

Building for Tomorrow Today: Developing a Supplementary Planning Document on Sustainable Design and Construction

- **Local authority area:** Leeds City Council
- **Stakeholders:** Local authority officers from across the authority, local developers, third sector organisations, statutory consultee bodies (e.g. Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage)

Summary

This case study describes how Leeds City Council prepared an up to date Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on sustainable design and construction as part of Leeds' Local Development Framework

Key learning points

- Sustainable design and construction is presented as a complex area. However the most effective solutions to sustainability are often the simplest and are concerned with improving the thermal efficiency of the fabric of buildings (i.e. high levels of insulation); orientating buildings to optimise use of daylight, and managing resource consumption (especially water).
- The use of a developers' checklist helped to put the onus on to developers to demonstrate that they were taking these issues seriously rather than expecting planning officers to do this.

Background

- The aim of the SPD is to provide practical guidance to developers in Leeds wishing to build to high levels of sustainable design and construction so as to achieve the following objectives:-
 - Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
 - Better adaptation to climate change
 - Reduced impact on the environment overall
 - Inclusive development for all users

Method

- **Chronology:** The main steps in producing the SPD were:

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| 2009 | Research and production of first draft for internal consultation |
| March 2010 | Amendments to draft and preparation of second draft for external consultation |
| June 2010 | External consultation |
| September 2010 | Amendments as a result of external consultation |
| August 2011 | Final design and publication |

- **Barriers**

After seeking legal advice on the PPS1 supplement on climate change, it was clear that the SPD could not set any mandatory standards as these would have to be set in a Development Plan Document such as the Core Strategy. Therefore the SPD established a voluntary policy in advance of the mandatory policy to be included in the Core Strategy, but consistent with it. In this way the SPD is providing encouragement to developers to voluntarily build in line with high standards of sustainable design and construction. Once the Core Strategy is adopted, the SPD then becomes a guidance document for the Core Strategy policy.

- **Resources**

The SPD was produced entirely in-house, with one main officer leading and with considerable assistance from several other colleagues, particularly towards the latter, final drafting and publication stages. Various students were enlisted throughout the process to help research best practice and case studies.

- **Timescale**

From start to finish the project took at least 2 years, although at times it felt a lot longer! The result however is a very comprehensive document that would be relatively easy to update or amend to suit another local authority.

Result - Key outcomes and impact

- The SPD is a comprehensive document, detailing best practice and summarising current legislative and policy requirements across the field of sustainable design and construction, including explanation of the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM. The document also includes a very comprehensive glossary of terms.
- The SPD is a key resource for officers and interested parties and is proving a useful asset for the development community, planning officers, building control staff and sustainability officers when considering development proposals.
- The impact of the SPD has been enhanced by its use being reinforced through a series of internal training sessions run by one of the sustainability team.
- The SPD includes a checklist that developers are encouraged to complete and this forms a key element of negotiations in determining planning applications.

- Areas for improvement include keeping the list of case studies up to date and publishing them on an interactive map of the city.

Key contact

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References / Links

The completed SPD can be accessed from the Council website www.leeds.gov.uk (search for 'building for tomorrow').

The SPD contains numerous references for sources of further information.

Photographs

The SPD includes a number of case studies and photographs of exemplar buildings