Winchester Local Plan

Local Plan Examination

Hearings Statement relating to: Matter 11 – Carbon Neutrality and Designing for Low Carbon Infrastructure

On behalf of: Bloor Homes Limited [R.19 reference - #ANON-AQTS-3BQA-Z]

Matter 11: Carbon Neutrality and Designing for Low Carbon Infrastructure

NB1 All references to the NPPF in this Statement (unless explicitly noted) are to the December 2023 version of the Framework, as paragraph 234 of the latest, December 2024, version of the Framework sets out that: *"For the purpose of preparing local plans, the policies in this version of the Framework will apply from 12 March 2025 other than where one or more of the following apply …. (b) the plan has been submitted for examination under Regulation 22[84] on or before 12 March 2025"*. However, it should be noted that as per paragraph 231 of the December 2024 version *"The policies in this Framework are material considerations which should be taken into account in dealing with applications from the day of its publication. Plans may also need to be revised to reflect policy changes which this Framework has made"*. As such, prior to and upon adoption of the Plan, the December 2024 version of the Framework will take effect.

Strategic Policy CN1: Mitigating and adapting to climate change

Q.1. *What is the robust evidence to justify the approach taken in strategic policy CN1 in setting out the overall strategy to achieve net zero and address climate mitigation and adaptation?*

11.1. Bloor Homes Limited (referred to hereafter as 'Bloor') confirms that all comments made are expansions upon Bloor's Manor Parks Regulation 19 (R.19) representations.

11.2. Bloor considers that the evidence base for Strategic Policy CN1 Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change contains a well-considered route to reducing emissions from homes and provides flexibility in approaches to design development and development scale at suitable criteria.

Q.2. *Would the policy strike the right balance between mitigating and adapting to climate change and ensuring delivery of the required level of growth within the Plan period, with particular regard to viability? Would it provide appropriate flexibility in this regard?*

11.3. **Yes.** Notwithstanding comments made below with regard to policy CN3.

Q.3. *In seeking to minimise carbon emissions would the policy accord with national policy as set out on the WMS published on 13th December 2023?*

11.4. **Yes.** Notwithstanding comments made below with regard to policy CN3.

Q.4. *Strategic policy CN1 sets out a design process through which development proposals can consider and incorporate varied forms of low carbon solutions. In the absence of a commitment to produce guidance on the production of energy and carbon statements would the policy be effective? Would the requirement for an energy and carbon statement to be updated to baseline conditions in relation to phased development be reasonable?*

11.5. Bloor notes that the concluding paragraph of policy CN1 refers to the requirement for an Energy and Carbon Statement, which is proportionate to the nature of application, to demonstrate how the design process has addressed the Policy CN1 requirements. A dedicated energy/carbon statement will provide relevant detail on the passive and active design measures which contribute towards carbon savings and can be secured through planning conditions. It is therefore required to ensure the policy is effective. However, it is not felt that, for phased developments, updating the Statement is reasonable, given that masterplan layouts may be required to change as a result of updated baseline conditions and relevant policy implications. These changes may impact the deliverability and viability of development. Any relevant design features and/or energy/carbon targets should be secured through planning conditions and relevant reserved matters applications.

Q.5. *In not setting specific actions or targets, would the policy be effective in its aim to meet the targets in the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration?*

11.6. **No**. Bloor highlights that it is critical to recognise that buildings are only part of the Council's carbon footprint. Significant amounts of carbon are emitted from transport, which is not covered by this policy, nor is the policy able to influence the decarbonisation of the national electricity grid. Therefore, it cannot be said that the implementation of Policy CN1, with or without targets, would be completely effective in meeting the Council's carbon reduction targets.

Policy CN2: Energy Hierarchy

Q.1. *Would policy CN2, when read with strategic policy CN1, serve a clear purpose?*

11.7. **Yes** – policy CN2 Energy Hierarchy, read in conjunction with CN1, states that energy consumption and carbon emissions reduction should be approached in a staged manner, represented by an energy hierarchy and therefore is logical in its application.

Q.2. *Would it be clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals? In particular would more explanation of appropriate interventions at each stage of the hierarchy be necessary for effectiveness?*

11.8. Bloor considers that the current policy wording is unclear and ambiguous, and decision makers would not have sufficient guidance to make a judgement on whether the hierarchy has been adopted. This goes against the guidance contained in NPPF paragraph 16 (d) and therefore the policy is unsound as it currently stands. Broadly speaking, the proposed energy hierarchy categories should be rephrased to reflect the following approach.

a) Minimise energy demand by employing the 'fabric first approach'
   - Orientation
   - Façade glazing ratio
   - Insulation
   - Thermal bridging
   - Air tightness

b) Maximise energy efficiency
   - Lighting efficiency
   - Ventilation efficiency
   - Heating/cooling efficiency

c) Utilise renewable energy (onsite)
   - Onsite renewables (e.g. PV, heat networks)
   - Heat pumps for heating and hot water

d) Utilise renewable energy (offsite)
   - Offsite renewables

Q.4. *In seeking to minimise carbon emissions would the policy accord with national policy as set out on the WMS published on 13th December 2023?*

11.9. **Yes** – notwithstanding comments made with regard to policy CN3.

