
**SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE :
TWEEDBANK – VISION FOR GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY
A Community for the Future & DELIVERING DEVELOPMENT
QUALITY – DESIGN GUIDE**

Report by Executive Director Corporate Improvement & Economy

PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS COMMITTEE

31 May 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 A 34ha site is allocated within the Council’s adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016 to the north of Tweedbank for mixed use development which includes housing and business uses. The site was incorporated into the LDP as part of Supplementary Guidance (SG) on Housing, as required by the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division of the Scottish Government following Examination of the LDP. The Housing SG was approved by the Council and was cleared by Scottish Ministers in November 2017.
- 1.2 The LDP stipulates the requirement for Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to be provided for the site. The purpose of the SPG is to set out the Council’s vision for the site and gives greater clarity on measures to achieve a high quality development. This includes identifying site constraints to be addressed, the identification of zones for specific uses, indicative housing densities for the residential zones, a possible area for a care home facility, placemaking and design guidance and a pre-application checklist.
- 1.3 A draft version of the SPG was approved by the Council in January 2020 as the basis for consultation. A 12 week public consultation followed thereafter which included a public exhibition in the Tweedbank Community Centre. All representations received during the consultation period are summarised in a table within Appendix B along with Officer responses to the representations submitted. The table also confirms changes to the SPG proposed by Officers in response to the representations received and the consequent amended version of the SPG can be viewed in Appendix A.
- 1.4 Although the Draft SPG incorporated a section on placemaking and design it was considered this should be expanded upon. Consequently a Design Guide has been prepared which gives more detailed advice along with good practice examples and references other related material considerations. The Guide will help ensure a high quality sustainable development which is sensitively designed within the attractive landscape setting of the site and

meets the Council aspirations for a high quality community for the future. The Design Guide can be viewed in Appendix C.

- 1.5 In considering the purchase of Lowood Estate it was agreed that all future strategic decisions relating to the Estate would be considered by Council. Consequently the final approval of the SPG / Design Guide requires to be made by Council. At the meeting of the Council in January 2020 it was agreed that at the conclusion of the consultation period all consultation responses and any proposed consequential amendments to the Draft SPG would be reported initially to the Planning and Building Standards Committee for their review and comment. Thereafter the SPG and any comments from the Planning & Building Standards Committee would be reported to the Council. It is proposed to submit the SPG and associated Design Guide to Council at its meeting on 17th June 2021. Once approved by the Council the SPG and the Design Guide will be significant material considerations in guiding planning applications for the development of the site.
- 1.6 A number of decision have been taken by the Council in respect of the purchase of the Lowood Estate and the terms of the Full Business Case for the Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region City Deal, which allows draw down of £15m of funding for the Central Borders Innovation Park that have an interrelationship with the proposed SPG. However, this report solely focusses on the Planning Guidance that will help shape development on the site and ensure that is becomes an integral part of Tweedbank. Further reports on the Development and Marketing Strategy will be forthcoming later this year.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Planning & Building Standards Committee:**
 - a) **Note the officer responses to the representations received and the consequent proposed amendments to the SPG (see Appendix B)**
 - b) **Approve the Supplementary Planning Guidance (see Appendix A)**
 - c) **Approve the Design Guide (see Appendix C)**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council's Local Development Plan was adopted in May 2016. Following the Examination of the LDP Reporters stated that the Plan had a shortfall of housing land and that in order to address the deficiency Supplementary Guidance (SG) on Housing should be prepared. A number of sites were considered including the site subject to this report. The site was selected for consideration for a number of reasons including that its high quality landscape setting would attract the interests of developers and property purchasers, it is in close proximity to the railway terminus at Tweedbank and it is located within the central part of an established housing market area.
- 3.2 Ultimately the site was taken forward as part of the Draft SG on Housing and issued for public consultation along with other sites proposed within the document. Following consultation the SG was approved by the Council and was then cleared by Scottish Ministers in November 2017 which meant that all the sites contained within the SG, including the Tweedbank Expansion site, became part of the adopted LDP. Within the LDP a number of site requirements were identified which planning applications must address. One of these requirements was that a masterplan / SPG should be prepared to help guide the development of this site.

4 PREPARATION OF SPG

- 4.1 The Council appointed Land Use Consultants (LUC) to undertake the preparation of the Draft SPG. LUC have expertise and experience in producing high quality guidance for similar projects. An internal working group of Council Officers was set up to develop the SPG in liaison with LUC. Scottish Water, SEPA and NatureScot also contributed to the development of the guidance. A well-attended public exhibition was held in Tweedbank Community Centre on 21st August 2019. Feedback was positive and points by local residents were incorporated into the Draft SPG. The Proctor Matthews Masterplan 2017 provided a useful starting point for the development of the Draft SPG.
- 4.2 In order to identify site constraints and areas which could be developed a series of maps were produced. These included constraints such as, for example, topography, flood risk areas, woodland and estate habitats, the River Tweed SAC and SSSI, cycle/footpath network, tree and ecology survey findings. A series of photographs identified key features on the site which should be taken account of and safeguarded and mitigated where necessary.

