

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE -26 FEBRUARY 2019

REPORT BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To seek Members' agreement to publish the draft Retail Frontages, Design & Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for public consultation.
- To agree that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the emerging Retail Frontages, Design & Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is not required.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: To recommend to Council that:

(A)	The draft Retail Frontages, Design & Signage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), as set out in Essential Reference Paper 'B', be agreed and published for a six-week period of public consultation; and
(B)	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.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council has had guidance in place relating to the preferred treatment to be applied to retail frontages for a number of years. As parts 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. 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 draft Retail Frontages, Design & Signage SPD has been produced by Murphy Associates working in collaboration with the Council. A copy of the draft SPD is attached at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published on 24 July, 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 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. The draft SPD has been prepared to provide further guidance in relation to the following District Plan Policies:

- Policy DES5 – Crime and Security
- Policy DES6 – Advertisements and Signs
- Policy HA5 – Shopfronts in Conservation Areas
- Policy HA6 – Advertisements in Conservation Areas
- Policy HA7 – Listed Buildings

2.3 The draft SPD provides guidance to applicants, agents, architects, retailers and independent traders on the requirements for high quality retail frontages, the replacement of existing and the installation of new shop fronts throughout the district, in order to raise the standard of design quality and to enhance the attractiveness and local distinctiveness of the district's shopping environments.

2.4 The Council attaches considerable importance to suitably-designed shopfronts, not only for the preservation of the character of buildings and areas, but also for the attractive overall appearance of shopping streets and the impact on their commercial success. This includes signage and lighting. The draft SPD explains the strong role of shopfronts and their associated signage in historic environments which are of particular relevance to the district, given that the retail and commercial areas of the five main settlements fall within conservation areas, containing designated and non-designated heritage assets.

2.5 The draft Retail Frontages, Design & Signage SPD covers the following areas:

- Legislation, policy and the need for permissions
- What to take into account
- Shopfront design advice
- Access provisions

- 2.6 It is intended that the draft SPD will be published for a six-week period of consultation during May/June 2019. The consultation will meet all the statutory requirements, including:
- Placing the consultation documents on the Council's website for the duration of the consultation;
 - Notifying relevant consultees by email or letter;
 - Making hard copies of the consultation documents available at the Council's offices in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford, and at libraries across the district.
- 2.7 Following consultation, a final version of the SPD will be produced. At the same time a statement will be prepared setting out who was consulted during the preparation of the SPD; a summary of the main issues raised; and how those issues have been addressed in the SPD. It is currently anticipated that the final SPD will be presented to Members in September 2019.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 The Council's draft Screening Statement 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.

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. At the time of writing this report, the Environment Agency has confirmed that they have no comments; no other responses have been received, though no contrary view is anticipated. The Screening Statement attached at **Essential Reference Paper 'C'** is therefore provided in draft, pending the receipt of consultation responses.

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

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