

## **TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

### **DELEGATED EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REPORT**

**Report to:** Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration  
**Date:** August 2019  
**Report for:** Decision  
**Report of:** Corporate Director for Place

#### **Report Title**

**A Design Guide for Trafford: Supplementary Planning Document**

#### **Summary**

The commissioning and adoption of a Design Guide for Trafford is identified as a driver of the Council's strategic vision and a key priority in the Corporate Plan for 2019-20.

The Planning and Development Service has recently appointed a consultant team led by LDA Associates to deliver the Design Guide. Data gathering work is now underway and a series of inception meetings have been held with officers. Initially this work is dividing the Borough into a number of 'character areas' which will underpin the structure of the Design Guide.

The next stage of the process is a series of 'design days' and workshops which will take place in each of the character areas. Key stakeholders will be invited to these workshops with the intention that key design issues and priorities for each of the character areas are identified. This work will inform the content of a consultation draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The consultation draft SPD will thereafter be the subject of a full and formal public consultation, in accordance with the relevant statutory processes.

Approval from the Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration is sought at this stage for the production of the Design Guide as an SPD and for the initial consultation and publicity that will take place through the 'design days', focus groups and workshops. Future reports will seek approval for the content of the consultation draft SPD and subsequent consultation and publicity.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

It is recommended that the Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration:

- Approves the preparation of the Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD);
- Approves the first stage of publicity and consultation arrangements for the Design Guide SPD, carrying out stakeholder engagement and a series of design workshops and focus groups in each of the identified character areas.

- Notes that following the consultation process described in this report a future report will seek approval for the content of the consultation draft SPD and the next stage of consultation and publicity.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Rebecca Coley / David Pearson

Extension: 4788 / 3198

Background Papers: None

<p>Relationship to Policy Framework / Corporate Priorities</p>	<p>Securing high quality development underpins the Council's vision and a number of the Council's strategic priorities, in particular: Building Quality, Affordable and Social Housing; Health and Wellbeing; Successful and Thriving Places; Pride in Our Area; and Green and Connected.</p> <p>The commissioning and production of a Design Guide is a key corporate priority for the Council in 2019-20.</p> <p>Policy L7 of the Core Strategy relates specifically to design and requires that development must be appropriate in its context, make best opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area, enhance the street scene or character of an area and make appropriate provision for open space. Good design also underpins the various Place Objectives and Strategic Objectives in the Core Strategy and policies relating to the supply of new homes, employment land, open space, transport and accessibility.</p>
<p>Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework</p>	<p>Design quality is integral to Policy GME-1 'Sustainable Places' of the draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. This policy aims to make Greater Manchester one of the most liveable city regions in the world, which is distinctive and with a clear identity which responds to the natural environment, landscape features, heritage assets and local history and culture and enables a clear understanding of how the place has developed. Development should also be visually stimulating, creating interesting and imaginative environments which raise the human spirit through the use of green space, public art and quality design.</p> <p>The Trafford Design Guide SPD will be the local response to these strategic policy aims.</p>
<p>Financial Implications</p>	<p>There is £160k of funding allocated for the Design Guide fees from the Planning Reserve (£120k) and base budget (£40k across two financial years).</p>

Legal Implications	None arising specifically from the content of this report. The future consultation draft SPD will be the subject of a full and formal public consultation, in accordance with the relevant statutory processes.
Equality/Diversity Implications	Neutral or minor positive impact.
Sustainability Implications	The Design Guide will be underpinned by sustainability principles although specific guidance relating to sustainability will be the subject of a future document once emerging development plan policy in the GMSF and Trafford Local Plan enables a more robust approach.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	The Council's own development schemes for its assets will need to comply with the guidance in the Design Guide which will need to be taken into account in any development appraisal.  Officer input into the production of the Design Guide can be delivered using existing staffing resource within the Planning and Development Service.
Risk Management Implications	Not applicable
Health & Wellbeing Implications	Not applicable
Health and Safety Implications	Not applicable

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 Securing high quality development underpins the Council's vision and a number of the Council's strategic priorities, in particular: Building Quality, Affordable and Social Housing; Health and Wellbeing; Successful and Thriving Places; Pride in Our Area; and Green and Connected. The commissioning and adoption of a Design Guide for Trafford is therefore identified as a driver of the Council's strategic vision and a key priority in the Corporate Plan for 2019-20.
- 1.2 Alongside Trafford's own ambitions, national planning policy places great emphasis on the creation of well-designed places. The Government has recently set up the 'Building Better, Building Beautiful' Commission with their interim report 'Creating Space for Beauty' published in July 2019. It is the government's view that local communities are more likely to accept new development in their areas if it is well designed and 'beautiful'.
- 1.3 Design is a key element of sustainable development and being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, the National Planning Policy Framework advises that plans or supplementary planning documents should use design guides and codes.
- 1.4 The design guide for Trafford is intended to build on this central element of government policy and enable the Council to ensure that quality design underpins decision making and advice given to developers and investors. Through a recent service redesign, the Planning and Development Service has a renewed emphasis on promoting and enhancing design quality throughout the planning process. It now needs a toolkit to support its ambitions and to ensure decision making is robust.
- 1.5 In May 2019 a Request for Quotation was advertised on 'The Chest' to seek a highly qualified consultant team to work with the Council, and importantly local communities and stakeholders, to produce a Design Guide which would outline principles for the delivery of high quality new development, communities and places throughout Trafford.

