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**To whom it may concern,**

### **Introduction**

Policy H4 of the District Council's Local Plan requires a comprehensive and detailed revision. As it stands, the policy fails to align with national housing policy requirements, and it does not effectively address the council's obligation to meet the diverse housing needs of the district. This misalignment not only undermines the council's commitment to sustainable growth but also risks failing to meet the standards set forth in the Local Plan of 2018. Furthermore, critical aspects such as self-build and custom housing remain grossly underdeveloped, and the proposed framework lacks sufficient regard for the district's infrastructure capacity to support future growth.

### **Alignment with National Policy**

A significant concern is the policy's disconnect from the national framework. National housing policies emphasize inclusivity and sustainability, mandating councils to plan for the housing needs of all demographics, including affordable housing, family housing, and provision for the aging population. Policy H4, in its current form, does not adequately reflect these imperatives. Its narrow focus neglects the broader objective of meeting the housing needs of the entire community, thereby limiting the plan's potential to contribute to equitable housing solutions.

The council must, therefore, revisit Policy H4 to incorporate provisions that clearly demonstrate adherence to national policy guidelines. This involves a robust commitment to delivering a variety of housing types and tenures, ensuring that all segments of the population are catered for. Such revisions will not only ensure compliance but also enhance the policy's credibility and utility.

### **Shortcomings Compared to the Local Plan of 2018**

The 2018 Local Plan set a commendable standard in articulating a vision for sustainable development, balancing growth with environmental, social, and infrastructural considerations. Policy H4, however, falls short of continuing this legacy. The lack of detail and ambition in addressing the district's housing needs represents a regression from the benchmarks established in 2018. This undermines public confidence in the council's ability to deliver on its long-term objectives.

To align with the principles of the 2018 Local Plan, Policy H4 must be rewritten to reflect a similar level of specificity and ambition. This includes setting clear, measurable targets for housing delivery, backed by a detailed implementation strategy.

### **The Case for Self-Build and Custom Housing**

One of the most glaring deficiencies in Policy H4 is the absence of a detailed framework for self-build and custom housing. These forms of housing are critical to meeting the needs of local residents, particularly in promoting affordability and enabling individuals to tailor their homes to suit specific requirements. Self-build and custom housing also contribute to a diverse and vibrant housing market, aligning with national and local aspirations for mixed and inclusive communities.

Currently, the lack of focus on self-build and custom housing represents a missed opportunity to leverage these benefits. The revised Policy H4 must include specific measures to facilitate self-build and custom housing projects. This could involve allocating a proportion of housing land specifically for these purposes, simplifying the planning process, and providing financial or logistical support to prospective builders.

### **Infrastructure Considerations**

Equally important is the need to evaluate the district's infrastructure capacity to support the proposed housing growth. Without adequate infrastructure, including transportation networks, schools, healthcare facilities, and utilities, the delivery of new housing risks creating unsustainable and disconnected communities. Policy H4 fails to address this critical aspect, leaving significant gaps in the overall planning framework.

The council must undertake a comprehensive assessment of infrastructure needs and incorporate the findings into the rewritten policy. This will ensure that housing development is supported by the necessary infrastructure, promoting cohesive and sustainable communities.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, Policy H4 requires substantial revision to address its shortcomings and align with both national policy and the 2018 Local Plan. By integrating provisions for a broader range of housing needs, emphasizing self-build and custom housing, and ensuring infrastructure readiness, the policy can better support the district's long-term growth objectives. A rewritten Policy H4, grounded in these principles, will serve as a stronger foundation for sustainable development, fostering confidence among residents and stakeholders alike.