

Live/work and sustainable communities

A proposal to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

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**Live Work Network
and 46 organisations in the live/work sector**

August 2004

"We believe that the case for Government support for live/work is overwhelming. This support will require much more explicit guidance than is currently available. We support the proposals in this paper and hope they will contribute to this"

Harry Platt, chief executive, Workspace Group plc

Joe Gerrard, CEO, Investland Group plc

Neil Waterson, FPD Savills

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Chris Brown-Bolton MRICS, Chris Brown Bolton Associates

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1. Introduction

The recent Live Work Network national conference *Planning live/work business clusters* (May 12 2004) was opened by ODPM's Director General of Sustainable Communities Richard McCarthy. In his address, he asked delegates, as members of the emerging live/work sector, to send him a document clarifying the ways in which live/work (combined workspace and home) can help the Government achieve its objectives.

This paper is our response. It represents the live/work sector's 'offer' to Government by:

- outlining the **positive contribution** that live/work can make to the sustainable communities, urban renaissance and rural regeneration agendas
- clarifying live/work's **strategic fit** with existing planning policy guidance and other policies
- suggesting a framework for the creation of vibrant live/work **business clusters**
- proposing **explicit planning policy guidance** on live/work and a new use class to maximise the positive benefits of this type of development

The paper, produced by the Live Work Network, is formally supported by a wide range of organisations with an interest in the live/work sector, from private sector developers and architects to planning consultants and housing associations.

Those responding to an initial survey to test support are included above

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2. Live/work's potential contribution to sustainable communities

We believe that suitably designed live/work developments can achieve the following sustainable development benefits:

1. Reduction in individual car borne movements

Combining your living and working environment removes the necessity to travel to work. This reduces traffic congestion on the road and fuel emissions. The travel to work journey is the most frequent trip undertaken by the car during the peak hours and accounts for 70% of all journeys. Additional live/work development would assist in the national objective in reducing traffic congestion and travel by car. Live/work developments also appeal to those who are less mobile such as the disabled or those who would prefer not to spend time travelling to work. Those who face a commute time of 45 minutes each way to work are spending one working day a week in the car - a waste of their time and a threat to work-life balance as well as a waste of precious natural resources

2. Sustainable building development

Purpose built live/work developments have the benefit of creating a single unit for both living and working. Consequently, fewer resources are used to build the property and more importantly energy savings can be achieved by only needing to heat and light a single property. This is clearly more environmentally friendly within the sustainable development framework

3. Urban regeneration

Live/work developments can provide valuable new employment opportunities in a sustainable manner. They can also provide suitable regeneration of vacant or derelict land where there is little prospect of other uses coming forward. Examples in Lewisham have shown that live/work development can be satisfactorily developed on land which previously accommodated traditional employment uses whilst still maintaining employment on site. Development of this kind can create communities of economically active residents in areas requiring regeneration and reinvestment. Live/work development also provides an alternative form of employment which may be more conducive to the local environment and more sustainable than other more intensive forms of employment land use

4. Rural regeneration

Live/work developments in rural areas can provide additional benefits to those listed above. In many villages second homes and commuting are common, and traditional employment in sectors such as agriculture is on the wane. Live/work schemes provide an opportunity to recreate a 'daytime economy' in places needing a critical mass of local business activity to sustain schools, post offices and other services. In market towns, live/work developments provide an opportunity to create a 'hub' serving previously invisible home-based businesses.

The Countryside Agency estimates that a third of the self employed in rural districts work from home. Live/work provides an opportunity to make this sector visible and connect home-based businesses, encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing

5. Business incubation

Live/work's cost saving appeals to those whose work or business is at a stage where separate premises are not possible. By combining these costs, it is easier for them to start-up and expand their business with lower initial overheads

6. Business clusters

Live/work developments can create the opportunity to create business clusters of associated businesses in one area - gaining knowledge and skills from one another and creating a business environment in one location without the necessity to travel

7. Mixed-use

Live/work is 'mixed use' in its purest sense - mixed use of one property. Where live/work occurs, there is an opportunity to create a shared community approach to the environment in a way that work only or residential only places cannot always achieve. There will be daytime occupancy and activity, helping to improve security and reduce fear of crime. And there will be evening/night occupancy - reducing risk of business premises crime. Live/work can also contribute to high density by removing the need for two separate premises - though the single live/work unit will often need to be bigger than an equivalent residential unit to fulfil its dual use

