

Maidstone Borough Council

Street Furniture Guidelines

Street Furniture

Street furniture, well chosen and appropriately sited can enhance and complement their location discreetly. Carefully considered street furniture and materials can help achieve this by strengthening character, improving the quality of the streetscape and providing people with the things they need to enjoy the town, whilst at the same time having a positive impact on maintenance requirements and sustainability. Without careful consideration, street furniture can have the opposite effect.

The Street Furniture Guidelines (SFG) aims to ensure a consistent, co-ordinated and high quality approach to street furniture in Maidstone town centre. The SFG is designed for everyone who specifies and/or installs street furniture in the town centre. This includes Council officers, developers and contractors.

With advice on general principles, guidance, siting, and installing street furniture, it supports efforts to enhance the character, quality and fitness for purpose of Maidstone town centre's streetscape.

The SFG is based on the general philosophy that the town's public spaces should enhance rather than restrict the ability of all residents to enjoy them to their maximum potential.

Policy Context

The Street Furniture Guidelines contribute to delivery of the town's Public Realm vision as set out in the Public Realm Design Guide. Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) Local Plan sets out the overarching planning policy for the public realm under Council Policy DM1 Principals of good Design. The aims of DM1 most relevant to Street Furniture are:

- Respond positively to and where possible enhance, the local, natural or historic character of the area. Particular regard will be paid to scale, height, materials, detailing, mass, bulk, articulation and site coverage - incorporating a high quality, modern design approach and making use of vernacular materials where appropriate
- Create high quality public realm and, where opportunities permit, provide improvements, particularly in town centre locations.
- Provide a high quality design, which responds to areas of heritage, townscape and landscape value or uplifts an area of poor environmental quality.
- Incorporate measures for the adequate storage of waste, including provision for increasing recyclable waste
- Provide adequate vehicular and cycle parking to meet adopted council standards.

In addition the regeneration of Maidstone town centre is a priority as supported by Policy SP4. The aims of SP4 most relevant to Street Furniture are:

1. Development in the town centre should demonstrate a quality of design that responds positively to the townscape, including ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the town centre's historic fabric.
2. Contributes to the priority public realm and accessibility improvement schemes for the town centre identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Street Furniture Guidelines (SFG)

The SFG set out standard design and installation specifications for the elements that make up the streetscape along with the issues that should be considered when choosing and implementing them.

The following guidelines provide quick and easy access to key information relating to street furniture. Each section is divided into four key areas:

1. General principles that should inform decisions on street furniture.
2. Guidance on which type of street furniture should be used in which location.
3. Siting - guidance on the best locations for items of street furniture
4. Installation - guidance on correct methods of installing the item of street furniture (Please refer to the Westminster Standard and the New Roads and Street Works act 1991 section 50 to cover all legal questions).

Street Furniture

General Principles

Street furniture can facilitate or encourage positive activity within the streetscape; such as seating or cycle stands. It can also prevent behaviour from occurring such as guardrails and bollards. As a general rule, only essential street furniture shall be introduced into the streetscape.

Where an item of street furniture is used to prevent behaviour (for example a bollard preventing vehicles from driving on and damaging a footway), consider whether the problem can be resolved in a different, less intrusive way (such as by strengthening the footway).

If new street furniture is absolutely necessary, consider whether it is able to fulfill a dual function. For example, a bin could be located to also prevent vehicles from damaging a pavement so that a separate bollard is not required.

Avoid including street furniture in a scheme to pre-empt a potential problem that may not actually happen.

Wherever possible, remove redundant items of street furniture when undertaking a project in an area. Consider whether new items of street furniture be combined with existing street furniture to minimise additional clutter. This also applies to utility junction boxes.

Guidance

To ensure consistent quality and character the choice of street furniture for Maidstone town centre should reflect either the standard item for MBC or the agreed character type for the specific zone in which it will be located. Formal furniture can also be commissioned as part of public art but this should be appropriate to the context and identity of the location, and the item must be agreed in advance with MBC's Design and Conservation Team.

Consideration should be given to retaining historic/heritage street furniture. Existing historic street furniture such as lamp columns, monuments and railings may be an important part of Maidstone's heritage. If in any doubt, check with the Council's Design and Conservation Team.

If considering replicating historic designs, ensure details are accurate and authentic.

Consider tonal contrasts between the item of street furniture and wider street-scene so as not to create hazards for visually impaired people.

Ensure all new items of street furniture are recorded on MBC's Asset Database, managed by the Street Scene Manager, Environmental Services Section. The Asset Database requires the location, make, model and manufacturer to enable easier future maintenance or replacement.

Always consider future maintenance implications of street furniture, minimalist solutions are also simple to maintain. All street furniture should be guaranteed to an industry standard of 5 years, but consideration should also be given beyond this time frame – please liaise with the Street Scene Manager, Environmental Services Section.

When undertaking any streetscape works caution must be applied in regard to the protection of tree roots and other underground elements such as utilities.

Where possible, any surfacing material reinstated during the fixing or removal of an item of street furniture should be the same as that used in the surrounding street, in terms of both colour and specification. Where this is not possible the replacement material should complement the primary existing surface material as closely as possible.

If unsure regarding installation always seek advice of Kent County Council's (KCC) Highway Services team or the New Roads and Street Works act 1991 section 50 to cover all legal questions when installing any element of furniture to ensure there is no impact on drainage or water flows.

Damaged street furniture should be repaired, replaced or removed at the earliest opportunity and replaced with like for like.

