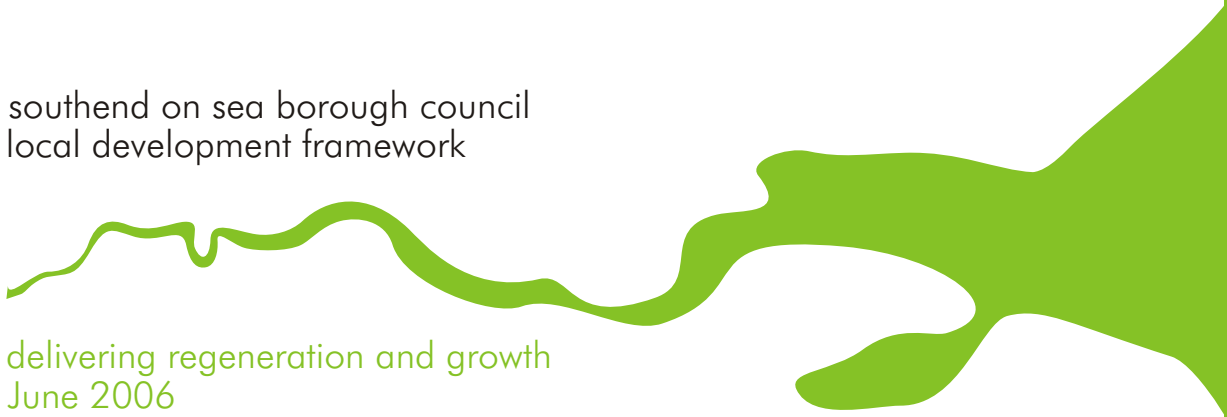


sustainability appraisal for the  
design and townscape guide (spd1)

southend on sea borough council  
local development framework

delivering regeneration and growth  
June 2006



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# 1 Introduction

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- 1.1 This document is a draft report of the sustainability appraisal (SA) of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) titled '*Design and Townscape Guide*', produced as part of the Southend-on-Sea Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.2 Sustainability appraisal is the process by which the influence that a plan or programme may have is assessed according to its likely contribution to the desirable environmental, economic and social objectives that are embraced by a concern to achieve greater sustainability.
- 1.3 The SA of the SPD forms part of the overall SA of the LDF, and this SA Report should be read in conjunction with the SA Report produced to assess the emerging Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD). The SA of the whole LDF is being carried out as the LDF is prepared, and the process is being applied to each of the constituent Local Development Documents, including SPD. The SA process, as a whole, that is being followed also meets the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive as set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. The Regulations require the preparation of an environmental report on the LDF, and hence on each of its component Local Development Documents (LDDs), and this is required (at para. 12(2)) to:
- 'identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of:*
- (a) implementing the plan or programme*
  - (b) reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme.'*
- 1.4 This SPD, as a stand alone document, does not necessarily fall under the type of plan or programme that needs to undergo SEA under the specific requirements of the Directive. This is because the SPD is a non statutory document, and does not directly set a framework for development. However, as part of the larger LDF the SPD does have a role in ensuring development is as sustainable as it can be with SA providing a check on this. SA of the SPD is also required by the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and by Planning Policy Statement PPS12: Local Development Frameworks, as well as meeting the good practice guidelines on SA issued by ODPM.
- 1.5 This document, referred to hereafter as the SA Report, is to demonstrate the likely sustainability implications of implementing the SDP in its final form.
- 1.6 This version of the SA follows early work on the SA of the SPD, and the earlier reporting stage at a draft SDP public participation stage. The SA Report and consultation responses to the draft report help influence the final version of the SPD. Notable alternations in light of the earlier appraisal findings was the inclusion of more material on securing energy efficiency and sustainable

construction in new development, and the expansion of coverage on biodiversity. The earlier version of the SA Report is available from the Council.

1.7 The SA report:

- provides further information on how this SA Report fits into the wider SA of the LDF, including consideration of matters such as the appraisal of alternatives, and the inclusion of consultation bodies – section 2
- describes some of the main environmental, economic and social characteristics of the Borough that should be reflected in the SA and SPD (the ‘baseline’) – section 3
- explains and presents the sustainability framework used in this part of the SA – section 4
- sets out some overall findings from the process – section 5, with section 6 providing a summary of these findings.

1.8 This SA report is intend to sit alongside the final version of the SPD, and highlight the likely sustainability impacts that this guidance may have.

