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Sent by email  
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05/05/2025

Dear Planning Policy Team,

## TELFORD AND WREKIN LOCAL PLAN REVIEW: PUBLICATION VERSION

1. Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan Publication 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 welcomes the Council's efforts to ensure that they have an up to Local Plan. Plan-making is a fundamental part of a Local Authority's role and is essential to support the delivery new homes and jobs. The HBF agrees that there are many factors that support the need for a review of the Telford Local Plan.
4. We would like to submit the following comments upon selected policies within the Publication Draft Local Plan consultation document, we have focused on those we consider to be most relevant to our members. These responses are provided to assist the Council in the preparation of the emerging local plan. The HBF is keen to ensure that Telford and Wrekin produces a sound local plan which provides appropriate policies for the area.

### Format

5. Whilst not a matter of soundness the HBF observes that the numbering of the policies within the Plan reads as slightly odd. It would be more normal to refer to the policies as Strategic Policy S1, not Policy Strategic S1.

### Plan Period

6. The Plan identifies a Plan period of 2020 to 2040. The NPPF<sup>1</sup> states strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15-year period from adoption and that where larger scale developments form part of the strategy for the area, policies should be set within a vision that looks further ahead (at least 30 years), to take 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 2041/42 to ensure that it covers the 15-year period. Whatever plan period is chosen there is a need for evidence to cover the whole plan period, it would therefore be sensible to ensure the evidence covers a longer time frame as well.

### Vision and Priorities

7. The HBF continues to suggest that the role of new housing in creating a sustainable Borough could be more explicitly recognised within the vision itself. The HBF suggests that further explanation is

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<sup>1</sup> NPPF 2024 Paragraph 22  
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also needed on what is intended by the term 'Forest Community' right at the beginning of the Plan. Within the document it is referred to as a policy, an approach and an ethos, without offering a clear definition or explaining how this impacts the Vision for the Plan. It would be helpful for the Plan to more clearly set out how the Forest Community and natural environment policies are intended to interact with new housing and other development. The HBF suggests that further consideration should be given to the role and benefits of new housing development within the Plan, and the Vision could usefully reflect this.

8. The HBF notes that Priority 4 looks to secure better homes for all, with the objective being to meet the housing needs of the Borough through the delivery of 20,200 homes up to 2040, across a range of types and tenures including more affordable, supported, specialist and accessible housing. The HBF continues to recommend that the Plan should recognise that there will also be a role for open market housing in meeting the housing needs of the Borough.

### **Policy Strategic S1 Protecting and Enhancing the Boroughs Green Spaces**

*Policy S1 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, or consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

9. The HBF questions if there is a need for a strategic policy on protecting green space, and if this matter is better addressed as part of the spatial strategy and/or development management policies. The policy as currently written adds nothing to the other policies on this subject in the Plan and does not assist in the determination of a planning application. If it is retained, it will be important for the policy to set out how the approach to protecting open spaces links to mandatory BNG, and in particular if and how BNG units can be provided on open spaces and/or within woodlands.

### **Policy Strategic S2 Nature conservation**

*Policy S2 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, or consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

10. The HBF questions if there is a need for a strategic policy on nature conservation as this issue is already adequately addressed in the chapter on green and natural environment. The policy as currently written adds nothing to the other policies on this subject in the Plan and does not assist in the determination of a planning application. If it is retained, it will be important for the policy to set out how the approach to nature conservation links to the delivery of mandatory BNG.

### **Policy Strategic S3 Economic delivery strategy**

*Policy S3 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, or consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

11. The HBF continues to suggest that the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan should be planning for an appropriate number of houses to support economic growth. The Plan should do more to recognise the links between housing and employment and the impacts that failing to provide to properly plan for housing will have on the economic performance and competitiveness of Telford and Wrekin and the wider West Midlands Region.
12. The HBF recommends that a clearer link and explanation is made between the spatial strategy, housing and employment allocations and the topic specific policies later in the Plan. Such matters may need to be considered on an area-by-area basis that fully recognises the links between housing policy and employment policy. Employment allocations and opportunities within a particular area could give rise to an additional housing need that should be accommodated within that area.

13. The failure to provide new housing close to where people work results in longer commuting times, less sustainable patterns of development and harms the economic performance of an area. What is needed is a plan that plans effectively for the housing and employment growth within Telford and Wrekin. The HBF considers it is important that the strong track record of housing delivery in Telford Wrekin continues not only to 2031, but also to 2040 and beyond.

#### **Policy Strategic S4: Housing Delivery Strategy**

*Policy S4 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

14. This states that the Council will deliver 20,200 homes over the plan period (until 2040). It also recognises the request of the Black Country Authorities for a contribution towards their unmet housing needs, and offers to provide 153 dwellings per year over and above the Borough's housing need, giving a housing requirement of 1,010 dwellings per annum (dpa).
15. The NPPF<sup>2</sup> states that to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing needs assessment, conducted using the standard method set out in the PPG. The NPPF<sup>3</sup> also states that the requirement may be higher than the identified housing need, if for example, it includes provision for neighbouring area, or reflects growth ambitions linked to economic development or infrastructure investment.
16. The HBF notes that the Standard Method identifies a local housing need of 857dpa, and that this plus the 153dpa contribution towards the Black Country Authorities, gives the 1,010dpa housing requirement.
17. The HBF continues to support the need for more housing in the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan for a variety of reasons including addressing the current housing crisis, meeting housing need, providing affordable housing, to support small and medium house builders and to support employment growth. HBF would request that the Council considers the annual LHN as only the minimum starting point and fully considers all of the issues that may result in a need for a higher housing requirement, including the need to provide a range and choice of sites, the need for flexibility, viability considerations and whether higher levels of open-market housing are required in order to secure increased delivery of affordable housing.
18. The HBF is aware of the challenges facing the Local Planning Authorities in the West Midlands and the Black Country to meet their own housing requirements. The issue of unmet needs has proven problematic with many neighbouring West Midlands authorities all saying they cannot meet their own needs because they are constrained and then asking each other to take their unmet needs, without success. The HBF is therefore supportive of the Council explicitly setting out their position to addressing these needs. However, the HBF considers that the contribution should have been greater, and more detail should have been provided within the Plan as to why this level was considered appropriate. The HBF also recommends that these elements of the housing requirement are monitored identifying what contributions are being made to local need and what is contributing to the wider housing needs.
19. The HBF would expect Telford and Wrekin's Plan to be an ambitious plan that plans for the future development of the Borough, detailing where new housing will go, meeting housing needs, providing certainty for the house building industry and setting out a long-term vision for the area, in accordance with the NPPF. The HBF would support a higher housing requirement than the

