



Sent by EMAIL ONLY to planningpolicy@melton.gov.uk

5/1/2024

Dear Sir/ Madam

Response by the Home Builders Federation to the draft Melton Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation.

1. Please find below the Home Builders Federation (HBF) response to the Melton Issues and Options Local Plan consultation. The HBF is the principal representative body of the housebuilding industry in England and Wales and our representations reflect the views of discussions with our membership of national and multinational corporations through to regional developers and small local housebuilders. Our members account for over 80% of all new housing built in England and Wales in any one year.
2. HBF have only responded to the consultation question which raise relevant issues for our members.
3. HBF notes that this consultation is only for a Local Plan Review that looks forward only for 10 years at adoption, being silent about the growth rates to be delivered beyond 2036. It is noted that the National Planning Policy Framework requires Plan to cover 15 years from adoption. HBF note the importance of the Leicester Housing Market area and the history of ongoing joint working in Leicester and Leicestershire, however we are also of the recent submission of Leicester City's Local Plan for Examination and of the recent difficulties and challenges to this joint working approach. HBF strongly support the need for plan-making and the plan-led system. As such we suggest that if only a Partial Review is to be undertaken then the Plan must include a policy and timeframe for undertaking a new full Local Plan update. In the midst of a housing crisis it is critical for plan-making to meet housing need in full, and ensuring monitoring and action in undertaken if there is any under-delivery of housing.

Vision and objectives

Consultation questions

Question 1 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/ somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree

Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/ somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree

Question 2 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this section

Question 3 What do you think are the most important objectives to be covered by our Vision? Please select your top 3

Improving facilities for all of the community and providing the new infrastructure needed to support our growing population

Addressing the causes and effects of climate change

Ensure local housing meets the local communities current and future needs

Supporting a diverse, competitive and innovative rural economy

Enhancing Melton Mowbray's town centre

Promoting high quality and well-designed development to help create healthy, sustainable and safe communities

Enhancing nature and minimising harm to the natural environment

Other (please specify)

4. HBF agree that the current Vision Chapter is too long and lacks clear focus. The new vision should still include reference to the need to meet current and future housing needs of the whole community, including for market and affordable housing. HBF also agree that it is important for the Local Plan Objectives to recognise the connection between housing and the future aspirations for the local economy.

Policy SS1. Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development Consultation Questions

Question 4 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

**Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

Question 5 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

5. Although HBF strongly agree that all policies should 'serve a clear purpose, avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies that apply to a particular area' we also agree that this policy is helpful in setting out how a planning application would be determined. This is one of the key roles of the document and a policy that sets this out explicitly is helpful. We also concur that any references to the NPPF must be consistent. It will also be important for the Council to consider if the recent (Dec 2023) changes to the NPPF have any impact on the emerging Local Plan. Once the Council has come to view on this matter, HBF would strongly welcome further consultation on this issue.

Policy SS3. Sustainable Communities (unallocated sites) Consultation Questions

Question 6 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

**Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 3: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

Question 7 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

Question 8 Under what circumstances do you think new homes in the borough's smallest and least sustainable settlements are justified?

Question 9 Do you think criteria should be introduced to require homes built in the borough's smallest and least sustainable settlements to be built to the highest sustainability standards? If yes, what types of criteria do you think the policy should consider?

6. HBF do not consider the policy options proposed for this policy area to be mutually exclusive. HBF agree that the Plan needs to be clear about what 'proven local needs' mean not just to provide clarity for decision makers, but also for developers and applicants.
7. Although HBF does not comment on individual sites or allocations, we believe that the Plan should provide for a wide range of deliverable and developable sites across the Borough in order to provide competition and choice to ensure that housing needs are met in full. HBF would wish to see the Plan set out a logical settlement hierarchy which meets all the housing needs and addresses all areas of the housing market, with a range of sites proposed for allocation.
8. The NPPF requires Local Plans to identify land to accommodate at least 10% of the housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare, unless there are strong reasons why this cannot be achieved. The HBF has undertaken extensive consultation with its small developer members. One of the chief obstacles for small developers is that funding is extremely difficult to secure without a full, detailed, and implementable planning permission. Securing an implementable planning permission is extremely difficult if small sites are not allocated. Without implementable consents lenders are uneasy about making finance available or the repayment fees and interest rates they set will be very high. Small developers, consequently, need to invest a lot of money and time up-front in the risky business of trying to secure an allocation and a planning permission, and this is money that many small developers do not have.
9. HBF would therefore wish to see the 10% small sites allowance delivered through allocations (and not windfall). Such sites are important for encouraging the growth in SME housebuilders who will tend to develop these sites but rarely see the benefits that arise from the allocation of sites in a local plan. Up until the 1980s, small developers accounted for the construction of half of all homes built in this country resulting in greater variety of product, more competition, and faster build-out rates. Since then, the number of small companies has fallen by 80%.
10. HBF also note that support for small and medium builders need not be limited to only small sites of less than 1Ha. SMEs also deliver on other types of non-strategic sites (for example up to 100 units). The inclusion of additional non-strategic allocations would expand the range of choice in the market, and (possibly most importantly), be

