

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Environment and Performance
Date 12 February 2025



NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY UPDATE AND ADOPTION OF REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of changes to three Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).
- 1.2 To provide Members with a brief update to changes in national planning legislation and guidance.
- 1.3 To seek Members' approval to adopt three amended SPDs: Parking Provision, Developer Contributions and Design Guidance SPDs.
- 1.4 It is important for Cabinet to note and acknowledge that the key reason for the Council's proposals to revise its existing adopted SPDs is to ensure that the Council has a complete and up to date, technically compliant suite of Planning Policy documents, supporting the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update when it is submitted to the Secretary of State later this year; otherwise the existing SPDs run the risk of being out of date in regard to upcoming planning decisions. The updated SPDs will create further positive benefits for the local community.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the content of the three revised Stevenage Supplementary Planning Documents: Parking Provision SPD, Developer Contributions SPD and Design Guidance SPD; and note the public consultation on the three revised Supplementary Planning Documents, held between 14 October and 24 November 2024.
- 2.2 Approve adoption of the three revised Supplementary Planning Documents: Parking Provision SPD, Developer Contributions SPD and Design Guidance SPD, from 28 February 2025.
- 2.3 Agree that delegated powers be granted to the Interim Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the SPD documents prior to adoption.
- 2.4 Note that the comments of the Planning & Development Committee on the content of this Report will be sought and fed back to Cabinet.

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 Applications will be assessed against the standards contained within them. The SPDs should be read in conjunction with policies in the adopted Stevenage Local Plan.

Policy Background

- 3.3 The procedure to adopt a SPD is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. In summary, the process runs as follows:
 - Prepare draft SPD;
 - Minimum 4-week public consultation (normally 6 weeks);
 - Process public consultation responses;
 - Revise SPD to take account of responses;
 - Publish summary of all consultation responses (consultation statement);
 - Adopt new SPD.

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).

- 3.4 The Council has already adopted a suite of SPDs, including:
- Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD (adopted October 2020) [BD2]
 - Developer Contributions SPD (adopted March 2021) [BD3]
 - Design Guidance SPD (adopted January 2023) [BD4]

- 3.5 A fourth SPD, “The Impact of Development on Biodiversity” SPD, previously adopted in March 2021, was revoked in November 2023 following approval by this Cabinet [BD5]. A statement of revocation was forwarded to the Secretary of State to this effect.

Parking Provision & Sustainable Transport SPD

- 3.6 The current Parking Provision & Sustainable Transport SPD was adopted on 12 October 2020.

- 3.7 The Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been produced to supplement policies SP6, IT5, and IT8 of the Stevenage Local Plan (adopted 2019). Upon adoption, it replaced the Stevenage Borough Council Parking Provision SPD (adopted 2012).

- 3.8 The purpose of this document is to explain the Council’s proposed approach to parking provision within new developments. Its intention is to provide clear guidance and certainty for developers and communities. As well as guidance on traditional aspects of parking, the SPD also provides guidance on related issues not covered in the previous Parking Provision SPD with the aim of promoting sustainable modes of transport.

- 3.9 Standards are put forward for the quantity of car parking, cycle parking, and disabled parking at all new developments. The document also provides guidance on the layout and design of these. Requirements for the provision of charging infrastructure are given to help ensure the expected rise in electric vehicle-use is realised and support is given for the implementation and installation of a cycle hire scheme and cycling hubs in line with the Council’s promotion of cycling. The use of public transport is also covered by this document with references to bus priority measures and the potential for a park and ride scheme.

