



## Report of the Head of Planning and City Regeneration

Special Planning Committee – 9 February 2021

# Approval of Public and Stakeholder Consultation on Placemaking Supplementary Planning Guidance for Residential Developments

<b>Purpose:</b>	To obtain approval from Members to carry out the necessary consultation and engagement process on draft placemaking guidance for residential development
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Swansea Local Development Plan (Adopted 2019).
<b>Reason for Decision:</b>	To enable formal consultation to commence on the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance documents.
<b>Consultation:</b>	Legal, Finance, Access to Services.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	1) Approve the Placemaking Guidance for: Householder Development; Infill and Backland Development; and Residential Developments for public and stakeholder consultation.
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### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report seeks the approval of Members to undertake public and stakeholder consultation, for a minimum 6 week period, on the following draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents:

- Placemaking Guidance for Householder Development (Consultation Draft)
- Placemaking Guidance for Infill and Backland Development (Consultation Draft)
- Placemaking Guidance for Residential Developments (Consultation Draft)

1.2 The documents (attached at Appendix A to C of this report) will provide SPG in support of policies in the Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP). Once adopted following the public consultation process, they will be used in the determination of planning applications. Fundamentally, the purpose of all three documents is to set out the expected placemaking approach for residential developments at all scales.

1.3 Upon conclusion of public and stakeholder consultations, a schedule of all the comments received will be produced. This schedule will include officer

responses to confirm whether amendments will be made to the document as a result of comments made. The schedule will be reported back to Members for consideration, alongside a final version of the documents, at which time Members will be asked to formally adopt them as SPG to inform future decision making on development proposals.

## **2.0 Planning Context**

2.1 In February 2019, the Swansea LDP was adopted as the Council's new statutory development plan (available at [www.swansea.gov.uk/ldp](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/ldp)). The LDP highlights that various SPG documents will be produced to augment policies in the Plan, which will set out appropriate detailed definitions and developer requirements to assist the interpretation of the policies. The titles of the above-mentioned SPGs (attached to this report at Appendix A to C) were highlighted in the LDP as key pieces of planning guidance to be produced during the lifetime of the Plan.

2.2 Having regard to this context, the above-mentioned SPG have been produced with particular reference to the following key LDP policies:

- PS 1: Sustainable Places
- PS 2: Placemaking and Place Management
- SD 1: Strategic Development Areas
- SD 2: Masterplanning Principles
- SD A-L: Strategic Site Allocations
- ER 1: Climate Change
- ER 2: Strategic Green Infrastructure Network
- ER 4: Gower AONB of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- ER 6: Designated Sites of Ecological Importance
- ER 8: Habitats and Species
- ER 9: Ecological Networks and Features of Importance for Biodiversity
- ER 11: Trees, Hedgerows and Development
- H 8: Ancillary Residential Accommodation
- CV 4: Conversion of Rural Buildings
- HC 2: Preservation or Enhancement of Buildings and Features
- EU 2: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy in New Development
- RP 1: Safeguarding Public Health and Natural Resource
- RP 3: Air and Light Pollution
- RP 4: Water Pollution and the Protection of Water Resources
- RP 10: Waste in new development
- SI 1: Health and Well-Being
- SI 8: Community Safety
- T 8: Parking

2.3 The updated documents are underpinned by a 'Placemaking approach', as advocated by the Swansea LDP and Planning Policy Wales (PPW edition 10). Placemaking is a holistic approach to planning and is the cornerstone of the Planning Authority's decision making process. It is a concept focussed on positive outcomes that considers social, economic, environmental and cultural values of development proposals, as well as the potential of an area to create development that promotes prosperity, health, and well-being. There is increasing evidence of the physical and mental wellbeing benefits to people that well designed places can provide. Swansea has significant growth pressures and it is imperative to positively shape new places be engaging in a proactive manner supported by the updated SPGs.

2.4 The updated SPGs reflect the changes made to national policy and guidance that have occurred over the last six years since the original documents were adopted. In particular, they have been updated to align with amendments to National Planning Guidance, the Planning Act, the Environment Act, Flood Management Act and the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which together require the Council to achieve clearly defined well-being and placemaking goals and objectives. The SPGs explain how these national requirements should be applied to residential developments at the local level to create sustainable, healthy, green and distinct places.

