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SENT BY EMAIL
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30/01/2023

Dear Planning Policy Team,

MIDDLESBROUGH LOCAL PLAN: SCOPING REPORT

1. Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the Middlesbrough Local Plan Scoping Report.
2. The HBF is the principal representative body of the house-building industry in England and Wales. Our representations reflect the views of our membership, which includes multi-national PLC's, regional developers and small, local builders. In any one year, our members account for over 80% of all new "for sale" market housing built in England and Wales as well as a large proportion of newly built affordable housing.
3. The HBF would like to submit the following comments upon selected points raised by the Scoping consultation. These responses are provided in order to assist Middlesbrough Council in the preparation of the emerging local plan.

Plan Period

4. The Scoping Report states that the new Local Plan will cover the period 2022 to 2039. The NPPF¹ states strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15-year period from adoption and that where larger scale developments form part of the strategy for the area, policies should be set within a vision that looks further ahead (at least 30 years), to take in account the likely timescale for delivery. The HBF considers that the Plan period to 2039 is unlikely to be sufficient to provide a 15-year period at the point at which the Plan is adopted and would recommend extending the Plan period, and if larger scale developments are proposed in the Plan, then an even longer period will be required.

Objectives

5. The Scoping Report sets out the Plan Objectives these include to build high quality homes that help to strengthen our communities, this objective is generally supported by the HBF.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

¹ NPPF 2021 Paragraph 22



6. The Scoping Report states that the approach to biodiversity net gain (BNG) will be established. The HBF would highlight that as the Government note on page 9 of their response to the consultation on net gain, they considered 10% BNG to deliver the right balance between “ambition, achieving environmental outcomes, and deliverability and cost to developers”. Given Paragraph 174d of the NPPF states that planning policies should “minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity” if a development delivers the 10% requirement by law it will ensure that paragraphs 174d of the NPPF is addressed as it will ensure a net gain. As such any level above this is not necessary to make a development acceptable in planning terms and cannot be made a requirement in the local plan.

Housing

7. The Scoping Report suggests that an evidence-based housing requirement will be determined using the standard method as a baseline. It states that housing sites will be allocated to meet the requirement. It goes on to say that other housing policies will be prepared to deal with the type, mix and tenure of housing, and to address affordable housing.
8. The HBF considers that the Council should use the Standard Method as the starting point for determining the housing requirement, as set out in the NPPF and the PPG. However, the HBF also recommends that the Council consider the potential circumstances when it might be appropriate to plan for a higher housing need figure than the standard method indicates as set in the PPG². This includes growth strategies for the area, strategic infrastructure improvements, taking unmet need from neighbouring authorities, previous levels of delivery or previous assessments of need.
9. When considering the level of housing land supply to meet the housing requirement the HBF recommends that the Council ensure that they give consideration to an appropriate level of flexibility within the supply to ensure that the Plan is robust and resilient to change. The Council’s housing land supply should include a short and long-term supply of sites with both strategic and non-strategic allocations for residential development. Housing delivery is optimised where a wide mix of sites is provided, with a range of sites by both size and market location. A wide mix of sites provides choice for consumers, allows places to grow in sustainable ways, creates opportunities to diversify the construction sector, responds to changing circumstances, treats the housing requirement as a minimum rather than a maximum and provides choice and competition in the land market.
10. The Council should identify at least 10% of its housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare or else demonstrate strong reasons for not achieving this target in line with the NPPF requirements.
11. The HBF understands the need for a mix of house types, sizes and tenures and is generally supportive of providing a range and choice of homes to meet the needs of the local area. It is, however, important that any policy is workable and ensures that housing

² PPG: 2a-010-20201216

delivery will not be compromised or stalled due to overly prescriptive requirements, requiring a mix that does not consider the scale of the site or the need to provide significant amounts of additional evidence. The HBF considers that flexibility will be important in any policy in relation to housing mix, this allows developers to consider not only the identified need but also market aspirations, local and site characteristics and viability.

12. The PPG³ is clear that authorities should set clear policies to address the housing needs of groups with particular needs such as older and disabled people. These policies could include setting out how the Council will consider proposals for the different types of housing that these groups are likely to require, identifying potential sites as allocations for these types of development and could also include providing an indicative figure for the number of units of specialist housing to be provided.
13. The HBF supports the need to address the affordable housing requirements of the borough. The NPPF⁴ is, however, clear that the derivation of affordable housing policies must not only take account of need but also viability and deliverability. The HBF considers that the Council will need to thoroughly test the viability of any affordable housing requirement to ensure that it is deliverable alongside the other policy requirements in this Plan. The HBF considers that any affordable housing split will need to take into consideration the need to provide affordable home ownership products including First Homes in line with national policy. The NPPF⁵ states that where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decision should expect at least 10% of the total homes to be available for affordable home ownership. The PPG⁶ states that First Homes are the Government's preferred discount market tenure and should account for at least 25% of all affordable housing units delivered by developers through planning obligations.

Development Management Policies

14. The Scoping Report also identifies that a suite of development management policies will be included and will cover issues such as a general development principles, developer contributions and space standards for new residential development.
15. The HBF notes that the nationally described space standards (NDSS) as introduced by Government, are intended to be optional and can only be introduced where there is a clear need and they retain development viability. As such they were introduced on a 'need to have' rather than a 'nice to have' basis. PPG⁷ identifies the type of evidence required to introduce such a policy. It states that where a need for internal space standards is identified, local planning authorities should provide justification for requiring internal space policies. Local planning authorities should take account of the following areas: Need, Viability and Timing. The Council will need robust justifiable evidence to introduce the NDSS, based on the criteria set out above.

³ ID: 63-006-20190626

⁴ 4 NPPF Paragraph 34

⁵ Paragraph 65 of NPPF 2021

⁶ PPG ID: 70-001-20210524

⁷ PPG ID: 56-020-20150327

Future Engagement

16. I trust that the Council will find these comments useful as it continues to progress its Local Plan. I would be happy to discuss these issues in greater detail or assist in facilitating discussions with the wider house building industry.

17. The HBF would like to be kept informed of all forthcoming consultations upon the Local Plan and associated documents. Please use the contact details provided below for future correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joanne Harding', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joanne Harding
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