

Strategic Planning and Information,
Oldham Council,
First Floor Reception,
Spindles Shopping Centre,
Oldham,
OL1 1 LA

spi.consultations@oldham.gov.uk

25/03/2026

Dear Sir/ Madam

Oldham Local Plan: Publication Plan (Regulation 19 Consultation)

1. Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the Publication Draft of the Oldham Local Plan (Regulation 19).
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 multinational 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. We would like to submit the following comments upon selected policies within the Publication Plan. The HBF is keen to ensure that Oldham produces a sound local plan which provides appropriate policies for the area.
4. Whilst not a matter of soundness it would be helpful if the council could include clause/paragraph numbers within all of the policies. The numbering of each clause/paragraph within a policy will aid referencing for those making representations to the Local Plan as well as for applicants and decision makers following the adoption of the plan.

Changes to National Planning Policy and Plan-Making System

5. It is worth highlighting that in December 2025, the Government published a consultation on a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This followed a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) made on 27 November 2025 which outlined the Government's intention to move forward with a new plan-making system (reference: UIN HCWS1104). The move to a new plan-making system includes a series of transitional arrangements.

6. It is clear that the Council is intending to use these transitional arrangements and submit its Local Plan for examination under the current plan-making regime. On this basis, paragraphs 4 and 8 in Annex A of the draft NPPF outline that the Local Plan will then be examined under the current NPPF (December 2024). However, it is also notable that in relation to decision making, Annex A also states that from the date the new NPPF is published, Local Plan policies that are “...*any way inconsistent with national decision-making policies in this Framework should be given very limited weight, except where they have been examined and adopted against this Framework*”.
7. Consequently, if the emerging NPPF comes forward in its current guise, the Council may need to have regard to national policies for decision making, given that any inconsistency may effectively render policies in the Local Plan that are not consistent with the new NPPF redundant as soon as the Local Plan is adopted.

Places for People Joint Development Plan Document (DPD)

8. The HBF notes that the Places for Everyone (PfE) Joint Development Plan Document (DPD) became part of the statutory development plan for nine of the ten Greater Manchester districts (including Oldham) in March 2024. The PfE DPD is the strategic plan of the area and consequently, the Oldham Local Plan is being brought forward pursuant to this.

Plan Period

The approach to the plan period is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not effective and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:

9. The Local Plan covers a period of 2022 to 2039. The NPPF (paragraph 22) 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.
10. The Council’s Local Development Scheme (LDS, March 2025) envisages adoption of the Local Plan by Spring 2027. If that is the case, then the plan will only have a plan period of 11 years, which is significantly shorter than the minimum 15 years set out in national policy. The HBF considers a plan period from adoption of 11 years is inadequate to allow for certainty and confidence for developers to invest in the Borough and for the plan to achieve its Vision and Objectives. It also hampers longer term strategic change for the area.

11. Whilst it is noted that the PfE DPD provides a plan period up to 2039, it specifically mentions that the constituent authorities will need to extend their plan period beyond this (see PfE paragraph 1.56). As such, the Council as minimum should extend the plan period to at least 2042 in light of this. This will ensure compliance with national policy.

Vision and Objectives

The approach to the Vision and Objectives is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared and not effective for the following reasons:

12. The HBF largely supports the Vision and Objectives as a whole and considers them broadly appropriate in promoting housing growth within the Borough. However, where the Vision states 'New homes, delivered in sustainable and accessible locations... ', the Council should amend this to 'New homes, delivered in sustainable and accessible locations where need is located....'. This will ensure that alongside utilising sustainable locations, that the areas identified actually spatially meet the need of the Borough and are where people wish to live. This will ensure the overall approach is positively prepared and effective.

