

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**22 May 2006**

**Report of the Director of Planning & Transportation**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Council Decision**

**1 KENT DESIGN GUIDE**

**Summary**

**To recommend the adoption of the Kent Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document in accordance with the Council's approved Local Development Scheme.**

**1.1 Introduction**

- 1.1.1 In the autumn of last year I reported to the Board on progress towards the publication of the new Kent Design Guide. Members will recall that the preparation of the new design guide has been the subject of extensive public consultation in which the Council has taken part itself. A report on the outcome of that consultation was considered by the Board in October of last year and since that time, the guide has been significantly amended to take on the views of those organisations and individuals who submitted comments on the draft document. There then followed a period of graphic design and production of the guide to bring it to a standard suitable for a document which has a purpose to promote excellence in design.
- 1.1.2 I am pleased to say that the final document has now been produced and I have arranged for a copy for all Members of the Council. I hope Members will take a general interest in the document but it is also intended to function as a reference document for Members when they are engaged in the consideration of development proposals and other schemes that affect the physical fabric and environment of the borough.
- 1.1.3 As I had noted in the previous report, it is a significant challenge to produce a design guide that is relevant to a county with such diverse characteristics as Kent. Nevertheless, I believe that challenge has been tackled with some success and the intention is that the document is now adopted by all the planning authorities of Kent and importantly is also adopted by the County Council as Highway Authority.
- 1.1.4 In the revisions to the Councils Local Development Scheme, now approved by the Government Office for the South East, the Kent Design Guide is listed as a

Supplementary Planning Document that the Council will adopt at about this time. It is therefore most appropriate now for the Council to make the decision to adopt the design guide as part of its suite of documents that form the Local Development Framework. Technically the Design Guide will be 'supplementary' to one of the 'saved' policies of our currently adopted Local Plan.

- 1.1.5 The purpose of the new design guide is two fold. Firstly, it is a promotional and aspirational document to set high standards of achievement in development and design generally and to be used as a reference point for discussions and negotiations with developers and local communities. Secondly, it is a working tool for those practically engaged in the design and development process and consequently it will be made widely available to practitioners in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It is also important that the practical application of the design guide is the subject for ongoing awareness training. To this end the project team who have overseen the production of the guide, under the auspices of the Kent Planning Officers' Group, are running practical training programmes for local authority staff and private sector organisations. A large number of our own staff will be taking part in this process.
- 1.1.6 I am also intending that later in the year we should run events for Members to assist with the familiarity of the design guide and its application in the planning process.
- 1.1.7 I hope very much that Members will find the new design guide to be a good quality and rounded document that will be helpful to the Council in achieving further improvement in the quality of development and spaces in the Borough.

## **1.2 Legal Implications**

- 1.2.1 The Council has the power to adopt Supplementary Planning Documents by virtue of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The preparation of the Design Guide, including the arrangements for public consultation, has followed current guidance on process and has been endorsed by The Government Office for the South East.

## **1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.3.1 The Council's contribution to the Kent Design Initiative has been made within existing budgets.

## **1.4 Risk Assessment**

- 1.4.1 The adoption of the Design Guide will provide greater weight to the Council's efforts to secure improvements to development proposals.

## 1.5 Recommendations

- 1.5.1 The Kent Design Guide **BE ADOPTED** by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document pursuant to 'saved' policy 4/11 of the Tonbridge & Malling Local Plan.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Steve Humphrey

File ref: B8

Steve Humphrey  
Director of Planning & Transportation