

Leeds Local Plan Update Consultation  
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SENT BY EMAIL  
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Dear Planning Policy Team,

### **LEEDS LOCAL PLAN UPDATE: PUBLICATION DRAFT**

1. Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the Leeds Local Plan Update Publication Draft Consultation 2022.
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 is concerned that Leeds approach to updating the Plan in a piecemeal basis increases the complexity of the Plan, has the potential for confusion as different elements of the Plan cover differing timescales, and has the potential for policies not to be considered in a holistic manner. This has been concern has been raised previously in our representations and continues to be a concern with this update.

#### **Strategic Policy SP0: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

*Policy SP0 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

4. This policy states that new developments will achieve 100% net zero operational carbon reductions (on 2000 levels). This will be achieved by minimising carbon emissions, adapting to the impacts of climate change, ensuring resilient and healthy places, maximising carbon storage and sequestration and supporting the robustness of the district's biodiversity. It also goes on to state that new developments will support the District's wider science-based Scope 1 and 3 carbon reduction targets as follows (85% by 2030, 95% by 2035, 97% by 2040, 99% by 2045 and 100% by 2050).
5. The HBF supports the Council in seeking to minimise carbon emissions, adapt to the impacts of climate change, creating resilient and healthy places and providing



biodiversity. However, the HBF does not consider that the Council setting its own standards is the appropriate method to achieve these outcomes. Whilst the ambitious and aspirational aim to achieve net zero, and to achieve carbon reduction targets at specific timescales is lauded, the HBF is concerned that the Council is adding to the complexity of policy, regulations and standards that housebuilders are already expected to comply with. The key to success is standardisation and avoidance of individual Councils specifying their own policy approach, which undermines economies of scale for product manufacturers, suppliers and developers.

6. The HBF acknowledges that Section 19 (1A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 outlines that development plan documents must (taken as a whole) include policies designed to secure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority's area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. The NPPF<sup>1</sup> looks for all plans to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. However, PPG<sup>2</sup> refers to the Planning and Energy Act 2008, the Deregulation Act 2015, and the Written Ministerial Statement (March 2015) and states that policies in relation to energy performance standards should not be used to set conditions on planning permissions with requirements above the equivalent of the energy requirement of Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes (approximately 20% above the then Building Regulations across the build mix). Part L of Building Regulations was updated in 2021 to achieve a 31% reduction in carbon emissions for new dwellings. Current Building Regulations, which took effect on 15 June 2022, therefore exceed Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. This therefore means the policy would directly conflict with both the PPG and the 2015 Ministerial Statement.
7. It is noted that Inspectors examining the Salt Cross DPD in West Oxfordshire<sup>3</sup> have raised concerns over a requirement for development to demonstrate net zero operational carbon on-site through ultra-low energy fabric specification, low carbon technologies and on-site renewable energy generation. The Inspectors have proposed instead that development will be required to demonstrate an ambitious approach to the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings. Whilst the justification for this amendment is awaited, the difference between national and local requirements has clearly been held to be unsound.
8. The second part of this policy sets out how this will be achieved with the numbered parts of the policy cross-referring to elements in other policies within the Plan. The HBF considers that as the Plan is to be read as a whole this part of the policy is not necessary, as it repeats a lot of the elements of the policies that are detailed elsewhere in the Plan. The HBF does not consider this to be consistent with the NPPF which states that Plans should serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area and should contain policies that are clearly written and

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<sup>1</sup> NPPF 2021 paragraph 11(a), 20(d), 152-154

<sup>2</sup> ID: 6-012-20190315

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/salt-cross-garden-village/salt-cross-area-action-plan-examination/>

unambiguous so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals<sup>4</sup>.

