

Dear Sir/ Madam

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING LOCAL PLAN**

1. Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan.
2. HBF is the principal representative body of the house-building industry in England and Wales. Our representations reflect the views of our membership, which include 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.

### **Consultation on new NPPF**

3. In December 2025 the Government published a consultation on the new NPPF. HBF recognise this will have no weight until it is formally adopted but once adopted the Council may need to give weight to some aspects of the policy. On the basis of paragraph 4 and 8 in Annex A of the draft NPPF being consulted on, this local plan, which the Council propose to submit under the current plan making process, will be examined under the NPPF24. However, it is also notable that in relation to decision making Annex A also states that from the date the new NPPF is published local plan policies that are "*...any way inconsistent with national decision making policies in this Framework should be given very limited weight, except where they have been examined and adopted against this Framework*". Therefore, should this new iteration of the NPPF be adopted unchanged the Council may need to have regard to national policies for decision making given that any inconsistency would effectively render policies in the local plan that are not consistent with the new Framework redundant as soon as the local plan is adopted.

### **SP1: Spatial Strategy**

4. HBF broadly supports the spatial strategy and agrees with the Council that in order to meet needs it must amend Green Belt boundaries. It is clear that housing needs cannot be met in full using sites outside of the Green Belt and that its decision to amend Green Belt follows discussions with other authorities as to whether they can meet any of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's (TMBC) housing needs – as required by paragraph 146 of the NPPF – and that there are exceptional circumstances to justify the proposed amendments. However, given that Tonbridge and Malling and many of its neighbouring authorities are also constrained and face high levels of housing need HBF do not consider it appropriate to either extend the Green Belt as is being suggested or create a local green gap between Kings Hill, West Malling and the Medway Gap settlements. We return to this point

later on in our comments.

## SP2: Delivering Homes for Our Communities

5. This policy confirms the Council’s intention to meet in full the housing needs established by the standard method of 1,097 dpa. While HBF agrees with the minimum number of homes to be planned for each year we do not consider the proposed plan period to be sound. Based on figure 5.1 it would appear that the plan will run from April 2024 and then end in March 2042 and therefore will not look forward for 15 full years from adoption. The Local Development Scheme sets out the Council’s intention is to submit in the Autumn of 2026 prior to the December deadline for the plan to be examined under the current plan making arrangements and NPPF. It is reasonable to expect that it will take at least 12 months for the plan to be examined and the Inspector Report to be received by the Council. As such the plan is likely to be adopted at the start of 2028 which means that on adoption the plan would look ahead for 14 full years, not the 15 years required by paragraph 22 of the NPPF. It is therefore recommended that the plan period be extended by a year to end in March 2043.

### *Unmet housing needs*

6. In a recent ministerial statement, the Government outlined their intention to enact the clause in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act that will remove the Duty to Co-operate. While this will remove the legal duty to co-operate it does not remove the need for local authorities to co-operate as part of the preparation of the local plan as established in paragraphs 24 to 28 of the NPPF, and that a failure to co-operate on strategic cross boundary mater will lead to the plan being found unsound. The main difference will be that inspector will now be able to recommend modifications to address any soundness issues resulting from any failure in co-operation.
7. This means that once the relevant regulations come into force next year Tonbridge and Malling are no longer under the legal duty to co-operate with their neighbours with regard to unmet development needs. However, they must still work together on such matters if the plan is to be found sound having specific regard to paragraph 62 of the NPPF and the requirement to account of “... *any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas ...in establishing the amount of homes to be planned for*”. Therefore, in preparing this local plan consideration must be given to the unmet needs that are potentially arising in neighbouring areas and consideration to options as to whether these needs could be met. The Council note in the local plan that they have been approached by Sevenoaks District Council and asked whether there is any potential to meet any of their needs. In response to this the Council state that they are unlikely to be able to help. However, it is also the case that neighbouring areas such as Tunbridge Wells and Gravesham face a significant increase in housing needs as well as being constrained in the same ways as Tonbridge and Malling. These councils have also asked TMBC for assistance.