of a scale that can come forward and making a contribution to housing numbers earlier in the plan period.

11. HBF would support a Local Plan that included sites allocated sites in rural areas. HBF supports this being done through plan-making process in the Local Plan which provides certainty, instead of seeking to rely on optional Neighbourhood Plans to meet rural housing needs.
12. HBF would also support a spatial strategy that recognises that there may be clusters of villages that provide a range of services for that area within reasonable travelling distance of each other, so villages may need to be grouped together. These areas might be able to sustainably support a substantial level of development but may not have all the services within one particular village. Any site selection methodology, and rural settlement policy needs to recognise this reality.
13. Similarly, the Local Plan should also recognise that settlements that currently do not have services could expand to include those services if new development is allocated in those areas. Rural sustainability considerations should not simply result in a list of villages that are deemed to have facilities and therefore can have more development, and a list of villages and other areas of 'countryside' that don't and therefore can't. The evidence and analysis of rural housing need and demand needs to be more sophisticated and nuanced to fully reflect local circumstances. Ensuring current facilities are not the only consideration used is important to deliver sustainable rural development. If the Local Plan results only in new development close to existing services only, rather identifying where services could be improved through new development, there is a real danger that this becomes a way of preventing development in certain communities rather than promoting improved villages and neighbourhoods.
14. HBF therefore supports a proactive plan that actively plans for both town and rural communities through allocations. There will still be a role for windfall sites in rural areas and a policy to enable them to come forward is also an important consideration.
15. HBF suggest there is also a need for a wider review of the settlement strategy in the Plan.

Policy SS4. South Melton Mowbray Sustainable Neighbourhoods

16. HBF have no comments on this policy other than to say the proposal must be deliverable, and it is important that housing delivery is effectively monitored so that if housing monitoring shows delays to housing delivery across the Borough action is taken to address this as soon as possible.

Policy SS5. Melton Mowbray North Sustainable Neighbourhood

17. HBF have no comments on this policy other than to say the proposal must be deliverable, and it is important that housing delivery is effectively monitored so that if housing monitoring shows delays to housing delivery across the Borough action is taken to address this as soon as possible.

Policy SS6. Alternative Development Strategies and Local Plan Review Consultation Questions

Question 14 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/ somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree

Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/ somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree

Option 3: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/ somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree

Question 15 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

18. HBF support the need for a monitoring to be an integral part of the plan, monitor, manage approach to plan-making and housing delivery. As such HBF do not support the inclusion of policies within a Local Plan that merely trigger a review of the Local Plan if monitoring shows housing delivery is not occurring as expected. Such a policy does nothing to address the housing crisis or undersupply of homes. There are other more effective and immediate measures that could be undertaken (as well or instead of preparing the next Plan or Plan Review) to enable the Council to address housing under delivery much more quickly than would be possible through the production of another plan, or plan review. Although a commitment to and timeframe for the production of a new Local Plan will also be needed.
19. HBF strongly support the need for the Council to be, and remain, committed to meeting its requirements for housing, employment and other development and infrastructure. HBF agrees that the Council must continue to regularly monitor the delivery of new development. HBF agree that where monitoring identifies significant and persistent shortfalls in the delivery of housing and employment, infrastructure or spatial distribution that deviates significantly from the plan strategy, or there are changes within the HMA to the objectively assessed need for development or the spatial distribution of growth across the HMA, the Council should consider an early a full or partial review of the Local Plan to identify alternative or additional development sites. However, this is not the only action that should be undertaken. Production of a new Plan would take time and some additional resilience and flexibility could usefully be built into this Plan/Plan review.
20. It is important that houses are brought forward, and the matter addressed as soon as possible, if under delivery is observed. HBF would suggest, as a minimum, explicit reference should be made within the Plan's policy to the potential to bring forward supply earlier. However, as the housing need and requirement figures for the Plan are minimum (not maximum) figures the Council could also specifically identify reserve sites, or criteria to support non-allocated sites that could/would be brought forward sooner to address any under delivery whatever the reason for that under performance. This could be a shortfall in market housing permissions granted and/or completions, affordable housing permissions granted and/or completions and any failure against the Housing Delivery Test or local plan monitoring. The Plan needs to set out how and when monitoring will be undertaken, and more is needed on what action(s) will be taken when if monitoring shows under delivery of housing.
21. HBF note that Leicester's Local Pan has now been submitted for Examination. It will be important that Melton plays its part in helping to meeting any unmet need from Leicester. HBF support the voluntary cooperation in Leicester and Leicestershire

