

MID SUSSEX DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – CONSULTATION DRAFT

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: 18th July 2019

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to ask the Committee to consider the draft Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
2. Subject to the above consideration, the Committee is asked to recommend that Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning approves the document for public consultation.

Summary

3. This report:
 - a) sets out the background to why a Mid Sussex Design Guide is needed for the District;
 - b) describes the process of its preparation and summarises the broad content of the Document.

Recommendations

4. That the Scrutiny Committee:
 - (i) Considers the Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD;
 - (ii) Delegates authority to Divisional Lead for Planning and Economy, in consultation with Cabinet Member, to make typographical, grammatical and photographic editorial changes before consultation; and
 - (ii) Recommends that Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning approves the document for public consultation.

Background

5. The scale of growth in Mid Sussex is one of the most significant in the region. The Mid Sussex District Plan sets a minimum housing provision figure of 16,390 homes to be built in the 17-year period 2014 – 2031. It also promotes significant employment growth, including the provision of a business park and a Science and Technology Park at Burgess Hill.

6. Alongside this, the District is characterised by a large number of national and local environmental designations (e.g. Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient Woodland, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) and by its distinctive towns and villages, attractive countryside and high quality landscape character. If the character and quality of our towns and villages is to be maintained, it is vital that the new growth is designed to a high standard.
7. While District Plan Policy DP26 Character and Design sets out a series of high level design principles expected from development, it is recognised that other planning tools are required to secure a step change in the quality of design which will help our communities better accept the growth agenda.
8. The preparation of a comprehensive District-wide Design Guide, as a Supplementary Planning Document, is seen as key to delivering a change in design quality by assisting landowners, developers, applicants and planners in the process of assessing the design quality of schemes. It will also help to support Planning Committee.
9. In addition, District Plan Policy DP26: Character and Design requires the optimisation of site potential in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Design Guide provides the opportunity to enable broad density and height guidelines to be developed for specific types of locations, such as town centres, to help make best use of land and to make Development Management decisions regarding these issues more straightforward.
10. Furthermore, the Council is in the process of preparing a Site Allocations Development Plan Document that will allocate a number of brownfield and greenfield sites for residential development and employment use. A key role of the Design Guide will be to help inform the preparation of this document, providing information on appropriate design, density and layout.
11. This approach is in line with Government policy which places more emphasis on design, as set out in the revised NPPF. In paragraph 124, the NPPF states that the "...creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve." Under paragraph 126 it adds: "To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, plans or supplementary planning documents should use visual tools such as design guides and codes. These provide a framework for creating distinctive places, with a consistent and high quality standard of design."

The process of preparing the Design Guide

12. Following a competitive tendering process, Urban Initiatives Studios were appointed in January this year to prepare a District-wide Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for new development in Mid Sussex.
13. The work of the consultants has been overseen by MSDC Urban Designer and the Planning Policy Team. A Member Workshop was held to steer development of the draft Design Guide. Early engagement has also taken

place with the Chairs of the Mid Sussex Design Review Panel, internal MSDC Council Officers and West Sussex County Council Officers.

14. A draft of the Design Guide has now been produced for consideration by this Committee before public consultation with stakeholders and the community.

Scope and content of the Document

15. District Plan Policy DP26 Character and Design sets the overall framework for the detailed guidance provided in the draft Design Guide, supplemented and cross referenced with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment's (CABE) (et al) 2018 edition of Building for Life criteria and the Government's Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2.
16. Within this framework, the document utilises the Mid Sussex District characterisation evidence base that supported the District Plan to identify the key characteristics of the landscape, towns, villages and hamlets in the District. This has enabled the identification of opportunity areas within the town centres for more intensive development, those areas that are more constrained, as well as ensuring that new development is contextual and locally distinctive.
17. The document is structured according to a series of integrated themes, including understanding the context, establishing well defined streets and layouts, transport connectivity, parking strategies, residential amenity, sustainable design and optimising site potential through building heights and housing density that reduces future pressure on development in the countryside. Each of the themes is illustrated with good and bad practice, including through local examples.
18. The Design Guide covers the following types of development:
 - Urban extensions (residential based developments)
 - Brownfield sites / urban infill / mixed-use developments
 - Rural developments
 - New dwelling design (houses and apartments)
 - Residential extensions
 - Building conversions
 - Commercial buildings / business parks / industrial estates.
19. Specific design guidance for Retail and Town Centre Developments will be covered by the proposed Shopfront Design guidance which will be prepared in 2019/20, in line with the commitment in the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan.

Next Steps

20. Following Cabinet Member approval, the Design Guide will be subject to a formal six week period of public consultation with statutory consultees, developers and the local community. After the consultation has ended there will be a review of the feedback received and, where appropriate, changes will be proposed to the Design Guide. The final draft version of the document will be reconsidered by this Committee, before being submitted to Full Council in Autumn 2019 for adoption as a SPD.

21. Once adopted the Design Guide SPD will carry weight in the planning decision making process. A training session on effective use of the Design Guide for Members and Officers will also be delivered by the consultants in the Autumn.

Policy Context

22. The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the importance of high quality design. The Mid Sussex District Plan was adopted in March 2018 and seeks to ensure that well located and designed development, that reflects the distinctive character of the towns and villages, is delivered in the District. The Draft Design Guide supplements and adds detail to the District Plan policies.

Other Options Considered

23. An option would be not to prepare a Design Guide and rely on District Plan Policy DP 26 Character and Design. However, this would mean that the Council would have to rely on the more general guidance in DP26 and would miss an opportunity to provide clear design guidance that supplements this policy, addressing the design issues that are specific to Mid Sussex.

Financial Implications

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

Risk Management Implications

25. Without the detailed design guidance set out in the Mid Sussex Design Guide, this would make it 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

26. It is important that the Council is able to secure high quality design for new development that creates inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods. 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

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

Appendix 1: Mid Sussex Design Guide SPD (Consultation Draft)

Appendix 2: Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 3: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening

Appendix 4: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening