

Report of the Strategic Director of Place to the meeting of the Executive to be held on 7 January 2020

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Subject:

Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide

Summary statement:

This report seeks Executive approval to formally adopt the Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for use in the determination of planning applications.

The purpose of the Guide will be to achieve a step change in the quality of new housing development in the District in support of policies in the current adopted Local Plan Core Strategy. It sets a vision for *“green, safe, inclusive and distinctive neighbourhoods that create healthy communities for all.”*

At the 11th June 2019 Meeting of the Executive it was resolved that the Draft version of the Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide be approved for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks. It was also resolved that the outcome of the consultation, including any suggested amendments, be reported back to the Executive as soon as possible with a view to seeking approval to adopt the Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The public consultation period ran from 30th July to 24th September 2019. This report details the key issues which have arisen from the consultation and the subsequent changes which are proposed to the Guide as a result.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Regeneration & Environment

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Executive approval to formally adopt the Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for use in the determination of planning applications.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Guide will be to achieve a step change in the quality of new housing development in the District in support of policies in the current adopted Local Plan Core Strategy.
- 1.3 At the 11th June 2019 Meeting of the Executive it was resolved that the Draft version of the Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide be approved for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks. It was also resolved that the outcome of the consultation, including any suggested amendments, be reported back to the Executive as soon as possible with a view to seeking approval to adopt the Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 1.4 The public consultation period ran from 30th July to 24th September 2019. This report details the key issues which have arisen from the consultation and the subsequent changes which are proposed to the Guide as a result.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Guide

- 2.1.1 The Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide will be a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in support of policies in the Local Plan Core Strategy, (in particular policies HO9 and DS1 – DS5). It will apply to all scales of housing development from an individual dwelling to a whole new neighbourhood.
- 2.1.2 The Guide sets a vision for *“green, safe, inclusive and distinctive neighbourhoods that create healthy communities for all.”* It identifies the following eight priorities for new development in the District:

1. Choice – a broad range of adaptable and efficient homes that are affordable to build, buy, rent and run.

2. Green – green streets and spaces.

3. Inclusive – accessible places with clear pedestrian routes.

4. Healthy – healthy and connected neighbourhoods that promote wellbeing and community life.

5. Distinctive – neighbourhoods with identity reflecting the District’s varied character.

6. Slopes – opening up views and designing to make the most of the topography and ground.

7. Efficient – designing to make efficient use of resources.

8. Process – making design and planning processes work together.

2.2 Preparation of the Guide

2.2.1 The Guide is part of a wider ‘Design Quality’ programme for Bradford funded by the Government’s Planning Delivery Fund which has also included a Masterplan for the City Village scheme and a Design Skills Training Programme for staff and members.

2.2.2 In September 2018 a team of consultants, comprising of Tibbalds and Urban Design Skills, were commissioned to prepare a draft Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide ready for public consultation.

2.2.3 During the preparation of the Guide the consultants led workshops with representatives of Departments from across the Council (including Place, Health & Wellbeing, Corporate Resources and the Office of the Chief Executive) and also with a number of key stakeholders (including Born in Bradford, Bradford Property Forum, Bradford Civic Society, Disabled and Older People Groups, and house builders active in the District).

2.2.4 This has helped to create a guide which is specific to Bradford and responsive to the challenges and opportunities in the District. The consultants completed their final draft in May 2019 and this was the document which was presented to Executive at the meeting on June 11th 2019 where it was given approval to consult.

2.3 Public Consultation

2.3.1 The formal 8 week consultation period took place between 30th July and 24th September 2019 and allowed members of the wider public and other organisations to have input into the content of the Guide.

2.3.2 Written representations were received from a variety of different perspectives and raised a number of different issues. There was a lot of general support for the Guide along with many comments and suggestions on specific matters where it could be improved.

2.3.3 The comments and suggestions have been incorporated into the document as far as possible. A ‘Statement of Consultation’ has been produced (in accordance with the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement) detailing the consultation that has taken place. This includes both the engagement with key stakeholders during the preparation of the Guide and the comments received during the formal public consultation period.

