

## **Divisions Affected - All**

# **PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 24 NOVEMBER 2021**

## **STREET DESIGN GUIDE**

### **Report by Director of Growth and Economy**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- (a) consider the contents of the report and put relevant questions to the Cabinet Lead member, Director of Growth and Economy and supporting Officers;**
- (b) decide if any further action is required;**
- (c) consider areas for further development of the Oxfordshire Street Design Guide and other supporting policy developments.**

#### **Executive Summary**

- 2. The purpose of this report is to provide the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee with requested background information to inform the review and discussion of the recent Cabinet decision to adopt the Oxfordshire Street Design Guide.
- 3. A copy of the Street Design guide can be found [here](#) on the County Council's website shortly.

#### **Scrutiny Guidance**

- 4. In order to assist the Committee with its preparation and understanding of this item there were two drop-in sessions prior to the Committee meeting for Place OSC Members to explain the role, content and purpose of a Street Design Guide. These briefing sessions took place on 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021.
- 5. This agenda is intended to operate as follows at the Place OSC Meeting:
  - I. Brief overview of key implications of the Street Design Guide and the next steps in its development
  - II. Question & Answer session with Cabinet Lead Member, Director of Growth and Economy and supporting officers

## **The Street Design Guide**

6. Oxfordshire County Council aims to enable Oxfordshire as a whole to become zero-carbon by 2050. In our role as the Highway Authority, when advising and assessing new developments, OCC needs to take this into account in order to achieve the ambition. The Design Guide presents how we can prioritise active and healthy travel through street design in new developments contributing to our carbon reduction ambitions.
7. The Design Guide provides design standards for streets in new developments. Promoting high quality placemaking whilst achieving high quality infrastructure for walking, cycling and buses.
8. This guidance is also intended to support the development industry in the preparation and submission of development proposals through the provision of up to date and transparent guidance. This should both de-risk and accelerate the preparation and determination of development proposals for developers and the county council.
9. As the Design Guide is now an adopted document, Transport Development Control Officers can use it to influence developments at pre-application stage and to form recommendations on planning applications.
10. As the policy context and council priorities change over time, it has been the intention to regularly review this guide and keep it up to date.

### KEY DATA

11. An external consultant was appointed for the project who has a wide range of experience in Urban Design and was responsible for creating South Oxfordshire District Council's Design Guide which was a finalist at the Royal Town Planning Institute Awards and at the National Urban Design Awards.
12. An evaluation of national guidance, particularly Manual for Streets (Department for Transport, 2007 and 2010), Inclusive Mobility (Department for Transport, 2005) and Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design (Department for Transport, 2020) was undertaken. The standards therein were adopted in the Design Guide.
13. A range of opportunities and methods were applied as part of the consultation process for the design guide to engage with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to inform the Design Guide.

### KEY AREAS OF CONSIDERATION

14. The county council's Climate Action Framework and Local Transport and Connectivity Plan have set our ambition to deliver a zero-carbon Oxfordshire transport system. Without the Street Design Guide it would be difficult to achieve this ambition.

## POSC6

15. The need for an updated design document was identified to replace the outdated 'Residential Roads Design Guide', bring guidance in line with Local Transport Plan 4 and emerging Local Transport Connectivity Plan (which this guide will sit under) as well as updated national guidance.
16. Transport Development Control teams are dealing with a high volume of strategic sites which are at pre-application stage. Without this guidance, it would lead to protracted and lengthy pre-application discussions or alternatively no pre-application consultation, which would result in planning applications that do not meet the county council's requirements and ambitions for active and sustainable travel.
17. The Design Guide is very clear on the direction of travel, walking and cycling should be future residents' first mode of choice. However, the planning system presents several challenges to achieve this. These are:
  - I. The Design Guide is a document adopted by the County Council but the District Councils are the Planning Authorities and therefore are the bodies responsible for granting planning consent. We need to work with District Councils to encourage them to refer to this Guide within their planning documents;
  - II. The District Council's and County Council's parking standards are outdated. With the current investment in sustainable and active travel via the Growth Deal, Housing Infrastructure Fund, etc which will enable more trips by foot, cycle and bus, there should be a review of parking standards for new developments alongside wider policy changes; and
  - III. Viability issues can erode County Council's infrastructure asks from development. We need to provide a clear steer to developers that without sustainable and active travel infrastructure, it would be difficult for OCC to support certain sites.