- 1.6 Six consultancies bid for the commission, and a presentation and interview were held with the three shortlisted bidders. A team led by LDA Associates, supported by Nexus Planning, Buttress Architects and Civic Engineers were the winning bidder, impressing the evaluation panel with their response to the brief.

## **2 Objectives and Scope**

- 2.1 The Design Guide needs to realise the Council's vision for the Borough. As such a number of high level objectives for the design guide have been identified, which reflect the Council's vision and strategic priorities. In addition, they reflect Greater Manchester's ambitions for inclusive and sustainable growth as expressed in the consultation draft GMSF. These objectives are shown in Table 1 below. Nevertheless, this list is not exhaustive and other objectives may emerge during the production of the guide, particularly if the national, regional or local planning policy or other regulatory context changes.
- 2.2 The Design Guide will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It will therefore need to have clear links to the adopted Core Strategy and in particular Policy L7 – Design, although other Core Strategy policies will also be relevant. It will however need to look forward to reflect the strategic policies in the GMSF, testing and adopting appropriate densities, internal space standards and car parking standards at the local level and as such it will need to be future proofed so it can be effectively re-adopted with the forthcoming Trafford Local Plan.
- 2.3 The primary objective is that it is usable by developers, decision makers and the community. Design is a subjective issue which evolves and, therefore, the guide must balance flexibility in interpretation with the robustness of decision making.
- 2.4 There will a requirement for extensive stakeholder, public and Member engagement during the adoption process with the formation of a steering group. A robust community engagement strategy is also required as statutory and non-statutory consultation will be carried out.
- 2.5 The design guide is not intended to replicate or supersede existing Conservation Area Appraisals and Conservation Area Management Plans but overarching principles underpinning good design will be as relevant in conservation areas as outside.
- 2.6 The guidance is however intended to replace a number of dated SPGs (mainly dating from the early 1990s) but also the more recent PG1 – Residential Development (2004), SPG2 – A56 Corridor Guidelines (2007) and SPD3 – Parking Standards and Design (2012).

<b>A DESIGN GUIDE FOR TRAFFORD: OBJECTIVES</b>		
<p><b>Corporate Plan 2018-2022</b></p> <p>Affordable and Quality Homes Health and Wellbeing Successful and Thriving Places Pride in Our Area Greener and Connected</p> <p><b>Core Strategy (2012)</b></p> <p>Place Objectives Strategic Objectives Policies SL1 – SL5 Policies L1, L2, L3, L4, L5, L7, W2, R1, R2 and R5.</p> <p><b>GMSF (2019)</b></p> <p>Our Vision Our Strategy Homes for Greater Manchester A Greener Greater Manchester A Greater Manchester for Everyone Allocations</p>	<b>A TOOL FOR DECISION MAKING</b>	<p>Promote and enhance design quality throughout the planning process.</p> <p>Help ensure successful delivery of Trafford’s place shaping agenda.</p> <p>Recognise specific challenges in different character areas across the Borough.</p> <p>Promote good design as a driver of value.</p> <p>Promote bespoke design and innovation to widen and attract new markets.</p> <p>Build on the success of popular and established residential neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Support the delivery of ambitious housing land targets.</p> <p>Balance the need to make the most effective use of land with increased densities whilst maintaining an area’s prevailing character.</p> <p>Create homes, not just housing.</p> <p>Support the delivery of jobs, growth and investment.</p> <p>Make town centres successful and attractive places to live, work and shop.</p> <p>Make the most of historic places, whilst protecting their special interest.</p> <p>Support delivery of high quality public realm and green spaces.</p> <p>Encourage place making through good urban design.</p> <p>Define mechanisms and tools to ensure the delivery of good design.</p>

Table 1 – Design Guide Objectives

### **3 Themes to be Developed**

3.1 The final design guide will provide overarching principles of good design related to place making, public realm and urban design, as well as provide specific guidelines related to architectural form and design.

- 3.2 A number of themes and topic areas have been identified (Table 2) which the design guide will cover. The varied nature of Trafford will require nuanced and responsive design guidelines which reflect the character of these areas. Like the objectives, these are not exhaustive, and LDA Associates will work with the Council to develop an exhaustive list of key issues and challenges to respond to in various contexts.
- 3.3 Three potential volumes of guidance were identified in the brief but the consultant team are not bound to this approach and will work with the Council to determine the most appropriate format for publication and adoption of the completed Design Guide and a strategy for ensuring it remains responsive and fit for purpose.

