

MID SUSSEX DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION

REPORT OF: DIVISIONAL LEADER FOR PLANNING AND ECONOMY
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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: Yes
Report To: Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth
Date of meeting: 29 July 2020

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to request that the Scrutiny Committee considers the proposed revisions to the draft Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (the Design Guide SPD) following representations made during the consultation carried out in Autumn 2019. The schedule of changes and revised Design Guide SPD are attached at Appendices 1 & 2.
2. Subject to the above consideration, the Committee is requested to recommend to Council the adoption of the Design Guide as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications.

Summary

3. This report:
 - a) Summarises the background and context to the preparation of the Mid Sussex Design Guide;
 - b) Summarises the actions agreed to address the issues raised in the representations received from the public consultation;
 - c) Sets out a summary of the proposed amendments to the draft Design Guide SPD in Appendix 1 (schedule of changes); and
 - d) Sets out the revised draft of the Design Guide SPD in Appendix 2.

Recommendations

4. **That the Scrutiny Committee:**
 - (i) **Considers and comments on the proposed changes to the draft Design Guide SPD set out in Appendix 1;**
 - (ii) **Considers and agrees the revised draft Design Guide SPD in Appendix 2; and**
 - (iii) **Recommends Council adopts the Design Guide as an SPD for use in the consideration and determination of planning applications.**
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Background

5. The scale of housing and employment growth in Mid Sussex is one of the most significant in the region. If the character and quality of our towns and villages is to be maintained, it is vital that new development in Mid Sussex is responsive to its local context and is designed to a high standard.

6. District Plan Policy DP26 Character and Design sets out a series of high-level design principles that new development is expected to achieve. However, further detailed guidance is needed to secure a step change in the quality of design in Mid Sussex.
7. This approach is in line with Government policy in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); with the new National Design Guide which encourages Local Authorities to formulate local design guides to meet the priorities of its communities based on understanding of the local context; and responds to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's reports.
8. The District-wide Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will assist landowners, developers, applicants and planners in the process of assessing the design quality of schemes. It will also help to support decision making by the Council's Planning Committees.

Scope and Content of Document

9. The Design Guide is structured according to a series of integrated design themes, including understanding the context, establishing well defined streets and layouts, transport connectivity, parking strategies, sustainability, and optimising site potential through building heights and housing density that reduces future pressure on development in the countryside. A series of Design Principles for each theme has been prepared.

Public Consultation

10. At its meeting on 18th July 2019, this Committee welcomed the draft Guide and resolved to delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to approve the document for public consultation. Consultation was carried out for six weeks between 9th October until 20th November 2019.
11. A total of 41 individual respondents commented on the draft Design Guide with 231 individual responses. A detailed schedule of responses received during the consultation is available to view on the Councils' webpage at:
<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/planning-building/supplementary-planning-documents/>
12. A summary of the representations, comments made by Scrutiny Committee on 22 January and the proposed changes are summarised below and have been grouped around the three themes previously considered by this Scrutiny Committee.

Key Issues and Proposed Changes

Detailed Design Issues

13. 28 respondents (including the Mid Sussex Design Review Panel (DRP)) made comments on detailed design issues, providing a total of 137 individual comments on different parts of the draft Design Guide. At the meeting on 22 January this Scrutiny Committee agreed:
 - the need for further guidance on residential amenity, extensions and conversions and the need for improved images;
 - the need for a separate chapter on Employment Sites with specific guidance on layout, landscaping and the design of buildings relating to this use;
 - the need for more detailed guidance on the development of brownfield sites and the inclusion of a reference to the Mid Sussex Brownfield Sites Register; and