- 3.10 The SPD provides further planning guidance under the following sections:

- Residential Parking Standards
- Non-Residential Parking Standards
- Mixed-Use Sites and Town Centre Parking Provision
- Electrical Charging
- Additional Requirements
- Cycle Parking Standards
- Transport Statements, Assessments, and Travel Plans

- Design and Layout
- Accessibility Contributions

Developer Contributions SPD

- 3.11 The current Developer Contributions SPD was adopted on 18 March 2021.
- 3.12 The aim of this SPD is to set out the Council's proposed approach to the use of Section 106 (S106) agreements to secure developer contributions from new developments. This will assist planning officers, applicants, service providers, Councillors and members of the public through the planning application process, ensuring that the process is fair and transparent and is applied consistently.
- 3.13 Developer Contributions, commonly known as planning obligations, are legal obligations entered into to mitigate impacts of a proposed development. They are entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990(2) by the developer and / or landowner, the local planning authority, and potentially other service or infrastructure providers linked to a proposal or mitigation scheme. They are legally binding and enforceable.
- 3.14 The other main form of developer contribution is the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Stevenage Borough Council adopted a CIL Charging Schedule in January 2020 and started implementing CIL on 1 April 2020. CIL is a non-negotiable charge on new built development which meets the thresholds identified in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (2010) (3) (as amended). CIL replaces the need to secure developer contributions through S106 agreements in many instances, allowing for infrastructure and service provision to be planned and implemented on a more strategic, borough-wide scale rather than in a piecemeal approach as mitigation against the impacts of individual developments.
- 3.15 The Council must publish its CIL funding priorities each year in an Infrastructure Funding Statement. Like S106 agreements, CIL liabilities are legally binding and enforceable, albeit through different legislative procedures.
- 3.16 The Council will still require applicants to enter into S106 agreements in some instances. This document sets out the instances where S106 agreements will be sought, what will be included in them, and how contributions will be calculated.
- 3.17 In essence, this document should be used to identify where developer contributions may be required in addition to the payment of a CIL charge for a proposed development. The Council advises that applicants always engage fully with the local planning authority and other infrastructure / service providers near the time of submitting an application to gain a better understanding of the exact amounts they may be expected to contribute.
- 3.18 The main topics covered in this SPD are:
- Community Infrastructure Levy
 - Hertfordshire County Council contributions
 - Housing
 - Commuted Sums to mitigate against policy non-compliance

- Site-specific mitigation
- Employment opportunities
- Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport (linked to Parking Provision & Sustainable Transport SPD)
- Monitoring fees

Design Guidance SPD

- 3.19 The current Design Guidance SPD was adopted on 30 January 2023.
- 3.20 Stevenage Design Guidance supports the strategic and detailed policies in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan. This guidance forms a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which is an additional 'material consideration' in planning decisions. This guidance replaced the Stevenage Design Guide 2009; updating advice where appropriate and providing new guidance on matters introduced or strengthened in the Local Plan including long-term sustainability through the use of durable, low maintenance materials.
- 3.21 This Stevenage Design Guidance sets out clear design principles to guide future development in Stevenage. It encourages a design led approach to all development, from large residential schemes to modest residential extensions and small infill developments.
- 3.22 The SPD provides design principles for all developments, accompanied by illustrations and good practice examples, to help deliver good design and clearly signpost where more detailed guidance can be accessed.
- 3.23 The National Design Guide (2021) notes that well-designed places have individual characteristics which work together to create its physical character. These ten characteristics help to nurture and sustain a sense of community. They work positively to address environmental issues affecting climate. They all contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the NPPF.
- 3.24 This document is divided up into each of these ten characteristics in order to ensure that this guidance reflects accurately the characteristics of the National Design Guide:
- Context
 - Identity
 - Built Form
 - Movement
 - Nature
 - Public Spaces
 - Uses
 - Homes and Buildings
 - Resources
 - Lifespan

