

Forward Planning  
Northumberland National Park Authority  
Eastburn  
South Park  
Hexham  
NE46 1BS

SENT BY EMAIL  
localplan@nnpa.org.uk  
01/12/2017

Dear Sir / Madam,

## **NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY LOCAL PLAN: POLICY OPTIONS PAPER**

Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation on the Northumberland National Park Authority Local Plan Policy Options Paper.

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.

We would like to submit the following comments upon selected questions posed within the Policy Options consultation document. These responses are provided in order to assist Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) in the preparation of the emerging local plan. The HBF is keen to ensure that the NNPA produces a sound local plan which provides for the housing needs of the area.

### **Vision, Strategic Priorities and Spatial Objectives**

The HBF are supportive of Strategic Priority 4 which looks to *'support the provision of a range of housing that encourages more working age people and families to live in the National Park or one of its gateway settlements'*.

The HBF are also generally supportive of Spatial Objective 5 which looks *'to make the National Park (and its gateway settlements) a more attractive option for young adults and people of working age to live and work in'*.

The HBF consider that it is important that the Vision, Strategic Priorities and Spatial Objectives are aligned to ensure that the full housing needs of the current and future residents are met.

### **Issue 3: Ageing Population**

The HBF is generally supportive of providing for the needs of older people and other specialist groups. However, the policy options document refers to adopting a Lifetime Homes standard for all new developments. The Council will be aware that the Lifetime Homes standard is no longer applicable following the Government's Housing Standards review. Lifetime Homes have now been replaced by the optional Building Regulations accessibility standards. These standards can be introduced via a plan but only where there is specific evidence to justify their inclusion. The evidence base and method of introduction is set out within the PPG section upon 'Housing - Optional Technical Standards' and include consideration of need and viability. The HBF is unaware that the Council can provide the necessary evidence at this stage and as such this option is not recommended.

### **Issues 3, 7 and 8: Meeting our future housing and employment needs**

The Policy Options Paper highlights that the population of the park is ageing, with a continuing, strong, increase in the proportion of the resident population over 65 years of age. Whilst this is, perhaps, not surprising it does indicate potential difficulties in maintaining economic and social wellbeing with a stagnant population size but ageing demographic. This will inevitably reduce the potential workforce and population vitality in the future. The HBF therefore consider that the NNPA may wish to consider the viability of housing scenarios, which seek to address this loss of working age population over the period of the plan. The NNPA will need to ensure that the housing provision does not limit the aspirations of local people, or limit the potential for new younger residents to provide or take up economic opportunities within the National Park, particularly in relation to appropriately sized family homes.

In terms to the scale of housing provision the HBF is mindful of the status of the area as a National Park and therefore does not consider unrestricted housing growth should occur. It is, however, important that the National Park retains its vitality and places due weight upon its duty to; 'seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities'.

### **Future Engagement**

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.

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,



**Joanne Harding**

**Local Plans Manager – North**

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