



Report of the Head of Planning and City Regeneration

Special Planning Committee – 22 October 2021

Adoption of Supplementary Planning Guidance: Placemaking Guidance for the Gower AONB

Purpose:	To inform Members of the representations received during the public consultation on draft Placemaking Guidance for the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and highlight officer responses to these, and to seek approval to formally adopt the amended version as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).
Policy Framework:	Swansea Local Development Plan (Adopted 2019); Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; City & County of Swansea Local Development Plan (Adopted February 2019); Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; Planning (Wales) Act 2015; Planning Policy Wales (2018) and related Guidance; Environment (Wales) Act 2016; Gower AONB Management Plan, 2017
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The issues raised in the representations made during the consultation process, and the responses of the Planning Authority to these (set out at Appendix A and B of this report), be noted;2) The final version of the SPG (attached at Appendix C and D of this report) be approved and adopted by the Council;3) The Head of Planning and City Regeneration, or appropriate delegated officer, be authorised to make any outstanding typographical, grammatical, presentational or factual amendments to the adopted final version of the SPG prior to its final publication
Report Author:	Ruth Henderson
Finance Officer:	Aimee Dyer
Legal Officer:	Sally-Anne Evans
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In **July 2020** the Planning Committee resolved to approve a draft version of the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Design Guide Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for the purpose of public consultation. Subsequently, a comprehensive stakeholder engagement and public consultation process was undertaken, to obtain views on the content of the draft document. This ran for over six weeks, beginning on 4th September and concluding on the 26th October 2020.
- 1.2 The responses to the consultation were recorded and evaluated, and having regard to the comments received, a number of modifications to the draft SPG were considered to be appropriate. The majority of amendments were relatively minor improvements to accuracy and clarity of the Guidance, or updates in response to the publication of Future Wales: the National Plan 2040, and associated amendments to Planning Policy Wales (Ed11). There were however some amendments, which were considered substantive enough to benefit from a second consultation, in order to ensure consultees had sufficient opportunity to consider them. The document was also re-named as '**Placemaking Guidance for the Gower AONB**' in order to reflect consistency with other SPG and in recognition of the placemaking agenda that forms the central theme of national planning guidance and the development plan. As per the initial consultation, this second consultation ran for over six weeks, beginning on 14th June and ending on 5th September 2021. Consultation reports for both consultations exercises are provided in Appendix A and B.
- 1.3 A final version of the SPG has been produced for Members to formally endorse as SPG to supplement the Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP), and to be used in planning decision making. The final version, including Appendices, is attached to this report at Appendix C and Appendix D.
- 1.4 This Committee Report briefly summarises the background and context to the SPG's preparation. It describes the outcome of the consultation process, and summarises the range of comments received, and the response of the Planning Authority to these comments. It also highlights the specific amendments that have been made to the initial draft versions to further clarify and refine the SPG.

2. Background and Context

- 2.1 Full details of the planning policy and legislative background and context to the SPG is provided in the Report of the Head of Planning and City Regeneration to Special Planning Committee dated July 2020 'New Supplementary Planning Guidance: Revised Gower AONB Design Guide'. The key points are summarised below, and include subsequent updates to the national policy framework.
- 2.2 The Swansea LDP (available at www.swansea.gov.uk/ldp) was adopted in February 2019 as the Council's statutory development plan. The LDP highlights a wide range of SPG scheduled to be produced to augment LDP

policies, which will provide definitions and working examples to assist the interpretation of policy. The LDP identifies “The Gower Design Guide” as a priority SPG to be produced in the early years of LDP adoption.

2.3 The SPG is primarily supplemental to **Policies ER 4: Gower AONB, PS2: Placemaking and Place Management** and **RP 3 Air and Light Pollution** in the adopted Swansea LDP.

2.4 The SPG also provides supporting guidance to the following adopted policies:

CV 1 Key Villages CV 2 Development in the Countryside CV 3 Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside CV 4 Conversion of Rural Buildings	H5: Local Needs Housing Exception Sites H6: 100% Affordable Housing Exception Sites
TR 3 Sustainable Tourism and Recreation in the Countryside	RC 10 Employment and Enterprise Development
RP 1 Safeguarding Public Health and Natural Resources RP 2 Noise Pollution RP 4 Water Pollution and the Protection of Water Resources	ER 1: Climate Change ER 2: Strategic Green Infrastructure Network ER 6 Designated Ecological Sites ER7 Undeveloped Coast ER 8 Protected Habitats & Species ER 9 Ecological Networks
HC 1 Historic and Cultural Environment HC 2 Preservation or Enhancement of Buildings and Features	EU 1 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Proposals EU 2 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy in New Development
SI 1: Health and Well-being	

2.5 The SPG provides applicants with the detail necessary to understand how the Council will implement the LDP’s Policies relating to placemaking at all scales within the AONB, and to ensure developments conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the nationally designated landscape, in alignment with recent changes to legislation and policy requirements which together require the Council to achieve clearly defined well-being and environmental goals and objectives.

