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Dear Planning Policy Team,

TRAFFORD LOCAL PLAN: DRAFT LOCAL PLAN (POLICIES) REGULATION 18

1. Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the Trafford Local Plan – Draft Local Plan (Policies) Regulation 18 consultation.
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 notes that paragraph 234 of the 2024 NPPF states that *‘for the purpose of preparing local plans, the policies in this version of the Framework will apply from 12 March 2025 other than where one or more of the following apply: (c) the plan includes policies to deliver the level of housing and other development set out in a preceding local plan (such as a joint local plan containing strategic policies) adopted since 12 March 2020’*. It goes on to state that where paragraph 234(c) applies the plan will be examined under the relevant previous version of the Framework.
4. We would like to submit the following comments upon selected policies within the Draft Local Plan consultation document. These responses are provided to assist the Council in the preparation of the emerging local plan. The HBF is keen to ensure that Trafford produces a sound local plan which provides appropriate policies for the area. The HBF notes that this consultation relates only to the policies of the draft Trafford Local Plan, and that any site allocations and designations will be the subject of a separate future consultation later in 2025.

Plan Period

5. The Plan Period is identified as 2022 to 2042. 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

¹ NPPF December 2023 Paragraph 22 / NPPF 2024 Paragraph 22

looks further ahead (at least 30 years), to take into account the likely timescale for delivery. The HBF considers that the Council may want to be looking to prepare a new Local Plan that will look forward to at least 2045 to ensure that it covers the 15-year period, they may also want to consider whether any strategic sites require the Council to plan over a longer period for these areas.

Vision and Objectives

6. The vision states that *‘Trafford will have met its housing requirement; it will have addressed its acute need for affordable housing to ensure that people have the types of homes that they both want and need’*. Strategic Objective 1 looks to deliver the homes that Trafford Needs.
7. The HBF considers that meeting the current and future housing needs should be a key part of the vision and objectives for the Plan, this includes the housing needs for market housing, family homes, homes for older people and homes for first-time buyers.

Policy ST4: Sustainable Development

8. This policy states that when considering all development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
9. The HBF considers that this policy is generally laudable, and elements such as the Council working proactively with applicants to find solutions that mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible without delay are generally supported. However, the HBF would query whether the content of this policy is actually a policy, or a statement of intent. The HBF considers that it is completely unnecessary to state that applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan when taken as a whole will be granted permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy ST5: Climate Change

10. This policy states that development proposals which contribute towards the Council’s net zero ambitions and / or mitigate against the impacts of climate change will be supported. It also states that new development will be expected to demonstrate how climate change has been considered in the design of the development and what adaptation and mitigation measures have been put in place.
11. The PPG² provides examples of mitigating climate change by reducing emissions: through reducing the need to travel and providing sustainable transport; providing opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy technologies; providing opportunities for decentralised energy and heating; and promoting low carbon design approaches to reduce energy consumption in buildings. The HBF recommends that the Council seek to ensure that they produce a sustainable Plan which supports a balance of homes and employment and is in line with the guidance provided by the NPPF and the PPG.

² PPG ID: 6-003-20140612

12. The HBF generally supports the Council in seeking to minimise carbon emissions and considers that supporting proposals which contribute towards the Council's net zero ambitions is potentially an appropriate way to do this. The HBF does, however, have concerns about how this policy will actually be implemented and how development will be expected to demonstrate how climate change has been considered. The HBF considers that the Council should ensure that this policy is only implemented in line with the December 2023 Written Ministerial Statement³ which states that *'a further change to energy efficiency building regulations is planned for 2025 meaning that homes built to that standard will be net zero ready and should need no significant work to ensure that they have zero carbon emissions as the grid continue to decarbonise. Compared to varied local standards, these nationally applied standards provide much-needed clarity and consistency for businesses, large and small, to invest and prepare to build net-zero ready homes'*. It goes on to state that *'the Government does not expect plan-makers to set local energy efficiency standards for buildings that go beyond current or planned buildings regulations. The proliferation of multiple local standards by local authority area can add further costs to building new homes by adding complexity and undermining economies of scale. Any planning policies that propose local energy efficiency standards for buildings that go beyond current, or planned building regulations, should be rejected at examination if they do not have a well-reasoned and robustly costed rationale'*.