## 2 Overall Approach to the Sustainability Appraisal of the Design and Townscape Guide SPD

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- 2.1 The way that the SA of the LDF is undertaken has to be applicable to each part of the LDF and throughout the process of its preparation. Some parts of the LDF will require more in depth appraisal than others, and this will depend on factors such as the statutory weight of the document, the level of influence the policies or proposals would have on development, and the topics covered by the document.
- 2.2 The SPD has one key role, to ensure that development is designed in a way that brings about beneficial impacts on the Borough. Therefore by definition the draft SPD should be bringing about sustainability benefits to the LDF area, with the role of this SA being to assess that the SPD covers the sustainability agenda appropriately, taking into consideration social and economic elements of good design as well as environmental matters. Also the SA will appraise the SPD to check that its form and structure will actually be useful to developers, designers and all other users of the guide to bring about the desired development.

### Scoping

- 2.3 As previously stated this SA Report is part of the ongoing SA of the whole LDF. For that reason much of the background of this report comes from the SA already undertaken for the emerging Core Strategy DPD. That report is the principal document of the SA process, containing a full consideration of baseline sustainability issues in the borough, as well as explanation of the SEA process, and the development of a 'sustainability framework' for the SA process. Similarly the SA Report of the core strategy has already been through a 'scoping' stage, which is a statutory stage of the SEA process. At this stage the four consultation bodies, as defined in the SEA Regulations for England, were consulted on the proposed methodology for the SA process, and the sustainability framework. Responses were received from all four of the consultees and where relevant these were fed into the SA of the core strategy and strategic options. As the SA of the SPD is part of the wider SA of the LDF, and as the SPD does not contain any matters of statutory policy or where there are likely to be significant adverse environmental or wider sustainability impacts, a further scoping stage is not required.

### Consideration of Alternatives

- 2.4 The SEA Directive requires that the relative sustainability impacts of alternatives to the plan or programme under consideration are assessed. However, the Directive makes clear that these need only be 'reasonable' alternatives, and interim guidance from ODPM makes it clear that alternatives that go against national policy are not reasonable. This means that there are no real alternatives that could be considered to this SPD which follows national policy in seeking to

ensure that all new development is of good design and contributes to townscape quality.

- 2.5 One possible alternative would be to not produce the SPD and instead rely on developers following national good practice advice, and the saved design policy of the Local Plan. However, this option does not allow for specific design matters of relevance to Southend-on-Sea to be included to guide new development, nor does it allow for the opportunity the guide provides of drawing all relevant matters together in one document. Therefore it is favourable from a sustainability point of view to proceed with producing a new SPD to support policy of the LDF under preparation.

### **Monitoring**

- 2.6 Monitoring is an important part of the SA process as a whole, and monitoring of the significant effects identified through SEA is a requirement of the SEA Directive. However, this system of monitoring need not be a stand alone process, and monitoring of the SA can be incorporated into monitoring of the LDF as a whole, this is made clear in the SEA Directive.
- 2.7 Monitoring this SA independently from the larger monitoring process for the LDF is unlikely to be greatly beneficial to the achievement of more sustainable development. Instead it is suggested that the Council identifies relevant indicators to monitor good design implementation and incorporates those into the monitoring procedure for wider monitoring processes of the SA and the LDF.

### **Format of the Appraisal**

- 2.8 An important part of the approach being followed in the SA of the LDF is the use of a 'sustainability framework' to assist in the comprehensive and systematic consideration of the parts of the plan in relation to what it means to promote more sustainable development. This framework has been developed for the SA of the LDF as a whole, and its relevance to this part of the SA is discussed in section 4 of this Report.
- 2.9 The SPD does not contain any specific policies or proposals. Therefore carrying out a systematic appraisal of these against the sustainability objectives is not possible. Instead this SA Report is based on a commentary relating to its coverage of sustainability issues, as well as an assessment of how effective the SPD may be on achieving more sustainable development. However, it also includes a simple symbol summary of the main design principles of the SPD against sustainability objectives, in order to check the coverage of issues.

### 3 The Baseline Environment

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- 3.1 This section of the report is a collation of information relating to the Borough of Southend-on-Sea, relevant to the SPD. This information is intended to inform the Sustainability Appraisal of the SPD, by aiming to describe sustainability matters of relevance. Therefore these concentrate primarily on aspects of built environmental character, and to a limited extent other environmental factors as well as social and economic characteristics.
- 3.2 The information presented here primarily comes from that collected for the SA of the LDF, extracting matters of relevance to the SPD, with the addition of other material where necessary. The SA of the Core Strategy DPD contains further details on the role, purpose and sources of baseline information.
- 3.3 This section is only intended as a very brief outline of the situation in the Borough as a whole. The information presented gives a general overview of the relevant matters, rather than seeking to concentrate on specific detail of the built environment.

