



# BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL

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Dear Sir/Madam

## **Response to the Consultation – Design Guide and Housing Policy Technical Guidance**

The Town Council has considered both consultation documents and comments as follows:

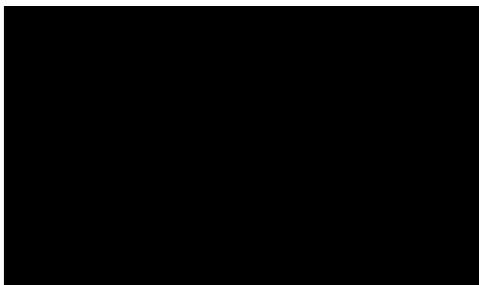
1. Council welcomes the purpose of the Design Guide to support the Local Plan with its requirements for high quality design, including reinforcing local distinctiveness and the efficient use of land. Similarly, it requires inclusive design and no adverse impact upon nearby uses.
2. The reference to Neighbourhood Plans is less clear. The Guide simply says that their policies 'should be taken into consideration'. At the Topic Session, it was said that Neighbourhood Plans sit alongside NPPF and the Local Plan, the inference being that in any conflict with the Design Guide, the NP would take precedence. The Town Council would certainly expect the Neighbourhood Plan to take precedence.
3. Each section of the Design Guide has a long list of other documents 'to be referenced'. It is not clear whether there is any conflict between the Guide and these documents and, if so, which takes precedence.
4. It is disappointing to note that in many cases good design is advocated but the Guide goes on to allow exceptions. In some cases, the parameters of the particular site may necessitate exceptions. Otherwise, outcomes depend on the interpretation of the guidance by developers, planning officers and the DMC.
5. The emphasis on woodland and planting native to the area is welcomed.

6. Section 7.3 requires that 'Where a cycle track is provided adjacent to a footway, this should be segregated by means of a kerb and, ideally, change in level.' There is **concern that this could be a trip hazard** and it would be better to delineate the areas through paving or contrasting surfaces.
7. The hierarchy of play areas is noted but the allocation of the types of area needs to be sensitive to likely demand. The Town Council has noted LAPs which are very little used. Many parents prefer a larger play area with equipment for young children separated from that of older children but where a parent can supervise both.
8. The Case Study of Kings Reach, Biggleswade, refers only to the green infrastructure. It should be noted that much of the rest of the estate design is problematic and would not conform to the policies set out in the Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan or the Design Guide.
9. The Town Council also welcomes the Housing Policy Technical Guidance and notes that it provides interpretation and implementation of housing policies in the Local Plan 'which is the development plan for Central Bedfordshire along with the "made" neighbourhood plans within the area.'
10. The encouragement of bungalows and other housing for older and less able people is very welcome. This supports older people to downsize but remain fully independent while providing accommodation for younger people who are less able.
11. Adherence to the national space standards is also very welcome, together with the idea of initial purchasers (off plan) having more choice over the internal layout of the property.

In conclusion, Biggleswade Town Council welcomes both documents subject to it being clear that the Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan takes precedence over both.

We look forward to your responses on the point we have raised in this letter as the Consultation reaches its conclusion.

Yours faithfully



Karim Hosseini  
Head of Governance & Strategic Planning