Policy RT1: Carbon and Energy

13. This policy states that new development must support Trafford Council's commitment for the Borough to be carbon neutral by 2038. It states that all developments should seek to reduce carbon emissions in accordance with the energy hierarchy in JP-S2. The policy goes on to state that development proposals must demonstrate how the design of the scheme has responded to the First Step Priority Areas and the Long Term Priorities set out in the locality policies. The locality policies set first step priorities such as public EV charging hubs and heat pumps in the Northern area and Solar PV and Retrofit in the Southern area. Long-term Priorities include district heat networks, heat pump prevalent zone and hydrogen heat opportunity areas.
14. Policy JP-S2: Carbon and Energy of the PfE sets out the energy hierarchy: Firstly, minimise energy demand; then, maximise energy efficiency; then, use renewable energy; then, use low carbon energy; and finally, utilise other energy sources.
15. Whilst the HBF would agree with the Council that there is a need to act to reduce carbon emissions and generally considers that the energy hierarchy is an appropriate consideration, we would disagree that this needs to be undertaken through the local plan. The HBF has been working with Government through the Future Homes Hub to develop a route map to ensuring new homes are zero carbon ready, and given that the Future Homes Standard (FHS) is expected to be implemented in the near future, this national standard will mean that all

³ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-12-13/hcws123>

homes will emit no carbon once the national grid decarbonises. Delivering these improvements through building regulations has a distinct advantage over delivering a variety of different approaches across the country, in that it provides a single approach that all developers understand and can be rolled out at scale. This allows supply chains and skills to be improved prior to implementation and ensures that improvements to building standards are actually deliverable from the point at which they are introduced.

16. The HBF does, however, have concerns about how this policy will actually be implemented and how development will be expected to demonstrate how they have responded to the first step priority areas and the long term development areas. The concerns as to the deliverability of alternative ad hoc local standards are reflected in the December 2023 Written Ministerial Statement⁴, which remains relevant planning guidance. The WMS notes for example that *'compared to varied local standards nationally applied standards provide much-needed clarity and consistency for businesses, large and small, to invest and prepare to build net-zero ready homes'* and that local standards can *'add further costs to building new homes by adding complexity and undermining economies of scale'*.
17. Therefore, whilst HBF considers the most effective approach to reducing carbon emission for new homes, whilst maintaining the delivery of those homes, is through building regulations, if the Council chooses to require a higher standards it must ensure that development not only remains viable but that the approach chosen will not impact on delivery. It must be able to show that there are the requisite skills in the labour market and supply chains in place for key products to ensure that delivery of new homes in the short and medium term is not affected. As set out previously, the PPG sets out how the Local Plan can mitigate climate change by reducing emissions through reducing the need to travel, providing opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy technologies, providing opportunities for decentralised energy and heating and promoting low carbon design approaches. It does not suggest that this is done by setting additional local standards for homes over and above those already set in national policy and through building regulations.

Policy RT2: Decentralised Energy Generation

18. This policy states that all major developments within Heat and Energy Network Opportunity Areas must assess the feasibility of connecting to an existing or planned decentralised energy network. It goes on to state that major developments that do not connect to a network will be required to contribute financially to the Council's decentralised energy initiatives in the area. The locality policies identify the Heat and Energy Network Opportunity Areas.
19. The HBF notes that decentralised energy networks are not always compatible with the Future Homes Standard (FHS). Its suitability needs to be considered on a site-by-site basis based on the specific site constraints. The HBF notes this is also often a very ineffective policy, which is unpopular with residents, locking them into expensive to maintain systems, without the ability to switch to alternative suppliers.

