

### DEVELOPMENT BRIEFING

#### 1. Introduction

This Appendix outlines, in detail, the methodology for Development Briefing.

The purpose of the Development Briefing process is to assist developers in providing detailed advice on appropriate development solutions at an early stage in the planning process, by interpreting the Local Plan policy for the site, and the characteristics of the site and its locality, to ensure a high quality built environment which contributes to the local community. The aim is to reduce uncertainty for developers, by informing them about the constraints and opportunities presented by the site and the type of development expected by the Local Authority, and to improve the efficiency with which the subsequent applications can be considered, by reducing negotiation time.

As each site is unique, it is expected that each Brief will be similarly unique, and respond to the nature, size, ownership and location of the site. Although each Brief will be different, there are essential steps in the Development Briefing process that are common to the preparation of each which are outlined below.

#### 2. Preparing the Development Brief

##### 2.1 When will a Development Brief be Prepared?

Development Briefs are usually needed only for large or complex or sensitive sites and there is no defined threshold at which a Brief must be prepared or a prescribed area around the site which must be taken into account in its preparation. However, this Local Plan identifies those sites where a Development Brief is required. This includes all the strategic site releases outlined in Policy H2. In addition, there will be other sites where a development brief will assist the planning process including:

- The redevelopment of windfall sites
- Major developed sites in the Green Belt and countryside.

Where a Development Brief is required, it will usually be prepared where the following applies:

- The Local Plan has established the land use for the site; or
- An outline application has been approved establishing the land use.

Development Briefs will not be prepared in order to establish a land use for a site. Generally Briefs will be prepared when the Local Planning Authority becomes aware of the development pressure by the applicant to pursue the procedures towards detailed consent.

##### Preparing a Development Brief – Who Can Prepare a Brief?

Most Development Briefs are prepared by the Local Planning Authority, in association with the main interested parties involved with the particular sites. However, the Brief may be initiated by those who have a primary interest in the site, ie, the landowner or developer, and the following procedures allow for this. The Local Planning Authority should be informed before the Brief is prepared if this is the case. All Briefs must be subject to public consultation, and adoption, which means that close working with the Local Planning Authority is essential. The Local Planning Authority will always lead on the consultation and adoption procedures, although assistance by the developer/landowner may be appropriate. This is because respondents are more likely to reply to a Local Authority. Evaluation of consultation to the Brief is best carried out by those who have been involved in its preparation, further emphasising the need for co-operative working arrangements.

##### 2.2 The Form and Content of Development Briefs

Development Briefs are not expected to follow a rigid formula. The content and style of the Brief should reflect its purpose. Development Briefs should be short and easy to read, and should be well illustrated. If a Brief is long and complex, an executive summary should be produced to highlight the key aspects. In order to be effective, and be capable of usefully informing the development process, Development Briefs should include the following:

## APPENDIX 3 – DEVELOPMENT BRIEFING

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### Objectives of the Brief

At the outset, the objective of the Brief should be established, explaining why the Brief is being prepared, and what are the key objectives for the development of the site. This will normally establish the Local Authority's wider expectations for the site.

### Information about the Briefing Process

A Brief should explain how it fits within the development process including information on:

- Who prepared the Brief and how they can be contacted;
- The stage which the development process has reached;
- How consultation will be or has been carried out; and
- The status of the Brief – is it Draft or Adopted?

### Detailed Site and Context Appraisal

The best development solutions should always flow from a good understanding of the site and its context. In this respect, the site appraisal is a critical stage in the Development Briefing process. The site and context appraisal should cover the following:

#### *Site Information*

The extent of information provided under this heading will depend upon the purpose of the Brief. The following checklist covers the extent of information that should be considered in the Brief:

- **Physical Context:** Descriptive information on the following (often most usefully shown mapped): topography, adjacent uses and townscapes, elements of local diversity, development pattern, building heights, key vegetation, local facilities including public transport, road and footpath network, any key views out, landmarks, and key views in to the sites, pollution sources (smell, dust, noise, etc), sensitive neighbouring relationships;
- **Site Description:** Physical description (best shown mapped) including: topography, vegetation and wildlife, buildings, access by foot/road, especially links to adjacent areas, uses, physical barriers, areas affected by pollution, smell, dust, noise etc, boundary treatment, enclosure, overshadowing, views within the site;
- **Public Utilities:** Including capacity information (if available), sewers, electricity, gas pipelines, overhead power lines, telecommunications;
- **Ownership:** Any related information, for example covenants (usually only necessary to show this for the site itself, unless access point or other adjacent land which is part of the development is in separate ownership); and
- **Formal Designations:** Including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Green Belt, Areas of Attractive Landscape, Special areas of Conservation, Special Protection areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Areas of Archaeological Potential, Tree Preservation Orders, Regionally Important Geological Sites, Biological Notification Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation etc.

