

Item No. 9.	Classification: Open	Date: 17 November 2015	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		11,000 New Council Homes – Design Values and Standards	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All Wards	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Mark Williams, Regeneration and New Homes	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR MARK WILLIAMS, REGENERATION AND NEW HOMES

Much new housing in London today comes across to many as tacky, boxy, poorly composed, visibly value-engineered and unworthy of this great city. It is also common to see much new housing development compromising on space and light standards, starkly segregating their residents by economic circumstance, and disregarding the many small but important details that make for a humane and truly enabling living environment.

The Southwark Design Guide represents an attempt to restart a new race to the top in housing design. It sets out a commitment to the highest aspirations a progressive housing client might have – from nationally leading space standards, lifetime access and the highest standards of energy efficiency in both their on-going management and construction, through to a strong commitment to coherent compositions that enhance the character identity and psychology of a neighbourhood. Our aim is to deliver durable and manageable new homes that are as convenient to Southwark to manage as a landlord as they are life-enhancing to residents and passers-by.

It also sets out an uncompromising approach to tenure blind development, demanding that external compositions and internal circulation and communal spaces make indistinguishable the presence of council or private residents. No children in Southwark commissioned new homes will be able to point to ‘rich areas’ or ‘poor areas’ of where they live, and all shared spaces will consider carefully how they can best engender new community.

The Design Standards document will also act as a ‘living document’, evolving with what critical feedback comes to back to us as we roll out our programme of new council housing - open to new smart technologies, to old technologies being used in new ways and open to challenge from architects. It will, in short, act as a key point of reference for architects and contractors working on our Direct Delivery and Regeneration in Partnership development sites and an inducement that in Southwark they have a client for whom they can and should produce career-best work.

The London Borough of Southwark has a glorious (as well as an inglorious) tradition of council house design to draw on and this guide represents our accumulated learning from both the highlights and lowlights of housing past and present. With our new Southwark Design Guide, we are using our New Homes programme as an opportunity to restore the pride and prestige of council housing, and create a legacy that present and future Southwark residents can be proud of for many decades to come.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet:

1. Approves the Southwark Design Values attached in Appendix 1 which sets out the council's aspirations for design excellence and reflect the council's core values and commitment to residents.
2. Approves the interim Design Standards attached in Appendix 2 which set out the council's commitment to high quality and robust design.
3. Notes that the two documents along with a third document, the Technical Specifications, will form the new Southwark Design Guide.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. In July 2013 this council made an historic commitment to build 11,000 new council homes by 2043; with the first 1500 delivered by 2018.
5. In November 2014 Cabinet agreed, as part of a staged approach to formalise further community engagement in the delivery of the new council homes, that the second stage engagement would address borough wide principles including design. A report noting the outcomes of the second stage engagement is being presented to Cabinet at this meeting.
6. In parallel to the above process officers commissioned the development of a design guide that sets out the Council's aspirations and expectations for its partners and contractors. The outcome is a suite of 3 documents (Design Values, Design Standards and Technical Specifications) that will form the Southwark Design Guide.
7. This report seeks approval for the two foundation documents in the suite – namely, the Design Values and Design Standards.
8. The Technical Specifications document, which is still being developed, is intended to serve as the starting point for consultants tasked with developing employer's requirement on behalf of the council and is underpinned by the Design Values and Design Standards documents.
9. The three documents will be used individually and together. The process for every New Homes project will start with an understanding of the council's Design Values; as the design process gets underway, the Design Standards will become the most relevant day-to-day reference point up to planning stage and from there on the Technical Specifications will play a larger role.
10. They need to be read in conjunction with our Core Strategy, New Southwark Plan and related policy documents, all of our existing housing related planning policy documents, the London Plan and other GLA standards and relevant external publications.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

11. The Design Values document is the kernel of the council's aspirations for excellence in design quality in the New Homes programme. It also represents the council's commitment to its residents. As such, it defines the outcomes sought, rather than the outputs required.

12. The starting point for the Design Values document was the 5 Fairer Future Principles and 10 Fairer Future Promises as set out in the Council Plan and the four principles set out in the Southwark Housing Strategy to 2043. As such the 15 design values set out in the document (and listed the following table) are a reflection of the council's core objectives.

The Fifteen Design Values
1. Promote equality, diversity and social cohesion through tenure blind design
2. Provide a wide range of dwelling types and sizes that respond to different household sizes, ages, circumstances and lifestyle choices.
3. Create a legacy of high quality buildings and spaces and places where these can be justified through a long-term approach.
4. Involve residents every step of the way.
5. Enhance the character, identity and psychology of an existing place – or create new places that have this potential.
6. Be open to new ideas, innovation and the benefits of smart and sustainable technology without taking undue risks.
7. Reduce capital cost by using space wisely in buildings that are straightforward to construct.
8. Keep rents, service charges and general running costs down by using robust, good quality materials and designing for low maintenance and light-touch management.
9. Reduce health and social care costs by making homes and neighbourhoods safe, comfortable, accessible and adaptable to changing need.
10. Take a 'lean, green and clean' approach to energy consumption to reduce fuel poverty and protect the natural environment.
11. Support family life and individual health and well-being by creating healthy environments that value privacy as well as sociability.
12. Improve life chances and encourage social mobility by providing space to study and work and for recreation and play.
13. Provide opportunities for social interaction and civic participation.
14. Create homes and places where people feel they have ownership, and are proud to live in and want to care for.
15. Seek to spread regeneration benefits beyond the immediate site boundary and ensure that new development takes account of future plans and looks for wider opportunities.