⁴ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-12-13/hcws123>

20. The HBF could find not find any evidence that the Council has considered the impact of this policy on the delivery of new homes, including the skills, supply chains and capacity available to ensure these standards can be delivered whilst maintaining the delivery of new homes as set out in the housing trajectory. For example, the HBF would have expected some consideration to have been undertaken as to whether there is sufficient grid capacity to cope with the increase amounts of decentralised energy that will be fed into the national grid during the period when there is excess electricity generation compared to what is being used. Should there be a need to increase grid capacity as a result of these policies there is a risk that new development will be hindered by a lack of grid capacity to export power.
21. Heat networks are one aspect of the path towards decarbonising heat, however currently the predominant technology for district-sized communal heating networks is gas combined heat and power (CHP) plants. Over 90% of district networks are gas fired. As 2050 approaches, meeting the Government's climate target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero will require a transition from gas-fired networks to renewable or low carbon alternatives such as large heat pumps, hydrogen or waste-heat recovery but at the moment one of the major reasons why heat network projects do not install such technologies is because of the up-front capital cost. The Council should be aware that for the foreseeable future it will remain uneconomic for most heat networks to install low-carbon technologies.
22. Furthermore, some heat network consumers do not have comparable levels of satisfaction as consumers on gas and electricity networks, and they pay a higher price. Currently, a consumer living in a building serviced by a heat network does not have the same opportunities to switch supplier as they would for most gas and electricity supplies.

Policy RT3: Overheating and the Urban Heat Island

23. This policy states that all new developments must be designed to minimise overheating risks and reduce reliance on active cooling systems, such as air conditioning. The policy goes on to state that where feasible, developments should include green roofs, vertical gardens, and strategic tree planting to provide cooling.
24. To be consistent with national policy, the HBF requests that the Council rely on the Building Regulations process as the way to minimise overheating and reduce reliance on active cooling systems, and as such suggest that this policy does not need to be included in the Local Plan. The HBF considers it would be appropriate to make reference to the Future Homes Standard and Part O (overheating) of the Building Regulations as the appropriate standards for development.
25. The HBF notes that green roofs and walls can add significant weight to the building structure particularly when saturated with water, and require significant maintenance to ensure their continued benefits. As such they are not always the most sustainable option for development, and this should be a consideration for the Council in looking to take this element of the policy forward.

Policy RT5: Circular Economy

26. This policy suggests that all developments should use resources efficiently, follow circular economy principles and aim to achieve net zero waste. It sets five criteria that major development must undertake these include utilising materials with a low embodied carbon content and submitting a Circular Economy Statement.
27. National planning policy is silent on the issue of embodied carbon standards as are building regulations. The HBF would therefore question why the Council consider that this policy is necessary in Trafford. The HBF considers it is best that such matters are addressed at a national level to avoid different approaches and standards being set in different areas. The housebuilding industry is working with the Future Homes Hub to develop a roadmap to reducing embodied carbon and whilst Councils may want to go further and faster the HBF have concerns that this will impact on the deliverability of development with a disproportionate impact on SME developers. Given that the Government has been clear that it does not want to see a proliferation of different standards across the country, the HBF would suggest that the approach being taken by the Council in setting such a standard is not consistent with the approach advocated in the WMS⁵.
28. The HBF is also concerned that planning may be too early in the building process to fully assess the carbon impact of a design. It may be that further decisions are made post planning, which do not require further consent which would impact on the carbon emissions. The HBF considers that if the Council is to introduce a policy in relation to embodied carbon it will have to closely consider how it will be monitored and what the implications are for the preparation of any assessment, particularly in relation to how easily accessible any data is. The Council will also have to consider how the policy will interact with other policies for example in relation to design, energy efficiency or resilience to heat, as well as the viability and delivery of development.
29. The HBF would be interested to know which officers within the Council will be considering the Circular Economy Statement, and what knowledge and skills they have to make a judgement on this Statement. How will the decision-maker determine if the Statement is appropriate and implementable. The HBF would also be interested to know how the Statement will be monitored and enforced, and at what stage any action would be taken.
30. The HBF considers that if this policy were to be introduced then the Council should provide a transitional period to give the industry time to adjust to the requirements, to upskill the workforce as needed and for the supply chain to be updated or amended as required.
31. The HBF also considers that this requirement should not apply to all developments and should recognise the scale of development in relation to the significant requirements of this policy.