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<sup>2</sup> NPPF 2024 Paragraph 61

<sup>3</sup> NPPF 2024 Paragraph 69  
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standard method identified local housing need housing in order to support economic growth, provide a range and type of sites, to support small and medium house builders and to contribute to the unmet needs in the wider area.

20. Additionally, as the standard method identified local housing need is a minimum figure, the wording of the policy should refer to the minimum housing requirement (which HBF argue should be higher) rather than inferring that the housing requirement is a figure to be met but not exceeded.
21. The HBF recommends that the policy is amended as follows:

*“1. The Council will deliver **at least** 20,200 **net additional** homes over the plan period (until 2040).  
2. The Council recognise the request of the Black Country Authorities for a contribution towards their unmet housing needs – therefore an offer of 153 dwellings per year over and above the borough’s housing need has been included within the **housing requirement of at least 1,010 dwellings per year requirement.**”*
22. Parts 3 and 4 of the Policy state that the delivery of new dwellings will be managed and monitored on an annual basis against the housing trajectory and that if the monitoring indicates that delivery is likely to fall below the level required to maintain an adequate supply of deliverable sites then the Council will proactively seek to increase the delivery of sites through the planning process.
23. The HBF are generally supportive of the plan, monitor and manage approach to housing delivery and that this has been explicitly recognised in this this plan. The HBF is also pleased to see such explicit references to the actions that the LPA can and would take in the case of under-delivery.
24. Although the HBF continues to consider that the housing requirements figure should itself be higher, we agree that it is important that houses are brought forward, and the matter addressed as soon as possible, if any under-delivery is observed. Whilst the HBF are generally supportive of the policy wording in Part 4 we would also suggest that the Plan needs to include a Monitoring Framework within it. The HBF would wish to see a Monitoring Framework included within the Plan, which clearly sets out the targets for housing (and other matters) that will be monitored and the triggers for action being taken, and what that action will be. Monitoring is essential to see if the Plan is delivery housing as expected. The monitoring framework is part of the way that the Plan delivers the flexibility is needed, so that the Council is able to respond to any changing circumstances.
25. Table 4 sets out the housing supply as of 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024, this identifies an existing housing supply of 11,612 dwellings and a net supply from new allocations of 8,588 dwellings.
26. Part 5(b) of the policy refers to new housing allocations in Policy HO1. The HBF’s specific comments in relation to HO1 can be found in our response to that policy, but we are surprised that the Council has chosen not to include a list of the housing allocations within the wording of either the Strategic Housing Policy or the housing allocations policy. Doing so would greatly assist the usability of the Plan and assist with the housing monitoring. Relegating the list of new allocated housing sites to Appendix C and the Policies Map seems to minimise their importance and further indicates that this Plan does not seem to be about guiding new development as plan-making process requires.
27. Part 5(C) states that well-designed windfall development in the built up areas on a ‘brownfield first’ approach will be supported and delivered to contribute to the housing delivery. Paragraph 4.40 of the Plan states that an allowance for 60 dwellings per year on small windfall (sites not identified in the Local Plan) is based on past delivery.

28. The NPPF<sup>4</sup> states that where an allowance is to be made for windfall sites as part of anticipated supply, there should be compelling evidence that they will provide a reliable source of supply. Any allowance should be realistic having regard to the strategic housing land availability assessment, historic windfall delivery rates and expected future trends. The HBF considers it is important that the Council ensures that they have the appropriate evidence to support this windfall allowance, this should not just be based on past delivery, it needs to demonstrate that this trend will continue into the future. The HBF also considers that by including windfalls within the Plan's housing requirement, the opportunity for windfalls to provide some additional flexibility in the housing land supply is removed. Windfalls do not provide the same choice and flexibility in the market as additional allocations. The HBF is of the view that any allowance for windfall should not be included until the fourth year of a housing trajectory, given the likelihood that dwellings being completed within the next three years will already be known about (as they are likely to need to have already received planning permission to be completed within that timeframe).
29. Part 5(e) references rural exception sites and housing in rural areas. This does nothing to address the requirement for allocations of 10% as small sites.
30. Part 5(f) allows for self-build homes in accordance with policy HO11. Again, this does nothing to meeting the small sites allowance requirements.
31. As the housing need and requirement figures for the Plan are minimum (not maximum) figures the Council could also specifically identify additional and/or reserve sites and/or include policies that would allow for additional windfall housing sites that could/would be brought forward sooner to address any under delivery whatever the reason for that under performance. This could be a shortfall in market housing permissions granted and/or completions, affordable housing permissions granted and/or completions and any failure against the Housing Delivery Test or local plan monitoring.
32. Therefore, HBF suggest, as a minimum, that explicit reference should be made both within the Plan's policy and within the monitoring framework of the potential to bring forward additional housing supply earlier, and the ways in which this could be done.

