

CABINET

11 November 2025

Title: Draft Becontree Estate Supplementary Planning Document and Design Code Public Consultation

Report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development

Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: Alibon, Beam, Becontree, Eastbury, Goresbrook, Heath, Mayesbrook, Parsloes, Valence, Village, Whalebone	Key Decision: Yes
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Accountable Director: Barry Coughlan, Head of Statutory Planning & Building Control, Be First	
Accountable Executive Team Director: David Harley, Strategic Director, Inclusive Growth and Place	
Summary: This report seeks approval to publish the draft Becontree Estate Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Design Code for consultation. This draft SPD has been developed to provide supplementary policy to the Local Plan 2037 to support the heritage preservation of the Estate. The draft SPD sets out the historic and cultural context of the Becontree Estate, demonstrates the importance of conserving the heritage of the Estate as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA), and provides detailed design guidance to residents to assist them in adapting their homes in a way that does not harm the character and appearance of the Estate. This paper further seeks approval to introduce two Article 4 Directions to remove permitted development rights and require planning permission for some alterations, that were previously able to be made through permitted development. These directions are proposed in order to facilitate the effective implementation of the Design Code. While the introduction of the Article 4 Direction will require residents to apply for planning permission where permitted development rights are removed, the Code allows for alterations and extensions that are larger than what is permissible through permitted development. The Article 4 Directions are proposed to:	

- remove permitted development rights for porches for all properties across the Becontree Estate, and
- remove permitted development rights for side and roof alterations located on corner blocks within the Becontree Estate.

This paper and Appendix 1 set out the context and justification for the removal of these permitted development rights, and the number of property owners across the Becontree Estate that will be impacted by these changes.

Following consultation and once adopted, this draft SPD will form a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the Becontree Estate.

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the commencement of consultation on the draft Becontree Estate SPD and Design Code at Appendix 1 to the report for an eight-week period, commencing in November 2025;
- (ii) Approve the making of, and public consultation of, two non-immediate Article 4 Directions to revoke limited permitted development rights under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning Order (General Permitted Development Order (GPDO)) 2015 (as amended);
- (iii) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Inclusive Growth and Place, to make final minor changes to the draft SPD and Design Code, and Article 4 Directions ahead of publication;
- (iv) Note that a further report shall be presented to Assembly following the consultation period and once changes have been made to address feedback, to seek adoption of the SPD; and
- (v) Note that a further report will be presented to Cabinet in late 2026 to seek confirmation of the Article 4 Directions.

Reason(s)

Policy SPP6 of the Local Plan 2037 identifies the Becontree Estate as a NDHA. The status and significance of the Becontree Estate as a NDHA arises through its history described in Section 2 of the SPD, its size and scale and the retained authenticity of the area in relation to its openness and spaciousness, regularity of pattern of built form, and homogeneity of design.

The introduction of Article 4 Directions that are underpinned by the SPD will support the policy objective to preserve the Estate by removing permitted development rights where alterations have historically had the most detrimental impacts to the heritage value of the Estate.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. The Local Plan 2037 recognises the Becontree Estate as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) due to its local and historic distinctiveness. NDHAs are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by a Local Planning Authority as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. The Local Plan sets out that design guidance will be prepared for the Becontree Estate and the Local Development Scheme (February 2025) sets out the expectation that an SPD will be developed, and that the anticipated adoption date for the SPD will be in 2026.
- 1.2. The Becontree Estate SPD and Design Code provides supplementary guidance to the policies of the LBBD Local Plan 2037. The SPD sets out the Council's policy for the preservation and enhancement of the distinctive character and qualities that can be found within the Becontree Estate. The SPD aims to explain the historic context for the Estate, demonstrate the importance of its preservation, and provide clear guidance to residents within the Estate that are seeking to alter their homes, so that any alterations are sensitive to the heritage value and existing character of the Estate.
- 1.3. The SPD has been prepared in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the London Plan (2021), and the Local Plan 2037. Once adopted, the Design Code SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the Becontree Estate, and proposals will need to demonstrate how they align with this SPD.

2. Proposals

- 2.1. The draft Becontree Estate Design Code aims to protect the heritage character of the Becontree Estate and clarify the planning process to enable residents to make sustainable and sensitive alterations and extensions to their homes. Importantly, the draft Code is not seeking to be overly restrictive but is intended to support residents by providing guidance to help them make alterations to the homes that are sympathetic to the character of the Estate. Additionally, while residents will need to apply for planning permission where permitted development rights are removed through the Article 4 Directions, in many cases the Code allows for alterations and extensions that are larger than what is permissible through permitted development. Other key matters are set out below.

Content of the SPD

- 2.2. A summary of the Becontree Estate Design SPD chapter content is below:
 - **Chapter 1** provides the introduction and purpose of the SPD.
 - **Chapter 2** sets out the historic context of the Becontree Estate and explains why it's important to preserve the Estate as a NDHA. The chapter sets out how the Estate developed over time, the architectural and built context and the spatial layout which all contribute to the unique character of the Estate.

