

Ref: SH/Central Beds DG
15th March 2023

Central Beds Design Guide SPD consultation CASS response

To Whom it May Concern,

Re: Central Beds Design Guide SPD consultation

Please see below the response from CASS to the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide SPD Consultation.

Design Guide SPD – Contents and Introduction – Chapters 1 to 4

- The guide sets the context in terms of the document objectives, including that *“the Council places great emphasis on the need for new developments to be of the highest possible quality, ensuring the places created now provide a lasting legacy and are locally distinctive”* and CASS supports this statement.
- The reference to Local Plan Design Policies and National Design Guide are useful, we also note that the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide is now structured in accordance with the National Design Guide headings.
- Whilst it is clear the Design Guide aligns with national and local design policies, it is not very clear how the Council envisages for the Design Guide to be used in prospective development opportunities and applications.
- We note the Contents spreads over three pages in rather small print. We would suggest some of the sub-headings are consolidated, so the key themes are clearer and easier to find, e.g. those headings included on divider pages to feature on the main Content page.
- We note there is a comprehensive Table of Figures (2.0) covering six pages. We would suggest that a better suited place for this would be at the back of the main document.
- We support the divider pages, e.g. 4.0 Introduction – they are visually appealing and clear.

Design Guide SPD – Context and Identity – Chapter 5

This chapter looks at context and identity through Landscape, Historic and Urban Design Context. This includes:

- *How the landscape and built form has evolved into the special character found in Central Bedfordshire today and gives specific guidance to preserve and enhance this character;*
- *Advice on the Heritage context and key considerations for developments in the historic environment;*
- *Advice on appraising a site and its setting.*
 - We support the key headings listed on the divider page 6 (5.0 Context and Identity)
 - We suggest the headings from page 6 are carried over the the next page, and /or subheadings grouped into these categories; as the information presented on page 7 can appear overwhelming.
 - We suggest that Chapter 5.9 Local Build Form Characteristics would relate well referenced to Chapter 6 Built Form as it deals with individual typologies including locally used materials, whilst the Chapter 5.7 Built Form in Central Bedfordshire relates well the the earlier material on Context and Identity.
 - Whilst we are of an opinion that 5.39 Appraising a Site and its Setting checklist is useful, it is not made clear how the headings relate to Chapters of the Design Guide.

Design Guide SPD – Built Form – Chapter 6

This chapter gives advice on:

- *Urban grain, enclosure, perimeter block structure and building lines;*
- *Hierarchy of spaces;*
- *Focal point, key and landmark buildings;*

- *Contextual development; arrangement of roofs, chimneys, materials;*
- *Relationships between buildings in a group;*
- *Density and legibility;*
- *Designing house types.*
 - We support the key headings listed on the divider page 33 (6.0 Built Form).
 - We suggest the headings from page 33 are carried over the the next page, and /or subheadings grouped into these categories; as the information presented on page 34 can appear overwhelming.
 - Chapter 6.7 Public and Private Space touches upon defensible space and boudary treatments. We suggest that the chapter is expanded with further detail of locally typical buoundary treatments, dependent on the location.
 - We find that Figure referencing is not consistant thourgh the document, e.g. some are referenced, while others not. Also the wording could be adjusted to avoid repetition e.g. “The figures from Figure 87 to Figure 101,.....” as “Figures 87 to 101”.
 - Page 53 illustrations – it is not very clear why some are examples of ‘high quality’ and some of ‘good quality’.
 - The Chapter would benefit from a end of section Checklist to summarise design element considererations.

Design Guide SPD – Movement – Chapter 7

This chapter gives advice on:

- *The user hierarchy – prioritising walking, cycling and public transport over motor vehicle use;*
- *Street character typologies and shared space streets;*
- *Permeability, connections to local facilities, and neighbourhoods, designing for public transport, and the design of walking and cycling routes;*
- *Boundary treatment, verges, tactile paving, wayfinding signage and street furniture;*
- *Use of planting, hard and soft landscaping, street furniture, street trees.*
 - We support the key headings listed on the divider page 70 (7.0 Movement).
 - We suggest the headings from page 70 are carried over the the next page, and /or subheadings grouped into these categories; as the information presented on page 71 can appear overwhelming.
 - The Chapter would benefit from a end of section Checklist to summarise design element considererations.

Design Guide SPD – Nature – Chapter 8

This chapter gives advice on:

- *The landscape character of Central Bedfordshire;*
- *The importance of retaining trees on development sites, specification of new planting, and enhancement of local character;*
- *The local biodiversity and ways of increasing this including making ecological connections, new green corridors, green roofs, community orchards and managed open space;*
- *Conservation and creation of new habitats for protected species.*
 - We support the key headings listed on the divider page 92 (8.0 Nature).
 - We suggest the headings from page 92 are carried over the the next page, and /or subheadings grouped into these categories; as the information presented on page 93 can appear overwhelming.
 - The Chapter would benefit from a end of section Checklist to summarise design element considererations.
 - We note the inclusion of Boundary Treatments section on page 97. This would benefit from cross referencing with the relevant parts in the Built Form section.

