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SENT BY EMAIL
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Dear Planning Policy Team,

DRAFT BOOTLE AREA ACTION PLAN

1. Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the Draft Bootle Area Action Plan.
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.

Vision and Objectives

3. The HBF supports that Council in including an objective that looks to meet the housing needs of Bootle's residents in a way that is safe and secure including affordable and aspirational housing, homes for families, older people and people with special needs.

BAAP2 Best Use of Resources

4. This policy states that new build housing developments should seek to be water efficient by seeking to encourage water consumption to fewer than 110 litres per person per day.
5. The Building Regulations require all new dwellings to achieve a mandatory level of water efficiency of 125 litres per day per person, which is a higher standard than that achieved by much of the existing housing stock. This mandatory standard represents an effective demand management measure. The Optional Technical Housing Standard is 110 litres per day per person.
6. As set out in the NPPF¹, all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence, which should be adequate, proportionate and focussed tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned. Therefore, a policy requirement for the optional water efficiency standard must be justified by credible and robust evidence. If the Council wishes to adopt the optional standard for water efficiency of 110 litres per

¹ Paragraph 31



person per day, then the Council should justify doing so by applying the criteria set out in the PPG. PPG² states that where there is a *'clear local need, Local Planning Authorities (LPA) can set out Local Plan Policies requiring new dwellings to meet tighter Building Regulations optional requirement of 110 litres per person per day'*. PPG³ also states the *'it will be for a LPA to establish a clear need based on existing sources of evidence, consultations with the local water and sewerage company, the Environment Agency and catchment partnerships and consideration of the impact on viability and housing supply of such a requirement'*. The Housing Standards Review was explicit that reduced water consumption was solely applicable to water stressed areas. The North West, Sefton and Bootle are not considered to be an area of Water Stress as identified by the Environment Agency⁴. Therefore, the HBF considers that requirement for optional water efficiency standard is not justified nor consistent with national policy in relation to need or viability and should be deleted.

BAAP17 Affordable Housing and Housing Mix

7. This policy states that housing developments that provide 15 dwellings or more should provide a minimum of 15% of the homes as affordable housing. It goes on to state that 33% of the affordable housing should be affordable or social rented, 25% as First Homes and up to 42% as discounted homes for sale.
8. This differs slightly from the policy for affordable homes in Bootle in the adopted Sefton Local Plan which states that affordable housing will be required as part of proposals for new developments of 15 dwellings or more on the basis of 15% of the total scheme (measured by bedspaces), and that the affordable housing should be 50% social / affordable rented and 50% intermediate housing.
9. The HBF considers that the policy provided in the Area Action Plan provides greater clarity than the adopted policy and is more in line with Government policy which looks for First Homes to be provided. However, without viability evidence it is not possible to confirm whether this policy would be appropriate or sound. The HBF supports the need to address the affordable housing requirements of the borough. The NPPF⁵ is, however, clear that the derivation of affordable housing policies must not only take account of need but also viability and deliverability. The Council should be mindful that it is unrealistic to negotiate every site on a one-by-one basis because the base-line aspiration of a policy or combination of policies is set too high as this will jeopardise future housing delivery.
10. The NPPF⁶ is also clear that where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect at least 10% of the total number of homes to be available for affordable home ownership. The HBF is

² ID: 56-014-20150327

³ ID: 56-015-20150327

⁴ 2021 Assessment of Water Stress Areas Update: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-stressed-areas-2021-classification>

⁵ NPPF 2021 Paragraph 34

⁶ NPPF 2021 Paragraph 65

concerned that the proposed policy will not deliver this requirement, if this is to be the case the HBF recommends that the Council provide the appropriate evidence.

11. The policy also states that on schemes that provide 25 new build homes or more of any tenure that a set mix of homes will be required this includes 25% of market housing being 1-2 bedrooms and 40% being 3-bed.
12. The HBF understands the need for a mix of dwelling types 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 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 additional evidence. The HBF considers that the Council should also ensure that the mix reflects the market demand and aspirations of the local community.
13. The policy also states that all homes should be designed to meet building regulations M4(2), and that on schemes of 50 or more dwellings a minimum of 5% of the homes should be designed to meet M4(3) 'wheelchair user' homes. This differs from the Local Plan which states that in developments of 50 or more dwellings, at least 20% of new market properties must be designed to meet M4(2) standards.
14. The HBF is generally supportive of providing homes that are suitable to meet the needs of older people and disabled people. However, if the Council wishes to adopt the higher optional standards for accessible, adaptable and wheelchair homes the Council should only do so by applying the criteria set out in the PPG.
15. PPG⁷ identifies the type of evidence required to introduce such a policy, including the likely future need; the size, location, type and quality of dwellings needed; the accessibility and adaptability of the existing stock; how the needs vary across different housing tenures; and the overall viability. It is incumbent on the Council to provide a local assessment evidencing the specific case for Sefton & Bootle which justifies the inclusion of optional higher standards for accessible and adaptable homes in its Area Action Plan policy. If the Council can provide the appropriate evidence and this policy is to be included, then the HBF recommends that an appropriate transition period is included within the policy.
16. The PPG also identifies other requirements for the policy including the need to consider site specific factors such as vulnerability to flooding, site topography and other circumstances, this is not just in relation to the ability to provide step-free access.
17. The Council should also note that the Government response to the Raising accessibility standards for new homes⁸ states that the Government proposes to mandate the current M4(2) requirement in Building Regulations as a minimum for all new homes, with M4(1)

⁷ PPG ID: 56-007-20150327

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/raising-accessibility-standards-for-new-homes/outcome/raising-accessibility-standards-for-new-homes-summary-of-consultation-responses-and-government-response#government-response>

applying in exceptional circumstances. This will be subject to a further consultation on the technical details and will be implemented in due course through the Building Regulations. M4(3) would continue to apply as now where there is a local planning policy in place and where a need has been identified and evidenced.

18. The HBF considers that if the Council has the evidence to introduce this policy, it may want to consider the most appropriate way to deliver the homes they require to meet their needs. The HBF considers that this may not always be in the form of M4(3) homes, and may need further consideration.

BAAP24 Environmental Improvements

19. This policy states that all residential developments that create 10 dwellings or more should provide a proportionate contribution to environmental improvements in the local area. It goes on to state that the cost is set at £2,577 (2023/24 prices) per housing unit, which will be secured through a planning obligation.
20. The HBF considers that it is not clear what the evidence is for this policy and why it is required, plans can only be considered to sound if they are justified and consistent with national policy. The NPPF⁹ is clear that Plans should set out the contributions expected from development and that such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the Plan. Without appropriate evidence it is not possible for the HBF to determine if this policy viable or sound.

Future Engagement

21. 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.
22. 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,



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⁹ NPPF 2021 paragraph 34