#### Urban Character

- 3.4 A landscape character assessment was undertaken of Essex and Southend-on-Sea for the Structure Plan review (July 2002). The borough of Southend-on-Sea falls in two character areas, the Thames Estuary and South Essex Coastal Towns. The characterisation report states that Southend-on-Sea and its associated neighbourhoods are the largest urban area on the South Essex coast. The urban form is dominated by a grid pattern of streets running parallel and at right angles to the contours. It has a dense urban form, but with some large parks and open spaces.
- 3.5 The built environment condition is mixed, with poor quality commercial 'shed' development being common within the area. Several areas of the fringes of the town have been identified as 'landscape improvement areas' through the previous Local Plan, and therefore there is an opportunity for these areas to be significantly enhanced upon through appropriate schemes (which could in part include built development).
- 3.6 The housing type and character of the borough is varied, and includes high density areas of Victorian and late Victorian terraces in south Leigh, Westcliff and Southend, with areas of more spacious twentieth century housing in areas such as north Leigh and Shoebury.
- 3.7 A defining characteristic of the Borough is that, on most sides the urban area extends right up to the borough boundaries. This means therefore that the urban area is subject to significant development pressure, and development needs must be met in an already constrained urban area.

- 3.8 Parts of the Borough are subject of specific urban regeneration initiatives, for social, economic and environmental reasons. These have been established with the intent to bring about social and economic improvements but also should have positive effects on the urban environment. An Urban Renaissance Company, 'Renaissance Southend', was set up in March 2005 to bring about physical regeneration and redevelopment of the whole borough, although initially concentrating on:
- The town centre and seafront (including the Victoria Avenue Business District)
  - The New Ranges in Shoeburyness
  - Southend-on-Sea's Industrial and Commercial areas
- 3.9 Therefore these areas will need to incorporate the principles of good design as detailed in the draft design guide SPD.
- 3.10 **Implications for SPD:** Development within the borough needs to help in the environmental regeneration of the urban area through good design, with specific attention paid to those areas in most need of enhancement. Attention needs also to be given to the appearance of the urban area from the rural areas and open spaces both within and beyond the borough boundaries. Good design also has an important role to play in bringing about good quality in high density developments and therefore making the most efficient use of land.

## Cultural Heritage

- 3.11 The historic and cultural heritage of the built environment makes a strong contribution to the overall quality and character in many parts of the borough. Enhancing these qualities where they exist or are in need of restoration is central to achieving a high quality urban environment.
- 3.12 In total there are fourteen Conservation Areas in the borough, designated as having 'special architectural or historic interest', which are in need of protection or enhancing. These areas are spread throughout the borough, and include areas in Leigh, Leigh Cliffs, central Southend, Prittlewell, and Shoebury.
- 3.13 There are also around 75 listed buildings and churches in the Borough, two of which are Grade II\* and three Grade I. In addition there are around 80 buildings listed as being of Local Architectural or Historic Interest and these include Frontages of Townscape Merit.
- 3.14 The borough contains five Scheduled Monuments in, or adjacent to, its boundary. These sites are:
- Prittlewell Priory, these priory remains date from the 10<sup>th</sup> century



- a univallate hill fort 'Prittlewell Camp' found 500m east of Sutton Crematorium, dating back to the prehistoric Bronze Age
- Southchurch Hall moated site, 1.1km east of Central Southend-on-Sea Station, dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the associated buildings now house a museum and remain in a generally good condition
- a defended prehistoric settlement at Shoeburyness, known as the Danish Camp, dating from the Iron Age, a rare example in south east England
- a Cold War Defence boom, this is within the local authority boundary, but stretches out into the Thames Estuary, the boom was built in the 1950s during the Cold War and is the only example of this type of structure of this date in Britain.

3.15 Other notable features include the Southend-on-Sea pier, at over 2km long making it the longest pleasure pier in the world. The pier dates from 1889, when work was started, and was completed in its current form by 1929.

3.16 **Implications for SPD:** Any development in the area will need to take into account the quality of the historic environment, to ensure neither the fabric or setting of historically or architecturally important buildings, or monuments is harmed.

## Open Space

3.17 Open space makes an important contribution to the built environmental character of the borough, with over 13 parks and designated community open spaces, five of which have been awarded Green Flag status for quality. In addition there are fifteen allotments sites in Southend and a further three in Leigh, totalling over 850 allotment plots.

3.18 A Study of Open Space and Recreation was undertaken in August 2004 to determine the level of provision, and need, within the Borough.

3.19 The various parks and recreational resources were assessed with the aim of setting standards for new provision. The study revealed an expected correlation between the density of development and the availability of open space, with greater the density the less open space available. The most central urban wards, such as Kursaal, Victoria and Westborough Wards, have 0.31 hectares or less per 1000 population of Park space. Therefore this means that large areas in the central part of the Borough do not have easy access by foot to a park of any kind.