13. The Design Standards document is essentially a client brief to design consultants and contractors. In addition to standards set out in local, regional and national planning guidance, the design standards document is also informed by the council's experience as landlord. Its development has drawn on the wide-ranging experience of many residents, councillors, council staff and consultants.

14. Southwark is a large and varied borough with a very wide range of housing need, tenure and typology at very different densities. So although these standards are unique to the council, they will still need to be supplemented on a project-by-project basis to reflect extra sites specific requirements. Key aspects of the Design Standards and the Technical Specifications will then be incorporated in the Employers Requirements produced for every scheme. Without being over prescriptive, the aim is to achieve a consistent level of quality while delivering value for money over the long term, at a time when all local authority budgets are particularly stretched.
15. Although not yet in use, this document has already been affected by new government policies and legislation. Ministers announced last year that new homes must achieve Zero Carbon (with Allowable Solutions) from 2016. This year has seen the introduction of new and amended Building Regulations for accessibility, security, waste and water, and the publication of a new national space standard.
16. These changes to planning and building regulation took effect on 1 October 2015 and its affects the GLA planning and funding standards as well as our existing local planning policies have not been fully established. Rather than wait, officers have continued with the drafting of what is now an interim version of Design Standards because the council has projects already underway and others about to start. Therefore, both Design Standards and Technical Specifications will be updated as soon as the full implications of the national policy changes are clear and as the emerging Southwark Plan gains weight.
17. Looking further ahead, the intent is to review the Design Standards and Technical Specifications regularly to ensure that they remain current, and reflect lessons learnt. As the standards are implemented officers will seek feedback from residents, staff (particularly housing managers) and external development partners and consultants.

Policy implications

18. In 2014 the council made ten new fairer future promises aimed at making Southwark a fairer place to live, where all residents have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Promise 3 was that we will improve housing standards and build more homes of every kind including 11,000 new council homes with 1,500 by 2018. We will make all council homes warm, dry and safe and start the roll out of our quality kitchen and bathroom guarantee.
19. Southwark Housing Strategy to 2043 set out Southwark's first long-term housing strategy. The housing strategy sets a clear ambition to increase the supply of homes in the borough including council homes, ensuring a supply of housing that is affordable to people on a range of incomes, and a demand that all homes are to be of the highest possible quality.
20. The development plan for the borough consists of the Mayor's London Plan (2015), the Core Strategy (2011), the saved policies of the Southwark Plan (2007), the Aylesbury Area Action Plan (2010), the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan (2014) and the revised Canada Water Area Action Plan (2015). The Core Strategy and the Saved Southwark Plan policies are to be replaced by a local plan to be known as the New Southwark Plan. This is currently being prepared in consultation with residents, land owners, developers, employers, local organisations and other groups and is expected to be adopted by 2018. The New Southwark Plan will set out a strategy to bring the full benefits and

opportunities of regeneration to all of Southwark's residents including the delivery of the long term Housing Strategy.

21. The Design Values are derived from the Council Plan 2014/15 to 2017/18 and Southwark Housing Strategy to 2043.
22. The Design Standards are intended to complement and supplement rather than replace existing council standards and to take account of many other external standards – including those of the GLA. They also take account of the final outcome of the Governments review of housing standards which took effect on 1 October 2015 by enshrining those standards, such as Code for Sustainable Homes and the South East London Housing Partnership Wheelchair Design Guidance.
23. They interpret these documents in the context of the council's own house-building programme, and add extra standards where the council feel they are necessary. They provide more detail, and at a more practical level. They cover issues such as management and maintenance - the less 'glamorous' areas that receive little coverage in typical design guides, but are crucial to long-term success.

Community impact statement

24. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work, in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.
25. The values and standards laid out in Southwark Design Guide aim to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people by ensuring that all occupants of the new homes are treated equitably. Design emphasis is placed on ensure that all new homes are tenure blind, that there is a balance of bedroom sizes, and that in addition to all homes being built to Lifetime Homes standards that there is also adequate provision of wheelchair units.

Resource implications

26. All costs associated with the development of the Southwark Design Guide to date have been contained within the Housing Revenue Account.
27. The costs and benefits (including lifecycle values) of implementing the standards and technical specifications will be evaluated on a project specific basis as part of a development viability assessment.

Consultation

28. In November 2014 Cabinet agreed a staged approach to formalise further community engagement in the delivery of the new council homes as per the table below.