National Planning Policy Changes

- 3.25 The previous version of the NPPF was updated on 20 December 2023 [BD6]. Key suggestions by Government for plan-making in the future for Stevenage Borough Council to consider, include:
- Plan-makers will have until 30 June 2025 to submit their local plans, neighbourhood plans, minerals and waste plans, and spatial development strategies for independent examination under the existing legal framework. The Government is also proposing that, to be examined under existing legislation, all independent examinations of local plans, minerals and waste plans and spatial development strategies must be concluded, with plans adopted by 31 December 2026.
 - Authorities that do not meet the 30 June 2025 submission deadline for 'old-style' plans will need to prepare plans under the new plan-making system.
 - Authorities will be required to start work on new plans by, at the latest, five years after adoption of their previous plan, and to adopt that new plan within 30 months. Plans that will become more than five years old during the first 30 months of the new system will continue to be considered 'up-to-date' for decision-making purposes for 30 months after the new system starts.
 - Authorities will no longer be able to prepare supplementary planning documents (SPDs) in the revised planning system. Instead, they will be able to prepare Supplementary Plans, which will be afforded the same weight as a local plan or minerals and waste plan. The government proposes that, when the new system comes into force, existing SPDs will remain in force for a time-bound period; until the local planning authority is required to adopt a new style plan. Current SPDs will automatically cease to have effect at the point at which authorities are required to have a new-style plan in place.
- 3.26 On 30 July 2024, the new Government published its anticipated consultation which set out their approach to revising the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in order to achieve sustainable growth in England's planning system [BD7]. A key amendment is as follows:
- Plan-makers will have until 31 December 2026 ~~30 June 2025~~ to submit their local plans, neighbourhood plans, minerals and waste plans, and spatial development strategies for independent examination under the existing legal framework.
 - Transitional arrangements regarding Local Plans mean that as long as a Local Plan is at Regulation 19 stage one month after publication of the new NPPF, then the plan making process to adoption can continue under the old system.
- 3.27 The reason for the proposed changes to the NPPF as well as reform the planning system is because they have made clear that sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of the country as well as the living standards of working people. The approach to deliver this growth will focus on three pillars: stability, investment and reform.
- 3.28 It is considered by Government that the December 2023 changes to the NPPF were disruptive to the sector and has been detrimental to housing supply. The reforms outlined in the consultation with the respect to the NPPF will take on

a more growth-focused approach. The proposed changes to the framework with an ambition to have universal and ambitious local plan coverage are vital in order to achieve economic growth and to be 1.5 million new homes.

- 3.29 On 12 December 2024, Government released the updated NPPF [BD8]. It promises significant changes to housing delivery, Green Belt planning, and Local Plan collaboration. The new NPPF takes immediate effect for all planning decisions, this includes all live planning applications which are yet to be determined by the Council.
- 3.30 For Local Plan making, there is a minimal transition period of three months from 12 December 2024 to 12 March 2025 whereby plans can proceed under the former NPPF (December 2023). However, the Local Plan must be at Regulation 19 pre-submission publication stage before 12 March 2025 and its draft housing requirement meets at least 80% of local housing need.
- 3.31 The intention of the above is to encourage Councils to prepare up-to-date Local Plans which have been prepared in accordance with the 2024 version of the NPPF.
- 3.32 Overall, the key changes include:
- Flexibility in Housing Plans: Local councils now have more discretion in determining housing requirements. The standard method for calculating housing need is now states as an advisory point, enabling adjustments for local needs.
 - Green Belt Safeguards: Councils are not obliged to amend Green Belt boundaries purely to meet housing targets, providing greater local control over these spaces.
 - Support for diverse housing: New measures to promote small-scale developments, community-led projects, and provisions for retirement housing, reflecting a commitment to housing stock and accessibility.
 - Focus on sustainability: Stronger emphasis on low-carbon, energy-efficient building adaptations to align with climate goals, including protections for heritage assets.

Local Plan – Partial Review and Update

- 3.33 In June 2024, Cabinet [BD9] approved the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update for the first round of public consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 3.34 Officers reported back to Cabinet on 13 November 2024 [BD10], feeding back on the Regulation 18 consultation and gained approval for the second round of consultation on the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update, the Regulation 19 version. This is currently out to public consultation until 14 February 2025 (extended from the original end date of 29 January 2025).
- 3.35 Given that the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update is at Regulation 19 stage and the draft housing requirement meets in excess of 80% of local housing need, under the transitional arrangements outlined above, this means that the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update will be submitted and

examined under the previous NPPF 2023 and not the current NPPF 2024. This provides more certainty with regard to the need to update the Plan, which is now over 5 years old and as such progressing the revised Plan to adoption at an earlier stage would mean that policies carry greater weight in decision making.

