

# Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

## Autumn 2024 Consultation

### Guide to changes and how to respond



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# What is the purpose of this booklet?

The booklet gives a simple overview of what Stevenage Borough Council is doing as part of its review of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). It is for everyone with an interest in how development is approved in the borough.

The SPDs are designed to set out more detail for how development is carried out. The booklet explains why we are reviewing them and what specific changes we are making. Anyone in Stevenage's community, such as residents, workers, businesses, community organisations or visitors can use the booklet to understand the role of Local Plan and the changes we are proposing.

# What are SPDs?

SPDs support the strategic and detailed policies in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP). The SBLP was adopted on 22 May 2019. The Plan sets out a spatial vision for the town to 2031 and contains detailed land use policies for the Borough. It looks to guide development and covers areas like housing, the built and natural environment, infrastructure, businesses, open spaces and more.

The Local Plan is a key part of what is known as the Council's 'Development Plan'. The 'Development Plan' is a hierarchy of planning documents which inform the assessment of planning applications. The Development Plan for an area comprises the adopted Local Plan, the Waste Local Plan, the Minerals Local Plan and any adopted Neighbourhood Plans (of which there are none currently in Stevenage). SPDs sit within this hierarchy of documents under the Local Plan.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are produced to add detail to the policies included in an adopted Local Plan. They are used to build upon and provide further guidance for development on specific sites or on particular issues. Whilst they are not part of the Development Plan for an area, and cannot add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development, the contents of a SPD are a material consideration when determining a planning application.

Applications will be assessed against the standards contained within them. The SPDs should be read in conjunction with policies in the adopted Stevenage Local Plan.

## **What are the SPDs?**

There are currently four SPDs and these cover:

- Stevenage Design Guide (January 2023)
- Developer Contributions (March 2021)
- Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport (October 2020)
- The Impact of development on Biodiversity (March 2021)

## **What are the main changes within the documents?**

Due to changes in National Legislation and the council partially reviewing the Local Plan, the SPDs are being updated to accommodate these changes. Three of the documents will include updates but we are also removing the SPD 'The Impact of development on Biodiversity' due to the statutory requirement of Biodiversity Net Gain on major and minor developments being introduced in early 2024.

# Parking and Sustainable Transport SPD – Main Changes

The Parking & Sustainable Transport SPD was adopted on 12 October 2020.

The Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been produced to supplement policies SP6, IT5, and IT8 of the Stevenage Local Plan (adopted 2019). Upon adoption, it replaced the Stevenage Borough Council Parking Provision SPD (adopted 2012).

The purpose of this document is to explain the Council's proposed approach to parking provision within new developments. Its intention is to provide clear guidance and certainty for developers and communities. As well as guidance on traditional aspects of parking, the SPD also provides guidance on related issues not covered in the previous Parking Provision SPD with the aim of promoting sustainable modes of transport.

Standards are put forward for the quantity of car parking, cycle parking, and disabled parking at all new developments. The document also provides guidance on the layout and design of these. Requirements for the provision of charging infrastructure are given to help ensure the expected rise in electric vehicle-use is realised and support is given for the implementation and installation of a cycle hire scheme and cycling hubs in line with the Council's promotion of cycling. The use of public transport is also covered by this document with references to bus priority measures and the potential for a park and ride scheme.

The SPD provides further planning guidance under the following sections:

- Residential Parking Standards
- Non-Residential Parking Standards
- Mixed-Use Sites and Town Centre Parking Provision
- Transport Statements, Assessments, and Design and Layout
- Electrical Charging
- Additional Requirements
- Cycle Parking Standards
- Travel Plans
- Accessibility Contributions

**Amendments to the Parking & Sustainable Transport SPD can be summarised as follows:**

- Removal of “Sustainable Transport” from the title of the SPD, to reflect the fact that the sustainable transport elements of the existing Parking & Sustainable Transport SPD have either been moved to the revised Developer Contributions SPD, or are suitably covered by Hertfordshire County Council Highways guidance.
- Sustainable transport contributions moved to Developer Contributions SPD.
- General improvements to presentation – removing unnecessary justification text, etc.
- Various clarifications on parking requirement calculation – when rounding should occur, what constitutes a bedroom, etc.
- Disabled parking requirements clarified.
- Electric Vehicle charging requirements removed – now covered by Building Regulations.

