

## **REPLACEMENT LOCAL PLAN – DESIGN STATEMENTS**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' views on new supplementary planning guidance to be included in the First Deposit Draft of the Replacement Local Plan. The Plan will replace the existing Rochford District Local Plan First Review, and provide a policy basis for the control of development in the District up to 2011.
- 1.2 The preparation of a Local Plan is a statutory function for the authority.

### **2 DESIGN STATEMENTS**

- 2.1 Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (General Policy and Principles) contains guidance for local planning authorities on the treatment of design issues and on design statements. Indeed many local planning authorities now expect applications for planning permission to be accompanied by design statements. The proposed guidance is attached to this report as Appendix One.
- 2.2 A Design Statement will help the Council, Councillors, neighbours and the public to:
- understand the proposals and the principles of the design;
  - consider the proposals against design policies in the Local Plan; and
  - consider the proposal against design objectives in PPG1 from which the Design Statement requirement comes.
- 2.3 In the light of this guidance the local plan makes reference to the use of design statements, particularly with reference to major development proposals. However, the local planning authority will expect greater use of design statements and has included policies that will reinforce this approach. Policies within the local plan currently under preparation will require design statements for major schemes and for development affecting sensitive sites.
- 2.4 The purpose of the supplementary planning guidance is to show what the local planning authority expects and why such an approach is justified. This will help clarify the situation for developers.
- 2.5 The main points covered by the proposed supplementary planning guidance note are:
- A clear statement of the local planning authority's commitment to good design;

- A clear statement as to the local planning authority's wish to be involved in pre-application advice and negotiation;
- A clear statement of when design statements will be required;
- A definition of what will constitute a sensitive site; and
- The three steps in preparing a design statement:
  - site analysis;
  - identifying design principles - to include the urban, landscape and architectural design aspects of the development; and
  - creating design solutions.

### **3 RECOMMENDATION**

#### **3.1 It is recommended:**

That, subject to Members comments, the guidance on Design Statements be approved for inclusion in the Replacement Rochford District Local Plan. (HPS)

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#### **Background Papers: None**

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## **DESIGN STATEMENTS**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The advice of Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 1 (General Policy and Principles) is that all applicants should be able to demonstrate how they have taken account of the need for good design in their development proposals. A number of local planning authorities therefore expect all planning applications to be accompanied by a Design Statement.
- 1.2 The Council believes that good quality design is important and therefore the early consideration of design issues is encouraged. The issue of design and landscaping is one of the core policies within the local plan and is one of the threads that run through every section of the plan. Good design has the ability to improve the quality of development and to improve quality of life.
- 1.3 A Design Statement will help the Council, Councillors, neighbours and the public to:
- understand the proposals and the principles of the design;
  - consider the proposals against design policies in the Local Plan; and
  - consider the proposal against design objectives in PPG1 from which the Design Statement requirement comes.

### **2 SENSITIVE SITES**

- 2.1 Whilst the major development sites are defined by and in association with policies, the definition of sensitive sites is more open to interpretation. However, the local planning authority believes that sensitive sites will be those lying within or having an impact upon the following, as defined by law or on the local plan proposals maps:
- Metropolitan Green Belt;
  - Coastal Protection Zone;
  - Special Landscape Areas;
  - Areas of Historic Landscape Value;
  - Sites of nature conservation importance (including, but not limited to, SSSIs, SACs and SPAs);
  - Residential areas; and
  - Public open space.
- 2.2 Where developers are unsure as to whether a site is considered to be sensitive, they are advised to contact the local planning authority to discuss the matter.

### **3 PRODUCING A DESIGN STATEMENT**

3.1 There are three essential steps to producing a Statement. These are:

- site analysis
- identifying design principles
- creating design solutions

These steps are dealt with in the sections that follow:

#### **STEP 1 - SITE ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION**

3.2 This is a factual account, which should be essentially based upon drawings and sketches explaining the site within its context, e.g. urban, residential, conservation area, sloping, industrial, vegetation etc. It is important that this analysis is based on fact and reason rather than opinion and must include:

- building styles and sizes, street patterns the nature of spaces between buildings and their uses, the character of the area, proximity to Listed Buildings, etc.;
- an explanation of the constraints and opportunities the site has in terms of its design, e.g. important views, features worthy of retention or protection, features which are detrimental and need to be addressed; and
- an explanation of the constraints and opportunities the site has in terms of its context, e.g. local building, changes of levels, physical features such as underground services, drainage systems, overhead powerlines, service trenches, trees, ecology and wildlife habitats, etc.

#### **STEP 2 - IDENTIFYING THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

3.3 These should be the main criteria that the design needs to fulfil. The principles will not just be a list of preferences, but instead a clear statement of what needs to be included in the design. They should remain consistent irrespective of any approach taken. The principles may also include critical constraints to the applicant such as minimum floor space to be achieved, the importance of signs to a commercial proposal, financial constraints, etc. This section will also include principles that are a requirement of the Council as may be set down in Local Plans and Development Briefs or other Guidance Notes.

3.4 The design principles must clearly relate to the site analysis and evaluation findings. The design principles will vary in number and complexity from proposal to proposal. For extensions or alterations to dwellings it is likely that there will be only a few principles, e.g. the extension should be designed to be sympathetically related to the existing property and not to cause harm to the neighbour.

3.5 However, in more complex proposals, design principles may include the retention of important public views, whether the mass and scale of buildings should be similar to those in the street or conversely a new building ought to be larger because of the relationship of the site to neighbouring buildings. Other important considerations might include the need to keep important trees, or that buildings may need to face a particular way or be in specific positions to meet the needs of industrial activities, etc.

3.6 It is important to understand that each site and proposal is unique and there is no right or wrong set of design principles.

### **STEP 3 - CREATING THE DESIGN SOLUTION**

3.7 The third stage is to produce the design solution. The important factor is that the design solution should incorporate the design principles, which in turn can be justified against the site analysis and evaluation.

## **4 CONCLUSION**

4.1 There are no set rules or ways of presenting Design Statements. Much depends upon the scale and nature of the development proposed. It should first comprise a detailed site analysis based upon drawings and sketches setting out the constraints, opportunities and design principles. Written statements alone may not be enough and photographs of the site and its surroundings can be helpful. The Statement should relate to the wider context of the site and not just to the site itself.

4.2 Applicants are invited to contact the local planning authority for pre-application advice, as such discussions are often a resource-effective and valuable opportunity to resolve issues at an early stage.