

14 November 2018

Ordinary Council

Draft Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide

Report of: *Phil Drane, Director of Strategic Planning*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council published the Brentwood Town Centre Design Plan in November 2017, which identified further work required to consider design guidance for all development proposals in the Town Centre.
- 1.2 The Council's strategy for sustainable growth through the emerging Local Development Plan identifies Brentwood Town Centre's potential to intensify, accommodate new development, and meet projected demands for a range of uses. However, it is important that new development contributes to creating a coherent Town Centre, ensuring that unique aspects and character are respected and retained.
- 1.3 The Draft Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide (Appendix A) aims to provide the necessary tools to help with decision-making for new development in the Town Centre. It proposes that new developments should adhere to its design guidelines to enhance and improve the setting of the town.
- 1.4 For the Design Guide to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), public consultation is required in line with national policy, guidance, and regulations.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Council approve the Draft Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix A), to be subject to a period of public consultation in line with national policy and guidance.**

3. Introduction and Background

Brentwood Town Centre Design Plan (November 2017)

- 3.1 In early 2016, the Council moved to understand more about redevelopment opportunities in Brentwood Town Centre by beginning work on the "Brentwood Town Centre Design Plan". Following a series of workshops to inform the project brief for the work, including understanding the planning history of several key Town Centre sites, urban design specialists Levitt Bernstein were appointed to produce the Design Plan. The project team included a wide range of experts in retail market viability, transport & movement, and heritage. As part of preparing the document, draft outputs were shared with the public for feedback, and the work was published in November 2017.
- 3.2 The Design Plan focused on four sites within the Town Centre. Three are Council owned: land at Chatham Way car park, land at Westbury Road car park, and land at William Hunter Way car park. The other is not owned by the Council: The Baytree Centre and surrounding land. The Design Plan takes an overarching strategic view of the Town Centre and considers development options in terms of how sites relate to each other and the local area.
- 3.3 The Design Plan forms a strategic starting point for two key workstreams to continue providing more detail when moving forward with development schemes:
 - a) Asset Development Programme; and
 - b) Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide.
- 3.4 The Asset Development Programme is the Council's project to identify a Joint Venture development partner to bring forward Council assets, such as those sites within the Town Centre considered in the Design Plan. This work is currently ongoing through the procurement process, reported separately through key corporate project updates and other means.
- 3.5 The need for a Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide was identified when preparing the more strategic natured Design Plan. The Design Guide is needed to provide the tools that will assist the Council's Planning Development Management Team when making decisions on all development proposals within the Town Centre.

Draft Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide (Appendix A)

- 3.6 As set out in the Council's emerging Local Development Plan, Brentwood Town Centre is the Borough's main centre. As part of the Plan's spatial strategy for sustainable growth, the Town Centre has the potential to intensify, accommodate new development, and meet projected demands for a range of uses (i.e. residential, retail, employment). However, new development should contribute to creating a coherent Town Centre, ensuring that the unique aspects and character of Brentwood are respected and retained.
- 3.7 It is proposed that new developments should adhere to the design guidelines set out in the Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide, once adopted, in order to enhance and improve the setting of the town. For this reason, a period of public consultation is proposed, in line with national policy and guidance, so that the Design Guide can be adopted by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 3.8 Brentwood Town Centre is growing fast and will be under increasing pressure, with development needs and infrastructure projects such as the arrival of the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail). In order to protect, retain and enhance the existing unique character of Brentwood Town Centre, part of which is a designated Conservation Area, it is important to set design guidelines for any new development that may come forward.
- 3.9 The content of the Design Guide provides detail of this strategy within the current and future context. It aims to inform new development and support applicants in the delivery of the highest quality architecture and public realm for Brentwood Town Centre and its hinterland.
- 3.10 The Design Guide aims to encourage high quality, sustainable development that:
- a) Is appropriate to context and compatible with the urban grain and materiality of the surroundings;
 - b) Makes positive improvements to the streetscape place in which it is located. This may be in terms of the physical built form, social well-being, biodiversity or green infrastructure;
 - c) Creates safe environments where crime and disorder, or fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life;

- d) Makes a positive contribution to the local economy and the vitality of Brentwood Town Centre; and
- e) Places the user and the user experience at the heart of design decisions.

3.11 The Design Guide should be used to help inform emerging planning applications for development in Brentwood Town Centre. Once adopted, all applications will be expected to follow this guidance, including the following:

- a) New development must be sympathetically designed to ensure that it builds on the distinctive character of Brentwood Town Centre, whilst protecting environmental and heritage assets;
- b) A significant portion of the geographic scope of the Town Centre is a Conservation Area, as such all applications for development within the area will be expected to respond to the Council's adopted conservation area character appraisal and to provide a heritage assessment;
- c) New development should seek to enhance a sense of place within the Town Centre; and
- d) Best practice design, implementation of energy efficiency, and sustainability in built development is encouraged.

3.12 Brentwood Town Centre comprises a variety of different uses, buildings and street typologies which collectively contribute to its unique character. A detailed analysis of the Town Centre in the production of the Design Guide has allowed four main character areas to be identified. A character area is defined as a zone within the Town Centre that has its own unique features (such as built form, use and scale of the streets) and a distinct setting. The four identified character areas are:

- a) Brentwood High Street;
- b) Other commercial streets;
- c) Brentwood Station; and
- d) Residential.

