

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, ECONOMY

ECONOMY, SKILLS & TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16th November 2017

**BIRMINGHAM DESIGN GUIDE VISION DOCUMENT AND BIRMINGHAM DESIGN AND
CONSERVATION REVIEW PANEL**

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To inform the Economy, Skills & Transport Scrutiny Committee about the City Council's intention to create a new Birmingham Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD); and establish a Design and Conservation Review Panel.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Economy, Skills & Transport Scrutiny Committee note the content of this report for information; and invited to make comments as part of the consultation on the Vision document.

3. Contact Officer

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4. Background

Birmingham Design Guide

- 4.1 As Birmingham continues to experience strong growth and investment, this must be underpinned by the delivery of well-designed buildings, streets and spaces. The Birmingham Design Guide will be the platform for the City Council's approach to promoting and securing this, ensuring the highest standards of design are achieved by all development.
- 4.2 The Design Guide will build from the strategic policies of the Birmingham Development Plan (BDP) and provide clear guidance to aid decision making and pre-application discussions, through the use of design principles and best practice examples. It will streamline all existing city-wide design guidance (such as Places for Living, High Places and Places for All), some dating back to the 1990's, into a single document.
- 4.3 The Design Guide will be structured around five "Big Design Themes" with detailed guidance on a breadth of subjects that will collectively help create high quality places and buildings for Birmingham's citizens. The five "Big Design Themes" are:

- **The Birmingham ID**
 - Character & Distinctiveness
 - Heritage
- **Living and Working Places**
 - Density (suburbs, city centre)
 - Residential Design Guidelines
 - Non-residential buildings
 - Tall buildings
- **Streets & Connectivity**
 - Access to different modes of transport (walking, cycling, public transport)
 - Street Hierarchy and Legibility
 - Parking
 - Mix of uses, activity, shop front design
 - Public Realm
 - Needs of people with restricted mobility
- **Green Environment and Infrastructure**
 - Landscape
 - Public Open Spaces
 - Rivers & Canals
 - Trees
 - Biodiversity
 - Sustainable Drainage (SuDs)
- **Efficient and Future Ready**
 - Energy Efficiency, Heat & Power
 - Air Quality
 - Waste & Recycling
 - Digital & Communications Infrastructure

Design Guide Vision Document

- 4.4 The first step in creating a design guide has been the publication of the Design Guide Vision document. Its purpose has been to publicly present the City Council's intention to create the Design Guide; and enable the city's citizens and businesses to submit comments and views on what they feel should be contained within it.
- 4.5 Following Cabinet approval of the Vision document on 13th September, the City Council published the document for a 6 week period of consultation (between 25th September and 6th November), enabling these comments and views to be gathered.
- 4.6 In line with the commitments in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement, the City Council used a range of media to inform the city's citizens and businesses about the consultation. This led to emails being sent to all contacts on the Birmingham Development Plan consultation database; publishing of a press release by the City Council Press Office; a professional launch held on 3rd October; and bespoke emails sent to relevant professional bodies. To engage with the city's young people, meetings are being arranged with the Building Birmingham Scholars and the Smithfield Young Persons Group. Engagement is also underway with the city's universities.
- 4.7 To aid engagement, a dedicated webpage was created, enabling documents to be viewed and comments submitted online (via Beheard):

<https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/designguide>

- 4.8 Paper copies of the Vision were placed in each district, at the following locations (mirroring those used during BDP consultation):

Birmingham City Council, 1 Lancaster Circus, Ground Floor Reception
Library of Birmingham
Druids Heath Library and Customer Service Centre
Erdington Customer Service Centre
Northfield Customer Service Centre
Saltley Customer Service Centre (Saltley Advice Service)
Sparkbrook Customer Service Centre
Harborne Library
Kings Heath Library
Hall Green Library
Shard End Library
Aston Library
Handsworth Library
Sutton Coldfield Library
Walmley Library
South Yardley Library

- 4.9 Comments and views submitted during the period of consultation will be collated, and considered in the production of the draft Design Guide SPD.

