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SOLAR ON CAR PARKS & ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING: A CALL FOR EVIDENCE

We are writing in response to the DESNZ call for evidence on mandating solar canopies in car parks and improving the installation of EV infrastructure.

British Property Federation (BPF)

The BPF provides a voice for the UK real estate sector – an industry which contributed more than £116bn to the economy in 2020 and supports more than 2.4 million jobs.

We represent some of the largest residential and commercial real estate investors and developers in the country. Our members have hundreds of billions of pounds of assets under management, including over 100,000 privately rented homes and hundreds of millions of square feet of commercial real estate space. Their investments help drive economic success, provide essential infrastructure and create great places where people can live, work, and relax.

The call for evidence

We have shared the call for evidence with BPF members, a number of whom have responded directly. As such, we have not sought to respond to the individual questions or provide a detailed response.

However, we would make the following observations.

Solar canopies

We support the ambition of the Government to accelerate the roll out of solar panels and agree that commercial real estate has an important role to play in terms of generating renewable energy and providing energy security. However, feedback from BPF members suggests that there are significant viability challenges installing solar canopies on car parks which can make investment unviable. As such, we do not support mandating solar panels on new outdoor car parks unless these viability challenges are addressed.

If the Government is minded to proceed, it will be important to learn from international experience. Some BPF members have experience of France where solar panels are mandated on car parks above a certain size. We understand that there is real flexibility in the French approach, with a range of important exemptions



including on viability grounds. We also understand that there is a form of subsidised recharge rate/state backed feed-in-tariff which reduces the payback period.

We appreciate that this is a call for evidence but the DESNZ paper raises a number of important questions and highlights a number of barriers that will need to be addressed. If the Government is minded to proceed with new regulation we would expect a full and formal consultation with the sector on the detail of any proposed new regulations.

EV charging infrastructure

We support proposals that speed up the installation of EV charging infrastructure, including proposals to provide more flexibility through permitted development rights. However, for many BPF members it is the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) approval process that creates the greatest delays. We need to reform and improve the process to cut DNO wait times for EV charging connections.

On a wider point, we still need to address the issue of fire risk. The Government might consider issuing new or updated guidance to mitigate these concerns and provides comfort to developers of underground car parks. We have heard of cases where developers have struggled to secure building insurance because of the real or perceived fire risk.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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