

## Wiltshire Council

### Cabinet

6 February 2024

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**Subject:** Wiltshire Design Guide - Final Draft for Adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Nick Botterill - Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

**Key Decision:** Key

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#### Executive Summary

Wiltshire Council has produced a draft Wiltshire Design Guide which, once adopted, will be used to ensure that developments in Wiltshire are consistently of a high-quality design.

The Design Guide is structured around the '10 characteristics of good design' as described in the National Design Guide, focusing on local priorities and qualities for Wiltshire.

The Design Guide is intended to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). As such it will become a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The preparation of SPDs follows a prescribed process set out in legislation. The Wiltshire Design Guide (WDG) was published for consultation for a 4-week period commencing 3 July 2023. It was extended for a further two weeks following requests from some consultees and closed on 14th August 2023.

Due process has therefore been followed and thorough consideration of the consultation responses received has been undertaken. All amendments to the draft Wiltshire Design Guide have been prepared to address, where practicable, the issues raised through the consultation. The council's response alongside any changes made are set out in the Consultation Statement at **Appendix 1**.

Adopting the Wiltshire Design Guide as an SPD will help support Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping. As an SPD, the guidance set out in the WDG will be afforded greater weight in the decision-making process. In this regard it will provide greater certainty to the development industry and local communities in terms of how new developments will be of a high-quality design and where relevant, better integrated into the existing.

Environmental Select Committee (ESC) on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 welcomed the draft document. A few minor suggestions were made which, where appropriate, have been incorporated alongside changes following the public consultation. A further

meeting was held with the ESC Chair on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 which reviewed the revised draft WDG.

Subject to Cabinet endorsement the final version of the Wiltshire Design Guide (**Appendix 2**) will be considered for adoption as a supplementary planning document by Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

### **Proposal**

That Cabinet:

- i. Notes the response to the consultation on the draft Wiltshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (the WDG) set out in the Consultation Statement at **Appendix 1**.
- ii. Endorses the amended WDG as set out in **Appendix 2**.
- iii. Approve the referral of the final version of the WDG (**Appendix 2**) to Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 for adoption as a supplementary planning document.
- iv. Subject to approval of Council, delegate to the Corporate Director Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Development and Strategic Planning, the power to undertake the final stages associated with the formal adoption and publication of the WDG, including any minor textual changes in the interests of clarity and accuracy.

### **Reason for Proposal**

To ensure that the Wiltshire Design Guide is formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that provides guidance to developers that supports Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping.

**Terence Herbert**  
**Chief Executive**

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### Purpose of Report

To:

- (i) Provide Cabinet with the response to the consultation on the draft Wiltshire Design Guide supplementary planning document (the WDG) set out in the Consultation Statement at **Appendix 1**.
- (ii) Recommend that Cabinet endorses the amended WDG as set out in **Appendix 2**.
- (iii) Recommends to Council that they formally adopt the amended WDG (**Appendix 2**) as a supplementary planning document.
- (iv) Subject to approval of Council, delegate to the Corporate Director Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Development and Strategic Planning, the power to undertake the final stages associated with the formal adoption and publication of the WDG, including any minor textual changes in the interests of clarity and accuracy.

### Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

1. The WDG will ensure that planning decisions regarding new development align with the Council's stated mission, in particular, to have a resilient society, a thriving economy and a sustainable environment.
2. The WDG identifies poor design features which singularly or collectively can lead to poor health and wellbeing outcomes and identifies positive design approaches, principles and features which promote health and wellbeing. It recognises the value a high quality built, and natural environment has to health and wellbeing, a fact which has been increasingly brought into the forefront at a national and local level.
3. The Council has acknowledged a climate emergency and has committed to becoming carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030. The Council's Business Plan sets out that through its leadership, it must now seek to make the whole of Wiltshire carbon neutral too. Having an adopted WDG will help support the delivery of this objective.

4. The Council's Business Plan makes clear the importance of building the right homes in the right places; Wiltshire Council aims to improve housing supply to ensure people can live and work locally, play an active part in their community, have easy access to high quality and affordable housing, close to family, that is right for them and in a beautiful place. Having an adopted WDG will help ensure the delivery of these principles.

