

**STREETSCENE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT AND HIGHWAYS GUIDE  
FOR DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP  
TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2010  
(2:00 pm to 3:10 pm)**

Present: Borough Councillors Finnie (Lead Member), Finch and Leake

In Attendance: Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning & Transport  
Max Baker, Head of Spatial Policy  
James Turner, Principal Engineer (Transport)  
Ann Groves, Urban Design Officer  
Kevin Tidy, Assistant Engineer (Highway Adoptions)  
Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview & Scrutiny)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Barnard.

**2. Lead Member**

Councillor Finnie was appointed as the Lead Member of the Working Group.

**3. Streetscene Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Highways Guide for Development Consultation Drafts**

The Chief Officer: Planning & Transport introduced the above consultation drafts stating that the rationale behind them stemmed from some issues that arose in 2007 during the development of Jennett's Park. These had included differing internal views in respect of the visual treatment of roads, street furniture and lights, parking and landscaping etc. and how they interlinked. As a result, the Spatial Policy Team had developed the SPD for guidance to ensure informed, consistent and robust decisions. The SPD established the principles for the streetscene and was supported by the Highways Guide for Development which set out detailed guidance. Both documents were in consultation draft form.

The Urban Design Officer gave a presentation in respect of the consultation drafts which listed the issues leading to their development, placed them in context, explained the role of the street, indicated the timetable for developing the documents and outlined the consultees and consultation responses received to date.

Issues leading to the development of the documents included the need to make minor amendments to approved plans to take account of design change to address Highways Authority and adoption requirements; the benefits of having documents to bring a design guide and technical specification together; the raising of standards requiring a balance between quality and maintenance costs; a common approach to development; promoting sustainability principles; offering practical design guidance; reducing street clutter; and achieving a consistent approach to commuted sums from developers towards infrastructure maintenance costs.

In terms of context to the consultation drafts, they had been developed by a multi-disciplinary officer working group including representation from all relevant teams,

namely, Planning, Parks & Countryside Landscape, Trees, Refuse & Recycling and Highway Engineering, Maintenance and Adoptions. The officer working group assessed all differing professional requirements and identified solutions to any conflicts achieving an approach that was acceptable to all disciplines. The two documents had been developed together and both formed part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) building on a plan-led approach to development. The Highways Guide for Development contained detailed technical highway specifications that were not appropriate for inclusion in the higher level SPD.

The role of the street was to achieve a balance between quality, safety, function, adoption and maintenance costs in perpetuity. The government's residential street design guidance, 'Manual for Streets', had changed the emphasis and focused on creating variety and quality spaces for all to use, a sense of place and identity, and in-house training in respect of its principles.

With regard to the timetable, the documents had been developed during 2009 and had been approved for public consultation purposes by the Executive in May 2010. The public consultation had taken place during the period 24 May to 5 July during which time nine responses had been received. Assessment of the consultation responses and resulting revisions to the documents was taking place from October to December. Comments from this Working Group were required by 14 December and the Executive would be invited to adopt the final documents at its meeting in March 2011.

Developers, house builders, architects, planning and highway consultancies, parish and town councils, neighbouring authorities and the LDF database of interested parties had been consulted on the documents. The key issues to emerge from the consultation responses had been insufficient information relating to Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), significant drainage solutions were needed to offset the potential for flooding, mobile phone and other communication networks should be placed underground, there was some duplication in the documents and areas where clarification was sought, the documents provided useful and informative guidance, a glossary and cross reference to area specific documents should be included.

The following points arose from subsequent questions and discussion:

- With regard to the deteriorating condition of some private roads in the Borough, the Working Group was advised that the maintenance of such roads was the responsibility of the residents concerned and that the guidance related to new residential development only. The use of private roads by the public as a link sometimes occurred and could be an issue unless private developments were built in the style of cul-de-sacs to prevent through traffic. In the event that private roads were utilised as an access for new developments, some upgrading by the developer may be necessary to bring the roads up to an adoptable standard or otherwise development would be resisted. As the Council encouraged developers to build new roads to the required standard and offer them for adoption, the guidance highlighted the pitfalls to developers of retaining private development roads which had ongoing maintenance responsibility and insurance liability.
- In response to a question concerning planning for future traffic increases, the Working Group was advised that the specification for road building had remained largely unchanged for the past 20 years. In terms of the impact from development, road hierarchy would be considered within any proposed layout and junctions within the development and on the existing highway network would need to be capacity tested and improved as necessary. Any analysis would

consider the amount of development traffic in addition to background traffic. Any future year analysis would contain growth factors which would be applied to the background traffic. Changing lifestyles featuring increased home delivery of goods by large vehicles was also an issue to be taken into account in road design and capacity.