8. Affordability

Live/work makes housing more affordable by removing the need for the self employed to find and pay for separate workspace premises. Once housed, a live/worker no longer needs to find a residential property. In this sense live/work offers a double benefit - reducing the demand for housing and for work premises. In addition, live/work developments of sufficient scale can reasonably be required to contribute an element of affordable live/work units, potentially managed by housing associations for rent or shared ownership. These can be targeted at an intermediate market - those who are ineligible for social housing but struggling to afford both a home and workspace. Owners of the other units would also benefit from their presence - a source of affordable services nearby. Some of these units could be aimed at self-employed graduates from local colleges, helping to strengthen the cluster and lock talent in the area

9. Reduced reliance on London offices

Live/work might also provide an opportunity for civil servants to relocate away from London before new offices are provided in the regions - and encourage home-based working solutions even at that point. Government departments could explore the possibility of forming partnerships with live/work providers to place such workers within schemes as a flexible measure to assist this process

10. Helping to sustain growth areas

In the Thames Gateway and other growth areas, there is clearly a need to avoid the creation of dormitory commuter zones. Live/work developments provide an opportunity to help new residents work from home but remain close enough to clients and markets for business meetings. They also provide an opportunity for the creation of business hubs serving other home workers as outlined above

The 'offer'

We believe that live/work as a property type offers significant sustainable community benefits, as outlined above. We also believe that, given high house prices and the growth in home working (almost 10% work from home according to the Census) the

trend towards live/work looks inevitable. The live/work approach already offers a great deal to Government. But more is possible...

Where their schemes are of a sufficient scale, genuine live/work developers should be prepared to contribute **economic development gains** in section 106 agreements, in keeping with proposals in ODPM's *Planning for economic development* document.

These could include some or all of the following benefits:

- A suitable proportion of **affordable live/work units** for rent or shared ownership. These to be aimed at an intermediate market start up businesses unable to initially afford separate home and workspace
- A partnership with a suitable **housing association** to deliver these and potentially some of the other benefits below
- Some form of **shared premises or 'hub'** to help resident businesses collaborate with one another, share knowledge and reduce costs. Such centres could provide business incubation and meeting facilities not only to residents but other businesses nearby. They could revert to live/work or workspace use if funding cannot be sustained after an initial period
- A project to assist business networking and manage this hub, with an additional function of **tracking work use**. This can report regularly to the planning authorities and developer, allowing useful lessons to be learnt
- **covenants** that require perpetual work use of the units, with the possibility of B1 use areas and an element of business rates if appropriate

Capturing value

We recognise that in many cases live/work developments are proposed on sites with relatively low employment use value. Sales of units at close to residential value create an incentive for developers to propose a live/work solution. Rather than seeing this value uplift as a threat, planners could instead see it as an opportunity - to capture some of this value for wider economic development objectives

We believe that genuine live/work developers - who are not trying to create backdoor residential use - will be prepared to agree to section 106 agreements that support business clustering projects and affordable workspace. This is because these activities will provide them with a track record and strengthen their hand in future applications to develop new live/work schemes

3. Live/work's strategic fit with existing policy

Live/work is not explicitly referred to in planning guidance or other Government policy papers. However, there are many PPG and policy document references that are clearly relevant and offer implicit support for live/work. A selection are listed below.

The Government has already recognised through PPG 13 that ICT is enabling rapid changes in the size specification and location of development - particularly in the service sector and the knowledge based economy. Since this PPG was issued, there has been further advancements in ICT, particularly the introduction of broadband.

This is now available to a large part of the UK. We believe that broadband has made (and will make) working from home easier and more attractive as businesses increasingly go online.

With the continuing increase in the use of ICT in the workplace, and the growth of 'footloose' and service sector employment, the number of people working from home throughout England and Wales will almost certainly continue to grow. Across England and Wales, the percentage of people who work at home or mainly from home has grown from 4.9% in 1991 to 9.19% in 2001 (Source: 1991 and 2001 Census, ONS).

In addition to ICT advances, in a time of high property prices, many smaller businesses are finding positive advantages in combining their living and working environment. Businesses can be nurtured through their infancy years by cheaper premises attained by not needing to sustain a mortgage on domestic and commercial premises. A clear example of this came from the West Ferry development in the London Docklands, developed by the Peabody Trust. This trend was anticipated in PPG 4 a full 12 years ago (see below), yet there has been little planning guidance to assist this process.