2.5 The Welsh Government are very clear in 'Building Better Places' - published in July 2020 as the Placemaking and post Covid-19 recovery document - that the places created and shaped through the planning process are critical to future prosperity, identity and well-being. It states:

*We have all spent more time in our neighbourhoods during the weeks of lockdown and we can all appreciate the difference between having a quality environment to live, work and relax in and how being cut-off from our friends and family can mean that a poor environment, with no or limited access to local goods, services and green spaces can have a severely detrimental impact on our mental and physical health and well-being, as well as our ability to protect our livelihoods.*

*Now, more than ever, we need to think about places and placemaking. This will be our core value in the work we take forward to bring about recovery in Wales. The regenerative action we take at all levels will be driven by integrated thinking and not short-term expedience which can have negative longer term consequences.*

2.6 Summer 2020 also saw the launch of the Placemaking Charter Wales which has been developed by Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales in collaboration with the Placemaking Wales Partnership – a multi-disciplinary group representing professions and organisations working within the built and natural environment. The Charter builds on the strengthening focus on Placemaking in policy and practice in Wales and aims to provide a common understanding of the range of considerations that go into placemaking. The process of Placemaking is underpinned by joined up local government and is key to delivering the objectives of the Well Being of Future Generations Act.

2.7 Swansea is considered to be at the vanguard of Placemaking in Wales. The Council adopted the Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP) in 2019, which has been highlighted as an exemplar development plan that embeds placemaking into strategic planning decision making. Furthermore the current versions of the SPG documents to be updated introduced the placemaking concept at the local Swansea level a number of years before this was embraced at the national level by Welsh Government in Planning Policy Wales.

2.8 The Charter outlines six placemaking principles that cover the range of considerations that contribute to establishing and maintaining good places (see attached).

- People and community
- Movement
- Public realm
- Location
- Mix of uses

- Mobility

The updated SPG documents for residential places at all scales full embraces these principles.

### 3.0 Summary of the Consultation Draft SPGs documents

- 3.1 The Placemaking Guidance documents emanate from an existing suite of documents that the Council has been using for a number of years to guide residential development. The Council adopted the Residential Design Guide and Infill & Backland Design Guide SPG documents in 2014, and the Householder Design Guide SPG was first adopted in 2008. They documents first introduced the placemaking approach at the local level before this was even promoted significantly at the national level. The original SPGs have proven to be clear and effective planning documents that were welcomed by Members, and which have been well used by Officers, Developers and their designers/ architects and agents. They are also regularly cited by Planning Inspectors when dismissing appeals.
- 3.2 The draft amended Placemaking Guidance documents (as attached at appendices A-C) builds further on the aforementioned current SPGs. The documents have been comprehensively updated, rather than not fundamentally changed, to incorporate learning from six years of use and to link into the current legislating, policy and best practice at the national and local level. Note that the text is finalised but some final grammatical changes, formatting and images/ captions are required before consultation. The new draft SPGs continue to focus on residential development at 3 different scales:
- Householder Development – typically extending or altering an existing home
  - Infill and Backland Development – typically a small site of around 10 homes either as a gap in an existing street frontage or a larger area behind existing buildings
  - Residential Development – typically major developments (classified as 10 or more homes) right up to the strategic sites allocated in the LDP for many 100s of homes.
- 3.3 The paragraphs below provide a brief summary of each Placemaking Guidance document (full draft documents attached at appendices A-C):
- 3.4 The **Placemaking Guidance for Householder Development SPG** provides applicants with the detail necessary to understand how the Council will implement the LDP's Placemaking policies in the context of alterations and extensions to existing homes within existing communities. This guidance has been updated to link to the LDP, PPW10, WBFGA and amended Permitted Development Rights. The guidance sets out general amenity considerations for the applicant and their neighbours plus specific guidance for alterations to detached/ semi-detached and terraced homes. In some instances these alterations will trigger Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (SAB) and guidance is given on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) at the plot level. Guidance also explains how the concept of Green Infrastructure (GI) at all scales, including plot level, can be addressed. This guidance is important to help residents improve and alter their properties to respond to changing circumstances whilst not impacting on the well-being of neighbours/ wider community and wider environmental considerations.

3.5 The **Placemaking Guidance for Infill and Backland Developments SPG** provides applicants with the detail necessary to understand how the Council will implement the LDP's placemaking policies in the context developments typically on smaller sites, often in close proximity to existing homes within existing communities. These infill and backland developments make up main development management workload and allow densification of existing places. Guidance is set out for amenity of existing and new residents, plus specific guidance for infill and backland developments as each type has different characteristics. These developments will trigger the need for SAB so guidance on SuDS at the plot and local street level is set out. These sites can often contain existing habitats, trees and bio-diversity and there is a much greater emphasis on the Section 6 duty (net gain) and Green Infrastructure in the updated version.