## **Background**

5. In the Housing White Paper in 2017<sup>1</sup> the Government concluded that *“Good design is fundamental to creating healthy and attractive places...”* Subsequently, in 2019 the Government produced The National Design Guide<sup>2</sup> (NDG). It *“sets out a blueprint for how local authorities can achieve quality and great design, and recommends what developers need to deliver to help win the support of communities – ensuring new homes are built faster and better.”*
6. However, it states: *“Specific, detailed and measurable criteria for good design are most appropriately set out at the local level. They may take the form of local design policies, design guides or design codes, prepared either by local authorities, or applicants to accompany planning applications.”*
7. Under current National Planning Policy Frameworks (NPPF 2021) legislation, in the absence of locally produced design guides or design codes, the NPPF and The National Design Guide are to be used to guide planning decisions. The updated NPPF (2023) is unchanged on this point.
8. The NPPF (paragraph 128) recommends that any such local design guide should *“provide a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high-quality standard of design”* and that *“the level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place and should allow a suitable degree of variety.”*
9. This means a Wiltshire Design Guide should provide new, locally authored design guidance that would apply across Wiltshire at a level of detail which does not exist in the National Design Guide.
10. The role of Neighbourhood Plans and Village Design Statements will remain important. These shall continue to incorporate design guidance which relates to specific neighbourhoods or sites, which cannot be covered in the county-wide WDG.
11. The process of creating the draft WDG has been based around the following objectives:
  - i. To comply with a national government directive to produce up-to-date local design guidance which addresses local priorities and preferences.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/590464/Fixing\\_our\\_broken\\_housing\\_market\\_-\\_print\\_ready\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590464/Fixing_our_broken_housing_market_-_print_ready_version.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/962113/National\\_design\\_guide.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962113/National_design_guide.pdf)

- ii. To ensure that the WDG advances the delivery of the Council's Business Plan objectives and the Core Strategy in particular Core Policy 57.
- iii. To ensure the WDG is not singularly focused on the appearance of new buildings and addresses all 10 characteristics of good design as described in the National Design Guide. In doing so it will provide the framework for any additional local design guidance that may be produced as part of Neighbourhood Planning or through Village Design Statements.
- iv. To create a more detailed level of good practice guidance than currently exists at a national level. This will ensure all Wiltshire is covered by comprehensive, local design guidance which will have material weight when considering planning applications.
- v. To ensure the text and presentation of the WDG is clear, engaging and of practical use to a wide audience, ranging from members of the public to developers and designers.
- vi. To create a document that developers can use to make more informed, early decisions when planning projects before they engage with the planning authority through a formal planning application process.
- vii. To formally adopt the guidance as an SPD, to ensure it has proper weight in planning and that this weight is publicly recognised.

12. The draft WDG went through extensive internal consultation across all relevant service areas in 2022. It was considered in draft format by Environment Select Committee (ESC) at a meeting on 14 March 2023. The ESC welcomed the Draft Design Guide and suggested some minor amendments of wording which were incorporated, where appropriate, prior to going to public consultation. The revised WDG was further considered by the ESC Chair on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

13. Cabinet agreed on 2 May 2023, to the draft WDG being formally consulted on through the statutory public consultation process for emerging planning documents as set out in legislation.

### **Main Considerations**

14. In the light of national and local planning policy (Wiltshire Core Strategy), the WDG has been prepared to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to give it greater weight in the decision-making process. Full regard has therefore been given to the relevant legislative process.

15. The purpose of the WDG is to provide a clear and detailed approach to delivering high quality growth in Wiltshire. It has been primarily prepared to support Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping, of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS).

16. Notwithstanding this primary role, the WDG has also been prepared to help guide growth. In this regard, it will be utilised to assist the review of the WCS, the preparation of neighbourhood plans and, as appropriate, decisions on individual planning applications.

### ***Consultation on the draft WDG***

17. The preparation of this SPD followed the prescribed process set out in legislation. The WDG was published for consultation for a 4-week period commencing 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023. However, following a number of requests, the consultation period was extended to 6 weeks and closed on 14 August 2023. During the consultation period 157 written consultation responses were received. These varied in length but collectively they raised 1,226 points for consideration.

