

Holistic Planning Policy in respect of Devil's Tower Road



HM Government
of Gibraltar

INTRODUCTION

The Development and Planning Commission (DPC) and prospective developers are asked to consider this Policy Paper in respect of applications for development fronting Devil's Tower Road.

This follows a meeting between the Town Planner and the Government on 2 September 2022 to discuss the holistic treatment of tall buildings in Devil's Tower Road.

This Policy Paper will cease to apply when a new Development Plan has been adopted.

Some of the policy areas in the Gibraltar Development Plan 2009 continue to apply today. Other areas have already been completed like the widening of the road scheme and the car park. Nevertheless there are general principles in the 2009 Plan which remain valid and current.



GIBRALTAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2009

Tall Buildings

2.29 Tall Buildings, suitably located and designed, can make a positive contribution to the urban environment. They affect the image and identity of an area as a whole, often serving as beacons of regeneration stimulating further investment. Tall buildings represent high density development and this can be seen to contribute, in a general sense, to sustainability principles. However, by virtue of their size and prominence such buildings can also harm the qualities that people value about a place. There is a need for such proposals to be carefully scrutinized and to balance up the positive and the negative effects of such proposals.

2.30 Gibraltar's limited geographical area, and overall scale, means that tall building proposals can easily have a major impact on the local landscape. Even with Gibraltar's limited area, there are significant variations in the character of the landscape with consequent differences in the ability of local landscape to absorb such proposals.

2.31 As a general rule it is not considered useful to define rigorously what is and what is not a tall building. This will clearly depend on the particular circumstances of the context into which the building is to be placed. However, an exception has been made in the case of the Old Town where the Old Town Plan includes a specific policy on tall buildings that identifies these as being of 5 or more storeys. In this case, it was considered appropriate to define tall buildings in the context of the general scale and height of buildings throughout the Old Town and the relative sensitivity of the townscape to the introduction of tall buildings.

2.32 As explained above tall buildings can have a major impact on the landscape and the Development and Planning Commission therefore expects applicants to provide a comprehensive design statement in support of any application. Applicants should also note that even where an outline application is submitted, the Development and Planning Commission shall require the proposal to be submitted in sufficient detail to enable a full assessment to be undertaken.



2.33 In considering such proposals, particular attention will be given to the relationship of the proposed development to its context, the effect on the whole environment (eg impact on historic building sites, landscapes and skyline) architectural quality, sustainable design and construction, contribution to public spaces and facilities, effect on local climate (microclimate) and provision of high quality environment.

2.34 In addition to the above considerations, tall buildings may also have implications on the safe operation of Gibraltar Airport. Section 8 provides further details.

2.35 The potential impact of tall building proposals on Gibraltar's landscape is of such significance that in addition to obtaining the Development and Planning Commission's permission the approval of the Government shall also be required.

Policy GDS15- TALL BUILDINGS

All applications for tall buildings shall need to be accompanied by a comprehensive design statement. In considering such proposals consideration shall be given in particular to:

- A) the relationship to context eg natural topography, scale, height, built form, streetscape etc;
- B) architectural quality eg scale, massing, silhouette, materials etc;
- C) sustainable design and construction;
- D) contribution to public spaces and facilities particularly the contribution to the provision of a mix of uses at ground floor level and the creation of quality public realm;
- E) effect on the local environment – microclimate, overshadowing, etc;
- F) provision of high quality environment; and
- G) airfield safety requirements.

In addition to planning permission tall building proposals will also require the approval of the Government.



Devil's Tower Road

17.1 Devil's Tower Road is the only access route to the eastern side of the Rock providing access to the beaches and the residential developments at Catalan Bay and Both Worlds. The appearance of the area has always suffered from the concentration of industrial uses in the area and their associated activities.

During the 1990s some of these uses relocated out of the area to more appropriate premises in some of the industrial estates that have been developed. In recent years, the area has seen a number of commercial uses moving in, particularly car showrooms that have helped to improve the frontages to Devil's Tower Road.

17.2 The proposed new access to the airport and the frontier is to be routed around the eastern end of the runway and feed into Devil's Tower Road. In addition, Devil's Tower Road will become the main access to the eastside construction waste development site. As a consequence there is a need to increase the carrying capacity of this road and the feasibility of widening the road to accommodate two lanes in each direction is being investigated. Due to the limited space available it is likely that any such road widening will necessitate the removal of much of the existing on-street car parking and there will therefore be a need to re-provide this parking within the general area. Such a road-widening scheme shall also offer the opportunity for environmental improvement as part of a comprehensive road scheme.

17.3 The policy areas are therefore to:

- Encourage residential development along Devil's Tower Road;
- Encourage existing industrial, commercial and storage uses, particularly those fronting Devil's Tower Road, to re-locate to more appropriate locations;
- Any new industrial/storage uses should be limited to site to the rear of frontage properties and adequate provision for parking and service areas should be provided within the site;
- Avoid the introduction of any heavy industrial uses into the area;
- Implement a comprehensive road improvement scheme incorporating road widening, environmental improvement and re-provision of public car parking.