⁵ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-12-13/hcws123>

Policy R1: Housing Delivery

32. This policy states that between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2042 (the plan period) a minimum of 22,443 net additional dwellings will be delivered in Trafford. The phasing of Trafford's housing requirements is stepped across the Plan period at an average of 1,122 dwellings per annum (dpa). The Council proposed to deliver 817dpa in the period 2022-2025, 1,122dpa in 2025-2030, and 1,224dpa in the period 2030-2039 and 1,122dpa in the period 2039-2042.
33. The Places for Everyone (PfE) document identifies a housing requirement of 1,122 dpa. This is stepped with 817dpa in the period 2022-25, 1,122dpa in the period 2025-30 and 1,224 in the period 2030-39. The Plan notes that as a joint plan the PfE document has redistributed some of Trafford's housing needs amongst other districts to reflect the availability of land and strategic priorities for the conurbation.
34. The HBF considers that the Council should plan for growth, this would be in line with the NPPF⁶ which states that Plans should be prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational but deliverable. The HBF notes that the local housing need (LHN) as identified by the current standard method is 1,599dpa, this is an increase from the LHN identified under the previous standard method of 1,399dpa and an increase from the housing requirement set out in the PfE document. The HBF does not consider that it is appropriate for the Local Plan to continue with the lower housing requirement from the Places for Everyone document post the end of the PfE Plan period. The HBF considers that at that point this Plan should revert to the figures identified by the Standard Method. The HBF considers that this would be in line with the NPPF seeking to Plan in a positive manner, and in line with the Building the Homes we Need Written Ministerial Statement in relation to taking the tough choices needed to improve affordability, turbo charge growth and build the 1.5 million homes the Government have committed to deliver. This would increase the housing requirement in the period 2039-2042 to 1,599dpa, and increase the overall housing requirement to 23,874 dwellings.
35. The justification text sets out the distribution of development between each locality, it suggests 18,704 net additional homes in the North, 3,860 homes in the South, 677 homes in the Central area and 5,072 homes in the West.
36. The HBF considers that the distribution of development can only be considered appropriate, if it ensure that the vision, aims and objectives are met and housing needs for all members of the local community are met. In order for the distribution to be appropriate, it may be that the Council needs to ensure flexibility in distribution so that all of the housing needs of all groups of the local community are met, these include those that need affordable housing, family housing and housing suitable for older or disabled people. It may also be that whilst there is a focus on previously developed sites within the existing urban areas that this does

⁶ NPPF 2023 Paragraph 16

not prevent development elsewhere within the Council area, particularly where it helps to meet housing need eg family housing or affordable homes.

37. The HBF considers that whilst it is appropriate to support the use of previously developed sites and to give weight to the value of using brownfield sites this needs to be done in the right way and should not prevent the delivery of other sustainable sites or sustainable developments. The Council will need to be able to demonstrate with evidence that this strategy is deliverable and developable over the Plan period, will meet the varied housing needs and will not lead to a shortage of homes being delivered.

Policy R3: Affordable and Social Housing

38. This policy states that all major residential developments will be required to provide on-site affordable housing, with a tenure mix of 60% rented (40% social rent and 20% affordable rent) and 40% affordable home ownership. The locality policies set the required affordable housing providing ranging from 25% in Trafford North to 45% in Trafford South. The policy goes on to state that a minimum of 10% of affordable homes must be Totally Affordable Net Zero (TANZ) homes.
39. The HBF notes that the Council has not undertaken a Viability Assessment at this point, and that it will be undertaken to support the next stage in the production of the Local Plan. The HBF supports the need to address the affordable housing requirements of the borough. The NPPF⁷ 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.
40. The HBF considers that it is appropriate for the Council to plan for the affordable needs of its community, and to ensure that it does this in line with the requirements in the NPPF⁸. This should ensure that any affordable housing requirements are clearly set out, and are evidenced as viable through an assessment, and that flexibility is provided within the policy where viability may be an issue. 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.
41. The HBF is concerned by the requirement for 10% of affordable homes to be provided as Totally Affordable Net Zero (TANZ) homes. The HBF also notes that the definition of a TANZ homes is not provided within the Plan, and that this could be an issue for the implementation of this policy. The HBF is concerned about the additional extra costs that this will add to the viability of homes. The HBF considers that this element of the policy should be deleted.

