

Optimising Site Capacity: A Design-Led Approach LPG

The Optimising Site Capacity - A Design-Led Approach LPG sets out the parameters for a design led approach in understanding the appropriate form of development for a site. In order to achieve the optimum capacity for a site, the process has been split into five stages in which the document provides guidance on the process of determining massing, circulation and provision of greenspace as well as analysing the sites surrounding context.

The document also provides information on the tools that have been developed in order to carry out this work, including the indicative site capacity toolkit and the sketch-up models.

The Council is supportive of taking a design-led approach, this approach however would require a high level of resource, design knowledge and digital literacy within the Council in order to carry out this approach.

It should be acknowledged that the Council has just adopted its local plan, which outlines a number of site allocations, with indicative site capacities relating to residential (C3), shops (E) and community facilities (E). Our local plan is further supported by Neighbourhood Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents which provide further guidance on design and site capacities.

The context of each of these allocated sites was investigated in terms of character, built form, planning designations, non-designated assets of heritage or other value, consideration of any relevant characterisation studies, planning history and examples of nearby development. Information was assembled from the NSP evidence base, discussion with internal stakeholders and wider external input from previous stages of public consultation

This guidance requires very detailed analysis of sites. Southwark has a very diverse urban typology which vary in its characteristics. As a result of this, the Council would have to produce a number of different area characterisations of each different typology, assessing each neighbourhood on its own merit. The Council does not have the resources to take on such a demanding project. The work would also result in the Council duplicating work.

The guidance provides detailed information on the site analysis that would need to be conducted relating to the surrounding area, massing and building typologies, movement and greenspace of the proposed development, which essentially provides the outline design of a site allocation. The Council would like to note that it has provided such information on site allocations located within in the local plan, relating to the surrounding area and the locations of new connections, active frontages and cycle paths however, it is not as detailed as it is suggested it should be within this guidance, relating to massing. The guidance further stipulates that site analysis should also include factors relating to flood risk, noise, land contamination and below and above ground conditions. This something in which a developer/applicant would undertake to understand the parameters of a site in order to create a successful proposal.

We would suggest that there needs to be some flexibility to give applicants and/or stakeholders the opportunity to be creative when designing schemes instead of dictating this.

Public engagement and consultation would require heavy amount resources in order to reach a wide range of people within the borough. Southwark is a very diverse borough with a large number of different ethnic minorities, consultation and engagement would need to be tailored to ensure that each of the ethnic minority groups are represented in the consultation process. Also, to have a successful placemaking exercise, the establishment of neighbourhood boards including residents, businesses and community organisations to create meaningful engagement. Furthermore, we have recently adopted our local plan, in which we consulted and consolidated all the areas for growth and change which would represent the aspirations of this guidance.

Section 3.3 '*Borough-wide growth strategy and location of tall buildings*' three areas are identified that categorise the three areas of change and growth. The Council have recently adopted policies relating to tall buildings. Under this policy the Council have outlined where in the borough tall buildings will and will not be considered and their criteria, whilst ensuring that they are sympathetic to Southwark's urban grain and character.

'*Conserve Areas*' this is generally understood as conservation areas. Here the guidance should be clear that tall buildings are not appropriate in these areas and should include guidance on how to proposed new conservation areas.

'*Enhance Areas*' the guidance should be clear that this is principally about in-fill design reflective of the surrounding area and outline that these areas are not appropriate for tall buildings.

'*Transform Areas*' there is not much guidance here. The areas described here are places defined in Opportunity Areas and Area Action Plans, where clear guidance is necessary, especially about tall buildings. Here is where a mixture of building heights and typologies would be suitable. Transform areas could be defined better residents could take offence at their area being described as '*an area defined as having low-quality development of ill-defined character, future development in transform areas have the opportunity to establish a newly coherent character grounded in good urban design principles.*'

Digitally modelling the capacity of a site is good way of demonstrating different residential typologies that can occupy a site allocation. However, the use of Sketch-Up is limiting, as access to Sketch-Up is required. In addition to access to the software user usability will also need to be taken into account, and the provision of training will be required as officers may not know how to use this software. The guidance should provide examples of alternative software (for example VuCity). The Council has already invested in VuCity which is the preferred tool for massing.

Although, digitally demonstrating a site allocations capacity is considered to be a good idea, it relies heavily on the idea that people have access to equipment to be able to view these

models. This has the potential to alienate residents of the borough from viewing these models.

The site capacity toolkit is described as something that can be used without prior training, and relies heavily on the assumption on digital skills and the ability to use modelling and data input software.