LPA	LHN under the new standard method	LHN under the previous standard method	Difference
Medway	1,594	1,658	-62
Gravesham	672	661	+11
Sevenoaks	1,149	704	+445

Tunbridge Wells	1,098	660	+438
Maidstone	1,358	1,220	+138

8. Looking at the increases in housing needs in neighbouring areas in the table above there is a significant risk that there will be unmet needs over the period of this local plan. It is therefore surprising that the Sustainability Appraisal does not consider unmet needs at all or assess a spatial option that goes beyond circa 19,000 dwellings per annum – the number of homes required to meet assessed housing needs as calculated using the standard method. At the very least the Council should be testing higher delivery options that could address unmet needs elsewhere in order to inform any decision as to the potential to help other authorities. For this plan to be considered sound it must be based on effective joint working which has then fed into decision making – including consideration of a reasonable alternative strategy that would deliver above the minimum housing need as assessed using the standard method.

### Housing supply

9. A housing trajectory has not been provided; however, we note that one will be provided in the regulation 19 version of the local plan. This makes it difficult to comment on whether the local plan is deliverable over the plan period and would allow for a rolling five year housing land supply on adoption. As the Council are clearly aware, in order to ensure the plan is consistent with paragraph 78 of the NPPF the Council will need to include a trajectory setting out how many homes will be delivered each year against the proposed housing requirement. HBF would recommend that this includes supply from all sites that contribute to supply to provide the necessary clarity as to when specific sites are expected to come forward and at what rate.
10. What is evident from Figure 5.1 is that there is almost no contingency in supply over the plan period. This problem is recognised in paragraph 5.27 of the local plan where the Council state that they would like to be in a position to offer around a 10% buffer between housing needs and housing supply. HBF agree with the council that the needs to be contingency in the Council’s housing supply to ensure that needs are met in full. In some cases, changes to delivery expectations between regulation 19 and examination can see plans that meet needs in full fall short. However, the Council should look at increasing this buffer to 20% given that the Council expect 8,700 homes to come forward on strategic allocations over 500 units – circa 69% of the total homes allocated in this local plan. As the Council will be aware the delivery of large complex strategic sites is never straight forward with unforeseen delays often occurring across both the planning and delivery phases leading to fewer homes coming forward over the plan period. Embedding a larger contingency in supply in the plan ensures that such delays do not impact on the long term objectives of the plan and enable the council to maintain control of decision making.
11. However, it is also the case that even an increased contingency should not be used as a justification for overly optimistic delivery trajectories for strategic sites. The Council is still to provide these, but they will need to take account of any complex land ownership issues, infrastructure requirements and whether there are committed

housebuilders promoting these sites. All these factors will impact on when these sites will commence and the rate at which new homes will be delivered.

12. The Council state they will investigate the provision of a buffer further and that an additional call for sites is being undertaken as part of this consultation. While this is welcomed the Council will also need to revisit those sites it has rejected in preparing this plan and consider whether any of these sites could come forward based on the representations made as part of this consultation.
13. The Council are not proposing in this consultation to use a stepped housing requirement. While HBF recognises that PPG allows for stepped trajectories, a key starting point for any spatial strategy should be to ensure that the plan delivers homes consistently across the plan period and does not seek to unnecessarily delay the delivery of new homes on the basis of the sites that are selected to meet housing needs. Therefore, the Council must do all it can to avoid pushing back the delivery to new homes to later in the plan period on the basis of its spatial strategy. If the Council choice of strategy reveals it cannot meet needs and does not have a five year land supply on adoption it should seek to allocate additional sites not to amend the trajectory. A stepped trajectory should only be entertained once all other options to ensure a consistent supply of homes across the plan period have been considered and shows that the Council is not, as required by paragraph 68-12 of PPG, unnecessarily delaying meeting identified development needs.