and note the long history of joint working to seek to actively address the housing crisis across Leicestershire. HBF were pleased to see the progress being made to try and efforts to address Leicester’s unmet need in a pragmatic and cooperative way informed by publicly available evidence and discussions. It is disappointing that this progress is now being undermined in some areas, especially because the housing need and demands of Leicester HMA clearly are issues that cross City, District and Borough Council boundaries. Effective joint working is likely to be an essential component in ensure housing needs are meet, whether undertaken on a voluntary or mandatory basis. HBF would therefore encourage the Council to continue to proactively plan to meet its needs and play a role in meeting the needs of the wider HMA. This is particularly important if economic growth aspirations are to be realised.

22. HBF note that Council’s analysis of the issues facing this policy seem to give strong weight to the need and justification for locally specific policy requirements but question whether they are too onerous or restrictive. It is also disappointment to note that there would appear to be no consequences for inaction. As mentioned before HBF support a clear monitoring approach that would result in the council taking action in the case of under-delivery of housing but agree flexibility may be needed on what actions would be most effective and when. Ultimately, what matters is that the issues that have led to under delivery, which may be wide and varied, are addressed in an appropriate way so that much needed housing can be, and is, built.

**Policy C2. Housing Mix
Consultation Questions**

Table 8: Optimum Housing mix requirements for market and affordable housing

	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4+ bed
Market	5%	30%	45-50%	15-20%
Intermediate	15-20%	50-55%	25-30%	0-5%
Social/affordable rent	30-35%	35-40%	20-25%	5-10%
All dwellings	15%	30-35%	35-40%	15%

Question 16 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/ somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree

Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/ somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree

Question 17 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

23. HBF support the requirement for the Plan to deliver a mix of house types and sizes. However, we do not believe it is necessary to include Table 8 within the policy. Flexibility is needed to enable site specific considerations to be taken into account. Instead of being prescriptive within the policy, policies in other Local Plan have set out within the supporting text the kind of information that would be considered and used to help inform site specific negotiations. This should be informed by the most current information available at the time. As such evidence may change over the Plan period, HBF is supportive of this approach.

24. HBF also request that the wording “having regard to market conditions and economic viability” is retained within this. Removing this sentence would further reduce flexibility.
25. HBF also note that the current policy refers to Building Regulation M4(2) and M4(3). HBF note that the requirements to meet Part M4(2) will be superseded by changes to residential Building Regulations. The Government response to ‘Raising accessibility standards for new homes’ states that the Government proposes to mandate the current M4(2) requirement in Building Regulations as a minimum for all new homes, with M4(1) applying in exceptional circumstances. This will be subject to a further consultation on the technical details and will be implemented in due course through the Building Regulations. There is therefore no need for a policy on this issue within the Melton Local Plan.
26. There is also a need to differentiate between Part a) and part b) of M4(3) technical standards. M43a sets out standards for wheelchair adaptable housing, where M43b relates to wheelchair accessible housing which can only be required on affordable housing where the Council has nomination rights. Any policy, if it remained, would need to recognise this distinction. This issue should also be factored into the whole plan viability assessment as both M4(3)a and M4(3)b impact on viability, with M4(3)b being considerably more expensive.

Policy C3. National Space Standard and Smaller Dwellings Consultation Questions

Question 18 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

**Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

Question 19 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

27. HBF supports the Government’s intention to set standards for energy efficiency through the Building Regulations. The key to success is standardisation and avoidance of individual Council’s specifying their own policy approach to energy efficiency, which undermines economies of scale for product manufacturers, suppliers and developers. The Councils do not need to set local energy efficiency standards in a Local Plan policy because of the higher levels of energy efficiency standards for new homes set out in the 2021 Part L Interim Uplift and proposals for the 2025 Future Homes Standard, which are currently out for consultation. This started on Dec 13th 2023 and closes in 6 March 2024. The consultation documents can be found online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-homes-and-buildings-standards-2023-consultation>
28. HBF does not support the introduction of the optional Nationally Described Space Standards though policies in individual Local Plans. If the Council wanted to do this, they will need robust justifiable evidence to introduce the NDSS, as any policy which seeks to apply the optional nationally described space standards (NDSS) to all dwellings should only be done in accordance with the NPPF, which states that

“policies may also make use of the NDSS where the need for an internal space standard can be justified”.