⁷ NPPF2024 paragraph 35

⁸ NPPF 2024 paragraph 63 - 66

Policy R4: Size and Type of New Homes

42. This policy states that all new residential development proposals must deliver a range and mix of dwelling sizes and types in accordance with the relevant Locality policy. The policy goes on to state that the Council will not support major development applications which would result in an over concentration of a particular dwellings size or type, where they do not meet an identified local need. There is only one locality policy and this is for Trafford North where development within the wards of Old Trafford, Gorse Hill and Cornbrook will be primarily apartment-led schemes, with 80% apartments and 20% ground floor duplexes.
43. 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 delivery will not be compromised or stalled due to: overly prescriptive requirements; requiring a mix that does not consider the scale of the site; requiring a mix that does not consider the viability of the site; or requiring the applicant to provide significant amounts of additional evidence. The HBF would expect the Council to ensure that the policy is applied flexibly and makes allowance for home builders to provide alternative housing mixes as is required by the market.
44. The HBF is concerned that the Plan will not meet the housing needs of all members of the community. The HBF notes that the justification text for Policy R1 sets out the distribution of development between each locality, with a focus for development in the North with 18,704 dwellings in this area, this equates to 83% of the housing requirement. The HBF also notes that this policy looks for major development in several wards in the North to be apartment-led with 80% apartments. Whilst the affordable housing policy looks for proposals within Trafford North to provide 25% affordable housing, this is the lowest of the affordable housing requirements. The NPPF⁹ is clear that the size, type and tenure of housing need for different groups in the community should be considered and reflected in planning policies these include those that require affordable housing, families with children, older people and people who wish to build their own homes. The HBF does not consider that the Plan provides for the needs of those seeking affordable homes or family homes.

Policy R5: Housing Density

45. This policy refers to PfE JP-H4, and identifies the designated town centres and other designated centres, in line with the PfE policy. The policy also states that the minimum density requirements across Trafford are shown on Figure 4-1. The density requirements range from 120 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 35 dph.
46. The HBF notes that Policy JP-H4: Density of New Housing of the PfE states that new housing development should be delivered at a density appropriate to the location, reflecting the relative accessibility of the site by walking, cycling and public transport. It suggests that minimum densities range from 120 dwellings per hectare (dph) within 400m of rail stations and Metrolink stops and in designated town centres to 35dph in all other locations.

⁹ NPPF Sept 2023 paragraph 62

47. Therefore, the HBF does not consider that this policy is required, and instead it would be beneficial to signpost to the PfE document in relation to density requirements, as part of explanatory text in the Plan. Unless, the Council has more up to date evidence and wishes to provide a more up to date policy within its own Local Plan.

Policy R6: Older Persons Accommodation

48. This policy states that the Council will seek to meet the needs of older persons through the provision of approximately 4,500 homes of the overall housing land target to be developed as new housing for older persons households, including approximately 2,500 C3 homes, 1,000 C2 extra care homes and 600 C2 residential bed spaces.
49. The HBF is generally supportive of providing homes that are suitable to meet the needs of older people and disabled people. Whilst there is general support for such development, the HBF would recommend that the Council should be more proactive in working with providers of this type of development to identify appropriate sites for allocation. This approach would provide far more certainty to the council that the need for such accommodation will be met in full. The HBF considers that the Council should note the difference between homes suitable for older people and specialist housing for older people, and the difference in need and demand for these types of homes.
50. The PPG¹⁰ states that the need to provide for older people is critical, and that offering older people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs can help them live independently for longer, feel more connected to their communities and help reduce costs to the social care and health systems. It goes on to state that Plan-making authorities should set clear policies to address the housing needs of groups with particular needs such as older and disabled people and that Plans need to provide for specialist housing for older people where a need exists¹¹. It also notes that allocating sites can provide greater certainty for developers and encourage the provision of sites in suitable locations. As such, the HBF considers that the Council needs to work closely with the providers of older persons housing to identify appropriate sites or to provide appropriate policies.
51. The policy states that major development of 10 or more dwellings (or equivalent C2 care bed spaces) will need to be in accordance with the affordable housing requirements set out in Policy R3. However, the HBF considers that Older persons' housing differs from mainstream housing with key variables such as build costs, marketing and sales periods, unit size, non-saleable community space, empty property costs and benchmark land values. These all affect viability and it is inappropriate to apply generic affordable housing targets, especially without appropriate viability testing.

