

IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE
16 MARCH 2008

RIVER BISS PUBLIC REALM DESIGN GUIDE

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Executive Summary

This report is a request from West Wiltshire District Council for the Implementation Executive formally to adopt the River Biss Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in order to guide new development in the River Biss Corridor in central Trowbridge and to serve as a “material consideration” in the development control process.

As with the recent Leisure and Recreation DPD, which was considered by the Implementation Executive on 26 February 2009, this adoption is also a “tidying up” operation in order to update planning policies in the District which has been made necessary by the timing of Local Government Reorganisation in Wiltshire.

The SPD can be found at: www.westwiltshire.gov.uk/index/planning/planning-policy/local_development_framework/river_biss_public_realm_design_guide_spd.htm

Proposal

That the Implementation Executive adopt the River Biss Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document as spatial planning policy for the West Wiltshire District area.

Reason for Proposal

West Wiltshire District Council has prepared a River Biss Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, which has passed through all its statutory stages. The District Council has resolved to adopt the document but it is necessary for it to be endorsed by the Implementation Executive before it can become planning policy for the District.

ALISTAIR CUNNINGHAM
Service Director, Economy & Enterprise

RIVER BISS PUBLIC REALM DESIGN GUIDE (PRDG)

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

Purpose of Report

1. To request the formal adoption of the River Biss Public Realm Design Guide (PRDG) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as spatial planning policy for the West Wiltshire District area. This adoption is essentially a “tidying up” operation to update planning policy, and which has been made necessary by the timing of Local Government Reorganisation in Wiltshire.

Background

2. The significance of the River Biss Corridor has been highlighted by the Trowbridge Urban Design Framework (2004). This has already been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by West Wiltshire District Council, and by the Vision for Trowbridge initiative, in which the District, Town and County Councils have worked in partnership with the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA).
3. This is reinforced by the number of potential development sites located along the river corridor, for example Waterside, St. Stephen’s Place and the former Peter Black’s site. Given the aspirations of all three Councils to ensure that the River Biss forms a prominent and high quality environmental focus in the face of the development pressure in the immediate vicinity, there is a need for appropriate planning guidance to enable informed development control decisions to be reached.
4. SWRDA has funded West Wiltshire District Council to enable the employment of specialist consultants, Halcrow, in order to develop a public realm design guide for the River Biss in Trowbridge, through to its adoption as an SPD.
5. The Draft River Biss Public Realm Design Guide was the subject of public consultation for six weeks at the end of July in accordance with the District Council’s Statement of Community Involvement and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.
6. On 21 January 2009, West Wiltshire District Council formally endorsed the design guide as a SPD and resolved to recommend its adoption by the Implementation Executive.

Main Considerations for the Implementation Executive

7. The main elements of the SPD are:
 - Guidance on specific design elements along the river corridor, including suggestions for the use of materials and street furniture
 - The identification of the different character areas and functions of the river corridor and, based on existing Local Plan policy, potential development opportunities; and
 - The promotion of environmental improvements, the enhancement of biodiversity and the reduction of flood risk along the River Biss corridor.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

8. As a SPD, the River Biss PRDG has been the subject of a full Sustainability Appraisal. It has also been prepared in consultation with the Environment Agency to ensure that flooding and wildlife issues have been taken fully into account.

Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal

9. As a planning policy document, the SPD has taken into account the needs of the whole community. It has also been the subject of statutory public consultation.

Risk Assessment

10. Clearly there is a danger that the future development of this central part of Trowbridge will proceed in an unco-ordinated and unsatisfactory fashion without the firm planning guidance provided by the SPD.

Financial Implications

11. Although there will be no additional financial costs incurred by the adoption of the SPD, its adoption will add weight to future bids for grants for enhancement schemes, including potential investment from SWRDA, which would in turn encourage investment in the public realm in this area.

Legal Implications

12. Under the 2008 Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) Regulations which govern the period leading up to the inauguration of Wiltshire Council on 1 April 2009, new policy for any part of Wiltshire can only be adopted by the Implementation Executive. West Wiltshire District Council has therefore formally resolved to request the Implementation Executive to adopt the SPD.

Options Considered

13. In preparing the SPD the options for the development of the River Biss area have been carefully considered through discussion with the community and local interest groups. The statutory public consultation process has arrived at what the District Council considers to be the optimum solution. The adoption of this document will ensure that it becomes a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications. Without an SPD there is a risk that the different areas of the river corridor will not be integrated into the wider design concept and that important planning opportunities will be missed.

Conclusion

14. The SPD is in line with the District and County Councils' objectives in the Transforming Trowbridge Initiative and the existing Local Plan. The adoption of the SPD is already provided for in the Local Development Scheme for Wiltshire Council, which was approved by the Implementation Executive on 10 December 2008.
15. The Implementation Executive is requested to adopt the SPD.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None