- 3.36 The consequence of not falling under the transitional arrangements and instead operating under the NPPF 2024 would mean that we would need to prepare a new Plan from scratch, thus increasing the risk that policies in the 2019 Local Plan would lose weight in decision making over time, until the new Plan progressed to the first stage of consultation. By operating under the transitional arrangements and therefore under the NPPF 2023, we are working to a broad two-stage process:

1. Local Plan – Partial Review and Update (to be submitted and examined under the NPPF 2023)
2. New Local Plan (to be progressed under the NPPF 2024 or subsequent versions of the NPPF thereafter)

- 3.37 Officers have sought legal advice from Counsel on the broad approach and Counsel are content that we are following the most appropriate process. In addition, in January 2025 officers sought the advice of the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) who were also broadly satisfied that we are following the correct process, appropriate to our local circumstances.
- 3.38 Therefore, following the Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 rounds of consultation, the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update will then be submitted to the Secretary of State (MHCLG), ahead of an independent Examination in Public by an appointed Planning Inspector. The submission of the Plan is expected to be in Spring 2025 (this will be a date post-County Council Elections), following the conclusion of the Regulation 19 consultation.
- 3.39 A final consultation on any modifications proposed by the Inspector to the Plan is then held prior to the Inspector’s Report, which would confirm whether the Plan can proceed to formal adoption, i.e. it is deemed to be sound. Monitoring and review of the Plan would then be required for a period of time after the Plan has been adopted.
- 3.40 It is important for Cabinet to note and acknowledge that the key reason for the Council’s proposals to revise its existing SPDs is to ensure that the Council has a complete and up to date suite of Planning Policy documents, supporting the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update when the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update is submitted to the Secretary of State in 2025; and to ensure that we do not get caught under the new system, meaning that the existing SPDs run the risk of being out of date in regard to upcoming planning decisions and the risk of being superseded by Supplementary Plans under the latest NPPF.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That Cabinet note the content of the three revised Stevenage Supplementary Planning Documents: Parking Provision SPD, Developer Contributions SPD and Design Guidance SPD; and note the public consultation on the three revised Supplementary Planning Documents, held between 14 October and 24 November 2024.

- 4.1 The current, adopted Stevenage Supplementary Planning Documents are attached to this Report as Background Documents BD2 to BD4.
- 4.2 The revised, final versions of each SPD are included as BD13 to BD15. This is accompanied, for each SPD, by a schedule of changes including justifications that provide reasons for each amendment made [BD16 to BD18].

Parking Provision SPD

- 4.3 Amendments to the Parking Provision & Sustainable Transport SPD, prior to public consultation, can be summarised as follows:
- Removal of “Sustainable Transport” from the title of the SPD, to reflect the fact that the sustainable transport elements of the existing Parking & Sustainable Transport SPD have either been moved to the revised Developer Contributions SPD, or are suitably covered by Hertfordshire County Council Highways guidance.
 - Sustainable transport contributions moved to Developer Contributions SPD.
 - General improvements to presentation – removing unnecessary justification text, etc.
 - Various clarifications on parking requirement calculation – when rounding should occur, what constitutes a bedroom, etc.
 - Disabled parking requirements clarified.
 - Electric Vehicle charging requirements removed – now covered by Building Regulations.

Developer Contributions SPD

- 4.4 Amendments to the Developer Contributions SPD, prior to public consultation, can be summarised as follows:
- Travel plan guidance clarified.
 - Car club, public transport voucher, etc. contributions added (from Parking Provision SPD)
 - New contributions towards cycle hire scheme.
 - Document now refers to the CIL annual inflation rate, which the Council is required to apply. This is for transparency and to allow developers to calculate their CIL charge ahead of development.
 - Introduction of developer contributions for Electric Car Clubs and the Cycle Hire Scheme, on large windfall and strategic sites. This is in addition to

collecting a CIL charge to reflect the Council's sustainable transport objectives.