Policy H1 - Delivering a Diverse and Sustainable Housing Offer

Policy H1 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:

13. Oldham's local housing need is set out in the adopted PfE DPD (Policy JP-H1), it sets out that Oldham is required to deliver at least 11,560 homes over the period 2022 to 2039, which equates to 680 dwellings per annum (dpa). This dwelling requirement is phased over the plan period: 404dpa in the period 2022-2025; 680dpa in the period 2025-2030; and 772dpa in the period 2030-2039.
14. Whilst the HBF agrees with this, it should not be considered in a complete vacuum. It is noted that since the adoption of the PfE,DPD the Government has committed itself to delivering 1.5 million new homes in the country by the end of the parliament. This is reflected in the 30 July 2024 WMS titled 'Building the homes we need' (reference: UIN HCWS48). To this end, the Government has amended the Standard Method for calculating Local Housing Need (LHN). This indicates that the LHN for Oldham is now 928dpa which is a 36.5% increase on the PfE figure. Given that this is the case and that there is a clear steer from the Government to provide a step change in housing delivery, the HBF considers that notwithstanding the need for conformity with the PfE DPD, the Council should be doing all it can to try and meet its current LHN. As the housing requirements are set as minima, doing so should not necessarily conflict with the PfE DPD in any event.

15. That aside, and consistent with our comments relating to the plan period, it is considered that the Council should also extend the plan period out to at least 2042, so as to meet the minimum requirement of a 15 year plan period from adoption of the plan (NPPF paragraph 22). Whilst the PfE DPD has a plan period to 2039, it specifically allows for the constituent local planning authorities to go beyond this (paragraph 1.56). The PfE DPD suggests that local planning authorities should roll forward their requirements to an appropriate end date for the plan (outlined in footnote 2), however given the change in circumstances since the adoption of the PfE DPD (namely the new Standard Method), the HBF considers it more appropriate to use the most recent LHN to extend the plan period (ie. 928dpa). This will ensure that the policy is positively prepared, effective and consistent with national policy.
16. Alongside this, Policy H1 outlines that all residential development should be accessible by active travel and achieve Greater Manchester Accessibility Level (GMAL) 4 or above unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant that it is not appropriate, or the development provides exceptional benefits to the surrounding environment and community. Whilst the HBF would agree that new residential development should be as accessible as possible, there is a danger with this policy, as drafted, that it becomes a blunt tool for assessing the merits of a proposed development site and results in a crude ‘pass/fail’ system based on the GMAL score. Whilst the GMAL score is useful and important, it does not measure the quality of walking routes, where residents may be willing to walk longer distances if the route is good quality. It also does not take into account any infrastructure provision or measures that a development could put in place to mitigate a lower GMAL score or how this might integrate with active travel measures.
17. Consequently, this part of the policy should provide added flexibility which takes into account the GMAL score of a site but allows for a further level of site-specific analysis to test the quality of routes and potential to improve transport infrastructure and other measures in the area. This will make the policy positively prepared and effective.
18. The Oldham Local Plan does not propose any housing allocations, with paragraph 2.6 stating that
“The Oldham Local Plan has been aligned with the plan period of PfE – up to 2039, given that it is supporting delivery of the Joint Plan. In addition, as this Local Plan focuses on non-strategic planning policies that deal with primarily development management matters, it does not include allocations for future development, whether that be for new homes or employment.”
19. Whilst this distinction is noted, the HBF considers that this does not preclude the Local Plan from allocating additional housing sites. Indeed, as the Local Plan is providing a more detailed spatial element for the development plan for Oldham, it is considered that allocating deliverable and developable sites (in line with paragraph 72 of the NPPF) will assist in clearly demonstrating

land supply over the plan period and provide certainty for developers wanting to deliver new homes.

