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Dear Planning Policy Team,

REGULATION 18 LIVERPOOL LOCAL PLAN 2025-2041 (SEPTEMBER 2025)

1. Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the Regulation 18 draft of the new Liverpool Local Plan 2025-2041.
2. The HBF is the principal representative body of the house-building industry in England and Wales. Our representations reflect the views of our membership, which includes multi-national PLC's, regional developers and small, local builders. In any one year, our members account for over 80% of all new "for sale" market housing built in England and Wales as well as a large proportion of newly built affordable housing.
3. The HBF would like to submit the following comments in relation to selected policies contained in the Regulation 18 consultation document, plus additional comments to pick up on other key themes and areas. These responses are provided to assist the Council in the preparation of the emerging Local Plan. The HBF is keen to ensure that Liverpool produces a sound Local Plan which provides appropriate policies for the area.

Plan Period

4. The Council is proposing a plan period from 2025 to 2041, which is a period of 16 years. Paragraph 22 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) outlines that as a minimum, strategic policies should look ahead over a 15 year period from adoption and that where larger scale developments form part of the strategy for the area, policies should be set within a vision that looks further ahead (at least 30 years), to take in account the likely timescale for delivery.
5. The Council's latest Local Development Scheme (LDS) was adopted in October 2024 and at that point, the Council considered that it would undertake its Regulation 18 consultation in April to May 2025, with adoption of the Local Plan envisaged by December 2026. Given that there has been some slippage in timescales since the publication of the LDS, it is reasonable

to consider that the adoption of the Local Plan may now run into early 2027. If that is the case, the HBF considers that the Council should be looking to lengthen its plan period to at least 2042 to ensure that it can meet the minimum plan period from adoption.

Local Plan Vision and Strategic Objectives

6. The HBF generally supports the Vision and Strategic Objectives contained in the Local Plan. To ensure that it is as comprehensive as possible, the HBF recommends that the Vision should explicitly state that new homes will not only meet the needs of existing residents but also those wishing to move to the area and include different housing types and tenures, including affordable housing. This will then ensure the Vision is better aligned to the Strategic Objective to deliver high quality new homes.

Policy STP1: Liverpool's Growth Strategy

7. Policy STP1 outlines the Council's commitment to meet, as a minimum, its Local Housing Need (LHN) calculated using the current Standard Method. This equates to 29,824 dwellings over the plan period (up to 2041) or 1,864 dwellings per annum. The HBF considers that this has been calculated correctly and incorporates the most up to date housing stock and affordability data. The Council will need to continue to monitor its LHN when new data is available and to include any changes in future drafts of the Local Plan.
8. The policy is clear that the Council has an aspiration to exceed its LHN and the HBF supports this and notes that this is entirely in accordance with the NPPF, which notes that the LHN is only a minimum starting point (paragraph 62) and that local planning authorities can look to exceed this figure (paragraph 69). This also reflects that the emerging Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) will likely require Liverpool to play a critical role in driving forward growth in the wider City Region.
9. To provide clarification in relation to this and to provide certainty for developers, the HBF considers that the Council should explicitly set out to what degree it wishes to exceed the minimum LHN figure so that its ambitions are unambiguous and so that the figure can be supported with appropriate evidence. It is noted that the Council is seeking to gather this evidence (noted in paragraph 4.10 of the Local Plan) and will need to ensure this is in place for future drafts of the Local Plan.
10. The policy also outlines that some of its housing requirement will be met through the allocation of 41 sites for housing and 14 sites for housing led mixed-use development. It will be important that these sites are able to meet the needs of all of Liverpool and provide a sufficient mix of house types, sizes and tenures.

Policy STP2: Strategic Spatial Strategy

11. In this policy the Council sets out that it will seek to focus new homes in the city centre, the city centre northern fringes, Liverpool North and Festival Gardens, with the accompanying explanatory text setting out its broad approach in these areas.
12. The HBF notes the need to take into account the emerging SDS, but considers that it is also important that the spatial strategy allows for the delivery of sufficient homes to meet local housing needs in a variety of locations. It is also important that the spatial strategy can be demonstrated to be viable so that housing is deliverable over the plan period.
13. The HBF also considers that the Council will need to ensure that the strategy is suitably broad, as a focus of development in a handful of areas (such as the city centre and inner areas of the city) will have implications for the types, size and tenure of homes provided (including affordable homes) and not necessarily provide the appropriate mix of homes needed to meet the housing needs across the city.

