SUBJECT: INCLUSIVE LANDSCAPE DESIGN

FINAL DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

1. Synopsis

1.1 The Inclusive Landscape Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is the first of its kind. The demand for it derived from a review of policies, practices and procedures undertaken by Islington Greenspace in partnership with Disability Action in Islington. The need identified was for a clear standard, appropriate to Islington’s environment, to provide a reference point for designers, an evaluation tool for project managers and an enforcement instrument for planners. When adopted the SPD will form part of Islington’s Local Development Framework (LDF).

1.2 In line with the Council’s vision of ‘One Islington’ the proposed SPD will contribute to the development of stronger communities within the borough where ‘all people from whatever background are able to realise their potential’ and ‘diverse communities feel safer’.

1.3 The first draft was approved for consultation in April 2009. The summer was spent recruiting a diverse body of local disabled people and preparing for a facilitated event to elicit informed views to coincide with the statutory public consultation period of 7 September to 19 October 2009.
2. Recommendation

2.1 To approve the final draft Supplementary Planning Document – Inclusive Landscape Design – for adoption.

3. Background

3.1 Key among the objectives championed by Islington’s Local Development Framework is that of an Inclusive Environment. That objective is upheld through policy, strategic planning documents, design guidance, development management procedures and enforcement. This objective reflects that enshrined in the London Plan and the Mayor’s Supplementary Planning Guidance ‘Accessible London; achieving an inclusive environment’.

3.2 To assist designers and regulators realise the object of Inclusive Design, the Planning pages of the Council’s website provide detailed advice, resources and specialist contacts. The site refers to a number of national guidance documents including:

- The Approved Document to Part M of the Building Regulations
- BS 8300:2001 - Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people: Code of Practice from British Standards Institution.
- Inclusive Mobility - A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure.
- The LB Islington Streetbook and The LB Islington Urban Design Guide (IUDG)

However, these refer in the main to the built environment and to a lesser extent aspects of hard or soft landscaping.

3.3 The lead authority on the design and management of outdoor spaces is the Fieldfare Trust, which produces a comprehensive guide ‘Countryside for All’. There is however a gap, one that is felt significantly in Islington’s urban setting with its 127 parks and open spaces, ranging from the Ecology Centre and parks with pitches to tow paths, elegant squares in residential areas, adventure playgrounds and hidden oases.

3.4 In addition there are many planning applications, submitted to the Council, that include a significant public realm and or landscaped element. The access aspects of those parts of the scheme will not be scrutinised by Building Control and so the onus is with Development Management to advise and scrutinise those aspects of the proposal in greater detail than would normally be associated with the planning stage of a development.

3.5 The purpose of this SPD is to provide guidance for Islington’s own design teams, to enable project managers to set a standard for outside contractors and ultimately to provide a reference point for Development Management officers assessing planning applications.

3.6 The guidance provided within the proposed SPD is drawn from a number of national and regional guides. The introduction provides the philosophical, principled and strategic basis of Inclusive Design upon which designers should be expected to apply their skills. The main body of the guide then sets out practical objectives, design considerations and minimum provisions, which should ensure that barriers are designed out and flexibility built into any landscape design proposal. Each section provides guidance on one of a range of common features and the ‘provisions’ listed set out ways in which relevant objectives can be met. There may be alternative ways of satisfying the design objective but
the onus will be on the designer or planning applicant to demonstrate the effectiveness of other solutions.

3.7 The costs associated with the processes of Inclusive Design, those of research and consultation, will be offset by the greater sustainability and more successful reach of works so completed. At the same time, costs to the designer or developer should be cut because for the first time the Council is setting out a clear standard, which it expects every landscape proposal to meet and against which planning applications will be assessed.

3.8 This final draft SPD design guide has been produced by the Council's Access Officer, under the direction of a steering group drawn from the Greenspace landscape design, project management, playgrounds and maintenance teams. It has more recently been informed by programmes of engagement with children from a local SEN school and a diverse group of disabled people, recruited by Disability Action in Islington.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications
The cost of producing the supplementary planning document and the public consultation is funded through existing Local Development Framework budgets within the Strategic Planning and Regeneration division of the Environment and Regeneration department.

4.2 Legal Implications
The SPD rests upon saved policies within Islington's UDP: D3 (site planning). It also seeks to effectively implement the London Plan Policy 4B.5 Creating an Inclusive Environment. The guidance is drawn from a range of national and regional guidance documents, selected on the basis of Greenspace project managers' and designers’ experience, the advice of statutory consultees and the views of local disable people, all moderated by the Council’s access officer.

4.3 Equalities Impact Assessment
An EIA been completed. The likely positive impacts and benefits of the SPD include:

- Increasingly accessible and inclusive open spaces throughout the borough
- Raises the profile of inclusive design within the council and to external stakeholders
- Gives stakeholders clear guidance on how to achieve inclusive landscapes
- Strengthens and expands the suite of guidance documents already available, enabling Islington Council to remain at the forefront of creating an accessible environment.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations
It is recommended that the final draft Supplementary Planning Document – Inclusive Landscape Design be taken forward for formal adoption.
Final Report Clearance

Signed by

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Executive Member for Communities, Skills and Business
Date

Received by

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Head of Democratic Services
Date

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