20. Furthermore, the Council will also need to demonstrate that there is land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare. Without actively allocating such sites, this becomes more difficult to demonstrate and may then disincentivise small and medium sized builders.
21. Indeed, rather than allocations, the Reasoned Justification which accompanies the policy outlines that the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and Brownfield Register provide details of sites considered suitable, available and achievable for residential development, and should be used as a starting point to identify potential development sites.
22. If this is the case, then the HBF would query why such sites cannot be allocated so as to give them development plan status, to demonstrate that the Council is proactively attempting to boost housing supply in the Borough and to provide confidence for the development industry. This is especially important given the total capacity of PfE DPD allocations is 2,766 dwellings and the remaining UDP allocations are 253 dwellings (see Appendix 1a of the SHLAA). This represents a fraction of the total requirement over the plan period. There is therefore a clear need to allocate sites in the plan to ensure that it is positively prepared, effective and that development is appropriately plan-led in nature.

Policy H2 - Density of New Housing

Policy H2 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified and not effective for the following reasons:

23. This policy sets out the minimum housing densities expected, ranging from 35 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 120dph. It sets out circumstances where lower densities may be acceptable including a demonstrable need for a particular type of house or site-specific issues.
24. The HBF supports the need to make efficient use of land, and this is consistent with the NPPF (paragraphs 124 and 125). Nevertheless, to make the policy effective and positively prepared, there needs to be a degree of flexibility built into the policy.
25. In this regard, the HBF notes that PfE Policy JP-H4 is flexibly worded in that development should have ‘regard to’ the densities set out in the policy. PfE Policy JP-H4 also explains reasons as to why a development may not be able to achieve the densities set out and that density should be appropriate for the location. The HBF therefore considers that Policy H2 needs to note this flexibility and ensure it is accurately reflected in its wording.

26. Whilst the policy currently notes some circumstances where exceptions to the minimum densities may apply, the HBF considers that these can be widened to include (alongside site specific considerations) market aspirations, deliverability, viability and accessibility. This will ensure the policy is effective and positively prepared.
27. The Council, through its evidence will also need to consider its approach to density in relation to other policies in the plan. Policies such as open space provision, SuDs, tree provision, biodiversity net gain, cycle and bin storage, housing mix, residential space standards, accessible and adaptable dwellings, energy efficiency and parking provision will all impact upon the density which can be delivered upon a site. It is not apparent from the evidence base the degree to which this has been taken into account, and this is required to justify the policy.
28. The policy also requires that developers set out gross and net developable areas when submitting planning applications. The Local Plan will need to define these terms clearly and we would suggest that the definition is tied to a specific industry standard (for example, the RICS standard).

Policy H3 - Housing Mix

Policy H3 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared, not justified and not effective for the following reasons:

29. Policy H3 seeks to ensure that the housing mix coming forward on development sites reflects that which is identified in the Council's Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA, 2024). This is distilled in Table H3 which accompanies the policy.
30. The HBF understands the need for a mix of house types and sizes and is generally supportive of providing a range and choice of homes to meet the needs of the local area. The policy recognises that there may be some circumstances when an alternative mix may be appropriate, however, the HBF recommends a more flexible approach is taken regarding housing mix which recognises that needs and demand will vary from area to area and site to site; ensures that the scheme is viable; and provides an appropriate mix for the location and market. Whilst it is noted that Table H3 contains a percentage range for each house size/type, this range is rather narrow and the HBF notes it is unrealistic that such ranges apply to all sites in the Borough. Therefore, greater flexibility is needed for the policy to be effective and positively prepared.
31. It is also noted that Table H3 requires the inclusion of a notable percentage of bungalows/level access dwellings on development sites which ranges from 15% – 35% (depending on tenure). The Local Plan points to the justification for this approach being contained in the LHNA. However, whilst this identifies a need for additional housing stock to meet the needs of an ageing

population, the LHNA also identifies that many older people wish to remain in their existing homes and for these to be adapted accordingly (paragraph 4.9). Whilst there appears to be some demand for bungalows (see paragraph 2.49), this does not appear to be consistent with the levels sought through Policy H3 and indeed it is acknowledged the future housing needs for older people can vary greatly (see first bullet point on Page 10) and therefore cannot purely be served by boosting the delivery of bungalows. Furthermore, through the PfE DPD (Policy JP-H3), there is a requirement for all new dwellings to be built to M4(2) standards, which require step-free level access to homes and for such homes to be adaptable to meet the needs of older people. As such, having this as a separate requirement in Policy H3/Table H3 appears superfluous and is unjustified.