### **Policy Strategic S5: Mitigating and adapting to climate change**

*Policy S5 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

33. This policy states that development should positively contribute to meeting local and national targets to address climate change including reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The policy states that Sustainability Statements will be required to be submitted with applications for new development. It states that they must demonstrate how the development will positively and measurably contribute to mitigating and adapting to climate change and local and national climate objectives including achieving net zero.
34. Whilst the ambitious and aspirational aim to achieve net zero is lauded, the HBF is concerned that the Council is adding to the complexity of policy, regulations and standards that housebuilders are already expected to comply with. The key to success is standardisation and avoidance of individual Councils specifying their own policy approach, which undermines economies of scale for product manufacturers, suppliers and developers. The impact of this requirement along with others in this Plan may have considerable viability implication and may lead to the non-delivery homes and needs to be fully considered within the Viability Assessment. The HBF notes that the Viability Note (December 2024) has included Costs for the Future Homes Standard (Option 1), leading to update

to the policy of plus 6% for housing and 4% for flatted development. The HBF is concerned that this does not line up with the requirements in part 4 of the policy requiring developments to demonstrate how they will positively and measurably contribute to local and national climate objectives including achieving net zero.

35. The HBF would caution against policies that seek to go further and faster than national legislation and policy changes, which would lead to the creation of a patchwork of differing local policies which could inadvertently undermine the delivery of the wider environmental objectives the Council is seeking and create unnecessary delays to much needed new housing.

### **Policy Strategic S6 Healthy stronger communities**

*Policy S6 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, and not consistent with national policy.*

36. The HBF questions what this over-arching policy adds anything to policies elsewhere in the Plan.

### **Policy Strategic S7: Developer contributions and infrastructure delivery**

*Policy S7 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

37. This policy states that new, improved and expanded infrastructure is necessary for the delivery of new development. It goes on to state that major development proposals will be required to provide a contribution towards the cost of infrastructure, subject to statutory processes and regulations.
38. Development can only be required to mitigate its own impact and cannot be required to address existing deficiencies in infrastructure or services. It is therefore essential for the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to clearly show the existing and known deficiencies in the current infrastructure, before reaching any conclusion on the cumulative effects of new development, and any contribution that is needed from new development to mitigate any additional individual and/or cumulative impacts.
39. Whole Plan viability testing is an important part of the plan-making process. However, as noted in PPG<sup>5</sup> assessing the viability of plans does not require individual testing of every site or assurance that individual sites are viable. The HBF would therefore request that additional flexibility should be included within this policy. This is needed because whole plan viability assessments use methodologies that test typologies of sites, and not the detailed circumstances of individual sites. As such there may be individual sites that are already not viable, for example if the costs or values of a specific site fall outside the parameters used of a typology that was tested. Some sites will be on the very margins of viability and other sites may already be unviable even without a change of circumstances. Therefore, additional flexibility is needed in the policy, and without this flexibility the plan is unsound because it was neither justified nor effective.

### **Policy CC1: Sustainable construction and carbon reduction**

*Policy CC1 is not considered to be sound as it is justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

40. This policy states that all new development must follow a fabric first approach, aiming to maximise energy efficiency at the outset. It goes on to set out a list of elements for all new buildings including being designed to maximise the benefits of solar gain, maximising insulation, including facilities to recycle water, and demonstrating where modern methods of construction (MMC) have been used to reduce carbon emissions. The policy also states that all development should aim to achieve net zero emissions.

41. This policy suggests that the Council is seeking to move away from the carbon reduction methods set out in Part L of the Building Regulations. The HBF generally supports the Council in seeking to increase energy efficiency, the HBF does not consider that the Council setting its own standards is the appropriate method to achieve this outcome.
42. As set out previously, whilst the ambitious and aspirational aim to achieve net zero is lauded, the HBF is concerned that the Council is adding to the complexity of policy, regulations and standards that housebuilders are already expected to comply with. The key to success is standardisation and avoidance of individual Councils specifying their own policy approach, which undermines economies of scale for product manufacturers, suppliers and developers. The impact of this requirement along with others in this Plan may have considerable viability implication and may lead to the non-delivery homes and needs to be fully considered within the Viability Assessment. The HBF would caution against policies that seek to go further and faster than national legislation and policy changes, which would lead to the creation of a patchwork of differing local policies which could inadvertently undermine the delivery of the wider environmental objectives the Council is seeking and create unnecessary delays to much needed new housing.
43. The HBF considers that the Council should ensure that this policy is only implemented in line with the December 2023 Written Ministerial Statement<sup>6</sup> 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'. The HBF considers as such it is appropriate to make reference to the Future Homes Standard and the Building Regulations as the appropriate standards for development, and to seek to use these standards to reduce energy use and improve energy efficiency.
44. The HBF is not clear what the Council are expecting in terms of facilities to recycle water within new buildings, is this for example the inclusion of a water butt within the development or something more technical. The HBF would also question if this is the most effective way to be water efficient, and whether other methods would be more appropriate or more sustainable. The HBF would suggest that greater flexibility should be included within this policy. The HBF considers that further evidence and justification is required to support the need for this element of the policy.
45. The HBF is generally supportive of the use of modern methods of construction (MMC). The home building industry is a progressive industry that has, for many years, adopted a range of innovative methods to improve the sustainability, efficiency and reliability of materials and processes in the lifecycle of a construction. This ranges from the use of digitally enabled house type designs delivered through partnerships with offsite manufacturers and the wider supply chain, to the use of new building methods or assemblies. Due to the variety of methods encompassed under the broad umbrella term, MMC, there can be confusion as to the true extent of MMC taking place in the homebuilding industry.

