



Report for:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	19th May 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>Author: Olivia Halper, Urban Design Officer Alex Robinson, Strategic Planning Manager Claire Covington, Assistant Team Leader, Strategic Planning</p>
Purpose of report:	To seek Cabinet's approval to consult on the Draft Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. approves the Draft Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document for public consultation; 2. delegates authority to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure and Assistant Director, Planning, Development & Regeneration to agree the timing of the public consultation on the Draft Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.
Period for post policy/project review	Once the Dacorum Strategic Design Guide (DSDG) is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 that meet all socio-economic needs and conform to best practice space, quality and sustainability standards.
<p>Implications:</p> <p>'Value for money' implications</p>	<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>
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 that 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 Council has undertaken a Community Impact Assessment (CIA) for the draft Dacorum Strategic Design Guide, which is appended to this report.</p> <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.</p> <p>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	Higher quality design of new developments will support

Implications	improved community health and wellbeing.
Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments	<p>Deputy Monitoring Officer:</p> <p>There is a requirement for public participation prior to the adoption of a SPD by a local planning authority as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. :</p> <p>Deputy S.151 Officer</p> <p>There are no financial implications of this report.</p>
Consultees:	<p>The following officers have been consulted on the Draft document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Gaynor Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration • 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 3. Community Impact Assessment for the draft Dacorum Strategic Design Guide: Appendix C
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>DBC – Dacorum Borough Council</p> <p>CIA – Community Impact Assessment</p> <p>SA – Sustainability Appraisal</p> <p>SPD – Supplementary Planning Document</p> <p>DSDG – Dacorum Strategic Design Guide</p>

Background

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.

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.
3. Once adopted the DSDG will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.
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.

Purpose

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.

Summary of main provisions

10. The DSDG comprises three parts, each of which has a specific role to play in guiding design and is summarised below.
11. 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

12. 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.
13. 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

14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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

17. 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.
18. 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
19. 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.

Supplementary Planning Document adoption process

20. The Draft Strategic Design Guide was reported to the Strategic Planning, Environment and Overview Committee on 22nd April. The view of the Committee was that:

“The draft DSDG is a well structured and exhaustive guide that should:

 - save the Council time and money by placing the onus on developers to show in advance how applications conform to Council policy,
 - guide developers on the preparation and presentation of major applications,
 - inform DMC decision making by providing clear material grounds for decisions which will be less liable to successful challenge at appeal than at present.

However, further work needs to be done on guidance for “in-fill” developments”
21. The additional work on guidance for “in-fill” development will be included within the scope of the Detailed Dacorum Design Guide to be prepared later this year.

22. The next stage in the process of adopting the DSDG as an SPD is to undertake formal consultation in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. This will include:
- minimum 4 week consultation period;
 - plans to be made available on the Council website and at relevant deposit points;
 - contact persons and bodies registered on the Council's Local Plan consultation database.
23. Cabinet is asked to approve the Draft Strategic Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, attached as Appendix A, for public consultation as set out in paragraph 22 above.
24. There is a risk that if the consultation were to take place during the strict national restrictions imposed due to COVID-19, the process may not meet the Council's consultation standards. Given the current uncertainty over when this situation will change, Cabinet is asked to give delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure and Assistant Director Planning, Development and Regeneration to agree the timing of the public consultation on the Draft Strategic Design Guide.
25. Following the consultation, the comments received will be assessed and a consultation report will be brought back to Cabinet later in the year.

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