# Developer Contributions SPD – Main Changes

The Developer Contributions SPD was adopted on 18 March 2021.

The aim of this SPD is to set out the Council's proposed approach to the use of Section 106 (S106) agreements to secure developer contributions from new developments. This will assist planning officers, applicants, service providers, Councillors and members of the public through the planning application process, ensuring that the process is fair and transparent and is applied consistently.

Developer Contributions, commonly known as planning obligations, are legal obligations entered into to mitigate impacts of a proposed development. They are entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990(2) by the developer and / or landowner, the local planning authority, and potentially other service or infrastructure providers linked to a proposal or mitigation scheme. They are legally binding and enforceable.

The other main form of developer contribution is the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Stevenage Borough Council adopted a CIL Charging Schedule in January 2020 and started implementing CIL on 1 April 2020. CIL is a non-negotiable charge on new built development which meets the thresholds identified in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (2010) (3) (as amended). CIL replaces the need to secure developer contributions through S106 agreements in many instances, allowing for infrastructure and service provision to be planned and implemented on a more strategic, borough-wide scale rather than in a piecemeal approach as mitigation against the impacts of individual developments.

The Council must publish its CIL funding priorities each year in an Infrastructure Funding Statement. Like S106 agreements, CIL liabilities are legally binding and enforceable, albeit through different legislative procedures.

The Council will still require applicants to enter into S106 agreements in some instances. This document sets out the instances where S106 agreements will be sought, what will be included in them, and how contributions will be calculated.

In essence, this document should be used to identify where developer contributions may be required in addition to the payment of a CIL charge for a proposed development. The Council advises that applicants always engage fully with the local planning authority and other infrastructure / service providers near the time of submitting an application to gain a better understanding of the exact amounts they may be expected to contribute.

The main topics covered in this SPD are:

- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Hertfordshire County Council contributions
- Housing
- Commuted Sums to mitigate against policy non-compliance
- Site-specific mitigation
- Employment opportunities
- Parking and Sustainable Transport (linked to Parking & Sustainable Transport SPD)
- Monitoring fees



## **Amendments to the Developer Contributions SPD can be summarised as follows:**

- Travel plan guidance clarified.
- Car club, public transport voucher, etc. contributions added (from Parking SPD)
- New contributions towards cycle hire scheme.
- Document now refers to the CIL annual inflation rate, which the Council is required to apply. This is for transparency and to allow developers to calculate their CIL charge ahead of development.
- Introduction of developer contributions for Electric Car Clubs and the Cycle Hire Scheme, on large windfall and strategic sites. This is in addition to collecting a CIL charge to reflect the Council's sustainable transport objectives.
- General updates to legislation and National Planning Policy (related to the NPPF, December 2023)
- Affordable Housing updates, in line with the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update amendment on Part M of the Building Regulations.
- The 'Construction Employment Opportunities for Stevenage' section now applies more flexibility, should a developer be unable to fulfil the obligations regarding construction jobs and apprenticeships. This is to support small and medium-sized developers and to reflect instances whereby local businesses and quick construction developers are unable to fulfil obligation due to time constraints.
- Increase in payment for failure to meet local recruitment targets for apprenticeships, from £250 per apprenticeships to £500. This is to help cover the cost of the brokerage system to fill apprenticeship positions and encourage early engagement with Stevenage Works, to support the delivery of local apprenticeships.
- Further clarity on what the training fund can be used for.
- Monitoring Fee increase to reflect the ongoing costs of the brokerage system to fill apprenticeship positions – officers have carried out work to determine local authority monitoring fees across the board. The proposed fees are based on an approximate benchmark value of several CIL charging authorities

# Stevenage Design Guide SPD – Main Changes

The Design Guidance SPD was adopted on 30 January 2023.

