

Planning Policy  
Development Services  
Allerdale Borough Council  
Allerdale House  
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SENT BY EMAIL  
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16/11/2018

Dear Sir / Madam,

## **ALLERDALE LOCAL PLAN: SITE ALLOCATIONS**

Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation on the Focused Consultation for the Allerdale Local Plan Site Allocations document.

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.

### **SA3 Affordable Housing**

*The HBF does not consider that Policy SA3 is sound, as it is not justified, effective or consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

This policy requires housing developments of more than ten dwellings to make provision for 20% affordable housing and for 40% in Cockermouth. The HBF does not dispute the need for affordable housing within Allerdale and indeed supports the need to address the affordable housing requirements of the borough. The NPPF is, however, clear that the derivation of affordable housing policies must not only take account of need but also viability. Paragraph 34 of the NPPF (2018) established the importance of viability to ensure that development identified in the Plan should not be subject to such scale of obligations and policy burden that their ability to be delivered might be threatened.

Table 7.1 of the Viability Study 2018 highlights the issues of viability for a significant number of sites. It shows that a number of schemes are not able to support any level

of affordable housing, whilst more than half of the schemes would struggle to provide the 20% required by this policy.

The Council should be mindful that it is unrealistic to negotiate every site on a one by one basis because the base-line aspiration of a policy or combination of policies is set too high as this will jeopardise future housing delivery. Therefore, site by site negotiations on these sites should occur occasionally rather than routinely.

The Council may also want to take into consideration the potential amendments to the definition of affordable homes and their provision, as set out in the NPPF.

*The HBF considers that the policy should be modified as follows in order to make the document sound:*

- *The HBF consider that the Council should reconsider the affordable housing requirement to ensure that it is viable and does not prejudice the delivery of homes.*
- *Consideration should be given to the new definition of affordable homes within the NPPF (2018).*
- *Consideration should be given to the affordable housing requirements set out within the NPPF (2018).*

### **Policy SA5 Housing Standards**

*The HBF does not consider that Policy SA5 is sound, as it is not justified, effective or consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

This policy requires all new homes to be built to the M4(2) standard, and for all residential development of over 30 dwellings to provide 5% of the development (across market and affordable) at M4(3) standards. The HBF is generally supportive of providing homes that are suitable to meet the needs of older people and disabled people. However, if the Council wishes to adopt the higher optional standards for accessible, adaptable and wheelchair homes the Council should only do so by applying the criteria set out in the PPG.

PPG (ID 56-07) identifies the type of evidence required to introduce such a policy, including the likely future need; the size, location, type and quality of dwellings needed; the accessibility and adaptability of the existing stock; how the needs vary across different housing tenures; and the overall viability. It is incumbent on the Council to provide a local assessment evidencing the specific case for Allerdale which justifies the inclusion of optional higher standards for accessible and adaptable homes in its Local Plan policy. If the Council can provide the appropriate evidence and this policy is to be included, then the HBF recommend that an appropriate transition period is included within the policy.

The PPG also identifies other requirements for the policy including the need to consider site specific factors such as vulnerability to flooding, site topography and other circumstances; and that policies for wheelchair accessible homes should only be applied to dwellings where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling.

*The HBF considers that the policy should be modified as follows in order to make the document sound:*

- *The HBF recommends that the policy is deleted in its entirety.*
- *If, the policy is to be retained the HBF recommend that the Council:*
  - *ensure that they have the appropriate evidence to support the policy;*
  - *ensure that the policy takes into account site specific factors such as vulnerability to flooding, site topography and other circumstances which may make the site less suitable for M4(2) and M4(3) compliant dwellings;*
  - *ensure that if step-free access is not viable that M4(2) and M4(3) should not be applied;*
  - *ensure 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; and*
  - *ensure an appropriate transitional period is included.*

### **Policy SA6 Housing Delivery**

*The HBF does not consider that Policy SA6 is sound, as it is not positively prepared for the following reasons:*

The HBF are keen that the Council produces a plan which can deliver against its housing requirement. To do this it is important that a strategy is put in place which provides a sufficient range of sites to provide enough sales outlets to enable delivery to be maintained at the required levels throughout the plan period. The HBF and our members can provide valuable advice on issues of housing delivery and would be keen to work proactively with the Council on this issue.

