

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:** Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

**Meeting/Date:** Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) – 9th March 2017  
Cabinet – 16th March 2017

**Executive Portfolio:** Councillor R Harrison, Executive Councillor for Growth

**Report by:** Clara Kerr, Planning Service Manager

**Wards affected:** All

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**Executive Summary:**

The current Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in 2007. Since that time there have been significant changes in national and local planning policy. The new design guide has been produced as an aid to improving the design quality of new development in Huntingdonshire. It sets out important design principles and explains key requirements of the Council. It has been designed as a manual to inform and inspire anyone with an interest in the development process, and a key supporting document for making planning decisions.

**Recommendations:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to consider and comment on the report.

The Cabinet are recommended to:

- 1) Adopt the proposed 'Huntingdonshire Design Guide' as a Supplementary Planning Document, with any minor amendments prior to publication being delegated to the Head of Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth; and
- 2) In making that decision, note the comments from the Consultation Statement and the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report and endorses the officer responses to the issues raised.

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval for the 'Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document', which was subject to a six week public consultation between 31st October and 12th December 2016. At the time of drafting this report work is continuing on ensuring that the necessary amendments are made to the Design Guide following the public consultation. A link to the Design Guide will be e-mailed to all Members of this Panel on Tuesday 7th March.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The new 'Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document' will replace the existing 'Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document', which was adopted in 2007. The draft SPD consists of 5 chapters:

- **Chapter 1: Overview** – provides background information on the purpose, objectives and status of the SPD once adopted and how the SPD should be used. This chapter also sets out why good design matters.
- **Chapter 2: Context and Local Distinctiveness** – provides an overview of the context of Huntingdonshire in terms of the existing settlement pattern, the future development strategy, the network of strategic connections, the landscape character of the district as well as more detailed information about the nature of public space and the architectural character of the district.
- **Chapter 3: Place Making Principles** – provides details on important place making principles that should be used to create attractive developments throughout Huntingdonshire. It covers land use and density; place making and hierarchy of movement; urban structure and the development block; parking and servicing; landscape and public realm; building form and building detail.
- **Chapter 4: Implementation** – sets out a step by step process for the successful design of development proposals. It also sets out a series of development scenarios that show how the place making principles can be brought together. The scenarios include several examples of developments in Huntingdonshire to highlight instances where this has been achieved.
- **Chapter 5: References and Glossary** – provides details of useful resources and publications that will support the process of drawing up well designed development proposals as well as explaining some of the terms used in the SPD.

## 3. LINK TO CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND / OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The adoption of the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD is a key action under Strategic Objective 1a) 'Create, protect and enhance our safe and clean built and green environment' of the Corporate Plan.

## 4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) will be circulated as an appendix following its meeting on 9th March 2017 but prior to the consideration of the report by the Cabinet.

## 5. MAIN ISSUES RAISED DURING CONSULTATION

- 5.1 A total of 42 comments were received from 21 consultees. A summary of the main issues raised in comments as well as a list of the consultees that made comments are presented in the Consultation Statement, attached to this report as Appendix B. The complete comments received can be found on the Council's [Consultation Portal](#). Comments were also received from an advisory group of the Council's Development Management Committee and internal consultees.
- 5.2 The majority of comments received were supportive and complementary. Most consultees chose to submit one comment with a number of detailed points concerned with specific parts of the consultation draft. There were a number of overarching issues raised:

<p><b>Density</b></p>	<p><b>Summary:</b> A range of points were raised, mostly on chapter 3. Place Making Principles, 3.2 Land Use and Density, but were raised on other sections as well. These included queries and concerns about how density is calculated, the difference between 'net' and 'gross' density, the relationship of proposed development with its surroundings, the typical density ranges identified and what is considered to be 'high', 'medium' and 'low' density development.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> The range and nature of comments shows that this is a subject needs clarifying and expanding the design guide's content for. Many different considerations mean that it is difficult to set density ranges for different locations. Stating density in terms of a number of dwellings per hectare is a crude measure on its own as different building forms can have the same density but will have markedly different characters. Furthermore, this approach needs to remain flexible to allow for any future potential changes in Government Guidance.</p> <p><b>Changes:</b> Text on density in section 3.2 has been revised and added to. Additional diagrams have been added to help explain how different building forms can affect density and how 'net' and 'gross' density are calculated. Table 3.2.1, which set out a range of typical densities has been deleted.</p>
<p><b>Navigation and usability of the document</b></p>	<p><b>Summary:</b> Several comments raised issues with the practicalities of using the document, noting how they found it difficult to move around and navigate through the document or could foresee problems with referencing specific content. Others were concerned about the way that it had been designed for digital use and that this may have adversely impacted on using a printed version.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> It is acknowledged that the extent to which the document was geared towards being used online and on touchscreen devices was ambitious. However, it was not the intention that this should be done to the exclusion or</p>