Policy CN3: Efficiency Standards to Reduce Carbon Emissions

Q.1. *What is the robust evidence to justify the stated energy efficiency requirements for all new residential development which would go beyond those of the Future Homes Standard? Would they accord with national policy? Given technological and infrastructure and other possible constraints would the policy be justified and effective?*

11.10. Bloor refers to the national approach, the Future Homes Standard (FHS), being taken forward to achieve the goal of ensuring new homes are aligned with the national 2050 net zero commitment, and expresses that the policy should adopt this approach to be consistent with national policy. The evidence base and Local Plan as presented do not robustly ensure that new homes can be delivered to the required technical standards for the costs specified. Whilst the required technology to deliver the policy is available to industry and assessed as part of the evidence base, there is a doubt as to whether it is cost effective to deliver this. The 'Net Zero Carbon Targets' document presented as part of the evidence base quotes cost uplift figures of £11,200 (detached home) and £9,400 (semi-detached home) to meet

the proposed standard. This compares with quoted figures from the HBF "Ready for Zero" study of £17,000 to £22,000 per home, so there is a clear discrepancy between industry stakeholders on the costs of delivery. To be certain that the proposed standards will not impact delivery, the viability analysis should be tested with additional costs provided by industry to ensure the Plan will be viable. Therefore, the impact on housing supply and affordability should be considered in accordance with the NPPF as required by the written ministerial statement (WMS) published on the 13 of December 2023.

11.11. In addition to this, the technical constraints of grid capacity have not been assessed. These are discussed in more detail in the response to Q.3.

Q.2. *What is the robust evidence to justify the way in which the energy efficiency requirements for all new residential development is expressed? In this regard, would policy CN3 accord with national policy?*

11.12. Bloor notes whilst WCC has produced an analysis of the energy efficiency requirements for new residential development and associated costs, the analysis is not robust. The policy is also not in accordance with national policy and is therefore unsound.

11.13. The evidence base document which underpins this policy, 'Net Zero Carbon Targets', was produced by a consultancy consortium but has not been tested by developers or housebuilders to ensure the targets proposed are buildable at the costs set out in the document to the required level of detail. Cost uplift data provided is high-level and is therefore not able to be properly scrutinised for accuracy, and therefore this evidence cannot be considered to be robust.

11.14. As set out by both Bloor and the HBF within their representation to the WCC R.19 Local Plan, within the WMS the housing minister notes that *"Compared to varied local standards nationally applied standards provide much-needed clarity and consistency for businesses, large and small, to invest and prepare to build net-zero ready homes"* and that local standards can *"add further costs to building new homes by adding complexity and undermining economies of scale".* After noting these concerns, the 2023 WMS goes on to state that any standard that goes beyond building regulations should be rejected at examination if the LPA does not have a well-reasoned and robustly costed rationale that ensures:

- That development remains viable, and the impact on housing supply and affordability is considered in accordance with the NPPF
- The additional requirement is expressed as a percentage uplift of a dwelling's Target Emissions Rate (TER) calculated using a specified version of the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP)

11.15. With regards to the first bullet point, the proposed standards are higher than the proposed FHS expected to be introduced with the FHS and seemingly will require higher levels of fabric efficiency. This will require new skills and materials that may not be readily available, and which could slow delivery in the

short to medium term as these are developed. As such consideration will need to be given as to the delivery rates of development in the early years of the plan period with fewer homes potentially coming forward in this period as these much higher standards will take time to embed. More detail on the proposed costs is provided below in response to Q.4.

11.16. The second bullet point in the WMS quoted above requires any policy to be expressed as a percentage uplift to the Total Emissions Rates calculated using the specified version of the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP). As such the Council's policy, which requires development to achieve a specified level of space heating demand and energy use, is inconsistent with national policy. The Council will need to amend its policy in line with this statement and ensure that it is consistent with SAP.

11.17. As demonstrated above, policy CN3 is not consistent with national policy, is not justified due to a lack of robust evidence and is therefore unsound.

Q.3. *What is the robust evidence to justify the requirement for 100% on site renewable energy for energy consumption?*

11.18. Bloor agrees with the drive to generate as much energy as possible on site to offset energy use. However, the current proposed policy ignores the fact that solar energy generation rarely matches energy demand at the time it is produced, therefore leading to excess energy generated that is not consumed on-site. Solar energy production is at its highest during the middle of the day in summer, whilst no energy is generated outside daylight hours and only small quantities are generated during winter. This is different to how most occupiers use energy, with more energy consumed during the cold months and often outside daylight hours to provide heating and lighting. This mismatch between consumption and generation leads to excess energy being generated during certain times of the year (summer) and more energy being consumed during other times of the year (winter). The proposed policy wording suggests that energy generation and consumption should be balanced over the course of a year for a net zero carbon development.