32. The Council will also need to explain through its evidence how the requirement for bungalow provision at the levels required on development sites matches with the density requirements outlined in Policy H2. Bungalows by their very design result in lower density development and it is unclear how the requirement can be met whilst also fulfilling Policy H2.

Policy H4 - Providing for Local Housing Needs

Policy H4 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not effective for the following reasons:

33. The HBF is generally supportive of providing homes that are suitable to meet the needs of older people and vulnerable people. Often such developments have their own specific locational requirements and needs which are different to general needs housing and so the HBF is supportive of the fact that this is referenced in the policy.
34. However, such developments also often have their own viability considerations which should be reflected in the local plan viability assessment, with then separate policy requirements to reflect these differences. It is not apparent from examining the Local Plan Viability Assessment (LPVA, December 2025) that this work has been undertaken. Consequently, this undermines the effectiveness of the policy.
35. In this regard, the HBF would recommend that the Council should be more proactive in working with providers of this type of development. This approach would provide far more certainty to the Council that the need for such accommodation will be met in full.
36. The accompanying Reasoned Justification outlines that the LHNA identifies a requirement for 5% of new dwellings to be built to the M4(3) wheelchair accessible standard (paragraph 8.36), although this is not translated into any policy text. Clarification is therefore required in this respect.

Policy H5 - Affordable Housing

Policy H5 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not effective for the following reasons:

37. The approach to affordable housing in Policy H5 is that all development of 10 or more net additional homes will be required to deliver an appropriate portion of affordable housing. The amount required is outlined in Table H4 where a distinction is made between High Value and Medium/Low Value areas and whether a site is brownfield or greenfield. For High Value areas the requirement is 20% on brownfield land and 25% on greenfield land. For Medium and Low Value areas the requirement is 10% on both brownfield and greenfield land.
38. In contrast, the LHNA identifies an affordable housing need of 669dpa (paragraph 5.4) which is just short of the overall housing requirement stated in Policy H1 of the Local Plan (680dpa). It is therefore clear that the number of affordable homes that are planned to be delivered through the Local Plan is capped as a result of viability. This is permitted through paragraph 35 of the NPPF, however it should be noted that the PPG outlines that an increase in the total housing requirement included in the plan may need to be considered where it could help deliver the required number of affordable homes (Reference ID: 67-008-20190722). This ties in with our comments in relation to Policy H1 and would make the policy effective.
39. Notwithstanding this, the LPVA clearly outlines the viability challenges that are apparent across the Borough. In particular it is clear that affordable housing within Medium and Lower Value Areas is unviable (paragraphs 9.9 – 9.11) and therefore the justification for 10% affordable housing in these areas is unjustified and will need further explanation from the Council. In High Value areas, the 100 dwelling typology is also unviable on greenfield and brownfield land (see Tables 8.4 and 8.7). Again, this would indicate that the policy requirement in this instance is unjustified. This issue is then compounded by Policy H5 not including an option for applicants to negotiate affordable housing requirements in instances where it would not be viable to provide a policy compliant amount. For the policy to be effective, this needs to be included.
40. Policy H5 also includes a tenure split which is:
 - 25% affordable rented;
 - 35% affordable home ownership; and
 - 40% social rented.
41. Footnote 49 of the Local Plan notes that this has been derived from the LHNA. Whilst the broad tenure split matches that in the LHNA, the LHNA assumes that the affordable home ownership will include First Homes (at a 40% discount on median prices). As there is no longer a mandatory

requirement for First Homes within the NPPF, it is unclear whether the Council will still be requesting this. This requires further explanation to ensure that the policy is effective.