<sup>6</sup> <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-12-13/hcws123>

46. The Council will also need to consider how the promotion of MMC to reduce carbon emissions would sit alongside the Council's other policies particularly those in relation to design or housing mix. As the need to create variety of individually designed homes for each authority or area within an authority, along with the appropriate mix of homes to meet the local need is often at odds with the volumetric construction required by MMC which requires repetitive or standardised designs in order to be effective.
47. The HBF is concerned that many of the criteria listed in part of the policy are not justified, and not fully costed in terms of the impact they may have on the viability and deliverability of homes. The HBF considers that they should be deleted.
48. The HBF considers that this policy should be deleted. The HBF considers that overall aim of this policy is already being addressed through national standards and that this is the most effective way to maximise energy efficiency and move towards net zero carbon emissions. The HBF also considers that if the policy is to be retained that the criteria set out in part 2 of the policy, are not justified, and are far too restrictive and may not always be the best way to achieve the outcomes that the Council are looking for. The HBF considers that these criteria should be deleted, or a significant level of flexibility included.

## **Policy CC2: Renewable energy in developments**

*Policy CC2 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

49. This policy states that all new development should incorporate renewable energy production and storage onsite, unless existing local renewable energy sources are available and achievable to provide power to the site. It also states that all development should seek to incorporate opportunities to deliver or connect to community and/or district renewable power and heat networks. In addition, it states that major development will be expected to be supported by a Heating and Cooling Strategy which demonstrates that the most sustainable heating and cooling systems have been selected.
50. The HBF is concerned about requirement for on-site renewable energy generation. The HBF considers this gives no consideration to the move towards the decarbonisation of the grid; the sustainability and environmental cost of actually creating small scale renewable energy production and storage versus large scale production and storage; site specific considerations which mean that this just may not be appropriate in all cases. The HBF strongly recommends that this element of the policy is deleted, or is amended to *'support will be given for the incorporation of renewable energy production and storage on site'*.
51. The HBF is concerned about mandatory requirements to connect to district heating networks. The HBF considers that it is important that this is not seen as a requirement and is instead implemented on a flexible basis. 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. This may mean that it is more ~~sustainable and more appropriate for developments to utilise other forms of energy provision, and~~ this may need to be considered.

52. Government consultation on Heat Network Zoning also identifies exemptions to proposals for requirements for connections to a heat network these include where a connection may lead to sub-optimal outcomes, or distance from the network connection points and impacts on consumers bills and affordability.
53. The HBF also considers that the need for a Heating and Cooling Strategy is unjustified and unnecessary, with many of the cooling elements already covered by Building Regulations, creating a duplication of work, with much potential for confusion and a lack of clarity as to which standards are being met where.

#### **Policy CC4: Water re-use, conservation, efficiency and quality**

*Policy CC4 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

54. This policy requires all development to demonstrate how it will maximise the re-use and recycling of surface water runoff, and require all new residential development to demonstrate that water consumption will not exceed 110 litres per person per day as per the higher building regulations.
55. 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.
56. 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. PPG<sup>7</sup> 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'. PPG<sup>8</sup> 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'.
57. The HBF also notes that many home builders are frequently delivering 115-110 litres per day which means the house building industry is already improving upon the regulations, and is doing so in a deliverable and viable manner. There is no need for Local Plan policies to repeat Building Regulations and it is in fact unhelpful to do so as Building Regulations may change during the course of the plan period.

#### **Policy CC5: Flood risk management and sustainable drainage systems**

*Policy CC5 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy.*

58. This policy states that all developments that require Sustainable Drainage Systems must be designed in accordance with the Council's SuDs Handbook.
59. The HBF considers that it is inappropriate to require development to be designed in accordance with the requirements of informal guidance, thus attempting to increase the weight of the document without it being subject to examination. The HBF recommends this element of the policy is deleted it is not appropriate to give increased weight to the Handbook through the Local Plan.

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<sup>7</sup> PPG ID: 56-014-20150327

## **Policy NE1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity**

*Policy NE1 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy.*

60. This policy states that in line with policy NE3 and NE4 the Council will support sustainable development which secures biodiversity net gains.
61. The HBF considers that this line is unnecessary as biodiversity net gain is already covered in policies NE3, and it is already assumed that the Plan is read as a whole and it is unnecessary to direct people to the subsequent policies.

## **Policy NE3: Biodiversity Net Gain**

*Policy NE3 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

62. This policy states that all new development should deliver biodiversity net gains, with major developments delivering in excess of a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain with an aspiration for 20%, subject to viability. The policy proposes that off-site solutions will be supported where it is demonstrated that the mitigation hierarchy of 'avoid, mitigate, compensate' and onsite over offsite solutions have been rigorously applied. Further criteria and then set in relation to the biodiversity net gain provision.
63. The HBF notes the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) which came in for large sites on February 12th, 2024, and for small sites from 2nd April 2024. It is therefore important for this policy to fully reflect all the new legislation, national policy and MHCLG and DEFRA guidance.
64. The HBF has been involved in a significant amount of work, being led by the Future Homes Hub, on BNG preparedness for some time, including feeding into the BNG Planning Practice Guidance and the DEFRA BNG Guidance. The HBF notes that this represents a lot of new information that the Council will need work though and consider the implications of, in order to ensure that any policy on Biodiversity Net Gain policy complies with the latest policy and guidance now it has been published. It should also be noted that the PPG<sup>9</sup> is clear that there is no need for individual Local Plans to repeat national BNG guidance.
65. It is important to note that for large and complex sites where the development is phased, the guidance is clear that the 10% must be delivered at the end of the development, and this may not result in 10% BNG on each phase. Additional advice on phased development has been provided in the BNG PPG<sup>10</sup>.
66. The HBF considers that there are significant additional costs associated with biodiversity net gain, which should be fully accounted for in the Council's viability assessment, some of which remain unknown at this time. It is important that BNG does not prevent, delay or reduce housing delivery. The costs relate both the financial costs and also land take- which will impact on densities achievable if BNG is provided on site. As this is still a new policy area and the market for off-site provision is not yet known, any figure used for BNG costs will need to be kept under review as BNG implementation progresses and a greater understanding of actual costs become available. The Viability Assessment, when undertaken, must clearly set out how it considered the implications of mandatory BNG and how it was arrived at using the most up to date BNG costs information available.