Policy STP3: Housing Delivery

14. The Council in this policy outlines how it will meet, as a minimum, its LHN over the plan period. It has identified several sources of housing supply, including:
 - Housing completions since the beginning of the plan period.
 - Housing commitments (through extant planning permissions).
 - Allocations.
 - Windfall development.
 - Indicative supply on brownfield SHLAA sites.
15. Whilst the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) allows for the inclusion of windfall in a local planning authority's housing supply, it must have compelling evidence of its delivery (Reference ID: 3-023-20190722). It is noted that the Council is expecting windfall of 140 dwellings per annum from 2028-29. This is based on past trends on small scale sites only (fewer than 10 units). The Council will need to be sure that this provides compelling evidence and takes into account that upon adoption of the Local Plan, windfall rates are likely to fall as housing supply will come from other sources.
16. The HBF would generally recommend that an allowance for windfall should not be included in the supply and instead should form part of the flexibility in supply. If additional supply is needed, further sites should be identified and allocated. Related to this, the HBF would also seek assurances that within the mix of sites put forward, that the Council provides 10% of its housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare (in line with paragraph 73 of the

NPPF). This is to assist small and medium housebuilders in delivering homes. The HBF considers that it is important that this requirement is appropriately covered by allocations rather than via windfall.

17. Table 4 of the Local Plan sets out the number of new homes expected to come forward from each of these sources compared to its minimum LHN figure. It is noted that once commitments, allocations and small windfall sites are taken into account, the Council can demonstrate only a small buffer of supply (113 units) compared to the minimum LHN.
18. Whilst it is appreciated that the figures in Table 4 will change as the Local Plan advances, the HBF is concerned about the small buffer. The Council has taken into account a 10% lapse rate on its commitments, but it would only take a handful of additional commitments to lapse, or issues delivering some of the allocations for that buffer to disappear. The HBF also considers that this does not align with the Council's aspirations to deliver homes above its minimum LHN.
19. To address this, the Council has sought to also include SHLAA sites on developable brownfield land (it estimates that these could yield 6,689 dwellings over the plan period). The HBF is concerned about including these within the Council's housing supply. These sites lack any formal planning status and it is unclear how many of these sites are actually viable and how thoroughly tested the deliverability of these sites has been. It is also unclear how these fit in with the Council's overall spatial strategy and why only brownfield sites have been considered and not suitable and sustainable greenfield sites too. The Council will also need to ensure that it takes into account any potential overlap between these sites and windfall sites to avoid double counting.
20. The HBF therefore considers that the Council will need to provide more evidence to justify the inclusion of these brownfield SHLAA sites in the housing supply and also consider whether it is beneficial to allocate these sites or alternatively identify additional sites to allocate in order to bolster housing supply.

Policy STP5: Infrastructure

21. The HBF considers that it is vital that new development is supported by appropriate infrastructure and supports the Council in preparing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and its commitment to keep this up to date. The HBF also notes and supports that the policy seeks to have regard in particular to viability considerations. The Council is correct in identifying viability as one of the key challenges in delivering the homes that Liverpool needs over the plan period.
22. The HBF therefore recommends that particular attention is paid to infrastructure costs and that the IDP is prepared alongside a suitably robust whole-plan viability assessment. The HBF and our Members would be happy to work alongside the Council in preparing the whole-plan viability assessment for the Local Plan.

23. It is noted that the policy mentions both the infrastructure required to support new development and existing deficiencies in infrastructure. The Council will no doubt be aware that it is not the role of new development to rectify existing infrastructure deficiencies, rather it is to mitigate the impact that relates specifically to the development only (see NPPF paragraph 58).

Policy STP6: Developer Contributions

24. Part 4 of this policy acknowledges that there may be circumstances where reduced developer contributions can be acceptable and highlights that this may be because of issues with viability of a development. In these cases, it will allow the submission of site-specific viability assessments at the planning application stage.

25. The HBF notes this and considers that this further emphasises the need for the whole-plan viability assessment to be robustly prepared to clearly demonstrate the viability of site allocations as well as a number of key development typologies. This is because 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.

26. This part of Policy STP6 also states that in cases where developer contributions may be reduced for reasons of viability, a review mechanism will be put in place in the Section 106 agreement to ensure that appropriate payments are made should the overall development viability improve. This needs to be carefully considered given that developers will have most likely financially planned their schemes in detail based on the situation at the time of granting planning permission and so any changes could risk delaying delivery of new homes.

27. The HBF also considers that if this is brought forward, it should likewise be the case that where it can be shown that viability has further deteriorated since the granting of planning permission, that the Council should be flexible in allowing planning obligations to be re-examined to ensure the development of new homes is not unnecessarily stalled.

Policy STP7: Green and Blue Infrastructure

28. The HBF notes that the Council has classified Green Belt and the Green Wedge as green infrastructure within this policy. The HBF does not consider this appropriate given that these are spatial designations rather than environmental designations. These should therefore not be included within this policy.

Policy STP10: Health and Wellbeing

29. Part 4 of this policy requires schemes of 50 or more dwellings to be accompanied by a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), with Part 5 of the policy stating that the requirements and scope of the HIA will be set out at the Regulation 19 stage.

30. The HBF generally supports plans that set out how the Council will achieve improvements in health and well-being. The PPG sets out that HIAs are a useful tool to use where there are expected to be significant impacts but it also outlines the importance of the Local Plan in considering the wider health issues in an area and ensuring policies respond to these (Reference ID: 53-005-20190722).
31. As such, Local Plans should already have considered the impact of development on the health and well-being of their communities and set out policies to address any concerns. Consequently, where a development is in line with policies in the Local Plan, a HIA should not be necessary. Only where there is a departure from the plan should the Council consider requiring a HIA.
32. In addition, the HBF considers that any requirement for a HIA should be based on a proportionate level of detail in relation to the scale and type of development proposed. The requirement for HIA for all development proposals of 50 dwellings or more without any specific evidence that an individual scheme is likely to have a significant impact upon the health and wellbeing of the local population is not justified by reference to the PPG. Only if a significant adverse impact on health and wellbeing is identified should a HIA be required, which then sets out measures to substantially mitigate the impact.
33. Any requirement for a HIA will also need to be reflected in the whole-plan viability assessment.

Policy STP11: Climate and Sustainability

34. The HBF agrees that there is a pressing need to tackle climate change and ensuring that built development is sustainable. Whilst the HBF appreciates the ambition of the Council to tackle climate change, in setting out this policy the HBF considers that the need to move towards greater energy efficiency and sustainability should be via a nationally consistent set of standards and timetables, which is universally understood and technically implementable. This is in line with the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) of December 2023 (reference: UIN HLWS120), which states that the Government does not expect plan-makers to set local energy efficiency standards for buildings that go beyond current or planned building regulations.
35. The HBF notes that this policy also seeks to maximise opportunities for connection to existing heat networks. The HBF considers that it is important that any policy in relation to heat networks is not seen as a requirement and is instead implemented on a flexible basis; recognising that heat networks are one aspect of the path towards decarbonising heat, and that other technologies can also contribute.

36. Government consultation on Heat Network Zoning in 2021 (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1024216/heat-net-work-zoning-consultation.pdf) 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.
37. Furthermore, some heat network consumers do not have comparable levels of satisfaction as consumers on gas and electricity networks, and they pay a higher price. Currently, there are no sector specific protections for heat network consumers, unlike for people on other utilities such as gas, electricity or water. A consumer living in a building serviced by a heat network does not have the same opportunities to switch supplier as they would for most gas and electricity supplies.
38. Part 2a of this policy also notes that the Council will seek that all development should minimise whole life carbon by reducing embodied and operational carbon emissions. Whilst the HBF considers that this is a laudable aim, the Council will need to carefully consider how this will be measured and monitored and what the implications are for this. Currently there is no set standard for measuring and monitoring and there are large gaps in the availability of both specific data and generic data. As such, any such policy should seek to encourage and support ways in which the whole life carbon output of a development can be minimised rather than making it a specific requirement.
39. Part 5 of the policy requires all new development to provide a Climate and Sustainability Statement. The HBF does not consider that such a document is required for all new development as it will depend on the scale and nature of the development and what is being proposed. The HBF recommends the requirement for such a statement is something best addressed through the Council's planning application validation list where it can be detailed under which circumstances it is needed and its scope. Including it in a validation list also allows the Council greater flexibility to amend the requirement as appropriate.