#### *10% small sites*

14. The most effective way to plan for a consistent supply of homes is to identify larger strategic sites to meet longer term needs with the allocation of a wide range of small and medium sized sites that meet needs in the first half of the plan period. In taking such an approach the Council will also be better placed to ensure that it meets the aim of paragraph 73 of the NPPG to support SME developers and promote a good mix of sites in the local plan. In particular it will be important for the Council to ensure the spatial strategy allows the Council to meet limb a) of paragraph 73 that the at least 10% of its housing requirements are on sites of one hectare or less.
15. In meeting the requirement in paragraph 73 of the NPPF the Council must ensure it is achieved from identified sites – either as an allocation in the local plan or as a site in the Council’s Brownfield Register. The Council must not rely on assumed levels of windfall delivery on small sites to meet this requirement. Such an approach would be inconsistent with the NPPF which defines windfall sites in its Glossary as “*Sites not specifically identified in the development plan*”. It is important to recognise that the allocation of small sites is a priority and stems from the need to support small house builders by ensuring that they benefit from having their sites identified for development either through the local plan or brownfield register. The effect of an allocation is to take some of the risk out of that development and provide greater certainty that those sites come forward. This in turn will allow the SME sector to grow, deliver homes that will increase the diversity of the new homes that are available as well as bring those homes forward earlier in the plan period.
16. The Council should also recognise that allocating small sites and supporting SME house builders not only ensures a stronger supply in the short term but also improves the diversity of choice within local housing markets,

support local and regional supply chains and are often pivotal in bring forward innovation and supporting jobs growth locally, with 1 in 5 of the SME work force comprising of apprentices. A failure to allocate small sites will contribute to the continued decline in small and medium sized house builders. Recent research by the HBF has found that there are 85% fewer small house builders today than there were 20 years ago and that of a survey of SME house builders 93% said that planning was a major barrier to SME growth. Whilst this decline is due to a range of factors, more allocations of small sites would ease the burden on many SME developers and provide more certainty that their scheme will be permitted, allowing them to secure the necessary finance that is often unavailable to SMEs until permission is granted.

#### **SP7: Green Belt**

17. While HBF have no comments on the policy itself we do not support any extension to the Green Belt boundary that is being considered by the Council as set out in paragraph 5.93 of the local plan. The NPPF, at paragraph 144, states that once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan and that any consideration should have regard to their intended permanence in the long term. Given the high level of need in Tonbridge and Malling and its neighbours, as well as other constraints across the sub region, HBF would suggest that placing additional barriers to future growth is unjustified and that development at the location proposed for a green belt extension can be managed more effectively in this local plan through other development management policies. In addition, the Council must also consider its decision to extend Green Belt in relation to the judgement in Gallagher Homes Limited and Lioncourt Homes Limited v Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (2014) EWHC 1283 (Admin). In this judgement it was noted that circumstances are not exceptional unless they necessitate a revision. It would appear to us that the Council has a desire to expand the Green Belt but that there is:

- no necessity for its expansion in order to deliver the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy which is to prevent urban sprawl; and
- that there are other policy mechanisms available to address the purposes of Green Belt.

18. The area subject of the proposed extension is already defined as countryside with the associated presumption against most forms of development, added to which, significant parts of the area are designated as Conservation Areas within which development is subject to more stringent control. There is no clear reason why the application of such development management policies would not be sufficient to ensure only appropriate development occurs at the location.

#### **SP9: Local Green Gap**

19. If the Council conclude that a Green Belt extension is not justified it is proposed to designate the same areas a Local Green Gap. While the HBF recognise that they have been adopted in other local plan there is no mention of Green Gaps within national policy and outside of Green Belt policy no mention of the need to prevent the coalescence of settlements. We are concerned that the proposed designation would seek to restrict growth around

two main line rail stations (East and West Malling) and as such limiting options for growth in one of the most sustainable locations in TMBC. Given that the clear direction of travel by Government in the latest NPPF consultation to locate more development around train stations it is clearly a retrograde step for a local plan such as this to seek to limit development at such locations. HBF acknowledges that at present the consultation holds no weight but if adopted in its current form even local plans being prepared and examined under the current NPPF, as would be the case for the TMBC Local Plan, will need to have regard to it and whether there are any policies in the plan that are wholly inconsistent with adopted national policy. Not only will the policy restrict the Council should it need to find further sites during this plan period, but it will also make it more difficult for future local plans to meet needs by creating what will be considered locally as an unalterable designation. As such HBF is not supportive of such policies and considers that development can be managed effectively through other development management policies related to the countryside and the edge of settlements with impacting on the long term deliverability of development at these locations should it be necessary.