3.20 **Implications for SPD:** The low level of open space in the central area does mean that any intensification of residential development in this location will result in a drop in the availability of park space per person. Parks and open spaces

should also be well designed to maximise their role in creating sustainable communities.

## **Biodiversity and Nature Conservation**

- 3.21 The urban area, and the open spaces within it, have an important role to play in supporting a wide variety of plants and animal species. Appropriately designed new development allows the opportunity to enhance this throughout the borough.
- 3.22 Habitats mentioned in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), that are found in the borough, include ancient and veteran trees, as well as 'ancient' hedgerows (such as those along the green lane north of Fossetts Camp, and running parallel to Eastwood Boulevard and in the boundaries of Edwards Hall Park). There are several woodland areas of importance in the Borough at Hadleigh Great Wood (in Belfairs NR), Belfairs Wood, Oakwood and Owl Wood.
- 3.23 Other more 'urban' habitats of importance are the allotment sites, with a total of 51.2ha of these sites in Southend-on-Sea, churchyards, private gardens, public parks and railway embankments. Essex Wildlife Trust note that many native species of Britain, such as the fox, are becoming increasingly adapted to urban conditions. Features such as balancing ponds, backgarden ponds offering areas of open water, and parks and gardens provide semi-woodland habitats that support species including woodpeckers, a range of plants, fungi and invertebrates. Similarly there is a wide range of plants and animals that depend on the grass and scrubland habitat that survive on verges and railway embankments found throughout the town. However, development often supports less wildlife than it should through efficient use of land leaving little outside space, and inappropriate landscaping, and there is often poor management of habitats for nature conservation purposes even where they do exist.
- 3.24 Other forms of urban wildlife habitats that are not covered by designation, such as hedgerows, back gardens and railway embankments must also be taken into account in all development proposals in the Plan area. These sites are important to the survival of many species of flora and fauna in the Borough, as they provide 'wildlife corridors' linking wildlife sites within the urban area, and to the open countryside. Species identified through the LBAP must also be given special protection as it is unlikely that they will only be found on designated sites, and ecological survey of sites prior to development is essential to ensure these species are not harmed.
- 3.25 **Implications for SPD:** New development in Southend-on-Sea should place a greater emphasis on including wildlife features and open green space as part of the design, in order to maximise the nature conservation value of the urban area.

## Natural Resources

- 3.26 Within the borough there are several matters related to resource use that may be of relevance to the design guide.
- 3.27 The whole of the Eastern Region has severe water resource issues. In summer much of the region already has no additional water supply, and Southend-on-Sea Borough is identified by the Environment Agency as having an 'unsustainable or unacceptable abstraction regime'. This means that new development in the Borough must be developed with this in mind, and ensure that there is sufficient water to meet the needs of development, and design quality to ensure the sustainable and efficient use of water.
- 3.28 Many parts of the Borough are at relatively high risk of flooding. The implications for development are that building on the fluvial flood plain must be avoided, and new development should be designed in order to minimise surface water run-off. The implications of tidal flooding means that new development, particularly residential development, should not be built where there are not already existing flood defences that reduce the risks to an acceptable level.
- 3.29 Climate change will be of great significance globally, and in the Borough, over the next few decades. The impacts of climate change are likely to have a negative effect on the water resource availability, especially as summers get drier through global warming. Global warming will also cause sea level rise, and therefore increase the risk of tidal flooding, and as a result of wetter winters may also increase fluvial flooding. Development in the Borough will have to be developed in such a way as to take these matters into account, as well as being designed to be energy efficient and located to encourage travel by more sustainable modes of transport.
- 3.30 **Implications for SPD:** New development must be designed to reduce the use of natural resources, with particular importance on water efficiency due to the supply issues in the borough, and also to reduce emissions.

## Social and Economic

- 3.31 Southend is undergoing continuing regeneration and enhancement of the Seafront, High Street and the Pier. The Pier's new developments cost £1.9 million from the European funded Southend Seafront High Street and Pier Enhancement ('Sshape') programme. As previously stated a 'Southend Renaissance' has recently been set up to help co-ordinate and deliver regeneration of the borough.
- 3.32 Southend-on-Sea is ranked at 130 (rank of average rank) in the Indices of Deprivation (ID2004 – local authority level) out of 354 English districts. Some of the wards of the Borough contain areas that are in the worst 10% deprived nationally, these wards being Kursaal (majority of the ward), Milton and Southchurch, which are all centrally located.

