



Agenda item:

Report for:	Strategic Planning & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	22nd April 2020
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Dacorum Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
Contact:	<p>CLlr Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure</p> <p>Responsible Officer: James Doe, Assistant Director, Planning, Development & Regeneration</p> <p>Authors: Olivia Halper, Urban Design Officer Alex Robinson, Strategic Planning Manager</p>
Purpose of report:	To consult the Committee on the Draft Dacorum Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
Recommendations	That Committee informs Cabinet of its views on the Draft Dacorum Strategic Design Guide SPD (Appendix A).
Period for post project review	Once the Dacorum Strategic Design Guide (DSDG) is adopted as an SPD, a review of its impact and continuing relevance should be undertaken within 5 years.
Corporate objectives:	<p>The DSDG design standards for new development will support the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clean, safe and enjoyable environment: e.g. design principles that include promoting walkable neighbourhoods, accessible green infrastructure and prioritising pedestrians. • Building strong and vibrant communities: e.g. including design principles providing a mix of uses and range of housing types and tenures integrated within neighbourhoods. • Ensuring economic growth and prosperity: e.g. including design principles that promote contemporary, sustainably designed employment areas. • Providing good quality affordable homes: e.g. including design principles to promote a range of tenures and housing typologies which meet all socio-economic needs and conform to best practice space,

	quality and sustainability standards.
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>None directly associated with this report.</p> <p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>The consultants were appointed through a formal procurement process where cost and value for money considerations were reflected in the scoring criteria.</p>
'Value for money' implications	
Risk implications	<p>Given the scale of future growth likely to come forward across the Borough it is important that the Council has up to date and robust design policies which reflect national practice and Dacorum's emerging Local Plan.</p> <p>National guidance advises all Councils to have local Design Guides that provide detailed design guidance; the DSDG provides this local-level framework whilst reflecting the latest national-level design guidance.</p> <p>If the DSDG is not approved, the Council will continue to apply its existing suite of design guidance documents, many of which are out of date and will not reflect Dacorum's emerging Local Plan.</p>
Community Impact Assessment	<p>The Dacorum Strategic Design Guide will become a supplementary planning document to the adopted Core Strategy 2013 and, in time, the emerging new single Local Plan. A community impact assessment for the Dacorum Single Local Plan was prepared in June 2019, consultation on the DSDG will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. A full Sustainability Appraisal (SA) must be carried out as part of the Local Plan process. The SA looks at social, environmental and economic impacts in detail and is scrutinised at the Local Plan examination by an independent inspector.</p>
Health and safety Implications	<p>Higher quality design of new developments will support improved community health and wellbeing.</p>
Consultees:	<p>The following officers have been consulted on the Draft document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Management, including Conservation • Strategic Planning & Regeneration • Strategic Housing • Community Partnerships
Background papers:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Core Strategy (September 2013) 2. List of existing design guidance to be replaced:

	Appendix B
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>DBC – Dacorum Borough Council</p> <p>SA – Sustainability Appraisal</p> <p>SPD – Supplementary Planning Document</p> <p>DSDG – Dacorum Strategic Design Guide</p>

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The adopted Core Strategy (2013) committed to preparing an Urban Design SPD to deliver the Council's design aspirations. The Dacorum Strategic Design Guide (Appendix A) forms the first part of this guidance. It outlines Dacorum's design expectations for high quality, inclusive and sustainable places which reflect and respond to Dacorum's local character, and a three-stage design process to achieve these. It also provides detailed guidance for the design of commercial areas and business and industrial units to meet best practice.
- 1.2 The DSDG was commissioned jointly by DBC and St Albans City & District Council, with input from the Local Enterprise Partnership for use with commercial development proposals. Each authority has now customised the final version to suit their particular circumstances and will be adopting their own documents. Despite this, the content and aspirations have remained broadly the same.
- 1.3 Once adopted the DSDG will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.
- 1.4 The second part of the SPD guidance to be prepared will be a Dacorum Detailed Design Guide, which will provide criteria and practical examples of acceptable development that is appropriate to the character of Dacorum. Together with the Dacorum Strategic Design Guide, on adoption it will replace the existing design guidance listed in Appendix B. The Dacorum Detailed Design Guide will be prepared during 2020, and will be reported to the Strategic Planning & Environment Overview Scrutiny Committee later in the year.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 Dacorum is entering a phase of significant growth, with development needed to deliver new homes as well as strong, prosperous communities that foster economic growth.
- 2.2 Urban extensions, new neighbourhoods and urban infill development are planned within the context of a mix of historic settlements and suburbs, a New Town and Green Belt countryside. This context merits the creation of special places and the highest levels of design quality. High quality design of new developments will also be important for community perception of new growth.
- 2.3 In this context, the DSDG sets out requirements for developers, applicants and Council officers to ensure that new development is of the highest possible design quality. It defines the strategic design principles which are to be applied across sites of all scales and which should underpin design at all stages, from site-wide masterplanning to the design of blocks, buildings and streets. It requires new proposals submitted for planning permission to demonstrate not only how they have responded to nationally recognised best practice in design, but also how

they have responded to the characteristics and features, which are unique and distinctive to the area.