Policy STP12: Sustainable Movement and Connectivity

40. This policy includes *inter alia* a requirement for development proposals to provide access to superfast broadband, as a minimum, and full fibre connections where available.
41. The HBF generally considers that digital infrastructure is an important part of sustainable development within an area. However, the inclusion of digital infrastructure such as certain broadband specifications is not within the direct control of the development industry, and as such it is considered that this part of Policy STP12 could create deliverability issues for development and developers.
42. Service providers are the only ones who can confirm access to infrastructure. Whilst the NPPF in paragraph 119 establishes that local planning authorities should seek to support the

expansion of electronic communications networks, it does not seek to prevent development that does not have access to such networks. The house building industry is fully aware of the benefits of having their homes connected to super-fast broadband and what their customers will demand. The HBF considers that in seeking to provide broadband and fibre to homes, the Council should work proactively with telecommunications providers to extend provision and not rely on the development industry to provide for such infrastructure.

43. As the Council are no doubt aware, Part R of the building regulations requires all new build dwellings to be installed with the relevant physical broadband/fibre infrastructure connections subject to a cost cap of £2,000 per dwelling. These requirements mean that there is no need for the inclusion of this part of Policy STP12.

Policy STP13: Social Value

44. The HBF notes the requirement for providing a Social Value Strategy as part of this policy and appreciates that this can be a way in which many of the positive aspects of building additional homes can be articulated through a planning application. However, such benefits should be implicit and driven through the Local Plan anyway, such that development which complies with the Local Plan should already be demonstrating the requirements of this policy. The need for a specific Social Value Strategy for such developments is therefore questionable, especially in light of paragraph 44 of the NPPF which highlights that planning application requirements should be kept to a minimum.
45. The need for a Social Value Strategy for all major developments is also questionable and does not appear to be justified in any evidence. The HBF considers that it is unlikely that all major developments should require such a document. Furthermore, the HBF would also question the need for the measures in the Social Value Strategy to be conditioned on any planning permission granted. Whilst the criteria in the policy are generally understood, they are inherently subjective in nature and so it is unclear what would specifically need to be achieved so as to discharge the planning condition. The Council needs to explain this in further detail and ensure the requirements are appropriately accounted for in the whole-plan viability assessment.

Policy CC21: City Centre Housing Provision and Mix

46. The HBF notes that this policy sets specific maximum and minimum thresholds for the provision of 1 and 3 bedroom properties in the city centre and city centre fringe sites. The accompanying explanatory text outlines that the driver behind these thresholds is from the results of the 2025 Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment (SHMNA) and the need to address the current imbalance in housing mix in these areas (which is skewed towards 1 and 2 bedroom properties).

47. The HBF understands the rationale in relation to this policy but would nevertheless recommend a flexible approach is taken regarding housing mix in the city centre and city centre fringe. This will need to recognise that needs and demand will vary from site to site; ensure that the scheme is viable; and provide an appropriate mix for the location and market. The policy should be re-worded to incorporate this flexibility.

Policy H1: Creating Mixed Communities

48. This policy requires that housing developments adhere to the mix set out in the SHMNA. These are set out in Table 6 and Table 7 of the Local Plan (city-wide and sub-area requirements).

49. 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, location or characteristics of the site; requiring a mix that does not consider the viability of the site; or requiring the applicant to provide significant amounts of additional evidence.

50. Consequently, the HBF would expect the Council to ensure that the policy is worded more flexibly so as to make an allowance for a site's location, scale, characteristics and surrounding context (alongside need), so home builders can provide homes as required by the market and which take into account scheme viability and commercial considerations.

