

# SMB

## TOWN PLANNING LTD

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Strategic Planning  
Crawley Borough Council  
Town Hall  
The Boulevard  
Crawley  
RH10 1UZ

19 June 2023

Our ref: SMB/jb/2020/18

Dear sir,

### **REPRESENTATIONS TO THE DRAFT CRAWLEY LOCAL PLAN 2024-2040 (MAY 2023) SUBMISSION PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON BEHALF OF OXFORD MATCH LIMITED**

On 29 June 2021 we made representations on behalf of our clients Oxford Match Limited to the Draft Local Plan 2021 – 2037. In that letter (a copy of which is appended for ease of reference) we stated, inter alia, that our clients have aspirations for the development of their freehold property interests within Crawley town centre. This still remains the case.

The relevant town centre policies are EC1, EC2, TC1 to TC5, H2, and H3c.

Taken together these policies are generally supportive of the principle of the proposed development comprising the conversion / redevelopment / upward extension of the upper floors of properties within the defined town centre for residential use with the ground floor being retained for Class E uses (Commercial, Business and Service). The provision of additional dwellings on windfall sites is critical to the Council where they are heavily reliant on neighbouring local planning authorities in meeting the identified housing need (58%) over the period of the Local Plan.

The draft Local Plan allocates 7 town centre sites under Policy TC3 and Policy H2 to deliver a minimum of 1,500 new dwellings over the Local Plan period.

From a review of these 7 sites in the Strategic Housing Land Assessment (February 2023), 3 of them - Cross Keys, MOKA Night Club and Telford Place – may not come forward or the number of dwellings actually delivered on them could well be lower than the Council anticipate. Therefore, this would create a shortfall needing to be met elsewhere, most probably through windfall sites. The draft Local Plan expects 1,598 new dwellings to come from windfall sites (100 dwellings per annum). We note that this “allowance” represents an increase from 55 dwellings per annum from the adopted Local Plan (2015).

In meeting this windfall site expectation, we have a number of concerns with some of the policies as drafted in the Local Plan.

Requiring three-bedroom properties in town centre locations in car-free developments are unlikely to be attractive to families and may well result in marketing difficulties. With this knowledge, housebuilders and developers may well be reluctant to provide for three-bedroom



dwelling in such locations. There is flexibility contained within in Policy H4 which requires all housing development to provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes to address the nature of local housing needs and market demand, dependent upon the characteristics of the site (our underlining for emphasis). The Policy also contains a “Housing Mix Test” which in our view is prescriptive and potentially conflicts with the “characteristics of the site” in town centre locations where paragraph 3.16 of the Draft Plan states that “*family accommodation, in accordance with Policy H3c .....may not necessarily be suitable for all sites*”. Therefore, we suggest that the first paragraph of Draft Policy H4 be reworded as follows:

*All housing development should provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes to address the nature of local housing needs and market demand. The appropriate mix of house types and sizes for each site will depend upon the size and characteristics of the site and the viability of the scheme. Consideration should be given to the evidence established in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and its updates for market housing needs and demand in Crawley. However, it is recognised that the provision of family accommodation in Crawley Town Centre, in accordance with Policy H3c may not necessarily be suitable for all sites.”*

Furthermore, the table under paragraph 13.14 indicates the provision of 30% of the market housing element on town centre sites should be Family Homes (25% 3-bedrooms and 5% 4-plus-bedrooms). In addition, the table indicates that the affordable rental element to be provided should be 25 - 30% for 3-bedrooms and 5 - 10% for 4-plus bedrooms. This seems to be excessive especially for a flatted town centre development and may have the adverse effect of reducing the viability of town centre schemes and consequently may well materially alter the affordable housing provision.

In light of our proposed changes to Draft Policy H4 above, the justifying text in paragraph 3.16 should be amended to read:

*“Town Centre mixed use developments will be expected to be built at higher densities whilst including family accommodation where site specific conditions allow. Applicants will need to justify why they have omitted family -sized units in proposed town centre development schemes”.*

Policy H5 expects town centre sites requiring 25% affordable housing to be split 60% social rent and / or affordable rent and up to 40% as intermediate tenure. At a site specific level however, Policy H5 identifies the circumstances under which this target may not be met and provides for a financial payment for off-site provision.