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<sup>9</sup> ID: 74-006-20240214

<sup>10</sup> ID: 74-054-20240214 & ID: 74-056-20240214

67. The HBF recommends that that Council work closely with the HBF, PAS, DEFRA and others with expertise in BNG to ensure that the policy is amended appropriately to reflect the latest position.
68. The HBF is concerned by the aspiration for 20% BNG subject to viability, this appears to suggest that developments should be providing 20% BNG unless there is viability evidence to demonstrate why they shouldn't. The HBF does not consider this is an appropriate policy. The HBF is of the opinion that the Council should seek to ensure that the 10% BNG is deliverable first rather than seek to place additional burdens on development and that the Council should have close regard to the latest guidance published by Government advises 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*". It is important to note from this statement that the national policy position is that local plans 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 HBF would argue that it should be considered a high bar with regard to the evidence required to justify such a policy.
69. There must be very robust evidence that the area is significantly worse than the country as whole with regard to the negative impacts on biodiversity from development and that the viability evidence will need to have considered in detail the actual costs facing development rather than assumed costs based on generalised national data if the 20% BNG requirement is to be justified. The HBF notes the viability challenges identified by the Viability Assessment and the Viability Note, and suggests that it is unlikely that the 20% BNG requirement will be viable in most cases. The HBF does not consider that the Council has provided sufficient appropriate evidence to demonstrate that the higher 20% requirement is needed in Telford and Wrekin and that biodiversity is under greater threat in this area, than in the rest of the country.
70. The HBF is also concerned about the impact that the 20% requirement with a preference to onsite could have on the density of development, the layouts proposed and the viability of the site not just for the cost of the BNG but also the cost in terms of land up take and loss of land for development. It is also important to note that the cost of offsetting will be higher still if there are insufficient BNG sites available locally as the spatial risk multiplier in the BNG Metric will increase if the BNG is bought outside of the local area or National Character Area. The Council should therefore seek to ensure that there is sufficient land available in Telford and Wrekin to ensure the offsetting can be delivered locally. These sites should be able to deliver the type of habitat required by development and must be allocated in the local plan. If this is not possible then the cost of delivering BNG will be higher.
71. The HBF suggest that there will also be a need for this policy and supporting text to say more about Local Nature Recovery Strategies. As the LNRS emerges it will be important for this Local Plan to be kept under review and further public consultation on the interaction between the two documents and/or changes to Local Plan policy to reflect the LNRS may be needed.
72. The HBF strongly recommends that the proposal for an aspirational 20% BNG subject to viability should be deleted.
73. The HBF would also recommend that the Council ensures that the Local Plan fully considers the BNG requirements in relation to site allocations. This is likely to require undertaking an assessment of the baseline to support the allocation to enable an understanding the BNG requirements for a ~~site to be allocated and the impact this may have on viability and other policy requirements and~~ considerations. It will be important to understand the BNG costs of mandatory BNG as this is non-

negotiable and as such may impact on the viability of the site and its ability to deliver against other policy requirements such as affordable housing or other s106 asks.

**Policy NE4: Development Greening Factor**

*Policy NE4 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

74. This policy states that the Council will require all major development proposals to contribute towards the greening of the Borough. It states that all major development proposals, or proposals that are predominantly residentially led should meet a minimum Greening Factor of 0.4.
75. 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 England<sup>11</sup>. 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.
76. The HBF notes that Urban Greening is likely to be a new concept for many. Although the supporting text of the policy attempts to explain what the Urban Greening Factor is, what is unclear from the policy is how the level of Urban Greening that would be required through the use of the Urban Greening Factor relates to the 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) required by the Environment Act. There would appear to be the potential for significant overlap with BNG that will need to be explored to ensure that the Council is not creating unnecessary administrative burdens on all applicants. Also, without a whole plan viability is also currently impossible to know how this might impact on the viability of development.
77. The HBF also considers that the Council will need to demonstrate why a minimum UGF of 0.4 for predominantly residential areas is appropriate for all major residential development across all of the Borough. The evidence to justify this should consider how this could impact on the viability and deliverability of sites going forward.
78. The HBF recommends that this policy is applied flexibly 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. The HBF also recommends that the UGF should not be a requirement on all sites, for example, smaller sites or sites near existing open spaces might be encouraged but not required to use the urban greening factor to inform the design. It would also seem inappropriate to require its use where specific provision has been agreed as part of a site allocation. The Plan will also need to clearly set out UGF relates to the wider BNG and LNRS objectives.

**Policy NE5 Green network**

*Policy NE5 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

79. As set out in previous responses, this policy needs to be clearer on how it links into BNG, and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), for example would it be appropriate for off-site BNG to be provided through enhancements to existing Green Networks.

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<sup>11</sup> 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>

## **Policy NE7 Strategic green gaps**

*Policy NE7 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

80. The HBF is of the view, for the reasons detailed elsewhere in our representation, and so not repeated here, that the Council need to allocate more sites for housing, including possibly some within Strategic Gaps.