Stevenage Design Guidance supports the strategic and detailed policies in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan. This guidance forms a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which is an additional ‘material consideration’ in planning decisions. This guidance replaced the Stevenage Design Guide 2009; updating advice where appropriate and providing new guidance on matters introduced or strengthened in the Local Plan including long-term sustainability through the use of durable, low maintenance materials.

This Stevenage Design Guidance sets out clear design principles to guide future development in Stevenage. It encourages a design led approach to all development, from large residential schemes to modest residential extensions and small infill developments.

The SPD provides design principles for all developments, accompanied by illustrations and good practice examples, to help deliver good design and clearly signpost where more detailed guidance can be accessed.

The National Design Guide (2021) notes that well-designed places have individual characteristics which work together to create its physical character. These ten characteristics help to nurture and sustain a sense of community. They work positively to address environmental issues affecting climate. They all contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the NPPF.

This document is divided up into each of these ten characteristics in order to ensure that this guidance reflects accurately the characteristics of the National Design Guide:

- Context
- Identity
- Built Form
- Movement
- Nature
- Public Spaces
- Uses
- Homes and Buildings
- Resources
- Lifespan

**Amendments to the Design Guidance SPD can be summarised as follows:**

- Design guide changed to tabular format.
- Clear distinction between mandatory requirements and optional best practice.
- Appendix 1 of the SPD (character assessments) has been deleted, as was too brief to be of real use and also out of date (2008).
- General improvements to presentation of Appendices 2 (shopfront guide) and 3 (residential extensions guide) – formatting, new drawings etc.

# The Impact of development on Biodiversity SPD – Main Changes

The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD was adopted on 18 March 2021.

This SPD relates to policies concerning biodiversity net gain in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and the National Planning and Policy Framework (NPPF).

This SPD outlines how the Council will assess planning applications, which will have an impact on biodiversity. The information applicants will need to provide to enable the Council to apply the government metric to quantify and assess impacts. The standards expected for impact calculations and any offset delivery.

The purpose of the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document is to give more detail to the current Strategic Policy 12: Green Infrastructure and the Natural environment, in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan.

Government has set a legal requirement for biodiversity to achieve a 10% net gain through development. The purpose of this SPD is to ensure that the process to achieve this 10% net gain is clear to all.

The Council also has an adopted Biodiversity Action Plan and this highlights the opportunities for biodiversity improvement in the Borough.

Following new legislation, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is now mandatory from 12 February 2024 for major planning applications and 2 April 2024 for minor, under <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/schedule/14/enacted>.

After approval at Cabinet on the 9 October 2024, the decision has been made to revoke the SPD due to legislation superseding the SPD. The Council remains fully committed to protecting and enhancing its ecology and biodiversity. For example, the Council has produced a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) which is referred to further in the Cabinet Report for Item 6 of the agenda for the 9 October Cabinet meeting. This Action Plan was the first to be published in Hertfordshire. Further information on the BAP can be found at: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/environment/green-spaces/biodiversity> .

# How to respond to the consultation

As your planning authority, we will undertake public consultation exercises.

Responding means you will have the option to be on the consultation list and be sent further notifications.

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 stipulate that for Supplementary Planning Documents, public consultation must be held for a minimum of 6 weeks.

## **Your response**

All your responses will be on the public files, so don't say something you wouldn't want to be read by everyone.