5 SPG FINDINGS

- 5.1 The Draft SPG was split into two parts. The first part identified the context, opportunities and constraints within the site and the second part confirmed uses identified within the development zones. The Draft SPG set out a vision for the development of the site and identified a number of opportunities and constraints. Taking account of the identified constraints eight development zones were identified. Predominantly these are residential zones. A mixed use zone to the west of the existing pond identified the possibility of the incorporation of a care home. The business

site will be a high amenity development for Class 4 (business) use. This will be located around the north, east and south of the pond and is a natural extension of the Borders Innovation Park to the south. The area around Lowood House (identified as the Lowood House neighbourhood centre zone within the Draft SPG) allows the opportunity for a small retail outlet to serve the development as well as workshops. There would also be the opportunity for other uses including a tourism facility at this location.

- 5.2 The LDP states an indicative figure of approximately 300 housing units on the site. The Draft SPG identified an indicative housing number for each zone and confirmed that number can be achieved. The figures for each zone are indicative only and it is likely that in practice the overall number of homes will exceed this figure. This is not unusual and the critical test is whether a proposal for each zone is acceptable in terms of design, site layout and that infrastructure issues are satisfactorily resolved.
- 5.3 The Draft SPG also identified areas of land to be safeguarded which included the higher quality woodland areas. The existing riverside walk will be retained and enhanced and further pedestrian walkways will be incorporated throughout the site. The large lower lying area to the extreme western part of the site is at flood risk and cannot be developed. This area of land allows the opportunity for some compensatory planting to be carried out. It is envisaged a single large scale play area /amenity area will be located within the central part of the site. Its finalised location and the timescale for implementation will be considered at the planning application stage as site phasing develops. It also confirms a new access road and bridge over Tweedbank Drive and the railway will be required on the south western side of the site. Access on the eastern side of the site will be via the existing Tweedbank Innovation Park. Ultimately, these routes will be internally linked to achieve connectivity within the site.
- 5.4 The Draft SPG considered opportunities for a range of energy options to serve the site which was aided by a study carried out by ARUP. Given the relatively small number of homes proposed on the site it appears unlikely that a centralised heating scheme (e.g. district heating system, wind turbine(s), biomass) will be financially viable at this time. Distributed schemes are most likely (e.g. roof mounted solar panels, air sourced heat pumps, ground-mounted panels) and this will be investigated and developed further.

6 CONSULTATION ON DRAFT SPG

- 6.1 Following approval of the Draft SPG by the Council in January 2020 a 12 week public consultation was carried out, commencing on the 21st February 2020 and ending on 15th May 2020. A public exhibition was held at the Tweedbank Community Centre on 4th March 2021 to discuss the proposals. Fortunately the exhibition took place before the Covid-19 lockdown and the event was attended by 56 persons. During the lockdown the SPG remained online for public viewing and comment and Officers remained available to answer queries regarding the document. Consequently it is not considered the pandemic prevented the opportunity for interested parties to submit representations. In total 22 representations were submitted in respect of the draft SPG.

- 6.2 The representations received can be viewed in Appendix B along with the Officer responses and any consequent proposed changes to the SPG. The main changes to the SPG are as follows:
- Placemaking and Design text has largely been moved from the Draft SPG into the Design Guide;
 - As requested by Historic Environment Scotland their policy for new build has been inserted into the document;
 - As requested by NatureScot reference has been made to the requirements for otter habitat surveys to be carried out by developers where required and a Habitats Regulations Appraisal must take account of NatureScot's comments; and
 - As requested by SEPA further matters have been identified to be incorporated into the Flood Risk Assessment and the River Basin Management Plan
- 6.3 The representation table also confirms that following comments submitted, the Council will consult and discuss with interested parties a range of matters as the site develops. This includes, for example: interests of the local community particularly in respect of potential uses within the neighbourhood zone near Lowood House; the longer term options for a new/replacement Lowood Bridge; discussions with Scottish Forestry regarding appropriate species for compensatory planting; and potential energy options for serving the site with developers.

7 DESIGN GUIDE

- 7.1 The Draft SPG incorporated placemaking and design advice for the development of the site. However, it was considered that this should be expanded upon and developed further in the form of a Design Guide. The Design Guide is intended to lead and inform all development proposals and planning applications relating to the site, ensuring that the expansion of Tweedbank delivers a high quality development in both form and design. It requires the use of innovative solutions which take cognisance of climate change impacts and the environmental quality on the site to maximise benefits and opportunities. The purpose of the Guide is not to provide a detailed design layout for the site nor to be so prescriptive in detail as to define specific individual designs for each house, colours of doors / windows, etc. These matters would most appropriately be addressed at the planning application stage. However, the document does give a clear expression of the quality required on the site and provides sufficient guidance to identify good practice principles which any interested developer would be required to follow in order to maximise the opportunities the site offers and achieve an exemplar standard of overall development the Council desires and expects.
- 7.2 An internal working group of Officers was set up to prepare the Guide. This included representatives from Development Management, Roads Planning and Built and Natural Heritage. In order to consider best practice options and examples of similar projects, a workshop was organised for the working group by Architectural Design Scotland who have knowledge and expertise on how such documents can best be produced. The findings of the workshop helped shape the final version of the Guide. The Guide has been presented and discussed with the Council's portfolio holders and the local members for Tweedbank and the Planning Working Group of Officers and

Members of the P&BS Committee. Any amendments requested during these briefings have been made where considered appropriate within the SPG/Design Guide.

