

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Environment and Regeneration
Date 14 July 2021



STEVENAGE DESIGN GUIDANCE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT 2021: PUBLIC CONSULTATION

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the draft Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2021 (Appendix A).
- 1.2 To seek Members’ approval to carry out public consultation on the draft Stevenage Design Guidance SPD 2021.
- 1.3 To maximise the delivery of high quality design from development in Stevenage and improve the health and wellbeing of the town and its residents, as well as providing sustainable development and mitigating climate change.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the content of the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD 2021 be noted.
- 2.2 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment

and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft SPD prior to its consultation.

- 2.3 That the draft Design Guidance SPD 2021 be published for consultation from 9 August to 4 October 2021.
- 2.4 That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee, held on the 13th July 2021, regarding the content of this report be taken into account as part of the Executive's deliberations on the matter.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are produced to add detail to the policies included in an adopted Local Plan (BD1). They are used to build upon and provide further guidance for development on specific sites or on particular issues. Whilst they are not part of the Development Plan¹ for an area, and cannot add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development, the contents of a SPD are a material consideration when determining a planning application.
- 3.2 The Council has a Design Guide SPD which was adopted in October 2009 (BD2). The document was produced to supplement policies in the District Plan Second review (2004) and focusses on traditional design ideas such as the separation distance of homes and the design of suburban roads. The overarching aim of the SPD is to ensure that development in Stevenage results in optimal design for different areas of development including safety, habitat, privacy etc. It requires developments to include aspects of design that provide model conditions for the residents of Stevenage and for the environment.
- 3.3 The SPD provides instructions of what to provide and how to provide appropriate design of different types of development in Stevenage. For residential development, this includes privacy, separation distances and extensions for example. For non-residential development, the design guide includes less guidance and this is an area that needs refining.

Policy Background

- 3.4 The purpose of the Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2021 is to give more detail to the current Strategic Policy 8: Good design, in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, and also Detailed Policy GD1: High quality design.
- 3.5 National Government have a range of documents that consider levels of differing design standards including:
 - Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard (2015)
 - Living with beauty: promoting health, well-being and sustainable growth (2020)

¹ The Development Plan for an area comprises the adopted Local Plan, the Waste Local Plan, the Minerals Local Plan and any adopted Neighbourhood Plans (of which there are none currently in Stevenage).

- Creating space for beauty: interim report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission (2019)
- Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission (2021)
- National Design Guide (2021)
- Draft National Model Design Code (2021)

These all promote good quality and thoughtful design to enhance environments for residents and biodiversity.

- 3.6 Other SPDs that the Council has already adopted, including the Sustainable Transport SPD and the Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD, have been incorporated and referenced in the document to ensure that the SPD remains robust and relevant.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That the content of the draft Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2021 be noted.

- 4.1 The draft Design Guidance SPD 2021 is included in Appendix A. A broad overview of the key points from the draft version is presented below.

Explanation of the purpose of the Design Guidance

- 4.2 An introduction to the document, what it relates to and how it sits with the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and its role as a material consideration.
- 4.3 A consideration of the components for good design e.g. the appearance of buildings, the form and creation of new streets and spaces and the functionality and practicality that is embedded in design and the visual quality of buildings.
- 4.4 An introduction of the ten characteristics as set out in the National Design Guide. This is to ensure consistency and continuity between national guidance and also our own local guidance.
- The ten characteristics*
- 4.5 **Context** – this section deals with the location of development and the attributes of its immediate, local and regional surroundings. An understanding of the context history and the cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood or region influences the location, siting and design of new developments. It means they are well grounded in their locality and more likely to be acceptable to existing communities. Creating a positive sense of place helps to foster a sense of belonging and contributes to well-being, inclusion and community cohesion.
- 4.6 **Identity** - the identity or character of a place comes from the way that buildings, street and spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine together and how people experience them. It is not just about the buildings or how a place looks, but how it engages with all of the senses. Local character makes places distinctive. Well-designed, sustainable places with a strong identity

give their users, occupiers and owners a sense of pride, helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods.