- General updates to legislation and National Planning Policy.
- Affordable Housing updates, in line with the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update amendment on Part M of the Building Regulations.
- The 'Construction Employment Opportunities for Stevenage' section now applies more flexibility, should a developer be unable to fulfil the obligations regarding construction jobs and apprenticeships. This is to support small and medium-sized developers and to reflect instances whereby local businesses and quick construction developers are unable to fulfil obligation due to time constraints.
- Increase in payment for failure to meet local recruitment targets for apprenticeships, from £250 per apprenticeships to £500. This is to help cover the cost of the brokerage system to fill apprenticeship positions and encourage early engagement with Stevenage Works, to support the delivery of local apprenticeships.
- Further clarity on what the training fund can be used for.
- Monitoring Fee increase to reflect the ongoing costs of the brokerage system to fill apprenticeship positions – officers have carried out work to determine local authority monitoring fees across the board. The proposed fees are based on an approximate benchmark value of several CIL charging authorities.

Design Guidance SPD

4.5 Amendments to the Design Guidance SPD, prior to public consultation, can be summarised as follows:

- Design guide changed to tabular format.
- Clear distinction between mandatory requirements and optional best practice.
- Appendix 1 of the SPD (character assessments) has been deleted, as was too brief to be of real use and also out of date (2008).
- General improvements to presentation of Appendices 2 (shopfront guide) and 3 (residential extensions guide) – formatting, new drawings etc.

Public Consultation (14 October – 24 November 2024)

4.6 Public consultation on the three SPDs commenced on 14 October 2024 and closed on 24 November 2024, a period of 6 weeks.

4.7 Consultation methods for all three SPDs was undertaken in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement [BD11]. This included:

- Consultees who had previously signed up to the planning consultation list were contacted by e-mail, or by post where no email address was provided.
- The consultation was hosted via the Planning Policy's "Commonplace" platform, which has been used successfully for a range of previous planning policy and related consultations.

- The consultation was advertised on the Council’s website home page and Planning Policy pages. It appeared on the Stevenage Borough Council social media pages and hard copies of the consultation documents were made available at the Council offices and town’s libraries.
- Representations were able to be submitted via the Council’s website and / or sent via e-mail to the Planning Policy team’s mailbox.

Public Consultation – Summary of Representations

- 4.8 The Council is required, for each SPD, to consider consultation responses and produce a “Consultation Statement” document stating the main issues raised by respondents, summarising how the issues have been addressed by the Council.
- 4.9 Officers have prepared a Consultation Statement relating to the public consultation exercise on the three SPDs [BD12]. A summary of the consultation is as follows:
- There was a total of 240 visitors to the Commonplace consultation platform.
 - There were 29 individual respondents, including organisations such as Hertfordshire County Council, Historic England and developers including Mace among other respondents.
 - There were 117 individual consultation comments, with 123 total contributions and comments (including agreements with draft revised wording).
- 4.10 The main topics raised, for each of the SPDs, during consultation can be summarised in the tables below:

| Parking Provision SPD | |
|------------------------------|---|
| General Summary | <p>Generally positive with suggestions on areas to consider or amend. Positive comments but, comments suggested amending areas such as, clarification on terminology and to ensure sustainable travel options, such as cycling were not omitted from the SPD.</p> <p>Comments suggested updates to national guidance documents but a positive reaction to the style and format of the document.</p> <p>Some comments suggested elements for sustainable travel to be improved in the SPD.</p> <p>Overall, useful comments were received to help with the update of the SPD.</p> |
| Space Standards | <p>Some comments suggested clarification on car parking standards and what they mean. Comments highlighted that although some may understand standards for parking provision, clarification in the</p> |

