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Royal Borough
of Windsor &
Maidenhead

Building Height and Tall Buildings Supplementary Planning Document

Consultation Statement

November 2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement sets out the work involved in preparing the draft Building Height and Tall Buildings Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for public consultation and how the Council has engaged various stakeholders and the community in preparing the SPD.
- 1.2 After the consultation on the draft SPD, this consultation statement has been updated to reflect the feedback received and sets out how this has been taken into account in the final version of the SPD. The final consultation statement will be published alongside the SPD for adoption.
- 1.3 In line with Regulation 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) 2012 regulations and with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Revised Statement of Community Involvement (June 2020), this statement provides details of:
 - (i) who the local planning authority consulted when preparing the supplementary planning document
 - (ii) a summary of the main issues raised by those persons
 - (iii) how those issues have been addressed in preparing the draft and final versions of supplementary planning document (SPD)

2 SPD preparation and early stakeholder and community involvement

- 2.1 During the examination pause period of the Borough Local Plan (BLP) in 2019, the council engaged consultants Urban Initiatives Studio (UIS) to prepare a Tall Buildings Strategy and Tall Buildings Technical and Baseline Study.
- 2.2 The intention was that this work would provide a robust evidence base for the formulation of a specific Tall Buildings policy in the Borough Local Plan, including specific design principles related to the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead that could form the basis for a future SPD.
- 2.3 As part of preparing the earlier work on the BLP, stakeholder engagement took place, mostly involving consultation and engagement with internal officers. This was an opportunity to test emerging thinking on a range of issues, such as certain design principles and aspects of infrastructure provision.
- 2.4 When the allocation sites were confirmed, UIS reviewed those allocations and provided guidance on tall buildings and increased building heights in areas that were of sufficient scale and opportunity to take this change. A draft Tall Buildings Strategy (TBS) and Tall Buildings Technical and Baseline Study

(TBTBS) were then published in October 2019 and included in the BLP examination evidence base.

- 2.5 As a result, members of the public and other stakeholders had the opportunity to make comment on the draft versions of the TBS and or the TBTBS during the examination of the BLP. Furthermore, the Inspector asked a number of questions in her Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) for the Stage 2 BLP hearings, including several related to Tall Buildings (Matter 6, Issue 4) and people had the opportunity to respond to these MIQs.
- 2.6 A BLP Stage 2 hearing session was held to discuss the proposed new policy QP3a (and its evidence base) on Tuesday 10th November 2020. Several parties attended this, including those representing developers and the local community. There were concerns raised, for example, on the draft policy including the acceptability of tall buildings in the Ascot area.
- 2.7 Following this, the Inspector specifically referenced both the emerging policy and the Tall Building Strategy in her Stage 2 examination post-hearing advice letter. This feedback necessitated a review and redrafting of Policy QP3a and the TBS and TBTBS.
- 2.8 This was an ongoing process that took several months of work between Council Officers and UIS. The revised policy was again consulted on at the Main Modifications stage and in her final report, the Inspector found Policy QP3a (as amended) to be 'sound'.
- 2.9 Post adoption of the BLP, further work was undertaken by UIS on producing the SPD document in order to ensure consistency with the adopted BLP. This included a review all sites, updating of boundaries where there were changes, confirmation of UIS recommendations for these areas.
- 2.10 Council officers have been involved and consulted at all stages of the production of the Tall Buildings Strategy and SPD since 2019 and their feedback has informed the content of the document from the start of the process.
- 2.11 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening has also taken place on the draft SPD with statutory consultees (Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England). As a result of this, it was agreed that a full SEA was not required for this SPD.

3 Consultation on the draft SPD – Autumn 2022

- 3.1 Consultation on the draft SPD took place between 30 August 2022 and 11 October 2022. This was two weeks longer than required by the Regulations to reflect the fact that the consultation was partly held over the summer holiday period. The approach taken to consultation was consistent with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
- 3.2 The following steps were taken to publicise the consultation and associated events:
- Everyone on the planning policy consultation database was notified, mainly by email, some by hard copy letter.
 - Information was included in the Borough Residents' Newsletter
 - Social media was used to message about the consultation
 - A public notice was placed in the Maidenhead Advertiser (1st September 2022) and the Windsor Express (2nd September 2022)
 - A press release was issued and there was press coverage of the consultation
- 3.3 All persons on the Council's planning policy consultee database were notified about the consultation. Residents were able to respond in several different ways, including via the consultation portal or by completing the Word version of the consultation form and returning it by email or by post.
- 3.4 All consultation material was made available on the Council website and hard copies were placed in Maidenhead Library, Windsor Library and Ascot Library.
- 3.5 A number of consultation events were held during the consultation period to help explain the draft SPD and encourage people to write in with their comments. These were:
- A drop in/exhibition event:
 - Maidenhead Library – 8th September 2.00pm – 6.30pm
 - An online briefing event – 28th September 6.00pm – 8.00pm
- 3.6 A recording of the online event was also made available on the website.
- 3.7 During the consultation period people were able to send in their comments in a number of different ways:
- Via the Council's planning consultation portal
 - By filling in a form available on-line and returning it by emailing or post, or by emailing comments

- By filling in a hard copy form available at Maidenhead Library, Windsor Library and Ascot Library.

