Gateshead Access Panel
Disability Equality in Gateshead and the Region

Urban Design SPD Review January 2012

**Response on behalf of Gateshead's
Disability Service User Involvement Forum
to the Public Consultation**

LDF Feedback Report No 3
for
Development and Enterprise
Gateshead Council
Local Development Framework
NewcastleGateshead One Core Strategy

January 2012

Subject:	**NewcastleGateshead One Core Strategy**
Document:	Urban Design SPD, Draft Sept 2011
Reviews:	14 December 2011- 04 January 2012
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Contents

Gateshead Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), Draft September 2011:
Review January 2012

Additional Feedback to Consultation

Note: Reference should also be made to the following feedback reports prepared by GAP in response to the current public consultation:

LDF Feedback Reports

No 1: One Core Strategy Review January 2012

No 2: Urban Core Area Action Plan Review January 2012

No 4: Housing Alterations + Extension SPD Review January 2012

Gateshead Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Draft September 2011: Review January 2012

General Issue: Document Format

Printed Document:

The following notes make comment on the spiral-bound printed copy of the Urban Design SPD, September 2011, provided to GAP for the purpose of this review.

The majority of the text used in this document is based on a thin character font and uses grey colour on white page background, both attributes make the text difficult to read due to the thinness of the characters and reduced contrast on the page. Readability is further reduced by the text size, which is mostly size 10 font for the main body of the text. For example, from page 24:

Policy 16 Health and Wellbeing
- Ensuring development contributes to health and well being

The above heading appears to be "Myriad-Roman (or similar font) size 12, with the body text below this in the same font but only size 10. The text on this page is moderately easier to read, due to the use of the white text on a mid-blue tone background. However with smaller font sizes such as this, the result is a greater tendency for the words in the text to run into each other, which makes it more difficult to scan or read along lines, especially in long paragraphs of more than a few lines.

Also, on page 33, the central block has white text on backgrounds of different colours, which results in varying contrast between text and background. Unfortunately in this case, even where the white text is use on a dark background as in the top (dark blue) panel, the legibility of the font is poor principally due to the narrowness of the font style and small text size.

For best practice, the minimum font should be size 12 for the body text, black rather than grey text should be used, and preferably with a bolder character style such as "Arial" or "Helvetica" or similar. This report uses Arial size 14 as standard for the main body text, with black text on white page.

Section Numbering and Headings and Core Policy References

The numbering of sections and chapters in the document is confusing and does not appear to match the listing in the contents page. Core Strategy Policy references appear to refer to the strategic policies as numbered in the earlier One Core Strategy (January 2011) consultation draft, which has since changed in the latest September draft Core Strategy numbering; which is confusing and should be remedied when documents finalised.

PDF Document:

The following notes make comment on the PDF version of the Urban Design SPD, September 2011, downloaded from the council website by GAP for the additional reference purposes for this review. Similar issues regarding legibility of font and text size as mentioned above for the printed version are also applicable to the PDF version, although the ability to enlarge / zoom the pages on screen can mitigate this issue for some people; this may not be adequate for others with impaired vision.

The font used for the main body text in the PDF appears to be "MyriadPro-Light" (or similar) with grey text on white pages, which does not support good legibility, as for example in paragraph 4.1 on page 26:

If places are to be used and cherished they must be
safe, comfortable, varied and attractive. They also need
to be distinctive and offer variety, choice and fun.
At the heart of good urban design, is making places
for people. Good design can help create lively places,
with distinctive character; streets and public spaces
that are safe, accessible, pleasant to use and human in
scale; and which foster a sense of civic pride.

General Issue: Document Content

Reference Document for Inclusive Environments

There appears to be little if any reflection within the early sections of this document with respect to 'best practice' standards for accessibility and inclusive design of the built environment. 'Manual for Streets' is referenced in various sections, but this does not provide adequate guidance on the development of inclusive environments for disabled and vulnerable people. It is important for quality of design and place making as well as sustainability, that inclusive design principles are encouraged from the outset and throughout the development processes.

Inclusive Design Guidance

Although in need of some updating, GAP advises reference to "Inclusive Mobility", published by Department of Transport 2005, as the principal guidance for this purpose. There has been some consideration nationally given to the preparation of a joint document to bring together the guidance in Manual for Streets and Inclusive Mobility, but we believe no decision has been taken as yet on which government department would produce this or when this might happen. It seems appropriate therefore that until such time as this guidance is updated, reference should also be made to:

"British Standards 8300: 2009: Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice".