Policy Z6.1 DEVELOPMENT FRONTING DEVIL'S TOWER ROAD

Proposals for residential development fronting Devil's Tower Road will normally be given favourable consideration.

Policy Z6.2 INDUSTRIAL/STORAGE USE

Proposals for new light industrial or storage uses will only be permitted where:

- A) they are located to the rear of property fronting onto Devil's Tower Road;
- B) adequate car parking and service areas are provided within the site; and
- C) there is no unacceptable adverse effect on the amenities of adjacent users, particularly residential.

Policy Z6.3 ROAD IMPROVEMENT

A comprehensive road improvement scheme shall be designed and implemented for Devil's Tower Road and shall include road widening, environmental improvement and re-provision of public parking.

17.4 The site of the ex-hostel and MOD/Quartermasters/Royal Gibraltar Regiment depot have already been identified as appropriate sites for multi-storey car parks. Construction work on a multi-storey car park has now commenced on the latter of these two sites. In respect of the former, the Plan makes provision for use of the site as a car park.

Policy Z6.4 DEVIL'S TOWER ROAD CAR PARK

The site of the ex-hostel, as shown on the proposals map, is allocated for car park use.

17.5 With the proposed routing of the new frontier/airport road through Devil's Tower Road the opportunity has been taken, as proposed in the earlier Consultation Draft of this Plan, to provide a 'park and ride' scheme on Devil's Tower Road where tourists arriving by private car could leave their vehicles and transfer to a bus or taxi. Such a facility would assist in keeping tourist traffic well away from the town area. The facility is to be provided within the multi-story car park currently under construction on the site of the ex-MOD Quartermasters and Royal Gibraltar Regiment Depot as referred in the above section.



17.6 It is considered that the park and ride scheme could also potentially service the beaches at Catalan Bay and Sandy Bay during the summer months by providing a shuttle bus service for beach users.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR DPC

1. No building in Devil's Tower Road will be permitted to be higher than the E1 development, from a planning perspective.

2. The general approach should be that building heights should taper down from E1 at the tallest point, down to Laguna Estate at the lowest point, although it is understood that there will be cases where this will not be possible such as where planning permission has already been granted.

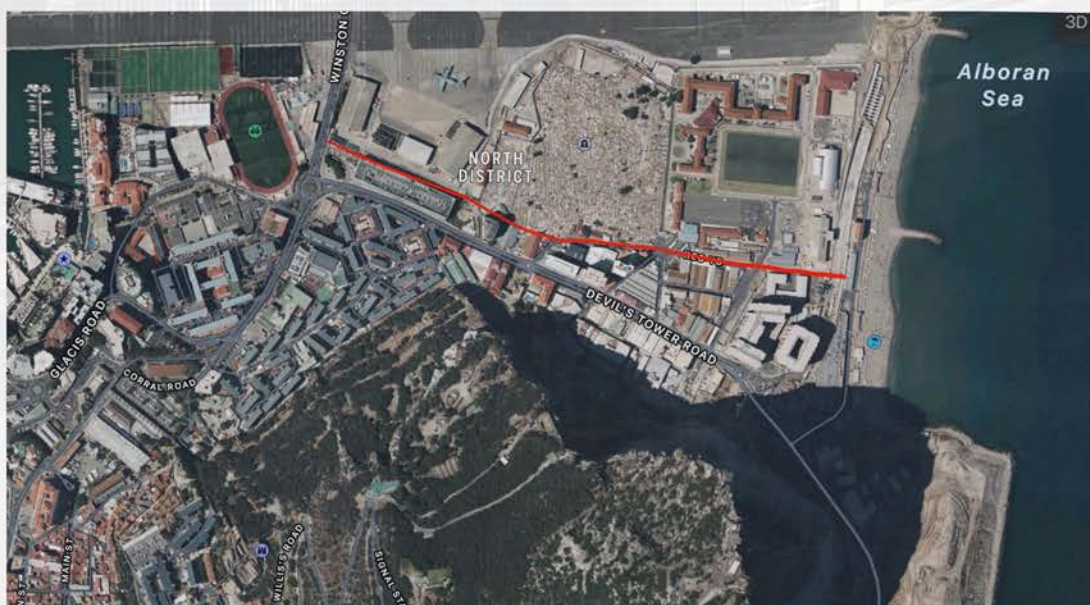
In any event, the Commission must ensure a variety in architectural design and in heights within that restriction.

3. Buildings must comply with the legal requirement for them to be near-zero energy, with on- or offsite measures or compensation in order to achieve this.

4. The ground floor of new buildings in Devil's Tower Road must provide commercial units and public amenities where facing the road. This includes shops, spas, restaurants, cafes, and cultural venues for example.

5. The top floors of new buildings in Devil's Tower Road must be set back away from the streetscape at higher levels.

6. The Commission will encourage the concept of a more scenic east-west pedestrian and cycling route to the north of Devil's Tower Road when considering applications for development in that zone.





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