- 4.7 **Built form** - Built form is the three-dimensional pattern or arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings and open spaces. It is the interrelationship between all these elements that creates an attractive place to live, work and visit, rather than their individual characteristics. Together they create the built environment and contribute to its character and sense of place.
- 4.8 **Movement** - Patterns of movement for people are integral to well-designed places. They include walking and cycling, access to facilities, employment and servicing, parking and the convenience of public transport. They contribute to making high quality places for people to enjoy. They also form a crucial component of urban character. Their success is measured by how they contribute to the quality and character of a place, not only how well they function.
- 4.9 **Nature** - Public open spaces are open to all. They provide opportunities for comfort, relaxation, stimulation and social interaction in a safe environment, to encourage interaction in an open space, its location and structure needs careful consideration along with its activities, versatility and how it can be used and accessed by all groups of people.
- 4.10 **Public spaces** - The quality of the spaces between buildings is as important as the buildings themselves. Public spaces are streets, squares and other spaces that are open to all. They are the setting for most movement. The design of a public space encompasses its siting and integration into the wider network of routes as well as its various elements. These include areas allocated to different users – pedestrians, cyclists and cars – for different purposes such as movement or parking, hard and soft surfaces, street furniture, lighting, signage and public art.
- 4.11 **Uses** - Sustainable places include a mix of uses that support everyday activities, including live, work and play. Well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use. Where there is rapid social and economic change, such as sustainable growth or diversification in rural communities or town centres, well-designed buildings and places are able to accommodate a variety of uses over time.
- 4.12 **Homes and buildings** - Well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them. They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time. Successful buildings also provide attractive, stimulating and positive places for all, whether for activity, interaction, retreat or simply passing by.

4.13 **Resources** - Well-designed places and buildings conserve natural resources including land, water, energy and materials. Their design responds to the impacts of climate change. It identifies measures to achieve:

- mitigation, primarily by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and minimising embodied energy; and
- adaptation to anticipated events, such as rising temperatures and the increasing risk of flooding.

A compact and walkable neighbourhood with a mix of uses and facilities reduces demand for energy and supports health and well-being. It uses land efficiently so helps adaptation by increasing the ability for CO₂ absorption, sustaining natural ecosystems, minimising flood risk and the potential impact of flooding, and reducing overheating and air pollution.

4.14 **Lifespan** - Well-designed places sustain their beauty over the long term. They add to the quality of life of their users and as a result, people are more likely to care for them over their lifespan. They have an emphasis on quality and simplicity.

Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration

4.15 An additional section in the Design Guidance SPD sets out details for the redevelopment of the Town Centre and incorporates work commissioned by the Regeneration Team and the work carried out by Building Design Partnership Ltd (BDP) (BDP is an international firm of architects and engineers).

4.16 The work by BDP deals with the Public Realm Guide for redevelopment of the Town Centre. It looks to ensure continuity between the original buildings and new development in the Town Centre.

4.17 This will include specific visions for open space and ensure that the design of buildings in the Town Centre are reflective of the architectural tone achieved by the Stevenage Development Corporation at the inception of Stevenage.

Appendices

4.18 The appendices in the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD 2021 contain a lot of detail and readers are directed to the relevant sections in accordance to the area of interest.

