

## **Matter 19 - Residential Development Policies**

*Issue – Does the Plan set out positively prepared policies on residential development which are justified, effective and consistent with national policy?*

[Policy NC1: Principles Guiding the Development of Strategic Housing Sites]

[Policy NC2: Development in the Residential Zones]

[Policy NC3: Provision of Affordable Housing]

[Policy NC4: Housing for Independent and Supported Living]

[Policy NC5: Creating Mixed Communities]

[Policy NC6: Purpose-Built Student Accommodation]

[Policy NC7: Criteria for Assessing New Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Sites]

[Policy NC8: Housing Space Standards]

[Policy NC9: Housing Density]

[Policy NC15: Creating Open Space in Residential Developments]

### **Questions**

#### **Policy NC2: Development in the Residential Zones**

19.1 Is a zoning approach to residential development necessary in order to effectively protect the living environment in residential areas of the city? How will the policy operate alongside Policy NC14?

19.2 How were the boundaries of the residential zones defined?

19.3 What is the basis for the list of preferred, acceptable and unacceptable uses in Policy NC2 and is it justified? Is it the case that proposals for unclassified uses will be assessed on their merits and could be acceptable if they do not have an adverse impact on residential amenity?

19.4 Does the policy wording provide clear direction to applicants on how the Council will determine applications in the residential zones? Are preferred and acceptable uses permitted in principle, as set out in paragraph 2.10?

#### **Policy NC3: Provision of Affordable Housing**

[also see questions regarding viability and deliverability in Matter 8 MIQs]

#### **19.5 How would the second bullet point relating to sites with a capacity of less than 10 dwellings work in practice? Is the approach deliverable?**

1. The HBF considers that this is a question for the Council. However, the HBF considers that there could be issues with how this second bullet point would work in practice, particularly where the site is not owned by the applicant and the viability of such a requirement has not been considered.

#### **19.6 Why is the minimum required contribution in part a) based on gross internal floor area rather than units?**

2. The HBF considers that this is a question for the Council. However, the HBF considers that it would be more straightforward for the Council to require a proportion of units rather than gross internal floor area, and for this to be rounded to the nearest whole unit, as necessary.

**19.7 Is the Council’s proposed additional wording for part a) (ER7 in CD31) necessary to ensure clarity regarding the transfer price and how the policy operates?**

3. The HBF considers that the proposed wording is not necessary for soundness.

**19.8 Is Policy NC3 to be applied to Build-to Rent schemes?**

4. The HBF considers that this is a question for the Council. However, if it is to be applied to Build-to-Rent schemes the HBF considers that the viability challenges will need to be considered, paragraph 12.53 of the Viability Assessment clearly states that Private Rented Schemes (ie Build to Rent) are shown as unviable. The NPPF<sup>1</sup> is clear that the derivation of affordable housing policies must not only take account of need but also viability and deliverability.

**19.9 Is the application of Policy NC3 justified in respect of specialist housing for older and disabled people?**

5. The HBF considers that the application of policy NC3 is not justified in respect of specialist housing for older and disabled people. Table 10.12 of the Viability Assessment clearly sets out the viability challenge in relation to older people’s housing, whilst paragraph 10.87 states that there is limited scope for Sheltered or Extra-Care Housing to bear affordable housing. Again, the NPPF<sup>2</sup> is clear that the derivation of affordable housing policies must not only take account of need but also viability and deliverability.

**Policy NC4: Housing for Independent and Supported Living**

**19.10 Is there a clearly identified need for the level of accessible and adaptable dwellings and wheelchair adaptable dwellings specified in parts a) and b)? Is this supported by viability evidence?**

6. This policy looks for new homes in developments of fewer than 50 dwellings to provide 100% accessible and adaptable dwellings, and in developments of 50 or more dwellings 98% should be designed to be accessible and adaptable dwellings and the remaining 2% should be wheelchair adaptable dwellings. It also goes on to state that all specialist housing designed for older or disabled people should be wheelchair adaptable or fully wheelchair accessible throughout.
7. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 34

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 34

8. PPG<sup>3</sup> 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 Sheffield which justifies the inclusion of optional higher standards for accessible and adaptable homes in its Local Plan policy. The HBF considers that the evidence provided by the Council is insufficient to justify this policy requirement. However, if the Council can provide the appropriate evidence and this policy is to be included, then the HBF recommends that an appropriate transition period is included within the policy.
9. The Council should also note that the Government response to the Raising accessibility standards for new homes<sup>4</sup> 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. M4(3) would continue to apply as now where there is a local planning policy in place and where a need has been identified and evidenced.