Policy R7: Adaptable and Accessible Housing

¹⁰ PPG ID: 63-001-20190626

¹¹ PPG ID: 63-006-20190626 & ID: 63-012-20190626

52. This policy states that in accordance with PfE policy JP-H3 all new dwellings must be built to the accessible and adaptable standard in Part M4(2) unless specific site conditions make this impracticable. It also states that proposals of 50 or more homes will be required to provide at least 4% of new homes to be built to Part M4(3) wheelchair accessible and adaptable standard. The Council encourages and supports the use of 'Lifetime Homes' design standard.
53. The HBF notes that Policy JP-H3: Type, Size and Design of New Housing of the PfE states that all new dwellings must be built to the 'accessible and adaptable' standard in Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations unless specific conditions make this impracticable.
54. 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. PPG¹² identifies the type of evidence required to introduce a policy seeking the use of the M4(3) standard, 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 Trafford which justifies the inclusion of optional higher standards for accessible and adaptable homes in its Local 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.
55. The PPG¹³ 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, which may make a specific site less suitable for M4(2) and M4(3) compliant dwellings, particularly where step free access can not be achieved or is not viable.
56. 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.
57. Part C states that the Council will encourage the delivery of homes which meet Lifetime Homes standards. The Council will probably be aware that the Lifetime Homes standard is no longer applicable following the Government's Housing Standards review. Lifetime Homes have now been replaced by the optional Building Regulations accessibility standards (M4(2) and M4(3)).

Policy R11: Self-Build and Custom Housing

58. This policy states that on sites of more than 100 houses at least 5% of dwellings will be made available as serviced plots for sale to custom builders. It goes on to state that each

¹² PPG ID: 56-007-20150327

¹³ PPG ID: 56-008-20160519

custom build plot must be marketed for at least 24 month period, and suggests that where plots remain unsold after the marketing period they will either be further marketed or will be transferred to a Registered Provider for the provision of affordable housing.

59. The HBF would be keen to understand the evidence to support the need for custom and self-build housing in Trafford, and how it has informed the requirements of Policy R11. The PPG¹⁴ sets out how custom and self-build housing needs can be assessed. The justification text suggests that they are 294 applicants as of 30th October 2024 on the Trafford Self Build Register, with just under half of those registered currently living outside of Trafford. There is no evidence in relation to the existing provision of self-build and custom-build homes.
60. The HBF does not consider that the Council has appropriate evidence to support the requirement for developers on sites of 100 dwellings or more to provide at least 5% of all new homes as service plots for custom or self-build housing. The HBF is concerned that as currently proposed this policy will not assist in boosting the supply of housing and may even limit the deliverability of some sites and homes.
61. The PPG¹⁵ sets out how local authorities can increase the number of planning permissions which are suitable for self and custom build housing. These include supporting neighbourhood planning groups to include sites in their plans, effective joint working, using Council owned land and working with Home England. The HBF considers that alternative policy mechanisms could be used to ensure a reliable and sufficient provision of self & custom build opportunities across the Borough including allocation of small and medium scale sites specifically for self & custom build housing and permitting self & custom build outside but adjacent to settlement boundaries on sustainable sites especially if the proposal would round off the developed form.
62. Part D of this policy states that each plot must be marketed for at least 24 months and where plots remain unsold after the marketing period they will either be further marketed for a period as agreed by the LPA or will be transferred to a Registered Provider for the provision of affordable housing at affordable housing land values. The HBF considers that there is no reason to require a site to be retained on the open market following the 24-month period nor is there any justification for having to transfer these plots to a registered provider. These are plots that would have been available for market housing and as such they should return to the developer to be built out after the marketing period. The Council should therefore amend the policy accordingly.
63. The HBF agrees that if demand for plots is not realised, it is important that plots should not be left empty to the detriment of neighbouring properties or the whole development. The timescale for reversion of these plots to the original housebuilder should be as short as pos-

¹⁴ PPG ID: 67-003-20190722

¹⁵ PPG ID: 57-025-20210508

sible from the commencement of development because the consequential delay in developing those plots presents further practical difficulties in terms of coordinating their development with construction activity on the wider site. The HBF suggests if this element of the policy is retained it is amended to 6-months rather than 24-months.

Policy TM10: Parking Standards

64. This policy states that new development will be expected to make provision for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, with all dwellings with a dedicated garage or driveway parking space providing access to electric vehicle charging infrastructure for at least one vehicle and for residential developments with shared parking areas there will be a requirement for active EV charging facilities.
65. The HBF considers that the provision of electric vehicle charging capability is unnecessary as Part S of the Building Regulations now provides the requirements for Electric Vehicle charging in residential developments, including identifying where exceptions may apply. The HBF considers that it is important that the Council does not set its own standards for development which may differ from the approaches set out in other consenting regimes.