3.33 **Implications for SPD:** Good design could help improve the attractiveness of the area to investors, as well as helping to increase tourism revenue. In addition the environmental regeneration of parts of the town through well designed development, has the potential to make a positive impact on local communities.

## 4 Sustainability Objectives

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- 4.1 The 'sustainability framework' has been developed to summarise the various aspects of the sustainable development agenda, so that it can be used in assessing the likely effects of the LDF on achieving more sustainable development. The framework was drawn up for the SA of the LDF as a whole, following discussions with a group of officers from the Council, and was further refined through the scoping process and the comments of the consultees.
- 4.2 Further discussion on the preparation and the rationale behind the framework can be found in the SA Report of the draft core strategy DPD. Below the sustainability framework is reproduced, with the addition of a column that describes the possible influences the SPD could have on meeting the stated objectives of sustainable development in the borough.

**Figure 1 : Sustainability framework for the SA of the LDF, adapted for the SPD**

Concern	Explanation and desirable direction of change	Relevance to Design and Townscape Guide SPD
<b>Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone</b>		
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to enable people all to have similar and sufficient levels of access to services, facilities and opportunities</li> </ul>	Good practice in design and layout of new development should help to ensure that facilities are accessible
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to provide the opportunity for people to meet their housing needs</li> </ul>	Providing affordable housing, and housing designed to meet specific needs will help meet this objective
Education & Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to assist people in gaining the skills to fulfil their potential and increase their contribution to the community</li> </ul>	The design guide will have little direct impact on meeting this objective. It is proposed not to use this objective in the SA of the SPD.
Health, safety and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to improve overall levels of health, reduce the disparities between different groups and different areas, and reduce crime and the fear of crime</li> </ul>	Designing new development appropriately should help to reduce crime and fear of crime
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to value and nurture a sense of belonging in a cohesive community, whilst respecting diversity</li> </ul>	Good design of new development can help unify an area, lending it a distinctive sense of place, which can have a positive impact on residents seeing themselves as part of a cohesive community
<b>Effective protection of the environment</b>		
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to maintain and enhance the diversity and abundance of species, and safeguard these areas of significant nature conservation value</li> </ul>	Appropriate landscaping, and layout of new development can help contribute to biodiversity protection and enhancement
Landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to maintain and enhance the quality and character and cultural significance of the landscape, including the setting and character of the settlement</li> </ul>	Development on the urban fringes can help to protect and enhance landscape character of the borough, as well as the appearance of the urban area from outside the borough
Built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to maintain and enhance the quality, safety and distinctiveness of the built environment and the cultural heritage</li> </ul>	The design guide should have the greatest impact on this objective.
<b>Prudent use of natural resources</b>		
Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to reduce all forms of air pollution in the interests of local air quality and the integrity of the atmosphere</li> </ul>	The guide can only have a limited impact on this objective, through appropriate location of new development and allowing access by means other than by car.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to maintain and improve the quantity and quality of ground, sea and river waters, and minimise the risk of flooding</li> </ul>	Helping to ensure new development is resource efficient is vital to meeting this objective. Also locating and designing new development to minimise the risk of flooding should also be impacted on by the guide.
Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to use land efficiently, retaining undeveloped land and bringing contaminated land back into use</li> </ul>	The guide can only have a limited impact on this objective, but could help ensure that new high density

		development is well designed, and thereby help make the most efficient use of land.
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to maintain the resource of productive soil</li> </ul>	The design guide will have little direct impact on meeting this objective. It is proposed not to use this objective in the SA of the SPD.
Minerals and other raw materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to maintain the stock of minerals and other raw materials</li> </ul>	The guide could have a positive impact on this objective, by helping to ensure that new development is designed and constructed in such a way as to reduce the use of primary materials, and to reduce waste.
Energy sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to increase the opportunities for energy generation from renewable energy sources, maintain the stock of non renewable energy sources and make the best use of the materials, energy and effort embodied in the product of previous activity</li> </ul>	Helping to ensure new development is resource efficient is vital to meeting this objective.
<b>Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment</b>		
Local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to achieve a clear connection between effort and benefit, by making the most of local strengths, seeking community regeneration, and fostering economic activity</li> </ul>	By helping to create a high quality urban environment, it may help to improve the attractiveness of the borough to inward economic investment, as well as encouraging more visitors to the area thereby helping to meet these economic objectives. It is proposed to combine the economic objectives into one for the SA of the SDP.
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to maintain and enhance employment opportunities matched to the size of the local labour force and its various skills, and to reduce the disparities arising from unequal access to jobs</li> </ul>	
Wealth creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to retain and enhance the factors which are conducive to wealth creation, including personal creativity, infrastructure, accessibility and the local strengths and qualities that are attractive to visitors and investors</li> </ul>	