2.3.4 The Statement of Consultation sets out the issues raised and explains how the representations received have been addressed. The statement is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2.4 Summary of key changes

2.4.1 A full schedule of the recommended changes to the Guide is set out in the Statement of Consultation – see Appendix 1. Below is a summary of where key changes are proposed. For reference the Consultation Draft version of the Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide is attached at Appendix 2 – the sections of text which are subject to change are highlighted in yellow.

2.4.2 Climate emergency

2.4.3 Various respondents commented that the guide needs to do more to address the climate emergency and to meet the Leeds City Region’s Climate Coalition target of net zero carbon by 2038. This includes requests for the Guide to set energy efficiency targets for new homes higher than current standards.

2.4.4 In response as a supporting document, an SPD, the Guide can’t set energy efficiency requirements for new homes higher than current Building Regulations. The Government’s guidance is clear that this must be done through policies in the local plan. However, a range of additional guidance is proposed to be added to the Guide based on the suggestions made to make it more responsive to the climate emergency (particularly under Topics 1.5 and 3.9). This includes:

- Referring to the climate emergency and the need for climate resilient development.
- A requirement for developers to submit evidence to show how they have considered the low carbon solutions outlined in the Guide.
- More detail on how the zero carbon target and uplifting the energy efficiency of homes can be achieved including further guidance on Passive House principles and Modular Homes.
- Identifying solutions to renewable energy which developers must consider such as connecting to district heating networks, solar panels, ground source heat pumps, direct electric and hydrogen ready systems.
- Highlighting that reusing an existing building conserves much more energy than building a new one.

2.4.5 Trees & Green Infrastructure

2.4.6 Changes are proposed to place much more emphasis on retaining existing mature trees and planting new ones and providing significant levels of green infrastructure as part of new developments given the many benefits this can bring in terms of climate change, air quality, health and biodiversity (Priority 2 and Topics 2.6 & 2.8).

2.4.7 Sustainable Transport/Cycling

2.4.8 Comments have been received calling for more radical solutions to transport in the District. Much of this lies outside the scope of this document but changes are proposed to provide extra emphasis that residential streets should be designed to give cyclists priority over motor vehicles (Topic 2.3). Further detailed guidance on this will be set out in the forthcoming Bradford Street Design Guide (see paragraph 3.2 below)

2.4.9 Accessible Housing Standards

2.4.10 The draft Guide included a requirement for 10% of new homes to be built to the Wheelchair Accessible Dwellings standard and the remaining 90% to be built to Accessible & Adaptable Dwellings standards (see topic 2.17). A respondent has noted that it is not the place of the design guide, an SPD, to set such standards – they are policy requirements that have financial implications and they have not undergone independent examination.

2.4.11 This has been considered, and it is noted that current national policy and guidance does not make provision for standards like these to be included within supplementary planning documents such as the Guide.

2.4.12 However, the wording in the adopted Core Strategy under Policy HO9 states that the Council will set out the proportion of new homes to be built to these standards in the Design Guide, and further work has subsequently been undertaken on the need and viability of introducing the standards.

2.4.13 Therefore it is considered important to still include the standards in the final version of the Guide. However it is proposed, in order to comply with national policy and legislation, that the wording is changed to note that the Council will seek (rather than require) these standards subject to viability and other considerations. This will clearly identify the intended direction of travel in advance of the outcome of the Partial Review of the Core Strategy which will formally address this issue through planning policy.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Core Strategy Partial Review (CSPR)

3.1.1 A Partial Review of the Core Strategy is currently underway. The Preferred Options Report was published for consultation concurrently with the Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide and it is important that the two documents have a close relationship with each other.