4 Main Issues Raised in Consultation on the Draft SPD and Main Changes to the SPD

- 4.1 A total of 104 different organisations and individuals submitted written comments on the draft SPD. Many of these submissions were very extensive in nature, covering a wide range of issues in the draft SPD. A detailed summary of the of the key issues raised in these comments and a list of all the individuals and organisations who commented is contained in the Summary of Representations document (Appendix 1 to this document). The Summary of Representations document also sets out the Council’s response to the issues raised and, where appropriate, highlights (in bold) where changes have been made to the SPD in response to those comments.
- 4.2 The issues raised were both of a general and detailed or technical nature. Key issues and concerns raised, primarily from the general public, included:
- Comments on the recommendations of the SPD on building heights on some of the sites identified as being most appropriate for tall buildings in the Borough. Particularly at the northern end of the South West Maidenhead Placemaking Area and Maidenhead town centre
 - General concern that the scale of development would result in overdevelopment of parts of the Borough
 - Opposition to some aspects of the context height analysis in certain areas of the Borough, including Windsor town centre, Ascot town centre and Cookham
 - Questions raised on the methodology employed to identify the sites that were assessed as being the most appropriate for tall buildings
 - Questions on analysis of Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) information used to inform the analysis included in the SPD
 - Suggestions raised that the SPD introduces new policy
- 4.3 There was a desire from some of the general public’s comments to see more clarity and certainty than they perceived the draft SPD to provide. Some also sought the use of stronger, firmer language in the way that some issues are addressed in the SPD. Conversely, there were challenges, particularly (but not entirely) from the development industry, suggesting that the draft SPD was going “too far”, was “too prescriptive” and may be seeking to set policy in an SPD which was regarded as inappropriate.
- 4.4 There were a wide range of detailed and technical comments on various aspects of the draft SPD, but focusing on three main elements:

- Context heights
- The methodology used to identify the sites that present opportunities for tall buildings
- The assessment of sites in Table 5.1 of the SPD (showing Borough-wide increased height, large building, and tall building detailed guidance)

4.5 Other areas of focus for more detailed comments included:

- Quality of the maps included in the SPD
- Sustainability/biodiversity net gain
- Some design issues including massing

4.6 In response to the comments received a wide range of changes have been made to the SPD. These are outlined in more detail in the “response” column of the table in Appendix 1. In summary some of the main changes made to the SPD following consultation are:

- The addition of text throughout the document to make it clear that this SPD does not allocate sites for development or grant planning permission, but rather that it identifies locations that present opportunities for tall buildings in the Royal Borough, together with site-specific recommendations on building height. It provides additional detailed guidance on location, height and design of tall buildings and sets application requirements for tall buildings as required by paragraph 6.14.11 of the BLP.
- Wording reviewed and amended where required to ensure consistency with the role of SPDs, with other documents in the Council’s Development Plan and the other SPDs adopted by the Council.
- A review of the Borough’s context heights using a GIS based methodology to compute context heights and create a metric-based context height to make the methodology even more robust.
- Re-evaluation and amended (where appropriate) of the potential heights possible on the sites identified as being most appropriate for the development of tall buildings in the Borough.
- Guidance reviewed and amended for several sites, including at Maidenhead Train Station (LM1), South West Maidenhead (LM7).
- Guidance reviewed for all sites included in Table 5.1 of the SPD and amended where appropriate, including the addition of text to make it clear whether or not there is an opportunity for a tall building on each site within the table.

- The addition of height guidance in metres for non-residential development.
- A review and update of all of the maps within the SPD in order to reflect the review of context heights and in response to requests to make them as legible and easy to read as possible.
- A review of the Application Requirements section, including the removal of the statement that outline planning applications for tall buildings are unacceptable.
- A number of other updates and clarifications in the key principles section, including wording aimed at reducing the risk of bird strikes.
- Updates to the text to ensure consistency with local and national policy, including national green belt policy.

4.7 Whilst it has not been possible to make changes to address all comments, not least because the SPD has to be consistent with the policies in the Local Plan, significant changes have been made in finalising the SPD. The SPD will be very important in shaping planning applications that are received by the Council, and there will be further consultation and engagement on those planning applications as they are prepared and submitted.

Appendix 1 - Summary of Representations on the Building Height and Tall Buildings Supplementary Planning Document

See separate appendix.