3.6 The **Placemaking Guidance for Residential Developments** applies to all developments of 10 or more homes. Many of the developments this SPG is used in relation to are for many 100s of homes with supporting community infrastructure such as schools and local centres. Given the scale of the development covered by this SPG, it usually creates a new community. This guidance has been updated based on the current discussions regarding the LDP strategic development sites to embed the Green Infrastructure Placemaking approach and apply this approach to all major housing sites. The guidance has also been updated to address LDP, PPW10, WBFGA, SUDS, GI. The guidance continues to be set out in a strategic manner with the following sections:

- A. Neighbourhoods
- B. Density and Mixed Uses
- C. Blue/ Green Infrastructure
- D. Making Connections
- E. Public Spaces
- F. Streets as Places
- G. Inclusive Places
- H. Townscape
- I. Quality and Character
- J. Community safety
- K. Amenity and Privacy
- L. Accommodating Parking

3.7 The guidance does not impose a particular architectural style but does require new places to be distinct, high quality and well related to context. This guide is equally applicable to the higher density residential schemes in Swansea City Centre and other town centres and also applies to mixed use proposals.

#### **4.0 Consultation Process and Next Steps**

4.1 The draft SPGs will be subject to a minimum 6-week period of consultation and engagement, which is an integral part of the process towards its adoption as formal planning guidance to inform decisions. It is anticipated that the consultation will be carried out during the months of March to May 2021. The consultation will allow Councillors, the public, stakeholders and other interested parties to make their views public and contribute to the content of the final version of the SPG. The aim is to ensure that there is a broad consensus of support for its objectives. It is important to note that planning legislation

precludes SPG from introducing new policy, but is instead an opportunity to augment what is already contained in adopted LDP policies.

4.2 The public and stakeholder consultation process will make use of a variety of consultation methods to raise awareness and maximise the involvement of the community. The precise methods capable of being used will be continually reviewed having regard to the constraints associated with Covid-19 restrictions. The methods will include:

- have your say section on the Council's website;
- articles in the local media;
- use of social media;
- a public drop-in consultation event for the public and stakeholders where officers will be available to explain the draft document and invite feedback (subject to being permissible having regard to Covid-19 restrictions);
- targeted email consultation of known stakeholders, including developers, local planning agents, designers/ architects, Community Councils and advisory bodies such as Natural Resources Wales.

All information will be readily available in hard copy at the Civic Centre and libraries (subject to opening), where electronic versions of the document and survey/feedback forms can also be viewed on line. Summary details and promotional materials will be provided in a bilingual format.

4.3 All comments received will be recorded, evaluated and, where appropriate, will feed into the final versions of the SPG documents. A full detailed schedule of representations will be published. A report setting out the public consultation comments received, and any amendments made to the SPGs as a result of these, will be presented to Members as soon as possible after the consultation period ends, at which time Members will be asked to approve the final versions as adopted SPG.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from the publication of these SPG, as the cost of the public consultation process can be accommodated within existing budgets and staff resources. The consultation will, as far as possible, utilise electronic communication via email and the Internet.

5.2 The final adopted documents will be made available electronically, so there will be no printing costs.

## **6.0 Legal Implications**

6.1 The SPGs will provide planning guidance to the adopted LDP (2019), and will be a material consideration in evaluating future planning applications.

6.2 The Council has a duty to seek to continually improve in the exercise of its functions (which include where appropriate powers) in terms of strategic effectiveness, service quality and availability, sustainability, efficiency and innovation pursuant to the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

## **7.0 Equality & Engagement Implications**

- 7.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.
- 7.2 Section 4 of this report outlines matters in respect of consultation activity wherein equalities considerations are considered. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screenings have been carried out which has demonstrated that a full EIA is not necessary for any of the three Consultation Draft SPGs. The EIA screenings identify mostly low impacts and highlights that the SPGs seek to facilitate community cohesion by assisting the implementation of the LDP. The LDP has already been subject to EIA and is based on a comprehensive and up to date evidence base, and was formulated with extensive community engagement. The SPGs themselves will be subject to a bespoke consultation for a minimum of 6 weeks that will provide opportunities for engagement via a range of methods, as described in this report.

**Background Papers:** None

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A: Placemaking Guidance for Householder Development – Consultation Draft SPG

Appendix B: Placemaking Guidance for Infill and Backland Developments – Consultation Draft SPG

Appendix C: Placemaking Guidance for Residential Development – Consultation Draft SPG

Appendix D: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Screening Forms