42. Furthermore, the HBF considers that there should be a degree in flexibility in the precise split in affordable tenures to take into account site specific viability considerations and also in the event that a Registered Provider cannot be identified to take the social rented or affordable rented properties (given that these would form a substantial part of the affordable mix). This would allow other affordable tenures to be considered and ensure that the delivery of much needed new homes is not delayed.

Policy CC4 - Water Efficiency

Policy CC4 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:

43. For residential development, Policy CC4 requires that all new developments are expected to achieve, as a minimum, the optional requirement set through Part G of the Building Regulations. The optional water usage standard is 110 litres per person per day, in contrast, the building regulations require all new dwellings to achieve a mandatory level of water efficiency of 125 litres per person per day. This in itself is a higher standard than that achieved by much of the existing housing stock. This mandatory standard already represents an effective demand management measure.
44. The PPG (Reference ID: 56-016-20150327) is clear on the evidence needed for local planning authorities to justify a move to the higher water standard. These are:
- Whether the area falls into the Environment Agency water stressed areas (from its 2021 classification) which identifies areas of serious water stress where household demand for water is (or is likely to be) a high proportion of the current effective rainfall available to meet that demand.
 - Water resource management plans produced by water companies.
 - River Basin Management Plans which describe the river basin district and the pressure that the water environment faces. These include information on where water resources are contributing to a water body being classified as ‘at risk’ or ‘probably at risk’ of failing to achieve good ecological status, due to low flows or reduced water availability.
45. The Council indicates that evidence has been prepared by United Utilities and is summarised in its Addressing Climate Change Topic Paper (Appendix 1). This acknowledges that Oldham does not fall in an area of water stress, although it points to a 2024 Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP) as evidence that moving to the optional standard is justified.

46. Having reviewed the WRMP, this notes that there are notable leaks in the current network that need addressing. Furthermore, the region is envisaged to be a net exporter of water to other regions in the future, which should not be the case if the area is lacking in future water supply. Whilst the HBF understands the objectives and desirability to move to a tighter water efficiency standard, it does not consider that the evidence submitted justifies this in line with the PPG.

Policy OL2 – Oldham’s Green Belt

Policy OL2 is not considered to be sound as it is not consistent with national policy and not effective for the following reasons:

47. Paragraph 16 of the NPPF seeks to avoid unnecessary duplication of policies (including those within the NPPF itself). The HBF considers that this policy does not add anything that is not already covered in the NPPF (Section 13). Even if the policy were to be retained, the wording should be significantly reduced to:

“Development proposals within Oldham’s Green Belt will be determined in line with national planning policy.”

48. This would also ensure that the policy picks up on all Green Belt matters including grey belt proposals and make the policy effective.

Policy N2 – Restoring Nature

Policy N2 is not considered to be sound as it is not consistent with national policy and not effective for the following reasons:

49. Policy N2 sets out the Council’s approach to biodiversity net gain (BNG), confirming its alignment with the national requirement for at least 10% net gain to be achieved. The PPG is clear that plan-makers do not need to duplicate the detailed provisions that is already in the statutory framework for BNG (Reference ID: 74-006-20240214).
50. Consequently, the HBF considers that much of this policy can be deleted as elements such as the sequential approach to the location of BNG (and the spatial risk multiplier) are already covered elsewhere and are readily understood. The HBF however supports the reference to Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) areas as an option for achieving BNG, although to ensure the policy is effective, this should not necessarily affect the ability of developers to achieve BNG through other means (in line with the sequential approach to the location of BNG).