**19.11 Is flexibility needed in Policy NC4 to address site-specific circumstances which may make it difficult to achieve M4(2) or M4(3) requirements?**

10. The HBF considers that flexibility is needed in Policy NC4 to address the site-specific circumstances which may make it difficult to achieve the M4 standards. The PPG<sup>5</sup> identifies requirements for policy in relation to the M4 standards including the need to consider site specific factors such as vulnerability to flooding, site topography and other circumstances which may make a site less suitable for M4(2) and M4(3) dwellings.

**19.12 Planning Practice Guidance states that where step-free access is not viable, neither of the Optional Requirements in Part M should be applied. Is the third paragraph in Policy NC4 on exceptions consistent with this?**

11. The HBF does not consider that paragraph 3 of this policy is consistent with the PPG<sup>6</sup>.

**19.13 What are the 'areas of need' referred to in Policy NC4? Should these be identified on the Policies Map?**

12. The areas of need do not appear to be defined. Whilst the HBF does not consider that it is necessary for these to be identified on the Policies Map, it does consider that the areas of need should be identified by evidence, or criteria should be provided to allow for applicants to determine what may be considered an area of need.

**19.14 What is the Council's justification for proposing to remove part c) of the policy? (ER6 in CR31)**

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<sup>3</sup> ID: 56-007-20150327

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/raising-accessibility-standards-for-new-homes/outcome/raising-accessibility-standards-for-new-homes-summary-of-consultation-responses-and-government-response#government-response>

<sup>5</sup> PPG ID: 56-008-20160519

<sup>6</sup> PPG ID: 56-008-20160519

13. The HBF considers that it is appropriate to remove part c of the policy, it is not clear how this would be monitored and managed and would not make for an effective policy.

**19.15 Is the requirement for specialist housing for older or disabled people to provide 100% wheelchair adaptable or wheelchair accessible, as set out in the final paragraph of Policy NC4, justified?**

14. The HBF does not consider that it is appropriate for 100% of housing to be wheelchair adaptable or accessible. Table 10.12 of the Viability Assessment highlights the challenges with delivery of older persons housing. It also appears that the base scenario for this assessment is for 100% M4(2) not for 100% wheelchair accessible homes, and that only 10% and 20% M4(3) standards have been tested (as set out in paragraph 8.45). The previous paragraphs in the Assessment set out the costs in providing a wheelchair accessible (£33,934) or wheelchair adaptable home (£13,650). The HBF is concerned that the requirement for 100% of homes for older people or disabled people to be 100% M4(3) is not evidenced by the viability assessment or through need. Not every older person seeking to live in specialist housing requires a wheelchair accessible or adaptable home.

**Policy NC5: Creating Mixed Communities**

**19.16 Is the mix of unit sizes and house types set out in parts a) and b) justified by need and viability evidence? Will the mix enable planned densities to be achieved?**

15. This policy requires that development of 30 or more dwellings in the City Centre and other highly accessible locations that no more than half the homes consist of one-bedroom apartments and studios (part a). It also requires a greater mix of house types on developments of 30 or more dwellings in other locations to include homes for larger households (part b).
16. The Viability Assessment suggests that the housing mix set out in Policy NC5 is reflected in the modelling, appendix 14 of the Assessment provides the details for base appraisals for residential development, including the numbers of bedrooms used in the assessments. However, as has been set out previously, the Viability Assessment clearly sets out the viability challenges within Sheffield, which leaves questions as to whether the proposed mix and planned densities will be achieved.
17. The SHMA contains a section on the future housing market, with the household survey providing insights into the future expectations and aspirations of local households. Table 5.13 and 5.14 set out the property type expectations and the demand by dwelling size. It identifies that the majority of people expected to move into a detached or semi-detached house and would prefer to live in a two, three or four bed property.

**19.17 Are parts a) and b) applicable to student accommodation schemes?**

18. The HBF considers that this is a question for the Council.

**19.18 Is the definition of highly accessible areas in Policy NC5 consistent with the definition in Policy NC11?**

19. The HBF considers that this is a question for the Council, but if the Council are expecting this to apply for all residential developments comprising 10 or more new homes, this is not likely to be an appropriate criteria for highly accessible locations.