Design Guide SPD – Public Spaces – Chapter 9

This chapter outlines the importance of public spaces as the centre point of most developments. It also outlines:

- *Guidance on Local Areas of Play, Local Equipped Areas of Play and Neighbourhood Areas of Play including: buffer zones; surface treatments; informal surveillance; hard and soft*

landscaping to create natural scent, colour and texture; play equipment, and furniture for parents and carers;

- *Public art including locations, purpose and the briefing process for different types of outline applications.*
 - We support the key headings listed on the divider page 108 (9.0 Public Spaces).
 - We suggest the headings from page 108 are carried over the the next page, and /or subheadings grouped into these categories; as the information presented on page 109 can appear overwhelming.
 - The Chapter would benefit from a end of section Checklist to summarise design element considerations.

Design Guide SPD – Uses – Chapter 10

This chapter outlines the importance of mixing uses to create diversity of activity in streets and spaces, and to contribute to the vitality and sustainability of towns and neighbourhoods. Advice is given on:

- *Mixed use development including residential, retail, commercial, and leisure depending on the context;*
- *Infill and backland developments; shopfronts; and mixed tenure residential;*
- *The design of mixed-use centres, the relationship to public space, increasing footfall, and ensuring strong connections to encourage pedestrian activity cycling and public transport*
- *Gypsy, Roma and Travellers guidance;*
- *Extra Care housing;*
- *Designing residential and nursing care homes.*
 - We support the key headings listed on the divider page 123 (10.0 Uses).
 - We suggest the headings from page 123 are carried over the the next page, and /or subheadings grouped into these categories; as the information presented on page 124 can appear overwhelming.
 - The Chapter would benefit from a end of section Checklist to summarise design element considerations.

Design Guide SPD – Homes and Buildings – Chapter 11

This chapter provides practical guidance for the creation of high-quality residential developments. It includes guidance on:

- *Achieving privacy through design; community safety; space standards and storage;*
- *Bin storage and collection; gardens and private amenity space; frontage conditions/setbacks;*
- *Garden size;*
- *Boundary treatments;*
- *Inclusive design;*
- *Householder alterations and extensions - front, side and rear extensions;*
- *Infills and backland development;*
- *Impact on neighbours;*
- *Self and custom build.*
 - We support the key headings listed on the divider page 140 (11.0 Homes and Buildings).
 - We suggest the headings from page 140 are carried over the the next page, and /or subheadings grouped into these categories; as the information presented on page 141 can appear overwhelming.
 - The Chapter would benefit from a end of section Checklist to summarise design element considerations.

Design Guide SPD – Resources – Chapter 12

This chapter encourages developments to follow advice on all aspects of sustainability. It advises on:

- *Optimisation of sites - including location, orientation, landscaping, SuDs, and reuse of buildings;*
- *The energy hierarchy of improving the insulated fabric, providing solar shading, utilising energy efficient appliances and systems, and on-site renewable energy;*

- *Low carbon design and Passivhaus measures;*
- *Reducing embodied energy and carbon in construction by improving speed, efficiency, using lower energy materials and reducing construction waste;*
- *Reducing noise, vibration, air, light and land pollution;*
- *Measures to mitigate climate change impact, such as green and blue infrastructure to absorb carbon and provide cooling; solar shading; and avoiding flood risk.*
 - We support the key headings listed on the divider page 160 (12.0 Resources).
 - We suggest the headings from page 160 are carried over the the next page, and /or subheadings grouped into these categories; as the information presented on page 161 can appear overwhelming.
 - The Chapter would benefit from a end of section Checklist to summarise design element considerations.

Design Guide SPD - Case Studies - Chapter 13

This chapter showcases some exemplar developments across Central Bedfordshire, which highlight the key themes from the Design Guide. It focuses on:

- *Priory View, Dunstable*
- *Kings Reach, Biggleswade*
- *Fairfield Park*
- *Former Stewartby Brickworks*
- *Wixams*

We understand the five case studies were selected for 'high quality design'. They appear to have different sensitive contexts and are examples of different types of development, however this is not clear at a glance from the description or image captions.

It would be useful if there were references to the earlier chapters, confirming a number of principles identified used in practice, as well as a plan shown where appropriate, and further detail of the scheme, challenges it faced and how they were overcome, e.g. if there was a context to King's Reach SUE, how the extension was integrated with the existing settlement.

Kind Regards,

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 Director, Master Planning