

WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

DRAFT NOTES OF A MEETING OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING GROUP

HELD ON 22 JULY 2021 IN VIRTUAL MEETING

Present: Councillor Tahir Aziz (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Steve Dorsett
Councillor Gary Elson
Councillor Will Forster
Councillor Adam Kirby
Councillor Louise Morales (Chairman)

Giorgio Framaliccio
Ernest Amoako
Daniel Ashe
Gillian Bernadt
Stephanie Broadley

Absent: Councillor Simon Ashall

Actions

2. Review of Outlook, Amenity and Daylight Supplementary Planning Document

Ernest Amoako introduced the report and explained that the Outlook, Amenity and Daylight Supplementary Planning Document (DPD) provided detailed guidance on achieving suitable and appropriate outlook, privacy, daylight and sunlight in new residential developments, whilst safeguarding the distinctive attributes of adjoining residential areas. Subject to the recommendations of the Working Group, it was anticipated that the report would be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 9 September 2021. There would be a minimum of 6 weeks public engagement and consultation between September 2021 and November 2021 to give the public the opportunity to comment on the draft SPD, and for their views to be taken into account before the SPD was finalised.

The Chairman queried whether SPDs had to be updated regularly and Ernest Amoako commented that SPDs offered the most flexible approach to review and that it was possible to review detail application of policies as and when you felt it was necessary to do so. The timing would be dependent on a number of factors.

On page 10 under point 1.5, the Chairman noted that new text had been added regarding dwellings located in the Boroughs main high density centres, which may allow closer separation distance. The Chairman commented that the Group needed to decide if this was required as she thought it would allow for poor quality development in high density areas such as in the town centre. Ernest Amoako commented that this particular SPD had specific characteristics that relied on its application taken account of the context within which the proposal is considered and that it was important how the guidance was interpreted. Every situation could present its own challenge and Planning

Officers advise how and when to apply these rules. The SPD did the best possible to highlight the fact that cannot lose sight of character and context to which application is determined. The Chairman commented that this change in text did suggest that it would be possible to relax the rules in high density centres going forward and was concerned regarding this. Ernest Amoako stated that this was the case, however the applicant would have to provide all the information in the first place to allow Members of the Planning Committee to make this judgement. Councillor T Aziz commented that he was not comfortable with this change and would like it to be clearer. Following a query from Councillor G Elson, Ernest Amoako confirmed that the document provided detailed guidance, rather than rules or absolutes.

On page 11, point 1.6 this had previously referred to 'larger village centres' which was more specific, rather than 'local centres' which had been replaced with. Daniel Ashe advised that the term 'local centre' was used in the Core Strategy; there were currently quite restrictive rules in place for urban centres and it was hoped that change would give Councillors more flexibility when considering applications.

Following a question, Ernest Amoako confirmed that Woking did have a similar approach to other authorities, what was different was the different information that unpinned the planning documents such as a character study to determine what the character of a specific area was. The context to which you were applying these measures differed from area to area.

It was noted that the 'Outlook' section had not changed much.

On page 15, point 3.5, following a query Ernest Amoako confirmed that he would check whether 'duplex' was a typo.

ACTION: E Amoako

Following a question Ernest Amoako confirmed that the evidence showed that there was a need for one/two bedroom dwellings. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment showed the type of accommodation that Woking needed. The Chairman commented that she was concerned that Woking now had an excess of studios and one bedroom properties and that there was not enough two bedroom. The Chairman was concerned that the SPD stated that one and two bedroom did not need amenity space and suggested it might encourage that kind of dwelling to be built. Ernest Amoako commented that the SPD did not drive policy, the DPD did that. The Chairman commented that it would be better if there was a more up to date housing need assessment.

On page 16 under point 3.10 the Group discussed the potential uses for the communal amenity space such as BBQs and children's spaces, and it was suggested that maybe these kinds of uses should be added. Ernest Amoako explained that anything could be added, but that there needed to be justification for doing so. Councillor Kirby queried whether the possible uses of the communal space could be expanded without being as specific as to list items that needed to be included. It was noted that this list could not be specific as it was important that applications not be rejected based on these. It was suggested that the end of the sentence be amended to read 'provide variety for resident's needs.' Ernest Amoako commented that these issues would not be dismissed and that Officers would see if they could accommodate the

thoughts of the Group. It was also noted that when this documents went out to consultation, other suggestions may be made. It was important that we ended up with a document that could be enforced.

ACTION: E Amoako

On page 16, point 3.11, the Chairman requested that the picture be replaced with an image from purple phase Sheerwater rather than an image from London.

ACTION: E Amoako

It was noted that point 3.15 and 3.16 on page 17 were entirely new to this policy.

Regarding point 3.18 on page 17, the Chairman was concerned that this would apply to very tall buildings, which did not provide any additional amenity space above four storeys high. Councillor G Elson thought that this was probably due to practicality and land cost as in high density areas it would be difficult to get anything built at all if there was a requirement for a huge amount of amenity space; although he did note it was important to get as much amenity space as was feasibly possible with very tall buildings. Ernest Amoako advised that evidence needed to support this amenity space figure and the implication of land availability needed to be considered. Although point 3.18 noted four storeys it was noted the Planning Officers would always try to achieve the maximum amenity space, however we did not want a SPD to limit what we were trying to achieve. Some Members agreed that developments needed to be viable, but that also that Members needed to decide what standard they wanted for high buildings and that to have no provision for above four storeys was wrong. Councillor S Dorsett suggested that perhaps additional wording should be added to state 'and proportionate amenity space for higher buildings'. The Group agreed that this should be added.

ACTION: E Amoako

On page 22, point 4.14 the chairman requested that 'laurel' be removed from the list of evergreen shrubs as this plant did not promote biodiversity. The Group agreed that this be removed.

ACTION: E Amoako

On Appendix 1, starting on page 30, Members commented that they found it strange that there was no mention of separation distances from commercial buildings. Councillor Kirby commented that he thought anything that affected residential properties should be covered by this scope and therefore this should take into account the residential/commercial property relationship. Members asked for a comparison document from neighbouring authorities on how they approached this; the Group appreciated that our separation distances needed to be specific to Woking and the character of specific areas, but Members thought that this would be useful information to have. Ernest Amoako stated that if this was the wish of the Group, then his team would find the appropriate wording and placement for this change in the document. It was also noted that an appendix could be added showing the separation distances applied elsewhere outside of the Borough.

ACTION: E Amoako

The Working Group RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the Executive that subject to the four recommended amendments noted in these minutes;

- (i) the contents of the proposed revision to the Outlook, Amenity and Daylight Supplementary Planning Document be noted and approved for public engagement and consultation between September 2021 and November 2021; and**
- (ii) delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning to approve amendments to the draft Outlook, Amenity and Daylight SPD to reflect new information before it is published for community engagement and consultation.**