## 5 Appraisal of SPD

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### Introduction

- 5.1 This section of the SA Report assesses the SPD in order to predict what the sustainability impacts of implementing this guide might be. As there are no specific policies or proposals in the SPD, it is not possible to carry out a systematic appraisal of the plan. Instead the SA process looks at the 'Design Principles' as set out in Section 2 of the SPD, with a simple matrix assessment looking at how these perform against the refined set of objectives as shown in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 The SPD consists of four sections, and a number of appendices. Section One is a general introduction to the guide, section two sets out the general 'Principles for Good Design' that new development in the borough should follow. This is followed by a section on 'Detailed Requirements for Good Design' which as the title indicates contains more detailed guidance on new development, and finally section four sets out the procedure for submitting planning applications and ensuring design is covered within them.
- 5.3 The SA first looks at the SPD as a whole with general comments on its likely performance in achieving a more sustainable level of development. This is then followed by a discussion of each of the sections of the SPD, with the emphasis on those sections that deal with the overall strategy and principles behind development in the borough.

### General Comment

- 5.4 The guide does contain a large amount of information and detail on how development should proceed in the Borough, and its coverage of issues is quite comprehensive. However the key question of whether this guide would bring about greater sustainability is how effective it would be in bringing about the right kind of development, and to achieving the overall objectives of the guide. The comments here therefore look at how effective the influence of the SPD may be in implementing the intent of the Guide. Regardless of the content of the Guide, its impact on achieving greater sustainability is based on whether it can be implemented or not.
- 5.5 The Guide uses diagrams and pictures to demonstrate principles or to offer explanation through example, and are an effective way of demonstrating the principles of good design. These allow for a better understanding of the issues involved and outcomes intended than by description alone. The useful graphics the SPD contains include pictures showing examples of good quality design in development in the Borough, as well as several diagrams on designing infill development and house extensions, to ensure these are carried out in keeping with existing residential character. However, in many circumstances the SPD relies on written descriptions. The technical working used in these sections is



explained in a glossary, and therefore it is hoped that this will be sufficient to ensure lay people and designers alike can implement the guidance. The inclusion of a substantial amount of illustrative material in the SPD is considered to go some way to assist the effectiveness of the document.

- 5.6 This issue is directly related to the matter of who the intended audience of the SPD is, as the Guide needs to be targeted at a wide range of users. From professional urban designers who are likely to be involved in submitting applications for large schemes, householders in submitting applications for extensions for instance. The Guide does achieve this balance quite well, and include a the glossary of terms to help clarify any more technical terms used. Therefore should help support development that takes place is in line with that desired by the SPD. However, the sheer number of topics and the detail with which they are addressed may overwhelm some users of the guide who have little familiarity with the issues addressed.
- 5.7 The advice contained in the Guide is quite generic, the principles as laid out are for the most part not very specific to the existing character of Southend-on-Sea, and many principles could be applied equally well to any part of the country. Although it is required that applications are assessed in relation to their context, and many applicants will be required to undertake a local character assessment as part of their application, it may have been helpful to spell out more detail on character specific areas of the town that have a distinctive local character. This could therefore help support these character and context assessments, and secure better design, in a similar way to the localised guidance given on beach huts will ensure these are in keeping with specific local character traits.
- 5.8 A particular point to note in this SPD is that the Guide should reference and refer to the most recent relevant planning documents, including national guidance. The Guide makes repeated reference to PPG3 in Section 2, and as this is soon to be replaced by PPS3 this should be updated to reflect the most current guidance. Furthermore it may be worth referred to other emerging guides, such as the 'Code for Sustainable Homes' currently under preparation by the DLGC.
- 5.9 Overall the document does appear relatively comprehensive in its coverage, and includes guidance on aesthetic and contextual issues, as well as coverage of issues such as the efficient and sustainable use of energy, water and the sourcing of materials.

## Section One – Status and Introduction

- 5.10 The first section of the SPD serves as an introduction to the Guide. It includes a list of the relevant plans and strategies that the guide reflects and is influenced by, and where its position in the planning hierarchy for the area. As well as setting out an overall commitment to securing more sustainable development and urban renaissance as part of the Thames Gateway. This is welcomed by the appraisal, and in particular the statement that,

*“Development proposals will be expected to contrite significantly to the creation of a high quality and sustainable urban environment which enhances and complements the natural and built assets of Southend.””*

- 5.11 The three ‘commitments’ of sustainability, environment and good design do set out a good understanding of the sustainability issues in the plan area, seeking not only improve the physical quality of the built environment and open spaces, but also to link this to helping create sustainable communities. Although the separation of ‘commitment to sustainability’ and ‘commitment to the environment’ might be unsuitable, as the environment is the core component of sustainable development, and therefore should not be treated separately. In terms of aiming to achieve more sustainable development this first section of the SPD does represent a good starting point for the guide, and covers key sustainability themes.

