
REPORT TO:	Environmental Services Committee	AGENDA ITEM: 7
DATE OF MEETING:	28th January 2010	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Director of Community Services	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Gill Hague X5742	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Better Design for South Derbyshire	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS01

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That until such time as the principles it contains are formally adopted in documents comprising the Local Development Framework (LDF), Members approve as interim guidance the document 'Better Design for South Derbyshire' attached as Appendix 1;
- 1.2 endorse the use of the Building For Life Standards as a basis for assessing new residential developments of more than 10 dwellings; and
- 1.3 agree to subscribe to the 'ourplace' initiative established by North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC).

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To seek approval for measures aimed at improving the quality of new built developments within South Derbyshire and to inform Members of the 'ourplace' initiative that has been developed and is operated by NWLDC.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Design Excellence Officer has drawn up a document aimed at developers that sets out a process which if followed should help to achieve high quality design solutions. The steps are relevant whatever the type of development and aim to ensure that development sites are fully assessed and understood before any design solutions are considered.
- 3.2 For residential properties in particular a mechanism for scoring proposals already exists in the Building For Life scheme that is organised and established by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). Developments are awarded once the development is fully completed.
- 3.3 The document Better Design for South Derbyshire would establish a score of 14 out of the 20 criteria used by Building For Life as setting the 'good' standard and it would be that standard that we would encourage developers to aim to meet or if possible exceed. The 20 questions that need to be answered for the assessment are set out

in an appendix to the document. The assessment of developments against the Building For Life criteria must be undertaken by an accredited assessor. The Design Excellence Officer has undertaken the relevant training and should be a fully qualified assessor by the time this report is considered at Committee.

- 3.4 Questions 19 & 20 relate to the use of advances in construction or technology that enhance the building's performance and whether the buildings outperform the minima such as the Building Regulations. These aspects require specialist knowledge to assess therefore one of the Council's Building Control Surveyors has qualified as an assessor for the Code For Sustainable Homes. This role therefore complements that of the Design Excellent Officer.
- 3.5 The building regulation standards for the conservation of fuel and power and water efficiency when introduced are expected to follow the Code of Sustainable Homes and eventually all the Building Control Surveyors will need formal training at least to gain an appreciation if not to assessor level.
- 3.6 Based upon the Building For Life criteria NWLDC has developed an award scheme for house builders that will enable potential purchasers to see whether the development will provide an ideal place to live. The scheme is known as 'ourplace' and has a logo for which copyright has been secured.
- 3.7 NWLDC aim to recruit other local authorities into the scheme in order to provide a consistent approach to assessing developments. They have offered SDDC free trial membership of the scheme for the first year with an annual fee of around £1,000 thereafter for use of the logo, artwork for the publicity material and to have details on the 'findourplace' website.
- 3.8 The 'ourplace' certificate is issued on the basis of information provided with the planning application and enables potential purchasers to compare online the scores for different housing developments. It is in effect a provisional Building For Life assessment made available at the start of the development process as the actual Building for Life award can only be issued on completion of the development having established that the development has in fact delivered what it said it would.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Printing costs and future membership would be covered by existing budgets.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 The current Corporate Plan 2009 -14 includes an action to adopt by March 2010 the Building For Life criteria for new homes as a basis for negotiation with developers.
- 5.2 The target for March 2012 is to set up a Member Design Award for those developments that exceed the 'good' standard. Joining in partnership with NWLDC would effectively mean that an award scheme would be introduced well before that target date and would not preclude this Council providing its own certificate to those developments that scored A+.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 The adoption of the Building For Life criteria, the guidance document Better Design for South Derbyshire and the 'ourplace' scheme will help deliver the Sustainable Environment theme in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 Until such time as the principles have been embodied into the LDF not meeting the standards set out in the document Better Design for South Derbyshire cannot by itself be given as a reason for refusing a planning application. However, the Building For Life criteria will help to promote better design as sought by the East Midlands Regional Plan Policy 2 and would prepare the way for developers and staff to become practiced in its application.

8.0 Background Papers

- 8.1 None other than those referred to in the document.