Birmingham Design & Conservation Review Panel

- 4.10 To support the effective delivery of the Design Guide, a new Birmingham Design & Conservation Review Panel (BDCRP) will be created to objectively assess development proposals against the guidance in the Design Guide. It is proposed that the Panel will comprise a diverse pool of external professionals, who can bring different expertise and perspectives to the review process; relevant Council Officers; and a single Member representative selected by Birmingham Planning Committee.
- 4.11 In creating this multi-disciplinary Panel, the existing Conservation Heritage Panel will be merged into the new BDCRP. This is to ensure a holistic approach is taken to design, enabling the City Council to provide a single design review service to support the implementation of the Design Guide SPD, whilst maximising the effectiveness of the service provided.
- 4.12 Allied with the Vision document consultation, the Council also sought expressions of interest from individuals and organisations who wished to become BDCRP members. Expressions

received will be assessed and shortlisted by officers within Planning and Development, with the Corporate Director for Economy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, agreeing the panel members and BDCRP Chair.

- 4.13 The design review process will form part of the Council's formal pre-application procedure, with BDCRP observations used in an advisory capacity to assist Planning Committee and planning officers in formulating their decisions and recommendations.
- 4.14 The BDCRP will review development proposals and infrastructure projects deemed sensitive (by the Corporate Director of Economy and Assistant Directors of Planning and Development)) in terms of design, public interest, locality or size. This may include the following developments and projects:
- Residential developments over 150 residential units,
 - Non-residential developments over 10,000 m²
 - Tall buildings (in city centre and wider city context)
 - Major planning applications affecting Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (1,000 m² / 10+ residential units)
 - Major infrastructure projects
 - Unusual or distinctly innovative projects
 - City centre and local centre public realm works
 - Council produced Masterplans, development briefs and design guidance

Developers may request their scheme be considered for design review, but the agenda will be set by the Economy Directorate.

- 4.15 Observations and comments made by the BDCRP will be feedback to the applicant for consideration before they submit a planning application.
- 4.16 Proposals which proceed to a planning application with a scheme that has responded positively to the design review comments will have a brief statement in their Planning Committee report. This will detail that a design review has taken place and the applicant has responded positively to comments received, resulting in the scheme presented to Planning Committee for consideration.
- 4.17 Proposals that fail to appropriately respond to the comments will have them attached to their Committee report (with additional officer commentary if required) for assessment by Planning Committee.
- 4.18 It is anticipated a BDCRP will take place on a monthly basis, with some panel members only asked to attend where their specific expertise is relevant to the schemes being considered. In certain scenarios, it may be necessary to hold special meetings to respond to specific proposals received.
- 4.19 The BDCRP will support the production of the draft Design Guide SPD.

Development Stages

- 4.20 The Birmingham Design Guide will be brought forward in the following stages:

- Stage One – detailed audit of the existing planning guidance (as listed at Appendix 4).
Now complete
- Stage Two (Part A) – publication of the Vision Document. The Birmingham Design Guide Vision Document will publicly present the Council’s intention to produce the Birmingham Design Guide SPD. It gives a broad overview of the five Big Design Themes; and enables individuals and organisations to submit comments and ideas on the content and structure of the Guide. **Current Stage**
- Stage Two (Part B) – announce creation of the Birmingham Design & Conservation Review Panel (BDCRP) alongside the Vision Document; and invite Expressions of Interest from a broad range of professions, to create a diverse pool of expertise that can help ensure future development delivers high quality architecture and places. **Current Stage**
- Stage Three – publication of the draft Birmingham Design Guide SPD, developed from engagement with the Council’s own professional expertise; and appropriate representations received during consultation on the Vision document.

The Design Guide will be subject to a statutory period of public consultation. It is anticipated this document will be **launched in Early 2018**.

- Stage Four – following the outcome of a statutory period of public consultation the Birmingham Design Guide will be adopted by the City Council as a Supplementary Planning Document. Adoption is anticipated to be in **summer 2018**.

It is proposed that the BDCRP will commence its formal role in Summer 2018, following adoption of the SPD.

5. Background Papers

Birmingham Design Guide Vision Document