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SENT BY E-MAIL AND POST

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Dear Sir / Madam

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICIES, SITES AND PLACES DPD PRE SUBMISSION CONSULTATION

Introduction

Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the above mentioned consultation. The HBF is the principal representative body of the house-building industry in England and Wales. Our representations reflect the views of our membership, which includes multi-national PLC's, regional developers and small, local builders. In any one year, our members account for over 80% of all new "for sale" market housing built in England and Wales as well as a large proportion of newly built affordable housing. We would like to submit the following comments and in due course attend the South Gloucestershire Policies, Sites & Places DPD Examination Hearing Sessions to discuss these matters in greater detail.

Policy PSP4 : Designated Local Green Spaces

The HBF remains concerned about the number of proposed Designated Local Green Spaces as previously set out in representations to the Draft DPD and whether or not all circa 560 spaces listed in Appendix 2 of the Draft DPD comply with paragraphs 76 and 77 of the NPPF. As previously stated the Council should bear in mind that "*the Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space*" (our emphasis).

Until further work is carried out by the Council it is not possible to come to a definitive conclusion on this matter suffice to say it is procedurally irregular for

the Council to be undertaking this Pre Submission consultation on the Policies, Sites and Places DPD including Policy PSP4 before determining the sites to be included in Appendix 2. It is understood that an informal consultation on proposed Designated Local Green Spaces is occurring between 18 – 30 July 2015 whilst the final list of spaces will be formally consulted upon in September / October 2015. Until this is undertaken and finalised the Policies, Sites and Places DPD should not be submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination.

Policy PSP6 : Onsite Renewable & Low Carbon Energy

The HBF suggests that the Council re-consider Policy PSP6 in view of the Written Ministerial Statement dated 25th March 2015. Under clause 3.54 of the DPD the Council confirms that Policy PSP6 may be subject to further amendment prior to its Examination as a consequence of future announcements on this topic by the Government.

Policy PSP17 : Parking Standards

The HBF also suggest that the Council re-check Policy PSP17 for compliance with national policy as set out in the Written Ministerial Statement dated 25th March 2015 which states *“This government is keen to ensure that there is adequate parking provision ... in new residential developments The imposition of maximum parking standards under the last administration lead to blocked and congested streets and pavement parking. Arbitrarily restricting new off-street parking spaces does not reduce car use, it just leads to parking misery. It is for this reason that the government abolished national maximum parking standards in 2011. The market is best placed to decide if additional parking spaces should be provided. However, many councils have embedded the last administration’s revoked policies. Following a consultation, we are now amending national planning policy to further support the provision of car parking spaces. Parking standards are covered in paragraph 39 of the NPPF. The following text now needs to be read alongside that paragraph: “Local planning authorities should only impose local parking standards for residential and non-residential development where there is clear and compelling justification that it is necessary to manage their local road network.”*”

Policy PSP38 : Internal Space Standards for Affordable Housing

Policy PSP38 proposes to introduce the nationally described space standard for affordable housing and for an unspecified percentage of dwellings the optional requirement M4(3) for wheelchair users under Part M of the Building Regulations. However to do so the Council should provide supporting evidence on need, viability, affordability and timing in order to assess the impact and effect of this policy in the local area. The Written Ministerial Statement dated 25th March 2015 states that *“the optional new national technical standards should only be required through any new Local Plan policies if they address a clearly evidenced need, and where their impact on viability has been considered, in accordance with the NPPG”*.

Paragraph ID: 56-020-20150327 of the NPPG sets out “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”.*

The latest evidence on whole plan viability testing is contained in the document South Gloucestershire Council Viability of Proposed Policies, Sites & Places DPD by Adams Integra dated April 2015. In this document it is not obvious whether or not the cost of providing M4(3) wheelchair standards to a percentage of affordable housing dwellings has been included. Under other assumptions the allowance for overheads is also unclear. However Appendix 1 confirms that the nationally described space standard has been applied to affordable housing as well as all other policy requirements. In its conclusions Appendix 1 seems to demonstrate that sites of more than 14 dwellings are unviable except in the area of Value Point 5. Whilst sites of less than 9 dwellings are unviable in the area of Value Point 2 but viable elsewhere. These conclusions suggest that the Council should reconsider its proposed requirements as set out in Policy PSP38.