- **Chapter 3** sets out the Becontree Charter and Vision, providing the overarching design principles that were developed alongside the Becontree Residents Forum and provides the vision for the neighbourhood.
- **Chapter 4** provides detail on how to use the Code, including providing explanation on how house types and street condition within the Estate may impact the changes that residents plan to make. The chapter also explains how to read the various sections and diagrams throughout the Code.
- **The Design Code** provides detailed design code and sets out the requirements and guidance for residents making alterations to houses within the Becontree Estate. This section provides clear direction on the kinds of alterations that will be supported by the Council.

Article 4 Directions

2.3. The Town and Country Planning Order (General Permitted Development Order (GPDO)) 2015 (as amended) gives permissions for certain building works and changes of use to be carried out under 'permitted development rights', subject to certain conditions. Permitted development removes the need to make a planning application. An Article 4 Direction can be used by Local Planning Authorities to withdraw specified permitted development rights across a defined area, provided that there is justification for both its purpose and extent. Article 4 Directions can be introduced as immediate or non-immediate, taking effect 12 months after its introduction and are subject to a 21-day consultation period.

2.3.1. The non-immediate introduction of the Article 4 Directions may result in an increased number of applications in the next 12-month period from residents seeking to make alterations to their properties under existing permitted development rights. In this case, we will encourage residents to use design guidance set out by the draft SPD when making their alterations.

2.3.2. While the immediate introduction of the Article 4 Directions has been considered, this would mean that residents that can demonstrate financial loss would be eligible for compensation from the Council. This approach is therefore not recommended.

2.4. The draft SPD identifies a number of historic characteristics that give the Estate its significant heritage value. Many of the elements of the built form in the Becontree are similar, which contribute to the character of the area. Some common features include the red brick or rendered facades, tall brick chimneys and tiled pitch roofs. Many of the houses in the estate are made of uniform building typologies, primarily terraces and cottages. Much of the estate has a uniform height, between two and three storeys with a pitched roof.

2.5. Through analysis of the evolution of the Estate and engagement with residents, it was evident that the property alterations most detrimental to the visual amenity and heritage of the Becontree Estate are those which are visible from the public realm and typically occur through permitted development. This includes alterations to porches, and side and roof extensions that are located on corner properties. These alterations are considered to cause harm to the architectural character and layout of the Becontree by disrupting the symmetry, regularity of built form and homogeneity of design that warrant its designation as a NDHA.

- 2.6. Therefore, this paper proposes that two non-immediate two Article 4 Directions, focusing on porches and roof and side extensions on corner plots, are introduced concurrently with the publication of the SPD. The non-immediate introduction will ensure that residents are notified well in advance of the Article 4 Directions coming into place and will also remove the risk of compensation claims from landowners that may be impacted by the change.
- 2.7. The introduction of Article 4 Directions will ensure that the draft SPD and Design Code is given weight in decision making and that the heritage and character of the estate are protected. The justification for removing permitted development rights for these alterations is set out in further detail in Appendix 2.

Scale of impact of the Article 4 Directions

- 2.8. Through the development of the SPD and the justification of the Article 4 Directions, the number of impacted residents has been assessed. Of the approximately 29,000 homes in the Estate, there are approximately 19,579 homes in private ownership in the Becontree Estate that would be impacted by the removal of permitted development rights for porches. Approximately 4,024 properties in private ownership would be impacted by the removal of permitted development rights for roof and side extensions, representing approximately 14% of the total number of homes in the Estate. The boundary of the Estate and Article 4 Directions is shown in Appendix 2.
- 2.9. While the introduction of the Article 4 Directions will result in planning applications being required for some household applications which were previously permitted development, these applications should be made simpler by the detailed design guidance provided by the draft SPD. This gives clear guidance of appropriate designs in terms of size, form, and materials, to support homeowners in making these applications.
- 2.10. Many residents are currently able to alter their properties to add a porch, side or roof extension through permitted development rights. Residents are encouraged to apply for a lawful development certificate before making this alteration to confirm that the proposed change is permitted development (cost of £264 per application). The introduction of the Article 4 Directions would require residents to apply for householder planning permission when seeking to make these changes (cost of £528 per application).
- 2.11. While we acknowledge that applying for planning permission will be an additional cost for residents, they will be able to make alterations to their properties in a manner consistent with the design code, which often allows for alterations and extensions that are larger than what is permissible through permitted development. The Design Code is intended to provide clear guidance and set out the Council's expectations on what residents can and cannot do in the Becontree Estate, streamlining the planning process and reducing the time and financial risks for residents.