11.19. The excess energy produced by a renewable installation can either be exported back to the grid where it can be used by other consumers or curtailed. Curtailment effectively wastes the energy generated. The extent to which excess power can be exported to the grid and used effectively is dependent on the available capacity in the local grid, which is determined and managed by the local distribution network operator. In recent years, the UK national grid capacity has become more and more constrained due to increasing amounts of decentralised energy generation. Without significant grid reinforcement that is aligned with the delivery of housing and employment, additional power being exported to the grid has the potential to hinder further development in the area being able to export power.

11.20. The evidence base does not consider grid capacity in the requirement to achieve 100% of energy consumed to be generated on site and as such cannot be considered to be robust. For this reason, the policy will not be effective and is unsound.

Q.4. *How have viability considerations been reflected in policy requirements, including any impacts on affordable housing provision and delivery?*

11.21. The WCC Local Plan Viability Study states on page 15, paragraph 3.31 that there are a range of sources as to costs, and the assumption made is that additional costs of meeting the policy objectives will fall in the range of 5.0-5.8% on base build costs over the 2021 Building Regulations Part L update. The August 2023 Revision F issue of the 'Net Zero Carbon Targets' evidence base document updates these figures to 5.4% or £11,200 for a detached home and 6.9% or £9,400 for a semi-detached home. The need to update these costs within the evidence base demonstrates that the costs of building to higher standards may not be fully understood by the industry. Bloor considers the costs quoted to be an underestimate of the costs and as such the policy has the potential to impact affordable housing provision and delivery. As expressed by the HBF in its R.19 representation to WCC, and reiterated by Bloor, the "Ready for Zero" study indicates that, in order to deliver a similar standard to that being proposed by the Council, there would be around a 15% to 20% increase in per unit costs (c. £17,000 to £22,000 more per unit as per the HBF representation to WCC) compared to the 2021 Building Regulations Part L. The viability analysis should therefore be stress tested with higher cost uplift figures, such as those presented above, to ensure that affordable housing provision and overall delivery will not be impacted by this policy. Due to the fact that the evidence is not robust, the policy is not justified and is therefore unsound.

Policy CN4: Water Efficiency Standards in New Development

Q.1. *Would the water efficiency requirements accord with national policy, which sets a standard of 110 litres per person per day in water stressed areas?*

11.22. Bloor objects to the proposed potable water consumption figure of 100 litres per person, per day quoted in Policy CN4. As expressed by both Bloor and the HBF in their R.19 representations, the lower water standard of 100 l/p/pd is not consistent with national policy which states that 110 l/p/d is sufficient in water stressed areas and therefore the policy cannot be deemed sound.

Policy CN8: Embodied Carbon Assessment

Q.1. *Would this policy serve a clear purpose in accordance with NPPF paragraph16? In its aim to reduce embodied carbon, in the absence of clear targets would the policy be effective?*

11.23. **No**. The policy does not serve a clear purpose in accordance with NPPF paragraph 16 in that the requirement to provide an embodied carbon assessment does not, in and of itself, reduce the carbon emissions associated with construction. In order to be an effective policy for reducing embodied carbon emissions, the policy would need to include embodied carbon targets which would, in turn, encourage the take up of more sustainable construction materials and practices.

Q.3. *Would policy CN8 provide adequate detail on the process of producing an embodied carbon assessment, so as to ensure effectiveness?*

11.24. **No.** The policy does not provide adequate detail and would require this in order to be considered effective. The 'Carbon Neutrality and Embodied Carbon Topic Paper' and 'Embodied Carbon Policy Options' documents included as part of the evidence base make reference to both upfront embodied carbon and lifecycle embodied carbon. As these two assessments measure carbon across different lifecycle stages, it is currently unclear what applicants are expected to assess. Bloor agrees with the identified embodied methodology ('RICS Whole Life Carbon Assessment for the Built Environment' methodology or through a nationally recognised assessment'), however suggests to clarify which lifecycle stages should be covered in the assessment. To be more effective, the following lifecycle modules are suggested: A1-A5, B1-B5, C1-C4. As a result of this, combined with the response to Q.1 above, policy CN8 cannot be deemed to be sound due to a lack of effectiveness.

Q.4. *Given the requirement for information on materials and construction methods, at what stage would an embodied carbon assessment be required? And would policy CN8 be clear in its requirements in this regard?*

11.25. Bloor considers that it is reasonable to expect developers to provide initial information on materials and construction methods during RIBA Stage 2, when detailed planning applications are usually submitted. However, in many cases, exact details are not confirmed until later design stages, so flexibility is required when setting conditions relating to embodied carbon. Detailed assessment of embodied carbon is not possible for outline applications. Given the level of detail provided for an outline application, details of materials and construction methods are not defined, and as such, it is not reasonable to expect this policy to be met at the outline stage, although commitments should be sought from developers to adhere to the objectives, with further details to be confirmed during Reserved Matters Applications.