29. The NPPF requires that all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence, which should be adequate, proportionate and focussed tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned. The PPG (ID: 56-020-20150327) identifies the type of evidence required to introduce such a policy. It states that ‘where a need for internal space standards is identified, local planning authorities should provide justification for requiring internal space policies. Local planning authorities should take account of the following areas:

Need – evidence should be provided on the size and type of dwellings currently being built in the area, to ensure the impacts of adopting space standards can be properly assessed, for example, to consider any potential impact on meeting demand for starter homes.

Viability – the impact of adopting the space standard should be considered as part of a plan’s viability assessment with account taken of the impact of potentially larger dwellings on land supply. Local planning authorities will also need to consider impacts on affordability where a space standard is to be adopted.

Timing – there may need to be a reasonable transitional period following adoption of a new policy on space standards to enable developers to factor the cost of space standards into future land acquisitions’.

30. HBF also reminds the Council that there is a direct relationship between unit size, cost per square metre (sqm), selling price per sqm and affordability. The Council’s policy approach should recognise that customers have different budgets and aspirations. An inflexible policy approach to NDSS for all new dwellings will impact on affordability and effect customer choice. Well-designed dwellings below NDSS can provide a good, functional home. Smaller dwellings play a valuable role in meeting specific needs for both open market and affordable home ownership housing.
31. An inflexible policy approach imposing NDSS on all housing removes the most affordable homes and denies lower income households from being able to afford homeownership. The introduction of the NDSS for all dwellings may mean customers purchasing larger homes in floorspace but with bedrooms less suited to their housing needs with the unintended consequences of potentially increasing overcrowding and reducing the quality of their living environment. The Council should focus on good design and usable space to ensure that dwellings are fit for purpose rather than focusing on NDSS.
32. HBF considers that if the Government had expected all properties to be built to NDSS that they would have made these standards mandatory not optional.
33. If the proposed requirement for NDSS is carried forward, then the Council should put forward proposals for transitional arrangements. The land deals underpinning residential sites may have been secured prior to any proposed introduction of the NDSS. These sites should be allowed to move through the planning system before any proposed policy requirements are enforced. The NDSS should not be applied to any reserved matters applications or any outline or detailed approval prior to a specified date.

34. If Homes England expects homes funded through their Affordable Homes Programme to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards, there is no need to repeat this requirement in a Local Plan policy.

Policy C4. Affordable Housing Provision Consultation Questions

Question 20 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

**Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

Question 21 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

35. HBF agree that the affordable housing policies need to reflect current government policy, the definition of affordable housing, and the thresholds for seeking it. The policy should also allow for the most current evidence to be used to inform policy and decision-making. It will also be important for any Affordable Housing policies to be underpinned by a robust and up to date whole plan viability appraisal to ensure that the policy does not make development unviable. In the case of Melton, it would seem that scenario testing based on different geographies and site typologies will be important and previous evidence in support of the current plan supported the need for a geographically differentiated affordable housing requirements.

36. It should also be noted that PPG (Reference ID: 10-001-20190509) says:

“Policy requirements should be clear so that they can be accurately accounted for in the price paid for land. To provide this certainty, affordable housing requirements should be expressed as a single figure rather than a range. Different requirements may be set for different types or location of site or types of development.”

Therefore, a policy that continued to include a requirement for affordable housing in Melton Mowbray of 5%-10% would not be in accordance with the PPG.