## **Policy HO1: Housing Allocations**

*Policy HO1 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

81. This policy identifies that housing site allocations are set out in Appendix C and identified on the Local Plan Policies Map.
82. The HBF is surprised that the Council has chosen not to include a list of the housing allocations within the wording of either the Strategic Housing Policy or the housing allocations policy. Doing so would greatly assist the usability of the Plan and assist with the housing monitoring. Relegating the list of new allocated housing sites to Appendix C and the Policies Map seems to minimise their importance and further indicates that this Plan does not seem to be about guiding new development as plan-making process requires.
83. The HBF is keen that the Council produces a plan which can deliver against its housing requirement. To do this it is important that a strategy is put in place which provides a sufficient range of sites to provide enough sales outlets to enable delivery to be maintained at the required levels throughout the plan period. The HBF and our members can provide valuable advice on issues of housing delivery and would be keen to work proactively with the Council on this issue.
84. It is important that housing delivery is effectively monitored so that if housing monitoring shows delays to housing delivery across Telford and Wrekin action is taken to address this as soon as possible. The HBF suggests additional sites should be allocated so they that can be easily and quickly brought forward to address any under-delivery of housing supply. The Council will need to monitor the delivery of housing and publish progress against a published Housing Trajectory, Housing monitoring should be undertaken on a site-by-site basis. Therefore, the detailed housing trajectory including for specific sites should be included within the Plan. This needs to be more detailed than what is currently provided in the chart above paragraph 4.38.
85. The HBF also notes that the NPPF<sup>12</sup> requires Local Plans to identify land to accommodate at least 10% of the housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare, unless there are strong reasons why this cannot be achieved. The HBF has undertaken extensive consultation with its small developer members. One of the chief obstacles for small developers is that funding is extremely difficult to secure without a full, detailed, and implementable planning permission. Securing an implementable planning permission is extremely difficult if small sites are not allocated. Without implementable consents lenders are uneasy about making finance available or the repayment fees and interest rates they set will be very high. Small developers, consequently, need to invest a lot of money and time up-front in the risky business of trying to secure an allocation and a planning permission, and this is money that many small developers do not have. The HBF would therefore wish to see the 10% small sites allowance delivered through allocations (and not windfall). Such sites are important for encouraging the growth in SME housebuilders who will tend to develop these sites but rarely see the benefits that arise from the allocation of sites in a

local plan. Up until the 1980s, small developers accounted for the construction of half of all homes built in this country resulting in greater variety of product, more competition, and faster build-out rates. Since then, the number of small companies has fallen by 80%. The HBF also notes that support for small and medium builders need not be limited to only small sites of less than 1Ha. SMEs also deliver on other types of non-strategic sites (for example up to 100 units). The inclusion of additional non-strategic allocations would expand the range of choice in the market, and (possibly most importantly), be of a scale that can come forward and make a contribution to housing numbers earlier in the plan period.

86. The Plan's policies should ensure the availability of a sufficient supply of deliverable and developable land to deliver Telford and Wrekin's housing requirement. This sufficiency of housing land supply should ensure that the Council can meet the housing requirement, ensure the maintenance of a 5-year housing land supply and achieve the Housing Delivery Test. The HBF also strongly recommends that the plan allocates more sites than required to meet the housing requirement as a buffer. This buffer should be sufficient to deal with any under-delivery which is likely to occur from some sites and to provide flexibility and choice within the market. Such an approach would be consistent with the NPPF requirements for the plan to be positively prepared.
87. The HBF believes that the Plan should provide for a wide range of deliverable and developable sites, including a buffer and small site allocations in Telford and Wrekin in order to provide competition and choice to ensure that housing needs are met in full. Although the HBF do not comment on specific site allocations, we are of the view, for the reasons details elsewhere in our representation, so not repeated here, there need to be more housing allocations.

### **Policy HO2: Sustainable Communities**

*Policy HO2 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

88. This policy identifies sites and the vision for the sites SC1-3.
89. The HBF considers that the Council will need to consider an appropriate balance of development, to ensure that all of their housing needs are met in terms of types and tenures; locations and markets, and to ensure that the Plan can deliver against its housing requirements. Although the HBF does not comment on individual sites or allocations, we believe that the Plan should provide for a wide range of deliverable and developable sites across the Borough in order to provide competition and choice to ensure that housing needs are met in full. It is important that all the sites contained within the plan are deliverable over the plan period, planned to an appropriate strategy and do not create an over reliance on one location or type of property.

### **Policy HO3: Housing Mix and Quality**

*Policy HO3 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

90. This policy states that all development is required to provide for a variety of tenures and sizes that reflect local housing needs.
91. 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, does not consider the viability of the site, or requires 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.

92. Part 2 of the policy states that all development, across all tenures, is required as a minimum to meet the internal space standards as set out in the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS).
93. The NDSS as introduced by Government, are intended to be optional and can only be introduced where there is a clear need, and they retain development viability. As such they were introduced on a 'need to have' rather than a 'nice to have' basis. PPG<sup>13</sup> identifies the type of evidence required to introduce such a policy. It states that 'where a need for internal space standards is identified, local planning authorities should provide justification for requiring internal space policies. Local planning authorities should take account of the following areas: Need, Viability and Timing. The Council will need robust justifiable evidence to introduce the NDSS, based on the criteria set out above. The HBF considers that if the Government had expected all properties to be built to NDSS that they would have made these standards mandatory not optional.
94. The HBF notes that there is a direct relationship between unit size, cost per square metre (sqm), selling price per sqm and affordability. The HBF recommends that the policy approach should recognise that customers have different budgets and aspirations. An inflexible policy approach to NDSS for all new dwellings will impact on affordability and effect customer choice. Well-designed dwellings below NDSS can provide a good, functional home. Smaller dwellings play a valuable role in meeting specific needs for both open market and affordable home ownership housing. The introduction of the NDSS for all dwellings may mean customers purchasing larger homes in floorspace but with bedrooms less suited to their housing needs with the unintended consequences of potentially increasing overcrowding and reducing the quality of their living environment. The Council should focus on good design and usable space to ensure that dwellings are fit for purpose rather than focusing on NDSS.
95. Part 5 of the policy states that development is required to demonstrate how its design is capable of adaptation and extension to accommodate the changing lifestyle and needs of households over time, in accordance with the Council's Homes for All SPD.
96. The HBF considers that it is inappropriate to require development to demonstrate how its design is in accordance with the Council's Homes for All SPD, thus attempting to increase the weight of the document without it being subject to examination, which is contrary to national guidance. Planning policy must be made through the Local Plan process. This is subject to mandatory requirements for public consultation and independent scrutiny through the Examination process. Seeking to give Local Plan status to the existing SPDs is not appropriate. The HBF recommends this element of the policy is deleted, it is not appropriate to give increased weight to the SPD through the Local Plan, any reference to the SPD should be moved to the supporting text.
97. Part 6 of the policy states that all major developments must include M4(2) / M4(3) housing in accordance with the Council's requirements or national standards (whichever is higher). Whilst paragraph 9.29 of the justification text states that planning conditions will be used to ensure that a specified number of dwellings on a scheme meet requirements M4(2) or M4(3) in this policy. Paragraph 9.30 states that further detail can be found in the Homes for All SPD.
98. The HBF is concerned that this policy is not clear what the Council expects from development in terms of the proportions of M4(2) and M4(3) homes. The HBF is also concerned again about the weight being placed on the SPD.

