

Item No	Referred from:	EXTRAORDINARY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
4a	Date:	5 DECEMBER 2023
	Title of item:	DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY SPD
To be considered alongside agenda item:	Agenda Item 5	

The report considered by O&S Committee at the meeting held on 5 December 2023 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 5th December, 2023, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the draft Sustainability SPD, attached as Appendix A to this report, be endorsed and approved for a six-week public consultation from 4 January 2024 to 16 February 2024.
- (2) That the Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter attached as Appendix C is endorsed and that developers of strategic and significant sites in the District (as defined by the Local Plan) are encouraged to voluntarily sign and commit to its pledges.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) To allow the draft Sustainability SPD to be progressed to public consultation so that it may be developed and eventually adopted to support the adopted Local Plan.
- (2) To support a common standard for design quality and sustainability across Hertfordshire.

Audio Recording 4 minutes 6 seconds

The Executive Member for Planning and Transport presented the report 'Draft Sustainability SPD' and highlighted that:

- If approved the draft would go out for public consultation in early January 2024 and the Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter would be endorsed.
- The Cabinet Panel for Environment had contributed to the improvements of the Sustainability SPD.
- The Local Plan was produced when the climate change aspirations of the Council were different. This draft would improve the climate and ecological stance of the Council especially as the built environment contributed to 25% of the CO² emissions.
- This draft seeks to promote higher building fabric standards to reduce the need for retrofitting in the future. It also encourages climate-responsive design using passive design strategies, such as orientation, shading, ventilation, insulation and landscaping, to reduce the reliance on mechanical systems and enhance the adaptability of buildings to changing weather patterns.
- The sustainability topics covered by the draft were highlighted in appendix A.

- The purpose of this draft was to provide a robust guidance for developers and to drive up the sustainability of our built environment and feedback from developers suggested they were supportive of this approach.
- There would be three levels of standards. bronze, silver and gold. The bronze level was the basic legal requirement. Applications meeting the silver and gold levels would be more favourably considered by the Planning department.
- The draft would go through a public consultation and then recommendations would be made to Cabinet next year.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Adam Compton
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor David Levett

In response to questions the Executive Member for Planning and Transport stated:

- The three different standard levels would raise aspirations and ambitions and they had clear criteria.
- There were three different SPDs and they related to different topics, this one covered the build, construction, embodied carbon, biodiversity and green infrastructure and was wider than the design code.
- The draft Biodiversity SPD was expected in March 2024 and the draft Design Code SPD in late 2024, the timetable for these SPDs was shared at the Cabinet meeting in November.
- There was some uncertainty around the future of SPDs following central government changes, however, in the meantime it was felt important to continue to update the Local Plan and strengthen policies.

In response to a question the Strategic Planning Manager stated that there was potential to revise the three standards and the options for implementation were highlighted at 8.7 of the report. It was also the intention that these standards would not be too onerous for small applications.

In response to a question the Strategic Planning Officer stated that the draft incorporated the best practices currently available from other Councils for renewable energy and biodiversity standards.

Councillor David Levett proposed and Councillor Adam Compton seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the draft Sustainability SPD, attached as Appendix A to this report, be endorsed and approved for a six-week public consultation from 4 January 2024 to 16 February 2024.
- (2) That the Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter attached as Appendix C is endorsed and that developers of strategic and significant sites in the District (as defined by the Local Plan) are encouraged to voluntarily sign and commit to its pledges.

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