- 3.13 Area specific guidance for new development within each of these character areas is provided in the Design Guide. In some cases, there may be an overlap between two-character areas. Where this occurs, design guidelines for both character areas should be considered. Similarly, where there is a transition zone between two-character areas, the design guidelines for both adjacent character areas should be considered, in the context of their direct surroundings.
- 3.14 For areas of Brentwood Town Centre not included in a character area but in close proximity to one or more-character areas, new development should take into account the design guidelines of the nearest character area(s).
- 3.15 As well as the character areas, there are chapters on Density & Residential Typologies; Public Realm and Materiality; and Sustainability.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 Once adopted, the Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide will provide specific planning policy guidance on the design of buildings and spaces. It will inform decisions on development proposals and form part of the Council's decision-making process alongside the Local Development Plan and other guidance.
- 4.2 Preparing planning policy that can be given the necessary weight in decision-taking requires the Council to undertake public consultation in line with relevant legislation. A consultation period is proposed to take place alongside the Council's Pre-Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19). Consideration of the representations received will then follow in order that the document responds to relevant points raised. Following this, the document would return to the Council for a decision about whether to adopt as a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 4.3 In September 2017, Policy, Project and Resources Committee approved that several corporate projects be scrutinised, one of which being work on Brentwood Town Centre. Members approved the scope for the Town Centre project, which specifically related to consultation on the Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide.
- 4.4 The Town Centre Member Scrutiny Group is tasked with scrutinising the consideration of representations received in response to the Design Guide consultation, so that the document can then be reissued for consideration by the Council before being adopted.

- 4.5 The Brentwood Town Centre Design Plan and Design Guide are central to the Council's Local Development Plan objectives and so there is a degree of overlap in terms of how change can be managed and delivered.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 The increasing pressures that Brentwood Town Centre is under and evidence in recent years of increased development activity and planning applications, suggest the need for design guidance that can help protect, retain and enhance the local character. For this reason, the Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide has been produced.
- 5.2 For the Design Guide to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document, public consultation is required in line with national policy, guidance, and regulations.
- 5.3 At present, the published national Planning Practice Guidance note for Local Plans Paragraph 028 (Reference ID: 12-028-20140306), sets out that “supplementary planning documents should be prepared only where necessary and in line with paragraph 153 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).”
- 5.4 Paragraph 153 of the NPPF sets out that “each local planning authority should produce a Local Plan for its area. This can be reviewed in whole or in part to respond flexibly to changing circumstances. Any additional development plan documents should only be used where clearly justified. Supplementary planning documents should be used where they can help applicants make successful applications or aid infrastructure delivery, and should not be used to add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development.”
- 5.5 Regulations 11 to 16 (Part 5) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for producing Supplementary Planning Documents.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Draft Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide is published for public consultation, to take place at the same time and for the same duration as the Council's Pre-Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) document. This is to be between dates that have yet to be set, but likely to be mid-November until mid-January. This satisfies regulatory requirements to consult for at least a six-week period and takes

account of the Christmas period (thereby increasing the consultation period to eight-weeks).

- 6.2 Making the Design Guide available for consultation alongside the Local Development Plan will ensure that extra detail can be provided to the Plan regarding Brentwood Town Centre. It should also result in a higher level of public involvement than might otherwise be expected in response to a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 6.3 Once consultation has concluded, representations made will be scrutinised by the Council's Town Centre Member Scrutiny Group and reported to Audit and Scrutiny Committee. This will include how representations can be considered in the finalisation of the Design Guide before it is proposed for adoption by the Council.
- 6.4 Preparation of the Design Guide has been informed by the Brentwood Town Centre Design Plan (November 2017). The Design Plan was informed by feedback received through public events held in March 2017. A report is published on the Council's website setting out content that was on display and feedback received (www.brentwood.gov.uk/towncentre).

7. References to Corporate Plan

- 7.1 The Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide will provide supplementary guidance to the Council's Local Development Plan, which is a key priority in the Council's 'Vision for Brentwood' Corporate Plan 2016-2019. The Plan is an important delivery vehicle for several cross-cutting priorities, informed by individual Council strategies.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Interim Chief Finance Officer

01277 312829 jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk

- 8.1 The cost of carrying out Local Plan consultation, including work on the Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide, has been accounted for within the planning policy service budget of the medium-term financial plan.

Legal Implications

Daniel Toohey, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

01277 312860 daniel.toohey@brentwood.gov.uk

- 8.2 Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the procedural requirements to be

followed before adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by a local authority. Regulation 12 specifically imposes the requirement for a local authority to prepare a statement setting out all persons consulted, a summary of the issues raised by those persons, and how those issues were addressed in the SPD.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

- 8.3 Whilst the Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide focuses on specific elements of design and quality, the overall aim to improve the Town Centre has cross-over implications for work relating to Economic Development and Community Safety, among other areas. Relevant teams and partners will be involved in the consultation process to ensure joined-up thinking on local strategies.

9. Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

- Brentwood Town Centre Design Plan, November 2017, (can be viewed at www.brentwood.gov.uk/towncentre)

10. Appendices to this report

- Appendix A: Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide, July 2018 (Draft for Consultation)

Report Author Contact Details:

Name: Phil Drane, Director of Strategic Planning

Telephone: 01277 312610

E-mail: philip.drane@brentwood.gov.uk