

## Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday, 17th October, 2022.

**Present:** Cllr Chris Barlow (Chair), Cllr Mohammed Javed (Vice-Chair), Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Pauline Beall, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Hugo Stratton, Cllr Hilary Vickers, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE

**Officers:** Simon Grundy (F, D&R) Simon Milner (C S, E &C); Rachel Harrison, Rebecca Saunders-Thompson, (CS)

**Also in attendance:** Cllr Ross Patterson

**Apologies:** Cllr Luke Frost

**PLA 21/22 Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

**PLA 22/22 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**PLA 23/22 Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2022**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Place Select Committee meeting which was held on the 26 September 2022 for approval and signature.

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 26 September 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**PLA 24/22 Scrutiny Review of Planning (Development Management) & Adoption of Open Space**

This was the third evidence session of the scrutiny review of Planning (Development Management) and Adoption of Open Space where members received a presentation from the Manager of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's (SBC) Planning Services team and the Highway Network and Flood Risk Manager, the content of which covered the following:

Planning Process: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Councils' Supplementary Planning Document was designed to provide additional guidance to open space policies in the Local Development Framework. The main considerations when assessing open space requirements were the nature of the development, scale of development, the need for open space and the impact on any adjacent open space provision.

Quantity Standard: The quantity standard was used to identify the level of demand caused by a new development and to identify areas where the standard was not yet met.

Application assessment: The Proximity Standard was used to identify pockets of land that did not meet the proximity standard and to identify how far from a development a contribution to offsite provision or enhancement of existing

provision could be used.

The minimum acceptable size was used to identify the point at which a development became big enough to require the provision of onsite open space.

**Open Space Calculator:** The Open Space Calculator helped to calculate the total number of properties and estimated population to determine what open space provisions were required on site.

**On site vs off-site provision:** The process to decide whether open space should be provided onsite or off site was outlined.

**Barriers and alternative options:** Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council had limited resources and was struggling to maintain already adopted open spaces. Due to budget constraints the council could not afford to adopt more open spaces. Developers were required to provide a commuted lump sum of twenty-five years to adopt their open space. Due to this, developers were hiring external management companies to maintain their open spaces.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

Members commented that this was an issue which affected all wards with residents being deeply unsatisfied with how open spaces were being maintained as they had to pay a large fee for maintenance without work being carried out. Members requested a list of conditions developers agreed upon when gaining planning permission and the time scale left on the conditions.

Members queried if plans would be approved if developers proposed easier to maintain open spaces. Officers responded that Stockton-on-Tees used a landscape architect who assessed the balance between low maintenance and a high-quality space on a case-by-case basis.

Members questioned whether it would be possible to find out how other local authorities maintain and adopt their open spaces.

The possibility of alternatives to the 25-year upfront sum was discussed.

Discussions also took place over developers not adhering to maintenance arrangements where planning conditions were imposed. Officers advised that there was a ten-year timeframe to enforce a breach of conditions. Members commented that planning conditions should be extended beyond 10 years due to estates taking that long to be built leaving planning with no enforcement power. Officers responded that the 10 years for enforcing any breach would not start until there had been substantial completion of the housing estate.

Members requested if a comprehensive list of developer's names could be put together for councillors. Officers replied that they would work on this.

Members questioned whether there were any specifications which management companies had to adhere to. Officers responded that they were not aware of any specifications in the Tees Valley Design Guide.

Members queried if feedback from councillors could be obtained to understand

which companies are doing what is expected of them and which are not.

Members commented that it would be a useful tool to have if Stockton maps could be updated to include who was responsible for individual open spaces.

Members questioned whether the commuted lump sum of twenty-five years was written in legislation or guidance. Officers responded that this would be investigated, and information would be fed back to members.

Members queried when the option for developers to use a third-party maintenance company came in. Officers replied that the option was brought in due to there being too much open space for the council to solely maintain.

Members commented that some of their residents were frustrated with having to pay both council tax and a fee to maintenance companies without any maintenance being carried out. Officers acknowledged people's concerns but replied that the council were only able to inform developers on the size of open spaces and how they should be maintained.

AGREED that the evidence be noted.

**PLA**      **Work Programme 2022-2023**  
**25/22**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.

**PLA**      **Chair's Update**  
**26/22**

The Chair had no further updates.