

Housing and tall buildings policy in the New Southwark Plan

Proposals from Southwark Planning Network for discussion with Cllr Johnson Situ and Cllr Leo Pollack

Southwark Planning Network welcomes this opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue with relevant Cabinet members about the ways that housing and planning policy can better meet local social needs.

- We recognise Southwark Council's concern to maximise the number and proportion of council homes being built, for example through its bid to the GLA's Building Council Homes for Londoners fund.
- We are interested in the initiatives the Council is considering to improve the quality of new Council housing, for example through the creation of a new Council-owned construction company and through the revision of the Council's New Homes Design Guide
- We have noted the report "New Homes Programme Delivery Model Review" (30 October 2018) which considers various options for increasing the amount of social housing.

1. We are concerned about the poor design and quality of the very dense developments coming forward in recent years, which are not providing the social housing that is so desperately needed. There are too many very tall buildings and yet there is no evidence that tall buildings provide more social housing than other sorts of development. We wish to go through data on the amount of social rented/affordable housing that has been provided in Southwark across all developments.

2. We seek housing policies that prioritise family homes and good space standards and align sensitively with (rather than compete with) the demands for green space, community space, industrial accommodation and other high street uses. Planning permission has been granted in recent years for housing developments that have a number of negative impacts. These include poor space standards and a lack of community provision and green space.

3. Tall buildings can have additional negative impacts such as overshadowing of neighbouring buildings, the wind tunnel effect and concentration of pollutants at ground level. This is a particular concern in the north of the borough, which is seeing the greatest concentration of tall buildings. We would like to discuss how these negative impacts can be addressed by policies in the NSP.

4. Tall buildings seem to fit within an overall approach of super-densification and high growth, reflecting an obsession with getting as much housing built as possible, rather than what kind and quality of housing is built and for whom. We are not opposed to tall buildings per se, but to the number and kind of tall buildings being proposed (and approved). We wish to talk through whether this is the best model for the people of Southwark and to consider the practicality of other models.

5. In particular, the lifting of the borrowing cap on the Housing Revenue Account presents opportunities for an expansion of the council house building programme, and to include 100% council housing where public land is developed. The overall Housing Strategy of the Borough needs to pick this up. But, also to consider other

ways of delivering high density whilst restricting the number and location of tall buildings.

6. The first priority of housing development should be the delivery of housing that meets the needs of those on the Housing Waiting List. Therefore, we propose a Housing Strategy that seeks 100% affordable housing until the waiting list for social housing is cleared. In the interim, whilst such a strategy is being prepared, the requirement on developers should be increased immediately to 60% affordable housing on public land and 50% affordable housing on private land through changes that can be made now to the draft New Southwark Plan.

7. We wish to work with the Council on the contributions that community led housing (including Community Land Trusts) and Build to Rent can make to meeting the needs of those on the housing waiting list.

8. We would also like to explore how the Council can prevent or severely restrict the practice of new housing being sold off-plan to global investors.

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Southwark Planning Network (SPN)