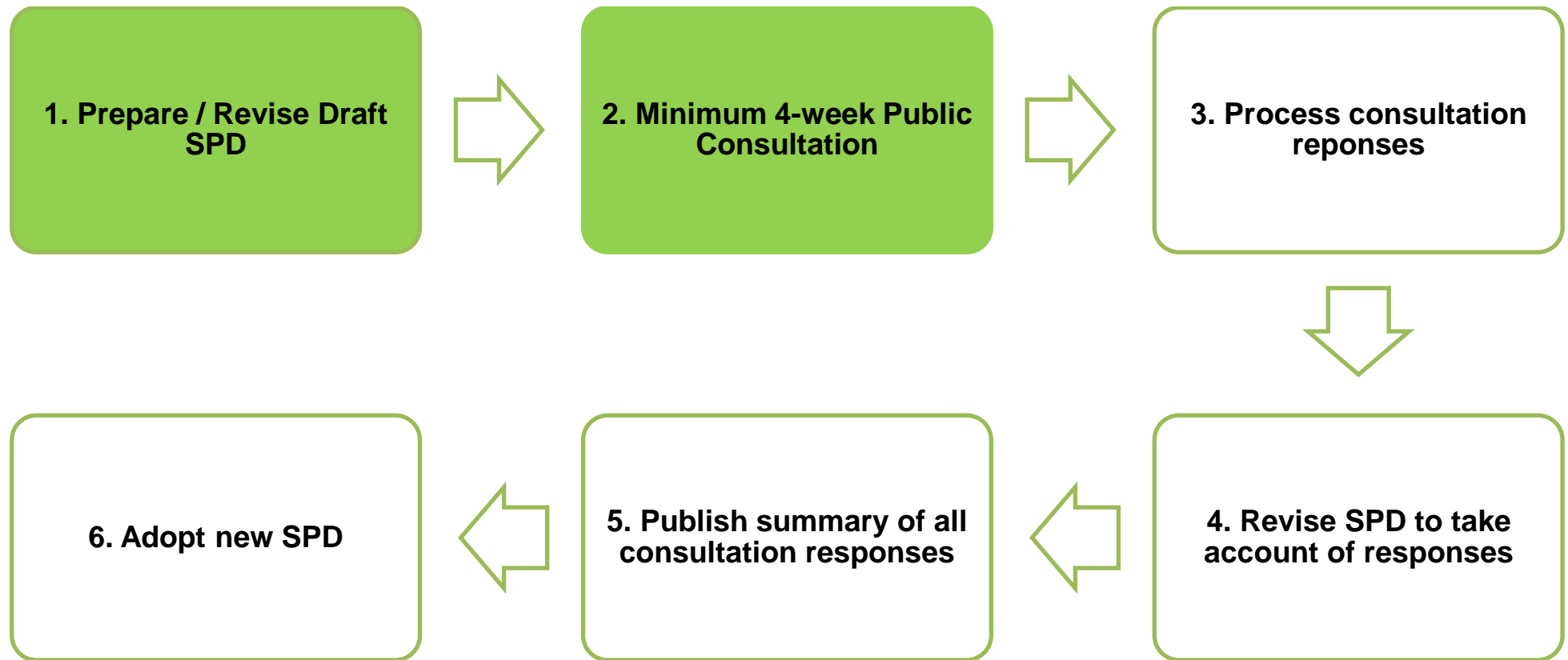
You will have the opportunity to make your response online. This has the advantage of being able to see what others are saying and being able to make a supplementary response. You can also contact the Planning Policy team separately using the contact information at the end of this document if you are unsure of anything.

The link to our consultation website is <https://stevenagespds.commonplace.is/>

When responding, you may want to use the words "object, support or welcome" to clarify your position. If you like what you see, don't sit back because another respondent may object. We welcome all views, and this helps planning officers and councillors to be aware of the interests of their communities. It also ensures that you will be kept informed of subsequent stages in the local plan's preparation when changes may be made.

# Next steps

The procedure to adopt a new SPD is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. In summary, it is as follows:



## Have your say

*Have your say here:*

<https://stevenagespds.commonplace.is/>

## Need more help?

*Contact us on:*

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