

Luton & South Bedfordshire Joint Committee

23 July 2010

Agenda Item No. 11

AUTHOR	Mark Saccoccio – Team Leader LDF north Central Bedfordshire.
SUBJECT	Supplementary Planning Document - Design Guide for Central Bedfordshire.
PURPOSE	To adopt the Supplementary Planning Document for the south area (former South Bedfordshire) of Central Bedfordshire subject to securing compliance with recommendations as set out below. Once adopted, the design guide will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for development in Central Bedfordshire.
RECOMMENDATIONS	That the Joint Committee: 1. welcomes the widespread and broadly positive response and support to the Draft Design Guide following formal public consultation; and 2. formally adopts the proposed Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) constituting part of its Local Development Framework (LDF).
REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS	In order to meet the requirements of the Town and Country Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Central Bedfordshire is committed to the creation of a design guide that will underpin the Council's commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of the built environment and promoting sustainable development and healthy communities. The Design Guide is intended to reinforce the Government's commitment to place making, good design and achieving carbon neutrality.

- 1.2 Whilst southern and northern Central Bedfordshire may operate within differing LDF frameworks, it has always been the intention that where possible, to align certain policy documents in order that they may apply equally across the new unitary authority. The Design Guide for the north area (former Mid Bedfordshire) has already been adopted and once adopted for the south area, this will mean that Central Bedfordshire will have in place a comprehensive approach to design.
- 1.3 Without a Design Guide, design quality is left purely to the negotiation skills of individual officers dealing with planning applications. The Design Guide is therefore intended to bring a much more consistent and robust approach to dealing with design across Central Bedfordshire.
- 1.4 The scope of the new Design Guide is broader than the previous guidance documents in that the core document addresses not only the principles of good design and place making but also covers a wide range of development, including street and highway design. It draws on the previous work undertaken by the legacy authorities and once adopted, it will supersede the existing design guides.
- 1.5 Its purpose is to set out recognised design principles which can help guide development across the authority appropriate to local context. From modest alterations through to master planning urban extensions, it is expected that the guide can help inform these processes. However, it should be recognised that the guide does not seek to be prescriptive but to set parameters for creative solutions as no one solution “fits all”.
- 1.6 The guide is crucial to underpin the Council’s aim to raise the quality of new development as part of its management of the growth agenda. When adopted, it will be a key part of the Council’s Local Development Framework (LDF) and will inform the Buildings for Life and Housing Quality Performance agenda. The design guide will sit at the heart of the Development Management process and will be a key material consideration in pre-application discussions and determination of planning applications.
- 1.7 At its meeting held 12 January 2010, Central Bedfordshire Executive Committee formally adopted the design guide as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for development in the north area (former Mid Bedfordshire) of Central Bedfordshire.

2.0 COMPOSITION OF THE DESIGN GUIDE

- 2.1 The design guide comprises the Core Document that provides detailed guidance on specific development types within the authority. It sets out the policy context and generic design guidance relevant to the authority. It also provides advice on the character and methods for appraising sites and their settings.

2.2 The objectives of the design guide are:-

- high quality buildings and extensions that are appropriate in scale and design to their setting;
- contribute positively to creating a sense of place and respect local distinctiveness through design and use of materials;
- use land efficiently;
- use energy efficiently;
- respect the amenity of surrounding properties;
- minimise opportunities for crime and enhance community safety;
- comply with the current guidance on noise, waste management, vibration, odour, water, light and airborne pollution;
- provide adequate areas for parking and servicing;
- provide hard and soft landscaping appropriate in scale and design to the development and its setting;
- incorporate public art in line with the thresholds determined by the Planning Obligations Strategy;
- ensure that public buildings are accessible for all, and comply with current guidance on accessibility to other buildings; and
- respect and complement the context and setting of all local historically sensitive sites particularly those that are designated.

2.3 The Core Document is complimented by a suite of 7 supplements that provide more detailed guidance on specific development types within the authority namely:-

- New Residential Development – Design Supplement 1
- Larger Footprint Buildings – Design Supplement 2
- Town Centre and Infill Development – Design Supplement 3
- Residential Alterations and Extensions – Design Supplement 4
- The Historic Environment – Design Supplement 5
- Shopfronts and Signage – Design Supplement 6
- Movements, Streets and Places – Design Supplement 7

2.4 The design guide can be found by clicking on the following link or by visiting the Central Bedfordshire website :-

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/ldf/central-bedfordshire-design-guide.aspx>

3.0 PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

3.1 Extensive consultation has taken place throughout the development of this Guide, both within the authority and with stakeholders.

3.2 An initial stakeholder workshop was held on 11 June 2009 and the comments received from this session helped inform the emerging guide.

- 3.3 On 6 October 2009, a six week statutory consultation period began which ran to 16 November 2009. Consultation was carried out in accordance with the joint Statement of Community Involvement with documents sent to stakeholders, deposited in libraries and customer service points and placed on the Council's website. As part of the consultation exercise, a workshop for stakeholders including Town and Parish Councillors was held at Priory House on 22 October 2009.

4.0 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED ON THE DRAFT SPD

- 4.1 The draft SPD has been the subject of public consultation and the responses received are scheduled in Appendix A together with a suggested response on behalf of the Committee following due consideration.
- 4.2 It will be noted that the majority of responses specifically welcome the Design Guide both in content and in format. No objections to the guidance were received.

5.0 THE WAY FORWARD

- 5.1 The revised draft Design Guide and Design Supplements have been placed on the "Shape Your Future" and Central Bedfordshire website. A hard copy of the documents is made available in the Members resource rooms at Priory House (Chicksands).
- 5.2 When adopted, the Design Guide will inform the Building for Life and housing quality performance agenda. The undertaking of Building for Life assessments will be introduced through the Annual Monitoring Report and will be required for all new housing developments of 10 units and above. This requirement will be linked to the Central Bedfordshire Development Management Performance Indicator to monitor the design quality of new housing developments. This new agenda will be achieved through a series of training events for officers and agents to ensure ownership and commitment to the principles in the design guidance.
- 5.3 It is also proposed to raise the quality of design in Central Bedfordshire through the widening of the existing Annual Design Award initiative.
- 5.4 Notwithstanding this however, as set out in the Luton and South Bedfordshire Local Development Scheme (October 2009), an Urban Design SPD will be prepared by the Joint Committee. The emerging design guide for Luton and Southern Bedfordshire will be a compendium of detailed planning guidance on design and sustainable development which will draw on existing and new work. It is the intention that this document will compliment the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide, the subject of this paper.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Preparation costs to date have all been met within the existing Development Plan budget. Printing and officer training costs in due course will similarly be met within that budget. No new budget needs to be identified to operate the Guide when adopted.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The Joint Committee is now asked to support and formally adopt the Design Guide. Its adoption will underpin national planning guidance, the Local Development Framework and Development Management through guidance aimed at improving the quality and sustainability of new development.

APPENDIX

Appendix A – Comments received during public consultation together with our recommended response on behalf of the Joint Committee.