The Council should also re-check Policy PSP38 against the advice contained in the NPPG which suggests that the Council should be specifying M4(2) rather than M4(3). Paragraph ID 56-009-20150327 clarifies that “*Local Plan policies for wheelchair accessible homes should be applied only to those dwellings where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling”.*

Policy PSP43 : Custom Build Dwellings

Policy PSP43 under Bullet Point (5) proposes that on sites over 100 dwellings at least 5% are offered as serviced plots to custom builders. Whilst the HBF supports custom build in principle for its potential contribution to overall housing supply the Council’s approach to custom build should be positively undertaken to increase the total amount of new housing developed rather than by a restrictive policy requirement for inclusion of such housing on large development sites. Such a policy approach only changes the house building

delivery mechanism from one form of house building company to another without any consequential additional contribution to boosting housing supply. If these serviced plots are not developed by custom builders then the Council has effectively caused an unnecessary delay to the delivery of these homes. Moreover Policy PSP43 provides no recourse for the larger house builder to develop out these serviced plots if undeveloped by custom builders. The Council should also give detailed consideration to the practicalities (for example health & safety implications, working hours, length of build programme, etc.) of implementing any such policy.

If the Council wishes to promote custom build it should do so on the basis of evidence of such need. It is not evident that the Council has assessed such housing needs in its SHMA work as set out in the NPPG under ID 2a-021-20140306 whereby the Council should collate from reliable local information the local demand for people wishing to build their own homes.

As the size of unit built by a custom builder is restricted by Bullet Point (10) the Council should confirm that this dwelling size restriction complies with national policy as set out in the Written Ministerial Statement dated 25th March 2015.

Furthermore it is understood from the document South Gloucestershire Council Viability of Proposed Policies, Sites & Places DPD by Adams Integra dated April 2015 that the impact of Policy PSP43 on development of over 100 units has not been viability tested as it is judged to have a neutral effect on viability. However unless this assumption is viability tested such a judgement has not been proven as correct. It is thought unlikely that this assumption is correct due to the imposition of size restrictions and no reduction in affordable housing contributions. The NPPG confirms that *“different types of residential development such as those wanting to build their own homes ... are funded and delivered in different ways. This should be reflected in viability assessments”* (ID 10-009-20140306).

It is recommended that Policy PSP43 is given further consideration by the Council. Perhaps it would be most sensible to defer Policy PSP43 until the review of the adopted Core Strategy in 2018 by which time the Self Build & Custom House Building Act 2015 will have bedded in.

Policy PSP44 : Private Amenity Space Standards

The Government wishes to streamline the planning system and to rationalise many differing existing standards into a simpler system which will reduce policy burdens and deliver more much needed housing. The Deregulation Bill 2015, which received Royal Assent in March 2015, specifies that Councils should not set any additional local technical standards or requirements relating to the construction, internal layout or performance of new dwellings. The only technical standards that can now be considered and incorporated into DPDs are restricted to the nationally described space standard, an optional requirement for water usage and optional requirements for adaptable / accessible dwellings. The Council's proposals under Policy PSP44 for minimum private amenity space standards are beyond these permissible

standards. Moreover standards can only be opted into if justified by evidence on need and viability. It is not obvious from the Council's supporting evidence if the density of developments tested in the viability assessment is compatible with the requirements of Policy PSP44. The Council should clarify that Policy PSP44 has been viability tested. Moreover the Council has not demonstrated a justified need for minimum amenity space standards. In summary it is contended that Policy PSP44 is in conflict with and therefore non-compliant with national policy.

Conclusion

For the South Gloucestershire Policies, Sites & Places DPD to be found sound under the four tests of soundness as defined by paragraph 182 of the NPPF, the Plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and compliant with national policy. Unfortunately there are number of concerns about the soundness of the DPD with particular reference to Policies PSP4, PSP6, PSP17, PSP38, PSP43 and PSP44 as outlined above. Therefore the DPD has not been positively prepared and properly justified as such it is inconsistent with national policy and is likely to be ineffective.

It is hoped that these representations are of assistance to the Council in preparing the next stages of the South Gloucestershire Policies, Sites and Places DPD. If any further information or assistance is required please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully
for and on behalf of **HBF**



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