<b>A DESIGN GUIDE FOR TRAFFORD: THEMES AND TOPICS</b>		
Theme		Topic Area
<b>VOLUME 1</b>	Design Guidance	Principles of good design Urban design and place making Density Tall buildings Articulation, form and detail Materials Public realm, public spaces, streets and highways Open space, landscaping and green infrastructure in developments New building technologies and delivery models
<b>VOLUME 2</b>	Character Areas Townscape / landscape characterisation	Regional Centre / Inner Area Town Centres New Places The Suburbs Historic Places Corridors and Hubs Rural Areas
<b>VOLUME 3</b>	Technical Guidance	Space standards Waste and services Parking standards Detailed design information to be submitted with planning applications

**Table 2: Themes and Topics**

- 3.4 Guidance on sustainability principles, Sustainable Drainage Systems, climate change adaptation and zero carbon homes are deliberately excluded from the scope of the Design Guide. This is because guidance in relation to these matters would be significantly constrained by the limited ability of the existing Core Strategy policies on climate change to deliver the Council's ambitions in this regard. As an SPD, the Design Guide must link to existing development plan policies. Therefore a future SPD, either comprising a further volume of the Design Guide or a stand-alone document, would be produced once the more ambitious emerging climate change policies in the GMSF and / or Trafford Local Plan are sufficiently advanced.
- 3.5 A steering group will be established to act as a critical friend as the document proceeds towards adoption. The membership of this group is unknown at present as it could take a number of forms, but is likely to include officers, Member(s) and local built environment professionals e.g. architects / planners.

#### **4 Progress so far and Next Steps**

- 4.1 Since their appointment in July 2019, the consultant team have begun spatial and socio-economic data gathering work and have held a series of inception meetings with officers. Two important workstreams are underway; firstly the character analysis of the Borough to enable it to be divided into different 'character areas' each with its own set of design principles; and secondly understanding the challenges for officers in delivering 'good design'.
- 4.2 LDA Associates devoted two days to site visits around the whole of the Borough to understand its spatial characteristics and what 'makes it Trafford'. One day was spent travelling and walking the Metrolink corridor and the other using a car to access more peripheral areas. This work has identified a number of 'character areas', which will be refined as the Design Guide progresses, but are broadly: Stretford, Old Trafford and Urmston; Trafford Park; Carrington and Partington; Sale and its surrounds; Altrincham and its surrounds; and Bowdon and Rural.
- 4.3 Following those visits a workshop was held with Development Management planning officers to draw out what barriers are in the way of delivering 'good design' and what recurrent themes and issues arise when trying to improve design quality in the planning process. A meeting has also been held with the Council's Heritage Development Officer to ensure that the work complements, rather than competes with, existing heritage advice and guidance for the Borough, such as the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plan.
- 4.4 The next key piece of work will take place in September 2019 and will be the holding of 'design days' and workshops with a focus group (maximum 15 attendees) in each of the character areas. These workshops will start to flesh out specific issues and objectives for each of the character areas, drawing on the experience of stakeholders. Focus group attendees will vary depending on the specific stakeholders for the particular character area but will include officers, Ward Member(s), community group representatives (including civic societies), neighbourhood forums, Business Improvement District representatives and, in the case of areas with a single major landowner e.g. Carrington, landowner representatives.
- 4.5 The output from the design days and workshops will inform the content of the first draft of the Design Guide SPD, which will be subject to a full formal consultation with the public and stakeholders, in accordance with the relevant regulations. A future report to the Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration will seek authorisation for the content of the consultation draft Design Guide SPD and to undertake consultation.
- 4.6 Key milestones towards adoption of the Design Guide as an SPD are as follows (dates indicative):-

<b>Stage of adoption process</b>	<b>Indicative Timescale</b>
Approval of proceeding to adopt a Design Guide as SPD and of initial stakeholder consultation	August 2019
Stakeholder Consultation 'Design Days'	September 2019
Complete Consultation Draft	September – December 2019
Executive Member approval of Consultation Draft	December 2019
Public and Stakeholder Consultation	January – February 2020
Consideration of consultation responses and review of document	March – May 2020
Final Draft document produced	May 2020
Adoption of SPD by Executive	June 2020

## **5 Other options**

- 5.1 Other options are not to prepare the Design Guide as SPD or not produce one at all. The Design Guide is a key corporate priority and the National Planning Policy Framework encourages Local Planning Authorities to adopt design guides or codes. It will give officers and Members of the Planning Committee a tool kit to resist developments of poor design and to improve design quality in the Borough. The Council's case at planning appeals will be significantly strengthened as a result of adoption, where planning applications have been refused on design grounds. Adoption as SPD will give the Design Guide more weight as a material planning consideration.

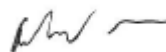
## **6 Reasons for Recommendation**

The Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration is asked to approve the preparation of the Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD); approve the first stage of publicity and consultation arrangements for the Design Guide SPD, carrying out stakeholder engagement and a series of design workshops and focus groups in each of the identified character areas and note that following the consultation process described in this report a future report will seek approval for the content of the consultation draft SPD and the next stage of consultation and publicity.

**Finance Officer Clearance**  
**Legal Officer Clearance**

**FF 13/08/19**  
**CK 13/08/19**

**[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE** *(electronic*



**Richard Roe 14/08/19**

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Corporate Director has cleared the report prior to issuing to the Executive Member for decision.