Policy N3 – Enhancing Green Infrastructure through development

Policy N3 is not considered to be sound as it is not effective, not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:

51. This policy requires *inter alia* that major developments (defined as 20 dwellings or above) use the latest version of the national Urban Greening Factor calculator, or equivalent, to demonstrate that the development will achieve an Urban Greening Factor score, or equivalent, of at least 0.4 for residential development.
52. Whilst laudable, the HBF is concerned that this approach may not be appropriate in all circumstances. The Urban Greening Factor may not be able to be applied to all sites, and the Council will need to be certain that it is not unduly penalising sites where this score cannot legitimately be provided. Indeed, the rigid application of the Urban Greening Factor can have significant implications in relation to site densities (in light of Policy H2), site layouts, highways, ongoing maintenance, and the viability of development. It is also unclear how this policy's aim is related to Policy N4 - Tree Replacement.
53. To ensure effectiveness and that the approach in Policy N3 is justified, the HBF would recommend a much less formulaic approach is considered which is more adaptable to site specific circumstances.
54. It is also noted that the accompanying Reasoned Justification mentions the requirement for tree lined streets (paragraph 14.53). This is contained in paragraph 136 of the NPPF. For consistency with national policy, this text should also make reference to footnote 52 which accompanies paragraph 136 and notes that tree lined streets are not required where there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate

Policy N4 - Trees

Policy N4 is not considered to be sound as it is not effective, is not positively prepared and not justified for the following reasons:

55. This policy states that trees and hedgerows should be retained wherever possible through careful siting and design. Where there is tree loss, the number of replacement trees required will depend on the stem diameter of the tree proposed for the removal. This is then set out in Table N1, with a tree replacement between 1:2 and 1:9.
56. The HBF considers that the tree replacement ratios proposed have potential to have a significant impact on the land uptake for any development and may have significant implications for the density of developments (notably the requirements in Policy H2), this in itself has potential to

have a significant impact on the viability of developments. Whilst the cost of Policy N4 is taken into account in the LPVA, this is only the physical costs of the trees and not the knock-on effect this has on site densities. This appears to have little thought behind it and the HBF considers this undermines the effectiveness of the policy and leaves it unjustified.

Policy D1 – Achieving High Quality Design

Policy D1 is not considered to be sound as it is not effective and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:

57. The HBF agrees that good design is an important facet of a successful development and contributes to a site's overall sustainability. This policy provides an overview of the key principles that need to be addressed to facilitate high quality design. In general, the HBF agrees with these principles, however the policy requires consistency with local design guides. These are then listed in the Reasoned Justification (paragraph 16.6), however none of these are development plan documents and therefore requiring that development adheres to these documents is not appropriate, as the implication is that through Policy D1 they are effectively given development plan status when they have not been scrutinised in the same manner (ie. through an independent examination). As such, to be consistent with national policy, Policy D1 should seek to ensure that applicants have 'regard to' local design guides.
58. The policy also mentions that developments that raise significant design issues will be expected to undergo a local design review. The accompanying footnote (footnote 139) defines this as an independent consideration of the planning application proposal undertaken by a panel of relevant professionals prior to the formal determination of the proposal by the Council, with all costs met by the applicant. The HBF is generally supportive of the use of design reviews, but it will be important that this tool is used appropriately and in a proportionate manner. Design review is broadly considered to be a valuable method to promote good design and an efficient way to improve quality. The HBF considered that if they are well managed, design review panels can provide high quality design advice that can add value to the places in which they are built. The HBF considers that it will be important that any design review is undertaken at the right time, that any feedback provided is constructive and sufficiently detailed, that an appropriate planning balance is sought to ensure that all policy requirements can be met (not just those in relation to design) and to ensure that the applicant is fully engaged in the process.
59. The concern from the HBF is that the threshold for when a design review is required, plus the actual process of the design review is unclear at this time. This does not provide certainty for applicants and if the design review threshold is too low or the process is ill defined or overly complex, this may lead to significant delays in determining planning applications. We have seen issues with design review panels elsewhere in the country where the threshold is too low and the

process too rigid (often involving several design review panels prior to an application proceeding to determination) which has frustrated sites coming forward. It is therefore imperative that the Council clearly sets out more information on how design review panels will operate in order to make the policy effective.

