

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	20 JULY 2020		
TITLE:	DRAFT DESIGN GUIDE FOR HOUSE EXTENSIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 With the new Reading Borough Local Plan having been adopted in November 2019, the Council is in the process of publishing a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), which give further guidance on the implementation of policies within the Local Plan.
- 1.2 This report seeks Committee's approval to undertake community involvement on a Draft Design Guide to House Extensions SPD (Appendix 1), which gives user-friendly guidance on how planning applications for house extensions will be decided. Community involvement will then be undertaken, and will be considered in preparing a version for adoption.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Draft Design Guide for House Extensions SPD (Appendix 1) be approved for consultation.
- 2.2 That the Deputy Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the SPD that do not alter the policy direction, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport, prior to consultation.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 In November 2019, Reading Borough Council adopted a new Local Plan. This sets out planning policies and proposals up to 2036 and is the main consideration in determining a planning application.
- 3.2 Some of the policies within the Local Plan require additional detail to be provided to assist with their implementation. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is a type of planning policy document that provides this additional detail. A SPD cannot make policy on its own, and can only provide additional detail on how policies in the Local Plan will be implemented.
- 3.3 The Local Plan contains policy H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation, which is a high-level policy dealing with the matters that typically arise on proposals for house extensions. It operates in tandem with other Local Plan policies, in particular CC8: Safeguarding Amenity, which ensures that developments do not have negative impacts on the amenity of existing or potential residents.
- 3.4 An existing Design Guide to House Extensions has been in place in Reading since its adoption in May 2003 and is in need of a refresh.

4. THE PROPOSAL

(a) Current Position

- 4.1 Due to the age of the existing Design Guide, as well as the references to policies which have now been superseded, there are limits on the weight that can be accorded to the Design Guide in planning decisions, and it would be timely to review the document now to continue to provide clear guidance to the approximately 20-35% of all planning applications that the Council deals with which relate to householder development.

(b) Option Proposed

- 4.2 Committee is recommended to approve a new Draft Design Guide for House Extensions SPD for consultation. Appendix 1 contains a full draft of the SPD.
- 4.3 The new SPD retains much of the guidance within the existing Design Guide, as good practice on the design of house extensions has not changed significantly. However, it brings it up to date with new references and links to the new Local Plan policy. It also takes into account changes that have happened in recent years, such as changes to permitted development rights for house extensions.
- 4.4 If agreed, the document will be subject to a consultation, to begin in August. SPD consultations generally last for six weeks, but the

Council's Statement of Community Involvement proposes that this be extended to eight weeks where a consultation takes place during the school summer holidays, and this will be the case here.

- 4.5 Responses received will be considered in preparing a final draft SPD for adoption, which is intended for later in Autumn 2020.

(c) Other Options Considered

- 4.6 The main alternative option is to continue with the existing Design Guide, dating from 2003. However, this refers to policies which are now out of date, which affects the weight it can be given in decision-making. This would miss an opportunity to bring the document up-to-date and make the policy context much clearer for those Reading households applying for planning permission.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 Adoption of the SPD will guide future development in a way that will contribute to achieving the Council's priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan (2018-2021)¹. It will help with "keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe" by ensuring that the effects of development on the wider environment are controlled and will also help with "ensuring access to decent housing to meet local needs" by enabling residents to extend their homes with well-designed extensions.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Whilst policies on climate change and sustainable design that apply to various forms of development are set out elsewhere, within the Local Plan and Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, the SPD does cross-refer to them, and touches on relevant matters as they apply to house extensions. In particular, there is the need to ensure that extending a house does not result in fragmentation of the green network, important for wildlife movement, which often incorporates private gardens, and to refer to the importance of tree planting.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 The Council's consultation process for planning policy, as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement (adopted March 2014), is that the widest and most intensive community involvement should take place at the earliest possible stage, to allow the community a genuine chance to influence the document. Therefore, significant and wide-ranging community involvement exercises took place during development of the new Local Plan. The draft SPD provides more details for implementation.

¹ http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4621/Shaping-Readings-Future----Our-Corporate-Plan-2018-21/pdf/FINALCorporate_Plan_2018_21webpub.pdf

7.2 Consultation is expected to last a period of eight weeks as described in paragraph 4.4 above. The consultation will involve contacting all individuals and groups on our consultation lists, as well as publication on the website.

8. EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

8.1 The Sustainability Appraisal of the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan incorporates the requirement to carry out a screening stage of an Equality Impact Assessment. A full Sustainability Appraisal that examines the effects of the house extensions policy (and any related policies) has already been completed as part of the Local Plan, and therefore additional Equality Impact Assessment is not required. It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to any of the protected characteristics.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Regulation 12 and 13 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for undertaking consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents, which must last for a period of at least six weeks. Once the SPD is adopted by the Council, it will hold weight in the determination of planning applications for any development in the Borough.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The SPD has been paid for in previous financial years by Planning Services.

10.2 Consultation exercises can be resource intensive. However, the Council's consultation process is based mainly on electronic communication, which helps to minimise resource costs.

10.3 The SPD does not contain any proposals that would have additional financial implications for the Council.

Value for Money (VFM)

10.4 The preparation of a new SPD will ensure that development is appropriately guided and that significant effects are minimised. Production of the SPD, in line with legislation, national policy and best practice, therefore represents good value for money.

Risk Assessment

10.5 There are no direct financial risks associated with the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted November 2019
- Design Guide for House Extensions, 2003