## Section Two – Design Principles

- 5.12 Section 2 of the SPD contains general design principles for the development of Southend.
- 5.13 The matrix in Appendix 1 shows each of the five key sustainability principles from section 2 of the SPD compared against each of the relevant sustainability objectives from the ‘sustainability framework’ developed for the SA of the LDF. The method used in the appraisal gives a general overview of the inclusion of sustainability considerations in the SPD. It is expected that it would be this section of the design SPD that should cover all of the relevant sustainability and urban renaissance issues for the borough, as it appears to be the intention of the section to cover all of the generic design principles on which new development should be based.
- 5.14 As Appendix 1 shows the coverage of issues appears quite comprehensive with matters such as accessibility, community and the built environment covered well. The relationship between good design and a high quality built environment and social regeneration is clearly made, with the inclusion of several principles that will directly aid social well being through good design. This includes matters such as designing layouts of new buildings to help reduce crime, and using new development and open spaces to bring or enhance a distinctive sense of place to areas within the Borough.
- 5.15 As well as aesthetic and contextual design principles this section also covers matters relating to the sustainable construction and resource efficiency of new development. This inclusion is welcomed by the sustainability appraisal as considering these aspects of a development from the outset of development is essential in order to fully realise the benefits of more sustainable construction. This includes consideration of the layout of development, the materials used, and design in features that will contribute to resource efficiency. The guidance indicates that all new development should expect to achieve ‘excellent’ on the BRE Environmental Assessment Method. This is an ambitious goal, and if

achieved should make a significant contribution to achieving more sustainable development (not only in terms of energy efficiency). Although to be truly effective these requirements of more sustainable construction and the BRE requirements need to be backed up by appropriate LDF policy in order to make them non-negotiable elements of new development. It may have been suitable for the Guide to refer to the emerging Code for Sustainable Homes being produced by the DLGC, that will set out sustainable guidelines and standards to be met.

- 5.16 Appendices 3, 4 and 5 are also a useful addition to the Guide as they show how energy efficiency, water efficiency and biodiversity features can be incorporated into development whatever the size. This provides a useful first point reference source, although the developer would have to look elsewhere for more detail on these schemes.
- 5.17 In terms of helping to achieve the economic objectives of sustainable development the matrix shows no relationship between the design principles and helping to achieve this. However, this may not necessarily be the case, and in many instances there will be an indirect impact between an improvement of the urban environment and the attractiveness of the borough to inward investment and increased tourism revenue. This relationship can not necessarily be attributed to any one of the principles but instead may be as a result of the combined effect of their implementation.
- 5.18 A balance that must be sought in all design guides, including this SPD, is that there is significant overlap between what is principle and what are process matters. It is therefore important for the Guide to be clear about what it is the guide is asking people to do and where there are particular requirements to meet, and what is merely advice, in order for successful implementation. Section 4 of the Guide goes some way to detailing this distinction by setting out what would be required as part of a planning application.
- 5.19 The final part of this section consists of a checklist of the design principles. This provides a good summary of the section, and sets out the main issues for consideration. This is welcomed by the sustainability appraisal as it provides a concise overview of the chapter, and allows quick cross reference to relevant sections.

### Section Three – Detailed Requirements for Good Design

- 5.20 This section gives provides guidance on the details of development and design in the Borough.
- 5.21 As with section two the coverage of issues appears to be quite comprehensive. The focus in this section is on the aesthetic issues of development design in order to retain character rather than the functional aspects of urban design, and it is the functional aspects that are generally more relevant in the promotion of sustainable development. The section could also include details relating to the

management of construction, including matters relating to the protection of residential amenity, air and water courses from the temporary impacts of construction, as well as considering how construction waste will be minimised and material re-used where possible.

- 5.22 The coverage of landscape seeks to incorporate elements of biodiversity enhancement. This approach is welcomed by the SA, as landscape should not only be for aesthetics but has a valuable role to play in maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.

#### Section Four – Making Applications

- 5.23 This section sets out the procedures for submitting a planning application and how the design issues should be incorporated into this.
- 5.24 This section aids users of the Guide understand what would be required of them at when submitting a planning application. It is thorough in setting out what must be included in an application as standard, and what needs to be included on a case by case basis. The Guide states that the additional supporting documentation 'may be required to accompany application on larger development sites'. This leaves a level of ambiguity in the inclusions needed in an application and highlights the need for proper pre-applications discussions for all developments to be able to identify these needs from the outset. Furthermore it may have been useful for clarity to make clear, if it is the intent, that some of these additional documents will be required for smaller scale developments if depending on the type of development or sensitivity of location.
- 5.25 An issue that this SPD raises is that the guidance is trying to be applicable to all types of development, from the largest commercial scheme down to householder extensions.