99. 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. The PPG<sup>14</sup> identifies the type of evidence required to introduce a policy requiring the M4 standards, 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 Councils to provide a local assessment evidencing the specific case for Telford and Wrekin which justifies the inclusion of optional higher standards for accessible and adaptable homes in its Local Plan policy. If the Councils 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.
100. 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, and the ability to provide step-free access. If the policy is to be retained, it will need to be amended to include these considerations.
101. The Council should also note that the Government response to the Raising accessibility standards for new homes<sup>15</sup> 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) 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.
102. Part M of the Building Regulations sets a distinction between wheelchair accessible (a home readily useable by a wheelchair user at the point of completion) and wheelchair adaptable (a home that can be easily adapted to meet the needs of a household including wheelchair users) dwellings. Whilst the PPG notes that Local Plan policies for wheelchair accessible homes should be applied only to those dwellings where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling. The HBF is also concerned about the significant additional cost of providing Part M4(3) wheelchair accessible. It is also noted that M4(3) homes are not always attractive to buyers or residents and inevitably require further adaptations to suit the individual needs.

#### **Policy HO4: Affordable housing requirements**

*Policy HO4 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

103. This policy states that all major developments will look to maximise affordable housing delivery and be required to deliver a minimum of 25% affordable housing in the Telford built up area; and 35% affordable housing in Newport and the rural areas.
104. The Assessment of Affordable Housing Needs and Housing Mix Note (Oct 2023) identifies an affordable housing need of 371 affordable dwellings per year, it suggests that 142 (38%) of these should be affordable rent, and 229 (62%) should be social rent, with an additional 112 as affordable home ownership.

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<sup>14</sup> PPG ID: 56-007-20150327

<sup>15</sup> <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>

105. The HBF supports the need to address the affordable housing requirements of the borough. The NPPF<sup>16</sup> 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.
106. The HBF also notes the significant viability challenges that are identified within the Appendix of the Regulation 19 Viability Note (Dec 2024). The Viability Note itself recommends that based on the viability evidence that the Council adopts a 20% affordable housing requirement in and adjacent to Telford. It also states that in relation to the Sustainable Communities the residual value but on most it is a little less than the benchmark land value suggesting that these are likely to be challenging to deliver with 20% affordable housing. It goes on to state that the delivery of any large site is challenging.
107. The HBF is concerned that the Plan as proposed will not meet the affordable housing need, as set out in the Council's own evidence. The HBF considers that the Council should consider increasing the housing requirement to help to address this need as set out in the PPG (ID: 2a-024-20190220). The HBF also recommends that the Council looks again at their Plan and spatial strategy, for example, if more sites were allocated, particularly in areas where the viability is greater, this would help to increase the level of affordable housing provided.

#### **Policy HO6 Supported and specialist housing**

*Policy HO6 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

108. The HBF considers that the Council's support for specialist and supported housing that increase choice for older, vulnerable and disabled residents is appropriate. The HBF is however concerned by the significant requirements included in the criteria of part 1. The viability of the development of older persons housing (including extra care schemes) is particularly challenging as set out in Table 10.6 of the viability assessment. There are a number of reasons for this including: less efficient net to gross ratios than general purpose housing; the inclusion of extensive communal areas, providing care and other ancillary uses; different net to gross ratios, typically of 70% compared with 85% for low rise general purpose flatted blocks; specialist housing developments for older people tend to have longer sales periods, as purchasers prefer to view the flat they intend to buy which results in very little off-plan buying during construction; and sales and marketing budgets are typically higher as a result of the lengthier sales period. The HBF recommends that the flexibility of the policy is significantly improved to reflect this challenge.

#### **Policy HO10: Stalled development sites**

*Policy HO10 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

109. This policy states that the Council will proactively and positively support landowners and developers to investigate, remediate and resolve issues that have delayed vacant and / or derelict brownfield sites.
110. The HBF welcomes the Council's intention to be proactive in their efforts to bring stalled sites forward, however this should not be limited only to delayed vacant or derelict brownfield land. Proactive support and interventions may also be needed to help bring forward allocations and possibly even windfall sites.

111. The HBF is however, concerned that there may be times when a site has been identified as stalled, but where the developer is already working proactively bring the site forward within their own work programme. The HBF considers that it is important that this policy is applied flexibly and where a developer is already proactively working to bring a site forward, even if this is longer than the one year reasonable time period the Council are proposing, the Council should not seek to exercise its compulsory purchase powers. The HBF also considers that compulsory purchase may not always be the appropriate solution, and instead the Council should seek to work closely with the developer to identify the constraints or challenges to the development of the site, and to help to address these as needed.

### **Policy HO11: Self Build and Custom Housebuilding**

*Policy HO11 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

112. This policy states that application sites delivering 100+ new dwellings should provide at least 5% of the housing as self-build or custom housebuilding serviced plots.

