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Dear Sir / Madam,

## **BURY LOCAL PLAN: POLICY DIRECTIONS**

Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation on the Bury Local Plan Policy Directions consultation.

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 on selected policy directions proposed within the consultation document. These responses are provided in order to assist Bury Council in the preparation of the emerging Local Plan.

### **Objectives**

The HBF support the objectives to '*deliver an appropriate supply of well-designed housing to meet needs*' and to '*deliver a competitive and diverse economy and high quality jobs*'.

### **OP6: Efficient Use of Land**

The HBF consider that the efficient use of land including the re-use of previously developed land can perform an important role as part of a balanced portfolio of housing sites. Therefore, this policy direction is generally supported providing this is not interpreted as prioritisation of such sites. The Council should seek to build upon mechanisms such as the Brownfield Register to encourage the re-use of previously developed land alongside greenfield opportunities.

### **H1: Housing Land Provision**

The HBF are supportive of including a policy that encourages new housing development through the identification of good quality and deliverable housing sites to meet Bury's needs.

## **H2: Windfall Housing Development**

The HBF are generally supportive of including a policy that would allow for development on sites that are not allocated for residential uses.

## **H3: Housing Needs**

The HBF would generally support the Local Plan introducing a policy encouraging developers to provide for an appropriate range of house types, sizes and tenures to meet housing needs. However, whilst the HBF is generally supportive of providing specialist homes that are suitable to meet the needs of older people and disabled people. The Council should be aware that if it 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 Bury 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.

## **H4: Affordable Housing Provision**

The HBF generally support the development of affordable homes, however, a policy to requiring a proportion of affordable housing to be provided for all new housing development must be supported by evidence. The NPPF is 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. Until such evidence is provided the HBF are not able to support the proposed policy requiring new housing developments of 10 or more houses to provide 10% affordable housing.

## **H5: Special Needs Housing**

The HBF would be generally supportive of a policy supporting specialist housing to meet the needs of a growing elderly population. However, we will need to reserve judgement on the policy direction until the criteria that needs to be satisfied is made available. In addition, as set out in our response to Policy Direction H3, the Council will need to ensure that they have the appropriate evidence before introducing a policy that seeks to require provision of housing meeting the optional housing standards.

## **Planning Obligations (OP9, H4, OS2, CF2)**

The NPPF states that all planning obligations must only be sought where they meet all of the following tests<sup>1</sup>:

- a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- b) directly related to the development; and
- c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

PPG also states that where local planning authorities are requiring affordable housing obligations or tariff style contributions to infrastructure, they should be flexible in their requirements. Their policy should be clear that such planning obligations will take into account specific site circumstances. The HBF would also like to emphasise that it is crucial that any planning gain requirements are fully considered in relation to site viability. Whilst the public inevitably wants developers to fund a range of facilities and services in their areas, it must be remembered that developers can only be asked to fund these where need directly relates to new development. Furthermore, if planning gain requirements are unrealistic then landowners won't sell their sites, and developers won't find them profitable enough to develop. As a direct consequence, the Council would then be likely to struggle to meet its housing supply requirement. It would also then fail to meet its responsibility to meet the housing requirements of the whole community.

### **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 the progress of the Inspectors Report and the adoption of this document. Please use the contact details provided below for future correspondence.

Yours sincerely,



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**Local Plans Manager – North**

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<sup>1</sup> Set out in Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.