51. The Council will also need to bear in mind that the SHMNA is a snapshot in time and that over the plan period, specific housing needs may change. This further underlines the need for this policy to be flexible.

Policy H2: Affordable Housing Provision

52. This policy outlines that for proposals for the development of 10 or more dwellings, developments should ensure that a minimum 20% of the homes to be provided are affordable and comprise the following types:

- 50% social rent.
- 25% affordable rent.
- 25% intermediate (shared equity housing provision).

53. The HBF supports the need to address the affordable housing requirements of the city. The NPPF in paragraph 35 is clear that the derivation of affordable housing policies must not only take account of need but also viability and deliverability.

54. In relation to need, the accompanying explanatory text outlines that the SHMNA identifies a need for an additional 2,384 affordable units per year. The HBF has significant concerns regarding how the Council intends to deliver this number of affordable dwellings each year to meet local need if the overall housing requirement is only 1,864 dwellings per annum. The affordable need equates to more than the housing requirement (128%).
55. It is also unclear as to how the Council has then arrived at a 20% affordable housing requirement. The HBF would expect that such a rate should be justified through evidence and this will need to include demonstrating that this amount of affordable housing on development sites will not undermine viability.
56. Given the gap between the affordable need outlined in the SHMNA and what is anticipated to be delivered through Policy H2, it is worth highlighting that the PPG states that an increase in the total housing figures included in the plan may need to be considered where it could help deliver the required number of affordable homes (Reference ID: 2a-024-20190220). Therefore, the HBF considers that the Council should also be taking this affordable housing need into consideration as part of their overall housing requirement.
57. The HBF would also recommend that there should be a degree of flexibility in terms of the precise tenure split, which can take into account location specific circumstances or instances where a Registered Provider has not been able to be found to acquire the affordable units.

Policy H3: Independent Living and Specialist Housing

58. Part 2c of this policy requires a proportion of housing and affordable housing in the largest housing developments (100+ homes) to meet the specific needs of older and vulnerable people.
59. The HBF is generally supportive of providing homes that are suitable to meet the needs of older and vulnerable people. Whilst there is general support for such development, the HBF would however recommend that the Council should be more proactive in working with providers of this type of development to identify appropriate specific sites for allocation. This approach would provide far more certainty to the Council that the need for such accommodation will be met in full. The HBF considers that the Council should note the difference between homes suitable for older people and specialist housing for older people, and the difference in need and demand for these types of homes.
60. This approach is consistent with the PPG which notes that allocating such sites can provide greater certainty for developers and encourage the provision of sites in suitable locations (Reference ID: 63-012-20190626). As such, the HBF considers that the Council needs to work closely with the providers of older persons housing to identify appropriate sites or to provide appropriate policies.

Policy H6: Custom and Self Build, Community-led Housing and other housing provision

61. Part 2 of this policy requires a proportion of self-build/custom-build housing and/or community-led housing will be sought as part of comprehensive regeneration proposals.
62. The HBF does not consider that requiring a proportion of self-build, custom-build or community-led housing on comprehensive regeneration proposals is the correct approach. It is considered unlikely that the provision of such plots on new housing developments can be 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. For self-build in particular, the HBF also notes that many would prefer not to be on a large residential development.
63. Instead, the HBF advocates for self-build/custom-build/community-led housing policies that encourage such development by setting out where it will be supported in principle. This better reflects the demand expressed in Table 15.1 of the SHMNA (185 entries on the self and custom build register since 2016). The HBF considers that this is appropriately covered in Part 1 of this policy, which should be retained whilst Part 2 should be deleted.

