

**Meeting** Executive

**Portfolio Area** Environment and Regeneration

**Date** 9 February 2022



**STEVENAGE DESIGN GUIDANCE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT 2021: PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK**

**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 public consultation (Appendix A).
- 1.2 To seek Members’ approval to significantly amend, in line with the points raised in the Consultation Statement, and to publicly consult on the second draft Stevenage Design Guidance SPD 2021.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the content of the Stevenage Design Guidance SPD 2021 Consultation Statement (Appendix B) 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 second draft SPD prior to its consultation.

- 2.3 That the second draft Design Guidance SPD, as attached at Appendix A, be published for consultation in September 2022 for a minimum of six weeks (speculatively 5 September to 17 October 2022).
- 2.4 That the Local List of Heritage Assets be published on the Stevenage Borough Council Webpage.

### **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 Plan<sup>1</sup> 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 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)

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<sup>1</sup> 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.
- 3.7 To confirm, as requested by the Executive previously, the Design Guidance SPD appendices (Local Heritage List and Public Realm Guidance) were separated out from the main document and were used as supporting documents in order to reduce the length and complexity of the Design Guidance SPD.

#### **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 Consultation Statement be noted.**

- 4.1 The draft Design Guidance SPD 2021 Consultation Statement is included in Appendix A. A broad overview of the key points from the draft version is presented below.
- 4.2 Design Consultants held an All-Member Session in July 2021 to bring them up to date with the National Design Guide in preparation for the public consultation.
- 4.3 Consultation on the draft Design Guidance SPD was held between 20 September to 15 November 2021 and was then extended for a further two weeks until 29 November 2021.
- 4.4 A total of 157 representations were received from a number of key consultees as well as internal teams.
- 4.5 Responses were received from
- Hertfordshire County Council Growth and Infrastructure Team
  - Hertfordshire Constabulary
  - Knebworth Estates
  - Historic England
  - Members of the public
- 4.6 A full summary of responses is provided in Appendix A together with officer responses to each comment.

4.7 The key responses are summarised in the table below

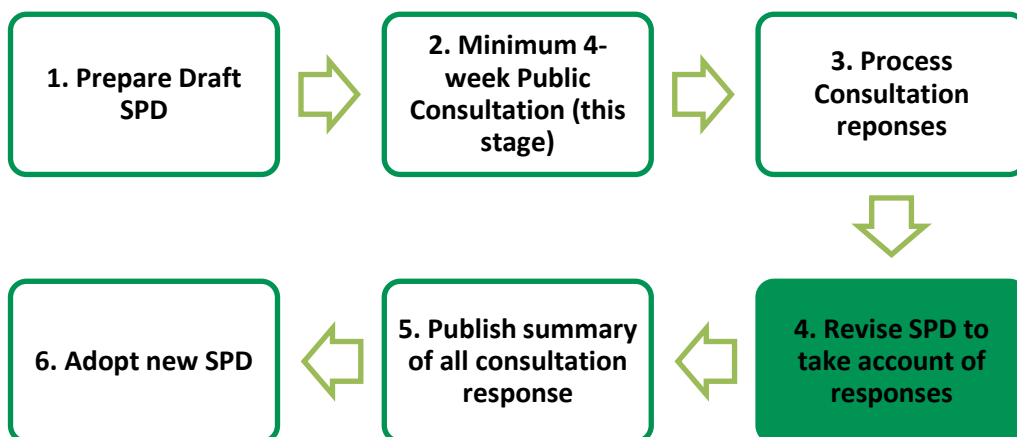
<b>Response</b>	<b>Reasons for Amendment</b>
Remove references to promoting fossil fuel efficiency	To promote the use of sustainable forms of energy supply.
Refer to new and updated documents from Sports England, Herts County Council (HCC) and Historic England	To ensure the robust nature of the document in light of updated reference documents.
Embed 'active design' throughout the document	Help to promote a more physically active and mentally stimulating environment in all aspects of design.
Reconsider the element of movement and how Stevenage was designed to not preclude one or other form of transportation	Ensure that the document is inclusive and supportive of the forms of transport that individuals chose to use.
Review the guidance of signage in the Town centre	Requirements of the Design Guidance SPD exceed what is permitted by law.
Strengthen the guidance relating to building in residential gardens	Gardens are not considered to be previously developed land and this point needs reiterating.
Reference HCC's role as Lead Local Flood Authority	Factual amendment.
Review the proposed species for street tree planting	Biosecurity regulations, for example Ash Dieback.
Review references to hedgerows etc.	The use of the word 'attractive' implies negativity to something that is aesthetically unattractive, would be more appropriate to use alternative language such as 'important' or 'valued'.
Updated document in relation to Part Q of Building Regulations	To ensure the robust nature of the document in light of updated reference documents.
Update lighting standards	To ensure the robust nature of the document in light of updated reference documents.

**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 second draft SPD prior to its consultation.**

- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.

**Recommendation 2.3: That the second draft Design Guidance SPD be published for consultation in September 2022 for a minimum of six weeks (speculatively 5 September to 17 October 2022).**

- 4.10 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:



- 4.11 We have completed the first consultation for a minimum four week 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.
- 4.12 Because the amendments that need to be made to the document are deemed significant, the document will need to be consulted upon once again once the amendments have been made.
- 4.13 The proposed second consultation in September allows time for officers to work on the document and ensure that is preparation is thorough prior to the consultation.
- 4.14 The current Design Guide SPD, 2009, is still a material consideration in the determination of planning applications; as is the draft Design Guidance SPD, as per the consultation version 2021, although to a lesser extent. This means that we are not undermining our position in terms of design in the period of our second consultation.

- 4.15 In addition, the second consultation ensures that we exercise good practice in relation to the amendments that we need to make.
- 4.16 The second consultation will be an appropriate consultation, in line with the Regulations, given the responses from the first consultation. In addition, it does provide an opportunity to further publicise the good work that the Council are doing in relation to the design of buildings and public realm in the Borough.
- 4.17 The timetable for consultation and adoption has been updated and is currently as follows:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Date</b>
Planning and Development Committee	31 January 2022
Executive	9 February 2022
8-week public consultation	September – October 2022
Consider and address responses	Autumn 2022
Adopt SPD through Executive	December 2022

- 4.18 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 Local List of Heritage Assets be published on the Stevenage Borough Council Webpage.**

- 4.19 The Local Heritage List, that acts as a supporting document to the Design Guidance 2021, has been published on the Council's webpage along with information detailing how nominations for new buildings and the associated evaluation criteria.
- 4.20 This is a live document and buildings will be assessed as and when they are submitted to the Planning Policy Team.
- 4.21 In due course, the List will be expanded to include art, sculpture and parks.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on the second 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 Borough Local Plan (2019).

### **Planning Implications**

- 5.7 The draft Design Guidance SPD will supplement the recently adopted Stevenage Borough 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 SPD

BD3 Local Heritage List

<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s28792/Item%206%20-%20Appendix%20A%20-%20Design%20Guidance%20SPD%202021.pdf>

BD4 Town Centre Public Realm Design

<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s28793/Item%206%20-%20Appendix%20E%20to%20Appendix%20A%20-%20BDP%20work.pdf>

## **APPENDICES**

A Draft Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2021

B Consultation Statement