### **CC1: Addressing Climate change**

20. HBF recognises that there is a need to reduce carbon emissions in order to achieve the national goal of achieving net zero by 2050 and that new development must contribute towards this. However, what this approach fails to recognise is that new housing development is emitting significantly less carbon than the existing stock and that this contribution will reduce even further once the Future Home Standard (FHS) is adopted. New homes built to FHS will be net zero ready producing no additional carbon at source. It is therefore unnecessary to state in final sentence of part 1 of the policy that through design, construction and energy efficiency that development must achieve as close to net zero as possible as this will be addressed through improvements to building regulations. Similar limb f of part 1 is also unnecessary as this is addressed through improvements being implemented through building regulations.
21. In addition, as outlined earlier, the Council will need to be aware of the outcomes of the consultation on the new NPPF. With regard to this policy, and indeed policies CC3 and CC4, the draft NPPF being consulted on outlines that policies in local plans should not cover matters relating to the construction. If this approach is adopted by the Government in the new NPPF then many aspects of this policy would be inconsistent with national policy and have limited weight given to them post adoption.

### **CC3: Sustainable construction and design**

22. Part 1 requires development to demonstrate compliance with the principles of sustainable design and construction. This reflects statements in CC1 and as set out above HBF consider such policies to be unnecessary as improvements to the design and new buildings in relation to energy and carbon emission will be addressed through the introduction of the FHS.
23. HBF is concerned that limb a of part 1 requires a whole life carbon assessment to be undertaken and that where this is considered to be inadequate or insufficient mitigation provided, then applications may be refused. While HBF recognises the need to reduce embodied carbon in developments at present the availability of information

relating to the embodied carbon of specific products makes it difficult to accurately assess embodied carbon with different assessments models resulting in different outcomes. This lack of information and consistency mean that decision makers cannot realistically be able to judge whether sufficient mitigation is being proposed in order to determine an application. HBF would suggest that a more appropriate approach would be a policy that encourages developers to reduce levels of embodied and operation carbon where possible and feasible.

24. Limb e requires development to be constructed using low embodied carbon and energy efficient materials. This is unsound as it is unjustified. Development should be encouraged to use such materials, as set out above, with the Council giving great weight when making decisions to those schemes that can show they have reduced the embodied carbon as part of construction, but it should not be mandatory.

#### **CC4: Energy and Heating**

25. This policy requires development to follow the energy hierarchy incorporate measures to use of zero and low carbon technologies and take a fabric approach to construction. HBF do not consider such policies to be necessary given that the FHS is due to be introduced that will ensure that all homes are zero carbon ready. As set out in our comments to CC1, the Council will need to have regard to the outcomes of the consultation on the draft NPPF in taking this policy forward.

#### **CC6: Water efficiency**

26. This policy requires development to meet the lower optional technical standard for water efficiency. Given the borough is in a water stressed area this is appropriate. However, it is not clear why development must also demonstrate that it is making the most efficient use of water and provide a water efficiency calculator as set out in the opening paragraph. If development is required to meet the lower optional standard, then that is sufficient with delivery against this standard, which is set out in Part G of the building regulation, being considered through building control. HBF therefore suggests that the first paragraph in part 1 of the policy is deleted and the policy simply states that building should be designed to meet the lower option standard of 110 lppd.

