# Screening Statement on the determination of the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal for the Bexley Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Part 2.

**Findings**

The purpose of this screening statement is to assess whether the Bexley Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document should be subject a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

Based on the findings of this screening statement, and the views of relevant statutory consultation bodies, the Council has concluded that neither a SEA nor a SA is necessary for the Bexley Design Guide SPD Part 2.

In accordance with Sections 9 and 11 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the Council consulted with the specified environmental organisations (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) before determining whether the SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects.

In accordance with Section 9(3) of the Regulations 2004, as the screening statement concludes that the implementation of the SPD will be unlikely to have significant environmental effects and therefore not require a SEA, the statement includes the reasons for this determination. The Council has taken into account the criteria specified in Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and the results of the assessment can be found in Tables 1 and 2 below.

**Introduction**

Sustainability Appraisal is the process of ensuring that a plan or policy contributes to sustainable development. Sustainability Appraisals incorporate the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. Sustainability Appraisal ensures that potential environmental effects are given full consideration alongside social and economic issues.

Strategic Environmental Assessment alone can be required in some limited situations where Sustainability Appraisal is not needed. This is usually where Supplementary Planning Documents could have significant environmental effects.

**Legislative Background**

The Planning Act 2008 amended section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. As a result, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) no longer have to prepare a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report for their Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The reason for this is that it involved duplication, since SPDs have to be in conformity with an overarching Development Plan Document which had already been the subject of SA.

The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 enacted section 180 of the Planning Act 2008, removing this blanket requirement for SA. However, the explanatory memorandum advises that LPAs will still need to screen their SPDs to ensure that legal requirements for SA are met where there are impacts that have not been covered in the appraisal of the parent DPD (Local Plan) or where an assessment is required by the SEA Directive.

The strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and SA planning practice guidance paragraph 008 confirms that SPDs do not require a SA but may in exceptional circumstances require a SEA. SEA is unlikely to be required, unless it is considered that there are likely to be significant environmental effects.

Before deciding whether significant environment effects are likely, the LPA will need to consider the criteria specified in schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and consult the consultation bodies. This initial assessment process is commonly referred to as a 'screening' assessment, and the requirements are set out in regulation 9 of the 2004 Regulations. The results of this process must be summarised in an SEA screening statement, which must be publicly available.

Under Regulation 9(3), if the council determines that a plan or programme is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, an SEA will not be required. The Council will however need to prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination.

**Local Plan**

Preparation of the Bexley Local Plan was informed by an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), which incorporated SA and SEA requirements. The Bexley Local Plan IIA Post Adoption Statement provides further details. The Design Guide SPD builds upon and provides more detailed advice and guidance on policies in the Bexley Local Plan.

**Design Guide SPD Part 2**

Bexley's Local Plan sets out the fundamental role of high-quality design in achieving sustainable development. National and regional policy place a clear emphasis on good design and the role of Local Authorities in determining what this looks like for their area. The Design Guide seeks to build upon the Design Guide SPD Part 1 – Design Principles, by further defining and illustrating what good design means across both common and emerging typologies in the borough. As with the Design Guide SPD Part 1 – Design Principles, the guidance has been drafted to support three objectives:

- Be more Bexley: The Council encourages development that reinforces local distinctiveness and discourages generic designs that do not complement the surroundings.
- Promote good design: Good design leads to better wellbeing outcomes and a more sustainable form of development.
- Provide clarity: The Guide is intended as a useful reference tool to reduce uncertainty for applicants looking to develop a site, thereby increasing the quality of submissions and reducing delay at the application stage.

The production of this document has followed best practice and has been informed by a robust local evidence base. The Guide is intended to aid the planning process, so it is primarily for:

- Applicants and their design teams in the preparation for pre-application discussions and planning submission;
- Decision-makers when considering whether to grant or refuse planning applications;
- People in local communities and their representatives to assess proposals in their area.

The guidance provided in this document will be supplementary to the Bexley Local Plan policies. It demonstrates ways to meet these policies using illustrations and codes. Where relevant, specific policies

are highlighted in the text for ease of reference. However, it is assumed that all guidance is provided to help applicants meet requirements set out in the Local Plan.

The Design Guide is additional, borough specific guidance for Bexley. It should be read in conjunction with national and regional design guidance on placemaking, such as the National Design Guide and the London Plan.

## CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

**Table 1: Characteristics of the Design Guide SPD Part 2**

| 1 | Criterion | Is there an effect? | Is there a significant environmental effect? | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(a)** | The degree to which the Design Guide SPD Part 2 sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources | Yes | No | The primary purpose of the SPD is to provide supplementary guidance to policies contained within the council's Local Plan, which has had a Sustainability Appraisal (including SEA) prepared, as part of an IIA.<br><br>The Local Plan includes development plan policies, and the SPD provides supplementary guidance to this document in terms of design in the London Borough of Bexley and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. However, as it occupies the lowest tier in the planning policy hierarchy, the degree to which the SPD sets the framework for projects and other activities is minimal, with the broad framework for future development being set out in the council's Local Plan and the London Plan. |
| **(b)** | The degree to which the Design Guide SPD Part 2 influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy | No | No | The SPD is a low-level policy document in the overall suite of planning policy, and therefore it does not influence other plans or programmes. Conversely, it is influenced by and in general conformity with upper tier documents at local, regional and national level. |
| **(c)** | The relevance of the Design Guide SPD Part 2 for the integration of environmental considerations in | No | No | The purpose of the SPD is to provide additional guidance on the policies contained in the council's Local Plan in terms of Design. Policies aimed at the requirement for integrating environmental considerations are set in the Local Plan. |

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| | particular with a view to promoting sustainable development. | | | |
| **(d)** | Environmental problems relevant to the Design Guide SPD Part 2 | No | No | The SPD itself only supplements adopted policy and does not introduce new policy. Environmental problems relevant to the borough are identified in the Local Plan and there are no environmental problems that are specifically relevant to the SPD only. |
| | The relevance of the Design Guide SPD Part 2 for the implementation of retained EU law on the environment (for<br><br>example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection). | No | No | The SPD supplements the policies in the council's Local Plan which themselves take into account environmental legislation established by retained EU law, but it does not introduce any new policy initiatives. |

**Table 2: Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to—**

| 2 | Criterion | Is there an effect? | Is there a significant environmental effect? | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(a)** | The probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects of the Design Guide SPD Part 2 | Yes | No | The SPD supplements the policies in the council's development plan, namely the council's Local Plan, which has had a Sustainability Appraisal (including SEA) prepared, as part of an IIA. The SPD does not introduce any new policies itself. As such, its implementation will help promote the objectives of the Local Plan in terms of applications for Design in the borough. |
| **(b)** | The cumulative nature of the effects of the Design Guide SPD Part 2 | Yes | No | The SPD provides supplementary guidance on policies in the council's development plan. Its implementation may assist in achieving environmental benefits for the whole borough that are sought in the overarching Local Plan policies |
| **(c)** | The trans-boundary nature of the effects of the Design Guide SPD Part 2 | No | No | The SPD policies are concerned with guiding development proposals in the borough and unlikely to have any impact on neighbouring boroughs. |
| **(d)** | The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents) of the Design Guide SPD Part 2 | No | No | The SPD contains policies aimed at minimising harm caused by noise, lighting and other environmental pollution. It does not contain polices that would pose a risk to human health or to the environment. |
| **(e)** | The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected) by the Design Guide SPD Part 2 | Yes | No | Together with the Local Plan and the London Plan, the SPD provides the policy framework guiding the design of development across the London Borough of Bexley. Because the SPD supplements planning policy and does not introduce any new policy, the magnitude of the effects of the SPD itself will be limited, although as part of a raft of policies it will have a |

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| | | | | beneficial environmental effect for the whole borough and its population, including visitors. |
| **(f)** | The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected by the Design Guide SPD Part 2 due to:<br>(i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;<br>(ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or<br>(iii) intensive land use. | Yes | No | The SPD supplements planning policies that have been subjected to Sustainability Appraisal (including SEA). The implementation of the SPD is likely to result in better management of environmental issues. It is not expected that there will be any significant negative effects in terms of natural areas and open spaces including its nature conservation areas, green and blue corridors, and public open spaces as a result of implementing the SPD. |
| **(g)** | The effects of the Design Guide SPD Part 2 on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status | Yes | No | The SPD only supplements and provides additional design guidance on the policies contained in the council's development plan . The Local Plan has been subjected to Sustainability Appraisal (including SEA). The implementation of the SPD is not expected to have significant negative effects on protected or locally important natural areas or landscapes. |