

HEARING STATEMENT

MATTER 10: DESIGN & SPACE STANDARDS

BLOOR HOMES LTD, CAMERON HOMES LTD, LOVELL HOMES LTD, FOUR ASHES ROAD LTD

1. ISSUE 1

Whether the approach of the Plan to design and space standards is justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Question 2: In terms of Policy HC12:

b. Is there justification for the use of the Nationally Described Space Standard in Policy HC12 in terms of need and viability?

- 1.1 No, the Written Ministerial Statement issued on 25th March 2015 is clear that the standards are optional, and compliance cannot be required outside of a relevant current Local Plan policy. It states:

"The optional new national technical standards should only be required through any new Local Plan policies if they address a clearly evidenced need, and where their impact on viability has been considered, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Guidance."

- 1.2 The reference to the NPPF relates to para. 135 which states planning policies should:

"create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users."

- 1.3 Footnote 52 makes it clear that use of the Government's optional technical standards should be used where this would address an identified need for such properties and the need for an internal space standard can be justified.

- 1.4 The Guidance is therefore clear that the application of the NDSS requires a Local Plan policy which has been fully evidenced, including identification of need and the consideration of any impact on viability.

- 1.5 No such evidence has been provided by SSDC. The SHMA 2021 and 2022 Update provides limited commentary in respect of NDSS. The SHMA 2024 provides no further evidence. The focus of this commentary, contained within the Accessible and Adaptable Housing section on page 84 of the 2022 Update relates to M4(2) and M4(3) standards and provides no justification for the requirement of NDSS on all new dwellings. It appears to imply that the NDSS is a national standard that should automatically apply. As set out above, this is incorrect. It also highlights that any requirements should be assessed to determine whether they

are viable and should not impose any further requirements beyond building regs.

d. Is Policy HC12 sufficiently flexible with regards space standards and distances between dwellings?

- 1.6 In light of the Council's proposed requirement for bungalows to be delivered on site (an expectation of a minimum of 10% provision across all tenures) flexibility should be provided on garden sizes or to allow the provision of communal/shared gardens to ensure efficient use of land and to reflect any desire from the market for low-maintenance external amenity areas. This approach would also align to identified distance between dwelling standards which identifies a reduced distance between principal facing windows at ground floor level, where intervening boundary treatments would interrupt views.

e. Overall, is Policy HC12 effective, justified and consistent with national policy?

- 1.7 No, as there is a lack of justification for the requirement of all homes to meet NDSS.

f. Are any modifications necessary in the interests of soundness?

- 1.8 Reference to NDSS should be deleted.

Question 3: In terms of Policy HC13:

c. In terms of the policy requirements as they relate to electric vehicle charging facilities, do they simply repeat Building Regulations, and if so, is it necessary? If not, what does the policy add, over and above current Building Regulations?

- 1.9 The requirements for electric vehicle charging facilities are superfluous and are now covered by building regulations.

d. Are any modifications necessary in the interests of soundness?

- 1.10 Whilst not a soundness issue, the reference to electric vehicle parking standards should be removed to avoid duplication of current Building Regulations.