**19.19 What is the justification for the distance of 200m and the 20% threshold in part c of the policy?**

**Policy NC6: Purpose-Built Student Accommodation**

19.20 How was the area identified as suitable for Purpose-Built Student Accommodation defined? Are the boundaries justified?

19.21 Is the area-based approach in Policy NC6 justified and does the policy provide sufficient flexibility? How will proposals be dealt with in parts of the city outside the defined area?

19.22 What is the evidential basis for the 2% wheelchair accessible bed spaces in part d) of the policy?

**Policy NC7: Criteria for Assessing New Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Sites**

19.23 Is part a) of the policy consistent with national policy on Gypsies and Travellers and is it sufficiently flexible?

19.24 Is the accessibility requirement in part d) justified and fair? Does it mirror requirements relating to general residential development?

19.25 What does the term 'reasonable access to the Strategic Road Network' mean, as set out in part e), and why is this necessary for Gypsies and Travellers?

19.26 In the case of any future private sites which are no longer fit for purpose, is it feasible and reasonable to require the re-provision of pitches/plots as set out in part j)?

**Policy NC8: Housing Space Standards**

**19.27 Is the use of the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS) supported by the Council's evidence on need and viability?**

20. The Housing Space Standards Topic Paper (January 2024) highlights that a series of Building for Life (BfL) Assessments were carried out on a variety of housing schemes across the city during 2019-20. The schemes were recently completed or nearly completed and included 11 sites, which the Council considered provided a spread across the city. The assessment included consideration of the accommodation mix and the housing size. The Council have also added an additional site to this, developed by Barratt Homes at Bannerdale, to bring the number of sites considered to 12. Table 2 and 3 consider the house sizes and Section 2.3 of the Paper goes on to evaluate this assessment. It suggests that 33% of the private for sale homes fail to meet the minimum NDSS standards. It also highlights that the schemes which meet the density requirements are the schemes that are struggling to meet the NDSS standards.

21. The Topic Paper then goes on to consider apartment schemes. It has considered 8 apartment schemes within Sheffield City Centre which were completed in 2020/21 or 2021/22. It highlights that 83.3% of the apartments assessed failed to meet the NDSS standards.

22. If the Council wishes to apply the optional NDSS to all dwellings, this should only be done in accordance with the NPPF<sup>7</sup>, which states that policies may also make use of the NDSS where the need for an internal space standard can be justified. As set out in the NPPF<sup>8</sup>, all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence, which should be adequate and proportionate, focussed tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned and take into account relevant market signals.
23. The NDSS as introduced by Government, are intended to be optional and can only be introduced where there is a clear need and they retain development viability. The PPG<sup>9</sup> 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 need, viability and timing. The Council will need robust justifiable evidence to introduce the NDSS, based on the criteria set out above. The 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.
24. The HBF does not consider that the Council have provided sufficient evidence to take account of need, and given the evidence they have provided, the HBF does not consider they have given full consideration as to how they will balance the policy requirements for both the NDSS and density to be met. For example, the HBF notes that the NDSS requirements for a 3-storey home is higher than for a 1 or 2 storey dwelling, and that there are significantly higher costs if elements such as undercroft parking is required to meet the density requirements.
25. The HBF does not consider that the Topic Paper is sufficient evidence to demonstrate need for the introduction of the NDSS. The Council have not provided evidence to show that these homes have not sold or that the residents of these properties are in anyway unsatisfied with their home. They have also provided no consideration of how these properties compare to other properties within the market area.
26. The HBF considers that standards can, in some instances, have a negative impact upon viability, increase affordability issues and reduce customer choice. In terms of choice some developers will provide entry level two, three and four-bedroom properties which may not meet the optional nationally described space standards but are required to ensure that those on lower incomes can afford a property which has their required number of bedrooms. The industry knows its customers and what they want, our members would not sell homes below the enhanced standard size if they did not appeal to the market.
27. It should be noted that the HBF's Annual Industry Customer Satisfaction Survey<sup>10</sup> published March 2023 and completed by over 60,000 new homeowners highlights that 90% of people who have bought a new home would do so again. It also highlights that

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<sup>7</sup> NPPF Sept 2023 paragraph 130(f) footnote 49

<sup>8</sup> NPPF Sept 2023 paragraph 31

<sup>9</sup> PPG ID: 56-020-20150327

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.hbf.co.uk/documents/12362/18th\\_Survey\\_CSS\\_2023\\_Completions\\_October\\_2021\\_-\\_September\\_2022.pdf](https://www.hbf.co.uk/documents/12362/18th_Survey_CSS_2023_Completions_October_2021_-_September_2022.pdf)

92% of homeowners are satisfied with the internal design and layout of their new home. This does not suggest that new homeowners have issues with the size of rooms provided or that there is a need for the NDSS to be introduced.