Policy C8. Self Build and Custom Build Housing Consultation Questions

Question 24 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

[Matrix]

**Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 3: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 4: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

Question 25 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

37. HBF does not consider that requiring major developments to provide for self-builders is appropriate. Instead, the HBF advocates for self and custom-build policies that encourage self and custom-build development by setting out where it will be supported in principle. The HBF considers that Councils can play a key role in facilitating the provision of land as set in the PPG. This could be done, for example, by using the Councils' own land for such purposes and/or allocating sites specifically for self and custom-build home builders- although this would need to be done through discussion and negotiation with landowners.
38. It is considered unlikely that the provision of self and custom build plots on new housing developments can be co-ordinated with the development of the wider site. At any one time, there are often multiple contractors and large machinery operating on-site from both a practical and health and safety perspective, it is difficult to envisage the development of single plots by individuals operating alongside this construction activity. We would also question if self-builder's aspirations match with a plot in the midst of a larger development. We would be interested to see the Council's data, analysis and evidence about this matter.
39. Although HBF do not support any requirements for self-build plots on large sites for the reasons listed above, we would be even more concerned if the threshold was reduced to 20 units and/or any other further conditions were introduced. HBF suggest any requirement specifying where on a site any plots should be located is unreasonable as it would prevent consideration of site-specific issues.
40. If a self-build policy was to be pursued, then HBF agree that if demand for plots is not realised, it is important that plots should not be left empty to the detriment of neighbouring properties or the whole development. The timescale for reversion of these plots to the original housebuilder should be as short as possible from the commencement of development because the consequential delay in developing those plots presents further practical difficulties in terms of co-ordinating their development with construction activity on the wider site. There are even greater logistical problems created if the original housebuilder has completed the development and is forced to return to site to build out plots which have not been sold to self and custom builders. Therefore, if a policy was included requirements are retained HBF would support the suggestion that any unsold plots remaining after a six-month marketing period revert to the original developer.
41. If the policy was introduced, HBF agree with the Council that there is no need for any to local occupancy conditions to be applied, but fundamentally HBF still believe requiring a proportion of larger, or smaller sites, to be self-build plots is not the best way to meet self-build demand.

**42. Policy C9. Healthy Communities
Consultation Questions**

Question 26 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

**Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

Question 27 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

Question 28 Do you think the Local Plan should require Health Impact Assessments for large scale developments? [Yes/No/Unsure]

Question 29 If you answered 'yes' to question 28, what size and types of development do you think should require them and why?

43. HBF agree that any Local Plan policies must set out clear and deliverable objectives and criteria. HBF agree that any duplication of policies within the plan should be avoided. Any policy needs to clearly set out what is expected from developers.

Policy EN2. Biodiversity and Geodiversity Consultation Questions

Question 49 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

**Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 3: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

Question 50 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

44. HBF suggest that the useability of the Plan is more important than an arbitrary assessment of the number of policies. As such we would support a sensible suite of policies to deal with this increasingly complex and detailed area of Local Plan policy.
45. HBF has been involved in a significant amount of work, being led by the Future Homes Hub, on BNG preparedness for some time and note the draft Planning Practice guidance from DLUHC and the Draft DEFRA BNG Guidance has been released midway through your consultation period.
46. Currently the BNG PPG has been published in draft form to allow for "familiarisation" and as such some details may change between now and the implementation date in January 2024. Similarly, HBF understand the DEFRA Guidance is still being refined before the implementation date, and indeed may be further refined once mandatory BNG is working in practice, to reflect any early lessons learnt.
47. HBF note that there is a lot of new information for the Council to work through and consider the implications of, in order to ensure that any policy on Biodiversity Net Gain policy so that it complies with the latest policy and guidance as it is finalised. It should also be noted that the PPG is clear that there is no need for individual Local Plans to repeat national BNG guidance.
48. It is the HBF's opinion that the Council should not deviate from the Government's requirement for 10% biodiversity net gain as set out in the Environment Act. There

are significant additional costs associated with biodiversity gain, which should be fully accounted for in the Council's viability assessment. It is important that BNG does not prevent, delay or reduce housing delivery.

