

Housing and Infrastructure Board

Wednesday, 08 February 2023

South Yorkshire Residential Design Charter

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Reason why exempt:	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Discussion
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions?	Not a Key Decision

Director Approving Submission of the Report:

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Executive Summary

Joint working with Local Authorities around raising the quality of new residential developments has identified an opportunity to prepare a Residential Design Charter and associated activities which could be progressed at pace and with minimal cost and resource implications, but which would address key shared residential design issues, improve awareness and understanding, and promote shared information, learning and joint working.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

Quality of life is enhanced by the quality and attractiveness of the urban environment. Good quality homes, the neighbourhoods in which they sit, and their connections to jobs, facilities, recreation and open spaces can play a vital role in attracting and retaining new

employees and residents as part of growing and developing the regional economy. High quality 'green' developments which improve energy efficiency will also help the region meet its net zero targets.

Recommendations

Board members are asked to:

1. Consider and support the proposed preparation of a Residential Design Charter and associated activities.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel

N/A

1. Background

- 1.1 National planning policy* highlights that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. At a regional level, the Sheffield City Region Housing Review (2020) recognised the need for good design to be integrated into all housing development as an integral aspect of place making in order to drive up the quality of design.
- 1.2 This aligns with the Mayor's ambitions for raising the quality of design and making homes fit for the future and built to the highest possible energy standards. These drivers are reflected in both the South Yorkshire Strategic Economic Plan and the South Yorkshire Housing Framework which support improving the quality of new development.
- 1.3 At the Local level, Planning Authorities in South Yorkshire have supportive policies in their Local Plans and accompanying guidance such as the South Yorkshire Residential Design Guide (SYRDG) published in 2011.
- 1.4 The SYMCA Executive has worked with Local Authorities to explore opportunities to update this Residential Design Guide and / or other joint working to provide up to date, consistent approaches to raising the quality of new residential developments. To inform this, the consultant Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design was commissioned to undertake a scoping study to better understand how the SYRDG aligns with current design policy and guidance, any gaps which exist and options for the scope of any update. This provided a thorough assessment and analysis along with potential alternative options for updating the Guidance.
- 1.5 The key outputs of this commission are discussed below, along with a preferred approach recommended by the Heads of Planning Group to prepare a Design Charter to help provide a consistent up to date approach to improving design across South Yorkshire.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The key findings and outputs of the Scoping Study commission are set out in the accompanying presentation (see Appendix A). As is presented, this included three

options for preparing a replacement SYRDG, all of which required substantial financial and officer resources to deliver.

- 2.2 Discussions with the Local Authorities' Heads of Planning identified a number of concerns around progressing with an update of the SYRDG at this time, focused on uncertainties with regard to emerging planning reforms and their implications; budget and resource implications given current pressures on local government finances; and timing in terms of guidance being available to inform sites coming forward for development in the short term.
- 2.3 In this context taking forward an update of the SYRDG was not considered to be the most effective use of resources at this time, although there was broad agreement to progress with an alternative approach. The accompanying presentation (Appendix A) provides further detail of this proposed approach.
- 2.4 A Residential Design Charter and associated activities are proposed which could be progressed at pace and with minimal cost and resource implications, but which would address key shared residential design issues, improve awareness and understanding, and promote shared information, learning and joint working. This would complement the existing and future design policies and guidance of Local Authorities and supporting tools which are being utilised (such as local Design Panels).
- 2.5 The Design Charter would provide a high-level document clarifying our joint commitment to securing high-quality design across South Yorkshire, setting out expectations and how we will support developers in preparing proposals and planning applications. It would highlight key common design issues and a shared approach to how these should be addressed.
- 2.6 Alongside this, complementary activities would support implementation and help raise design awareness:
- Workshop(s) for Local Authority Members, officers and the development industry to help raise awareness and promote consistency across South Yorkshire.
 - Profile raising opportunities associated with the launch of the Charter.
 - A commitment across the public sector to continuing to share resources and learning to support better informed design policy, guidance and decision making.
 - To continue to explore opportunities for joint working in future wherever this adds value.
- 2.7 Subject to the support and commitment from Local Authorities, it is envisaged that much of the work associated with this proposal could be undertaken utilising officer time from the Local Authorities and SYMCA Executive. Some limited expenditure to commission external specialist advice and support may be required, subject to further work to develop the proposal and a better understanding of the potential resource implications.
- 2.8 Subject to the agreement of this Board, the proposed next steps are for a working group of Local Authority and SYMCA officers to develop a more detailed brief and

clarify resource implications with a view to progressing the Charter and associated activities during 2023.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1

Support the preparation of a South Yorkshire Residential Design Charter and complementary activities.

3.2 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations

Key risks associated with this approach are:

- That not all South Yorkshire Authorities agree to support the proposals.
- That Local Authorities and SYMCA are unable to commit sufficient officer time and any identified financial resources.

These risks are being mitigated by working closely with the Local Authority Heads of Planning, Housing Directors and urban design leads to develop the proposals. A working group has been established and options to minimise resource implications will be explored.

3.3 Option 2

To not support the development of a Residential Design Charter and complementary activities.

3.4 Option 2 Risks and Mitigations

The key risk associated with this option is that up to date, consistent guidance and messages around residential design quality are not put in place and that existing approaches remain ad hoc. This could be mitigated to some extent by taking forward individual elements of the proposal (such as more regular shared learning opportunities); however, the benefits of the full package of proposed activities would not be realised.

3.5 Recommended Option

Option 1.

4. Consultation on Proposal

4.1 The proposal has been developed in conjunction with the Local Authority Heads of Planning Group and urban design leads. Should the proposal be supported, opportunities to secure input and feedback from other stakeholders including communities and the development industry will be explored.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Subject to approval, the next steps are for a working group to develop a brief to take forward this proposal, including timescales, and clarify resource implications. Subject to support from all partners, the intention is to progress the Charter and associated activities during 2023. The Board will be kept updated with progress.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

- 6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement issues arising from this report; however, budget and procurement implications related to implementing the proposal, should it be supported, will need further consideration in conjunction with the South Yorkshire Authorities.

7. Legal Implications and Advice

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

- 8.1 There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

- 9.1 There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report; however, raising residential design quality will improve the standard of homes and places within South Yorkshire to the benefit of all communities.

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

- 10.1 Raising the quality of residential developments will help ensure that new development responds to the challenges of climate change, including improving energy efficiency which will help the region meet its net zero targets.

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

- 11.1 There are no Information and Communication Technology implications arising from this report.

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

- 12.1 There would be communication and engagement opportunities associated with the launch of the Design Charter and the development of complementary activities.

List of Appendices Included:

- A Presentation: Residential Design in South Yorkshire

Background Papers

None