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SENT BY E-MAIL AND POST

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Dear Sir / Madam

**BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION
RESPONSE TO INSPECTOR'S QUESTIONS (ID/35) AND THE COUNCIL'S
RESPONSE (BNES/45)**

Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the above mentioned matter.

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.

The Council's defence for a Housing Market Area (HMA) for BANES only relies upon the documents DCLG Advice Note "*Identifying sub-regional housing market areas*" published in 2007 and "*Geography of Housing Market Areas*" Report by Colin Jones, Mike Coombes and Cecilia Wong dated July 2010 and the interpretation thereof. However the Council's response raises a number of matters of concern.

Firstly, Paragraphs 70 and 71 of the Council's response refer to the geographical coverage of population/households across three identified HMAs stating 80% of the population/households are within a BANES HMA, 20% in a wider Bristol HMA and 25% in a Mendip HMA. If it is assumed these percentages should add to 100%, a correction is required to clarify the extent of population/households in each HMA. However the geographical coverage

or distribution of population/households is irrelevant to defining a HMA. HMAs are geographical areas defined by household demand and preferences for housing, which reflect the key functional linkages between places where people live and work.

A re-examination of the ORS BANES SHMA Update 2013 Report states that the city of Bath is only 50 – 65% self-contained on the basis of travel to work patterns and all other settlements are less than 50% self-contained (Paragraph 3.10). However Paragraph 2.11 of the same Report states that to be self-contained at least 65% closure has to be achieved. Furthermore Footnotes 3 and 5 of the Council's response suggest that depending on the methodology used to interpret the data, there is a disagreement on the percentage levels of closure required to achieve self-containment. It would appear that BANES has not achieved self-containment under the less rigorous 65% measure used by ORS nor the CURDS higher level of 75 – 77.5%. Moreover the recently published National Planning Practice Guidance on the Planning Portal website indicates that an area can only be considered self-contained if 70% of household migration and search patterns are within the same area (ID 2a-011-130729).

Secondly Figure 3 of the ORS Report illustrates BANES split between a Bristol focussed HMA (including North Somerset and South Gloucestershire) and a BANES/Wiltshire/Mendip HMA. This is the crux of the problem, since BANES is not its own HMA, which other HMA is the best fit. Again the recently published National Planning Practice Guidance states that *“a LPA should assess their development needs working with the other LAs in the relevant HMA in line with the Duty to Co-operate, this is because such needs are rarely constrained precisely by LA administrative boundaries”* (ID 2a-007-130729).

Using the “What Homes Where?” toolkit it is possible to identify strong migratory patterns between BANES and all its neighbouring authorities. The toolkit indicates that BANES receives more households moving from Bristol than it exports to Bristol, conversely BANES exports more households moving to Wiltshire and Mendip than it receives. So the question remains which is the more important relationship. If Bristol cannot fulfil its own housing needs more households would move to BANES likewise if Wiltshire and/or Mendip restrict housing provision fewer households would be able to move from BANES. Both scenarios would be increased housing pressures within BANES illustrating that the SHMA must encompass a wider geographical area than BANES alone and that such strategic matters with cross boundary implications are central to the Duty to Co-operate. As putting BANES into one or the other of the identified HMA does not deal with both circumstances outlined above, the best fit would be for BANES to be part of a West of England HMA.

The “What Homes Where?” web based toolkit has been developed as a resource to provide independent and publicly available data on the household and population projections for every local authority in England. The aim of the resource is to assist LPAs understand the drivers of housing need. This resource has been jointly sponsored by the Local Government Association,

the HBF, the Planning Advisory Service, the Planning Officers Society and Shelter among others. The use of the “What Homes Where?” toolkit in determining objectively assessed housing need has been endorsed by Inspectors at examinations into the West Northamptonshire’s Joint Core Strategy and the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy. On 11th July 2013, the Inspector, Nigel Payne wrote in his Preliminary Findings on Matters relating to Housing Needs for the Gravesham LP CS *“I formally request that the Council urgently undertake an up-dated assessment of the full objectively assessed needs for new housing in the Borough over the plan period (to 2028) and / or to 2031. This should take into account both the latest ONS national and regional population and household projections and the early 2011-census statistics including by reference to the “How Many Homes / What Homes Where toolkit” recently launched by Lord Taylor at the House of Lords.”*

Thirdly the re-instatement of the West of England SHMA would be a return to the status quo of the pre-revocation of SWRSS era, which is of more than historic interest as suggested by the Council in Paragraph 35 of its response. It is a most advantageous time to carry out a new West of England SHMA given the willingness of the LEP to co-ordinate such work and the current status of plan making in the respective LPAs with the Bristol CS subject to early review, further examination of the North Somerset CS proposed and no adopted CSs in South Gloucestershire and BANES. Paragraph 67 of the Council’s response suggests that the Council has always believed that BANES was its own HMA and not part of a wider Bristol HMA or West of England HMA. This is untrue Figure 3 of the ORS Report shows BANES divided between two wider HMAs, which the Council has acknowledged. The Council’s problem is determining which one of the two identified wider HMAs is the best fit for the BANES administrative area.

Fourthly, in view of the Council’s poor performance to date on working with neighbouring authorities to objectively assess the housing needs for the HMA, there is no confidence that the Council could address important strategic housing issues with cross boundary implications through an informal process of consultation alone as proposed by the Council.

Finally with regards to Paragraph 94 as set out in our previous representations, there is no agreement that there is a significant over-provision of market housing in the Core Strategy in fact the overall level of housing provision in BANES of 12,700 new homes is too low. Moreover it is yet to be established whether or not there are unmet housing needs arising from Bristol and Wiltshire, which may impact upon BANES.

In conclusion the key issues identified in ID/28 remain unresolved. The Council’s assessment is for BANES only rather than a SHMA for a wider HMA (Paragraph 1.9 ID/28). BANES is not a self-contained HMA in the absence of a SHMA based on a wider HMA, there is no up to date and NPPF compliant evidence to indicate housing needs for the wider area (Paragraph 1.35 ID/28). The LEP proposes to undertake a West of England SHMA. It is proposed by BANES Council any issues identified by such an assessment would be addressed by a very early review of the BANES Plan. However the

fundamental question remains is this plan so essential as to outweigh its lack of compliance with the NPPF?

We hope that these comments are useful in informing the discussion at the Examination Hearing on the SHMA scheduled for 17th September 2013. In the meantime if you require any further assistance or information please contact the undersigned.

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



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