11,000 council homes – stages of public consultation		Time frame
Stage 1	Charter of Principles	August – October 2014
Stage 2	Borough-wide principles for development	February – September 2015
Stage 3	Estate-by-estate/ site specific engagement	Autumn 2015 onwards
Stage 4	Engagement with local residents around involvement in management of new homes	TBC – as various projects near completion

29. Central to stage 2 of the public consultation was the question of what these new homes should look like, the findings of which were to be incorporated in the suite of design documents. In order to elicit the widest ranges of comments, the following nine questions were posed to residents:

1. What do you think of the way your neighbourhood/estate looks?
2. What do you think are the most important features of an attractive neighbourhood or estate?
3. What do you think are the most important amenities or facilities a neighbourhood or estate should have?
4. If you were moving into a new council home, what would be most important to you? What makes a home family-friendly?
5. Let us know your suggestions for improving communal areas in developments of new council homes
6. We want to create mixed communities where you can't tell the difference between council homes and privately owned homes. How do you think we can best achieve this?
7. We want to encourage social interaction and develop a sense of community with these new homes.
8. Can you share an example of a situation that has brought you closer to your neighbours?
9. We want our new homes to promote the health and wellbeing of all residents. What would enable you to be healthier, more active and fulfilled in your neighbourhood or estate?

30. The main vehicle for these questions was a paper questionnaire distributed to residents at various events across the borough, such as the Bermondsey Carnival and Eid festival throughout June and July. Community engagement officers attended these events and encouraged attendees to complete the questionnaires in person. The questionnaire was also posted on the council's new online consultation hub and sessions were also held at four libraries (targeted on the basis of footfall and ensuring a good geographical spread) across the borough where residents were again encouraged to complete the questionnaire.
31. The questions were also posed to the council's formal housing consultation structure of area housing forums, Tenant Council and Homeowner Council as well as a number of discussions with the Future Steering Board, both on the

subject of the questions and on the design guide itself. In total, around 2,500 residents were engaged on the issue of design of the new homes and neighbourhoods during the consultation which ran from June to August 2015.

32. The following table outlines how the key issues raised by residents in response to the consultation questions have been addressed within the Design Standards.

Issue	How it is addressed in the Design Standards
Adequate room size/ space	The space standards set out in Section 3.1 (general requirement within the home) will ensure that the new homes are not only spacious but also provide a good social (e.g. kitchen and living rooms) and private spaces (e.g. bedrooms).
Green space/ playgrounds	The requirements set Section 1.4 (public spaces) of the Design Standards will enable attractive open spaces with provision for play.
Energy efficiency	The requirements set out in Section 3.14 (energy, power and water) adopts a 'fabric first' approach that will produce highly energy efficient homes.
Sound proofing	The requirements set out in Section 3.9 (privacy and sound-proofing) exceed current building regulations.
Importance of community cohesion	The design standards for the communal areas (page 20) aims to make them convivial spaces that provide opportunities for social interaction and reduce the likelihood of antisocial behaviour. Likewise, the soundproofing requirements in Section 3.9 will by ensuring that residents have quiet enjoyment of their home will foster goodwill and community cohesion.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Democracy

33. The council is committed to the delivery of a substantial number of new council homes over future years and, in particular, 1,500 by 2018. The quality of design for those homes is an important factor and this report asks Cabinet to approve two fundamental documents which are the Design Values and the Design Standards.
34. The report refers at paragraph 22 to the review of housing standards which is being introduced. In effect, the national technical housing standards came fully into effect from October 1 2015 and therefore in the future the Council will only be able to impose upon developers optional standards in building regulations relating to access to and the use of buildings. Therefore, the ability for the Council to regulate the work undertaken by developers is being restricted.
35. However, this report is concerned with the Council's own developments and the Council is therefore able to complete developments to a higher standard. The Cabinet clearly has the authority to reach this decision.
36. The Public Sector Equality Duty has been considered at paragraph 25 and reflects the aim of advancing the equality of opportunity and in particular highlights the need for the adequate provision of wheelchair units.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FC15/032)

37. The strategic director of finance and governance notes the proposal to seek approval for the Design Values and Design Standards for the new Southwark Design Guide for the 11,000 new council homes. The financial implications of implementing these values and standards will need to be met from within the council's overall capital resources for the housing investment programme.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Council Plan 2014/15 to 2017/18	Chief Executive / Strategy and Partnerships 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Stephen Gaskell 020 7525 7293
Link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?id=5163		
Housing Strategy to 2043	Housing and Modernisation / Strategy & Performance Improvement 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Claire Linnane 020 7525 0732
Link: Housing Strategy to 2043		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Design Values
Appendix 2	Interim New Homes Design Standards

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Mark Williams, Regeneration and New Homes	
Lead Officer	Gerri Scott, Strategic Director of Housing and Community Services, and Stephen Platts, Director of Regeneration	
Report Author	Nnenna Urum-Eke, Housing Regeneration Programme Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	5 November 2015	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	5 November 2015	