9. The HBF recommends that this policy is deleted.

### **EN1 Part A: Embodied Carbon**

*Policy EN1 Part A is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

10. This policy states that all major development should calculate their whole life cycle (WLC) carbon emissions and demonstrate actions to reduce life-cycle carbon emissions of the development. It goes on to state that the assessments will be monitored, and that this policy will be subject to a future plan review to set a benchmark figure for future development. The justification text suggest that applications would be expected to use a nationally recognised tool for submitting their WLC assessments and suggests the use of tools such as One Click LCA and UKGBC One Click Planetary.
11. The HBF considers that this policy does not serve a clear purpose and it is not evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals. Whilst it is requiring the calculation of the whole life cycle carbon emissions and actions to reduce life cycle carbon emissions it is not clear from the policy how it will be determined what is an appropriate level of emissions or what would be an appropriate level of reductions.
12. The HBF considers that if the Council is to introduce a policy in relation to WLC it will have to closely consider how it will be monitored and what the implications are for the preparation of any assessment, particularly in relation to how easily accessible any data is, and that it will have to take into consideration that much of the responsibility for emissions will lie in areas outside of the control of the homebuilding industry, including material extraction and transportation, occupation and maintenance, demolition and disposal. The Council will also have to consider how the policy will interact with other policies for example in relation to energy efficiency or resilience to heat, as well as the viability and delivery of development.
13. The HBF considers that if this policy were to be introduced then the Council should provide a transitional period to give the industry time to adjust to the requirements and for the supply chain to be updated or amended as required.
14. The HBF also considers that this requirement should not apply to all developments and should recognise the scale of development in relation to the significant requirements of this policy.
15. The Viability Study includes a total fixed cost of £50,000 in relation to the cost impact of this policy.

### **EN1 Part B: Operational Energy**

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<sup>4</sup> NPPF 2021 paragraph 16.

*Policy EN1 Part B is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

16. This policy requires all new development to demonstrate that the buildings will achieve net zero operational carbon emissions in line with a hierarchy set out in the policy which starts with minimising carbon emissions through passive design principles including fabric efficiency measures; renewable energy onsite and exceptionally through carbon offsetting through a financial contribution to the Council.
17. The policy also states that gas boilers and electric resistive heating will not be supported. It also states that planning applications need to be supported by energy statements that demonstrate how the development meets net zero operational carbon, and how energy efficient design and demand reductions measures meet the following targets: Housing – Energy Use Intensity Target of 35kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/year and Space Heating Demand of 15kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/year.
18. As set out previously, the HBF is concerned that the Council setting their own standards over and above those set nationally may lead to issues for home builders as this adds to the cost and complexity of development. The impact of this requirement along with others in this Plan may have considerable viability implication and may lead to the non-delivery homes.
19. The HBF does not consider that the Council has provided the justification for why Leeds requires a policy that is so significantly above the requirements set out nationally in the building regulations requirements. The HBF does not consider that the Council have provided the justification for why there is a need for the home building industry to consider the unregulated emissions in addition to the regulated emissions, as it is generally acknowledged that developers have limited control over future unregulated emissions. The HBF also does not consider that the Council have justified the Energy Use Intensity Targets and Space Heating Demand Targets set out in the policy, it is not apparent why these levels have been chosen and how they relate to existing development in Leeds.
20. It is expected that new legislation will mean that from 2025 all newly built homes will not be able to include a gas boiler. This is part of the UK Government commitment to reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. Therefore, the HBF does not consider that this element of the policy is necessary, it creates unnecessary duplication, and adds a negative tone to the policy, the HBF recommends the element in relation to gas boilers and electric resistive heating is deleted.
21. The HBF also considers that this requirement should not apply to all developments and should recognise the scale of development in relation to the significant requirements of this policy. The Council should not place unduly onerous requirements onto individuals and small sites.
22. The Viability Study utilises costs from a report by Currie and Brown from December 2018 to estimate the cost of carbon reduction in new residential buildings. It suggests costs of

achieving zero carbon ranging from £7,056 to £16,464. However, the assessment goes on to suggest that to prevent double counting the costs of achieving the interim uplifts to Part L and Future Home Standards need to be deducted from these costs and suggests an additional cost of £3,850 per house and £1,098 per apartment. The HBF is concerned that these costs are low and do not seem reflective of the requirements of the policy which are significantly over and above the current standards and above the emerging Future Homes Standards.