2.4 In accordance with the latest national-level planning policies and guidance, the DSDG ensures clarity on design expectations and how this will be demonstrated and tested through the development management process.

2.5 The guidance should be used by applicants, designers and officers working in collaboration. The DSDG will be used by:

- Applicants and their design teams preparing development proposals;
- Planning officers, to negotiate with applicants/agents as proposals are developed, to offer pre-application advice at the outline and reserved matters stage, and to assess the quality of development proposals when determining planning applications;
- Elected Councillors when assessing development proposals in advance of and at planning committee;
- Statutory consultees providing commentary on applications;
- The Dacorum Community Review Panel when reviewing development proposals at pre-application and application stage; and
- Local communities as they are consulted on applications.

3. Summary of main provisions

3.1 The DSDG comprises three parts, each of which has a specific role to play in guiding design and is summarised below.

3.2 Throughout, the DSDG specifies how applicants will be expected to demonstrate compliance with its principles. The entire guidance operates on the basis of 'comply or justify', where deviation from its provisions will only be permitted with robust and evidence-based justification for doing so. In such cases, applicants must demonstrate that their proposals will deliver the very highest quality design that aligns with the overarching aims of the DSDG. This approach reflects current best practice to ensure that a high standard of design will be secured, whilst offering applicants and their design team(s) have flexibility to innovate.

Part 1: Design Process

3.3 Part 1 sets out an approach to the design process that the Council will expect applicants to follow. This provides a route for planning applicants and their design teams to understand the specific character of this part of Hertfordshire and apply a character-led approach to design.

3.4 The design process is based on three key stages:

- **Observing Place** – Observing and understanding the site and its broader context
- **Evaluating Place** – From the features observed, identifying which will be most influential to design
- **Making a Place** – Applying the identified features to design at all scales and stages, from a site-wide masterplan through to increasing levels of detail, to create distinctive places.

Part 2: Design Principles

- 3.5 Part 2 establishes design principles to which all development proposals in the Borough are expected to adhere. The principles are ambitious and set a high standard for new development, so that it contributes to sustainable growth and continues Dacorum's tradition of distinctive, attractive and successful places.
- 3.6 Design principles are arranged under 10 categories, each of which links strategic aims to a checklist of practical, measurable principles which designers can implement and planning officers can assess. The principles are supported by the design process outlined in Part 1 of the DSDG, which helps to ensure that principles are met in a way which reflects and responds to the local context.
- 3.7 The 10 categories are:
1. A Distinctive Place
 2. A Compact Place
 3. A Place for All
 4. A Connected Place
 5. With Great Streets and Spaces
 6. With Great Homes
 7. Active and Healthy
 8. Facing the Climate Crisis
 9. Flexible and Adaptable
 10. For the Long Term

Part 3: Employment Uses Guidance

- 3.8 Part 3 provides guidance to secure contemporary employment areas which adhere to best practice environmental sustainability measures and offer a diverse and flexible range of high quality commercial spaces for different businesses, and coherent, attractive public spaces and streets which encourage healthy working lifestyles and social interaction. In particular, these provisions will be used to promote the highest possible design quality for the Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter.
- 3.9 The first section sets out general design principles that apply to any employment area, illustrated with case studies demonstrating best practice. The principles are:
- A Healthy Place to Work and Socialise
 - A Multi-Functional, Natural Environment
 - A Sustainable Built Environment
 - A Well Connected, Integrated Place
 - A Pedestrian Focused Place
- 3.10 The second section provides design solutions, tailored to large and small business and industrial units, which address commonly-encountered challenges of parking, servicing and relationship to the public realm. Design solutions are also illustrated with best practice examples.

Appendix B: List of existing design guidance to be replaced once both the Strategic and Detailed Design Guides are adopted

Existing guidance to be replaced
Area Based Policies SPD
Development in Residential Areas

Environmental Guidelines
5 Shop Fronts
6 Advertisements
7 Development in Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings
8 Conversion of Agricultural Buildings
10 Waste Management
12 Safety and Security
Dacorum Urban Design Assessment & Update Paper
Saved Appendices of Local Plan 2004
Appendix 3 – Layout and Design of Residential Areas
Appendix 4 – Layout and Design of Employment Areas
Appendix 7 - Small-scale House Extensions
Appendix 8 – Exterior Lighting