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|------------------------------|---|
| | <p>text was recommended to assist understanding of 0.5 parking spaces and how this is calculated.</p> <p>This has also included clarification for cycle parking standards, including introduction of a requirement for adapted cycle spaces and design standards to accompany them.</p> |
| Care homes | Comment was received on number of visitor parking spaces for Class C2 Care Homes. |
| Sustainable travel | Comments highlighted sustainable travel visions should be updated and ensure consistency throughout the document with any new evidential studies / technical papers. |
| Cycle parking | Comments have highlighted clarification around standards but also provision of visitor cycle parking in new developments. The type of cycle parking provision was also highlighted as an area to amend to encourage economical designs which are easy to use. |
| National / Regional Guidance | Comments highlighted that guidance and strategy references should be displayed clearly, and if necessary, latest version included where possible. |

Developer Contributions SPD

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| General Summary | <p>Generally positive with suggestions on areas to consider or amend. Positive comments were also received on how the SPD aims to mitigate development on areas such as the public realm, active travel projects and sport provision.</p> <p>Comments did highlight that although there were positive comments, there were a few reservations about how to ensure contributions are sought for education, housing and transport infrastructure.</p> <p>Many feel elements for sustainable travel and climate change mitigation are not a priority in the SPD.</p> <p>Overall, useful comments were received to help with the update of the SPD.</p> |
| Affordable Housing | <p>There were positive comments on how the SPD provides guidance on how affordable housing should be provided.</p> <p>Comments considered the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of terms – for example, rent means social not affordable rent; • Wheelchair housing and the potential need for bespoke works for these standards; |

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Health | <p>Comments were positive regarding the inclusion of health and the significant impact housing has on current infrastructure. Comments suggested that a close working relationship between all parties is essential to meet the demands of growth. It was also noted that developer contributions should not only be for GP surgeries but also mental health and community health clinics.</p> <p>Comments also suggested new processes which could aid developer contributions. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the level and type of demand generated by the proposal. • Work with the partners to understand the capacity of existing healthcare infrastructure and the likely impact of the proposals on healthcare infrastructure capacity in the locality. • Identify appropriate options to increase capacity to accommodate the additional service requirements and the associated capital costs of delivery. <p>Some comments have also highlighted recent appeal decisions and how this might impact future decisions.</p> |
| Sport / Open Space | Contextual updates to make sure the latest guidance is used for calculations in sport contributions and positive comments for off-setting contributions for Open Space, if it cannot be placed on site. |
| Transport | Comments suggested updates to rights of way and travel plans within the text. |
| Education | Comments have highlighted the change of circumstances for funding in education. |
| Climate Change / Air Quality | Comments highlighted that the Draft Developer Contribution SPD does not include information on improving air quality. Comments recommended including technical studies for climate change mitigation. |

| Design SPD | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| General Summary | <p>Generally positive with suggestions on areas to consider or amend. Overall, comments viewed the simplification and format of the SPD as very good.</p> <p>Some comments highlighted the need to clarify some planning terms and to be clear in what we want from design.</p> <p>Comments suggested updates to illustrations as a helpful way to communicate ideas.</p> <p>Overall, useful comments were received to help with the update of the SPD.</p> |
| Housing and adaption | Ensure terminology is clear and remove ambiguous language. |
| Movement | Comments highlighted the need for rights of way to be recognised within the document. |
| Active Travel | Ensure active travel is included as part of overall design and the relevant guidance from outside the council is referenced accordingly. |
| Safety | Comments welcomed the guidance on safety and where areas are designed well, crime and the fear of crime can be reduced. |
| Environment | A number of comments were received for swift bricks and on design, including a proportionate number in developments. |
| Building design and character | <p>Comments highlighted the need for flexibility with building design. The guide should not stop innovation and creativity. Therefore, comments requested flexibility in the text to take account of this, as character from local areas will assist with the design process.</p> <p>There was also a recommendation for the inclusion of character areas (formerly Appendix 1) to support the guide in explaining to developers, homeowners, businesses and decision makers what makes Stevenage unique as a place. This would enable new development to understand and reinforce the positive local character of Stevenage's character and conservation areas in new design.</p> |
| Environment | Space for orchards and allotments are not mentioned in the document and comments suggested including as this could be a positive initiative for flats and house with small or no gardens. |

Final changes to SPDs following consultation

- 4.11 Officers have taken all comments and views into account in a conscientious manner. This has helped to inform and shape the final version of the SPD being reported to Cabinet.
- 4.12 The main concepts and principles of the draft SPD have been maintained and brought forward into the final version of the SPD, considering a number of significant amendments suggested by respondents' comments.
- 4.13 A complete schedule of consultation responses, the Council's response to the comments and the areas of changes proposed in the SPD are provided in the Consultation Statement [BD12].
- 4.14 Below is a summary of the final changes to each SPD, following the consultation period.