113. The HBF generally advocates for self and custom-build policies that encourage self and custom-build development by setting out where it will be supported in principle. The HBF considers that Councils can play a key role in facilitating the provision of land as set in the PPG. This could be done, for example, by using the Councils' own land for such purposes and/or allocating sites specifically for self and custom-build home builders- although this would need to be done through discussion and negotiation with landowners.

114. The HBF would be keen to understand the evidence to support the need for custom and self-build housing in Telford and Wrekin, and how it has informed the requirements of Policy HO11. The PPG<sup>17</sup> sets out how custom and self-build housing needs can be assessed.

115. 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 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. The HBF considers that the Council's own evidence shows that there is not a demand from custom and self-builders.

116. The PPG<sup>18</sup> 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.

117. The HBF considers it is unlikely that the provision of self and custom build plots on new housing developments can be co-ordinated with the development of the wider site. At any one time, there are often multiple contractors and large machinery operating on-site 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. The HBF also questions if there is a

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<sup>17</sup> PPG ID: 67-003-20190722

<sup>18</sup> PPG ID: 57-025-20210508

mismatch between the kind of plots and locations that self-builders are looking for, and the kind of plots that would result from this policy.

**Policy HO12: Housing development in the rural area**

*Policy HO12 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

118. This policy states that the Council will support housing development in the rural area by supporting a limited amount of housing development in key settlements. The policy also suggests that new dwellings in the rural area will only be supported where they meet the criteria set in NPPF paragraph 82.
119. The wording and layout of this policy is confusing. It covers range of rural housing issues and as such HBF suggest as a minimum some sub-heading should be included to split out the New Housing in Rural Areas, Infill Development, Replacement Dwellings, Conversions and Change of Use.
120. The HBF also notes that the NPPF reference needs to be updated to reflect the latest NPPF. However, given that this element of the policy only refers to the requirements in the NPPF, the HBF would query the value of the policy.

**Policy HO13: Affordable rural exception sites**

*Policy HO13 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

121. This policy states that the Council will support affordable housing schemes as an exception to normal rural housing policy where development is defined as minor development and consists of 100% affordable housing.
122. The HBF considers that this policy is not consistent with the NPPF and should allow for a proportion of market housing where they help to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing.

**Policy ST4: Design of roads and streets**

*Policy ST4 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

123. This policy states that the Council will require all development to accord with Government guidance such as the Manual for Streets and other relevant guidance including the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and the most up to date design guidance from the Local Highways Authority.
124. The HBF considers that it is inappropriate to require development to accord with Government guidance or other relevant guidance, thus attempting to increase the weight of the guidance without it being subject to examination, which is contrary to national guidance. Planning policy must be made through the Local Plan process. This is subject to mandatory requirements for public consultation and independent scrutiny through the Examination process. Seeking to give Development Plan status to the government guidance or other relevant guidance is not appropriate. The HBF recommends this element of the policy is deleted, it is not appropriate to give increased weight to guidance through the Local Plan, any reference to the guidance should be moved to the supporting text and identified as something that is material consideration not something to be accorded with.

**Policy ST5: Electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure and parking design**

*Policy ST5 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy.*

125. This policy states that all new development must provide electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and development is expected to meet the standards for electric vehicle charging infrastructure set out in the Council's latest parking guidance document.
126. 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 where exceptions may apply.

### Monitoring Framework

127. 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 plan will actually be monitored, and identifies when, why and how actions will be taken to address any issues identified.

### Viability Concerns

128. The HBF considers that it is important that all of the policies in the Plan allow for flexibility to take into account the viability challenges in Telford and Wrekin. The HBF notes that the Viability Assessment / Viability Note already highlight the significant viability challenges in Telford and Wrekin. However, the HBF is concerned that the Viability Assessment does not consider all of the additional costs facing developer at this time.
129. The HBF recently wrote to the Chancellor<sup>19</sup> to express concern over the impact of the proposed Building Safety Levy on housing delivery and to request that Government reassess its approach. This has seen the implementation timeline for the Building Safety Levy pushed back to Autumn 2026 with the levy regulation expected to be laid in Parliament later this year. This means that sites that were acquired several years ago will now become liable for another tax, which is likely to cause significant delay in housing delivery as scheme viability is revisited and has the potential to reduce the delivery of housing including Affordable Housing as a result. The Building Safety Levy: Technical Consultation Response<sup>20</sup> sets out the levy for Telford and Wrekin is £12.18/m<sup>2</sup> for previously developed land and £24.80/m<sup>2</sup> for greenfield sites. This is an additional cost to be considered in the Viability Assessment. The HBF recommends that this is recognized in the Viability Assessment.
130. Other factors that need to be taken into account include increasing costs of materials and labour due to inflation and the costs of mandatory BNG, which are still emerging as the off-site market is yet to be established. HBF members are reporting costs of £20-30k per off-site BNG unit. Although the initial price of statutory credits is now known this national fallback option has been deliberately highly priced to discourage their use. Whilst this intention is understandable, at present the lack of functioning local markets for off-site credits causes viability problems because HBF members' experience to date suggests that any scheme that needed to rely on statutory credits would become unviable. The Planning and Infrastructure Bill also has potential to increase costs faced by developers in relation to the developer levy towards the Nature Restoration Fund.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.hbf.co.uk/news/home-builders-federation-calls-for-suspension-of-the-planned-building-safetylevy/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/building-safety-levy-technical-consultation/outcome/buildingsafety-levy-technical-consultation-response#:~:text=As%20part%20of%20the%20Remediation,in%20Parliament%20later%20this%20year.>

**Future Engagement**

131. 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.
132. 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.
133. At present the HBF does not consider that the Plan is sound, as measured against the tests of soundness set out in the NPPF, and as set out in our representations above. The HBF would therefore like to participate in any hearing sessions associated with the examination of the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan and related to our representations, as this will allow the HBF to represent the industry and to address any relevant points raised at the examination. The HBF would like to be kept informed of the submission and examination of the Local Plan.

Yours faithfully



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