## **EN2: Sustainable Construction Standards**

*Policy EN2 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

23. This policy expects major applications to demonstrate how they have achieved a four-star rating (as a minimum) under the BRE Home Quality Mark scheme. It goes on to state that to evidence this, applications will include independently certified evidence of their sustainability credentials at the design stage and post construction.
24. The HBF notes that within the HQM Mark One Technical Manual<sup>5</sup> it states that the final certification is issued after the construction is completed, although an interim assessment and certification at the design stage can be undertaken to estimate the likely HQM performance. The document clearly states that the pre-assessments are not formal assessments certified by HQM, and there is no such thing as an uncertified HQM rating, so the HQM performance based on a pre-assessment is not proven and no-one must claim that a home has been awarded an HQM rating based on pre-assessment. The HBF is concerned how this would work with the policy requirements. The HBF is also concerned that any delays in occupation of a home, which may happen whilst awaiting condition discharge could also cause viability issues. Finally, the HBF is also concerned about the numbers of assessors that available to provide this assessment and the time it may take to train sufficient numbers for this policy requirement to work and for housing delivery to remain at appropriate levels.
25. The HBF does not consider that it is necessary for Leeds to set a standard for sustainable construction. The HBF does not consider that the Council have provided any evidence or justification for why residential development should need to meet the four-star rating under the BRE Home Quality Mark or why developments should need to be assessed using the Home Quality Mark. The HBF recommends that this policy is deleted.
26. The Viability Assessment includes a budget estimate of £750 per apartment and £1,000 per house, the assessment also highlights the likely costs for the certification and registration in relation to BRE's Home Quality Mark. The HBF is concerned given the wide-ranging nature of the Home Quality Mark that these costs are not sufficient to cover the costs of this policy. There is also the possibility if this becomes a requirement that it creates a monopoly and potential for prices to increase in line with demand.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.homequalitymark.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/HQM-ONE-Technical-Manual-England.pdf>

## **EN4: District Heating**

*Policy EN4 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

27. This policy sets a hierarchy in relation to district heating networks for developments of 10 or more dwellings, starting with connecting to an existing district heating network, construction of a site wide network served by a new low carbon heat source, collaborating with neighbouring developments to develop a shared heating network and finally in areas where district heating is currently not viable the need to demonstrate how sites have been designed to allow for connection in future.
28. The HBF considers that it is important that this is not seen as requirement and is instead implemented on a flexible basis. Heat networks are one aspect of the path towards decarbonising heat, however currently the predominant technology for district-sized communal heating networks is gas combined heat and power (CHP) plants. Over 90% of district networks are gas fired. As 2050 approaches, meeting the Government's climate target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero will require a transition from gas-fired networks to renewable or low carbon alternatives such as large heat pumps, hydrogen or waste-heat recovery but at the moment one of the major reasons why heat network projects do not install such technologies is because of the up-front capital cost. The Council should be aware that for the foreseeable future it will remain uneconomic for most heat networks to install low-carbon technologies. This may mean that it is more sustainable and more appropriate for developments to utilise other forms of energy provision, and this may need to be considered.
29. Government consultation on Heat Network Zoning<sup>6</sup> 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.
30. 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. All heat network domestic consumers should have ready access to information about their heat network, a good quality of service, fair and transparently priced heating and a redress option should things go wrong. Research by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) found that a significant proportion of suppliers and managing agents do not provide pre-transaction documents, or what is provided contains limited information, particularly on the on-going costs of heat networks and poor transparency regarding heating bills, including their calculation, limits consumers' ability to challenge their heat suppliers reinforcing a perception that prices are unjustified. The monopolistic nature of heat networks means