PPG1: General policies and principles 1997

Para 8

'Within town centres but also elsewhere, mixed-use development can help create vitality and diversity and reduce the need to travel. It can be more sustainable than development consisting of a single use'

PPG3: Housing, modified July 2003

Para 42

'Some local planning authorities have allocations of land for employment and other uses which cannot realistically be taken up in the quantities envisaged over the lifetime of the development plan. Equally, since planning policies may have changed since some of this land was designated for particular land uses, it is possible that the designation is no longer compatible with policy set out in current PPGs. The Government regards this as a wasted resource, especially where such sites include previously-developed land. Local planning authorities should therefore review all their non-housing allocations when reviewing their development plan and consider whether some of this land might better be used for housing or mixed use developments'

PPG4: Industrial and commercial development and small firms, 1992

Para 14

'The characteristics of industry and commerce are evolving continuously, and many businesses can be carried on in rural and residential areas without causing unacceptable disturbance through increased traffic, noise, pollution or other adverse effects'

Para 24

'Few firms, especially small ones, can afford to build their own premises, and developers who provide unit factories, offices and other premises suitable for small firms are contributing to the expansion of the economy and of employment. Planning applications for speculative development should be considered on their land-use planning merits; authorities should not normally seek to investigate whether the

developer already has particular prospective purchasers or tenants; this will seldom be a material consideration'

Para 32

'Many small businesses and other non-residential uses are started by people working in their homes, and technological innovations are likely to increase the incidence of home-working'

PPG12: Development plans, modified July 2003

Para 4.9

'Through the planning system, local authorities can help create the right conditions in which businesses can thrive and prosper. In preparing development plans, local authorities should take account of the need to revitalise and broaden the local economy, the need to stimulate employment opportunities, and the importance of encouraging industrial and commercial development, particularly in the growing knowledge driven sector. They should look to provide a range of suitable sites in their plans for industrial and commercial development which take account of the needs of existing and future businesses'

PPG 13: March 2001: Transport

Para 43

'In order to reduce the need for long-distance out-commuting to jobs in urban areas, it is important to promote adequate employment opportunities in rural areas. Diversification of agricultural businesses is increasingly likely to lead to proposals for conversion or re-use of existing farm buildings for other business purposes, possibly in remote locations... [planning authorities] should not reject proposals where small-scale business development or its expansion would give rise to only modest additional daily vehicle movements, in comparison to other uses that are permitted on the site, and the impact on minor roads would not be significant'

Para 33

'The introduction of new information and communications technology (ICT) is enabling rapid changes to be made in the size, specification and location of development, particularly in the service sector and the knowledge based economy with consequent implications for planning policy. Although the effects of ICT are difficult to predict, it is creating opportunities to reduce the need to travel. ICT is facilitating increased flexibility in working patterns, including more home working, which has the potential to reduce daily commuting to work and enable some journeys to take place outside the peak periods. It also has the potential to increase the distance between homes and places of work, resulting in less frequent, but longer, journeys that may make less use of public transport'

Para 34

'Local authorities in both urban and rural areas should be alert to the possibilities for harnessing the use of new technologies to encourage local employment opportunities which reduce the need to travel. They should take a flexible approach to the use of residential properties for home working, consistent with the need to protect the amenity of the area for any neighbouring residential uses'

Other policy documents

Live/work can also fit with recent policy thinking emerging from ODPM. This includes the paper *Planning for economic development*, which suggests that section 106

agreements can be used to obtain economic as well as housing and utility gains from development sites. The paper also expresses support for a review of employment land to ensure that sites that are not sustainable or likely to be developed for employment should be released for other uses.

A full strategic fit assessment

For a full appraisal of live/work's fit with a range of PPGs, please see the paper by Live Work Network associate Andy Lake - section 6

4. Live/work business clusters - the key factors

We believe that live/work, mixed-use of a single property as workspace and home, is worthy of support as an appropriate use on schemes of **all sizes**. However, when a live/work development is of a sufficient scale, it is possible to achieve significant economic and environmental impacts. In these cases the creation of a **live/work business cluster** becomes possible.

Delegates at the Live Work Network's national conference in May 2004 considered how such clusters might be created and made effective. They suggested the following factors as necessary for a successful cluster:

1. Critical mass

- At a certain scale, a live/work scheme can potentially create a business cluster. This will vary depending on location but starts to become a meaningful proposition on schemes of well over 20 units
- Where these schemes offer connections with and facilities for non-resident businesses nearby, they can create wider business clusters - with the scheme at the 'hub'
- In rural areas where there is little business infrastructure, schemes may need to be larger than urban equivalents, to create a supportive business climate where little or none exists