"There is a strong link between the design and management of the buildings, spaces and places and the development of a more equal and inclusive society. Places that are inclusive should:

- be welcoming and for everyone
- be accessible and easy to use, with dignity and without undue effort or anxiety
- enhance our mental and physical health and well-being reflect the diversity of today's society while building on the history of local areas
- encourage mutual and harmonious relations between social groups
- and ensure that economic resources are evenly and fairly shared.

These principles are embedded in a range of national standards and best practice guidance including Building for Life, Code for Sustainable Homes, Lifetime Homes standards, Manual for Streets, The principles of inclusive design, Planning policy statements 1, 3, 6 and 12 and planning policy guidance note 17." Inclusion by design, CABE 2008

Other documents that should be referenced for "further information" include:

- British Standards 8300: 2009: Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice
- Inclusion by design - equality, diversity and the built environment, CABE 2008.
- Inclusive Mobility, Department for Transport, 2005
- Lifetime Neighbourhoods, DCLG, Dec 2011
- Planning Advice Note 78: Inclusive Design, March 2006
- Sight Line: Designing better streets for people with low vision:
  A pioneering study shows how better street design can transform life for people with low vision, helping them to become more confident and more mobile. CABE 2010.

Part 2: 4.0 Borough Wide Design Objectives

No stated objectives with regard to developments based on principles of "inclusive design": this appears to be a result of the importance of inclusive design not being identified within the policy objectives of the One Core Strategy document; as indicated in GAP's reports reviewing the One Core Strategy Document drafts in May and December 2011, and in review of the Urban Core Area Action Plan in December 2011.

It is unclear and confusing as regards which policies are being referenced in this document, as on page 24 it refers to:

> "…the emerging Core Strategy Policies including:
> "Policy 16: Health and Well-being"
> "Policy 16: Quality of Place"
> "Policy 16: Green Infrastructure and Natural Environment"

Whilst it is assumed these references are meant to reflect on the current draft version of the OCS document (September 2011), the lack of accurate cross-referencing to this document creates confusion for those persons reading and reviewing this SPD.

Layout (Urban Grain), Page 27: There appears to be an error in the text : "…small and infrequent (fine grain), or large and infrequent (coarse grain)…": should this not read: "…small and frequent (fine grain)…"

Density and Mix, Page 28: This appears to use the wrong text in relation to the right hand picture of Borneo Sporenburg, Amsterdam.

Architectural Form, Page 29: This appears to give the wrong definition. Also a typographical error in text for the right hand picture of St Paul's Visitor Centre, with the word "use" printed as "sue".

D 4.1: Quality Design and Architecture

Building Types (page 32)

At 4.7, first bullet point states:
- Ensuring the development proposals are underpinned by the principles of sustainable design

This should be "…principles of sustainable and inclusive design".

At 4.10, reference to "…good storage provision" will be ineffective in addressing the issue unless some guidelines and potentially a required minimum %age volume of each individual housing accommodation / type is stated.

New Housing (Page 33)

4.11 makes reference to:
> "Core Strategy Policy 23 (Housing for specific groups) and (Ensuring a balanced housing stock)"

However the current OCS document (Sept 2011) covers this under "Policy CS13".

Also stated in this section is a reference to Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing:

"Other matters to consider when preparing proposals for new housing include:
- The provision of Lifetime and wheelchair homes in accordance with Core Strategy Policy 23 (Housing for specific groups).
- Meeting the minimum internal space standards as set out in Core Strategy Policy 23 (Ensuring a balanced housing stock)."

Also, the phrase in the last bullet point refers to "Meeting the minimum internal space standards as set out in Core Strategy Policy 23 (Ensuring a balanced housing stock)".
 What does this actually mean?
The OCS document (as a policy document) does not state minimum space standards, but does say:
> "Providing adequate space inside and outside of the home to meet the needs of residents."

So whose space standards does this SPD refer to and what is the basis for the standard?