Policy H12: Accessible Homes

64. Policy H12 requires all new housing development, except for co-living and purpose built student accommodation, must comply with building regulations Part M4(2) and proposals of 10 or more dwellings should provide 10% that meet Part M4 (3) Part (2) (a) of building regulations.
65. The HBF is generally supportive of providing homes that are suitable to meet the needs of older people and disabled people. The PPG is clear that such standards are optional, and evidence needs to be provided to justify their inclusion, 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 (Reference ID: 56-007-20150327). Whilst the Council has provided some evidence in its SHMNA (and this is referred to in the explanatory text), the HBF considers that this does not address all the PPG criteria and crucially it will need to be shown that the introduction of these optional standards is viable.
66. The Council will also no doubt be aware that Part M of the building regulations sets a distinction between wheelchair accessible dwellings (a home readily useable by a wheelchair user at the point of completion) and wheelchair adaptable dwellings (a home that can be easily adapted to meet the needs of a household including wheelchair users). The PPG is clear 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 (Reference ID: 56-009-20150327). The Council will need to ensure the policy is consistent with this position.

67. Part 8 of the policy also requires all homes (with the exception of co-living and purpose-built student accommodation) to meet Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). Given the requirement to also meet M4(2) standards, the policy outlines that minimum size gross floor-space for a 1 bed property should be 50sqm. It states that proposals that include residential units that are less than this but meet the NDSS 1 bed 1 person requirement (39sqm) will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.
68. The NDSS as introduced by Government, are intended to be optional and can only be introduced where there is clear evidence. The PPG identifies the type of evidence required to introduce such a policy (Reference ID: 56-020-20150327). It states that where a need for internal space standards is identified, local planning authorities should provide justification for requiring internal space policies and this should take account of need, viability and timing. The intention is therefore that this is a 'need to have' rather than a 'nice to have'.
69. 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.

Policy H14: New Housing Design Requirements

70. The HBF agrees that good design is an important component of sustainable development, however the HBF does not regard it appropriate that Policy H14 requires applicants to meet the relevant design standards and guidance set out in the emerging Housing Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
71. The SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and will not in itself be a development plan document. However, by requiring compliance with the SPD through Policy H14, the Council is effectively giving the SPD development plan status. This is not appropriate given that the SPD will not be subject to the same scrutiny and examination as a development plan document. The wording of this policy should therefore be changed so that applicants 'have regard to' the SPD.
72. Part 2 of the policy requires all new housing development to maximise the provision of dual aspect homes and avoid the provision of single aspect homes. Whilst this part of the policy does allow for instances where this may not be possible, the HBF seeks assurances that this policy will be flexibly applied to take into account site specific constraints.

Policy H17: Public Open Space in New Housing Development

73. Part 3 of Policy H17 requires proposals to align with the guidance set out in the Public Realm Strategy SPD. In a similar manner to our comments in relation to Policy H14 above, the SPD

will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and will not in itself be a development plan document. Therefore, to prevent the SPD being given development plan status (which would not be appropriate), the HBF recommends that the wording of this part of the policy should change so that applicants 'have regard to' the SPD.

Policy GI1: Green Belt

74. This policy appears to restate national planning policy with regards to Green Belt. As Local Plan policies are not meant to replicate policies found elsewhere (see paragraph 16 of the NPPF), the HBF does not consider that this policy is necessary.

Policy GI6: Tree Canopy Cover

75. The HBF notes that core to this policy is that each application should achieve 25% canopy cover within its red line boundary, as well as stating a preference to retaining trees rather than their removal and replacing with new trees.

76. The HBF generally supports tree planting within development sites. Any policy which sets a minimum canopy cover however should be accompanied by robust evidence which explores the implications of such a policy. This needs to consider the viability of the policy, not just in terms of the cost of trees and their maintenance, but the impact this will have on gross to net ratios on development sites. This should be accurately reflected in the whole-plan viability assessment, so its overall impact can be demonstrated alongside other policy and regulatory requirements.

77. The Council will also need to explain how the policy sits with other policies within the Local Plan, as well as areas of national policy, such as those which instruct developers to use development land as efficiently as possible (see paragraph 130 of the NPPF) and the Council's own site capacity assessments of its allocations.

78. Whilst the overall rationale of this policy is understood, the HBF is concerned with regards to the lack of flexibility. Whilst there is an allowance in instances where a 25% canopy cover is not possible, there is a requirement for a notable amount of evidence to be provided to prove that this is the case. Given that the Council is looking to provide homes in areas such as the city centre and city centre fringe sites, it is clear that such sites will likely struggle to achieve the 25% canopy cover from the outset. Other sites outside these areas will also likely have constraints which will make it clear that such canopy cover is not possible. Such sites should not need to provide detailed evidence where it is clear from the start that the policy requirement is not achievable.