3.1.2 Of particular relevance is Core Strategy Policy HO9 'Housing Quality' which is currently under review and deals with accessibility, space and sustainability standards for new homes. Additional references to Policy HO9 have been added to

the final version of the Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide under topics 2.17 and 3.2 to make clear that these sections should be read in conjunction with both the current policy and any subsequent future alterations to it

3.2 Bradford Street Design Guide

3.2.1 The Council is also planning to produce another Supplementary Planning Document – a Bradford Street Design Guide which will be closely linked to the Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide.

3.2.2 The Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide will set the overall agenda and principles for the design of residential streets with the Street Design Guide providing the detailed technical guidance which sits alongside this. References are made to the forthcoming Street Design Guide in relevant sections of the Homes and Neighbourhoods Guide to ensure that there will be read across between the two documents.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1 The costs of preparing the guide have been funded via an award of £100,000 from the Government's Planning Delivery Fund.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

5.1 It is not foreseen that any legal, financial, reputation or other risks will arise if options 1 or 2 (see section 9 below) are selected by Members and the recommendation of this report is accepted. If option 3 is selected there are potentially some financial and reputation risks, as outlined under this option in section 9.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

6.1 The preparation of the draft Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide and the public consultation period have been in compliance with relevant legislation and guidance regarding supplementary planning documents including Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 and the government's Planning Practice Guidance (revised 15 March 2019). The adoption of the Guide would also be carried out in accordance with the Regulations.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

7.1.1 A number of workshops have taken place to inform the preparation of the Guide involving representatives from Born in Bradford, Disabled and Older People

Groups, Incommunities and Council officers from Public Health, Housing and the Chief Executive's department.

- 7.1.2 This has enabled an insight into housing issues affecting different age groups (children and older people), a range of disabilities (including wheelchair users, visual impairment, mental health and dementia), and low income households and BME communities.
- 7.1.3 In response to this Priority 1 of the Guide is to provide a 'choice' of housing to meet the needs of people in the District, Priority 3 is for 'inclusive' and accessible homes and places, and Priority 4 is for 'healthy' neighbourhoods (see pages 10-11 of the Guide).
- 7.1.4 This is supported by specific guidance including designing streets which limit traffic speeds to 20mph and that give priority to pedestrians and cyclists, whilst also providing pavements that are free of clutter, cars and bins, with regular places for people to rest and sit down on main walking routes (Topics 2.3, 2.4, 2.17).
- 7.1.5 It requires that open spaces are included and designed to be accessible to everyone and that opportunities for 'doorstep play' for young children and toddlers are provided close to homes on residential streets (Topics 2.6, 2.10, 2.17).
- 7.1.6 Guidance is provided on how homes can be designed for multi-generational living (Topic 2.11) and the Guide seeks new homes to be accessible with 10% built to wheelchair accessible standards and the remaining 90% to the accessible and adaptable standard (Topic 2.17).
- 7.1.7 A change is proposed to the Guide to include reference to the importance of providing high speed digital connectivity for all new homes (Topic 2.17).
- 7.1.8 An 'Equalities Impact Assessment Scoping Report' of the Guide was published at public consultation stage and concluded that the document had positive implications for equality and diversity. It can help to advance equality of opportunity for people who have a protected characteristic, and also to foster good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.2.1 The preparation of the Guide has included input from officers in Environmental Health, Energy and the Countryside Service amongst others. It is considered that it will have positive implications in terms of sustainability through guidance including the following examples:
 - **Green Streets** (Topic 2.4) – requires streets to be designed to be greener which could include more street trees, swales, and planting/hedgerows for

garden boundaries.

- **Water** (Topic 2.7) – requires that priority is given to sustainable drainage processes and that a drainage strategy should help to shape the design of the open space, landscape and streets.
- **Biodiversity** (Topic 2.9) – identifies how development can provide a net gain in biodiversity by including design features at the scales of neighbourhood, street and individual house.
- **Air Quality** (Topics 1.5, 2.3-2.6, 2.8, 2.15) – the issue of air quality is addressed throughout the document through requiring that developments:
 - Prioritise active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport.
 - Incorporate street trees, planting, open spaces and landscape.
 - Include EV charging points for vehicles.
- **Cycling** (Topic 2.5) – includes design guidance on how to meet the Core Strategy’s cycle parking requirements for different types of homes.
- **Energy Efficiency** (Topics 1.5, 3.9) – whilst it is not possible to set energy efficiency standards in an SPD document such as this the guide does provide guidance on how homes can be designed to be more energy efficient through their layout, details and materials, including taking a fabric first approach.