#### **NE5: Biodiversity Net Gain**

27. HBF would suggest that the Council give consideration as to whether a policy on BNG is needed given that the process for considering and delivering BNG is set out in legislation and regulation. The HBF notes that one the introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) relevant updates where made to the PPG, and in particular stated that:

*“Plan-makers should be aware of the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, but they do not need to include policies which duplicate the detailed provisions of this statutory framework. It will also be inappropriate for plans or supplementary planning documents to include policies or guidance which are incompatible with this framework, for instance by applying biodiversity net gain to*

*exempt categories of development or encouraging the use of a different biodiversity metric or biodiversity gain hierarchy.*

*Plan-makers can complement the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain by, for instance, including policies which support appropriate local offsite biodiversity sites, including whether specific allocated sites for development should include biodiversity enhancements to support other developments meet their net gain objectives in line with Local Nature Recovery Strategies.” (Reference ID: 74-006-20240214).*

HBF therefore considers it unnecessary for the Council to restate in a local plan policy a requirement that is already required by legislation and has a significant amount of supporting guidance, with such repetition being inconsistent with the approach set out in paragraph 16f of the NPPF.

28. If the Council do retain the policy, then part 2 needs to be amended as the Council refers to the mitigation hierarchy and not the biodiversity gain hierarchy. The two are distinct, as explained in paragraph 74-008 of PPG, and it is important for these not to be confused within the local plan. HBF also considers part 3 to be unsound as it seeks to require development that they cannot meet net gains on site to then show that they have fully explored opportunities to deliver net gains within the borough. This fails to recognise that the DEFRA metric includes a spatial risk multiplier which imposes unit penalties the farther the purchased units are from the original development site. As such there is already a clear incentive for a developer to deliver net gains within the Borough and no need for the Council to require the developer to demonstrate this as part of the planning application. Following on from this part 5c is also unsound and should be deleted for the same reason. If the Council want to see any off site delivery provided within the Borough they should, as is suggested by PPG, provide support for the local offsite delivery sites.
29. While the 10% cannot be varied on the basis of viability due to it being a statutory requirement it is important that the costs in the viability evidence are accurate. Paragraph 4.32 notes that the costs used are based on the 2019 DEFRA Impact Assessment (IA) and use the Central Estimate which assumes 75% of net gains are achieved on site. However, the IA also costs the offsite delivery at £11,000 per biodiversity unit, which is significantly lower than the costs faced by developers. A pricing report by Biodiversity Units UK shows that the cost per units varies significantly depending on habitat type. For medium distinctiveness grassland and woodland these range from £25,000 to £35,000. These costs increase substantially for higher distinctiveness habitats with units for watercourses costing in excess of £150,000. What this is indicative of is the uncertainty as to how much BNG will cost to a developer. These will only really be known once the baseline assessment has been undertaken and it is clear what can be delivered on site and how much it will need to be provided offsite. It is therefore important that for strategic sites, in particular some site specific understanding to the baseline habitat is known to ensure that the costs considered in the viability assessment are reasonable and the sites remain deliverable when the cumulative costs placed on development through this local plan are considered.

