

7. **RUNNYMEDE DESIGN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) ADOPTION  
(PLANNING, POLICY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-GEORGINA PACEY)**

**Synopsis of report:**

To achieve high quality development in the borough to support the objectives of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, further detailed guidance is required which gives advice to people who wish to develop land and property and assists local communities in contributing to the planning process.

A Design Guide for the borough as a Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared based on national good practice, and also taking into account opinions of Councillors and local residents. The draft SPD has also undergone a period of public consultation, during which representations have been received. These representations have now been considered by Officers. The Draft SPD has been the subject of screening in respect of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) which have concluded that neither a SEA nor HRA is required.

A total of 8 representations were received during consultation from Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October to Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and the comments made in 1 late representation has also been taken into account. A copy of the Consultation Statement which summarises these representations and how they have been taken into account is set out at Appendix C. This statement also sets out a range of other amendments which are recommended by officers following their final review of the document. The proposed amendments which officers are of the view should be made to the draft SPD prior to its adoption are summarised as follows:

- Updating of title page and document footer throughout to refer to adoption date;
- Additional text has been added to confirm the purpose of an SPD and how it will be used in decision taking;
- Incorporation of introductory comments from the Chairman of the Planning Committee
- To respond to the National Design Guide;
- Updating of the document in some places to ensure factual accuracy as far as possible at the time of adoption, and in order to correct a number of spelling and grammatical errors;
- To signpost the reader to a number of useful additional sources of information as highlighted by consultees (for example Active Design);
- Updating of some of the maps in appendices 2 and 3;
- Additional text added to better celebrate the historic environment assets in Runnymede and to promote healthy lifestyles;
- Incorporation of wording recommended by the Environment Agency in relation to the construction of walls and fences in flood zone 3.
- Updating of appendix 5 on the design of pitches and plots for Gypsies, travellers and Travelling Showpeople; and,
- Updating of the glossary.

None of the amendments proposed are considered to change the general purpose of the SPD in that it continues to set out criteria for a good design across the borough for new development. Therefore, as the amendments are minor in nature, it is considered that no further consultation is required prior to the adoption of the SPD. For information, all proposed amendments recommended following the period of public consultation and final review by officers are highlighted in red in the draft SPD. The exception is very minor spelling and punctuation changes.

The modified SPD as recommended for adoption is attached at Appendix B (available to view on Web only). Once adopted, the SPD will be a material consideration for the purposes of the determination of planning applications.

**Recommendation(s):** The Planning Committee are recommended to RESOLVE to:

- i) **APPROVE** the draft Design SPD as modified and as set out at Appendix B for adoption with an implementation date of 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

- 1.1. Good design is a crucial aspect of sustainable development. The creation of high-quality buildings and places is a fundamental element of the planning and development processes and creates better places for people to live, study, play and work. Runnymede has a high quality and distinctive character and new developments should seek to protect and enhance its special characteristics.
- 1.2. The National Planning Policy Framework advises local planning authorities to set out design expectations at an early stage, along with clarity upon how good design will be tested, as part of the development process. Doing so creates a greater understanding for applicants, agents and local communities in what constitutes good design and what will be expected in new developments. This can be achieved by supplementary planning documents such as design guides.
- 1.3. The Government published the amended National Design Guide in January 2021. The new National Guide sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. The National Guide also recognises the importance of local design guides confirming that they are an important way of communicating local design expectations and requirements and are one of the key tools that the National Planning Policy Framework expects local planning authorities to prepare and use.
- 1.4. In February 2018, the Government awarded the Council 'design quality' grant funding for two years. Part of the funds awarded enabled the Council to employ independent Design Consultants 'Tibbalds' to produce a draft Design Guide for Runnymede. It is this document, as modified following the recent period of public consultation and final review by officers that can be viewed at Appendix B.
- 1.5. The Draft Design Guide project was shortlisted as a finalist for the 2020 National Planning Awards (run by Planning and Placemaking Resource) under the 'Award for Partnership Working' category. These awards recognise excellence in professional planning work and related activities.

## **2. Report**

- 2.1 Runnymede is a beautiful borough and a desirable place to live, work and visit. The borough is varied in character with its historic small towns and villages, valuable heritage assets, waterways and open spaces. The borough attracts many visitors and also benefits from its geographically advantageous position; being close to London and the wider Surrey countryside. Its special qualities need to be recognised and taken into account when planning for the delivery of development into the future to ensure that new development protects and enhances these qualities.
- 2.2 The Council's adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan includes policies relating to design including policies EE1 (Townscape and Landscape Quality) which sets out key criteria for achieving good urban design within the context of national policy and guidance. Policy SD4 (Highway Design Considerations) and Policy SD7 (Sustainable Design) set out further design policy considerations for new development which comes forward over the Plan period. The local plan also includes policies for specific land allocations and opportunity areas allocated within the borough, some of which contain site-specific requirements to be addressed in the design of the development schemes coming forward on these sites.
- 2.3 During the preparation of the Runnymede Design SPD, Tibbalds in association with Design South East ran Member, officer and community workshops with local resident groups in 2018 and 2019. The workshops helped shape the consultation draft of the document. The draft Design Guide defines a set of twelve aspirations for the borough that have emerged through the production of the guide. The aspirations describe the place that we want Runnymede to be in the future. The draft Design Guide provides a series of design standards for Runnymede based on these aspirations, to guide the design of new development which takes place. The Design Guide also includes a detailed character assessment of the borough to help understand more local design characteristics, separate guidance specifically for householder extensions and alterations, and advice on how to design pitches and plots for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- 2.4 Officers are of the opinion that the draft Design Guide is now ready to progress to adoption. Public consultation has allowed officers to fully consider all of the comments made in the representations received and make the necessary revisions to the guide. Officers have also recommended a series of additional minor modifications following a final review of the document. The draft SPD was open for consultation for just over a 6 weeks period from Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October to Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020. A summary of the changes that have been made to the Design Guide following the consideration of the representations received during the period of public consultation are set out as follows:
  - Updating of title page and document footer throughout to refer to adoption date;
  - Additional text has been added to confirm the purpose of an SPD and how it will be used in decision taking;
  - Incorporation of introductory comments from the Chairman of the Planning Committee
  - To respond to the National Design Guide;

