

Matthew Birkinshaw MRTPI
The Planning Inspectorate
The Square
Temple Quay House
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Date: 17 February 2023

Dear Mr Birkinshaw,

RE: Examination of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan: Next Steps

Further to my letter dated 22nd December, and in reply to your letter dated 31 January 2023, we appreciate your, and the wider, need for clarification of timescales. Indeed, the Council has been considering this, following your Initial Findings letter, but needed advice from consultants on their capacity and timescales.

We have also had to consider issues in relation to the Council's pre-election period and timetable of Council meetings.

I can now offer an indicative timescale for the key stages in the Council's consideration of the Inspector's Initial Findings letter.

All the consultants needed to advise the Council further on the various elements covered by your letter are now working on them (or will be as in a timely manner as the way forward becomes clearer).

Regarding Green Belt Assessment and Development Strategy the updated work will comprise a comparative assessment of all reasonable alternatives (c70-75 sites) wholly or partially within the Green Belt, with an overall harm rating and noting any variation in harm across a site and setting out the potential for mitigation measures.

Following the Green Belt Assessment there will be a review of the relevant SHELAA assessments and Sustainability Appraisal.

The further work will be presented in an updated and revised Housing and Development Strategy Topic Paper. A draft report from the consultants is expected at the end of March.

With regard to the Strategy for Tudeley Village, a staged approach is being taken into work on the prospects of satisfactorily mitigating certain impacts, such that unduly detailed work is avoided, also having regard to the potential impact on progressing the examination.

The following works are being specifically undertaken for Tudeley Village:

- The Council is discussing the matter of accessibility by rail with Network Rail to establish whether there are further opportunities that can be explored for a railway station that might serve the development to seek to improve modal shift and highway impact from the allocation.
- Further discussions and evidence are sought from the developer, The Hadlow Estate and their representatives, regarding the level of employment floorspace anticipated at the site, which will then be reviewed by the Council’s consultants.
- Further discussions and supporting evidence are being produced having regard to the potential for bus connectivity and improvements in Tonbridge, which is involving discussions between stakeholders and T&MBC Officers. These discussions are ongoing, and it is anticipated that they will be concluded by the end of March also.
- A two-stage approach to assessment of the Five Oak Green bypass is being considered. Stage 1 is a broad scoping and assessment of likely impact from the associated works based on the queries raised. This will be in the form of a RAG assessment and is anticipated to be concluded at the end of February. Advancing to stage 2 will be dependent on the outcomes of Stage 1 and the likelihood of success of dealing with matters raised including landscape impacts.

With regard to Paddock Wood, masterplanning work is being undertaken to assess strategic delivery options of the urban expansion in accordance with Option 3 as identified in the Initial Findings letter. This is being overseen by David Lock Associates and will cover coordinating with other consultants on highway implications, flood risk, infrastructure delivery. The Council will then need to run viability modelling to assess delivery implications.

It is anticipated that much of this consultancy work will be completed by the end of March, at which time we will review the evidence and undertake the review of associated documents, such as the Sustainability Appraisal.

Officers will take a formal recommendation on the way forward for the TWBC Local Plan to Members, which will now be after the local elections in May.

The table below sets the indicative timetable for progressing the examination, with significant milestones identified.

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| End of March | Substantive further work on strategic development options completed |
| End April | Review of relevant evidence base documents and updates in relation to:- • viability, |

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHELAA, • Sustainability Appraisal, • Infrastructure Delivery Plan, and • the Housing and Development Strategy Topic Paper. |
| 4 May | Local elections |
| 22 June | Cabinet meeting - Officer report with recommendation on Suggested Changes to the Local Plan |
| 5 July | Full Council meeting - Officer report with recommendation on Suggested Changes to the Local Plan |
| 24 July - 17th September | Subject to Council decision, consultation on Suggested Changes |
| November | Focused Hearings |

Following on from the Focused Hearings on the Council's "Suggested Changes", subject to the Inspector having considered representations on them, including those discussions at hearings, the Council would then anticipate liaising with the Inspector on comprehensive "Main Modifications", which would need to be formally consulted upon ahead of the Inspector's final report.

You will appreciate that this is a provisional timetable, as it is dependent upon the implications of the outcomes of the Suggested Changes on matters including viability and housing supply for instance. Also, it is subject to Members' consideration.

Although there is a gap until the first planned working meetings of the new Council, I anticipate that time will be useful in refining the necessary Modifications.

Yours sincerely



Carlos Hone MRTPI
Head of Planning Services
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council