18. The WDG consultation was publicised extensively. This included:

- A public notice in the press issued under the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 \(part 5 regulations 11 to 16\)](#) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This set out that the council was consulting on the draft Wiltshire Design Guide with the intention that it will become a supplementary planning document (SPD) in support of Core Policy 57.
- Over 4,000 individuals and organisations were consulted via email, the Council's online consultation portal or by post on the draft Wiltshire Design Guide. This included statutory consultees, neighbouring authorities, developers, special interest groups, community groups as well as individuals.
- Notices were placed in all Wiltshire libraries and on the Wiltshire Council website.
- Social media posts were made before and during the consultation period alerting people to the consultation and the various online and in-person events.
- Briefing notes for councillors and Town and Parish Councils were issued.

19. The draft WDG and other related documents, including a printed version of the feedback form, were made available on the council's website. Hard copies of the document were also made available for reference at all Wiltshire Council Libraries and at the 3 main council hubs. Hard copies and large print version were posted out on request.

20. To support with the general understanding of the draft WDG and to answer any questions arising before and during the consultation period the following activities were undertaken:

- 16 June - a presentation was provided at a meeting of Wiltshire Town and Parish Council Clerks.
- 19 July - from 18:15 – 19:30 an online webinar was held that gave a short overview of the draft WDG and answered questions from the public. This was attended by 41 people.

- 26 July - a face-to-face public event including an exhibition was held in The Atrium at County Hall, Trowbridge. The council's two Senior Urban Designers were on hand throughout the day to explain the document and to answer questions. This event was visited by over 30 people.

***Main issues raised through the consultation.***

21. The Consultation Report at **Appendix 1** clarifies how the consultation was undertaken and provides a summary of the main issues raised.

22. Feedback has been received from a very wide spectrum which includes individual representations from members of the public, statutory consultees, such as Town and Parish Councils, community and specialist groups such as the Lawn Tennis Association, CPRE and Wiltshire Community Land Trust. There has also been considerable feedback from developers including Redrow Homes and Persimmon Homes. All comments have been useful in informing the final version of the WDG (**Appendix 2**).

23. The strategy is supported by, amongst others, the New Forest National Park Authority, Cranborne Chase National Landscape and other statutory and advisory bodies. Comments and issues raised during consultation included:

- New Forest National Park Authority – Well-presented document that follows a consistent format to National Design Guidance. However further clarification is needed to explain that it applies only to the area of Wiltshire within the Council's planning jurisdiction and that this excludes the New Forest National Park which has its own design guidance.
- Sport England – commented it was easy to read, follow and understand. In addition, it sought that expectation in section 5 also include charging for electric bicycles and scooters.
- Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) – comments were made in light of future DIO strategic planning aspirations and were supportive of the WDG. The relationship to other planning documents and in particular Neighbourhood Plan Design Guidance was queried.

***Town and Parish Councils:***

24. Generally welcomed the guide with comments that included that it is well written, straightforward and a common-sense guide to Wiltshire design. Suggested areas for consideration included from:

- Trowbridge Town Council - Generally good but really could do with a detailed section on shop design for town centres in Wiltshire.
- Colerne Parish Council - Commend the underlying threads of the Design Guide - Health and Wellbeing, Sustainability and Climate resilience, and getting the homes in the right places. But would have liked to have had a requirement for all new homes to have solar panels.
- Royal Wootton Bassett Town Council - recommendation to make the statement regarding not using inflexible ready-made architectural plans,

stronger. Also a recommendation to include reference to fitting of blinds in windows due to temperature increases.

- Amesbury Town Council -It was felt that the use of the image of “Military Camp Westdown, Salisbury Plain” as a key landmark in south (SIC) Wiltshire is inappropriate, particularly as planning was not required.