2. Location

- Live/work clusters can either plug into the 'right' areas (eg for creative/IT business) or be 'first in' - leading the creation of a new local economic identity. The latter is harder to achieve, but can bring greatest regeneration benefits
- If possible there should be a proximity with and link to the education sector. Affordable units could for example be offered to graduates and college facilities to live/workers
- Distance from clients/markets is less of an issue where broadband is available and where quality of life outweighs the inconvenience of long distances. In urban contexts however, proximity is important
- The cost of housing/premises are key issues. Where both are high, the demand for live/work is likely to be higher
- Data such as levels of home-working and self-employment can be useful indicators of demand. However, 'soft' factors such as business buzz and quality of life are also relevant
- Ideally a location will be showing some signs of attractiveness to the target market which a live/work cluster can cultivate and make visible

3. Technology

- Broadband critical. Live/work need not be just for IT-related business, but almost any business can benefit from IT and broadband today
- Ideally residents should get better-than-average connections for less than they would pay as individuals - a selling point for a live/work scheme
- Many live/work residents report a desire for shared (therefore cheaper) office technologies such as photocopiers, security systems, IT support

4. Design of units and whole site

- Schemes and units should 'feel' like a workplace. But in an era when workplaces are feeling more and more comfortable, informal and attractive/soft environments are best
- The decision whether to offer separate-access space for work and living or open plan flexible space should depend on the live/workers, not on preconceived ideas that suit providers and planners: both work as live/work models
- Families will tend to favour separate access space, single and younger people more flexible integrated space
- Schemes should create a sense of shared endeavour and easy access to others. Live/workers almost always seem to value this above privacy and isolation. But they should not be forced to 'participate'

5. Sustainability - long term work use

- Planners should require work use of units as a condition of consent, but not in a way that removes necessary flexibility/damages the market for units
- Live/work is a visible upfront version of homeworking (which is usually hidden from planners and various authorities). Live/workers should not be penalised for how they use their property just because their home working is open
- If planners have not got the resources to check/enforce work use, other means are available - developers can be required through section 106 agreements to establish business support projects that track work use for an initial period (see below)
- Business rates can be applied to part of the property to signal work use from the outset and act as a disincentive to potential residential use abuse
- Planners could require (on sites of sufficient scale) a proportion of rented/shared-ownership live/work as a means of further protecting work use

6. Business support packages

- Live/work residents typically find existing business advice agencies less than satisfactory
- Live/work schemes of sufficient scale could benefit from projects to support residents' businesses, learning from the best practice of those already doing this (see our report *Homes that work* for models)
- Any combination of developer contribution (through section 106) and grant funding can fund such projects for a time limited period
- These projects need not be permanent. Once a cluster is established and networking is strong they become less necessary
- However residents may choose to pay for some of the services
- One possible route to sustaining business support is to include some contribution towards it through a service charge
- Business support projects could also be required to track the progress of businesses and the continuation of work-use
- Any such 'track record' data would be helpful to the developer in seeking future live/work approvals elsewhere

7. Affordability

- Live/work is inherently more affordable than the cost of separate home and workspace. This should be seen as a benefit of all live/work development
- Developers could do more to market the cost savings of combining workplace and home all in one property

- Live/work unit values will vary in relation to residential values but will usually be slightly cheaper because of the more restricted market for selling on
- Developers of large sites should be encouraged to agree a proportion of 'affordable live/work' units (rent, shared ownership or discounted sale)

8. Collaboration - shared space/activity

- Live/workers generally value some shared space (eg meeting room/café) on the site to encourage networking
- Service charges can do more than cover traditional upkeep-of-common-areas costs. They could include business support, broadband/telecoms and a contribution towards shared space and facilities
- Opportunities to cut costs by sharing resources - eg storage/photocopiers/IT support - should be considered. A live/work cluster allows resident micro-businesses to 'big up' their buying power, with economies of scale
- Live/workers may wish to share services too - a website, marketing/advertising, discount schemes. These things must be specified by residents themselves
- If at all possible a live/work cluster should widen any such services and facilities to non-resident businesses and projects nearby to build the cluster and obtain revenue (eg from hiring rooms)
- All the benefits above are unlikely to occur without a coordinator or project to enable them to happen? Even if funding for them is temporary, they are worth pursuing to kick start a culture of networking

9. Mix of business/resident types

- Residents should ideally be from a variety of sectors. One sector schemes could create more competition than collaboration
- Live/work is appropriate for both more traditional kinds of artisan/craft work and environmentally-friendly IT reliant business
- Schemes aimed at the latter need not be inherently middle class. Why assume working class people do/can not run IT-based businesses?
- Ideally developments should house a combination of existing viable businesses and start ups. A scheme for only the fragile start ups will not necessarily help those people a great deal
- Viable/successful businesses can benefit from start up neighbours offering affordable skills close by. And start ups can clearly benefit from the potential to work with and for the stronger companies on the site
- Live/work developments have so far failed to connect with employers and house employees? There is a large potential market here for developers to explore - eg home-working key workers
- Live/work is usually for single people, but family live work is a huge potential market. It will usually require work and living space with separate access
- Family businesses run from home can benefit from separate access live/work as a means of expanding and taking on non-family staff without having to find separate premises and having to commute

5. Proposals for new planning guidance on live/work and a new live/work use class

Those who are active in the new emerging live/work sector - in all sectors - believe that this hybrid form of development should be recognised within planning policy. We believe that the benefits of live/work to the Government's sustainable community objectives - as set out in section 2 of this paper - are clear.

