



Full Council	Tuesday, 15 December 2020	Matter for Decision
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Report Title: **Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document Consultation document**

Report Author(s): **Jamie Carr (Planning Policy Manager)**

Purpose of Report:	This report is seeking Member approval on the draft Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for public consultation.
Report Summary:	<p>On 23 September 2020, a report was taken to Place Shaping Working Group (to which all Members were invited) to introduce the revised Public Realm Strategy SPD Members. In addition to introducing the draft document, Members were asked for their initial feedback and comment.</p> <p>Comments were received by the team from Members prior to the Member consultation deadline of the 9 October 2020 and all comments received have been taken account of within the redrafting of this consultation draft.</p> <p>This report summarises the key parts of the SPD as well as highlighting some of the changes made due to Member feedback.</p>
Recommendation(s):	That the draft Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (as set out at Appendix A) be approved for public consultation beginning the week commencing 18 December 2020 for an 8-week period.
Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):	<p>Stephen Hinds (Deputy Chief Executive) (0116) 257 2681 stephen.hinds@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Adrian Thorpe (Head of the Built Environment) (0116) 257 2645 adrian.thorpe@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Jamie Carr (Planning Policy Manager) (0116) 257 2652 jamie.carr@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p>
Corporate Objectives:	Building, Protecting and Empowering Communities (CO1) Growing the Borough Economically (CO2)
Vision and Values:	"A Stronger Borough Together" (Vision) Teamwork (V3) Innovation (V4) Customer Focus (V5)
Report Implications:-	

Legal:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Financial:	There are no implications directly arising from this report.
Corporate Risk Management:	Effective Utilisation of Assets / Buildings (CR5) Economy / Regeneration (CR9)
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report. EA not applicable
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Statutory Officers' Comments:-	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees:	None.
Background Papers:	None.
Appendices:	1. Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document Consultation document

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) are documents which add further detail to the policies set out within the Council's adopted Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design or changes of use. SPD's do not form part of the Council's development plan, however they are a material consideration in the planning decision making process. They are equally important documents for both the proposer of development and the decision maker (in this case the Council).
- 1.2 The Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document Consultation Document is an update to the existing Public Realm Strategy SPD that was adopted by the Council in 2012.
- 1.3 The SPD takes account of updated local planning policy set out in the Council's adopted Local Plan (2019), updated evidence base underpinning the Local Plan and national planning policy and guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance.
- 1.4 In September 2012, the Council adopted its first Public Realm Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Since then, many development proposals that involve change to existing public realm and/or the creation of new public realm have taken account of the guidance set out within the current Public Realm SPD. To ensure that the Public Realm SPD continues to play a key role in future development proposals that have an impact on public realm within the Borough area, it was necessary for the Council to review and update the document where relevant.

- 1.5 Since the adoption of the existing Public Realm Strategy SPD, national and local planning policy and guidance has been updated and there has been the introduction of the Government's new National Design Guide. This draft Public Realm Strategy SPD update takes account of the new planning policy and guidance at both a local and national level, as well as the physical changes that have occurred to the Borough's public realm within the town and district centres, over the past 7-8 years.
- 1.6 Additionally, the existing Public Realm Strategy SPD concentrated specifically on improving public realm within the Borough's three main centres of Wigston, Oadby and South Wigston. With this update, the Council has widened its ambitions to look at improving the public realm throughout the Borough, not just within the centres. The new SPD will seek to make the Borough's public spaces ever more user friendly for the communities that live and work within it, as well as seek to reduce car usage and the reliance on the motor vehicle, through encouraging more people to walk and cycle around the Borough.

2. Why have a Public Realm SPD and who is it for?

- 2.1 The Borough's streets and public spaces are a public service that are available for use 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round. With this demand comes a need for public spaces that are of high quality, designed to be efficient, and are flexible for different users needs.
- 2.2 Research has proven that the establishment of high quality urban design and public realm, can not only regenerate areas, but also improve the health and well-being of those who use it, improve the environmental and biodiversity sustainability of the area and help to create a sense of place. The health and well-being of the Borough's communities is paramount continually, however is particularly important at this moment in time.
- 2.3 In terms of 'what is public realm?', it can be defined as – all *'Public spaces between buildings and structures, or alongside watercourses, that are of the built and / or natural environment, that are open and accessed for free by the public'*.
- 2.4 Public spaces included in the above definition would include – streets, pavements and relevant highway, public squares, pedestrian green spaces (such as Burtons Corner towards the north of The Parade in Oadby and the Pocket Park in Bell Street, Wigston), urban parks (a good example being Peace Memorial Park in Wigston), and other pedestrian networks, such as canal towpaths and the Historical Lanes in Wigston that connect north to south and east to west.
- 2.5 Items comprising the term 'public realm' would include (but is not limited to); seating, bollarding or railings, litter bins, bus stops, and lighting (which would all come under the generic term of street furniture), signage and markings (both vehicular and pedestrian), public art, pavements and planting.
- 2.6 Because of the important role public realm plays in everyone's daily life, it is imperative that the Council does what it can to continually improve all public realm within the Borough area, whether it is in ownership of the public realm or it has a public interest in the public realm.
- 2.7 Currently, the quality of the Borough's public realm is mixed and aging. A large amount lacks consistency and contributes to a poor visual appearance of the streetscape in general. Not only does this affect the aesthetics of place, it can have a significant impact on people's health and wellbeing.
- 2.8 The key aim of the new Public Realm Strategy is to 'put the meat on the bones' of the relevant planning policies set out in the Council's Local Plan. The strategy also seeks to

add value, advice and guidance to anyone who is proposing to implement development schemes in the town and district centres, other regeneration areas, and the wider Borough. It also sets out best practice and new standards and style that will be sought throughout the Borough area. In addition, the Strategy also helps meet the Short Term Action of RE2: Encouraging Sustainable Transport, of the Council's Environment Strategy and Action Plan.