Housing and Adaptability for Disabled People
Gateshead like many local authorities and housing organisations are struggling to fund adaptations to homes for disabled persons. It is widely believed that by adopting policies for the provision of Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing the cost to adapt such properties to meet occupier needs will be greatly reduced. This is in part a worthwhile assumption that GAP generally supports. However, what does not appear to be generally recognised by the accommodation providers (i.e. LAs and HAs) and developers, is that this does not automatically address the housing needs of disabled people and is unlikely to provide housing that can be affordably adapted for disabled adults and children with high dependency and / or complex needs; where additional space is generally required to accommodate assisted lifestyles and care needs, such as for an ensuite wetroom for assisted bathing / showering. A policy is required to advocate the design of homes with additional flexibility of accommodation, including potential for future ease of extending, supported by suitable allowances for permitted developments through local planning guidelines that respond to specific impairment related needs; which goes beyond the existing Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing standards.

Lifetime Homes Standard
This is generally intended to support the lifestyle changes of families through the generations, including those with children using prams and pushchairs, persons

who become less mobile through accident, age, or other health issues; where some basic allowances are made to facilitate movement between spaces and around spaces for independent use of a wheelchair, and potential for some future adaptation to facilitate accessibility needs.

> "Housing that is designed to the Lifetime Homes Standard will be convenient for most occupants, including some (but not all) wheelchair users and disabled visitors, without the necessity for substantial alterations.

> Lifetime Home will meet the requirements of a wide range of households, including families with push chairs as well as some wheelchair users. The additional functionality and accessibility it provides is also helpful to everyone in ordinary daily life, for example when carrying large and bulky items. Lifetime Homes are not, however, a substitute for purpose-designed wheelchair standard housing. Many wheelchair users will require purpose-designed wheelchair housing. Planners and providers should therefore ensure that good provision is made to meet this need."

> Lifetime Homes: For Professionals: Lifetime Homes: For Professionals: 16 Design Criteria from 5 July 2010 (REVISED): www.lifetimehomes.org.uk

> "Lifetime Homes are general needs dwellings that are designed to provide accessible and convenient accommodation for a large segment of the population from families with young children to older people, and people with temporary or permanent physical impairments.

> By catering for differing needs of disabled people as residents or visitors, Lifetime Homes will reduce discrimination and social exclusion by promoting inclusive and balanced communities.

> Building homes that are both accessible to a wide range of people with added features within the design to increase flexibility in use if needs change is both cost effective in respect of low adaptation costs and increases the market potential of the property."

> Lifetime Homes: An introduction. Habinteg 2007

Wheelchair Housing Standards

This standard aims to address the basis needs of disabled people who are able to generally or mostly achieve use of specific rooms or facilities in and their home either independently or with some assistance from a wheelchair, but does not provide access to all rooms and activities or provide for high dependency needs or care support.

> "Dwellings built to wheelchair housing standards will be designed specifically to meet the diverse and changing needs of wheelchair users and the

multiplicity of impairments that some wheelchair users experience. Lifetime Homes, while suitable and offering choice for some people with impairments will not have the additional spatial requirements all wheelchair users need to access every room and facility of the dwelling, and thereby maximising their potential for independence.

Lifetime Homes and wheelchair housing do have features in common, but there are important differences and more detailed requirements for wheelchair housing that will almost certainly make the footprint of a dwelling to wheelchair housing standards different to that of other dwellings."

Wheelchair Housing design standards: An introduction. Habinteg 2007

Home Zones

Although not referred to in this document, it is important to recognise the limitations of shared surface environments and impact on many disabled people with physical mobility and / or sensory impairments. Community involvement of representative disability groups is very important to develop local guidelines for Home Zones, which will encourage greater confidence in proposals for future developments. Reference should also be made to the report: "Design for Disabled People in Home Zones" published by JMU (Joint Mobility Unit) 2007.

Part 3: 5.0 Urban Design Principles

Consider inclusion of reference to the guidance to best practice as stated in "by design: Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice": section 2: thinking about urban design, published by DETR and CABE, 2000; as listed later in this report as part of the review of Appendix A.

3.0 street layout and ease of movement (page 69)

GAP strongly advise reference to the "Inclusive Mobility" guidance document, and the specific inclusion of this reference under the heading in the green block listing "Design principles 3 0 street layout and ease of movement" as follows:
> "(e) reflect best practice guidance contained within Manual for Streets 1 & 2
>   and Inclusive Mobility"

4.0 public realm (page 70)

2.11 includes the statement:
> "The design and location of street furniture should be carefully considered as an integral part of the design of the public realm and should be positioned so that it does not obstruct pedestrian desire lines, or pose a hazard to the visually impaired."

