

Backland and Infill Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Statement of Consultation

1- Backland and Infill Development

1.1 The SPD has been prepared to provide detailed guidance to assist the consideration of backland and infill development. The SPD ensures that such development protects residential amenity and contributes to the attractiveness of the area.

1.2 Following on from the Swindon Design Guide the SPD emphasises the importance of good design and makes it clear that backland or infill development schemes should generally be 'in character' with the existing built environment and appear to naturally 'belong'. The SPD also makes it clear that backland and infill development should not give rise to adverse amenity issues, in particular with respect to overshadowing, privacy and overlooking.

1.3 In addition, the SPD provides detailed advice on design & materials, plot size, site layout, garden space provision and access & parking arrangements, which infill and backland development proposals will be expected to adhere to. The SPD allows for any application that fails to conform to the advice in it, to be recommended for refusal.

2 - Consultation Arrangements

2.0 A draft of the Backland and Infill SPD was considered at the Borough Council's Planning Committee meeting on 13th February 2007. Approval was given at that meeting for a formal public consultation exercise to take place on its content for a period of six weeks.

2.1 Consultation on the draft SPD took place between 19th February and 2nd April 2007.

2.2 The outcomes of the public consultation exercise were considered by Planning Committee on 13th June 2007. Approval was given by the Committee to adopt the Backland and Infill SPD for the purposes of development control and to aid decision-making.

2.3 The plan has been adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives discussed in the SA. The SA assessed the potential effects of both the SPD policies and relevant Local Plan "saved" policies. It has found that both sets of policies have the potential for beneficial sustainability effects. However, policies in the Local Plan regarding Backland and Infill development are extremely limited and, without supplementary guidance, are unlikely to result in significant benefits for the Borough. Consequently, it is considered that the SPD will contribute significantly more to sustainability objectives than relying solely on the "saved" policies.

3 - Consultation Outcomes

3.1 During the consultation period on the draft SPD, responses were received from a total of 11 parties. Nine of these – the Theatres Trust, Swindon Police, Wroughton Parish Council, South Marston Parish Council, Chiseldon Parish Council, Thames Water, Penhill Forum and Mr Adrian Read all offered supportive comments, with suggestions for further inclusions. Hannick Homes & Development Ltd and Fairhurst (UK) Ltd submitted the most significant comments in respect of their length and detail. A full summary of the comments and their responses are appended alongside this document.

3.2 Several key changes have been made to the document since the consultation period, the most significant of them are:

- To include the revision of diagrams and photographs.
- The structure has also been changed to include access and parking as a separate chapter.
- The revision of specific minimum plot and garden sizes.
- A number of updates and corrections have been necessary to reflect new information such as new national guidance 'Manual for Streets' (DFT, March 2007).
- Appeal decisions in favour of backland and infill schemes have been included to give a more balanced approach and provide the circumstances and boundaries in which such development has been allowed.

4 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

4.1 Following consultation of the draft Backland and Infill SPD, the document was amended to reflect the consultation responses and findings of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report. The SA Report incorporates the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC for an Environmental Report.

4.2 Under Section 39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Sustainability Appraisal is mandatory for new or revised Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and SPDs. Local authorities must also conduct an environmental assessment in accordance with the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC "on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment"

4.3 European Directive 2001/42/EC also requires that when a plan or programme is adopted, a statement must be produced, summarising how environmental considerations have been taken account of in the plan or programme.

4.4 The SA highlighted a number of potential significant adverse effects that could result from the SPD, including:

- The potential to reduce the biodiversity value of back gardens; and
- The potential effect of development on reducing permeability on at least part of a site, leading to increased risk of flooding from surface water run-off.

4.5 In response to the significant adverse effects highlighted in the SA, the following changes were made to robustly mitigate these potentially significant adverse effects:

- Added paragraph 2.9 referring to the importance of existing garden spaces for biodiversity and wildlife habitats.
- Added paragraph 2,11 regarding flood risk associated with Backland and Infill development. Recommendation includes the use of permeable surfaces where possible and the implementation of sustainable drainage systems where possible on larger sites.

4.6 The SA has been carried out as an integral part of producing the Backland and Infill Development SPD and has provided input at each stage of production. Integrating the Sustainability Appraisal from the outset was considered essential to ensure the SPD met the objectives of sustainable development. As a result the SPD has become a resource that will further the achievement of sustainability objectives, within the Borough, by encouraging development that is well designed and built in the right location, making efficient use of land but without compromising the quality of the local environment.

4.7 The SA has been carried out in line with Government guidance contained within “*Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents*” (ODPM, 2005) and “*The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities*” (ODPM, 2003). The SA meets the requirements of Section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 and European Directive 2001/42/EC.

5 - Monitoring

5.1 European Directive 2001/42/EC requires that information is made available to the public on measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the SPD. Proposed monitoring measures have been documented in the SA Report.

6 - Further Information

6.1 The document is available to be viewed and purchased at the Borough Council's offices at Premier House, Station Road, Swindon and is also available to view and be downloaded from the Borough Council's website at www.swindon.gov.uk/supplanningdocs