Policy T4 – Electric Vehicle Charging

Policy T4 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:

60. This policy sets out requirements for electric vehicle charging for new development. However, the requirements for electric vehicle charging infrastructure are already clearly set out in Part S of Building Regulations. The Government is clear that this is the standard which should be followed and there is no mechanism for going over and above this in the plan-making system.
61. As such, this policy is superfluous and in line with paragraph 16 of the NPPF, should be deleted.

Policy CO5 - Securing Educational Places through New Residential Development

Policy CO5 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:

62. This policy states that for major development of 10 dwellings or more, where demand resulting from a residential development will create or exacerbate a shortfall in the number of local school places, the Council will seek to secure new and or improved education facilities.
63. The HBF agrees that new development should mitigate its own impact. The PPG sets out that plan makers and the education authority need to work collaboratively to identify which schools are likely to expand and where new schools will be needed as a result of planned growth. It goes on to highlight that it is important that costs and land requirements for education provision are known to inform site typologies and site-specific viability assessments (Reference ID: 10-029-20190509).
64. It is therefore considered that the policy or Reasoned Justification could be more pro-active in identifying where school expansion or new schools will be required in order to provide greater certainty for developers and for this to be better reflected in the Local Plan. This would ensure consistency with national policy.
65. The LPVA makes a general allowance for an education contribution which is included in an overall S106 cost assumption (£5,500 per plot). This appears to be derived from the per plot allowance used in the PFE DPD (£5,250 per plot) with an uplift included. It is unclear from this

work as to the breakdown of this figure and how much specifically is for education and how this figure is derived. As such, the HBF considers the approach to education contributions is not justified and the policy is not effective. Further information is required on where school expansion is likely to be needed over the plan period and how the costs of this have fed into the LPVA.

Policy CO6 - New Development and Health

Policy CO6 is not considered to be sound as it is not effective and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:

66. This policy seeks alignment with PfE Policy JP-P6 which outlines that a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) will be required for all developments screened for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and other proposals which, due to their location, nature or proximity to sensitive receptors, are likely to have a notable impact on health and wellbeing.
67. Given that a HIA is seen as a useful tool where impacts on health from a development proposal are anticipated to be 'significant' (see PPG Reference ID: 53-005-20190722), the Council's approach does appear to be pragmatic. However, to be effective, the policy should identify how those developments outside of those screened for EIA purposes will be assessed to establish whether a HIA is needed. Currently this is unclear and should be explained also with reference to the Integrated Assessment that accompanies the Local Plan which has already assessed health impacts (which would indicate that policy compliant schemes already address health issues).

Policy IN1 – Digital Infrastructure and Telecommunications

Policy IN1 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:

68. This policy sets out *inter alia* that all new residential developments should enable Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) broadband infrastructure. However, the requirement for broadband infrastructure for new residential developments is already set out in Part R of the building regulations. The Government is clear that this is the standard which should be followed and there is no mechanism for going over and above this in the plan-making system.
69. As such, this part of Policy IN1 is superfluous and in line with paragraph 16 of the NPPF, should be deleted.

Policy IN2 – Planning Obligations

Policy IN2 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective, not positively prepared and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:

70. This policy states that in some cases, a site-specific viability assessment may be submitted where the need for such is evidenced by a change in circumstances which could not have been evident in the LPVA.
71. The NPPF is clear that plans should set out the contributions expected from development and that such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan (paragraph 35). The LPVA shows significant viability challenges in many parts of the Borough, in particular showing development as unviable in Lower and Medium value areas on both greenfield and brownfield sites (see Tables 8.2, 8.3, 8.5 and 8.6, plus paragraph 9.9). The HBF also has concerns regarding deliverability in some of the Higher value areas given that the assumptions for policy and S106 costs are opaque and it is difficult to see how these have been calculated. It is therefore difficult to see how the approach is justified.
72. In light of this, the HBF is concerned that the Council is restricting the circumstances where it is possible to submit a site-specific viability assessment when it would seem inappropriate not to accept site specific viability assessments on all sites (given the viability issues identified). Whilst it would clearly be preferable in the first instance that the Local Plan sets policy requirements that would not undermine the viability of development sites coming forward (therefore saving time and money in bringing sites forward), it is clear that this is likely to be impractical and so a more flexible approach to site specific viability assessments is required so that the policy is effective and positively prepared.
73. Where the policy does currently allow for site specific viability assessments to be submitted, it is on the basis that a clawback mechanism will be incorporated into the legal agreement. This is to ensure that additional mitigation is provided if final development viability is better than anticipated in the initial viability assessment. If this is the case, for effectiveness, the Council should also include for allowing viability to be renegotiated where economic/market conditions have meant that the viability position has worsened. This will ensure the policy is appropriately balanced.