Parking Provision SPD – final changes since public consultation (BD13 & BD16)

- 4.15 Amendments to the Parking Provision & Sustainable Transport SPD, following public consultation, can be summarised as follows:
- Disabled car parking standards for residential development now based on number of wheelchair user dwellings or (for HMOs) accessible tenancy units rather than set as a percentage of total car parking provision.
 - Standards added for adapted cycle parking (e.g. recumbents).
 - Design criteria added for adapted cycle parking spaces.
 - Various minor changes to refer to more up-to-date evidence documents.

Developer Contributions SPD – final changes since public consultation (BD14 & BD17)

- 4.16 Amendments to the Developer Contributions SPD, following public consultation, can be summarised as follows:
- General minor changes including change of textual references administrative changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, updated Planning Practice Guidance, and the Community Infrastructure Regulation 2010 (as amended).
 - Amended paragraph to reflect proposed CIL Draft Charging Schedule and the introduction of a new charge on industrial development (note: the CIL Draft Charging Schedule is out to public consultation from January to February 2025, ahead of Submission to the Secretary of State for Public Examination and likely Adoption in Autumn 2025; the SPD reflects the current CIL rate as of 2020 and notes the likely adopted new CIL rates as of 2025).
 - Amended wording to provide clear notification of the requirement to apply an annual updated index inflation on CIL.
 - Amended paragraph to reflect education contributions as a whole and now references the Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme to support the Council's sustainable transport objectives.

- Amended paragraph to reflect the need for wheelchair user dwellings identified in the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2023 and to reflect the proposed Local Plan Partial Review and Update.
- Updates to provide clearer wording on process for project bids.
- Clearer wording relating to if a developer is unable to fulfil obligations towards the Local Employment and Apprenticeships as set out in a Section 106 agreement, due to time constraints.
- General changes to ongoing costs of the brokerage system to fill apprenticeship positions, administrative fees, monitoring and allocation of Local Training Funds.

Design Guidance SPD – final changes since public consultation (BD15 & BD18)

4.17 Amendments to the Design Guidance SPD, following public consultation, can be summarised as follows:

- Various minor changes to refer to more up-to-date evidence documents and other relevant guidance.
- Various minor changes to provide clarity and correct typos.

Recommendation 2.2: That Cabinet approve adoption of the three revised Supplementary Planning Documents: Parking Provision SPD, Developer Contributions SPD and Design Guidance SPD, from 28 February 2025.

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



4.19 The Council has undertaken a round of public consultation and the Council has considered the consultation responses, produced a document stating the main issues raised by respondents, and summarised how the issues have been addressed by the Council [BD12].

- 4.20 The Council is required, for each SPD, to produce an Adoption Statement, to notify the public of the adoption of each SPD.
- 4.21 The Adoption Statements for each SPD are attached to this Report as Appendix A, B and C.
- 4.22 The three SPDs are now ready to be finalised and adopted on 28 February 2025.
- 4.23 The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government will be forwarded the three final adoption statements, following adoption of the three SPDs.

Recommendation 2.3: That Cabinet agree that delegated powers be granted to the Interim Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the SPD documents prior to public consultation.

- 4.24 The Supplementary Planning Documents are appended to this report. However, it may be necessary to make minor changes prior to going out to public consultation. This might include cosmetic adjustments, the correction of typographical errors and any minor factual changes.
- 4.25 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.

Recommendation 2.4: That Cabinet note that the comments of the Planning & Development Committee will be sought and fed back to Cabinet.

