

REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 24 NOVEMBER 2009

SUBJECT: URBAN DESIGN GUIDE – SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 This report asks the Committee to agree for consultation a proposed draft Urban Design Guide.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section D(2) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the review and preparation of strategic and local plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that:

- (i) the Committee approves the draft Urban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Guidance for consultation.**
- (ii) a report on the consultation exercise, summarising representations received is presented to a future meeting of the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee.**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Scottish Government has published several papers in the last few years promoting better urban design. This includes "Designing Places" and "Designing Streets", which aim to create attractive new developments. Concern has been expressed nationally over the poor quality of design, particularly in volume house building, including;-

- streets dominated by car parking
- poorly connected areas being isolated
- poor facilities for public transport, cycling and walking
- circuitous housing layouts which are difficult to find your way around
- the lack of character and identity in new development
- poor quality and quantity of open space provision

3.2 As part of the Planning Improvement Service run by the Scottish Government, Development Services secured 80% grant funding towards the cost of an Urban Design Training course for officers from Planning and Development, Development Management and Transportation. The course consisted of 6 days training and an additional six days research and practical work. A number of actions were identified at the end of the course including changes

to working practices and the need for urban design guidance to supplement the Moray Local Plan policies.

- 3.3 The Design Guidance is intended to form part of a suite of Guidance which includes the Developer Requirements Supplementary Planning Guidance and site specific development briefs.
- 3.4 The Urban Design Guide when approved, will become a material consideration.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 A copy of the proposed draft Urban Design Guide is included in Appendix 1. The Guide sets out the key principles of urban design and interprets national guidance in the local context. The guide is split into three main sections and also provides a checklist for applicants and officers to ensure the principles have been followed. A template for Design and Access Statements, a new requirement introduced by the 2006 Act, is also included.
- 4.2 The Guidance aims to encourage good design principles to ensure that new developments are successful places to live, work and relax. Good design from the outset can avoid problems in the longer term such as poorly maintained spaces, isolated communities and social problems. Good design adds value to a development, creating a place that is attractive, safe and easy to move around.
- 4.3 The three main sections in the report are;-
- Creating Places with Character and Identity - this section encourages designs to incorporate elements which will create a distinctive place with its own identity rather than “just another development.” This can be achieved through sensitive integration with the surroundings, small development block sizes, varied house styles and gateway features.
 - Connecting Places - successful places depend upon good connections to and within the site. The function of the street should change from being primarily a movement corridor. The connections should make it as attractive to walk, cycle or use public transport as it is to take the car. Places should be designed as “walkable neighbourhoods” which are well connected to local facilities. Car parking should be carefully integrated to avoid it dominating the streetscape and should be broken up with soft landscaping. Homezones with shared surfaces are encouraged.
 - Creating Safe and Pleasant Places - open spaces should be an integral part of a development and create a network of greenspaces linked together by footpaths and cyclepaths. Open spaces should be fit for purpose and well maintained. Boundary treatments should enhance and define open spaces. Buildings should be orientated to ensure that open spaces, footpaths and other communal areas are overlooked. Developments should incorporate public art.

- 4.4 Although aimed primarily at housing developments, the basic principles contained within the Guide can be applied to all types of development.
- 4.5 The consultation period will run from 30 November through to the 22 January 2010 and will consist of:-
- a press release raising awareness of the draft and advising where it can be viewed.
 - the draft being made available on the website
 - letters advising of the consultation/ copies of the draft being sent to community councils/ associations, agents, developers, architects and consultees.
 - copies being circulated internally for further comment.
- 4.6 All representation will be acknowledged, summarised and presented to the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee on 9 February 2010. If representations raise significant concerns then a Hearing may be convened to consider them.
- 4.7 A copy of the final version will then be sent to the Scottish Government along with the committee report explaining the consultation exercise and how comments were taken into account. The Scottish Ministers have 28 days in which to comment otherwise the Council can proceed to adopt the Guide.

5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) *Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan*

Preparation of Supplementary Planning Guidance is identified as an Action in the Moray Local Plan 2008. The Single Outcome Agreement has a priority to create well designed, sustainable places.

(b) *Policy and Legal*

When formally adopted the Guidance will become a material consideration when assessing planning applications.

(c) *Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)*

Consultation on the Guidance can be accommodated within existing staff resources.

(d) *Consultations*

Development Control Manager, Gordon Holland, Transportation Manager, Ian Bruce, Environmental Protection Manager, Jill Stewart,

Chief Housing Officer have been consulted and their views incorporated into the Guide.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Scottish Government are encouraging local authorities to promote better urban design standards to produce sustainable places on the ground. The need for Urban Design Guidance in Moray to support the Moray Local Plan 2008 has been identified.
- 6.2 The draft guide aims to create well designed and connected safe and pleasant places of character and identity.
- 6.3 Once approved the Guide will supplement Local Plan Policies, and become a material consideration.

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Background Papers:

Ref: GST/BDH