

**NOTICE OF MOTION – CLLR G CUNDY – INTRODUCE A PLANNING POLICY TO GREEN
NEW DEVELOPMENT OVER 15 STOREYS**

Executive Summary

At its meeting on 25 July 2019, the Council referred the following Notice of Motion to the Executive.

Councillor G Cundy

“This Council should introduce a policy at the earliest opportunity whereby any new planning application for development over 15 storeys should have at least 20% of its total surface area as living wall, garden terrace or roof garden. Where the Council has ownership, control or interest this policy should be adopted prior to formal policy introduction as a matter of internal policy.”

Officer Comment

“The Council is committed to improving the environment and ensuring sustainable development across the Borough. In this regard, the principle of having a living wall, garden terrace or roof garden as part of development is supported. However, the notice of motion as drafted is too prescriptive and could be counterproductive to the objectives and benefits that the Council is seeking to achieve by integrating green infrastructure as essential part of development.

There are various types of green infrastructure that can successfully be integrated as part of development other than living walls, garden terraces or roof gardens depending on the nature and location of the development, which must not be ruled out. The appropriateness of the type of green infrastructure that could be integrated into development should depend on the individual merits of the development and its locational characteristics.

A policy that sets a threshold of over 15 storeys for it to apply gives the wrong message that green infrastructure should not be an essential part of development up to 15 storeys. There would be a significant number of development up to 15 storeys that could also benefit from green infrastructure, which the Council would find it difficult to secure because of the restrictions of such policy.

The requirement for 20% of the total surface area of development to be green walls etc. could present design and aesthetic challenges given that there might not be uniformity in the height of development in the area.

Living walls, garden terraces, and roof gardens require specialist products to thrive and maintain with added costs to development. It is highly likely that such a prescriptive policy will require a formal modification to the Core Strategy and an appropriate scrutiny at an examination to give developers and interested parties the opportunity to make representations. Unless the Council chooses to do so otherwise, the next review of the Core Strategy will be in October 2023 when this matter can be addressed.

The Council's development companies operate independently on commercial basis. It would be indefensible to impose such restrictions on them when challenged if it is not backed by an adopted local plan policy. The Council may therefore wish to have a dialogue with the companies to decide how best they can be incentivised to meet these prescriptive targets before the internal policy is introduced. This would mean having a clear understanding of the cost implications and how it would be funded.

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Members are reminded that the Council already has a robust policy on green infrastructure opportunities, which already promotes green walls and green roofs without being too prescriptive. Policy DM1 (Green infrastructure opportunities) of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) promotes green walls and green roof as examples of green infrastructure that can be incorporated into development. The policy can be applied to achieve the same objectives as the notice of motion if planning decisions take full account of its requirements. A copy of the policy is attached at Appendix 1 for information.

It is recommended that this matter is deferred and appropriately considered as part of the future review of the Core Strategy.”

Background Papers: None.

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