Policy IN3 – Delivering Social Value and Inclusion

Policy IN3 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified, not effective and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:

74. This policy states that all planning applications for major developments shall be supported by a Social Value Strategy.

75. Many residential developments will bring with them social benefits, through the provision of new more sustainable homes and potentially through the provision of affordable homes and other infrastructure provided through planning obligations. In September 2024 the HBF and Lichfields' produced a report on The Economic Footprint of House Building in England and Wales (https://www.hbf.co.uk/documents/13924/The_Economic_Footprint_of_Home_Building_in_England_and_Wales_report_-_September_2024.pdf). This document not only highlighted the economic benefits but also the social benefits of residential development. It highlighted that in 2023 house building created nearly 834,000 jobs, supported 6,000 apprentices, 900 graduates and 3,300 other trainees, provided £9.2bn of new affordable homes, £1.5bn provided for infrastructure including £677m on new and improved schools, £216m in open space, youth, community, sport and leisure facilities and an additional £6.8bn spent in local shops and services by residents of these new homes.
76. Paragraph 45 of the NPPF is clear that local planning authorities should only request supporting information that is relevant, necessary and material to the application in question. As this is the case, the HBF does not consider that it is necessary to include a policy requiring major proposals to provide details of what social value outcomes will be delivered and how this will be measured and assessed. This is an unnecessary burden to place on applicants and is unlikely to add value to a development, over and above the general benefits associated with development as set out above.
77. 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 also needs to explain this in further detail and ensure the requirements are appropriately accounted for in the LPVA as this is not currently clear.
78. As such, the policy is not justified, effective or consistent with national policy and should be deleted.

Policy M1 – Monitoring Framework

Policy M1 is not considered to be sound as it is not positively prepared and not effective for the following reasons:

79. The Monitoring Framework of the Local Plan provides a selection of indicators and monitoring targets to monitor the performance of the policies. These are outlined after each section of the plan. There is also a Local Plan Monitoring Indicators table associated with Policy M1 (Table M1). Table M1 itself seeks to monitor indicators against the Integrated Assessment objectives

rather than specifically the policies of the Local Plan. It is therefore unclear on what basis the Local Plan is being monitored. For monitoring to be effective, this requires clarity from the Council.

80. Irrespective of this, the Monitoring Framework also needs to be more precise in terms of data sources for the indicators identified (ie. specifically where the data is to be found) and needs to be more definitive in terms of actions; identifying when, why and how actions will be taken to address any issues identified. Currently, Policy M1 is vague in terms of actions which are imprecise and heavily caveated (using ‘may’ instead of ‘will’). This requires further explanation to ensure effectiveness and to allow the plan to be positively prepared.

Future Engagement

81. The HBF trusts that the Council will find these comments useful as it progresses its Local Plan to examination. We would be happy to discuss these issues in greater detail or assist in facilitating discussions with the wider house building industry.
82. 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 faithfully,

Chris Martin

Chris Martin BSc(Econ) MSc MA MRTPI
Regional Planning Manager (North West, North East and Yorkshire)
Home Builders Federation
Email: chris.martin@hbf.co.uk
Phone: 07972774229