49. It is also important to note that large and complex sites where the development is phased, the guidance is clear that the 10% must be delivered at the end of the development, and this may not result in 10% BNG on each phase. Additional advice on phased development is still awaited.
50. HBF also suggest particular care is needed in terminology to ensure the BNG policy reflects the national policy and guidance. For example, on-site and off-site biodiversity is referred to as units, and the statutory national credit system of last resort is referred to as credit. Similarly, it will be important to differentiate between the mitigation hierarchy, which seeks to avoid harm and then mitigate it in relation to protected habitats and the BNG hierarchy which prioritises on-site BNG delivery, then off site units and finally allows for statutory credits.
51. The costs of BNG must also be considered as part of the whole plan viability assessment and should be specified as a single specific item, not combined into a generic s106 costs item. There are significant additional costs associated with biodiversity net gain, which should be fully accounted for in the Council's viability assessment, some of which are unknown at this time. It is important that BNG does not prevent, delay or reduce housing delivery. As this is an emerging policy area and the market for off-site provision, and statutory credits are not yet known, any figure used for BNG costs will need to be kept under review as BNG implementation progresses and a greater understanding of actual costs become available. The Whole Plan Viability Assessment should clearly set out how it considered the implications of mandatory BNG and how it was arrived at using the most up to date BNG costs information available.
52. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are new initiative, and one has yet to be prepared that covers Melton. As the LNRS emerges it will be important for this Local Plan to be kept under review and further public consultation on the interaction between the two documents and/or changes to Local Plan policy to reflect the LNRS may be needed.
53. HBF would encourage Melton to ensure the Local Plan fully considers BNG as part of the site selection process. This should include understanding the BNG requirement, including undertaking an assessment of the baseline to support the allocation. Understand the BNG costs and viability for the site and considering how this may impact other policy requirements such as affordable housing, other s106 or CIL contributions.
54. The BNG policy will also need to follow and adopt recommendations and guidance from the Local Nature Recovery Strategies (once these have been prepared) and set out the specific BNG solution the council would like to be prioritised when off-site credits are needed to achieve BNG policy compliance. This is important to ensure that the plan provide certainty for developers, communities and LPAs alike and to ensure that BNG solutions are effectively targeted. The Plan needs to set out receptor sites and appropriate area(s) for BNG off-site unit delivery so that the

ecologist can run the BNG statutory metric correctly, because the local significance of BNG is one of the inputs into the Metric.

Policy EN8. Climate Change Consultation Questions

Question 58 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

**Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 3: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

Question 59 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

55. HBF agree that every policy should include clear and deliverable objectives or criteria and reflect current government policy and guidance. HBF also agree with the Council's assessment that "climate change is already set out in the introduction of the plan as a key strategic objective, so the justification for the need for this policy in its current form is very weak." And that "if this policy were removed, it would have no direct impact on local plan policy for climate change."
56. HBF also recognise the importance of climate change and the need for Local Plan policies to help adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change, but HBF suggest that this is best addressed holistically throughout the Plan, rather than by a specific policy which merely repeats or signposts to other policies in the Plan.

Policy EN9. Ensuring Energy Efficiency and Low Carbon Development Consultation Questions

Question 60 Looking at the options above, which option do you support?

**Option 1: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 2: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

**Option 3: strongly agree/ somewhat agree /neither agree nor disagree/
somewhat disagree/ strongly disagree**

Question 61 Please use the comment box below to explain your response or provide any additional information you would like us to consider in our review of this policy

57. HBF would agree with the Council's assessment that "aspects of the policy which relate to improving building standards have been taken forward by the Government through the building regulations regime, which reduce the need for local plan policies to consider local building standards, with further revisions and improvements expected before any revised local plan is adopted, which will deliver 'net zero ready' new homes." HBF strongly agree that "this national approach through building regulations is more effective and simpler for local developers to comply with."

58. HBF supports the Government's intention to set standards for energy efficiency through the Building Regulations. The key to success is standardisation and avoidance of individual Council's specifying their own policy approach to energy efficiency, which undermines economies of scale for product manufacturers, suppliers and developers. The Councils do not need to set local energy efficiency standards in a Local Plan policy because of the higher levels of energy efficiency standards for new homes set out in the 2021 Part L Interim Uplift and proposals for the 2025 Future Homes Standard, which are currently out for consultation.
59. The consultation suggests that despite this a climate change policy may still be needed because the current policy also covers water efficiency, home offices, cycle parking, design of developments, onsite renewable, use of materials and waste from construction and suggests that these other factors are not included within new or proposed national building standards. This is not correct. The current Part G Building Regulations requires developments to compliance with a limit of 125 litres per day. House builders are frequently delivering 115-110 litres per day which means the house building industry is already improving upon the regulations. There is therefore no need for a policy on this matter in a Local Plan.

Policy EN12. Sustainable Drainage Systems

60. HBF suggest further thought needs to be given to how BNG policy and SUDs policy interact.

Policy D1. Raising the Standard of Design

61. HBF are unclear from the consultation if the Council intends to prepare a Design Code for Melton. If this is an aspiration HBF think it is important for any design requirements to be proportionate and informed by input from the development industry to ensure it is helpful, viable and deliverable.

Future Engagement

62. 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.
63. 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



Rachel Danemann MRTPI CIHCM AssocRICS

Planning Manager – Local Plans (Midlands and South West)

Home Builders Federation

Email: rachel.danemann@hbf.co.uk

Phone: 07817865534