

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 7 March 2016
Report of: Head of Regeneration and Development
Title: Approval of the Skyline – Watford’s approach to taller buildings SPD

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 A new supplementary planning document (SPD) has been prepared to accompany the forthcoming Taller building policies within the Local Plan 2. This SPD identifies the particular issues to be considered when designing taller buildings. This has been prepared in light of a number of pre-application enquiries relating to proposals for taller buildings.
- 1.2 The intention is to adopt the SPD prior to adopting Local Plan 2. This is to ensure planning officers and developers have guidance on what is acceptable for designing taller buildings.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet are asked to adopt Skyline – Watford’s approach to Taller Buildings SPD.
- 2.2 Delegated authority is also requested for the Head of Regeneration and Development to approve editorial changes to layout, photos and general editing post Cabinet.

Contact Officer:

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Report approved by: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration and Development

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1.1 Background

- 3.1.2 Skyline – Watford’s approach to taller building Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), Appendix A, was out for consultation, alongside the Local Plan 2 consultation, for 6 weeks ending on 4th February 2016.

The emerging Local Plan 2 Taller Building Policy seeks to ensure that taller buildings are directed to the most appropriate parts of the Borough, and that the character of Watford is protected and/or enhanced. A strategic approach to the location and design of tall buildings is necessary to create successful places, promote regeneration and lead to the economic success of Watford.

- 3.1.3 The aim of the guidance is to provide a design standard to assist both local authority planners and applicants/designers to create taller buildings of design quality which are based on more sustainable land use patterns whilst improving the community and the built environment.
- 3.1.4 The guidance sets out a clear process with which to assess tall building applications, helping to ensure consistency of approach and offering a steering focus for developers to ensure that any taller buildings are of sufficient design quality to create successful places and improve regeneration.
- 3.1.5 In advance of the Local Plan 2 being adopted it is necessary to adopt the SPD for use. This will be required for applications that come in order to assess the suitability of proposals for new or replacement taller buildings.

Local Plan 2 Consultation

Local Plan 2 – Development Management and Site Allocations has previously been out for two rounds of consultation, and a focussed round looking at a small number of new policies closed on the 4th February 2016. Alongside this consultation of the policies (that will be incorporated in Local Plan 2), the Skyline SPD was also out for consultation.

- 3.1.6 The SPD consultation has had limited responses from Cassiobury Park Residents Association (supportive), Herts Constabulary and Historic England. This can be read in more detail in Appendix B, Regulation 12 Statement.
- 3.1.7 The following comments have been received from Historic England (HE) who broadly welcome the guidance, but have some concerns regarding the content and suggested that some additional work may be necessary before adoption:
1. More explicit reference to the merits of tall buildings in terms of the opportunities for mixed use development;
This has been done.
 2. Reference to the need for recreational and amenity space in association with the residential component of tall buildings;
This has been done.

3. Need to make direct reference to the guidance prepared by HE which was published in December 2015;
This has been done.
4. Greater explicit reference regarding the siting of taller buildings with regard to heritage assets; this should include the direct juxtaposition of the proposed building in relation to an asset; longer views which include assets and suggested wording included. Assets include conservation areas and consideration of the impact of taller buildings on these and on the registered park should be considered. Also, consideration should be given on the potential impact on any assets outside of the borough boundary but which may be affected in terms of view corridors.
Suggested wording included and other issues will be covered in the evidence report to be prepared to support the new policies in Local Plan 2 (TB1 And TB2)
5. Under Criteria 1 (Visual Impact and Design Quality) suggest that reference is made to the use of independent design advice and suggestions made regarding particular images used;
This has been done.
6. Issues with the images used to illustrate the points made under criteria 2 (Urban Scale and Setting) and 3 (Public Realm, Light, view and Privacy);
Images and photographs have been changed and address comments made.
7. Under criteria 7 (Sustainability and Environment) reference the benefits for remodelling and recladding as an option over redevelopment;
This has been done.
8. When selecting materials consideration of how those materials relate to light and shade should be made;
Reference to this has been included.
9. Review how a redevelopment in Cambridge has dealt with parking issues and access to basement areas; need to add more on this issue.
Section has been reworked to take account of comments.

Comments in relation to the policies were also received from HE and these will be considered as the policies are reviewed over the next few months.

3.1.8 As a result of the consultation the SPD has been re-structured and also photos updated and wording added to reflect comments.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 There are no financial implications contained within this report.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that once adopted the SPD will be a material planning consideration which can be taken into account when assessing applications for tall buildings.

4.3 Equalities

4.3.1 None

4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Schemes could be controversial due to height, but the intention of SPD is to minimise this impact.	2	4	8

4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 The Skyline – Watford’s approach to taller buildings SPD aims to help planners when assessing taller building applications. Therefore, there should be no significant staffing impacts as a result of the guidance.

4.6 Accommodation

4.6.1 n/a

4.7 Community Safety

4.7.1 n/a

4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1 Issues of sustainability have been considered and incorporated in the document.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Skyline – Watford’s approach to taller building SPD
- Appendix B – Regulation 12 Statement