2.6 The SPG promotes the ‘placemaking approach’, which underpins the Swansea LDP, Future Wales, the National Plan 2040 and Planning Policy Wales (PPW). The SPG assists in implementing this approach, with the overarching aim being to raise the standard of design across the Gower AONB. The Guidance assists the key objective of maintaining and enhancing one of the most naturally beautiful landscapes in the UK, and ensure that new development successfully integrates into the sensitive landscape within which it sits.

2.7 The Welsh Government have emphasised in ‘Building Better Places’ - published in July 2020 that Placemaking should be at the heart of post

Covid-19 recovery, emphasising that the places created and shaped through the planning process are critical to future prosperity, identity and well-being. It states:

“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.”

3. Public Consultation and Engagement

3.1 A public consultation and engagement process was undertaken on the first draft version of the SPG, which began on the 4th September and ran until the 26th October 2020.

3.2 Face to face public engagement events were unable to occur due to constraints on social contact associated with Covid-19 restrictions. This was the case during both the initial and subsequent consultation. Nevertheless, the consultation involved a wide range of awareness raising and engagement activities, including:

- Print media articles and social media notices before and during the consultation.
- A specific web page created for the SPG that described the consultation, provided a weblink to the document, and a link to the comment form.
- A copy of the Initial Consultation Report was provided on the SPG webpage to support the second consultation process.
- Notification emails posted to a range of stakeholders, including Councillors
- Remote briefings to stakeholder groups via Microsoft Teams presentations.
- Publication of recorded video presentations on the Council’s website.

3.3 The responses to this consultation were recorded and evaluated, and amendments were proposed. A further 8 week consultation period was undertaken between 14th June and 5th September 2021 to ensure consultees had sufficient opportunity to consider the amendments. The consultation involved a similar range of awareness raising and engagement activities to the initial consultation exercise.

4. Key Issues Arising from the Consultations

4.1 The responses to both the initial and subsequent consultation have been recorded and evaluated. The key issues raised are set out below

4.2 The public consultation generated a range of representations relating to all parts of the SPG, from individuals, stakeholders, development industry sectors and community councils.

4.2 The initial and subsequent Consultation Reports (enclosed as Appendix A and Appendix B of this Committee Report) contain summaries of the comments received, categorised into issues/themes, together with the Council’s corresponding response. Any necessary amendments to the draft SPG document are also reported, including substantive amendments.

- 4.3 In total some 125 comments were received to the initial draft document and 54 comments to the subsequent consultation document. The main issues raised are set out below grouped under sub-headings that relate to sections of the relevant SPG and the specific questions asked in the consultation survey.
- 4.4 **Broad Support for the document:** the majority of respondents were aware of the existing SPG and thought the links to the LDP are clear throughout. This is expected as the existing Gower Design Guide SPG is well-used by members of the public and the development industry and the revisions bring the document in line with the LDP and national planning guidance. However, some thought the document too technical and lengthy.
- 4.5 **Length of Document:** The document follows the design and layout of the existing Gower Design Guide SPG and is comprehensive and well illustrated. With the additional inclusion of Modules relating to chalets and lighting, it stretches to just over 247 pages, plus an additional 160 pages of appendices. The LPA has reflected on the comments made in regard to the documents overall size, however fundamentally the SPG is designed to be accessible for specific modules, rather than necessarily having to be read from cover to cover. Therefore there is no proposal to reduce the length of the main document.
- 4.6 **Landscape Character Areas:** The inclusion of the Landscape Character Areas from the Gower Landscape Character Assessment undertaken in 2013 was welcomed as it provides more detailed guidance than LANDMAP and aligns the document with the evidence upon which LDP policies are based.
- 4.7 **Seascape Character Areas:** The inclusion of reference and relevant extracts from the Carmarthen Bay, Gower and Swansea Local Seascape Character Assessment 2016, was welcomed as it provides guidance on how seascape should be taken into consideration for relevant developments and aligns the document with the evidence upon which LDP policies are based.
- 4.8 **General Design Considerations:** Many comments related to specific design elements and have been included/amendments made throughout the document where considered appropriate.
- 4.9 **Colours and Materials:** following comments received in the first consultation, information relating to Environmental Colour Assessment was been included throughout the document, a tool which aids developers chose colours and materials that complement the landscape.
- 4.10 **Module 5E: Chalets:** the guidance was amended after the first consultation in order to clarify that Module 5a did not apply to chalets and specific guidance was included in relation to the extension of existing chalets.
- 4.11 **Module 5G:** Further guidance on sustainable design elements, such as air source heat pumps, has been included.

