



Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 23 July 2024

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Matthew Spoons, Economic Development & Visitors

Director Lead: Matt Lamb, Director – Planning & Growth

Lead Officer: Matthew Norton, Business Manager, Planning Policy & Infrastructure Business Unit

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Key Decision
Report Title	Draft Supplementary Planning Documents for Consultation
Purpose of Report	To present to Cabinet a Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in relation to Solar Energy and a Draft Interim Affordable Housing SPD for public consultation.
Recommendations	That Cabinet approve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the proposed SPDs at Appendices B and C; and b) public consultation be undertaken for 6-weeks on the proposed amendments for referral back to Cabinet for adoption.
Alternative Options Considered	Cabinet has already agreed to produce SPDs on Solar Energy and Affordable Housing therefore no alternative options have been considered at this point.
Reason for Recommendations	To allow the District Council to consult on the Draft SPDs.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its 26 March 2024 meeting Cabinet approved the development of two supplementary planning documents on Solar Energy and on Affordable Housing to support the implementation of national and local planning policy and provide additional guidance to applicants and decision makers.
- 1.2 The delivery of affordable housing is a long-term Council priority and the review and updating of the Council’s Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document has been identified as an action within the Council’s Community Plan. Delivery of affordable housing as part of wider development schemes is an important way to deliver affordable housing.

- 1.3 In order to assist in the development of an SPD and to understand more about the barriers to delivering affordable housing, the Council engaged with developers and registered providers (of affordable housing) in April/May 2024. Questionnaires were sent to 39 developers and 7 registered providers. Whilst the response rate was low (only three companies responded), the Council has garnered an important insight into the issues facing operators in the district. A summary of the responses are contained in **Appendix A**, but in short the sector is experiencing a number of deliverability issues relating to funding and viability.
- 1.4 The development of solar energy farms has recently become a significant issue locally, including the emergence of two large solar energy farm proposals in Trent valley. These larger applications are nationally significant infrastructure projects and will be determined by the Secretary of State.

2.0 Proposals

- 2.1 **Affordable Housing SPD** - Initially it had been intended to update the SPD to the extent that it would provide guidance on both existing policies and those contained within the submitted Amended Allocations & Development Management DPD. However, in attempting to draft the SPD it became apparent that it was difficult to accommodate both aims. This was because some of the elements of policy in the submitted DPD have objections to them, and we cannot insist upon adherence to such policies. In some sections we would be stating the current policy, current national policy and our proposed policy which made the document difficult to understand. As the aim of the SPD is to provide a context for planners, developers and other interested parties the approach that Newark & Sherwood District Council will take to these matters this is not a helpful approach.
- 2.2 It is therefore proposed that the basis for the SPD should be the current policies contained within the Amended Core Strategy and be an 'interim SPD' until the Amended Allocations & Development Management DPD has been adopted. There have been changes to national policy subsequent to this means that our existing policies do not reflect:
- that previously Affordable Housing could not be secured on sites of 10 or less (i.e. 11 or more) and now they can be secured on sites of 10 or more.
 - that alongside the dwelling number trigger a combined gross floor space of more than 1000sqm was also included however now this has been replaced with a 0.5 hectares trigger.
 - that at least 10% of new dwellings to be available for affordable home ownership (with a range of exemptions to this)
 - the introduction of first homes and other affordable housing products.

Therefore at the relevant points in the SPD it explains how the Council will deal with these policy changes.

- 2.3 The Draft Interim SPD is attached at **Appendix B**. It sets out the context for affordable housing policy in Chapter 2 including definitions of what is and is not affordable housing. Chapter 3 highlights Affordable Housing need in Newark & Sherwood and in particular the continuing need to deliver affordable housing across a range of type and tenure in

all parts of the district. Chapter 4 provides the detailed basis for delivering affordable housing as part of new residential development and the various expectations the District Council has around delivery. Chapter 5 deals with securing rural affordable housing something that the Council has significant success with, including delivery of 74 dwellings in 5 locations across the District in the last 10 years.

- 2.4 In drawing up this guidance we have tried to reflect the concerns of the sector, however it is important to provide a basis for strong decision making and therefore whilst the Council has attempted to build flexibility into the SPD the starting point should always be compliance with requirements.
- 2.5 **Solar Energy SPD** - provides guidance on the application and interpretation of local national policy on major stand-alone ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) proposals within the District. The Draft SPD is attached at **Appendix C**. In particular the SPD sets out what the District Council considers to be important local features that developers need to aware off and the various issues which are likely to be material considerations in the determination of any planning applications.
- 2.6 It is proposed that both draft SPDs are subject to a period of six weeks of public consultation in line with the requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement. Following the close of the consultation the District Council will consider any consultation responses and consider any amendments which are necessary and present them to Planning Policy Board and then Cabinet for final adoption.

3.0 Implications

- 3.1 In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications (FIN24-25/3157)

- 3.2 No direct financial implications have been identified.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None