The above statement should be amended to read "…or pose a hazard to visually impaired people"

Reference should also be made to the importance that considered use of materials and tonal contrast between materials, especially at junctions between levels and between vehicle and pedestrian routes can greatly aid recognition of routes and navigation of the environment, especially for people with impaired sight. This also applies to other physical features in the environment such as street furniture, where changes in surface finish, texture and tonal contrast can aid recognition of potential hazards and obstructions as well as increasing awareness of such facilities.

Certain materials tend to be automatically associated with function, such as black tarmac surfaces and vehicle routes, concrete blocks and slabs and pedestrian routes; which can be a very important consideration for some people and especially for those with sensory, cognitive or developmental impairments.

> "People experience the built environment differently according to who they are – their social, cultural and economic background. The full diversity of this experience needs to be considered if all users are to be comfortable and feel that a particular space or place belongs to them."
> Inclusion by design, CABE, 2008

Design Principle 4 – public realm (in green panel on page 70)
Consider making specific reference to the above issues within the green panel titled, such as where it states: -
   (c) using a selective palette of materials to provide a
   unifying theme and a distinctive sense of identity to the locality;
This could be changed to read: -
   (c) using a selective palette of materials to provide a
   unifying theme and a distinctive sense of identity to the locality,
   whilst also enhancing the readability of the environment;

Further reference is made to disabled people within the existing list under this heading at (f) and (h), to which some changes are currently suggested as follows:
   (f) ensuring accessibility for prams, wheelchair users
   and people with disabilities or mobility problems
Preferred text:
   (f) ensuring accessibility for prams, for wheelchair users,
   and for people with other mobility problems; including people with
   sensory, cognitive and developmental impairments

(h) considering the needs of disabled people and
how the place / space will be used these groups

Preferred text:

(h) considering the needs of disabled people and
how the place / space will be used by these groups

Commissioning of artists and other sub contractors

Within this section under the heading "Design Principle 4" it states:

(g) on occasion commissioning bespoke street
furniture from artists

It is very important that developers recognise the need to provide an appropriate brief to all sub contractors, including artists, which responds to: the principles set out in this guidance; the OCS policies; and current legislation including equalities legislation (i.e. the Equality Act 2010 and subsequently published Codes of Practice). Specifically in relation to elements to be installed in the built environment, where there is potential for public interaction, there should be consideration given to the principles of inclusive design and how people with impairments may be given equality of opportunity to benefit from the art work. This may include such as: incorporating tactile elements; seating for respite; elements that can create an audible response, such as with changes in wind direction or moving water; and / or elements that may create an olfactory response when approached possibly through inclusion of planting that may respond to changes throughout the seasons, and sometimes by recognising how allowing pleasant aromas to escape from buildings into the pedestrian areas can aid recognition of the services offered, such as from a bakery or coffee shop.

7. 0 building design & materials

Materials and Detailing

It is important that developers and designers recognise that the choice of materials and finishes for elements and features externally and internally to buildings can greatly affect how the building, its function and features can be readily recognised. The visibility of and through entrances and interior spaces for example can aid recognition of place and function, making it easier for all users of the environment including many disabled people to find the facilities of interest or need; as well as increasing an individuals confidence to enter, which is particularly important for many disabled and older persons.

Care is required with regard to association and juxtaposition of materials, and framing of elements and features to aid recognition of such as glazed entrances in a glazed façade, or timber doorways in a timber or similar colour tone façade.

Similar issues exist in the external environment and streetscape as regards the importance of highlighting and contrasting street furniture and routes by use of different and / or contrasting materials and finishes; especially where interaction or wayfinding are intended.

Design principle 7 - building design and materials (green panel on page 73)
Within the green panel GAP suggests additional text to address the issues discussed above, such as:
" (g) use materials to enhance recognition and awareness of environments. Consideration of how materials can be used to aid recognition and encourage activity in environments should influence the choice of materials, finishes and detailing, to provide environments for more accessible to all."

8. 0 public art

When considering the introduction or addition on public art into communities, it is important to consider how the art reflects on the community and how community ownership of the art form can be encouraged.