We welcome the fact that Policy DD3 reflects Central Government’s nationally described space standards for new dwellings to have a minimum floor to ceiling height of the main living space of 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area. However, whilst we are concerned that criteria (iv) of the Policy states that the with minimum clear floor to ceiling height of 2.7m is the aim for 3-person 2-bedroom units and above, there is flexibility for a lower height “*where it suits the proportions of a narrower unit*”. This should be redrafted to state “*where the characteristics of the site determine otherwise*”.

Furthermore, criteria (v) of Policy DD3 requires private outdoor open space (2.5m deep by 4m wide = 10sqm) to be associated with moderate and high-density residential development. This is potentially too large for town centre schemes, particularly flats and the Policy should be redrafted to reflect this as follows:

*“Usable private outdoor space, at least 2.5m in depth x 4m wide, and accessed directly from main living areas or kitchen. In town centre residential schemes, the minimum acceptable depth for private outdoor amenity space is 1.5m with the minimum area being 5sqm for 1 and 2 person flats plus an extra 1sqm each additional occupant.”*

Policy DD3 as drafted will not make the most efficient use of deliverable land, particularly constrained town centre sites. The Policy as drafted could undermine and conflict with Policy CL2 (principles of good urban design) and CL3 (using land more efficiently and sustainably), as well as, more importantly, those policies seeking further residential development in the town centre to meet the Council's identified housing needs.

We trust that these comments will be taken on board by the Council and the Inspector appointed to hold the Examination in Public in due course.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Birnbaum', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Simon Birnbaum BA Dip UPI MRTPI**  
**Director**  
**SMB TOWN PLANNING LIMITED**  
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# SMB

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29 June 2021

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Dear sir,

### **REPRESENTATIONS TO THE CRAWLEY LOCAL PLAN 2021 -2037 SUBMISSION DRAFT ON BEHALF OF OXFORD MATCH LIMITED**

Oxford Match Limited have aspirations for the development of their freehold property interests within Crawley town centre.

Therefore, the following draft policies relating to development within Crawley town centre are directly relevant:

- EC1 and EC2,
- TC1 to TC5, and
- H2, H3c and H5.

Taken together these above policies are generally supportive of the principle of, inter alia, development comprising the conversion of the upper floors of existing properties for residential use together with appropriate upward extensions of buildings to provide additional dwellings. This is particularly in the situation that Crawley Borough Council find themselves in being heavily reliant on neighbouring local planning authorities and windfall sites to assist in meeting the identified housing need over the period of the Local Plan.

Our main concern however is with Policy H5, which as drafted, expects town centre sites requiring 25% affordable housing to be split 60% social rent and / or affordable rent and up to 40% as intermediate tenure. At a site specific level however, Policy H5 identifies the circumstances under which this target may not be met and provides for a financial payment for off-site provision.

We are concerned however that the table under paragraph 13.14 indicates the provision of 30% of the market housing element on town centre sites should be Family Homes (3+ Bedrooms). In addition to this the table indicates that the affordable rental element to be provided should be 30% to 40% as Family Homes. This seems to be excessive especially for a flatted town centre development and may have the adverse effect of reducing the viability of town centre schemes and consequently may well materially alter the affordable housing provision.



Naturally, there are a number of draft detailed development management policies that would be used by the Council to assess planning applications. Oxford Match Limited have concerns specifically with draft Policies DD3 section i to v and consequentially that sentence of draft Policy H3b which refers to DD3(i to v) as currently drafted.

Our objection to draft Policy DD3 is on the grounds that it is too prescriptive. In particular, the draft policy contains criteria that are beyond the scope of Central Government's nationally described space standard for high and medium-density schemes, notably requiring a minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.7m (as opposed to 2.3m) for 3-person, 2-bedroom units and above. In addition, private outdoor open space (2.5m deep by 4m wide = 10sqm) to be associated with residential development is far too large for town centre schemes.

Policy DD3 as drafted will not make the most efficient use of deliverable land, particularly constrained town centre sites. The Policy as drafted could undermine and conflict with Policy CL2 (principles of good urban design) and CL3 (using land more efficiently and sustainably), as well as, more importantly, those policies seeking further residential development in the town centre such as Policy TC1 to meet the Council's identified housing needs.

Policy DD3 should be modified accordingly by stipulating minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.3m is acceptable and that in town centre residential schemes the minimum acceptable depth for private outdoor amenity space is 1.5m with the minimum area being 5sqm for 1 and 2 person flats plus an extra 1sqm each additional occupant.

We trust that these comments will be taken on board by the Council and the Inspector appointed to hold the Examination in Public in due course.

Yours faithfully



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