

Report of City Planning Officer
Report to Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration)
Date: 20th January 2015
Subject: Leeds Housing Standard – Design Quality (update) - Memoranda to ‘Neighbourhoods for Living’ (January 2015)

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES

1. This report follows on from the last report (of Directors of City Development and Environment and Housing) to this Scrutiny Board (Working Group meeting 28th August 2014) recommending that the Explanatory Memoranda supporting the Council’s existing Neighbourhoods for Living is shared/commented on.
2. The Memoranda (together with existing Neighbourhoods for Living) represents the Design Quality aspect of the proposed Leeds Standard, and updates/ expands on key issues of layout and design of housing. It builds on the collaborative work between Lead Members, elected Members, officers, partners and representatives of the major house builders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Scrutiny Board is asked to consider and comment on the contents of the Memoranda to Neighbourhoods for Living and the new Foreword to the existing main document.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny Board with the follow up from the last report (of Directors of City Development and Environment and Housing) to this Scrutiny Board (Working Group meeting 28th August 2014) recommending that the Explanatory Memoranda supporting the Council's existing Neighbourhoods for Living is shared/commented on.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Following Scrutiny Board (Housing and Regeneration) working group on 28th August, Executive Board, at its meeting in September 2014, considered the report on how the Council seeks to achieve appropriate quality standards in support of the delivery of 70,000 houses by 2028, ensuring 'quality' and 'quantity' are achieved in accordance with the draft Core Strategy. The report emphasised the importance of excellent quality housing in supporting the economic growth ambitions of the Council.
- 2.2 The previous report outlined the development of the 'Leeds Standard' to promote and enable excellent quality in the delivery of new homes under three themes; Design Quality, Space Standards and Energy Efficiency Standards. The report also proposed that the Council can use the Leeds Standard in its role as Council landlord through its delivery and procurement approaches. Through its actions the Council can also seek to influence quality in the private sector. Those aspects of the Standard concerned with 'design quality' are planned to be addressed through better application of the Council's Neighbourhoods for Living guidance. The report made it clear that the wider application of other aspects of the standards is contingent on further government guidance, which currently envisages a formal development plan process and implementation through the Building Regulations.
- 2.3 The explanatory Memoranda is aimed at measures to influence housing delivery through the clarification and application of the principles held within the Neighbourhoods for Living document. The Council's approach combines some existing standards and draws on a number of existing Council policies to support and reinforce the standard in addition to some additional specification in respect of the Council's new build programme.
- 2.4 The programme for the development of the Memoranda (to deliver on the 'design quality' aspect of the Leeds Standard) has involved a series of reports/events – including Executive Board, Joint Plans Panels, Scrutiny Board (Housing & Regeneration), and workshops. Notably Executive Board (17-9-14), Joint Plans Panels (27-6-13 & 14-11-13), Scrutiny Board (Housing & Regeneration) working group, Housebuilders/Councillor/Officer workshop (2-10-13), Council House Building programme workshop (29-4-14), Housing & Regeneration (Housing Growth) providers workshop (16-5-14).
- 2.5 Specifically, the Housebuilder workshop in October 2013, attended by members of Plans Panels, representatives of major housebuilders, designers and officers from the Council involved in housing delivery, provided a strong consensus on issues of quality and early collaborative processes. The aim of the workshop was to promote

a greater understanding of how schemes can be designed to better reflect the positive character and identity of adjoining areas to overcome the commonly perceived problems which arise in submitted applications.

- 2.6 In addition, the Housing and Regeneration workshop in May 2014 also provided a strong basis for this more collaborative and forceful direction to improve the design quality of housing and neighbourhoods in Leeds. Participants included representatives from major house builders, Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), Registered Providers, Estate Agents, Home Builders Federation, planning consultants, Civic Trust, Councillors and officers.
- 2.7 The Council House building workshop in April 2014 provided the opportunity to share and explore issues of quality in terms of internal space standards, energy/environmental standards, and external layout & architectural quality. This was followed by inter-disciplinary working groups tasked with developing proposals for each of the 3 themes. The Memoranda associated with this report (for clarity on key current issues) together with the strong use of the Neighbourhood for Living principles also reflects the outcome of that working group.
- 2.8 Further consultation on the draft Memoranda to Neighbourhoods for Living commences following an event entitled 'Leeds Housing Growth' (15-1-15) for key housing providers/decision-makers, including representatives of major house builders, Councillors, Council officers and other stakeholders.

3.0 MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1 The structure of the Memoranda responds to the issues of layout and detailed design (both of which have been cited as key concerns by Plans Panels over recent years).
- 3.2 Key 'Neighbourhoods for Living' principles are underlined and explanatory text (with illustrations) provide information to enable delivery of positive outcomes. The new Memoranda (as NfL) sets out to prompt, steer and assess design quality throughout the design and development process from an early stage.
- 3.3 The expectation of Neighbourhoods for Living is re-emphasised – especially the processes of analysis-concept-scheme-detail which has appeared to be lacking in many recent applications.
- 3.4 Key concerns members (and officers) were raising repeatedly with planning applications in recent years are illustrated (diagrams have been used - not specifically attributable to individual developers) - car parking dominating the streetscene, poor proportions/fenestration, unresponsive to local character and materials. These provide clarity to the issues summarised in the Joint Plans Panel reports in 2013 (with regard to concerns of both layout and detailed character).
- 3.5 During the process of developing the Leeds Standard with colleagues in the Council it has proved appropriate and beneficial to consider the wider objectives and initiatives in Leeds. The Memoranda has received positive input from health representatives and the issues of promoting healthy lifestyles and age-friendly

design are firmly embedded in the principles of Neighbourhoods for Living. These have been used (within the new Memoranda) alongside key 'health and well-being' themes – to provide a good reference point for this work. Similarly 'child-friendly' issues provide a basis for the promotion and use of Neighbourhoods for Living.

- 3.6 The Memoranda also provides an update with regard to the policy basis for NfL – following adoption of the Core Strategy.
- 3.7 The useful addresses are also updated to continue to assist developers to cross refer to helpful organisations/websites etc.
- 3.8 The Explanatory Memoranda and the new Foreword to the existing Neighbourhoods for Living housing design guidance will be forwarded in advance of the Scrutiny Board.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Scrutiny Board is asked to consider and comment on the contents of the Memoranda to Neighbourhoods for Living and the new Foreword to the existing main document.

5.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 5.1 'Neighbourhoods for Living – a guide for residential design in Leeds – Memoranda to 3rd Edition 2015'.
- 5.2 New Foreword to existing main document ('Neighbourhoods for Living – a guide to residential design in Leeds'), main document is available for download from Leeds City Council website (searching for 'Neighbourhoods for Living').