Policy GI6: Green Infrastructure in New Developments

66. This policy states that all development proposals must demonstrate how they will contribute to the protection, enhancement (including quality and/or the multi functionality), and expansion of the Green Infrastructure network. It goes on to state that all development proposals must demonstrate how they will contribute to the protection, enhancement (including quality and/or the multi functionality), and expansion of the Green Infrastructure network. It states that, that plan will be required to include an Urban Greening Factor (UGF) demonstrating a UGF score of 0.4 as a minimum for residential development on brownfield development sites and 0.5 as a minimum for residential development on greenfield development sites.
67. Natural England has developed an Urban Greening Factor for England, as one of a suite of five Headline Green Infrastructure Standards within the Green Infrastructure Framework – Principles and Standards for England¹⁶. The Urban Greening Factor (UGF) is a planning tool to improve the provision of Green Infrastructure (GI) particularly in urban areas. The HBF notes that this document suggests a target UGF score of 0.4 for predominantly residential development, it also sets out proposed UGF Surface Cover Weightings.
68. The HBF considers that if the Council wishes to include a policy on urban greening it will need to justify the requirement set, it is not clear what evidence has been used to justify the requirements for an UGF of 0.4 or 0.5. It will also need to consider how this could impact on the viability and deliverability of sites going forward. The HBF recommends that if the Council chooses to take a UGF policy forward it should ensure that this policy is applied flexibly

¹⁶ Urban Greening Factor for England – Development and Technical Analysis - Green Infrastructure Framework - Principles and Standards for England (January 2023) <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5846537451339776>

taking into account other considerations such as the density of development, embodied carbon, design, energy efficiency, proximity to open spaces, local character, and other site-specific elements. It may be that in some cases the urban greening target means that other policy requirements cannot be met or become significantly more costly.

Policy GI7: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

69. This policy states that for major development a Tree Canopy Cover Assessment must be provided that demonstrates how the development will incorporate trees on site and where there is no existing tree canopy cover provide a minimum of 20% tree canopy and where there is existing tree canopy cover provide a minimum increase of 10% tree canopy cover.
70. The HBF is concerned that there is a considerable tension between the proposed density requirements for development, the design policies of the Plan and the need for 20% tree canopy cover or an increase in 10% tree canopy cover. The HBF is concerned by the tree canopy policy proposed, this could have significant potential implications in terms of viability of the development, not only due to the tree provision costs but also in terms of efficient land use, site layout and highways considerations. The HBF considers that it will be important for the Council to gather appropriate evidence in relation to this policy that considers its practical implementation, and how it sits alongside other plan requirements.

Policy GI10: Building Biodiversity into New Developments

71. This policy states that all development proposals should seek to enhance biodiversity beyond the minimum mitigation requirements, where appropriate and practical. It goes on to state that all new development will be expected to incorporate measures to support biodiversity where appropriate and practical.
72. The HBF does not consider it is appropriate for this policy to seek to enhance biodiversity beyond the minimum mitigation requirements. In considering the soundness of this policy it is necessary to consider paragraph 74-006-20240214 of PPG which states that:
“... plan-makers should not seek a higher percentage than the statutory objective of 10% biodiversity net gain, either on an area-wide basis or for specific allocations for development unless justified. To justify such policies, they will need to be evidenced including as to local need for a higher percentage, local opportunities for a higher percentage and any impacts on viability for development. Consideration will also need to be given to how the policy will be implemented”.
73. It is important to note that the starting point is that the Local Plan should not seek a higher requirement. This is different to a permissive policy allowing local plans to seek a higher level of BNG where justified, and the HBF would argue that it should be considered a high bar with regard to the evidence required to justify such a policy.
74. Turning to the delivery of a biodiversity requirement it is necessary for the Council to recognise that BNG is site specific depending on both the existing site characteristics and the ability of development to both mitigate and provide additional gain without an understanding

of the baseline level of biodiversity it is difficult to gauge the cost of meeting the higher requirements in this local plan. Whilst broad assumption can be used it must be remembered that the level of BNG required could be significantly higher than expected increasing costs or substantially reducing developable area of a site. However, without a viability report it's not possible to comment on whether this biodiversity requirement is viable.

