

Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document FAQs

These FAQs are designed to respond to some of the commonly asked questions about the scope and content of the Sustainability SPD.

Why has the Council produced a Sustainability SPD?

Supplementary Planning Documents are documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. This SPD has been produced to expand particularly on these adopted District Plan (2018) policies relating to design, climate change, water, pollution and the natural environment.

Designing and constructing development to improve its environmental performance will reduce the environmental impact of new development and address climate change. The District Plan (2018) incorporates a suite of policies to help ensure that new development in the district reduces its environmental impact- minimising carbon emissions, flood risk, pollution and pressure on resources.

To ensure that these policies are implemented as effectively as possible, guidance is required to ensure that the correct information is submitted alongside planning applications, demonstrating how policy requirements will be met. This will help the planning process contribute towards addressing the commitments in the Council's climate change declaration, agreed by members in July 2019.

What is the purpose of the SPD?

The purpose of this SPD is to support the implementation of District Plan policies by providing technical guidance on sustainable design and construction to improve the environmental sustainability of new development. As such, it will contribute towards both the national and local commitment to addressing climate change.

It sets out detailed guidance across a range of topics:

- Design led approach
- Energy and carbon reduction
- Climate change adaptation
- Water efficiency
- Pollution
- Biodiversity
- Sustainable transport
- Waste management

Can the SPD set targets that exceed the adopted District Plan (2018)?

No. Legally, the SPD is subordinate to the adopted District Plan (2018). It cannot

introduce new compulsory targets that would change District Plan policy requirements otherwise the Council could be at risk from legal challenge. Targets, including the transition towards net zero carbon development will be considered as part of the review of the District Plan, which is due to start next year. Any decisions will need to be taken in light of any Government changes to planning or building regulations following recent consultation.

Does the SPD still have a value when it can't set targets?

Yes. This SPD helps the transition to higher targets by setting out more detail on how to achieve environmental sustainability and how to exceed current policy. The requirement for submission of a qualitative checklist also provides a stronger implementation mechanism. Developers will have to consistently demonstrate how they have addressed each checklist criteria and submitted relevant evidence. This will provide greater transparency about if/how developments comply with, or exceed, policy across a range of environmental topics. 3.9 The SPD's primary focus is to ensure policy requirements are implemented, but it also encourages good practice and compliance with stronger energy targets.

Who should use the SPD?

The SPD provides detailed, holistic guidance for applicants about District Plan policy requirements and expectations. It will also help officers and councillors assess the environmental credentials of developments and encourage developers to go further than current policy, to demonstrate excellence in sustainable development.

When should the SPD be used?

The principles and good practice examples in the SPD are valuable for all development proposals. However, the SPD principally applies to new development. Applications for new development that result in a residential net gain of 1 plus dwellings or an increase in non-residential floorspace should submit the combined checklist in Appendix A of the SPD. Information provided should be proportionate to the scale and type of development proposed. Applicants should use the SPD throughout the pre-application, application and post-application stages of their scheme to inform the design and construction process.

What next?

Following the consultation, the comments received will be considered and any necessary changes will be made. The final SPD will then be considered by the Council, for adoption in early 2021. Once adopted the SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