The HBF notes that Table 2 identifies a total number of completions, planning permissions and allocations over and above the housing requirement, this is supported by the HBF. However, the HBF recommends that the plan allocates an appropriate buffer, this buffer should be sufficient to deal with any under-delivery which is likely to occur from some sites. Such an approach would be consistent with the NPPF requirements for the plan to be positively prepared and flexible. The HBF recommends as large a contingency as possible (circa at least 20%) to the overall housing land supply to provide sufficient flexibility for unforeseen circumstances and in acknowledgement that the housing requirement is a minimum not a maximum figure.

The HBF does not wish to comment upon the acceptability or otherwise of individual sites. It is, however, important that all the sites contained within the plan are deliverable over the plan period and planned to an appropriate strategy. The HBF would expect the spatial distribution of sites to follow a logical hierarchy, provide an appropriate development pattern and support sustainable development within all market areas.

The Council's assumptions on sites in relation to delivery and capacity should be realistic based on evidence supported by the parties responsible for housing delivery and sense checked by the Council based on local knowledge and historical empirical data.

The HBF representations are submitted without prejudice to any comments made by other parties on the deliverability of specific sites included in the overall HLS, 5 YHLS and housing trajectories. However, the HBF do have some concerns about the delivery of homes and seek assurance that the housing requirement will be delivered.

*The HBF considers that the policy should be modified as follows in order to make the document sound:*

- *That further housing allocations should be included to ensure that the housing requirement is met and that sufficient homes are delivered.*

### **Policy SA7 Supporting Housing Development**

This policy highlights how the Council will react if the demonstrable supply of sites does not meet the five-year housing land supply. The HBF support a practical response to the monitoring of the five-year housing land supply but would seek assurances that it will be implemented in such a way as to allow development to come forward and homes to be delivered.

### **Policy SA33 – Broadband**

*The HBF does not consider that Policy SA5 is sound, as it is not justified or effective for the following reasons:*

This policy requires applicants to demonstrate to the Council how they will install the necessary infrastructure to allow broadband service operators to provide future occupants with superfast fibre broadband connectivity, and if this is not possible to demonstrate that they have explored alternative provision options. The HBF generally consider that digital infrastructure is an important part of integrated development within an area. However, the inclusion of digital infrastructure such as high-speed broadband and fibre is not within the direct control of the development industry, and as such it is considered that this policy could create deliverability issues for development and developers. Service providers are the only ones who can confirm access to infrastructure. Whilst, paragraph 112 of the NPPF (2018) establishes that local planning authorities should seek 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 consider that in seeking to provide broadband the Council should work proactively with telecommunications providers to extend provision and not rely on the development industry to provide for such infrastructure. The Council should also note that Part R of the Building Regulations clearly sets the appropriate standards for high speed electronic communication networks, that are within the control of the housebuilder.

*The HBF considers that the policy should be modified as follows in order to make the document sound:*

- *'As it is the Council's intention for all new properties to be served by a high speed and reliable broadband connection, all applicants must demonstrate **engagement with** ~~to the Council how they will install the necessary infrastructure (including~~*

~~ducting and cabinets) to allow~~ broadband service operators ~~to~~ **and show how they will work with operators to provide future occupants with superfast fibre broadband connectivity, where feasible.**

*If the provision of ducting for fibre broadband is not possible, then the applicant must demonstrate that they have explored **with the broadband service operators** alternative broadband provision options.'*

### **Policy SA52 Protecting and Creating Green Infrastructure**

*The HBF does not consider that Policy SA52 is sound, as it is not effective for the following reasons:*

This policy requires major residential development to strengthen the Green Infrastructure Network through the creation of new and enhancement of existing green infrastructure assets within the site. Overall, the HBF is supportive of the drive towards incorporating additional green space within new communities. However, developers should only be expected to provide for those facilities which are made necessary by the development proposed and not simply in order to make up for existing deficiencies in provision or provide benefits for the community at large. It should also be acknowledged that this may have a knock-on effect on housing density and the need for additional land to be allocated for new development.

### **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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