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<sup>6</sup> Heat Networking Zoning consultation (2021)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1024216/heat-network-zoning-consultation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1024216/heat-network-zoning-consultation.pdf)

that future price regulation is required to protect domestic consumers. The CMA have concluded that “a statutory framework should be set up that underpins the regulation of all heat networks.” They recommended that “the regulatory framework should be designed to ensure that all heat network customers are adequately protected. At a minimum, they should be given a comparable level of protection to gas and electricity in the regulated energy sector.” The Government’s latest consultation on heating networks proposes a regulatory framework that would give Ofgem oversight and enforcement powers across quality of service, provision of information and pricing arrangements for all domestic heat network consumers.

### **Water 1: Water Efficiency**

31. This policy states that residential developments of 10 or more dwellings where feasible are required to meet a water standard of 110 litres per person per day. This requirement is the same as is currently included within CSSR Policy EN2.
32. The Building Regulations require all new dwellings to achieve a mandatory level of water efficiency of 125 litres per day per person, which is a higher standard than that achieved by much of the existing housing stock. This mandatory standard represents an effective demand management measure. The Optional Technical Housing Standard is 110 litres per day per person.

### **Policy G1: Protecting, Maintaining, Enhancing and Extending Green and Blue Infrastructure within and outside of GBI**

*Policy G1 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

33. This policy requires all applications to provide a Green Blue Infrastructure (GBI) assessment. The HBF generally supports the Council in providing and supporting the provision of green and blue infrastructure. However, the HBF considers that many of the elements that this policy is asking the applicant to consider as part of their GBI Assessment are elements that are already included within planning policy found elsewhere in the Plan. The HBF considers that if a proposal is considered to be in accordance with the Plan, there should be no need for the applicant to provide a GBI assessment. The HBF also considers that where a GBI Assessment may be required that the Council need to ensure that the evidence required is proportional to the scale and / or impacts of the development proposed, and that the assessment is not overly onerous and does not require significant additional evidence to be collated. It is noted that the Viability Study includes a cost of £50,000 for the undertaking of the GBI assessment.

### **Policy G2C: Tree Replacement**

*Policy G2C is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

34. This policy states that where removal of existing trees outside woodland is unavoidable, justified and agreed with the LPA, those trees removed will be replaced with an appropriate number, size and type of tree calculated using the Council’s tree

replacement methodology. Tables 1-3 in the Plan set out the replacement methodology, with the range from 1:1 to 1:38 dependent on the category<sup>7</sup>, stature and diameter of the tree to be replaced and the stature and diameter of the replacement trees.

35. The HBF is concerned by the potential tree replacement strategy provided, this could have significant potential implications in terms of viability of the development, not only due to the replacement costs but also in terms of efficient land use, site layout and highways considerations. The Tree Replacement Report provides some of the evidence for this policy, however, it appears to have considered trees separately from all other plan requirements and without any practical considerations as to how this policy will work. The HBF understands the Councils desire to prevent the loss of carbon sequestration capacity, but would question whether the tree replacement strategy proposed is the best way to do this, and whether other options may be more appropriate, and whether this policy needs to be applied much more flexibly in order to take into consideration other requirements and circumstances. The Viability Study includes consideration of this policy and has increased their allowances for external works by 1%. The HBF is concerned that this does not reflect the true cost of this policy requirement.

#### **Policy G4B: Quality of New Green Space**

*Policy G4B is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

36. This policy states that in order to be considered high quality new green space should seek to meet the following objectives: (n) a mix of formal and in-formal play provision. The HBF would seek further clarification as to what exactly is required by this objective, the HBF does not consider that this policy clearly written and unambiguous, and does not consider that it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals.