#### *Site Constraints*

Each site will have its unique set of constraints. The Brief should identify these, preferably in map form, and explain the significance of each and how they may be overcome. These could include:

- **Areas to be Protected from Development:** ie: areas of nature conservation value, flood plains, archaeological interest, protected trees and hedges, wayleaves for utilities etc;
- **Ground Conditions:** Including landslip, gas migration, settlement, hydrological difficulties, and soils;
- **Known or Possible Contamination:** Including previous uses where contamination may have

occurred;

- **Access Limitations:** Junctions with limited capacity, limited visibility etc; and
- **Sensitive Uses/Buildings Adjacent to the Site:** Amenity/pollution issues etc.

### ***Policy Context***

The Brief should identify the main policy considerations including any relevant national Planning Policy Guidance, Structure and Local Plan policy, Supplementary Planning Guidance, area based initiatives, other Local Authority policies relevant to the site, and any existing consent or current proposals for the site and in the surrounding area.

## **2.3 The Briefing of Appropriate Development Responses**

Development Briefs are not about producing blueprints or imposed design solutions. They are flexible tools. However, the Local Planning Authority will need to be satisfied that any development solutions they propose are:

- Physically capable of implementation; and
- Financially viable.

The simplest way to record appropriate development responses is diagrammatically on a site plan, supported by text to explain certain elements in more detail.

Guidance included in the Brief on appropriate development contributions should cover the following:

- **Acceptable Uses for the Site:** This should include proportions of mixed uses, and any unacceptable uses (normally confirmed already in policy or by outline planning consent);
- **Possible Development Solution(s):** Including any retained buildings, direction of development ie: frontages, scale massing and height of buildings, amount of development, expressed in a number of ways, perhaps floorspace, unit numbers, density or percentage coverage, means of circulation, main areas of planting and landscaping, appropriate detailing and materials, key features to be retained, land adjacent to the site that requires protection. Development solutions may be shown as a number of acceptable options or key principles, (these are best shown diagrammatically);
- **Infrastructure Requirements:** State the amount and type of facilities required, including, within the Wycombe Transportation Strategy area, appropriate levels of contributions and any off-site requirements; and
- **Public Transport Accessibility:** The location of the site relative to levels of access by existing scheduled public transport and in relation to footpath and cycleway networks, both existing or as proposed in the immediate and surrounding development area or areas.

In describing appropriate development solutions for the site, the Brief should also include what is not likely to be acceptable. This should include what is expected as part of any subsequent planning application, and an indication of how the Local Planning Authority will consider any applications that fall outside the requirements of the Brief. The Brief needs to state what can be flexibly interpreted and what needs to be more rigidly adhered to. The Development Brief will set out the design principles and the standards to be applied.

## **3. Consultation**

All Development Briefs will be subject to consultation with local Ward Councillors, the public (especially immediate neighbours of the site), local amenity groups/residents associations, statutory consultees, landowners and developers with an interest in the site and any site occupiers. Consultation must be undertaken early in the Briefing process and should reflect the requirements of a particular Brief. PPG12: Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance (February 1997) emphasises that the weight accorded to Supplementary Planning Guidance (including Briefs) will increase if it has been prepared in consultation with the public, and has been subject to Council resolution. Generally, the Local Planning Authority will co-ordinate the consultation procedure, by issuing a draft Development Brief for comment, and revising the Brief as appropriate to reflect

local concerns.

### **Consultation Responses**

Each response should be acknowledged, and where possible, taken into account in revising the Brief. Consultation is likely to raise information about the nature of development that will be acceptable and any legitimate concerns of the community. These responses are helpful to the developer in preparing the scheme for planning approval to gauge how objections might be overcome. An adopted Brief will carry a statement on how the consultation was carried out, the responses, and how the Brief has been revised to reflect these.

## **4. Adoption**

In order to add weight to the consideration in determining applications, Development Briefs will be adopted. Occasionally, this will be delegated to the Strategic Director (Planning and Major Projects). Briefs will only be recommended for adoption following consultation. When a Development Brief is initiated by the developer/landowner or other outside interest, the Local Planning Authority will seek to negotiate, where there may be omissions or differences of interpretation, to agree the Brief before a recommendation is made to the Council Committee/ Strategic Director (Planning and Major Projects).

## **5. Status/Duration of Adopted Development Brief**

Once approved, and having been subject to public consultation, the Brief is a 'material consideration' in determining any subsequent planning applications. Applicants should not find proposals rejected because of matters of principle when the proposal reflects the requirements of the Adopted Brief. However, the full details of the development proposal need to be assessed, and if other material considerations are not dealt with satisfactorily it remains within the Council's power to refuse permission, notwithstanding the provisions of the Adopted Brief.

If circumstances change markedly, and it is clear that the Brief is stifling the potential for the site to be developed, it may be appropriate to review or update the Development Brief. A revised Brief will not be prepared in conflict with the Local Plan or seek to change or introduce new policies. It will be necessary to review the Local Plan to alter a land use designation, rather than issue a revised Development Brief. Only once the Local Plan designation has been approved will a Brief be revised to reflect the change in land use.