Policy GI7: New and Existing Vegetation

79. This policy sets out the Council's approach to existing vegetation and the provision of new planting on development sites.

80. The HBF agrees that existing vegetation should be retained wherever possible (in line with paragraph 136 of the NPPF), however the Council should acknowledge within the policy that sometimes being able to retain all vegetation on a site is not possible (eg. to achieve a site access or to ensure a coherent design/layout). The implications of any tree loss should be examined on a site-by-site basis and appropriately considered in the wider planning balance.
81. In relation to new planting, it is noted that Part 10 of the policy requires tree lined streets and these need to be positioned in adoptable highway verges of at least 2.4m width or provide justification if such trees are proposed in private land. The HBF notes that paragraph 136 of the NPPF requires that new streets are tree-lined (unless, in specific cases, there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate). The policy should therefore seek to align with the NPPF and be sufficiently flexible so as to allow tree lined streets to be provided in a number of different ways.
82. In a similar way to our comments on Policy GI6, the HBF considers that the requirements for tree planting (including tree lined streets) will need to be accounted for when setting net developable areas in the whole-plan viability assessment and when examining the site capacities of allocations.

Policy GI8: Achieving Biodiversity Net Gain

83. The HBF notes the introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) came in for large sites on 12 February 2024, and for small sites from 2 April 2024. This was accompanied by relevant updates to the PPG. In particular the PPG states:

“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.

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....” (Reference ID: 74-006-20240214).

84. In accordance with this, the HBF considers that much of Policy GI8 can be deleted as it simply repeats the statutory framework and guidance. The Council should therefore re-examine this policy and tailor it to specific local circumstances (where necessary).
85. The HBF also notes that the policy sets out the local requirements for planning applications that are subject to mandatory BNG. These requirements may be better suited to be included in the Council's planning application validation list rather than specifically in this policy. This will better allow the Council to detail the scope and the specifics of these requirements.

Policy GI9: Urban Greening Factor

86. This policy incorporates a tool for assessing the proportion and quality of green infrastructure on development sites. Ensuring that an appropriate amount of green infrastructure is provided on a site is important, however the HBF notes that this policy seeks to apply a rigid formulaic approach to this.
87. The HBF is concerned that this approach may not be appropriate in all circumstances. It is also clear that not all of the Urban Greening Factors in Table 10 of the Local Plan can be applied to all sites, and the Council will need to be certain that it is not unduly penalising sites where some of these factors cannot legitimately be provided (which may then affect a site's overall score). The HBF would therefore recommend a much less formulaic approach is considered which is more adaptable to site specific circumstances.
88. In a similar way to Policies GI6 and GI7, the Council will also need to make sure that the implication of this policy is fully taken into account in the whole-plan viability assessment in terms of its effect on net developable areas. Indeed, the HBF is concerned that these policies cumulatively, alongside other policy and statutory requirements, may put significant pressure on net developable areas and site densities. This will need to be explored further by the Council.

Responding to Climate Change and Managing Natural Resources

89. The HBF notes that the wording of many of the policies in this section of the Local Plan are yet to be finalised. The HBF therefore comments on the wording as it currently stands. As a general observation, the HBF would recommend that when finalising the wording of these policies that the Council seeks to avoid duplication of requirements between these policies and Policy STP11.

Policy NZ1: Achieving Net Zero

90. The HBF supports the move towards net zero and notes that the Government has legislated to achieve this by 2050 (through the Climate Change Act 2008). It is therefore important that to enable consistency in approach, all local planning authorities should align with this goal

and ensure any policy requirements are consistent with national standards (eg. building regulations).

91. The HBF notes that if local planning authorities deviate from national standards, it creates a patchwork of different requirements across the country which unnecessarily complicates housing delivery and makes it more difficult and costly to bring forward the homes that are needed.