	<p>detriment of usability in printed form. Unfortunately some navigation functionality was not available in the consultation draft.</p> <p><b>Changes:</b> Several usability and navigation enhancements will be made once the content is finalised.</p>
<p><b>Parking Provision</b></p>	<p><b>Summary:</b> A wide range of comments were raised, mostly on chapter 3. Place Making Principles, 3.5 Parking and Servicing, but were raised on other sections as well. A number of specific issues are covered below. There were concerns expressed about how appropriate provision could be provided successfully within new development, with a number of references made to existing instances with problems. There were also concerns about the compatibility of semi-basement and basement parking with flood risk.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> This is understandably one of the most important issues for a design guide to address. It is considered that there would be benefit in providing separate detailed guidance on parking provision, both in terms of how to determine the level of provision and details such as the form location and dimensions of spaces as well as other related travel/ transport guidance. The form such guidance might take will be investigated.</p> <p><b>Changes:</b> Several amendments made to aid clarity. The Garage design measurements text and diagram have been amended to aid clarity. Cycle parking text is also amended.</p>
<p><b>Various related topics</b></p>	<p><b>Summary:</b> Several comments raised topics relating to design, whether in detail or touched on more implicitly. These issues include the range of architectural styles and their evolution, historic environment, detailed requirements in relation to water courses, tree and woodland protection and enhancement.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> While these issues are related to design most are detailed in nature and are specific to particular circumstances. Several of these issues are addressed in more detail in planning or related documents/ sources and are (or will be following amendments) referenced in the Design Guide, for example the Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment SPD, the Tree Strategy for Huntingdonshire and the recently produced Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD. While there is some scope to revise and add to the content in the Design Guide it is considered that these issues are best addressed elsewhere.</p> <p><b>Changes:</b> Several amendments have been made throughout the document to aid clarity and provide reference to specific policy and guidance.</p>
<p><b>Water</b></p>	<p><b>Summary:</b> Comments were mostly on chapter 3. Place</p>

<p><b>management and Flood Risk</b></p>	<p>Making Principles, 3.6 Landscape and Public Realm, Water Management, but were raised on other sections as well. Concerns raised included caution about infiltration with reference to ground conditions, usability of diagrams for surface water management, space in development for sustainable drainage systems as well as their upkeep and properly addressing flood risk including boundary treatments. Reference to the recently completed Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD was requested.</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Water management and addressing flood risk are important subjects which are addressed in numerous guidance and policy documents. Finding the right balance of content for the Design Guide has been difficult but it is considered appropriate to amend and add to the content in the draft SPD to some extent. Reference to Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD would be beneficial; however it is still to be adopted by the Council.</p> <p><b>Changes:</b> Several references to flood risk have been added. Water management section has been revised and added to, diagrams clarified, reference to Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD added.</p>
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5.3 The more detailed issues raised on sections of the design guide are set out in the Consultation Statement in the same format as the general issues covered above.

5.4 The Design Guide has been amended as indicated in the Consultation Statement and is attached as Appendix A. Due to the size of the document this will only be supplied electronically. It is anticipated that a small number of minor amendments will be required to finalise the document, in order to correct 'typos'. Several usability and navigation enhancements will also be made once the content is finalised. Such amendments will not affect the content of the SPD.

## 6. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

6.1 The aim of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive is 'to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.'

6.2 The Directive is implemented through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Supplementary planning documents may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already have been assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan.

6.3 In order to determine whether a SEA is necessary for the Huntingdonshire Design Guide a screening process has been undertaken and is set out in the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report, which is attached as Appendix C.

- 6.4 The conclusions of the SEA screening are that the Design Guide will not have significant environmental effects and therefore does not require full Strategic Environmental Assessment.

## **7. HABITATS REGULATION ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 The Habitats Directive requires competent authorities to decide whether or not a plan or project can proceed having undertaken the following “appropriate assessment requirements” to:

- Determine whether a plan or project may have a significant effect on a European site
- If required, undertake an appropriate assessment of the plan or project
- Decide whether there may be an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site in light of the appropriate assessment

- 7.2 In order to determine whether an appropriate assessment is necessary for the Huntingdonshire Design Guide a screening process has been undertaken and is set out in the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report, which is attached as Appendix C.

- 7.3 The conclusions of the HRA screening are that the Design Guide will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any internationally designated sites either on its own or in combination with any other plans. Therefore, an appropriate assessment is not required.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The updating of our local policy position will give more coherent, consistent and robust support to the Council’s position with regard to the design quality of development in the district. The adoption of the SPD will give its contents weight at Public Inquiries and throughout the development management process.

- 8.2 The production, public participation and proposed adoption of this draft SPD have complied with relevant regulations and provisions as set out in the Town and Country [Local Planning] [England] Regulations 2012 as amended, being the applicable regulations for the process.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to consider and comment on the report.

- 9.2 The Cabinet are recommended to:

- adopt the proposed ‘Huntingdonshire Design Guide’ as a Supplementary Planning Document, with any minor amendments prior to publication being delegated to the Head of Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth; and
- in making that decision, note the comments from the Consultation Statement and the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report and endorses the officer responses to the issues raised.

## **LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

Appendix A: Consultation Statement: Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD

Appendix B: Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations  
Assessment Screening Report

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