- the need to provide more information on appropriate, locally distinctive materials, including suitable modern or contemporary materials and their application.
14. Accordingly, the detailed design advice has been expanded and clarified particularly in respect of the final chapters covering residential amenity, household extensions and building conversions. The changes made include:
- The office-to-residential conversion section in chapter 10 proposes guidance on the conversion of post-war office blocks rather than traditional commercial buildings as the former is a more typical occurrence than the conversion of older commercial buildings. The latter is covered by the section that deals with conversions of traditional buildings;
 - The Residential Amenity chapter now clarifies how the amenity of future (as well as existing) residents need safeguarding. The daylight / sunlight section now states that it will be necessary to conform to BRE standards;
 - Chapter 6 proposes more detail on facing materials, and a section that covers buildings on sloping sites;
 - The parking section has been sub-divided with design principles that clearly differentiate between on and off-street parking.

Sustainability

15. Some of the respondents, including the DRP, considered that the draft Design Guide should have gone further in addressing the issue of sustainability. At the meeting on 22 January this Scrutiny Committee agreed:
- to the inclusion of a new section on Sustainability in the Introduction to the document to set out the sustainability objectives of the Design Guide;
 - to signpost how the Design Guide covers a wide range of interconnected sustainable design themes relating to green infrastructure, biodiversity, trees, sustainable transport, site optimisation and mixed use as well encouraging the highest standards in the design of buildings to minimise the use of resources and energy;
 - that the start of each chapter be amended to indicate how the topic covered in the Chapter helps to deliver a low carbon and climate resilient future for the District.
16. Accordingly, the contribution that design makes to the sustainability agenda is set out more clearly within the revised document.

Structure and Format

17. A number of respondents considered that the draft Design Guide should be more concise and clearer. In response to this, Scrutiny Committee agreed that the document should be reviewed to make it clearer and more succinct, including removing any repetition in the 'reasons' sections and any overlap between chapters.
18. In response to the representations, the draft Design Guide has been edited. The "Reasons" sections have been omitted in chapters 3-10 to remove repetition where additional supporting information was included in the "Reasons" sections this has now been incorporated as appropriate in the Design Guide (DG) Principles.

19. Finally, to ensure consistency with latest government guidance, references have been made to the National Design Guide (NDG) which was published during the Mid Sussex Design Guide consultation. The NDG sets out 10 characteristics that are cross-referenced in the list of Design Principles under the sub-section of Chapter 1.
20. The schedule of changes is set out in Appendix 1 and the revised draft SPD is set out in Appendix 2.

Next Steps

21. Following consideration of the proposed changes and the proposed revisions to the draft Design Guide, Scrutiny Committee is requested to recommend the adoption of the Design Guide to Council as an SPD to be used as a material consideration in the planning process.
22. Following the consideration of the proposed textual changes by the Scrutiny Committee, the images will be updated for the Full Council draft to reflect the consultation responses and changes to the text.
23. Training on the effective use of the Design Guide will be arranged for Members and Officers in Autumn 2020.

Policy Context

24. The NPPF emphasises the importance of high-quality design. The Mid Sussex District Plan seeks to ensure that well located and designed development is delivered in the District. The Draft Design Guide supplements and adds detail to the District Plan policies.

Other Options Considered

25. An option would be not to prepare a Design Guide and rely on District Plan Policies. However, this would mean that the Council would miss an opportunity to provide clear design guidance specific to Mid Sussex.

Financial Implications

26. The cost of the preparation of the Design Guide SPD is £30,000, which includes training, and this has been funded from the Development Plan Reserve.

Risk Management Implications

27. Without the detailed design guidance set out in the Mid Sussex Design Guide, it would be difficult to secure a step change in design quality in the District. Given the growth agenda, there is the risk that this may result in adverse impacts on the character and quality of our towns and villages.

Equality and customer service implications

28. The draft Design Guide has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment. This concludes that the document does not discriminate against any members of the community that have 'protected characteristics.'

Other Material Implications

29. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening have been undertaken on the draft Design Guide.

Appendix 1 - The schedule of changes

Appendix 2 - The proposed revised Mid Sussex Design Guide