### ***Consultants and local interest groups:***

25. Whilst generally welcomed by local interest groups Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), raised concerns that the strategy is repetitive in some sections and too wordy and that some sections could be brought together. CPRE also sought stronger requirements around information that should be provided to support an outline application.
26. Salisbury & Wilton Swifts, North Wiltshire Swifts, Swift Local Network Planning Group - suggested that the language used needs to be more robust explaining that the use of ‘should’ and ‘expectation’ seems to carry little weight in planning decisions. The group also suggested that relevant British Standard references should be included in the nature section. They also commented on seemingly contradictory statements regarding compact development, making efficient use of land, garden sizes and the need to have sufficient space to grow your own food.

### ***Developers:***

27. Raised concerns that the strategy made reference to the emerging Local Plan and policies within in it that had, as yet, not been tested through examination in public and adopted. They sought clarity in the wording that the document was providing additional guidance to existing Core Strategy policy.
28. Felt that the guide sought to prevent the use of inflexible ready-made architectural plans and elevations and that this failed to recognise that standardisation enables costs to be kept down. Reference was made to Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 61-008-20190315) which states that SPDs ‘should not add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development’.
29. Thought that expectations related to garden sizes that sought to provide householders with some privacy and space to grown your own food, potentially conflicts with higher density developments expectations.
30. Suggested that as the WDG is guidance, in most instances the word ‘must,’ should be avoided.
31. Suggested more flexibility was needed in relation to housing mixed tenure and self-build home expectations.
32. Requirements for internal space standards and reference to energy efficiency standards could become out of date as regulations change and should not be so prescriptive in the WDG.



***Residents:***

33. Resident comments are very mixed and varied. Issues covered in the responses include: strengthening some wording to give greater weight to the expectations; adding more detailed information of specific topics such as, shop front design guidance; questioning the relationship between the Wiltshire Design Guide with national and local guidance such as neighbourhood plan; matters related to the efficient use of land, densities and communal spaces; seeking strengthened requirements related to energy such as, the use of solar panels and electric charging points; and some very local issues related specifically to their village or town.

***Response to the consultation and proposed changes to the WDG***

34. In accordance with legislative process<sup>3</sup>, before the Council can adopt the WDG as an SPD it must have regard to the main issues raised through the consultation and how such issues have been addressed. These considerations are set out in more detail within the Consultation Statement (**Appendix 1**). A short summary of some of the recommended actions to resolve the main issues raised and how the draft WDG should be amended is set out below. **Appendix 2** sets out the WDG as amended in response to the comments.

35. In response to:

- The New Forest Park Authority request for further clarity over the jurisdiction of the WDG additional statements that explain that the WDG excludes the New Forest Park Authority area have been added.
- Sport England, section 5 now includes charging for electric bicycles and scooters.
- The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) query the relationship between planning documents and in particular neighbourhood plan design guidance is covered in section 1.4 and in Appendix A – Neighbourhood Planning.

***Town and Parish Councils:***

36. Support for the WDG is positive and the comments are helpful. Regarding some of the areas for consideration the council can respond as follows:

- The purpose of the WDG is to add a degree of local granulation that does not exist in National Guidance. However, it should not be so prescriptive that local distinctiveness and character of individual areas may be lost. This could be the case for shopfront guidance that aims to improve the look of our high streets. Arguably such local area specific guidance would be more appropriate at a neighbourhood planning level or as a stand-alone document that can pick up on some of the specific nuances of different areas.
- Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) should build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an adopted local plan. As they do not form part of the development plan, they cannot introduce new planning

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<sup>3</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, Regulation 12

policies into the development plan. They are however a material consideration in decision-making. [Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning \(local Planning\) \(England\) Regulation 2012](#) . Accordingly, the WDG expands on existing Core Strategy policy. The emerging Local Plan will introduce new policy that subject to adoption may introduce additional requirements in relation to climate change such the use of solar panels.

- The image of “Military Camp Westdown, Salisbury Plain” as a key landmark in south (SIC) Wiltshire has been removed.

***Consultants and local interest groups:***

37. The structure of the WDG aligns with the structure used in National Design Guidance and is appropriate for use at a county wide level. The WDG will be used as a reference document and as such some sections will inevitably be read in isolation. Occasionally relevant information is provided in a section that is also relevant to another section. So, whilst repetition is generally avoided there are some instances that help with the intended useability, by the point being made in more than one section.
38. Relevant references to British Standards, that provide a further level of detail to the expectation, have been added as suggested.