- 4.26 The Planning & Development Committee, via the Chair and Vice Chair, have been circulated this Cabinet Report in advance of the Cabinet meeting.
- 4.27 Any feedback from Planning & Development Committee Members will be taken into consideration in the Cabinet's approval of this Report's recommendations.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs associated with producing the revised Stevenage Supplementary Planning Documents will be met from the agreed departmental budget.
- 5.2 Any potential schemes that are mentioned in the SPDs will need to be subject to a business case and / or will require third party funding.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 Consultation on the revised Supplementary Planning Documents was undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 5.4 The outcomes of consultation were conscientiously considered in finalising the SPDs, taking responses into account prior to approval by Cabinet.

Risk Implications

- 5.5 It is important for Cabinet to note and acknowledge that the key reason for the Council's proposals to revise its existing SPDs is to ensure that the Council has a complete and up to date suite of Planning Policy documents, supporting the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update when the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update is submitted to the Secretary of State in 2025; and to ensure that we do not get caught under the new system, meaning that the existing SPDs run the risk of being out of date in regard to upcoming planning decisions and the risk of being superseded by Supplementary Plans under the latest NPPF.

Policy Implications

- 5.6 The revised Stevenage Supplementary Planning Documents accord with, and has been produced to supplement policies in, the adopted Stevenage Local Plan (2019) and emerging Local Plan – Partial Review and Update.

Planning Implications

- 5.7 The revised Stevenage Supplementary Planning Documents will supplement the adopted Stevenage Local Plan (2019) and emerging Local Plan – Partial Review and Update.
- 5.8 If adopted after consultation, the documents will not form part of the Development Plan for Stevenage. However, they will be a material consideration for planning applications.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.9 The revised Supplementary Planning Documents have 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 revised Supplementary Planning Documents do 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, particularly those who are less mobile or disabled.

Community Safety Implications

- 5.11 Whilst the revised Supplementary Planning Documents do not have any direct community safety implications itself, when implementing any proposals, the delivery body will need to consider potential impacts on community safety.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Stevenage Borough Local Plan, 2011–2031
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/stevenage-borough-local-plan/stevenage-borough-local-plan.pdf>
- BD2 Stevenage Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (October 2020)
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/planning-guidance/parking-provision-and-sustainable-transport-spd-2020-adopted-version-2020.pdf>
- BD3 Stevenage Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (March 2021) <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/planning-guidance/march-2021-updates-planning-guidance/sbc-developer-contributions-spd-march-2021.pdf>
- BD4 Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (January 2023) <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/stevenage-design-guide-spd-january-2023.pdf>
- BD5 Revocation Statement: The Impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (November 2024)
- BD6 National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- BD7 Proposed Reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the Planning System
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>
- BD8 National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- BD9 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Cabinet, Item 4: Local Plan Review and Local Development Scheme (June 2024)

<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s36560/4%20Cabinet%20Report%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20LC%20Final%20230524.pdf>

- BD10 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Cabinet, Item 4: Local Partial Review and Update: Regulation 18 Consultation Feedback and Regulation 19 Consultation (November 2024)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s37640/4%20Cabinet%20Report%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20LC%20Final%20011124.pdf>
- BD11 Stevenage Statement of Community Involvement (June 2024)
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/consultation-documents/reg-19-lp-consultation/statement-of-community-involvement.pdf>
- BD12 Supplementary Planning Documents: Consultation Statement (February 2025)
- BD13 Stevenage Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document (February 2025)
- BD14 Stevenage Developer Contributions Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (February 2025)
- BD15 Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (February 2025)
- BD16 Stevenage Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document: Schedule of Changes and Table of Justifications (February 2025)
- BD17 Stevenage Developer Contributions Guidance Supplementary Planning Document: Schedule of Changes and Table of Justifications (February 2025)
- BD18 Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document: Schedule of Changes and Table of Justifications (February 2025)

APPENDICES

- A Stevenage Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document: Adoption Statement (February 2025)
- B Stevenage Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document: Adoption Statement (February 2025)
- C Stevenage Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document: Adoption Statement (February 2025)