

Mr R C Wakeling. D.C.M.

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FAO Inspector - Matthew Birkinshaw

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024

### **Re: Tunbridge Wells Local Plan Examination**

I/we write in response to your letter of 15 October to residents who submitted responses to the local plan consultation earlier this year.

Your letter provided an update on the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan examination and explained that after the stage 3 hearings in July the Inspector wrote to TWBC asking them to carry out a public consultation on certain additional evidence that had been submitted.

TWBC duly launched a consultation which runs from 11 September to 23 October and provided 20 updated documents against which responses can be made. All the documents merit thorough consideration but those that impact residents of Paddock Wood are those that concern me/us particularly.

Although the request to consult the public has been met, I question whether the real views of the public will be heard through this process or if it is the intention of TWBC to conduct this consultation to tick the box. The documents are not easy to read, use technical language and frankly make it too difficult to establish what the key issues are and what impact they will have on the town and residents of Paddock Wood.

I do not have the expertise to provide a reasoned response to issues such as flood mitigation and traffic management. The original local plan promised 'betterment' for Paddock Wood. This has yet to materialise and from what I can glean from the documents there is little detail on how things are likely to improve with, to date, no infrastructure improvements having been delivered because of the three developments already in situ despite promises which remain unfulfilled.

I/we question the absence of any plain English version of the documents published as part of the consultation which would help the 'man in the street' understand what is at stake. There have been no face-to-face meetings held in Paddock Wood to enable residents to discuss the updated documents with planning officials and there are certainly no 'easy read' versions of the documents which would have helped more people understand what it being proposed.

I feel that TWBC are unlikely to receive many responses from members of the public to the consultation although this may not be representative of the true feelings in the town. The process is far too difficult for anyone other than those immersed in planning to grasp. There is little transparency and much hiding behind complicated documents which hide the real impact the proposals for massive development will have on a small town and its residents who feel powerless in the face of TWBC's steamroller approach.

Consultations of this type do not give us a voice but more increase the feeling of despondency and of the whole thing being a 'done deal' over which we have no say.

I realise that this does not constitute a formal response to the consultation but more intended to bring to your attention that TWBC have made it difficult for residents to contribute.