***Developers:***

39. Several amendments have been made, where appropriate, to address the issues raised by developers and to remove any ambiguity. These include changes to the wording that relates to the emerging Local Plan to clarify that the WDG provides additional guidance on existing policy, amendments to the text related to density and garden sizes and, removal of housing density dwellings per hectare figures. Guidance related to mixed housing tenure, internal space standards and reference to energy efficiency standards have also been amended.
40. However, guidance related to sometimes inappropriate use of ready-made plans and standard elevations is important and remains largely unchanged. Whilst internal layouts and standard house plans can help keep cost down, site layouts and elevations need to reflect local factors including connections with neighbouring sites, typography and have local distinctiveness.

***Residents:***

41. The Wiltshire Design Guide, if adopted, will be a supplementary planning document (SPD) that expands on existing policy, primarily Core Policy 57 and as such some flexibility is needed. It is felt that the wording in the expectations is appropriate for the purposes of an SPD and that the level of detail is also appropriate for a guide that covers Wiltshire. Some more specific guidance would be worthy of inclusion in Neighbourhood Planning documents.
42. Wording related to density and compact development has been amended to allow flexibility in different settings. Whilst issues raised seeking increased requirements related to active travel and energy align with aspirations in the Climate Strategy, some

would require policy changes and are a matter for Local Plan consideration. Finally, some local matters raised did not directly relate to the consultation on the draft Wiltshire Design Guide. Where appropriate these have been passed to the relevant council service.

### **Summary**

43. Despite the issues raised, the strategy is generally welcomed by bodies including New Forest National Park Authority, Cranborne Chase National Landscape as well as many Town and Parish Councils, specialist interest groups and individuals. It adds an appropriate level and range of expectations that, if adopted, will help the delivery of Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping.
44. Where appropriate the WDG has been amended to address the responses received. It is now in a final format that if adopted as a supplementary planning document will have weight in planning decisions and has the potential to improve the quality of design of new developments going forward.
45. In summary, it is considered that the consultation responses received in respect of the WDG have been appropriately and fully addressed. The proposed amendments that are set out in the Consultation Statement (**Appendix 1**) and the changes incorporated into the final draft of the Strategy (**Appendix 2**) are reasonable and reflective of the comments received. In this regard, the Strategy has been strengthened to provide greater clarity and precision. In reviewing the WDG, other additional minor changes have also been made in the interest of clarity and accuracy but do not alter the overall substance of the document consulted on.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

46. The Environment Select Committee (ESC) considered the draft Design Guide at a meeting on 14 March 2023. The ESC welcomed the Draft Design Guide and suggested some minor amendments of wording which have, where appropriate, been incorporated alongside other changes.
47. The Chair for ESC was provided with a briefing setting out the changes at a meeting in January 2024.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

48. The proposal is to create a design guidance document which supplements Core Policy 57 and as such there are no safeguarding implications arising from the proposal.

### **Public Health Implications**

49. This Guide is focused on the design of new places. It identifies poor design features which singularly or collectively can lead to poor health and wellbeing outcomes and identifies design approaches, principles and features which promote health and wellbeing.

50. The value that a high quality built and natural environment has to our health and wellbeing and the significance of achieving this in development has been increasingly brought into the forefront at a national and local level. Comments received during the internal and external consultations have been incorporated.

### **Procurement Implications**

51. It is considered that there are no procurement implications associated with the proposal.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

52. The consultation process was undertaken in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and legislative procedures. The Council engaged widely with statutory bodies, town and parish councils, local interest groups, general public and the development industry. Therefore, sufficient opportunity has been provided for all those with an interest in the WDG to provide comments and help shape its final form as an SPD.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

53. The proposal has no direct implications for energy consumption, carbon emissions or associated environmental risk management. However, a golden thread running through the WDG encourages design that positively addresses climate change objectives, adaptation, and resilience.

54. The WDG includes design expectations which seek to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions and through good design protect and enhance the natural environment, support active travel and promote climate change mitigations measures such as through nature-based solutions. As discussed above any more significant requirements will need to be sought through policy changes and these will come through the Local Plan review that is currently being progressed.