- 2.9 The document seeks to advise how the streets can be reclaimed by pedestrians and bring the environmental standards up to a level commensurate with the status afforded the Borough by the Local Plan. Improvements to the public realm of the Borough will create a sense of pride, local distinctiveness and a positive identity that generates social and economic confidence.
- 2.10 The Public Realm Strategy SPD will be relevant to all new development proposals within the Borough that affect public realm.
- 2.11 The Public Realm Strategy SPD will provide advice and guidance to all individuals, organisations, decision makers and public bodies that;
- Are proposing new development, for example, the Borough Council and the County Council, developers, land owners, architects, planning consultants, the general public and urban designers.
 - Have an interest in new development, design and public realm, for example, residents of the Borough, local groups, statutory consultees, national / regional / local public sectors bodies and relevant parts of the Borough Council.

3. Objectives of the Public Realm SPD

- 3.1 Having clear and cohesive principles for the choice of materials, design, quality and location of street furniture, signage and planting, with a clear hierarchy of public squares, streets and green spaces and their coordination with higher level strategies, plays an important role in raising the quality of the Borough's streetscape and encouraging people to use them.
- 3.2 In addition, the Public Realm Strategy SPD seeks to ever better the Borough's public realm through a number of key objectives, namely – having clear, concise and simple to follow design principles; reducing the loss of heritage and local distinctiveness; increasing usage whilst at the same time reducing user conflict; increasing freer movement and ensuring better connections; decreasing crime and increasing safety and integration; and, improving economic activity and dwell time.

4. Main changes stemming from initial Member consultation

- 4.1 On 23 September 2020, a report was taken to Place Shaping Working Group (to which all Members were invited) to introduce the revised Public Realm Strategy SPD Members. In addition to introducing the draft document, Members were asked for their initial feedback and comment.
- 4.2 Feedback was received by Members and the draft document was amended accordingly. In addition, further changes were also made due to new information being available to Officers. A summary of the main changes are set out below.
- A reference to achieving Biodiversity net gain in all new public realm development where possible to do so, was placed at paragraph 3.5. Additionally a similar reference was made within the new paragraph 9.11.

- A new paragraph (5.13) was created to reference the Council's Tree Strategy.
- A new paragraph (5.19) was created to reference the 'Right Bin in the Right Place' guidance document.
- Paragraph 7.5 was expanded to suggest that where appropriate, the use of more natural forms of public realm should be sought, where traditionally harsher more manmade options would have been utilised. A new paragraph (12.5) was inserted to suggest similar.
- An additional sentence was added to paragraph 7.7 to state that the Borough Council would work closely with the County Council to ensure reinstatement works were of a higher standard.
- Paragraph 7.12 was expanded to reference cycling and mobility scooters in the public realm. It was also mentioned that in areas where all these uses are in a single shared space, the space needs to be designed in such a way as to be safe for all users. A similar reference has been added at paragraph 12.52.
- Additional sentences were added to paragraph 7.16 to reference the current plans in relation to CCTV within the Borough.
- A new paragraph (7.20) was added to reference the benefits of protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- Additional wording was added throughout Section 8 to ensure that the street audits were up to date and any potential enhancements were referenced.
- Paragraphs 8.57 and 8.58 were expanded. Also an additional paragraph (8.59) was added to reference the potential creation of green ways by enhancing existing green lanes in the Borough.
- An additional theme has been added to the 'Vision'. The additional theme is 'Connected'.
- A 'Connections' section was added. New paragraphs 10.15 and 10.16 were added to suggest that the improvement of connections within the Borough will be sought. Specifically the main vehicular routes, by making them more pedestrian and cyclist friendly.
- Reference was made within the 'Wigston Southern Periphery Key Principles' section to the heritage moulds / casts the Council own relating to the street furniture along The Lanes in Wigston. A similar reference has been made in the 'Conservation Area Key Principles' section also.
- The Walking Routes section at paragraph 12.24 onwards has been amended to include reference to cyclists and cycling.
- An additional principle was added in the 'Shared Streets and Home Zone Key Principles' section to state *'It should be ensured that pedestrians have priority over all other vehicle types'*.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If approved by Members for public consultation, the SPD will be on public consultation from the week commencing 18 December 2020 for an 8-week period. The consultation will

be undertaken in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and the government's recently published notifications in relation to consultation.

- 5.2 All comments received during this consultation period will be taken into account and the document will be revised where relevant, to produce a final draft document.
- 5.3 It is anticipated that the final draft document will be submitted to Full Council during spring 2021 for adoption.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 To ensure that the draft SPD is robust and accurate, it is recommended that Members approve it for an 8 week public consultation. The consultation will allow those with an interest in public realm and those with expert knowledge the opportunity to comment and help shape the final SPD.