#### **Policy G9: Biodiversity Net Gain**

*Policy G9 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

37. This policy states that all new development will provide a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) in line with the Environment Act. It goes on to state that the presumption is for BNG to be delivered on site. Off-site will only be acceptable where there is clear evidence that the mitigation hierarchy has been applied. It also states that any land to be in private ownership or other land that it is not considered reasonable by the LPA to enforce compliance in accordance with the BNG Management Plan will be scored as zero value in the Biodiversity Metric calculations.
38. The HBF has a number of concerns firstly, by some of the detail included within this policy, the potential lack of flexibility, the limited acknowledgement that a mix of approaches may be required and that there is no allowance for a financial contribution to be made. Secondly, how the LPA will determine what land is considered reasonable.

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<sup>7</sup> BS 5837: 2012



Finally, the HBF is concerned how the detail in the policy will sit with the requirements provided nationally.

39. The Viability Study has estimated a cost for this policy of £19,698 per hectare to create and maintain sites over a 30-year lifecycle. The HBF assumes this cost has its basis in the Net Gain Impact Assessment which included a central estimate of £19,282 per hectare of development in the Yorkshire Region based on 2017 prices. The HBF notes that the central scenario is based on 75% of BNG being provided based on scenario A and 25% based on scenario C. Scenario A assumes that the developer is able to avoid significant loss of distinctive habitats and therefore mitigates and enhances on site. Scenario C assumes that the developer is unable to compensate on site and is unable to find local compensatory habitat in which to invest, instead they have to pay for their units through the biodiversity unit off-setting market. The HBF is concerned that the costs for Scenario C are significantly higher than that currently used in the Viability Study at £66,570 per hectare based on 2017 prices, and that the Council do not appear to have undertaken work to demonstrate that the majority of BNG can be provided on site.

#### **Policy F1: Food Resilience**

*Policy F1 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

40. This policy seeks to support food resilience by supporting residential development to reserve and create on-site opportunities for community food growing for residents and the local community as part of their GBI assessment. It requires that residential developments with private gardens to provide at least 1 semi-mature fruit tree per garden and that they should explore opportunities to plant semi-mature fruit tree under policies on new greenspace and GBI.
41. The HBF considers that there is no justification or evidence for this policy requirement. The HBF is also concerned in relation to the implications of this policy in terms of viability, efficient use of land and site layouts. The HBF is also not sure whether residents of all new developments would want fruit trees or community food growing opportunities, and it is not clear what would happen where these facilities are not used in an appropriate manner or are not maintained for food growing or are removed. It is also possible that residents would prefer other formats of food growing than fruit trees, and this policy does not provide any flexibility in this part of the policy.

#### **Policy SP1A: Achieving 20 minute neighbourhoods in Leeds**

*Policy SP1A is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

42. This policy looks for new development to meet the principles of 20 min neighbourhoods. The policy then set out the principles of a 20 min neighbourhood as they apply to Leeds these include providing good accessibility to a range of local services within a 10-minute walk; easy access to public transport; and a mix of house types. It goes on to states that housing development (5 or more units) will be acceptable in principle on non-allocated land providing that the site is located in those areas that meet the 20 minute

neighbourhood principles; can address deficiencies in accessibility; the number of dwellings does not exceed the capacity of transport, educational and health infrastructure; Green Belt policy is satisfied; areas of high flood risk are avoided; and greenfield land does not have intrinsic value for amenity open space, nature conservation, makes a valuable contribution to the character of the area, or can contribute to the adaptation to climate change.

43. The Council identify that the concept is intended to ensure that neighbourhoods support strong communities and local economies and recognise that easy walking and cycle access to services and facilities is good for health, and physical activity. It is noted that the TCPA<sup>8</sup> also include access by public transport within their definition. The HBF considers that the concept can be a useful consideration when determining the appropriate location of development. However, it will also be appropriate to consider the range and variety of development provided, it may be that additional development could help a smaller settlement support more services and therefore contribute to the creation of a 20 minute or a more sustainable neighbourhood. The Council may also want to consider that larger developments may also be able to contribute to the creation of improved active travel infrastructure or open spaces. The HBF considers that there is not sufficient flexibility within the policy to allow for a site that would otherwise constitute sustainable development and deliver other benefits to be supported.
44. The Council will also need to work on making active travel and public transport quick, easy to use, well maintained, safe and available to all, and therefore more appealing than using a car. The Council will also need to consider how these people that live in the City may travel to other places to visit friends, family, social and leisure activities or employment, which may not all be located within the city.

