

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Planning

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Wards affected: South Oxfordshire District

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To: CABINET

Date: 22.09.16

New South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016

Recommendation

To adopt the new South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (Appendix A) as a Supplementary Planning Document to the adopted South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012.

Purpose of Report

1. Following public consultation, to consider comments made about the draft design guide supplementary planning document (SPD), agree proposed changes and adopt the document.

Corporate Objectives

2. Two key objectives are building the local economy and meeting housing need.

Background

3. A project to write a new design guide to replace the 2008 guide commenced in June 2015. The aim was to provide an up to date, innovative, concise and engaging document. The guide would then be used as a tool to ensure developers build high quality schemes that respect the local context in South Oxfordshire.

4. The draft guide was subject to 4 weeks internal consultation and 6 weeks public consultation. As part of the internal consultation, Development Management Officers, South Oxfordshire District Councillors and other relevant Council departments and teams were consulted. As part of the external consultation, Officers and Councillors were consulted again alongside all statutory consultees and everyone listed on the register of consultees. A press notice was published in both the Oxford Mail and Henley Standard and a note added to the Council's website. Press releases promoting the consultation were issued to all local papers. Hard copies of the guide were also available to view in libraries in Didcot, Henley, Wallingford and Thame as well as at the Council Offices in Milton Park.
5. We received 49 responses from local residents, statutory consultees, interest groups and officers of the Council. Overall, the consultation feedback has been positive and constructive and the guide has been amended to incorporate and respond to relevant comments. The main areas of concern were that the guide had too much of an urban emphasis, lacked examples in a rural context and it didn't cover all scales of development. The main areas of support related to the clear structure and concise format of the guide, the easy to understand visual examples and up to date content. A summary of the consultation undertaken for the guide can be found at Appendix C.
6. The main changes to the guide following the consultation period comprise clarification and re-emphasis of how this guide relates to different contexts and how it can be applied to all scales of development, a stronger section on the value of good design, a new section on small scale development and two additional technical documents for apartments and non-domestic buildings. A copy of the previous draft of the document with track changes showing how it has been amended can be found at Appendix B.
7. If the design guide is adopted by Cabinet it will be a material consideration when determining planning applications.

Options

8. An option would be to continue using the current South Oxfordshire Design Guide SPD, adopted in 2008 rather than replace it with a new guide. This document is now considered old however and does not reflect current best practice or development pressures in the district. It is also long (204 pages), can be difficult to engage with and absorb all of the relevant information in such a large document. The guide also does not cover larger residential development schemes.
9. A more concise, up to date, visually stimulating and innovative guide was required and the new guide has sought to meet these aspirations. The new guide is easier to read and follow, and the well-established design principles within it are relevant to all scales of development. The new guide follows a different structure from the existing guide, taking the reader through a logical design process and providing them with the information they will need to design, assess and recognise high quality development.

Financial Implications

10. There are no ongoing financial implications of preparing a supplementary planning document and the cost of the project does not exceed an existing budget.

Legal Implications

11. The preparation of the SPD is in compliance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and paragraph 153 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Risks

12. There are minimal risks and limited consequences as this is a small project. The service has undertaken public consultation and sought to address any issues raised throughout the consultation period in accordance with Regulations.

Conclusion

13. The new South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 Supplementary Planning Document will be a useful tool for designers, developers, officers, councillors and the public by setting out the Council's expectations for high quality design in developments and how to achieve this.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that the new South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Draft South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 and suite of technical documents
- Appendix B: Draft South Oxfordshire Design Guide with track changes showing amendments
- Appendix C: Design Guide Consultation Summary (Draft)