

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Planning Committee: 25 September 2013

**Subject: Residential Development: Principles for Good Design
Supplementary Guidance**

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To seek approval of draft supplementary guidance for the design of residential developments and to advise Members of the consultation process proposed in conjunction with the West Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan launch.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1** That the Committee **approves the draft supplementary guidance and its progression to public consultation.**

3. Background

- 3.1** In recent years Scottish Government planning policy has placed an increasing emphasis upon the need for good design and placemaking. Design is an important material consideration in determining planning applications, and there is a growing recognition of the value which good design adds to new development and to the wider area. In particular, some modern residential development has been criticised for being poorly laid out and lacking in character and the Scottish Government encourages developers and planning authorities to raise the standard. Many exemplar schemes now exist in Scotland to put theory into practice.
- 3.2** Fundamentally, the key policy documents from the Scottish Government advocate a shift towards a more design-led approach for new residential development, rather than relying upon a standards-based approach which can result in development lacking individual character. Planning authorities are encouraged to make use of supplementary guidance to set out their requirements to developers.
- 3.3** At its meeting on 14 August 2013, the Planning Committee approved the publication of the West Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan Proposed Plan. It is recommended that supplementary guidance on the design of new residential development should form an accompanying document to the Local Development Plan and supplement the policies therein.

4. Main Issues

Purpose

- 4.1** The purpose of the supplementary guidance is to inform developers of the standards of development required and the criteria used by the planning authority to assess applications for new residential development. It would apply to all new residential developments of 3 units or more. It seeks to be a flexible document designed to create innovative and context-sensitive residential developments.

Style and Structure

- 4.2** The draft supplementary guidance reflects the style and structure of the Local Development Plan, in order to emphasise its close relationship to it. It consists of an introductory section, followed by six sections covering particular issues for good residential design. These are:

- Character and Setting
- Layout and Plot Sizes
- House Design
- Landscaping, Open Spaces and Play Areas
- Roads and Parking
- Providing Safe Communities

Each section would have an explanatory text, photographs and illustrations, along with a checklist of good design considerations. It is proposed to publish it online with interactive links as well as making paper copies available.

Main Considerations

- 4.3** The proposed standards would require that all developments give adequate consideration to the local context, be design-led not standards-led, promote the six qualities of good design; and be accompanied by appropriate supporting documents where necessary.
- 4.4** West Dunbartonshire is made up of a number of towns and villages within a broadly urban area but which are in close proximity to the rural fringe. Historically, settlement patterns and town growth are different across the area resulting in different areas having their own local character. Consideration of the local context is fundamental to bringing forward a successful scheme and it encourages that any housing proposal should start with an assessment of the existing surroundings. .
- 4.5** A major criticism of some previous housing developments is that their design has been overly influenced by technical standards, in particular those for road construction, along with developers' natural desire to maximise the number of units on the site. It is recommended that all schemes should be design-led firstly and that development should be based upon a systematic assessment of the site, and not the imposition of technical standards as the primary consideration.

4.6 The Scottish Government's "Designing Places" document identifies six qualities which are at the heart of good design, and all schemes are required to promote them. These six qualities are that development should be:

- Distinctive
- Welcoming
- Adaptable
- Resource Efficient
- Safe and Pleasant
- Easy to Move Around

4.7 All national and major developments should include a Design and Access Statement and the draft supplementary guidance strongly encourages a Statement for local developments within/near sensitive sites as well. It also encourages prior discussion with the Councils Development Management Team over the requirement for EIAs, Transportation Assessments, Flood Risk Assessments, Site Investigative Reports and Tree Survey Reports. Pre-application meetings are recommended to discuss/resolve issues at an earlier stage which supports the developer's protocol.

Next Steps

4.8 If agreed, it is proposed to publish the draft supplementary guidance alongside the Local Development Plan in late September 2013, for a minimum consultation period of 8 weeks. During this time the community and developers would be able to make representations on its content. In order to encourage public engagement, it is proposed to:

- publicise the draft guidance alongside the Proposed LDP;
- hold an information session with Councillors;
- make the document available in Council offices and libraries;
- make the document available on an Local Development Plan webpage/website; and
- hold meetings with Community Councils, house builders and other interested organisations.

4.9 Following consideration of points raised during the consultation period, the amended guidance would be returned to the Planning Committee for approval at a future date.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no people implications.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Publicity for the supplementary guidance would take place alongside that for the Proposed Local Development Plan, and additional costs would therefore be minimal.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 No risks have been identified.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 No equality impacts have been identified.

9. Consultation

9.1 There has been internal consultation with the key stakeholders within the Council. Workshops and meetings were held to identify the main issues and draft versions of the supplementary guidance have been circulated internally for further discussion.

9.2 The next stage in the consultation process is to publish the draft supplementary guidance alongside the proposed Local Development Plan, carry out a workshop with Members, and consult with external stakeholders.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 The draft supplementary guidance seeks to improve the quality of new residential development within the Council area and is considered to contribute to the Council's strategic priorities and in particular towards local housing and sustainable infrastructure.

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Appendices: Appendix 1: Text of proposed residential supplementary
guidance

Background Papers: None.

Wards Affected: All wards