A number of successful projects have achieved this in Gateshead through community involvement by the artist and commissioning organisation, to encourage ideas from the local people about what how they with to perceive their community either in the past, present or future, or what messages they wish visitors to their locality to take away with them, or what aspects of the locality may be reflected, amplified, or transformed by the art work. Such artworks can be viewed in the riverside sculpture park that reflect on the industrial eras, the routes across the river, or the changing face of the quayside areas, whereas the artwork at Watergate Forest Park reflects both on the coal mining heritage as well as the current aspects of the nature reserve. In the latter example the artist involved the local community, schools, and Gateshead's DESUIF (Disability Equality Service User Involvement Forum) meetings, to provide suggestions for artwork that could enhance the accessibility of the park, by incorporation of artwork as seats at rest points and viewpoints as well to provide features for orientation and waymarking, with visual and tactile elements.

Design principle 8 - public art (in green panel on page 74)
Within the green panel GAP suggests additional text, such as:
"Encourage community involvement by developers and artists to consider how public art can reflect aspects of the local community, history, culture, or aspirations for the future of the community, and to enhance social inclusion."

Appendix A (Page 75)

Design Quality Standards: Reference Documents:

Lifetime Homes is included in this listing, but not 'Wheelchair Housing' or 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods': GAP suggests these should also be included.
Please see also GAP comments above in response to the section on "New Housing (Page 33)" with regard to Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Housing and the limitations of these standards for disabled people with high dependency and complex needs. Therefore, although it is appropriate to refer to the Lifetime Homes Standard, it is not appropriate to refer to it as on page 75 as "…flexible adaptable homes for people of all ages and physical abilities"

"Inclusive Design - Design of homes for people with a range of physical abilities": This reference appears to refer to a publication from English Partnerships which was superseded by the Homes and Communities Agency and then by the Department of Communities and Local Government. Consequently the publication appears to be no longer available.

GAP advises there should also be reference to guidance on Community Involvement, as adopted by Gateshead Council's "Statement on Community Involvement" (SCI) as referred to on Page 17 of this draft SPD.

Other documents that should be referenced for "further information" include:
- British Standards 8300: 2009: Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice
- By design: Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice, DETR and CABE, 2000
- Inclusion by design - equality, diversity and the built environment, CABE 2008.
- Inclusive Mobility, Department for Transport, 2005
- Lifetime Neighbourhoods, DCLG, Dec 2011
- Planning Advice Note 78: Inclusive Design, March 2006
- Sight Line: Designing better streets for people with low vision:
  A pioneering study shows how better street design can transform life for people with low vision, helping them to become more confident and more mobile. CABE 2010.
- Statement of Community Involvement, Gateshead Council (current document was published 2007 and is subject to annual review "…in conjunction with the preparation of the Local Development Framework's Annual Monitoring Report" as stated in the document).

Consider inclusion of reference to the guidance to best practice as stated in: "by design: Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice": section 2: thinking about urban design, published by DETR and CABE, 2000 as listed next (subject to approval of copyright) either as a reference or as written here.

Objectives of urban design

Character *A place with its own identity*	To promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture.
Continuity and enclosure *A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished*	To promote the continuity of street frontages and the enclosure of space by development which clearly defines private and public areas.
Quality of the public realm *A place with attractive and successful outdoor areas*	To promote public spaces and routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including disabled and elderly people.
Ease of movement *A place that is easy to get to and move through*	To promote accessibility and local permeability by making places that connect with each other and are easy to move through, putting people before traffic and integrating land uses and transport.
Legibility *A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand*	To promote legibility through development that provides recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks to help people find their way around.
Adaptability *A place that can change easily*	To promote adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.
Diversity *A place with variety and choice*	To promote diversity and choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs.

Ref: "by design: Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice: section 2 thinking about urban design, published by DETR and CABE, 2000.

Appendix C

Urban Core Windmill Hills and Riverside Park (Page 88)
The descriptive text and proposed Design Guidance appears to have been transposed relative to the diagrams on this page, compared to the layout on the previous pages in this Appendix, which causes some confusion for anyone reading this, especially if less familiar with the area. The layout of this page should be improved and reflect the layout of the previous pages, with text alongside the diagrams instead of under as on this page.

Within the description of the Riverside Park, there is reference at the end of the paragraph to "…improvement works that have made the park more accessible." This statement is only partly true, as the steepness of the site topography and existing routes creates barrier to disabled and older people. There is therefore an existing need for the creation of easier access routes for disabled and older people through the park and to reach some of the locations of public art, for it to be "accessible" and more inclusive.

7: Glossary

Definitions need to be provided also for the following terms:

- inclusive design
- community involvement
- social inclusion

Please refer to GAP via the contact below for any clarification of the contents of this report.

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