**19.28 What is the definition of ‘adequate living space’, as referred to in part b) of the policy?**

28. The HBF considers that this is a question for the Council.

**19.29 How should development be flexible and adaptable to meet the changing needs of occupants, as specified in part c)?**

29. The HBF considers the move towards the M4(2) standard should ensure that this flexibility and adaptability is met, and it should not be necessary to set any further standards or requirements. The M4(2) standard will be met where a new dwelling makes reasonable provision for people to gain access to; and use a dwelling and its facilities, where the provision is sufficient to meet the needs of occupants with differing needs including some older or disable people; and to allow for adaptation of the dwellings to meet the changing needs of occupants over time.

**19.30 Are the sizes and depths of private amenity/garden space, as referred to in the Definitions, justified and reasonable?**

30. The HBF considers that the sizes and depths suggested in the definitions are not justified or reasonable. The HBF is concerned that the full implications of these definitions have not been fully considered in terms of the density requirements, viability or deliverability.

**Policy NC9: Housing Density**

**19.31 Are the density ranges and distance thresholds in Policy NC9 justified and supported by evidence? Why are upper levels used for most of the identified areas and does this provide sufficient flexibility?**

31. This policy states that housing development will be required to make efficient use of land. It also sets density requirements for different areas ranging from at least 70 dwellings per hectare (dph) within or near to (within 400m) the Central Area, 50 to 80dph within or near to District Centres, 40 to 70dph within easy walking distance (10 minutes’ walk / 800m) of tram stops and high frequency bus routes (those with at least 6 buses per hour in both directions between 7.30am and 6pm Mon – Sat), 30 to 50dph in remaining parts of the urban area and 30 to 40dph in the rural areas. It allows for exceptions to these requirements to reflect the character of a Conservation Area or to protect a heritage asset, to create different density character areas on larger development sites or are necessary to protect an environmentally sensitive area.

32. The setting of residential density standards should be undertaken in accordance with the NPPF<sup>11</sup> where policies should be set to optimise the use of land. This may mean that it is not necessary to include the upper levels of the ranges, as currently identified in the policies for all by the Central Area.

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<sup>11</sup> NPPF Sept 2023 Paragraph 124 & 125

33. The HBF would recommend the Council ensure further flexibility is provided by this policy to allow developers to take account of the evidence in relation to site specific conditions, market aspirations, deliverability, viability and accessibility, not just those elements currently identified.
34. The HBF is not aware of any evidence provided by the Council to justify the density ranges and distance thresholds used in this policy and the HBF is concerned that Council has not fully considered how its approach to density relates to other policies in the plan. Policies such as open space provision, SuDs, tree provision, biodiversity net gain, cycle and bin storage, housing mix, residential space standards, accessible and adaptable dwellings, energy efficiency and parking provision will all impact upon the density which can be delivered upon a site.

**19.32 Is the wording of part a) effective in respect of conserving and enhancing the historic environment? Is the Council's proposed amendment LS10 (in CD31) to part a) necessary for soundness?**

35. The HBF does not consider that the Council's proposed amendment LS10 is necessary for soundness.

**19.33 Do Policies NC5 and NC9 conflict with one another in respect of density?**

36. The HBF is concerned that the Council has not provided sufficient evidence to determine whether policies NC5 and NC9 conflict. The HBF considers that the housing mix policy has the potential to impact on the densities that can be provided alongside other policies within the Plan as highlighted above.

**Policy NC15: Creating Open Space in Residential Developments**

19.34 Is the requirement for 10% open space on sites of 100 or more dwellings justified and deliverable?

19.35 What open space requirements will apply on sites below 100 dwellings?

19.36 How would the minimum standards referred to in the first bullet point of Policy NC15 be measured?

19.37 Are the Council's proposed amendments SV38 and SV41 (in CD31) necessary for soundness reasons?

19.38 Is proposed amendment GD12 (in CD31) to paragraph 4.52 necessary to establish the approach to playing pitches and ensure soundness?