3. Options Appraisal

3.1. This paper recommends that the draft SPD be published for public consultation and that two non-immediate Article 4 Directions are made. The options considered in making this recommendation were:

- Option 1 – Seek to designate the Becontree Estate as a Conservation Area – While this option was considered, the Becontree Estate is unlikely to meet the statutory criteria required for designation as a Conservation Area. Furthermore, this designation would be considerably more restrictive than the introduction of Article 4 Directions.
- Option 2 – Publish the draft SPD – Publish the draft SPD and proposed Article 4 Directions for public consultation, to protect the character of the Estate, provide clarity to homeowners and give the community an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft SPD.
- Option 3 - Do not publish the draft SPD and do not make an Article 4 Direction – This would result in not meeting the expectations of the Local Plan or the programme set out within the Local Development Scheme. Additionally, this would continue to risk the preservation of the character and value of the Estate and result in a lack of clarity for homeowners seeking to alter their properties.

3.2. Option 2 was assessed as the preferred option. Option 1 was not considered favourable as would be very restrictive in terms of changes that residents are able to make to the homes. Option 3 was not considered favourable as it is important that detailed policy and design guidance is published to protect the heritage value and character of the Estate, and to provide clarity to the community and to homeowners.

3.3. Importantly, publication of the draft SPD will ensure that the community has an opportunity to provide feedback on the SPD, and the proposed approach to Article 4 Directions. This option also provides a balanced approach by focusing on the elements that have the most detrimental impacts to the visual amenity and heritage value of the Estate and retaining permitted development rights where alterations would have less impact.

4. Consultation

4.1. Over the course of 2022 and 2023, Be First worked with the Becontree Residents Forum to develop the Becontree Design Code through a co-working process. Through this engagement, officers were able to identify the alterations that have been most detrimental to the heritage and character of the Estate and gain an improved understanding of the types of alterations that are important to the community.

4.2. Consultation will occur with Planning Committee Members and Ward Members at briefing meetings on 30 October 2025.

4.3. We have undertaken informal engagement with officers of MHCLG to seek initial feedback on the Article 4 Directions. No concerns were identified regarding the

approach or scope of the proposed Article 4 Directions. Once approved by Council, MHCLG will be formally notified of the Article 4 Directions.

- 4.4. Statutory consultation on both the draft SPD and the proposed Article 4 Directions will take place from November 2025, subject to Cabinet approval.

5. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Alex Essilfie-Bondzie, Interim Head of Finance (HEC and IG)

- 5.1. The introduction of the code and Article 4 direction on the Becontree Estate is not expected to result in additional costs to the Council as implementation costs are expected to be mainly Council officer time spent to take the code to adoption.
- 5.2. Currently, many residents can make changes such as adding porches or extensions under permitted development rights and are encouraged to apply for a lawful development certificate at a cost of £264 to confirm eligibility. However, the proposed Article 4 Directions would require residents to apply for householder planning permission at a cost of £528. While this introduces an additional expense to residents, the Design Code allows for larger and more flexible alterations than permitted development. It will also streamline the planning application process, offer clarity and reduce time-related risks for residents. As a result, the overall financial impact on Residents and the Council is expected to be minimal.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Dr Paul Feild, Principal Standards & Governance Lawyer

- 6.1. This report seeks approval to publish the draft Becontree Estate Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Design Code for consultation. The SPD has been drafted to provide supplementary policy to the Local Plan 2037 to support the preservation of the Becontree Estate setting its historic and cultural context and seeks to justify the conserving the heritage of the Estate as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA).
- 6.2. To preserve the unique architectural heritage features of the Estate it is proposed that the Council make two Article 4 Directions. These Directions does not stop development from happening it requires that a planning application is made.
- 6.3. The reason for the proposed Article 4 Directions is that works identified (porches and roof and side extensions on corner plots) can currently be carried out as Permitted Development under the auspices of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (1995 Order). The said 1995 Order is a general grant of planning permission by the Secretary of State for development in certain specified circumstances. These works could fundamentally alter the heritage character of the Estate.
- 6.4. However, 'permitted developments' can be removed by a decision of the relevant Local Planning Authority, under Article 4 of the 1995 Order and thus require that such developments will need a formal planning application. The procedure to make

the Article 4 Direction is set out in Schedule 3 of the 1995 Order. The reason the non-immediate process is recommended is because the alternative (immediate Article 4 Direction) carries with it a right to claim compensation.

- 6.5. The decision to make an Article 4 Direction is a Cabinet function as a Local Planning Authority policy decision.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1. Corporate Policy, Customer and Equality Impact - The draft SPD provides supplementary guidance to the Local Plan 2037. A full Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken as part of the development of the Local Plan. Council's Strategy and Participation Team has confirmed that further assessment is not required for the SPD.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices:

- **Appendix 1** – Draft Becontree Estate SPD and Design Code
- **Appendix 2** – Justification of the Article 4 Directions for the Becontree Estate
- **Appendix 3** – Draft Article 4 Directions for the removal of permitted development rights