

HBF response to Harborough Local Plan (March 2025) Examination

Matter 10: Design of Developments and Management of Impacts

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.

Please note that we have not responded to all the questions only those of relevance to our members, and reflecting the issues in our Reg 19 response that HBF submitted.

Please also note that in order to avoid unnecessary repetition HBF wish to make a general point applicable to all DM policies, before specifically answering the policy specific MIQs.

The new NPPF was published on 17th August. This sets out national planning policy in a new way, separating policies for plan-making from those for determining planning applications. Although the Harborough Local Plan is being progressed under transitional arrangements, and the 2024 NPPF, these new national policies, especially the DM policies will be relevant in determining planning applications. HBF would therefore suggest that in order to be effective and justified the wording of this section of the Plan needs to be reviewed. We suggest that some changes to the chapter, individual DM policy wording and supporting is needed in light of the new NPPF, to ensure that both the Local Plan and the determination of applications can be understood in this new context. It will be important for decision makers and other plan-users to understand the factors that will be relevant to consideration of a planning application in Harborough and this would include the new national DM policies.

We also suggest that in order to be effective, justified and in compliance with national policy any reference to the NPPF, or the PPG, in this Plan should be specific about it relating to the NPPF 2024, to avoid any confusion in the future. The references that we are seeking to introduce will also need to specifically refer to the NPPF 2026.

Stage 2 Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs)

Matter 10: Design of Developments and Management of Impacts

Whether the Plan is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to Design of Developments and Management of Impacts?

Policies DM01, DM02, DM03, DM04, DM05, DM06, DM07, DM08, DM09, DM10, DM11, DM12, DM13, DM14 and DM15

Issue 1: Development Standards

Policy DM01 High Quality Inclusive Design

1. Is it realistic, in criteria b and h of policy DM01 together, to expect all development to protect and enhance existing natural assets, and enhance the public realm?

No. This policy needs to be amended so it is more proportionate.

2. Is the policy justified, effective and consistent with both paragraph 16 (f) and Chapter 12 of the NPPF? What is meant by ‘a good quality experience’ in criterion 1 of the policy? Similarly, what is meant by, ‘integrated as far as possible’?

No, these terms are not clear.

Policy DM08 Sustainable Drainage

4. Does the Plan make appropriate provision for sustainable drainage systems that work effectively?

HBF are aware of feedback from members who are finding the new SUDs guidance and requirements are reducing net developable areas of site and negatively impacting on both housing delivery and the viability of schemes

Policy DM09 Sustainable Construction and Climate Resilience

1. Is it clear to users of the Plan what ‘minimise’ carbon emissions during construction entails, to satisfy criterion 1a) of policy DM09?

This is not clear. HBF continue to believe that national policy is clear that this issue should be addressed through Building Regulations and the forthcoming Future Homes Standard. In seeking to go further and faster than national policy, the Plan could inadvertently undermine the very benefits it is seeking to deliver.

2. Does the water efficiency standard of a minimum equivalent to 110 litres per person per day for any residential use, in criterion e) of policy DM09, appropriately address local water stress?

HBF do not support the policy that seeks to require development to ensure an estimated water consumption of no more than 110 litres/person/day. HBF do not believe such a policy is needed in the Local Plan because current Part G Building Regulations require 125 litres per day, and house builders are frequently delivering 115-110 litres per day which means the house building industry is already improving upon the regulations. There is no need for Local Plan policies to repeat Building Regulations and it is in fact unhelpful to do so as Building Regulations may change during the course of the plan period.

In addition, there will be viability and deliverability issues if this policy was to be allowed that have not been fully considered.

3. Are the BREEAM standards and ratings appropriate in policy DM09, and consistent with national policy? In criterion 2 of policy DM09, is the BRE Home Quality Mark minimum three star rating standard for residential development consistent with national policy and justified? Is whole life-cycle assessment practicable for major residential development?

There is no justification for this. Building Regulations are a separate process and issues covered by them should not be subject to policies in Local Plans.

4. Have the implications of these standards of development for housing delivery, viability and affordability been robustly assessed?

No. HBF have provided detailed comments on viability elsewhere in our responses which are not repeated here other than to say this is yet another example of additional regulatory burdens and costs and facing developers, which ultimately lead to lower levels of affordable housing being viable.

5. Should on-site renewable energy generation be addressed in policy DM09?

There is no need for a policy on this matter as it is being addressed through Building Regulation and the Future Homes Standard.

Policy DM10 Biodiversity and Geodiversity Protection and Enhancement

1. Is policy DM10 consistent with national policy on avoiding unnecessary duplication of policies?

No. It is noted that the PPG is clear that there is no need for individual Local Plans to repeat national BNG guidance. HBF therefore question if a BNG policy is needed as this is addressed through the national requirements and the BNG condition.

If a policy is to remain, then it should be noted that the Government published its responses to the BNG consultation on 15th April 2026. See the links below:

[Improving the implementation of BNG for minor, medium and brownfield development](#)
[Biodiversity net gain for nationally significant infrastructure projects](#)

The first raft of intended changes has now been implemented with the introduction of a 0.2 Ha exemption and small sites being able to deliver off-site. Further changes, including revisions to the statutory metric are expected shortly. The policy and supporting text need updating to reflect this new approach.

2. Is the 'at least 10% measurable biodiversity net gain' figure in criterion 1 of policy DM10 justified, considering both local biodiversity need and the need to deliver development in the District?

HBF suggest that if reference to BNG is needed, this should only need to be made to the national requirement for schemes eligible schemes to deliver 10% BNG. The new national guidance, and 2026 NPPF, are clear that Plan should not seek to secure more than 10% BNG.

In order for this Plan to be sound it must comply with the Environment Act and DEFRA Guidance. This is separate from and in addition to MHCLG advice and the NPPF. Care is therefore needed to ensure that any policy on Biodiversity Net Gain policy complies with the latest policy and guidance on adoption.

HBF would also request that the Council ensures that the Local Plan fully considers the BNG requirements in relation to site allocations. This is likely to require undertaking an assessment of the baseline to support the allocation to enable an understanding the BNG requirements for a site to be allocated and the impact this may have on viability and other policy requirements and considerations. It will be important to understand the BNG costs of mandatory BNG as this is non-negotiable and as such may impact on the viability of the site and its ability to deliver against other policy requirements such as affordable housing or other s106 asks.

3. Is policy DM10 flexible enough? Are requirements 4a) to 4f) of policy DM10 realistically achievable for all development? Is it realistic to expect development to have no adverse impact on elements 5a to 5c) of Policy DM10?

This policy needs to be proportionate. Not all of these factors are relevant to each and every new development and the policy needs to be changed to reflect this.

4. Is policy DM10's provision for species and their habitats in the District, and on designated sites of international importance beyond its boundaries appropriate and consistent with national policy? Is the approach to compensation in policy DM10 appropriate?

HBF notes that there seems to be significant potential for confusion around environmental hierarchy, and suggest particular care is needed to avoid any confusion between the well-established mitigation hierarchy and the new BNG hierarchy. There is need for the policy wording and/or supporting text to be clearer about the differentiation between the mitigation hierarchy (which seeks to avoid harm in the first place, then mitigate and only then compensate 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). There seems to be significant potential for confusion between the two difference hierarchies. HBF therefore suggest that the Harborough Plan should do all it can to explain how the two hierarchies work in different ways and that they seek to achieve different aims. We would suggest the use of the term “BNG spatial hierarchy” may help with this issue.