Policy NZ2: Adapting to Climate Change

92. The HBF recognises that climate change adaptation will be important in the future. Many of the matters raised in this policy however are already covered through building regulations (such as overheating and water usage), whilst others such as flood risk are covered in national planning policy and guidance and already require applicants to model in the effects of climate change (plus ordinarily a further buffer of 40%) when designing flood risk and drainage infrastructure.

93. The policy will therefore need to ensure that it is not simply replicating the requirements that are already set nationally.

Policy NZ3: Sustainable Energy and Construction

94. As outlined in our response to Policy STP11 above, the Government has made clear through the December 2023 WMS (reference: UIN HLWS120) that it does not expect plan-makers to set local energy efficiency standards for buildings that go beyond current or planned building regulations.

95. The HBF therefore considers that the Council should approach sustainable energy and construction via a nationally consistent set of standards and timetables, which is universally understood and technically implementable.

Policy NZ4: Embodied Carbon and Circular Economy

96. This policy outlines a number of measures that the Council is intending to put forward to reduce embodied carbon. The HBF notes that many of the proposed criteria seek to support and encourage ways to reduce embodied carbon. This is supported on the basis that mandating (rather than encouraging/supporting) such measures is currently difficult to do given that there is no single established way to measure and monitor embodied carbon and obtaining the relevant data is often not possible (please see our response to Policy STP11). It may also be the case that some of these criteria are simply not feasible on some sites or may be cost prohibitive.

97. In relation to Part 1 of this policy, it is noted that the Council intends to prioritise the retention and conversion of existing buildings over demolition. The HBF notes that this may not always be the most preferable way to proceed with development, as it would be dependent on how feasible it is to adapt existing buildings to modern sustainability standards and it may be the case that such buildings/developments may also be poorly designed and not fit for modern purposes.

Policy NZ6: Managing Flood Risk

98. The HBF recommends that this policy incorporates the latest updates to the PPG published on 17 September 2025 with regards to surface water drainage and the application of the sequential test (see Reference ID: 7-023-20220825, 7-027-20220825, 7-027a-20220825 and 7-028-20220825).

Policy T5: Parking

99. The HBF notes this policy makes reference to both Council standards (Part 5) and Part S of building regulations (Part 7) when it outlines the Council's approach to Electric Vehicle Charging (EVC). For consistency, the Council should be applying Part S (as the national standard) to its EVC requirements.

Policy T7: Access to Public Transport

100. Part 1a of this policy states that all new developments should be located within 400m of existing or planned bus stops or within 800m of a train station. To make this policy effective, this requirement should be appropriately qualified with 'where possible'.

101. The HBF notes that there is clearly merit in ensuring that development sites are as close as possible to public transport facilities but there may be instances where this is not feasible, or development lies just outside these ranges. The flexibility is therefore needed, and this also acknowledges the fact that it is the quality of a route to public transport facilities as well as the distance which is important.

Policy T10: Digital and Connectivity and Telecommunications

102. The HBF notes that there is a large degree of overlap between Part 2 of this policy and Policy STP12. The Council will need to ensure that any duplication is appropriately addressed.

103. Part 2 of the policy (like Policy STP12) requires all new development to be served by specific broadband/fibre infrastructure. As outlined previously, the inclusion of digital infra-

structure such as certain broadband specifications is not within the direct control of the development industry, and as such the HBF considers that Part 2 of this policy could create deliverability issues for development and developers.

104. Given that Part R of the building regulations sets the national standard for broadband/fibre connections for new development (which for consistency should be followed), the HBF considers that this requirement in Part 2 of the policy is superfluous and should be deleted.

Policy QD4: Streets and Public Realm

105. The policy requires streets and public realm to align with the Public Realm Strategy SPD and other adopted SPDs. Given that these SPDs are not development plan documents, the HBF considers that this policy should not be giving these documents development plan status by requiring that proposals align with them. The HBF therefore recommends that development proposals should 'have regard to' the SPDs rather than aligning with them.

Monitoring

106. 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.

Future Engagement

- 106 The HBF trusts that the Council will find these comments useful as it continues to progress its Local Plan. We would be happy to discuss these issues in greater detail or assist in facilitating discussions with the wider house building industry.
- 107 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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