
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2011

EEOSP.15/11

HOUSING DESIGN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Assistant Director (Economic Development) (Mrs Meek) presented report ED.08/11 that covered feedback following two stages of consultation in 2007 and 2009 and proposed changes to the document in response to the consultation. The document had been amended in line with officer consideration of the comments received and any additional changes to national planning policy. Mrs Meek explained that the document would form part of the Local Development Framework and that the purpose of the document was to expand on key design policies within the local plan in the light of national guidance and local, regional and national best practice. It would apply to residential developments of varying scales, for individual household applications to large scale developments. She believed it was a helpful and useful document.

The Urban Designer (Mr Higgins) gave a presentation on the document that gave the background to the consultation and advised that the document was still a work in progress. He stated that the document showed examples of design both good and bad from local and other developments. Mr Higgins indicated that the document responded to new guidance and included movement, public realm and open space and landscape.

Mr Higgins advised that during the consultation in 2009 61 representations had been received, most of which had been incorporated into the current draft of the document.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- *How had the comments from the consultation been treated? Had the people who had made comments received a written response?*

Mrs Meek explained that officers would not normally respond directly to people who had responded to the consultation as the response was in the document.

Mr Higgins advised that a lot of the response was in the detail of the report. Comments from agencies such as English Heritage, Police and Cumbria County Council were included in the document, including all constructive suggestions received.

- *If a person had responded would that response appear on the Council's website?*

Mrs Meek confirmed that the final report would be available on the Council's website and that the Executive's report was also available that included the responses received.

- *If an application indicated a certain number of parking spaces per property could the Council make a decision to change that figure?*

Mrs Meek advised that the Council were able to set local policies as part of the Local Development Framework policy process. Previously parking was decided by the Highway Authority but now it was possible to be decided by Members as part of the Local Development Framework. Mrs Meek stated that it was important to develop policies and that they were key to development in all areas.

- *If a development came before the Development Control Committee now could Members specify a figure for parking spaces per property?*

Mrs Meek advised that there would have to be some justification for the figure but that it could be looked at. She confirmed that the Local Development Framework would be the overarching document.

- *The Development Control Committee needed the power to be able to make decisions without the threat of potentially high costs.*

Mr Higgins advised that the Supplementary Planning Document was an emerging document and advised that as such there may be errors and requested Members to advise if they found any errors in order to rectify them before the final document was produced.

- *The document referred to levels of parking spaces and suggested that there should be a maximum level. The Member believed that could render the document less flexible than it otherwise could be.*

Mr Higgins advised that the figure was governed by specifications within the Cumbria Design Guide but that national limits had now been removed and there was now no minimum or maximum. If Members wished to increase the figure to one above the Cumbria Design Guide standards, that would have to be done through the Local Development Framework. Mr Higgins explained that appropriate parking provision could be identified through pre-application/development briefs for a larger development.

The Economic Development Portfolio Holder advised that officers were attempting to establish a Local Development Framework group and suggested that Councillor Watson may wish to be part of that group.

- *Parts of the city have had trees and grassed areas removed to be tarmaced for parking purposes. Was there a mechanism in place that would prevent that happening in future developments?*

Mr Higgins advised that parking pressures could be looked at as part of the landscaping process and that permeable paving was available that allowed run off into a planted area. Developers could be asked to pay a commuted sum for landscape maintenance.

- *Members agreed that the document was very well presented with a lot of illustrations and limited use of jargon.*
- *There was a concern regarding density and parking issues in that Carlisle was a unique area as residents could access city centre facilities but needed a car to access anything outside the centre. Therefore parking spaces were required on properties to avoid parking on the street. Was there enough flexibility to allow innovative parking provision?*

Mrs Meek advised that density was included in the Local Plan but that had been superseded by the new Government policy PPS3. Mrs Meek stated that the Council would always be looking for new ideas and officers worked with developers to implement new ideas.

Mr Higgins advised that an urban site required a certain density to make parking, services, shops and public transport viable.

- *There were a number of Conservation Areas within Carlisle and it would be a shame if concerns about architecture prevented innovative design.*

Mrs Meek believed that Development Officers encouraged good design whether it be modern or a reflection of historic design.

- *The document stated that “Pursuit of Code 3 rating or above will be encouraged in all new residential developments.” Was “encouraged” sufficiently strong wording?*

Mrs Meek advised that it would be difficult to insist on such measures as, particularly in historic areas, materials were expensive and while it was important to ensure the correct design, it was a matter of getting the balance between design and cost right and Development Control Officers would look at those issues with the developers.

- *The report stated that response from United Utilities referred to water harvesting. Sometimes green issues used more energy than they were attempting to save.*

Mr Higgins advised that in some cases it was uneconomical to recycle grey water. He believed that insulation was very important to conserve energy.

- *The report was a good step forward and would be useful to Members, Development Control officers and the public. A great deal of thought had gone into the report and Members of the Panel had learned a lot.*
- *Are all references to responses marked on the website?*

Mrs Meek advised that they should be and confirmed that she would check. Mr Higgins stated that there would be a link from the City Council's web page to the final document.

- *Will there be a relaxation for applications for extensions?*

Mrs Meek advised that that would not be known until the new legislation had been received. She expected that people would make enquiries whether planning permissions was needed and be advised accordingly.

RESOLVED: 1) That the report be noted.