

TITLE	: SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR DOMESTIC EXTENSIONS AND ALTERATIONS		
TO / ON	: Planning Control Committee		20 th February 2003
FROM	: Borough Planning & Economic Development Office		
STATUS	: FOR APPROVAL TO GO FOR EXTERNAL CONSULTATION		

1.0 TYPE OF DECISION

1.1 What type of decision is to be taken:-

EXECUTIVE DECISION				COUNCIL DECISION	
Key		Non Key	✓		

1.2 If a key decision, has it been included in the Forward Plan

Inclusion in Forward Plan	(No)	Date of Plan	
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2.0 SUMMARY

Draft Development Control Policy Note 6: Domestic Extensions and Alterations has now been drafted for external consultation purposes. The guidance note seeks to provide members of the public, Planning Officers and Members of Planning Control Committee with clearer guidance on Policy H2/3 (Extensions and Alterations) of the Unitary Development Plan.

The advice note sets out clear standards for a range of potential domestic extensions in order to make it easier to determine what will and will not be acceptable in planning terms.

In order to increase the value and legitimacy of the guidance note it needs to go through a comprehensive consultation period before its adoption. The benefits of adopting the note are set out in this report and Members are asked to approve it

(with or without modifications) in order to progress external consultations.

Members should note that the drawings and diagrams within the draft document are only illustrative at present and they will be improved before the SPG is circulated externally.

3.0 **OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTIONS (with reasons)**

Recommended Option

That Members approve the Supplementary Planning Guidance note (SPG) in order that it can go for external consultation. The standards within the SPG will be used to assess proposals for domestic extensions at all stages of the planning process.

Option 2

That Members approve the SPG with recommended modifications in order that it can go for external consultation.

Option 3

Members reject the approval of the SPG on domestic extensions and alterations.

4.0 **THIS REPORT HAS THE FOLLOWING IMPLICATIONS**

Corporate Aims

The SPG will play a role in the achievement of the Corporate Aims of:

- Develop a stronger community spirit;
- Creating a better future for all generations; and
- Improving the quality and availability of Council services.

Policy Framework

- Bury Unitary Development Plan (adopted August 1997)
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 1: General Policy and Principles (February 2000)

Statement by Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that this report is consistent with the provisions of the UDP and underlying legislation/guidance.

Statement by Director of Finance & E-Government

There are no resource implications arising directly from the adoption of the SPG on domestic extensions and alterations.

**Human Resource
IT/Land and
Property
Implications**

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**Wards/Area Boards
affected**

Boroughwide

**Scrutiny Panel's
Interest**

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Consultations

The draft SPG has been subject to internal consultation with the relevant Sections within the Environment & Development Services Department.

It is envisaged that if the SPG is approved for external consultation purposes that it will undergo a 6-week consultation period with relevant people/bodies including architects and planning agents working in Bury.

Call-in

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Briefings

Executive Members/ Chair		Chief Executive	
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5.0 INTRODUCTION

- 5.1 The Planning Section has recently drafted Development Control Policy Note 6: Domestic Extensions & Alterations (Supplementary Planning Guidance – SPG) to support Policy H2/3 of the Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP).
- 5.2 The SPG provides further advice and clarity on the Council’s standards for certain types of domestic extensions and alterations. It will be a useful document for members of the public in designing their proposals and for Planning Officers in determining whether a planning application is acceptable.
- 5.3 The SPG has already been through internal consultation with relevant Sections within the Environment and Development Services Department, and its content is deemed to be in accordance with local and national planning guidance. However, national planning advice states that SPG should be prepared in consultation with the public and Members are, therefore, asked to approve the SPG for external consultation purposes (bearing in mind that the illustrations within the report will be significantly improved before doing so).

6.0 **BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 All planning applications for domestic extensions and alterations are currently assessed against the criteria contained in Policy H2/3 of the UDP, which was adopted in August 1997. However, the Policy is very generalised in that it does not set out specific standards or guidance for the range of potential extensions possible. The Policy is illustrated below:

<p>Policy H2/3 – Extensions and Alterations</p> <p>Applications for house extensions and alterations will be considered with regard to the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) the size, height, shape, design and external appearance of the proposal;b) the character of the property in question and the surrounding area;c) the amenity of adjacent properties; andd) visibility for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers of motor vehicles. <p>Justification</p> <p>This policy is concerned with ensuring that extensions and alterations to residential properties are of a high standard. Extensions and alterations to dwellings, including garden extensions and garages, can be visually intrusive; restrict daylight, privacy and outlook to neighbouring properties; and unacceptably reduce the available garden area. For all these reasons it is necessary to adopt standards to control the design, form and size of proposed extensions and alterations to ensure that they are sympathetic in nature with the original building and surrounding area. The Council will issue more specific guidance on these matters as necessary.</p>
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- 6.2 This policy is considered to be vague and imprecise. Over the years it has proved to be inadequate for members of the public and their architects to base their designs and proposals on as it does not provide any specific set standards or advice. Similarly, the Policy has not provided Development Control (DC) staff with sufficient details on which to negotiate and determine planning applications.
- 6.3 Subsequently, SPG has been developed and designed to provide more clarity on the above policy and to set out what the Council requirements will normally be for specific types of extensions.

7.0 **ISSUES**

- 7.1 The generalised nature of Policy H2/3, without any supporting guidelines, has raised several concerns, including:
- i) the lack of established detailed guidelines has resulted in DC Officers applying different standards to similar planning applications throughout the Borough. This has become more of an issue recently, as DC staff that have arrived from other planning authorities are used to applying different standards than those that are being applied in Bury. Whilst the differences

in most cases have been minor it is considered important that the same standards are applied consistently throughout the Borough;

- ii) insufficient planning guidance has meant that members of the public and their architects have had little to base the design of their proposals on, apart from the general criteria in Policy H2/3. This has led to the submission of planning applications that have been unacceptable in planning terms due to inappropriate design or scale. In a lot of cases this has been at the applicant's expense in terms of time taken to get a decision and the financial cost of revising plans;
- iii) similarly, the submission of poor quality proposals for extensions has meant DC Officer's have wasted a lot of their time on avoidable negotiations and waiting for the submission of revised plans. Even before the formal submission of planning applications, DC Officer's have spent a considerable amount of their time in pre-application discussions on what standards should be applied to particular proposals; and
- iv) although it is not possible to say for certain, it is felt that the lack of specific adopted standards has encouraged some unsuccessful applicants to challenge Planning Control Committee decisions at planning appeal. Some of these appeals have been successful over the years and the lack of set guidelines is considered to have been a contributing factor in some of the Inspector's decisions.

7.2 It is felt that these issues can be overcome through the approval of set standards in SPG as follows:

- i) once the content of the SPG has been approved all DC Officers can apply the same standards and advice contained within it **consistently** throughout the Borough. This will help prevent DC Officers giving conflicting advice to applicants;
- ii) the SPG will give applicants and agents increased **certainty** to design schemes that are in accordance with the standards at the outset, without having to 'guess' what standards would be acceptable. If applicants meet the standards their proposal will normally be deemed acceptable in planning terms, thus saving them time and money;
- iii) if the advice in the SPG is adhered to by applicants and their agents in the submission of planning applications then this should save valuable Officer time, preventing the need to negotiate fundamental details of a planning application or waiting for amended plans. It will streamline DC Officer's recommendations on applications as they will either be in accordance with the SPG or not;
- iv) Officers will save time on pre-application discussions as they can simply direct applicants to the section of the SPG applicable to their proposal;
- v) if the quality of planning applications improves and Officer's do not have to spend as much time negotiating details, it is expected that the SPG will improve DC's performance in meeting their targets for determining planning applications;

- vi) The SPG can be used to support the Council's case at appeal if an application has been refused and appealed against. Additional weight is given to SPG at appeals if they have been through a consultation period.

7.3 From the above, it is clear that further guidance on domestic extensions and alterations is required and it is felt that SPG is the best way that this can be achieved.

7.4 It should be noted that the SPG can be applied to planning applications before its formal adoption, but as stated, the weight attached to it by Planning Inspectors is significantly less than if it is adopted after a consultation process.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 It is clear that Policy H2/3 does not give adequate advice to either applicants, agents or DC Officers on the standards that should be applied to different types of proposals for domestic extensions and alterations.

8.2 The lack of set standards has led to poor quality proposals that have taken valuable Officer time to negotiate and revise at all stages of the planning process, through to appeal.

8.3 While the approval of set standards is no guarantee that the quality of submissions will improve, they are expected to and it is considered that the SPG will have a positive impact on Officer time and improve the consistency of Council decisions and in meeting Central Government performance targets.

8.4 Therefore, Members of the Planning Control Committee are asked to approve the draft SPG in order for it to go out for external consultation and formal adoption thereafter.

BRIAN DANIEL
BOROUGH PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Background documents:

- Bury Unitary Development Plan (August 1997)

For further information on the details of this report, please contact:

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