Policy WA4: Water Efficiency

75. This policy states that all new residential developments must achieve, as a minimum, the optional requirement set through Building Regulations Requirement G2: Water Efficiency or any future updates.
76. The HBF does not consider that it is necessary for development to adopt, as a minimum, measures to limit water usage including the implementation of the optional technical standards for water efficiency. The optional water standard is 110 litres per person per day, 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.
77. 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 person per day, then the Council should justify doing so by applying the criteria set out in the PPG. PPG¹⁷ 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*'. PPG¹⁸ 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 and Trafford are not considered to be an area of Water Stress as identified by the Environment Agency¹⁹. 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.

Policy CT5: Social Value in New Developments

78. Many residential developments will bring with them social benefits, through the provision of new more sustainable homes and potentially through the provision of affordable homes and other infrastructure provided through planning obligations. In 2024 the HBF and Lichfields'

¹⁷ PPG ID: 56-014-20150327

¹⁸ PPG ID: 56-015-20150327

¹⁹ 2021 Assessment of Water Stress Areas Update: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-stressed-areas-2021-classification>

produced a report on The Economic Footprint of House Building in England and Wales²⁰ this document not only highlighted the economic benefits but also the social benefits. It highlighted that in 2023 house building created nearly 834,000 jobs, supported 6,000 apprentices, 900 graduates and 3,300 other trainees, provided £10.8bn of new affordable homes, £1.5bn provided for infrastructure including £677m on new and improved education facilities, £216m invested in open space, youth, community, sport and leisure facilities and an additional £6.8bn spent in local shops and services by residents of these new homes.

79. This policy requires major development proposals to use local labour and training agreements through planning obligations and other mechanisms where appropriate. The HBF considers that the Council will need to consider how this would work for the home building industry, particularly in relation to the construction period and what this would mean for longer term job stability. Whilst increasing the numbers of people working in the construction industry, along with upskilling and increasing the diversity of the workforce is a top priority for the HBF, this needs to be done in the right way.
80. The HBF Industry Attraction and Skills Team already works with home builders in relation to employment and skills, this includes ensuring that the skills levy that housebuilders pay to the Construction Industry Training Board is deployed effectively to increase the number of people entering the industry and the quality of the skills training they receive.
81. The HBF considers that the Council will also need to consider the costs that would be associated with this policy and ensure that it is considered as part of the viability requirements. This may have a particular impact on the SME builders in the area who may not have the job opportunities available or the resources to provide appropriate training.

Policy BE10: Digital Connectivity

82. This policy states that all new development will be required to incorporate full fibre connections, including ducting to industry standards for efficient connections to existing networks, unless it can be proven that it is technically unfeasible.
83. The HBF considers that a policy that would generally encourage and support the provision of digital connectivity could be appropriate, however, any requirements on developers should not go beyond the provision of infrastructure as set out in the statutory Building Regulations. The HBF considers that the Council should work closely with the providers of digital infrastructure, to ensure that appropriate provision is provided, and that the onus is placed on those who can actually provide the appropriate infrastructure. The HBF does not consider that it is necessary to provide a policy to incentivise the development industry, the industry is already well aware of the benefits of infrastructure and the requirements of those looking to purchase a new homes and can self-police the cost/benefit of this provision with regards to site viability.

²⁰ <https://www.hbf.co.uk/policy/economic-footprint/>

Monitoring

84. The HBF notes that PfE include a Monitoring Framework and that the Local Plan includes a monitoring section at the end of each chapter. The HBF notes that the monitoring Framework within the Local Plan only includes an Indicator and Target. The HBF recommends that the Council include an appropriate monitoring framework which sets out the monitoring indicators along with the relevant policies, the data source and where they will be reported, this should also include the targets that the Plan is hoping to achieve and actions to be taken if the targets are not met. The HBF recommends that the Council provide details as to how the Local Plan will actually be monitored, and identifies when, why and how actions will be taken to address any issues identified.

Viability

85. The Council will also need to ensure that they have considered viability, viability assessment should not compromise sustainable development but should be used to ensure that policies are realistic, and that the total cumulative costs of all relevant policies will not undermine deliverability of the Plan. The Council needs to ensure that policy requirements should be set at a level that takes account of affordable housing and infrastructure needs and allows for the planned development to be deliverable without need for further viability assessment at the decision-making stage.

Future Engagement

86. 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.

87. 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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