We therefore suggest that the Government should want to facilitate and encourage such development through the planning system without ambiguity or controversy.

Many of our members who are currently promoting live/work developments and involved in the planning system point out that there is **no explicit Government planning policy** for live/work - despite the positive sustainable benefits that can be achieved from combining living and working environment.

Being mindful of some of the PPG reviews that are currently under way, we would like to suggest the following additions:

Planning Policy Statement 1: Creating Sustainable Communities

Paragraph 1.1 of PPS1 recognises that planning shapes the places where people live and work. The Government pledge from the outset claims that more sustainable communities will be established - places where people want to live and meet their aspirations for the future. Improvements in ICT are therefore making it more desirable and achievable for people to live and work at home. Live/work developments provide more flexible lifestyles which are becoming increasingly popular in today's society. Live/work development should therefore be recognised as part of a lifestyle change that will contribute to a sustainable community.

We recommend that paragraph 1.15 of PPS1 is altered to provide more direct encouragement for Live/Work development by stating:-

*“Planning authorities should have regard to the importance of encouraging industrial, commercial, **live/work** and retail development if the economy is to prosper and provide for improved productivity, choice and competition, particularly when technological and other requirements of modern business are changing rapidly.”*

Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing – Consultation Draft

PPG3 provides the Government's planning advice on housing. We believe this PPG could facilitate more live/work developments by being more explicit in its advice.

We recommend that paragraph 4 is amended to include a new bullet point which states:-

“Local planning authorities should:

- *promote and encourage live/work development as a sustainable form of employment”*

We also suggest that under the sub-heading ‘Promoting mixed-use development’ (paragraph 9) live/work development should be specifically identified as a sustainable

form of development which has the ability to reduce travel and promote regeneration. Accordingly such development should be encouraged and made available on employment sites and in other locations where this can assist in regeneration.

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas – Consultation Draft

PPS7 provides government guidance on rural areas. Given the sustainable attributes that can be achieved by live/work developments, we believe they can be appropriately located in rural areas - especially on redundant and derelict land where former employment uses have now ceased.

The introduction of sensitively designed live/work developments can also bring life back into rural communities and foster economic prosperity. Such schemes can often reduce the impact of more obtrusive industrial buildings and promote regeneration of otherwise redundant land. In more remote locations, sensitively designed developments can enhance the countryside and create more sustainable communities.

It is therefore recommended that the sub heading *Business development and employment* (paragraph 6) be amended to include a new paragraph which states:

“Planning authorities should support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas, particularly where traditional, rural based industries are in decline. Local Planning authorities should therefore:

- ***Allow sensitively designed live/work developments to assist in the regeneration of redundant employment land and to provide a sustainable employment alternative on other employment sites within the countryside.”***

Use Classes Order 1987

We would also suggest that ODPM reviews use classes to consider a **live/work use class**. Currently, many local planning authorities are treating live/work developments with suspicion, regarding it as residential development which potentially can undermine and erode their employment land supply.

Regrettably this approach does not recognise the employment potential that can be achieved through each live/work unit. Local planning authorities are also sceptical about how they can secure the ‘work’ element within such developments as they consider conditions can be removed and consequently lead to the loss of the employment on site.

In order to provide greater certainty over the retention of both the living and working element of the proposal and to provide flexibility over the amount of accommodation used for ‘working’, we suggest that a separate Use Class should be devised for live/work development.

With a separate use class in place, planning authorities could have the comfort that if the live/work development were to change to solely employment use or solely residential use they could require the occupant to submit a change of use application.

Distinguishing live/work from home working

In considering a live/work use class, we suggest that live/work properties should be defined as having some different attributes to ordinary home working (which should rightfully be seen as a flexible use of residential property).

Home working in a residential property will often be intermittent and will vary from occupant to occupant upon change of owner/tenants.

In contrast live/work property should be *'designed for perpetual ongoing dual-use as a workplace and home'*. Live/work usually implies work use of the property of a significantly greater scale and frequency than ordinary home working.

/ends