

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 MARCH 2021		
TITLE:	ADOPTION OF THE DESIGN GUIDE TO HOUSE EXTENSIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	ALL
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report relates to the proposed adoption of the Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), for use in determining planning applications for new development in Reading. The SPD gives user-friendly guidance on how planning applications for house extensions will be decided in line with the Reading Borough Local Plan, which was adopted in November 2019.
- 1.2 A Draft Design Guide to House Extensions SPD was approved for consultation by Policy Committee on 20th July 2020 (Minute 22 refers). Consultation took place between July and September 2020, and a total of 10 responses were received. A Statement of Consultation summarising the process and the responses is included as Appendix 1.
- 1.3 A revised version of the SPD has now been prepared, taking account of the responses received. This is included as Appendix 2 to the SEPT Committee report in tracked changes format. Committee is recommended to formally adopt this as part of the Council's planning policy for determining planning applications.
- 1.4 Appendices:
Appendix 1: Statement of Consultation on the Draft Design Guide to House Extensions SPD
Appendix 2: Design Guide to House Extensions SPD

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the results of the consultation on the Draft Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document, undertaken between July and September 2020, as set out in the Consultation Statement at Appendix 1, be noted.**
- 2.2 That the Design Guide to House Extensions SPD (Appendix 2) be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.**

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.**
- 4.1 Policy Committee approved the Draft Design Guide to House Extensions SPD for consultation on 20th July 2020 (Minute 22 refers).**

4.2 Consultation was undertaken between 31st July and 25th September 2020, a total of eight weeks. The draft SPD was placed on the Council's website, and all of the contacts on the Council's consultation list were written to advising them of the consultation. A total of 10 written responses were received. The main points raised are summarised below.

- There are a number of parts of the document where it should be clearer on the instances where planning permission is not required as a result of permitted development rights.
- More reference to heritage assets, in particular listed and locally-listed buildings, are required.
- Guidance should be given on hardstanding in front gardens.
- The document should be stronger on the measures to prevent residential annexes becoming separate dwellings.
- There should be stricter expectations in terms of energy performance of developments.
- More guidance should be given on the routes for permitted development, in particular the use of Lawful Development Certificates.
- A number of inconsistencies in the layout were highlighted.

4.3 A full Statement of Consultation, detailing the consultation measures and the responses received, is included as Appendix 1. Proposed Council responses to each representation are also included within the Statement of Consultation.

(b) Option Proposed

4.5 Committee is recommended to adopt the revised version of the Design Guide to House Extensions SPD as attached at Appendix 2. Once adopted, the SPD will be used to supplement the Local Plan for the determination of planning applications for new development.

4.6 The main changes that have been made to the SPD compared to the version that was consulted upon are summarised below:

- More information on the extent of permitted development rights, and the process for demonstrating compliance with those rights, as well as on instances where these permitted development rights may have been removed;
- Addition of updates to information requirements and cross-references to the Council's published Validation Checklist;
- A number of additional references to heritage assets;
- Amendments to the section on dormer windows to reflect permitted development rights;
- An additional section on upwards extensions to reflect a new permitted development right introduced in August 2020;

- An additional section on ancillary residential accommodation, such as granny annexes, previously included within the section on buildings in the garden, but which has its own distinct implications that need to be dealt with separately;
- An additional section on hard surfacing of front gardens; and
- A number of other amendments for clarity and consistency.

4.7 Once adopted, the SPD will be used to supplement the Local Plan in determining applications for house extensions and householder development.

(c) Other Options Considered

4.11 The main alternative option is not to adopt the SPD and instead 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). 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 Community involvement on the Draft Design Guide to House Extensions SPD took place between 31st July and 25th September 2020, a period of eight weeks. Paragraph 4.2 of this report summarises the consultation process already undertaken, and this is set out in more detail in the Statement of Consultation in Appendix 1. The community involvement stages were undertaken in line with the Statement of Community Involvement (adopted

March 2014). The consultation period was extended from six to eight weeks to reflect the fact that it included the summer holiday period, in line with the SCI.

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. Regulation 14 sets out the requirements for adoption. The production of and consultation on the SPD are in compliance with the requirements under the Regulations.

10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The work undertaken on drafting the documents and the expenditure on community engagement has been funded from existing budgets.
- 10.2 The SPD does not contain any proposals that would have additional financial implications for the Council.

Value for Money (VFM)

- 10.3 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

- 10.4 There are no direct financial risks associated with the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- Draft Design Guide to House Extensions SPD, July 2020
- Adopted Local Plan, November 2019
- National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019