

## **Home Builders Federation (HBF) Response to Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) for the Bristol Local Plan- Matter 6: Infrastructure and Community Facilities**

HBF is the principal representative body of the housebuilding 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 have not commented on every policy on those of interest to our members.

We have not repeated our Regulation 19 concerns which remain outstanding but have referred them where we feel this is helpful. This response should therefore be read in tandem with our Regulation 19 comments.

### **Matter 6: Infrastructure and Community Facilities**

**Issue 6.1: Whether policies IDC1 and SV1 relating to development contributions and social value are justified, consistent with national policy and effective.**

#### ***Policy IDC1: Development contributions and CIL***

Q6.1: Is Policy IDC1 justified, consistent with national policy and effective? In particular:

- a) **Is the viability assessment (EVEV01) suitably comprehensive, based on up-to-date evidence, and does it cover all of the Plan policies for which contributions may be required?**

HBF provided detailed comments on Bristol Viability Appraisal in our response to Policy AH1: Affordable Housing which can be found in paras 82 to 90 of our Regulation 19 response. They are not repeated here. We would however wish to note that since the conclusion of the Regulation 19 consultation, national mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain has been implemented. Feedback from our members indicate that this is providing more complex and time-consuming than perhaps expected, which in turn is impacting on housing delivery both in terms of financial viability and the time taken to secure planning permission. Feedback also suggests the requirements for on-site BNG first may also be affecting achievable.

HBF would also wish to draw attention to the recent Future Homes Hub publication [https://irp.cdn-website.com/bdbb2d99/files/uploaded/Delivering\\_the\\_Plan.pdf](https://irp.cdn-website.com/bdbb2d99/files/uploaded/Delivering_the_Plan.pdf) which sets out in more detail the opportunities and challenges facing the house building sector in delivering the Future Homes standard. It was published in Dec 2024. This further underlines our concerns around viability and the problem of Local Plan policies which seek to go further and faster than national Government policy.

**b) Is Policy IDC1 consistent with paragraph 57 of the NPPF which sets out the circumstances in which planning obligations may be sought and the Community Infrastructure Regulations?**

No. Section 106 contributions can only be sought to enable a development to mitigate its own impact. They cannot be used to address existing deficiencies and history under investment in services, facilities and infrastructure.

**c) Is Policy IDC1 consistent with paragraph 58 of the NPPF and PPG ID:10-007 and 10-008 which sets out the circumstances in which viability assessments may be considered as part of a planning application?**

As the whole plan viability methodology uses typologies, this means there may be individual sites that are not viable, for example if the costs or values of a specific site fall outside the parameters used of a typology that was tested. Some sites will be on the very margins of viability and other sites may already be unviable even without a change of circumstances. HBF therefore support the recognition of the potential need for flexibility in relation to site specific viability issues. Without such flexibility the Plan is unsound.

**d) Is it justified and effective for the reasoned justification at paragraph 4.4 to refer to the Planning Obligations SPD which is dated from 2013 and refers to existing Core Strategy policy?**

No. Para 4.4 of the Plan which states that "Other contributions may be sought depending upon the individual characteristics of a development proposal. The approach to other contributions is set out in its planning obligations supplementary planning document" is unsound as it does not comply with national policy, is not justified and as such will be ineffective. If the Council wish to seek "other contributions" these would require a policy basis, set out in the new Local Plan, they cannot be sought from an SPD which relates to an old Local Plan policy that will be superseded.

All s106 contributions being sought by the Council should have been considered in the whole plan viability assessment. HBF has detailed our concerns about the Viability Appraisal in our Reg 19 and these MIQ responses which are not repeated here. However, the wording of para 4.4 in the Plan further underlines our concerns about the inadequacy of the Aspinall Verdi study.

The Whole Plan Viability Assessment should be used to test different amounts of affordable housing and other policy requirements to ensure the level of s106 and CIL sought do not make development unviable. Without full information and analysis of the "other contributions" being sought being robust and credible, the plan is unsound as it has not been shown to be deliverable or effective. Therefore, HBF would question the soundness of a Plan that seeks to rely on a viability assessment that has not included all the key parts of the policy ask.

- e) **What are the implications if any for the aims of Policy IDC1, where the viability assessment identifies that provision of flats over 6-storeys are more challenging in terms of viability?**

As mentioned above, flexibility and site-specific viability may be needed to address individual site issues, however a known viability issue facing a particular housing type methodology should have resulted in changes to policies, and further viability testing through an iterative process to arrive at policies that are viable. This is essential if the Plan is deliverable and effective in these known circumstances.

### **Policy SV1: Social value and inclusion**

***Policy SV1 requires that all major applications for planning permission are accompanied by a Social Value Strategy, which would include all proposals of 10 or more homes. The policy also states that a condition will be imposed to ensure that the relevant parts of the strategy are to be implemented prior to the commencement and occupation of the development.***

#### **Q6.2: Is it proportionate to expect all major proposals to be accompanied by a Social Value Strategy?**

No. As HBF state in para 29 of our Regulation 19 response. HBF do not consider the requirements for a Social Value Strategy to be justified, evidenced, or effective. As such in our view this policy is unsound and should be deleted.

#### **Q6.3: How would the Strategy be utilised in the assessment of planning applications?**

HBF are unclear of how the Council intend this policy to work in practice, this in itself is a problem making the plan ineffective and unsound.

#### **Q6.4: Would a condition to secure the retention of the Social Value Strategy be in conformity with the tests for the implementation of planning conditions as prescribed in the Paragraph 57 of the NPPF?**

No. HBF would question how such a condition could be necessary to make a development acceptable in planning terms.

#### **Q6.5: The reasoned justification to Policy SV1 states that the Council 'will publish advice on the content of the social value strategies, which is based on its Social Value policy, but there are no timescales for the publication of this document, its future status, and likely contents. In consequence, is the policy clearly worded and unambiguous to provide certainty for future decision makers and developers?**

No. The policy is unclear, ambiguous, unjustified and ineffective, as such it should be deleted.

***Word Count 1244 (including wording of the questions)***