SUBJECT: Inclusive Design Supplementary Planning Document

1. **Synopsis**

1.1 Following the adoption of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, the Council is preparing Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to support their implementation. One of these SPDs is the Inclusive Design SPD, which is the subject of this report. The SPD is attached to this report at Appendix One.

1.2 Applying to all aspects of design, this Supplementary Planning Document sets out the principles of ‘Fairness through Inclusive Design’ that underpin the Council’s Local Plan, and sets basic minimum standards for some of the most commonly occurring design elements in and around public buildings, places of employment, housing and student accommodation.

1.3 This Inclusive Design SPD replaces the existing Accessible Housing SPD and Planning Standards Guidelines, and for the first time introduces space and quality standards for student accommodation. It serves to explain a range of design policies within the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies.

1.4 The draft SPD was issued for public consultation between 30 September 2013 and 11 November 2013, and has been revised accordingly.

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 To note the key points raised during public consultation and the Council response as presented in the consultation statement (Appendix 2).

2.2 To agree to adopt the Inclusive Design Supplementary Planning Document at Appendix 1.
3. **Background**

3.1 The SPD replaces Section 5 ‘Access and Facilities for People with Disabilities’ of Islington’s Planning Standards Guidelines 2000 (updated 2002) and the ‘Accessible Housing SPD’ 2009. It also takes into account the introduction of the Equalities Act 2010 (superseding the Disability Discrimination Act), revisions to British Standards and the updated Lifetime Homes Standards (2010). It introduces for the first time, essential space and quality standards for student housing that effectively interpret policies on accessible housing for student accommodation in order to deliver fairer, more inclusive and sustainable facilities. The SPD will provide a ready reference for applicants and the Council’s own development management officers.

3.2 The London Plan, Islington’s Core Strategy and Development Management Policies now views student housing as ‘Housing’ for the purposes of planning policies on ‘Housing Choice’ and a flexible housing stock. This means that all parts of a student housing development should be ‘visitable’ (and so facilitate social inclusion/community cohesion) and 10% of bed spaces should be wheelchair accessible. However, student housing is explicitly excluded from the standards set for ‘general needs housing’ that are set out in the Mayor’s Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

3.3 In order to implement the above planning policies, it has been necessary to interpret the principles of inclusive design for the student housing context, taking into account:

- The accessibility of shared facilities
- The accessibility of en-suite and/or studio bedrooms
- The location and design of self-contained wheelchair accessible rooms

3.4 The space standards proposed for student housing have been tested as part of the Council’s viability study ‘Study of Financial Viability of Student Accommodation in Islington’ (August 2012) and which showed they do not affect the viability of current development models.

3.5 **Consultation**

The draft SPD was issued for public consultation between 30 September 2013 and 11 November 2013 and has been revised accordingly.

Nearly 2800 letters and over 1750 emails were sent out, inviting designers, developers, student housing providers, access and inclusion professionals and organisations of disabled people to comment on the draft SPD.

As part of the consultation exercise, Disability Action in Islington facilitated a focus group of disabled students to look specifically at the proposed standards for inclusive student accommodation. The recommendations of that group are summarised in the consultation statement attached at Appendix 2, and a full report is available on request.

The consultation responses have helped inform the final SPD, the changes including:

- The introduction of a section to address issues of access and inclusion within an historic environment
- A additional requirement that all student bedrooms are visitable
- A relaxation of the requirement that generally used student bedrooms (over and above the 10% wheelchair accessible rooms) are adaptable
• A requirement that wheelchair accessible bed spaces are properly integrated throughout a development
• The addition of a glossary of terms

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications:
The cost of finalising and implementing the Inclusive Design SPD will be met from the existing budget of the Spatial Planning Team, which sits within Planning and Development Division.

4.2 Legal Implications:
This Inclusive Design Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared in line with the relevant planning regulations. The statutory policy bases for the SPD are the policies in the adopted Development Management Policies including DM2.2 - Inclusive Design and DM3.4 – Housing Standards.

The SPD is subject to consultation in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012. Following consultation and adoption the SPD will assist with the assessment of any future relevant planning applications.

4.3 Environmental Implications:
The statutory policy on which this SPD is based has been subject to extensive Sustainability Appraisal (SA) at each stage of plan preparation. The draft Inclusive Design SPD has not been subject to Sustainability Appraisal because the SPD does not introduce new policies, it simply supports implementation of existing policy in Islington’s Local Plan. These policies have been sufficiently appraised in the SA of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies.

In addition, the SPD has been subject to the screening in terms of the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and European Directive 2001/42/EC. The screening concluded that the Inclusive Design SPD will not result in any additional significant effects to those already identified through the higher level sustainability appraisals.

4.4 Equality Impact Assessment:
The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The Council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons’ disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The Council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

An equalities impact assessment (EqIA) was undertaken on the Development Management Policies which provide the basis for this SPD.

An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken for the SPD. This is available on request. The assessment lists the likely positive impacts and benefits of the SPD, all of which advance the Council’s Fairness agenda:
• It will raise the profile of inclusive design within the Council and to external stakeholders
• It will give stakeholders clear guidance on how to achieve inclusive environments
• It strengthens and expands the suite of guidance documents already available, enabling the Council to remain at the forefront of creating an inclusive environment.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 The Inclusive Design SPD replaces the existing Accessible Housing SPD 2009 and Planning Standards Guidelines and for the first time introduces space and quality standards for student accommodation. It serves to explain a range of design policies within the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies.

The introduction of an SPD that consolidates and effectively enforces the Council’s inclusive design policies is particularly important now, at a time when Central Government proposes to introduce a national standard for housing design and seeks to remove local authorities’ power to set local design standards in the future. With a robust local standard that is secured by way of the Local Development Framework, Islington can defend its policies on Inclusive Design and potentially delay the impact of a national housing standard that would effectively become a maximum rather than a minimum standard and adversely affect the quality and accessibility of new housing in Islington.

Appendices

• Appendix 1 - Inclusive Design SPD
• Appendix 2 - Consultation statement

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Executive Member for Housing and Development  20.1.14

Report Author:  Clare Goodridge and Karen Ross
Tel:  2394
Email:  Clare.Goodridge@islington.gov.uk and Karen.Ross@islington.gov.uk