



# THE HOME BUILDERS FEDERATION

Parish Clerks,  
[elwick.clerk@btinternet.com](mailto:elwick.clerk@btinternet.com)  
[hartvillagepc@btinternet.com](mailto:hartvillagepc@btinternet.com)  
[johncunliffe@hotmail.com](mailto:johncunliffe@hotmail.com)

**Sent by email only**

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015

Dear Sir / Madam,

## **Hartlepool Rural Neighbourhood Plan 2015 – 2030: Consultation Draft May 2015**

1. Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the consultation draft of the Hartlepool Rural Neighbourhood Plan 2015 to 2030.
2. The HBF is the principal representative body of the house building industry in England and Wales and our representations reflect the views of our membership of multinational PLCs, through regional developers to small, local builders. Our members account for over 80% of all new housing built in England and Wales in any one year including a large proportion of the new affordable housing stock.
3. The HBF has extensive experience of development plan preparation and provides the following comments to assist the Parish Councils in preparing a robust plan for rural Hartlepool.

### **POLICY GEN1 - VILLAGE ENVELOPES**

4. The policy seeks to retain new development within the existing village envelopes where it accords with site allocations and designations. The HBF supports the provision of new housing in sustainable locations. Whilst the policy seeks to achieve this aim, the focus upon site allocations and designations may inhibit sustainable development coming forward on sites which are not allocations or designations. These may be in the form of windfall sites or sites not originally considered deliverable within the allocations process. Providing such sites are sustainable and fulfil other policy considerations within the plan they should be brought forward.
5. The HBF suggests the following modifications to the policy;

*'Within the Village Envelopes as defined on the Proposals Map, development will be permitted where it accords with site allocations and designations. **Non-allocated sites will be also be permitted provided they are of an appropriate scale and accord with other plan policies**'.*

6. The supporting text to the policy does not consider the possibility that the emerging Hartlepool Local Plan may consider the expansion of one or more village envelopes. To ensure that the rural plan remains consistent with the Local Plan, and therefore does not become out of date, it is recommended that this possibility be discussed in the supporting text.

## **POLICY GEN 2 - DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

7. The policy correctly emphasises the need for good design. The HBF encourages the use of Building for Life 12 (BfL12) to aid discussion upon design issues. Whilst the HBF is supportive of BfL12 and many of our members accord to its requirements it is important that it does not become mandatory for all developments as this would remove flexibility.
8. The HBF recommend the following amendment to the policy;

***'2. New housing should be well designed and score highly using the most recent Building For Life criteria, applicants are encouraged to submit their own Building for Life assessment to form the basis for discussions on design quality'***

9. Criterion 6 of the policy refers to; *'incorporating the highest standards of energy efficiency'*. Whilst a laudable aim the recent ministerial statement by Eric Pickles, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2015, identifies that upon commencement of amendments to the Planning and Energy Act 2008 in the Deregulation Bill 2015, expected late 2016, energy performance requirements will be set solely within the Building Regulations, therefore criterion 6 is not required as it cannot be enforced after this date.
10. The NPPF is also clear that development viability is a key component of planning decision making and policy setting. A requirement for development to go beyond the Building Regulations would be likely to place unsustainable burdens upon the development industry and stall development coming forward. It is therefore recommended that this criteria be removed.
11. Paragraph 8.10 refers to the housing standards consultation, this has now been superseded by the ministerial statement, noted above, as well as the amendments to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

## **POLICY H1 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

12. The policy refers to a requirement of; *'at least 170 new dwellings will be developed in the plan area by 2029'*. The HBF is supportive of the requirement being identified as a minimum, this accords with the NPPF requirement for plans to be positively prepared.
13. It is, however, unclear how the figure of 170 new dwellings has been derived and whether this may need to change as a consequence of work upon the emerging Hartlepool Local Plan. It is important that the Rural Plan remains consistent with the emerging Local Plan and its evidence base. If

work upon the Local Plan identifies a higher housing requirement within the rural area this will need to be reflected and considered.

