

5 January 2017		ITEM: 8
Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
Thurrock Design Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Monica Qing, Senior Planning Officer		
Accountable Head of Service: Andy Millard – Head of Planning and Growth		
Accountable Director: Steve Cox – Director of Environment and Place		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report outlines the background, purpose and consultation process involved in the production of the Thurrock Design Strategy (TDS).

The TDS is being produced as a quality-led policy tool which, alongside Local Plan policies, will be used to inform and assess development proposals, from small infill sites through to larger regeneration and redevelopment schemes. Although SPDs do not have the same weight or status as policies in a Local Plan (as they are not subject to an independent examination before an Inspector) they can still form a 'material consideration' in determining planning applications once they have been adopted.

The draft TDS was published for public consultation from 26th February to 11th April 2015 alongside the Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 1) document. One of the key outcomes of the consultation is the recognition of the importance of achieving good design and the benefits this can bring in delivering sustainable communities.

1. Recommendation

1.1 Members note the current status and progress on the production and adoption of the Design Strategy and provide comments on the consultation process that will inform the production of the final document.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 In order to support high quality development in the Borough, the Council has recognised the need to produce Design Strategy Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are produced to provide additional detail and guidance to support policies and proposals in an adopted development plan. Although they do not have the same weight or status as policies in a Local Plan as they are not subject to an independent examination before an Inspector they can still form a 'material consideration' in determining planning applications once they have been adopted by the Council following public consultation.

- 2.2 Combined with the relevant national design policy and guidance, the TDS sets out Council's requirements for assessing the context of a site, and provides guidance based on the characteristics of five broad place typologies.
- 2.3 The document also provides a checklist of pre-submission, submission and post-submission design requirements that Thurrock Council will expect in support of planning application proposals. Where proposals do not reflect the guidance and are contrary to national policy they will be considered for refusal.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The importance of achieving good design and the benefits this can bring in delivering sustainable communities, is clearly set out in National Planning Policy and Guidance. In preparing the TDS the Council is committed to substantially raising design standards across the Borough and the delivery of the following six objectives:

1. Improve the overall design quality standards of development in Thurrock, enhancing perceptions of place and reinforcing a strong sense of civic pride.
2. Innovate through design improvements in locations where the existing built environment requires regeneration.
3. Enhance the best of the existing built and natural environments drawing on the heritage and identity of towns and villages in Thurrock.
4. Provide clear guidance on the Council's expectations regarding the design approach to be adopted in Thurrock.
5. Work proactively with the development industry to bring forward proposals in a timely and effective way having regard to statutory policy requirements.
6. Lead by example through the design and implementation of Council-led development projects.

- 3.2 The overarching objectives described above will be implemented through the application of the TDS to all projects coming forward within Thurrock where

the Council will work closely with developers and landowners to secure the delivery of high quality development across the Borough.

- 3.3 At its meeting in February 2016, Council agreed to undertake a 6-week consultation on the first draft of the TDS. During that consultation period, the Council received 53 comments from both public and industry experts. The industry experts think one of the TDS's strength is the weight it gives to drawing on context in the design of developments. One of the shared concerns is what is expected of applicants and how design quality will be measured. A summary of the consultation responses and Officers' responses appended to this report.
- 3.4 Corresponding to the shared concerns, it is intended to improve the clarity in terms of what is expected of applicants through further review of the document. In addition, the Council will produce a range of supplementary documents to provide more detailed design guides for five place typologies outlined in the TDS. These design guides will provide more detailed rationale and quality measurements needed but beyond the scope and capacity of the TDS. The work on the Design Guide for Residential Alterations and Extensions is already close to completion and the Design Guide for Industrial Development is the next in the pipeline. This will be followed by the Design Guide for Town Centres and Transport Hubs.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Council is looking to work more closely with developers and landowners to secure the delivery of high quality development across the Borough. The TDS will be a key tool to achieve this.
- 4.2 During the 6-week consultation period, the Council received a number of responses. The final TDS will be informed by the consultation responses and the views of this Committee. Once adopted, The TDS will be an important policy tool providing incentives and clear directions for good quality design in Thurrock.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 The draft Thurrock Design Strategy was published for public consultation from 26 February to 11 April 2015 alongside the Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 1) document.
- 5.2 During the consultation period the draft TDS document was made available to view at thurrock.gov.uk/localplan with comments being encouraged through the Council's consultation portal or on Comment Forms which were available on request at the Civic Offices and in libraries across the Borough. Council Officers also attended Community Forum meetings and organised a series of drop-in 'Road Show' events to allow people to learn more about the TDS.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The TDS is prepared as an overarching design vision and objectives at both strategic and local scale. It strengthens corporate policies and priorities particularly in creating a great place, improving health and well-being, promoting and protecting our clean and green environment.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Management Accountant

The costs associated with progressing this work on the Council's side can be met from within the existing Local Plan budget.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Vivien Williams**
Principal Regeneration Solicitor

The TDS has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012. The guidance within the Design Strategy supplements adopted policies within the Council's Core Strategy as such it has not been subject to a separate Sustainability Appraisal. Once adopted, the Design Strategy will be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development and Equalities Manager

There are no direct diversity issues linked with this report, however, if adopted, the document will be subject to a Community and Equality Impact assessment to assess the borough-wide equality improvements through better design solutions such as mixed uses and tenures, accessible open spaces and etc. The CEIA will also allow for possible negative impacts to be assessed and mitigated.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

The TDS will have numerous positive impacts on Public Health, Environment and sustainability because it sets out Council's requirements regarding assessing the context of a site and the key design principles and objectives for safe, healthy and sustainable developments.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the** report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

Thurrock Design Strategy Consultations.

9. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1 - Summary of Consultation Responses and Officer Responses

Report Author

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