary and secondary road network, which in the past held back development with frontages onto principal and secondary ‘A’ class roads.

Kent Highway Services hope to present the draft policies to their Scrutiny Committee at the end of March, with the policy being approved by the Government Office some time during the summer of 2010. All planning applications submitted after this time will be subject to these new policy restrictions. A hiatus period exists between now and the introduction of the Policies in the summer, where developers could potentially avoid more stringent transport planning and highway access controls.

KENT ADOPTS NEW JUNCTION VISIBILITY STANDARDS

The Kent Design Guide has recently undergone review, with access visibility, parking and quality audit guidance being revised to take account of recent changes to overarching Government guidance, such as that in Manual for Streets published in 2007.

Access and junction visibility standards have changed markedly from standards used in previous years. It is now acknowledged that visibility distances, previously based on outdated advice in the Highway Code, are unreasonably high. Research undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory has resulted in visibility design standards being drastically lowered from the historic norm.

Kent Design uses a new formula approach to derive appropriate access visibility splays, on a site by site basis using traffic speed data. Initial experience shows that many sites which would previously have not met access standards are now able to progress through planning. For more information please contact Jason Lewis.

NEW DWELLINGS ON OLD FARM

DHA acted as the planning consultant for Barratt Homes for the successful submission of a full application for 74 new homes at Brisley Farm in Ashford. 30% of the units will be affordable homes, all built to Code for Sustainable Homes level 3. The site benefited from an outline permission for a school dating back some 15 years, which was subsequently deemed surplus to requirements.

ENGINEERING SUCCESS

On behalf of Amsbury Developments Ltd, DHA have secured full planning permission for the redevelopment of the former Cranbrook Engineering site in the centre of Cranbrook to create a mixed use development comprising 14 residential units, retail and office uses, together with landscaping, parking and the creation of a new footpath link. Most of the former garage and workshop site has been vacant for several years, detracting from the town’s sensitive Conservation Area.

The design of the approved scheme was the result of five years of discussion with Planning and Conservation Officers from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and a public consultation event held in November 2008. English Heritage agreed that the design, by csdp architecture, preserves and enhances the character of the Conservation Area and would not harm the setting of nearby Listed Buildings.

An earlier version of the scheme was refused at Planning Committee in August 2009 despite widespread support from Planning Officers and the public. DHA and Amsbury submitted an appeal, whilst also negotiating the revised application. The Planning Committee agreed that their previous concerns had been overcome and granted permission in January 2010.

The approved scheme comprises a total of 14 residential units, including five cottages and nine apartments, together with 14 car park spaces. The scheme also provides three ground floor retail units and just over 100m² of office floorspace. A new pedestrian link will also be created through the site linking Stone Street with the Co-operative supermarket car park, along the edge of Wilker’s Field. For more information please contact Jonathan Buckwell or Laura Leatherbarrow.
THE SUSTAINABLE AGENDA?

DHA have a qualified in-house Code for Sustainable Homes Assessor who provides advice to our planners and clients on sustainability issues during the planning process. Many Local Authorities now specify what level of sustainability a development needs to achieve and require details of this to be submitted at the planning application stage.

DHA have produced initial Code Assessments for a range of residential schemes, including a proposed scheme of fourteen Code Level 5 ‘kit homes’ in a rural setting (images right). DHA have also produced BREEM Pre-Assessment Estimators for a wide range of non-residential developments.

We are able to advise on the measures needed to be incorporated into the design of a development in order to achieve a particular level of sustainability, or where seeking a higher than required level could improve the planning prospects of a particular scheme. In addition there are an increasing number of appeal cases where conditions which require a particular Code level are being successfully challenged and we can discuss the prospects of this approach, where applicable.

The Government are currently consulting on changes to the Code for Sustainable Homes which will come into force later this year and are likely to make Code Level 3 harder to achieve. It is important to take a realistic stance regarding sustainability issues, which does not damage the planning prospects of a scheme but also does not impact upon its viability and feasibility if permitted. For more information on the Code for Sustainable Homes or BREEM, or to discuss the sustainability implications for a particular scheme, please contact David Harvey, DHA’s Planning Director.

PPS7 HOUSES

DHA is currently working on a proposal for a 7 bedroom PPS7 house in the Kent countryside. The proposal is to be submitted under an exception clause contained in Planning Policy Statement 7 which allows an isolated dwelling of exceptional design in the countryside. The stringent criteria include ensuring that a proposal is innovative, contemporary and ground breaking, in aspects including design, landscape and sustainability. Given these high standards and the potential for varied interpretation of the wording at local level, gaining a PPS7 approval is notoriously difficult, but not impossible. It is important to select the right consultant team and fully engage and understand the Council’s position at an early stage.

DHA has an in house PPS7 specialist who has completed a major piece of research into such schemes and can advise on the process and the suitability of sites. Please contact Nic Drake for further information.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

Urban design as a subject probably rivals planning in the number of different names for different documents and industry terminology. But what do they really mean? Below is a select few with the meanings as advised by CABE:

- Conservation area character appraisal - A published document defining the special architectural or historic interest of an area.
- Design assessment - An independent assessment of a design, usually carried out for a local authority by independent consultants.
- Design brief - A document, prepared by a local planning authority, a developer, or jointly, providing guidance on how a site of significant size or sensitivity should be developed. Site-specific briefs are sometimes known as planning briefs, design briefs and development frameworks.
- Planning brief - This guide refers to site-specific briefs as development briefs. Other names, including planning briefs, design briefs and development frameworks are also used.
- Design statement - (a) A pre-application design statement is made by a developer to indicate the design principles on which a development proposal in progress is based. (b) A planning application design statement sets out the design principles that the applicant has adopted in relation to the site and its wider context, as required by PPS1.

Urban design framework - A document which informs the preparation of development plan policies, or sets out in detail how they are to be implemented in a particular area where there is a need to control, guide and promote change. Area development frameworks are also called a variety of other names, including urban design strategies, area development frameworks, spatial masterplans and planning urban design frameworks.

If you think you need any of these for your own project please contact Matthew Woodhead.