7.3 The Guide should be read in conjunction with the SPG and between them there is sufficient information provided to ensure application submissions satisfy the Council's aspirations for the development of the site. The Guide requests that in advance of any planning application any interested developers contact Council Officers at an early stage to discuss the requirements of these documents to ensure compliance. This includes the need for early discussions with Scottish Water and SEPA to confirm implementation works to be addressed. Each application submission for the development of a zone must be supported by a mini planning brief along with any other supporting report identified in the Guide. A pre-application checklist is included which any developer must address.

7.4 The Design Guide comprises of the following component parts:

- 1) *Introduction* – confirms the purpose of the Design Guide and its relationship with the SPG
- 2) *Vision* – confirms development of the site will support the sustainable expansion of Tweedbank utilising a range of historical, cultural and environmental assets to create a distinct and exemplar development with a strong sense of place
- 3) *Planning Process and Site Zones*– confirms the identified site zones and that any application submission must comply with the requirements and advice within the SPG and Design Guide.
- 4) *Phasing and Service Infrastructure* – identifies the envisaged phasing for the development of each zone along with matters to be addressed when implementing service infrastructure.
- 5) *Heritage, Biodiversity and Landscape* – seeks to ensure new development has no adverse impacts on the attractive landscape setting of the site and protected habitats, species and the built heritage. This includes addressing any mitigation measures where required and promoting opportunities for improving habitats and the environment
- 6) *Movement and Infrastructure* – confirms the requirement to ensure the site is a well-connected place that is fully integrated into Tweedbank and readily and conveniently accessible from the surrounding area for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. It must adhere to the 20 minute neighbourhood initiative
- 7) *Climate Change, Utilities and Services* - confirms the Council's desire to ensure the delivery of a responsible, resilient, forward-looking 21st century net zero emissions community which responds innovatively to the challenges of climate change. The Council will work with developers to consider the most appropriate and up to date energy technologies and evolving practices as the development of the site progresses
- 8) *Responsive Placemaking and Design* – gives best practice examples and guidance for a range of placemaking and design considerations which should be encompassed within application submissions
- 9) *Guidance for Development Zones* – for each of the development zones a number of specific site requirements are identified

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial

The Council has developed a detailed financial model for the costs of acquisition of the Lowood site and the wider redevelopment of Tweedbank. The model shows the costs of development of the various tranches of the Tweedbank development, including Lowood, as these are currently understood along with the associated economic benefits and a range of scenarios associated with funding. The full development appraisal of the site was considered by Members previously. That initial modelling indicates that the Council's investment in the site should be recouped through the development phases through the onward sale of the site with 179 jobs created during the construction phase and a further 173 jobs created in the post construction period, and a potential economic impact of £150 million GVA in the economy. Updates will continue to be provided as the financial implications of delivery are better understood.

8.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) *Risk of preparing the SPG*
There are no risks in preparing the SPG
- (b) *Risk of not preparing the SPG (and Design Guide)*
The LDP confirms the requirement to produce the SPG. The SPG has been written by experienced consultants with input from relevant stakeholders to ensure that the SPG is appropriate to the area and addresses any concerns that the local community, prospective developers and other interested parties may have. This should reduce the likelihood of objections to the proposed SPG and future developments. The SPG will be most useful in giving advice to a wide range of interested parties as to identifying the key issues to be addressed when submitting application proposals for the development of the site, reducing the likelihood of rejection of unsuitable submissions and/or delay in approving proposals.

8.3 Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this study and it is not anticipated there will be any adverse equality implications.

8.4 Acting Sustainably

- (a) **Economic Growth**
The SPG identifies and confirms the economic growth opportunities within the site including the high amenity business site and residential zones.
- (b) **Social Cohesion**
The proposals contained within the Draft SPG will help to meet the diverse needs of people in the local communities, including the potential inclusion of a care home.

c) **Protection of the Environment**

The Draft SPG has identified all environmental matters to be addressed and mitigated as the site is developed.

8.5 **Carbon Management**

It is not considered the study brings any impact on the Council's carbon emissions.

8.6 **Rural Proofing**

It is anticipated the study will have a neutral impact on the rural environment.

8.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made.

9 CONSULTATION

9.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report

Approved by

Rob Dickson

Signature

Executive Director Corporate Improvement & Economy

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Charles Johnston	Lead Planning Officer (Planning Policy and Access)

Background Papers: Proctor & Matthews Tweedbank Spatial Framework, (January 2018), Scottish Borders Local Development Plan 2016, Draft SPG – Tweedbank: Vision for Growth and Sustainability January 2020

Previous Minute Reference: None

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