### **Workforce Implications**

55. The creation of a design guidance document supplements Core Policy 57 and will sit alongside other existing national and local design policy and guidance. Officers already utilise these documents where appropriate when executing their remit. As such there are no additional workforce implications.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

56. If a decision is made not to recommend to Council that the draft WDG is adopted, then the objectives listed under 'Background' will remain unachieved and most importantly objective (iv) which, 'seeks to provide a more detailed level of good practice guidance than currently exists at a national level which will have material weight when considering planning applications', will be lost.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

57. None identified.

### **Financial Implications**

58. The proposal is to create a guidance document which supplements Core Policy 57 and as such there are no direct financial implications.

### **Legal Implications**

59. In accordance with [Part 5, Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#), before a local planning authority can adopt an SPD (or revisions to one) it must consult for not less than four weeks and then prepare a Consultation Statement setting out who was consulted, a summary of the main issues and how they have been addressed in the SPD.

60. The WDG has been prepared in compliance with legislative requirements and the amendments tabled for consideration respond appropriately and effectively to the consultation responses received.

61. As soon as reasonably practicable after the local planning authority adopt an SPD they must:

(a) Make available in accordance with Regulation 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, by publishing on their website and making available for inspection at their principal offices and other places within their area as the local planning authority consider appropriate (e.g. all council libraries and main office hubs) during normal office hours, the:

- (i) SPD; and
- (ii) an adoption statement, which includes the date on which the SPD was adopted and, pursuant to Section 23(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, any modifications made since the draft supplementary planning document was subject to consultation, and

(b) Send a copy of the adoption statement to any person who has asked to be notified of the adoption of the supplementary planning document.

62. Supplementary Planning Documents build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an adopted Local Plan. In this regard, the WDG has been prepared to supplement the design policies within the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy and once adopted, any replacement design policies set out in the currently emerging Local Plan Review.

63. As set out in this Report, once adopted the WDG will be a material consideration in decision making and hence have weight in the decision-making process.

64. The council's Legal Services have been consulted on the proposal set out in this report. The legal requirements are set out in the body of the report and Legal Services have confirmed that they have no additional comments.

### **Options Considered**

65. Options considered were:

- i. To create a short (10-20 page) document which could succinctly compliment the National Design Guide. However, such a short document would not read as a coherent document as it could only include some of the National Design Guide's 10 characteristics of good design. Instead, this WDG is comprehensive and more coherent, with references to (rather than repetition of) the National Design Guide.
- ii. To expand the guide to include all the additional specialist topics suggested through the consultation. This would risk the document becoming muddled and unfocussed and the increased length would reduce the usability. The final version as proposed for adoption follows the National Guidance 10 Characteristics making it easy to read across the two documents.
- iii. Produce a WDG but not seek to adopt it as an SPD. This was rejected as it is important that its content is given proper weight in decision making in all matters relating to planning.

### **Conclusions**

66. The amended draft Wiltshire Design Guide responds positively to the list of objectives set at its inception and has undergone comprehensive internal consultation and a subsequent statutory public consultation process. All comments have been considered and responded to and the final version (**Appendix 2**) provides the level of guidance needed at a local level for a county as large and diverse as Wiltshire.

67. Adopting the WDG as an SPD will significantly assist in the implementation of Site Allocations Plans as well as planned development in accordance with the WCS and emerging Local Plan. Moreover, it will assist local communities plan for high quality housing development through neighbourhood plans and thereby helping guide developments coming forward across the local planning authority area of Wiltshire.

68. As an SPD, the guidance set out in the WDG will be afforded greater weight in the decision-making process. In this regard it will provide certainty to the development industry and local communities in terms of the expectations needed to demonstrate that Core Policy 57 has been given due consideration in planning proposals.

## **Parvis Khansari - Corporate Director, Place**

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19 January 2024

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Wiltshire Design Guide Consultation Statement

Appendix 2: Design Guide - Adoption draft

### **Background Papers**

[Draft Wiltshire Design Guide SPD for public consultation - Cabinet 2nd May 2023](#)