- An officer explained that the meaning of the phrase 'street legibility' was the level of ease with which road layouts and junctions could be interpreted, navigated and remembered. A grid design was considered to be more legible than a hierarchical layout with lesser roads such as cul-de-sacs leading off larger feeder roads. Highway designers considered a grid layout to be more efficient than small winding cul-de-sacs although the road layout was dictated to some degree by the shape and size of the development site. Officers would undertake an assessment of terminology used in the drafts to ensure the documents were written in English.
- A Member felt that the guidance contained a contradiction between favouring an open environment and suggesting that enclosed areas such as cul-de-sacs were more secure. There were differing views in respect of the latter point as, although cul-de-sacs tended to attract less crime, this was dependent upon the level of daytime occupation of residences. The officers undertook to address any contradictions in the documents.
- In response to a question as to whether the guidance addressed extinguishing streetlighting overnight, the Working Group was advised that although the specifications for streetlights were included in the documents, they did not specify when streetlights should be illuminated in order to offer flexibility. Although existing policy required the illumination of streetlighting during all hours of darkness, consideration was being given to reducing the hours or utilising motion sensors. New developments took account of existing lighting in the area and could include the provision of additional lampposts if considered necessary.
- A Member expressed the view that new developments should maintain the character of areas where they were constructed.
- As it was not possible to prescribe for all situations, the guidance sought to strike a balance between prescription and suggestion. Another Member did not favour over circumscribing streetscenes, particularly by the use of grid patterns, as this could de-humanise areas against people's wishes for an interesting environment offering a variety of outlooks and privacy, which could more easily be achieved through some curvature of the streetscene. It was felt that if preferred road layouts created street cleansing or similar issues then attention should be focused on using equipment which suited the roads and did not dictate their layout.
- The provision of garaging in housing developments was identified as an issue. Research behind 'Manual for Streets' had found that garage use across the country had changed from parking to storage for reasons including increased car size, reduced house size and lack of storage space, leading to increased on-street parking. In line with this, the SPD favoured alternatives to garages such as parking barns and stated that the use of garages would only be considered appropriate in certain circumstances. The Working Group did not concur with this view stating that garage provision should continue as garages were served by driveways which offered off-street parking and the need for parking was likely to increase in future years. Increased on-street parking owing to a reduction in

garage provision would impact on the design of residential streets. Parking / garaging provision at a distance from homes was not welcomed as it led to indiscriminate parking on pavements and verges etc. The officers indicated that where garages were counted as parking provision but not used for that purpose the result was insufficient space for parking in the streetscene and these factors needed to be balanced. The Council was unable to dictate house space and storage provision to developers. The wording of this section of the SPD would be reviewed by officers.

- The Working Group was invited to identify some examples of developments with well designed streetscenes as a template for future developments. Edgcombe Park Drive in Crowthorne and Jennett's Park were identified although the latter currently lacked some facilities. Elvetham Heath was also identified as its raised kerbs and planting prevented indiscriminate parking. The narrowly bended entry section and roundabout of Stevenson Drive in Binfield were cited as examples of poor streetscene design. Wider streets with rumble strips to control traffic speed were welcomed as they offered an open outlook and could be easily negotiated by all vehicles.
- Members considered that the refuse collection section of the SPD needed to be strengthened and address the problem of bin storage for residents, particularly those living in terraced properties, owing to the number of different wheeled bins currently in use which detracted from the streetscene. Although screened hideaways for bins would have merit, residents could not be compelled to use and maintain them.
- The SPD sought to reduce street clutter, in line with a government request and a new traffic manual. It was noted that any new signs would be added to existing sign posts/poles to minimise the number. St Marks and the London Road traffic lights were identified as the only areas of the Borough which were overly cluttered with signage.
- Responders to the consultation included the Government Office for the South East, the Environment Agency, Chavey Down Residents' Associations, Parish Councils and individuals. The maximum consultation period of six weeks had been pursued in order to attract as many responses as possible. The public were reluctant to respond to consultations and consideration needed to be given to identifying effective ways of engaging with potential responders. No complaints in respect of a lack of consultation had been received.

#### **4. Future Meetings and Activities**

The Working Group's views would be submitted to officers by the deadline of 14 December to be taken into consideration by the Executive when it agreed the final documents at its meeting on 29 March 2011. No need for further meetings of the Working Group was envisaged and the outcomes of its work would be reported to the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 11 January 2011.

#### **5. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.