14. The table identifies very specific figures for individual sites based upon work undertaken as part of the SHLAA. It is unlikely that these figures will be accurate in all instances once development proposals have been submitted or indeed if other sustainable sites come forward. It should also be noted that the figures for allocations and commitments add up to a maximum of 169 dwellings, this is insufficient to meet the plan requirements of at least 170. To be consistent with the 'at least' stance of the policy it is recommended that the figures for individual villages are identified as indicative minima and additional sites are considered. The proposed HBF modifications to Policy GEN1 also assume greater importance as without additional sites the housing requirement will not be met.

## **POLICY H2 AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

15. The policy identifies an affordable housing threshold of five or more units, this is contrary to the PPG and the ministerial statement, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014. These identify a lower threshold of 6 units or more within designated rural areas. The 0.4ha threshold has also been replaced by 1,000sqm gross internal floor area and as such should not be used. Providing the whole of the 'Rural Plan' area is a designated rural area under section 157 of the Housing Act 1985 the policy should be amended to reflect this. If not the higher threshold must be used.
16. Part 1 of the policy also indicates that the policy will relate to changes of use and conversions. This is contrary to the PPG and ministerial statement which introduces a vacant building credit. The vacant building credit is discussed in detail within the PPG (paragraphs 23b-021 to 023). The HBF therefore recommend the following amendments to part 1 of the policy;

*'Affordable housing will be required in applications for residential development that consist of a gross addition of five ~~five~~ six or more dwellings' (or 0.4 hectares).  
~~These include residential new build, renewal of lapsed unimplemented planning permissions, changes of use and conversions'~~*

Additional supporting text which acknowledges and explains the vacant building credit would also be beneficial.

17. Paragraph 8.39 of the supporting text indicates that for developments of between 6 and 10 dwellings on-site provision is preferred due to the small amount of affordable housing which will be provided. Whilst this may be the case the plan cannot insist on on-site provision as this would be contrary to national guidance. The PPG clearly states that where the lower (6 units or more) threshold is applied;

*'...local planning authorities should only seek affordable housing contributions from developments of between 6 to 10-units as financial contributions and not affordable housing units on site. Any payments made (whether as an affordable housing contribution or contribution to a*

*pooled funding pot for general infrastructure provision) should also be commuted until after completion of units within the development.'* (PPG para. 2a-017)

18. Part 2 of the policy indicates a borough wide need for 27.5% affordable housing. The policy indicates that contributions will be made to assist meeting this target. The policy does not, however, provide any guidance upon the actual policy requirement. The NPPF, paragraph 174, indicates that policy requirements, including those for affordable housing, should be identified with the plan. Plan paragraph 8.32 suggests a 15% target is generally achievable. It is unclear what this is based upon, but if based upon credible evidence this should be utilised as the target requirement. If this level makes development unviable part 7 of the policy would then be invoked. The Council should be updating its Affordable Housing Economic Viability Assessment (2009) to consider current economic conditions and the implications of other policies. This may be useful evidence to assist in setting the affordable housing requirement for the Rural Plan.

#### **POLICY H5 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON THE EDGE OF HARTLEPOOL**

19. The HBF support development which compliments its setting. However the strict stipulation that developments should have a gross density of 25dph or less is likely to be too rigid. A more flexible approach is recommended to enable all local characteristics and issues of development viability to be considered. It is therefore recommended that the policy be amended to read;

*'3. provide an open and attractively landscaped development, the gross density of the development **should normally be** about 25 dwellings per hectare (or less)';*

#### **Information**

I trust that the Parish Councils will find the foregoing useful in the continued development of the Hartlepool Rural Plan. I would be willing to discuss any matters raised within this response prior to the next phase of consultation and wish the Parish Councils well in your continued development of the plan.

Yours sincerely,

*MJ Good*

**Matthew Good**  
**Planning Manager – Local Plans**  
Email: [matthew.good@hbf.co.uk](mailto:matthew.good@hbf.co.uk)  
Tel: 07972774229