7.2.2 The above is further supported by proposed changes to address the climate emergency, taking on board comments received during the consultation from the Environment Agency, WYCA and local community organisations and residents – see section 2.4 above.

7.2.3 A Sustainability Assessment Scoping Report was published at public consultation stage and concluded that the Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide would have positive implications in terms of Sustainability.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

7.3.1 The Guide should help to reduce greenhouse gas emission impacts through prioritising active travel and public transport over the car, making developments greener with more trees and landscape, requiring the provision of electric vehicle charging points and delivering better energy efficiency in homes. See also sections 2.4 and 7.2 above.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

7.4.1 West Yorkshire Police’s Architectural Liaison Officer has been involved in workshops throughout the preparation of the draft guide and has helped to influence its content. A priority of the guide is to create safe communities. It has

been developed in accordance with 'Secure by Design' principles and includes guidance on making inclusive places for people with safe streets and spaces and secure properties.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

7.5.1 Members of the public have had an opportunity to comment on the draft version of the guide within an 8 week consultation period, and the comments received have been taken into account and fully documented. No conflict with the Human Rights Act is foreseen.

7.6 TRADE UNION

7.6.1 There are no Trade Union implications.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

7.7.1 If adopted, the Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide SPD will influence applications for housing development throughout the entire Bradford District.

7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

7.8.1 As stated above, the Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide SPD, if adopted, will influence applications for housing development throughout the entire Bradford District.

7.9 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

7.9.1 There are no implications for corporate parenting.

7.10 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

7.10.1 With regard to the public consultation the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principles relating to individuals' data and rights under the Data Protection Act 2018 are being respected.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

8.1 None.

9. OPTIONS

9.1 Option 1 (Recommended)

9.1.1 Adopt the Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide with the changes as recommended as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to be used in the determination of planning applications.

9.1.2 The selection of this option will allow the Guide to progress to adoption immediately.

9.2 Option 2

9.2.1 Subject to further changes beyond those proposed, adopt the Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide as an SPD to be used in the determination of planning applications.

9.2.2 The selection of this option will allow Members to shape and influence the content of the final guide prior to adoption. However, it may cause some delay, depending on the scope of the proposed amendments and whether or not the Executive, an alternative Committee or individual Members wish to be re-consulted prior to formal adoption. Any fundamental changes to the SPD may require further public consultation before it could be considered for adoption.

9.3 Option 3

9.3.1 Refuse permission to adopt the Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide as an SPD.

9.3.2 Should Members be deeply unsatisfied with the document or the principle of adopting a Homes & Neighbourhoods Design Guide SPD then selection of this option will allow them to halt or put an end to the progression of the document.

9.3.3 It should be noted that the Council's adopted Core Strategy states that an SPD will be prepared to support the implementation of the design and housing policies. The Council has received an award from the Government's Planning Delivery Fund for the purpose of preparing and progressing a Design Guide towards SPD status. Selection of this option would effectively put an end to this work and could potentially negatively impact on any future funding bids to the Government.

9.3.4 Also a number of Council departments, other organisations and community groups have provided input into the preparation of the guide and selection of this option may prevent their aspirations from being met.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 **That the Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide with the changes as recommended, attached in Appendix 1, be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.**
- 10.2 **That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to carry out any minor amendments of a drafting or similar nature necessary, prior to the formal publication of the adopted Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide SPD.**

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1. Statement of Consultation (including Schedule of Recommended Changes)
- 11.2 Appendix 2. Homes and Neighbourhoods Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, Consultation Draft June 2019.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 12.1 A number of background documents have been used to inform the writing of this report. All are published and readily available to the public.