- Updating of the document in some places to ensure factual accuracy as far as possible at the time of adoption, and in order to correct a number of spelling and grammatical errors;
- To signpost the reader to a number of useful additional sources of information as highlighted by consultees (for example Active Design);
- Updating of some of the maps in appendices 2 and 3;
- Additional text added to better celebrate the historic environment assets in Runnymede and to promote healthy lifestyles;
- Incorporation of wording recommended by the Environment Agency in relation to the construction of walls and fences in flood zone 3.
- Updating of appendix 5 on the design of pitches and plots for Gypsies, travellers and Travelling Showpeople; and,
- Updating of the glossary.

2.5 Officers recommend that this Design Guide is adopted by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document now that the relevant regulatory processes have been followed. It will then be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. On adoption, the Runnymede Design SPD will supersede the 2003 Householder Guide and Urban Area Character Appraisal from 2009. On adoption, the new Design Guide will help ensure that new development meets the highest standards of design quality and placemaking. As such it will become a fundamental part of the planning policy 'toolkit' required to effectively deliver high quality, sustainable development in accordance with the aspirations of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, as well as national planning policy and guidance.

### **3. Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) do not form part of the Development Plan for Runnymede but are material considerations for the purposes of decision taking.
- 3.2 Although not part of the Development Plan, the SPD also supports 2030 Local Plan objectives and policies with respect to design.
- 3.3 The adopted Local Plan seeks to guide development in the borough up to 2030. The Design Guide will support the new policies to achieve high quality development in the borough. The Government published the National Design Guide in October 2019 (followed by an amended version in January 2021) which sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. The Government also recognises the importance of local design guides confirming that they are an important way of communicating local design expectations and requirements and are one of the visual tools that the National Planning Policy Framework expects local planning authorities to prepare and use. The production of a new local Design Guide for Runnymede will comply with Government policy relating to the importance of design.
- 3.4 The Design Guide, once adopted, will further assist in assessing planning applications for new development by providing up-to-date information in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 2020.

### **4. Resource implications**

- 4.1 None identified.

### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 The Design Guide will be adopted as a formal Supplementary Planning Document which will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and significant weight can be given to the document in decision making.

### **6. Equality implications**

- 6.1 The Council has a Public Sector Duty under the Equalities Act 2020 to have due regard to the need to:
- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation;
  - b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a Protected Characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share those characteristics;

in relation to the 9 'Protected Characteristics' stated within the Act.

6.2 In pursuance of this duty, Officers undertook an Equality screening to determine the impact that the Draft Design SPD may have on any of the nine protected Characteristics. The Assessment concluded that the Draft Design SPD when adopted could have a positive impact on anyone seeking housing within the Borough who has the protected characteristics of Race (in terms of being a gypsy or traveller), Disability, and Age. It is anticipated that the Design SPD will also be beneficial to the wider Borough community through the careful and detailed consideration applicants will give to ensuring higher quality developments. In particular, the SPD highlights the importance of greater social inclusion to ensure that new developments consider the needs of all people, including people with disabilities. The conclusions of the original Equalities screening have not altered following the making of amendments to the document following the period of public consultation. The Design SPD is fully consistent and complementary to the emerging Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, which has had a detailed Equality Impact Assessment undertaken at each stage of Plan preparation. Overall, it has been concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

## **7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications**

7.1 The Design SPD is not part of the Development Plan for Runnymede and as such is not subject to Sustainability Appraisal.

7.2 The SPD underwent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening with the conclusion that there were no likely significant effects on designated habitats or any other significant environmental effects. The three statutory bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) have been consulted on the screening assessment in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004.

7.3 Comments have been received from all three bodies; the Environment Agency raised no comments. Historic England confirmed that as the SPD does not contain proposals that would have likely significant effects for specific and identifiable heritage assets, that could be considered to affect the borough's heritage in a predictable or measurable way, they did not feel that the document merited subjection to SEA. Historic England however welcomed the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Design SPD as part of the future planned consultation process. Natural England confirmed that they agreed with the conclusions drawn in the screening that neither a Strategic Environmental Assessment nor a full Appropriate Assessment was required.

## **8. Other Implications**

8.1 None.

## **9. Conclusion**

9.1 Officers recommend that the Planning Committee adopts the Runnymede Design SPD as modified, and as shown at Appendix B with an implementation date of 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Members are asked to note that on adoption, the Runnymede Design SPD will supersede the 2003 Design Guide and 2009 Urban Area Character Appraisal.

### **(To resolve)**

#### **Background papers**

Appendix B: Runnymede Design SPD for adoption  
Appendix C: Consultation Statement