- 4.12 **Module 5I: Lighting:** Support for the inclusion of lighting guidance within the document, particularly to as the Council is Swansea Council is seeking the formal recognition of the Gower AONB as a 'Dark Sky Community' from the International Dark Sky Association (IDA). However, there was some concern regarding the technical nature of the module and whether the wording is strong enough to discourage light spill from windows etc. in new developments.
- 4.13 **Comments requiring factual updates:** A number of comments did highlight the need for the draft SPG to be amended in order to: provide factual updates; provide new/up to date images reflecting recent planning consents or local buildings rather than ones from other authorities; additional cross references to relevant existing information; correction of editing errors and improve the grammatical structure of the document.
- 4.14 **Comments not requiring amendments:** A large number of the comments made did not necessitate an amendment to the draft document as it was considered the LDP and/or SPG already sufficiently covered the points raised. Some comments made in support of the SPG did not require a response other than to note and welcome the representation made. Some suggestions put forward conflicted with the adopted LDP or national guidance, or requested repetition of national guidance, neither of which are appropriate. A number of comments were queries that required an answer (which has been provided in the consultation reports), but did not require a change to the SPG.

5. **Monitoring**

- 5.1 The effectiveness and appropriateness of the SPG will be regularly monitored by the LPA having regard to the outcomes that arise. This monitoring will consider any additional evidence arising over time, such as new national guidance and future outcomes of planning decisions that reference the SPG (including planning appeals). This will be particularly important where such outcomes demonstrate that a particular change to the guidance is necessary for the LPA to continue to use the SPG to provide effective, evidenced based and sustainable decision making

6. **Integrated Assessment Implications**

- 6.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, 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 Acts.
 - 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.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 6.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the ‘well-being goals’.
- 6.3 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process has been undertaken to ensure due regard has been had to the above. This process takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 6.4 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) screening was carried out prior to the July 2021 consultation. The IIA demonstrated that a full IIA was not necessary, because the SPG seeks to facilitate community cohesion by assisting the implementation of relevant LDP Policies, which themselves have already been subject to EIA, are based on a comprehensive and up to date evidence base, found sound by the Planning Inspectorate. The IIA was an update of the EIA carried out in 2020 on the previous version of the SPG which identified mostly low impacts. The results of this screening are set out in Appendix D of this Committee Report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no significant financial implications arising from the publication of this SPG. The cost of the public consultation process and document production has been accommodated within existing budgets and staff resources, and has utilised, as far as possible, electronic communication (email and website).
- 7.2 The final adopted document will be made available electronically and hard copies will generally only be produced upon request for an appropriate charge in order to recoup costs incurred. As such printing costs going forward will not be significant and can be met within allocated budgets.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The SPG will provide planning guidance to the adopted Swansea LDP and will be a material consideration in evaluating future planning applications.
- 8.2 The adopted SPG will supersede the following SPG which will no longer remain extant:
- Gower AONB Design Guide, 2011
 - Lighting Scheme Guidance for Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’ SPG, 2010
 - Hareslade Chalet Development and Plot Renewal Design Guide, 1984
 - Holts Field, Murton Conservation Area, Enhancement Programme and Design Guide, 1990
 - Miles Lane Chalet Development and Plot Renewal Design Guide, 1984
 - Sandy Lane, A Step in the Right Direction, 1984

- Advertisement Policy in Gower, Tourist Related Signs within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 2010.

- 8.3 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.

Background Papers:

Report of the Head of Planning and City Regeneration to Special Planning Committee July 2020 re: [New Supplementary Planning Guidance: Revised Gower AONB Design Guide](#)

Appendices:

Please note that Appendices A-D are available to download from <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/spg>

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Appendix A | Initial Public Consultation Report - 2020 |
| Appendix B | Second Public Consultation Report - 2021 |
| Appendix C | Placemaking Guidance for the Gower AONB SPG - Main document |
| Appendix D | Placemaking Guidance for the Gower AONB SPG - Appendices |
| Appendix E | Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Screening Form |