## **H2: Affordable Housing**

30. The SHMA indicates that there is a strong need for affordable housing within Tonbridge and Malling with around 532 dwellings needed each year to accommodate households who can neither afford to rent or buy a home in Tonbridge and Malling. In response policy H2 sets a requirement of 50% affordable housing provision for land within or released from the Green Belt and 40% on sites of 10 or more units or more than 0.5 hectares, this threshold reduces to 6 or more units for sites in the National Landscape. Alongside the level of affordable housing need, the other key evidence determining the soundness of the affordable housing policy is the Interim Viability Assessment. This evidence must indicate that, as is noted in paragraph 35 of the NPPF, the level of contribution placed on development should “*not undermine the deliverability of the local plan*”.
31. Turning to the viability assessment, what is evident is that in the areas where values are lowest (under £4,600 per sqm - Tables 6.3.1 to 6.3.3), the majority development typologies will struggle to meet the policy requirements set out in this local plan. Turning first to the 50% requirement on land in or released from the Green Belt. This has been applied in order to be consistent with the Golden Rules relating to Green Belt release set out in paragraph 67 of the NPPF which requires 50% to be affordable unless this would make the development of these sites unviable. However, the viability considerations in relation to development sites coming forward in Green Belt on those lower value areas do not appear to have been taken into account. Based on the evidence of sale values in the Viability Assessment at least two of the strategic sites for development are on land to be released from the Green Belt in locations in the north of Borough where values will be at the lower end of those for Tonbridge and Malling. Placing a 50% requirement on these sites will, on the basis of the evidence in the Viability Assessment, render these schemes to be unviable even if land values are at the lower end of the range.
32. Given that these sites are necessary to ensure that the plan meets housing needs over the plan period to is clearly essential that the planning obligations on them do not render them unviable and the plan as a whole undeliverable. To HBF the evidence indicates that there is justification for potential reducing the 50% requirement on those sites that may be made undeliverable by its application. While the policy does offer flexibility this is not an option afforded to those sites released from the Green Belt due to NPPG which notes in paragraph 10-030 with regard to the Golden Rules that site specific viability assessment should not be undertaken for the purpose of reducing developer contributions, including affordable housing. It is therefore essential that the contributions require through this local plan on those sites that are released from the Green Belt do not make development unviable as there are no opportunities to revisit these other than through a review of the local plan.
33. Turning to PDL land the evidence indicates that the redevelopment of secondary office and retail for housing is available at all value points in the Borough and that on secondary industrial 40% is only becomes viable when values exceed £5,600 – and even then, only in limited circumstances. This is recognised in the conclusion of the viability assessment with paragraph 7.2 stating “*The target will be more difficult to achieve in on previously developed sites which have higher benchmark land values*”. The study’s authors then go on to recommend the 40% requirement is adopted on a maximum reasonable proportion on the basis that site specific circumstances are taking into account. However, given the viability evidence indicates that development on PDL will struggle there is clear justification for a variable policy relating to such sites to ensure they do not need to challenge the

application of a policy that has been tested by the Council as being unviable on such sites.

34. HBF recommend that where development is considered to make a development unviable then it should be reduced. This is particularly important for Green Belt sites given that there will not be the change to revisit these at the application stage.

#### **Policy H6: Specialist Housing to meet the Needs of Older and Vulnerable People**

35. Part 1 of this policy requires 5% of units as supported and specialist accommodation for older and vulnerable people on sites of between 20 and 99 homes and on sites of 100 or more dwellings to deliver 5% as specialist accommodation as either C3 or C2 equivalents. Firstly, rather than seek to require the delivery of specialist accommodation on these sites HBF would suggest that the primary focus should be on ensuring stand-alone delivery on specific allocations. The Council must proactively engage with the providers of specialist accommodation to identify appropriate sites rather than seek to require some type of provision on all sites of 20 or more homes.
36. Secondly, if specific allocations are not made then the threshold at which sites need to provide specialist accommodation is low. It is likely to be impractical to provide specialist sheltered accommodation, for example on small sites as this would mean only a few homes and it is not clear whether this would be attractive those providers of specialist accommodation. HBF would suggest that at the very least the lower threshold for provision is removed. However, as to what the threshold should be the Council must engage with providers of specialist accommodation development in TMBC to understand what scale of scheme they consider to be practical which they would be interested in delivering. There is a risk that in requiring deliver on sites that are too small to provide an appropriate scale of specialist accommodation this policy will simply delay in the delivery of new homes.

