

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 08 OCTOBER 2019

REPORT BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR
PLANNING AND GROWTH

EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN: RETAIL FRONTAGES, DESIGN & SIGNAGE
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD) - FOR ADOPTION

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To outline the results of the public consultation on the draft Retail Frontages, Design & Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and seek Members' agreement to adopt a revised document.
- To report that the three statutory consultees have no comment on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening report, so confirm that an SEA of the Retail Frontages, Design & Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is not required.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:</u> To recommend to Council that:	
(A)	The responses of the consultation be noted and the officer responses and proposed changes to the Retail Frontages, Design & Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be supported;
(B)	The Retail Frontages, Design & Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'B' to this report, be approved for adoption; and

(C)	In accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 it has been determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the emerging Retail Frontages, Design & Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is not required as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The District Plan promotes high quality design and aims to safeguard the vitality and viability of the town centres whilst recognising the importance of preserving and enhancing their historic character. The need to ensure that retail and town centres are of a high environmental quality has also been seen to become more important because of the changing nature of our town centres.
- 1.2 Supplementary Planning Documents are documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular topics, such as design.
- 1.3 The Retail Frontages, Design & Signage SPD has been produced by Murphy Associates working in collaboration with the Council.
- 1.4 Members will recall that public consultation on a draft version of the SPD for a period of six weeks was agreed at Executive on 26th February 2019. The consultation subsequently took place between 20 June and 5pm on 1 August 2019.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in February 2019, emphasises that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process is seeking to achieve. Good

design is a key aspect of sustainable development and being clear about design expectations is essential for achieving this.

- 2.2 The Council has had guidance in place relating to the preferred treatment to be applied to retail frontages for a number of years. As part of the Hertford Urban Design Strategy (HUDS), further consideration has been given to the quality and character of Hertford town centre as part of the works taking place there.
- 2.3 The purpose of the draft Retail Frontages, Design & Signage SPD is to aid the effective implementation of the Design and Heritage policies in the District Plan (Chapters 17 and 21 respectively) relating to the design of shopfronts and advertisements, particularly within Conservation Areas and on Listed Buildings. Once adopted the SPD will be a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 2.4 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning (England) Regulations 2012, the draft SPD was subject to six weeks of consultation. A total of 13 responses were received from 11 respondents. Two of the responses stated that the respondents had no comments on the draft SPD. Four comments expressed support for the document, including Historic England, which welcomed the production of the SPD. There were two objections to the SPD and 5 comments.
- 2.5 The matters raised in these submissions are included in the statement of consultation, which is attached **at Essential Reference Paper 'D'**. This includes summaries of the main issues raised; the officer response to those issues; and proposed amendments to the SCI, where appropriate. It also includes a late representation (ID14), which has been considered but does not result in any amendment being proposed.
- 2.6 Many of the comments, including the two objections, relate to issues outside the scope of the SPD such as retrospective planning decisions, excessive use of A-boards, parking and

strategic development in the Green Belt. Two representations promote the importance of addressing the signage of shopping centres separately. This is not considered necessary as modern design and illumination are already sufficiently considered in the SPD. Therefore, although these matters have been included in the schedule of responses they have not resulted in any recommended changes to the document.

- 2.7 However, a couple of the representations have suggested amendments that would add value to the SPD in terms of clarification of the proposed text and photos. For these cases proposed amendments to the document have been suggested in the schedule.
- 2.8 Members are therefore invited to agree the officer responses to the issues raised as part of the public consultation; the proposed changes to the draft SPD; and the adoption of the final document. A copy of the final Retail Frontages, Design & Signage SPD is attached at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 2.9 Under the requirements of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), certain types of plans that set the framework for the consent of future development projects, must be subject to an environmental assessment. It is therefore a requirement that the Council undertakes a Screening Assessment to determine whether the draft Retail Frontages, Design & Signage SPD should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- 2.10 The Regulations require that the Council consults three statutory bodies in reaching this determination. Consultation has therefore been carried out with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England. All three organisations have confirmed that they have no comment on the Council's draft Screening Statement.

2.11 Therefore, the final Screening Statement is attached at **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**. It concludes that the draft SPD is unlikely to have significant environmental, social or economic effects beyond those of the District Plan policies it supplements; does not create new policies and only serves to provide useful guidance on how to effectively and consistently implement the District Plan policies and therefore does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None

Essential Reference Papers

ERP 'A':	Implications/Consultations
ERP 'B':	Retail Frontages, Design & Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
ERP 'C':	Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement
ERP 'D':	Consultation Statement

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