4.19 The appendices include:

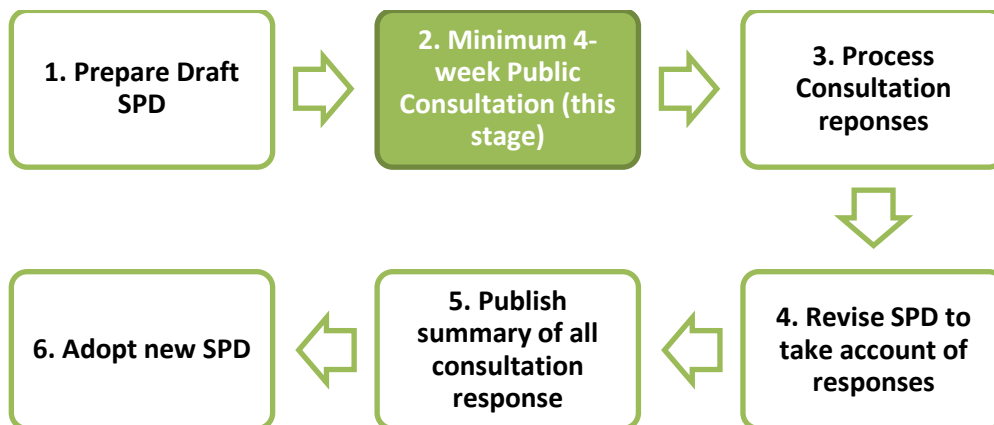
- Stevenage Urban Character Assessments;
- Key shopfront components, including security shutters, canopies and awnings, and illumination etc;
- Building design features, including scale, sunlight, daylight and overshadowing, and landscaping etc; and
- Local Heritage List buildings identified in the Borough.

Recommendation 2.2: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft SPD prior to its consultation.

- 4.20 The draft Design Guidance SPD 2021 is appended to this report. However, it may be necessary to make minor changes prior to the consultation start date. This might include cosmetic adjustments, the correction of typographical errors and any minor factual changes.
- 4.21 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.
- 4.22 Should significant amendments or additions be required to the document, it will be necessary to re-consult on these significant changes and the document will come in front of the Executive again for agreement to further consultation.

Recommendation 2.3: That the draft Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document be published for consultation from 9 August 2021 to 4 October 2021.

- 4.23 The procedure to adopt a new SPD is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. In summary, it is as follows:



- 4.24 The Council must first undertake a consultation for a minimum four week period, however this has been extended to eight weeks to allow for the summer period. Following this, the Council must consider the consultation responses, produce a document stating the main issues raised by respondents, and summarise how the issues have been addressed by the Council.

4.25 The timetable for consultation and adoptions is currently as follows:

Stage	Date
8-week public consultation	9 August – 4 October 2021
Consider and address responses	Autumn 2021
Adopt SPD through Executive	December 2021

4.26 As with any consultation exercise, it is not known how many responses will be received so the post-consultation stages will not be known for definite until a later date.

Recommendation 2.4: That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee, held on the 13th July 2021, regarding the content of this report be taken into account as part of the Executive's deliberations on the matter

4.27 The Planning & Development Committee meet on 13 July 2021, the day before this report is considered by Executive.

4.28 Any comments made at Planning & Development Committee on 13 July 2021 will inform any final decision made by Executive.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on the draft Design Guidance SPD will be met from the agreed departmental budget.
- 5.2 Any potential schemes that are mentioned in the SPD will need to be subject to a business case and/or will require third party funding.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 Consultation on the draft Design Guidance SPD will be undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 5.4 The outcomes of any consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the SPD to take responses into account prior to approval by the Executive.

Risk Implications

- 5.5 There are no significant risks associated with producing the draft Design Guidance SPD.

Policy Implications

- 5.6 The draft Design Guidance SPD accords with, and has been produced to supplement policies in, the adopted Stevenage Local Plan (2019).

Planning Implications

- 5.7 The draft Design Guidance SPD will supplement the recently adopted Stevenage Local Plan (2019).
- 5.8 If adopted after consultation, the document will not form part of the Development Plan for Stevenage. However, it will be a material consideration for planning applications.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.9 The draft Design Guidance SPD has the potential to have a positive impact on climate change through the multiple benefits that prioritising the design of development and incorporating innovative technologies.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.10 The draft Design Guidance SPD does not have any direct equality or diversity implications. When implementing any of the proposals the delivery body will need to consider the potential impacts on different community groups, in particular those who are less mobile or disabled.

Community Safety Implications

- 5.11 Whilst the draft Design Guidance SPD does not have any direct community safety implications itself, when implementing any of the proposals the delivery body will need to consider the potential impacts on community safety.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 [Stevenage Borough Local Plan, 2011-2031](#)
BD2 [Stevenage Design Guide 2009](#)

APPENDICES

- A Draft Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2021