MAYOR OF LONDON

London Plan Guidance

Optimising Site Capacity: A Design-led Approach

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London Plan Policy	Policy D1 Londonôs form, character and capacity for growth ï Part (B3) Policy D3 Optimising site capacity through the design-led approach Policy D4 Delivering good design
Plan making	Planning authorities and neighbourhood planning groups should use this guidance during the local and neighbourhood plan-making process, when setting design parameters and establishing an indicative site capacity for site allocations and masterplans. This includes any existing site allocations that are being brought forward into new or revised Development Plans, as well as those that have been assessed as part of Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs) and have been found to be suitable and available. Where a site is brought forward through an appropriate Development Plan Document (DPD), it should be accompanied by a set of design parameters. These should take account of any relevant site-specific work that has been already undertaken, such as an area masterplan or characterisation assessment.
Planning Application type and how the London Plan Guidance will be applied	All development must make the best use of land by following a design-led approach that optimises the capacity of sites. This must be evident in the design and access statements submitted at the planning application stage. While this guidance applies to all land uses, it is mainly directed at residential or residential mixed-use sites.
Who is this guidance for?	Anyone involved in the planning, design, construction, delivery and operation of new major development including local borough planners, planning applicants, energy consultants, designers, developers, contractors, building owners, network operators and facilities managers. Specialists in urban design, including heritage and conservation officers, should be involved in the process set out in this document and as such should refer to this guidance.

1 About this document

1.1 What is the design-led approach?

1.1.1 Good growth across London requires development to optimise site capacity, rather than maximising density. This means responding to the existing character and distinctiveness of the surrounding context and balancing the capacity for growth, need for increased housing supply, and key factors such as access by walking, cycling and public transport, alongside an improved quality of life for Londoners. Capacity-testing should be the product of the design-led approach, and not the driver.

1.1.2 This document sets out how the design-led approach, set out in Policy D3 of the London Plan, should be used to determine the most appropriate form of development on a site. The design-led approach is the process of setting site-specific design parameters and codes for development sites to provide clarity over the future design. These comprise a set of high-level strategic parameters addressing the form, massing and layout of a future development. They should be informed by a site-specific design vision that prioritises placemaking. They should be formulated at the local and neighbourhood plan-making stage to establish the design aspirations; and, for residential applications, to determine the indicative site capacity. Where design parameters have been set by the local planning authority or neighbourhood planning group, applicants should demonstrate that they have met these while following the process, set out in the document, to determine a more detailed design.

1.1.3 On sites where design parameters have not been set by the local planning authority or neighbourhood planning group, applicants should carry out this process during the preliminary design stages to determine a siteôs optimum design response and to clarify their design intentions. The design review process should be used to assess and inform design options early in the planning process (see Policy D4, Part D). This process should be carried out at the pre-application stage, with documents submitted as part of the design and access statement within a planning application.

Figure 1.1 Relationship between the design LPGs