## 6 Summary of Issues

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- 6.1 Overall the introductory sections of the SPD show a good understanding of the issues relating to sustainable development, and particularly the relationship between built environmental quality and sustainable communities.
- 6.2 In general there is a good coverage of sustainability issues in the SDP and matters relating to the aesthetic nature of development as well as the sustainability in terms of resource efficiency and biodiversity. This combined approach is welcomed by the SA, and represents a significant change from the consultation draft version of the SDP.
- 6.3 The Guide contains a great deal of information from detailed specifics about the design of some aspects of development to more broad principles of what would be considered good design. The advice given does lack much in the way of specifics that ties the advice given to Southend-on-Sea, and much is generic good practice. However, this is not necessarily a criticism of the approach, as the guidance does emphasise the importance of individual developers identifying character and context in their area as part of designing their development.
- 6.4 A further issue is the target audience of the document, and achieving the balance between providing a document for those already familiar with urban design and novices is difficult. The approach taken in the Guide does seem to achieve this balance quite well and includes material relating to small development and large development, as well as a glossary to explain more technical terms.
- 6.5 The other key issues is that the Guide precedes the development of development control policies that will set the statutory approach to new development. This means the SPD can not refer to policy to support the advice in the Guide. Also this means that it is not clear whether some of the guidance given will become required through policy, such as matters relating to sustainable construction and meeting BRE Environmental Assessment Method standards.

## Appendix 1: Comparison of the SPD design principles against the sustainable development objectives

- = positive relationship, with the principle helping to achieve the sustainability objective
- = no direct relationship between the principle and the objective, although secondary relationships may exist
- ? = unclear relationship between the principle and objective, which may be as a result of factors such as unpredictable effects, lack of clarity in the principle as described, or differing ways it could be implemented

	Accessibility	Housing	Health and safety	Community	Biodiversity	Landscape character	Built environment	Air	Water	Land	Minerals	Energy	Economy	Comment
Site appraisal	?	-	-	●	?	●	●	-	●	-	-	-	-	This should help to ensure that development takes into consideration the assets and constraints on the site itself, in order to ensure development is appropriately located and designed for the site. It should have general positive effects on the appearance and biodiversity value of the site. Flooding is explicitly addressed, and should help prevent inappropriate development in flood risk areas.
The Design Concept	●	-	●	●	?	?	●	?	-	●	-	?	-	This first part of the section appears to deal with the form of development, and how it can be designed to fit in appropriately into the surroundings without negative effects on the character of the area. It has the potential to have positive effects on making accessible sites, as well as helping define communities. The principle explicitly refers to building densities, and this should help encourage the efficient use of land. The parts of this section on accessibility and pedestrian permeability of the site should also have greatest effect on helping to achieve more accessible development, and secondary to this there may be air and energy related benefits associated with less car use. The part of this section on the public realm should help to meet objectives related to the health and safety of communities, both by the provision of open space, and ensuring new development is designed to reduce

														crime and fear of crime. The principles should also help to bring direct improvements to the built environment, and townscape character. All of these elements should help in improving communities and sense of place.
Sustainability development	●	●	-	?	?	-	●	?	●	●	●	●	-	The principles set out in this section aim for more sustainable development. As they appear now they should help in partially helping to meet several sustainable development objectives, including those for accessibility and the built environment. As well as encouraging the reuse of buildings that should have positive effects relating to the efficient use of land, and conserving primary resources. This section also covers matters relating to the more sustainable use of resources, such as energy and water, listing the various ways this can be achieved, with appendix 3 providing a useful guide to measures that can be taken to incorporate this type of provision into all scales of development. In particular this section contains an ambitious target, welcomed by the sustainability appraisal that all new development should aim to achieve the BREEAM 'excellent' standard (although this assessment does not only consider energy matters). This would also need to be backed up by appropriate policy in the statutory sections of the LDF. The part on affordable housing covers a topic which is likely to be included in detail in the statutory sections of the LDF, and may not be necessary here.
The Historic Environment	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	As with affordable housing the principles of this section are in line with national guidance and are likely to be included in the statutory part of the LDF.
Control of permitted development	-	-	-	?	-	?	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	The approach taken in this section should help to retain and enhance the quality of development in areas within Southend that have been identified as having important local character, under Article 4 Directions. Keeping these Directions under review should help prevent harm to these locally distinctive areas by restricting permitted development rights.



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