### SEPTEMBER CABINET DECISION

18. Following the Cabinet's decision in September 2021 to adopt the guide, it is available on the County Council's website.
19. The Oxfordshire Street Design Guide will be a live document which will be updated yearly to address any issues and to be kept up to date with local and national guidance. It will also allow further annexes to be added to the document on additional design elements if required. A Second Edition is expected by Summer 2023 which will also include a review of Manual for Streets 3.

### ENGAGEMENT

Summary of stakeholder engagement in drafting Design Guide:

POSC6

Consultee	Dates	Type of consultation	Further engagement	Key Outcomes
Internal teams	2018/2019	Email / Workshops	Meetings with individual teams	Inclusion of topic areas, amendments to draft
Developers	Summer 2018	Workshop	<i>Planned webinar following adoption of document</i>	Encouragement of adoption of guidance as it would be helpful in bringing forward development. Some felt strict guidance should be provided on geometries.
District Councils	Summer 2018	Workshop	Pre-publication Briefing & Planned <i>webinar following adoption of</i>	Encouragement of adoption and signposting to district design guides.
County Council Members	December 2020	Webinar	<i>Cabinet Meeting May 2021</i>	Enthusiastic about content and form of document. Need to follow LTN 1/20 principles and standards.
External stakeholder* consultation	Dec 2020 - Jan 2021	Online consultation	Further meeting held with Oxfordshire Cycling Network	Key themes within the external stakeholders' responses which have resulted in amendments to the draft.
Critical Friend Review	Mar 2021	Review of draft	Ongoing engagement with amendments to draft	Well produced and illustrated document. Given the quality of the document, need to seek to strengthen content.

\*inc. cycle, pedestrian, civic, disabled user groups, developers and district councils

20. Launch events are being planned with internal officers, stakeholders, and developers to make them aware of the document, and notify them that officers will be actively using the document when advising on development sites.
21. Ongoing engagement with key users of the document for feedback on the Design Guide will be enabled through:
  - I. Using existing Stakeholder Forums being run for the Local Transport Connectivity Plan;
  - II. Creation of a Developer Forum; and
  - III. Officer feedback events.

22. Feedback from this engagement will be fed back into the Design Guide through the monitoring framework and any necessary edits or new content will be added to the Second Edition and future revisions.

### IMPACT OF PANDEMIC

23. The pandemic has resulted in more people working from home, reducing the need to travel, or if travel is required, travel outside traditional peak hours. The discussion around the impact of travel behaviour and street scene has also been topical in the context of the climate crisis and therefore residents of Oxfordshire are more aware of their individual impact. This has resulted in a demand for high quality active and sustainable travel infrastructure.
24. These changes mean that we need to rethink the way new developments are designed in particular in the context of reducing the need to travel or travelling sustainably. The Design Guide provides a user hierarchy which places pedestrians and cyclists at the top and private cars at the bottom. It also demonstrates how this priority can be achieved through design.
25. *'Urban planning after COVID-19 - Supporting a global sustainable recovery'* a Research Paper by Royal Town Planning Institute (October 2021) notes the following challenges highlighted by the pandemic:
  - I. Place-based inequality;
  - II. Changes in consumption patterns and the need for a green industrial revolution; and
  - III. Unequal accessibility and connectivity of place.
26. By promoting active travel through appropriate design of new streets, the inequalities of accessibility can be addressed. The Design Guide highlights the importance of connectivity to areas surrounding new developments, and this area could be developed further in the next edition of the design guide with the provision of design parameters.

### **Next Steps**

27. Monitoring the use and impact of the Design Guide following launch events.
28. Release of Second Edition including:
  - I. review of new Manual for Streets 3;
  - II. feedback from users of the document following engagement set out in paragraph 21;
  - III. guidance on connectivity to areas surrounding new developments and junctions in new developments

## Financial Implications

29. There are no budgetary implications in relation to publication of the Oxfordshire Design Guide. The cost of preparing the Design Guide has been funded through Homes and Community Agency Capacity Funding.

September Cabinet Report checked by:

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## Legal Implications

30. No legal implications have been identified in relation to publication of the Oxfordshire Design Guide.

September Cabinet Report checked by:

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Background papers: [September 2021 Cabinet Papers](#)

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