Public Seating

General Principles

When installing new seating consider the existing offer including: public (e.g. a bench), private (e.g. café), formal (something designed specifically for seating) and informal (something people sit on that is not designed for seating alone; such as steps or a wall) seating opportunities.

Upgrade existing benches if they are unfit for purpose when undertaking a scheme in an area.

Guidance

Both formal and informal seating and can be provided through either an artistic commission or the defined standard for each zone. Where seating is provided through an artistic commission, guidance from the Public Art Policy should be applied.

Siting

Identify a place that people actually want to sit.
Ensure there is sufficient room on the footway to prevent the seating causing an obstruction.

Select a specific location for new seating, considering how users may benefit from the surroundings and sensory experiences.

Protect from unpleasant experiences such as wind, rain and in some instances vehicular traffic.

Installation

As per Westminster Standard. Westminster Standard is adhered to by Maidstone Borough Council Environmental Services Section, and relates to the industry standards for Street Furniture.

Cycle Stands

General Principles

When installing cycle stands explore the surrounding area to determine whether there is an unmet demand, such as cycles attached to other street furniture.

Consider future proofing the scheme by adding more stands than may currently be required. Cycle stands should be installed in banks of 5.

Whenever cycle stands are being considered, contact the MBC's Transport Planning team for advice.

Guidance

Stainless steel Zenith stands should be used in all locations.
Any departure from the prescribed standard will need prior agreement with MBC's Transport Planning and Street Scene teams.

Siting

Cycle stands should be placed in a visible position. Cycle stands should also be placed on cycle desire lines, and is located as close to the user's destination as possible. Ideally, cycle parking should be located within 25 metres of significant destinations (such as a railway station).

Cycle stands should be placed in a position where users feel it is safe to leave their bike, and also in a position where users feel safe at all times of the day. Overlooked, lively locations work better than deserted spaces.

Cycle stands must not impede pedestrian movement.

Installation

As per Westminster Standard (as above)

Litter Bins

General Principles

Ensure necessary and practical bin provision is included as an integral part of the scheme design.

Guidance

All bins throughout the town should be provided with integrated ashtrays (see picture). Please refer to the Street furniture database. Any deviation from the standard bin should be agreed in advance with Streetscene, Waste, Commercialisation and Operations Department.

Siting

Bins should be located as close as possible to sources of rubbish generation, such as bus stops, benches and shop entrances and in positions that enable easy servicing access.

Where possible, site bins close to other items of street furniture (such as lamp columns or bus shelters) to reduce the area taken up by the street furniture collectively.

Bins should not be located in positions that obstruct pedestrian flow.

Installation

The installation of standard MBC bins are overseen by the Street Scene Operations Manager, Environmental Services Section.

Bollards

General principles

In general, the use of bollards should be avoided wherever possible – footway strengthening is always the preferable option. As a secondary use, bollards can be used help to protect upper buildings that overhang onto the public highway.

Wherever possible consider the removal of redundant bollards.

Guidance

Suitably chosen and located bollards can make a positive contribution to the character of a street or area. The borough's standard bollard is set out in the Street Furniture Database where details of the correct historic bollard for each area of the town can also be found.

Choices in relation to materials and deviation from the standard or historic bollard type must be agreed in advance with Council's Maintenance and Design and Conservation teams (and anyone else considered relevant by those teams).

Siting

When bollards are required, their location should not obstruct pedestrian desire lines.

Only use the minimum number of bollards necessary to achieve your objective.

Where more than one bollard is installed, bollards should line up with each other and be regularly spaced.

Installation

Installation of bollards involves removal of the existing footway surface, setting the bollard in concrete foundations, and re-instatement of the footway surface.

When a bollard is reinstated, or a new bollard is provided, surface materials should be carefully re-laid and as close as possible to the primary existing surface material.

Lamp columns

General Principles

Street lighting forms a highly visible and vital part of the streetscape. Lighting is provided to enable safe use of the highway for road users and pedestrians and also helps to promote strong and safe communities. Lighting can also be a key element in successful regeneration projects and can provide an area with a strong visual identity. For Maidstone town centre lighting columns should have fixings for Christmas decorations and a power point.

KCC has a Street Lighting Strategy in place, which outlines the basic principles and standards applying to street lighting in Kent. Some lighting columns that exist in the town centre belong to MBC.

Guidance

The standard colour for lighting columns is light grey (as defined in BS 4800 colour code 00 A O1). Maidstone town centre has adopted different colours for street furniture depending on the zone and therefore the columns may require a different colour. Water based paint in steel blue RAL 5011 and gold should be used as a standard across the town centre with the exception of a standard black & gold for the heritage and historic zone.

This will be agreed with MBC's Conservation Team and KCC prior to installation.

Siting

Siting of guardrail will be governed by the specific requirements of each location, seek guidance from KCC.

Installation

New lighting columns and lanterns must comply with Kent Design Guide and the KCC Street Lighting Policy and Strategy.

Pedestrian Guardrails

General Principles

Guardrails can be unsightly, create a hostile environment for pedestrians and encourage higher vehicle speeds. They can also be expensive to maintain.

Guardrails should be avoided unless there is a clear evidence of its need. KCC provides guidance on procedures to inform provisions and removal of guardrails through their Highways Team.

Siting

Siting of guardrail will be governed by the specific requirements of each location, seek guidance from KCC.

Installation

As per KCC guidelines.

For further guidance and advice please contact:

Street Scene Operations Manager

Environmental Services Section

Maidstone Borough Council Depot, Bircholt Road, Park Wood Trading Estate,
Maidstone, Kent ME15 9XY

W www.maidstone.gov.uk

T 01622 602390