#### **H7: Accessible and adaptable**

37. This policy requires all homes to be built to part M4(2) and with 5% of market homes and 10% of affordable homes on schemes of 20 or more units will be built to part M4(3). While HBF recognise that there may be a need for some homes to be built to meet the needs of wheelchair users it is not clear whether the evidence supports the level of provision being proposed by the Council. Over the plan period it is estimated that there will be an increase in the number of households with a wheelchair users with around 450 of those households being unable meet their needs in their current home. This is around 2% of the homes that are to be delivered over the plan period. However, if all of the sites listed in policy A1 of the Reg 18 Plan over 20 units were to deliver in line with Policy H7, the plan would deliver circa 882<sup>1</sup> homes to meet M4(3) standards nearly twice as much as is needed. While we appreciate the need to provide homes for those in wheelchairs, the experience of our

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<sup>1</sup> 13,664 dwellings minus 1000 at BG which will not be delivered in the plan period, minus 59 from sites under 20 units leaves 12,605 dwellings.

members is that the level of demand set out in local plans is often not reflected in sales. HBF would suggest that the policy as currently drafted is unjustified.

### **H8 Self and Custom Build Housing**

38. The policy requires residential development of over 70 units to provide 5% of plots for self or custom house building. This is to meet a demand for self-build plots of 22 per base period. What is not clear from this policy is whether any account of windfall delivery has been factored into this policy. The Council have not provided and from windfall. However, our estimates suggest that if all sites of 70 or more dwellings were to deliver 5% Self and Custom Built Housing the plan would deliver over 642 Self and Custom Built Housing plots, which is significantly greater than the current backlog and future trends which amount to a need for circa 190 plots. Even if demand meets the 22 plots per annum suggested by the council the policy would still deliver in excess of demand. On the basis of this evidence housebuilders are being overburdened by this policy and are likely to be left with plots they cannot sell and that at present it is unjustified.
39. HBF would also suggest that a review of the self-build register is undertaken to understand whether those on the register remain interested in self-build and wish to remain on the list as well as whether those on the list can realistically afford to build their own home.
40. In addition to the above evidence on needs and supply the Council also needs to set out what alternative options for providing self-build plots it has considered before placing the burden of meeting these needs on house builders. PPG sets in paragraph 57-025 that planning authorities should not only use planning policies to meet needs but also whether they could use their own land to meet those needs, how have they engaged directly with land-owners to try and bring forward specific sites for self-build. It is essential that these mechanisms are considered prior to setting requirements in local plans for plot delivery on larger sites.
41. The Council also needs to consider the difficulties in providing self-build plots on new housing developments and how these are coordinated with the development of a wider site. At any one time, there are often multiple contractors and large machinery operating on-site and therefore from both a practical and health and safety perspective, it is difficult to envisage the development of single plots by individuals operating alongside this construction activity. It may also be the case that it is unfeasible to provide self-build plots on sites taking into account topography and access and the degree to which self-build and the rest of the site can be developed separately. HBF would therefore recommend that in part 2 of the policy that where developer can show that provision of plots is either unfeasible or unviable then they will not need to be provided.
42. Finally, the policy states that where self-build plots are not sold after an initial marketing period of 9 months and a subsequent 6 month period then an application may be supported to complete the plots a standard market home. It is not clear why a further 6 months period is necessary after the initial 9 month marketing. If the demand for self-build is considered to be strong, then a 9 month marketing period is sufficient. HBF also objects to the statement that applications may be supported. This is too ambiguous. If a plot has not been sold the direction to the decision maker must be that an application to build out the plots a market housing will be supported.

43. In conclusion HBF does not consider this policy to be justified or effective at present. Without further evidence the HBF would suggest that the requirement in this policy has not been robustly justified. We would also suggest that the Council consider allocating specific sites for self-builders which are more likely to meet the needs of those households as well as avoiding the potentially harmful impacts of mixing the delivery of self-build units alongside commercial housebuilding.

### **Monitoring**

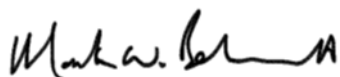
44. In Annex 6 the Council has set out monitoring indicators along with the relevant policies, the data source and where they will be reported. This should also include the targets that the plan is hoping to achieve and actions to be taken if the targets are not met. The HBF recommends that the Council provide details as to when and how the Council will react should it fail to address any issues identified.

### **Future Engagement**

45. 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 housebuilding industry.

46. 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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