**Policy P10: Development Principles for High-Quality Design and Healthy Place Making**

*Policy P10 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

45. This policy states that all development shall be inclusive and accessible to all users. It is not clear what this policy requires from development. It is noted that adopted Policy H10 currently requires 30% of dwellings to meet the requirements of M4(2) and 2% to meet the requirements of M4(3) (wheelchair adaptable dwellings). It is not clear how these two policy requirements work together, and if this policy is intended to propose an increase in the M4(2) or M4(3) standards this needs to be made clear and appropriate evidence needs to be provided.

**Policy P10A: The Health Impacts of Development**

*Policy P10A is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/the-20-minute-neighbourhood>

46. This policy requires a Health Impact Assessments for residential developments of 100 units or more. It is also noted that the Viability Report includes a cost of £50,000 for undertaking a health impact assessment.
47. The HBF generally supports plans that set out how the Council will achieve improvements in health and well-being. In preparing its local plan the Council should normally consider the health impacts with regard to the level and location of development. Collectively the policies in the plan should ensure health benefits and limit any negative impacts and as such any development that is in accordance with that plan should already be contributing positively to the overall healthy objectives of that area.
48. The PPG sets out that HIAs are 'a useful tool to use where there are expected to be significant impacts' (ID:53-005-20190722) 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. 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. In addition, the HBF considers that any requirement for a HIA should be based on a proportionate level of detail in relation the scale and type of development proposed. The requirement for HIA for development proposals of 100 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 sets out measures to substantially mitigate the impact.

#### **Policy DC1: Digital Connectivity**

*Policy DC1 is not considered to be sound as it is not justified and not consistent with national policy for the following reasons:*

49. This policy requires all new development to provide as a minimum a contribution to the enhancement of Leeds digital infrastructure provision gigabit capable network infrastructure, with the installation of physical infrastructure necessary for gigabit capable connection. And it requires infrastructure capable of accommodating more than one network operator to ensure that choice is offered to the end user.
50. The HBF considers that a policy that would generally encourage and support the provision of digital connectivity could be appropriate, however, any requirements on developers should not go beyond the provision of infrastructure as set out in the statutory Building Regulations. The HBF considers that the Council should work closely with the providers of digital infrastructure, to ensure that appropriate provision is provided, and that the onus is placed on those who can actually provide the appropriate infrastructure. The HBF does not consider that it is necessary to provide a policy to incentivise the development industry, the industry is already well aware of the benefits of infrastructure and the requirements of those looking to purchase a new homes and can self-police the cost/benefit of this provision with regards to site viability.

51. It is also noted that the Viability Study makes an allowance of £750 per flat and £1,000 per house, and that it suggests that the cost of providing the fibre and connecting to the dwellings will be incurred by the network providers. The HBF consider that this cost appears low, and would suggest that costs can be variable and depend quite heavily on the distance between the site and cabinets, capacity and the quality of the cabling provided.
52. The policy also states that as part of a planning application submission a 'digital connectivity statement' is required which must provide evidence that issues related to digital connectivity have been considered as an integral part of the site development and design. It is stated that non-compliance with this policy will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where the developer provides robust evidence within the 'digital connectivity statement' setting out what constraints to compliance exist, what alternative technology has been explored and what is proposed as suitable alternative provision.
53. The HBF considers it is unnecessary to require a digital connectivity statement to be submitted with all planning applications. Most new developments will be built with appropriate modern digital connections. A statement should only be required if a connection is not possible.

#### **Future Engagement**

54. 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.
55. The HBF wishes to participate in the hearing sessions in order to be able to respond to any issues raised in relation to the home building industry.
56. 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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