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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to this exhibition about the Tunbridge Wells Borough Pre-Submission Local Plan Public Consultation

The Council is carrying out a public
consultation on the Pre-Submission Local
Plan and its accompanying Sustainability
Appraisal starting at **9am on Friday 26**

March 2021 and ending at **5pm on Friday**
4 June 2021

This exhibition

- explains what a Local Plan is and the process of producing it, with an emphasis on the stage the Local Plan is now at (known as the Pre-Submission stage)
- gives an overview of the [Pre-Submission Local Plan](#) including the development strategy and changes since the Draft Local Plan
- provides information on how to view the Local Plan, its accompanying [Sustainability Appraisal](#) and other supporting documents
- explains the scope of the consultation
- outlines how to make representations (formal comments)
- provides information on how to contact the Planning Policy team for further information or assistance

The Purpose of a Local Plan

Local Plans are a type of planning document. They:

- set out a long-term vision for an area and related objectives
- contain a development strategy that will deliver the vision
- include a set of topic-based policies against which future planning proposals are assessed

The need for a Local Plan

Planning how best to meet people's needs, now and in the future, for homes, workplaces, community and leisure facilities, etc. is a key function of the Council.

The Council is required by law to produce a Local Plan that sets out how such needs will be met across the borough, looking at least 15 years ahead.

The Council's current Local Plans ([Local Plan 2006](#), [Core Strategy 2010](#) and [Site Allocations Local Plan 2016](#)) are now outdated and need to be reviewed. The new Local Plan will replace these Local Plans.

The [Pre-Submission Local Plan](#) being consulted upon:

- covers the whole borough of Tunbridge Wells for the time period 2020 - 2038
- sets out the planning policy framework for different areas, principally on a parish basis, including the provision of the necessary infrastructure such as schools, green spaces and highway improvements needed to support growth
- includes development management policies, set out by theme - environment, housing, economic development, transport and parking and open space, sport and recreation
- is a refinement to the Draft Local Plan consulted upon in 2019

Once 'adopted', future planning applications will be assessed against the policies within the new Local Plan.

Producing the new Local Plan

The Local Plan has been in preparation for some time, with two earlier public consultations, at the Issues and Options stage and the Draft Local Plan stage. The Local Plan is now at the Pre-Submission stage, as shown in the diagram below.

This is the version of the Local Plan that the Council propose to 'adopt'.



[The Draft Local Plan](#) and its accompanying Sustainability Appraisal were consulted upon in 2019. Over 8,000 comments were received from over 2,000 responders.

[Response reports](#) containing all comments made to this previous consultation period are available for viewing on the Council's website

The Council has carefully considered all comments. A summary of the main issues raised and its responses, which also take account of further studies, are contained in its most recent [Consultation Statement](#).

Overview of the Pre-Submission Local Plan

The [Pre-Submission Local Plan](#) consists of a number of individual sections. Key sections are:

- **Vision and Objectives** - at section 3, a long-term vision of the kind of borough the Local Plan seeks to achieve and associated objectives to achieve the vision
- **Development Strategy and Strategic Policies** - these form section 4 of the Local Plan and set out the spatial distribution of development throughout the borough and provide the policy framework from which following sections of the Local Plan flow
- **Place-shaping policies** are included at Section 5. These provide an overarching settlement/parish policy and individual site allocations for each settlement/parish. They set out detailed requirements on how the Local Plan expects sites to be developed to deliver the Local Plan's development strategy
- **Development Management policies** form section 6 of the Local Plan - set out by theme these are the policies against which future planning proposals will be assessed

The next boards give more detail about the vision and objectives, the development strategy, place-shaping section and development management policies of the Local Plan.

Overview of the Pre-Submission Local Plan

The Vision

- reflects the range of issues and opportunities that the Council needs to address over the Local Plan period
- sets out that growth in new homes, jobs and supporting infrastructure will be achieved, in a manner that respects the distinctive qualities of the borough
- sets out that the Council will work with stakeholders to maintain and improve overall living standards and access to employment, leisure and cultural opportunities for all the borough's residents
- expects that development should help achieve the Council's goal of carbon neutrality for the borough by 2030
- identifies that development should help conserve and enhance the borough's recognised heritage and environmental assets
- expects that all development should be of high-quality design that respects local identity and character
- sets out ambitions for identified settlements across the borough and recognises the role a garden settlement could make in achieving sustainable development

The vision is supported by a number of strategic objectives.

Overview of the Pre-Submission Local Plan

The Development Strategy

The Local Plan's development strategy is illustrated by the 'key diagram' (see [next board](#)).

To accommodate the level of further housing needed, including affordable homes, whilst also protecting the integrity of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Green Belt in the borough is very challenging. However, the Council believes that it is able to balance a wide range of objectives to achieve sustainable growth.

This involves:

- promoting infilling and redevelopment in towns and villages across the borough
- some growth of most towns and villages, broadly reflecting their status and constraints
- more substantial growth at Paddock Wood, extending into eastern Capel parish
- a new settlement between Paddock Wood and Tonbridge, in Capel parish, referred to as 'Tudeley Village'

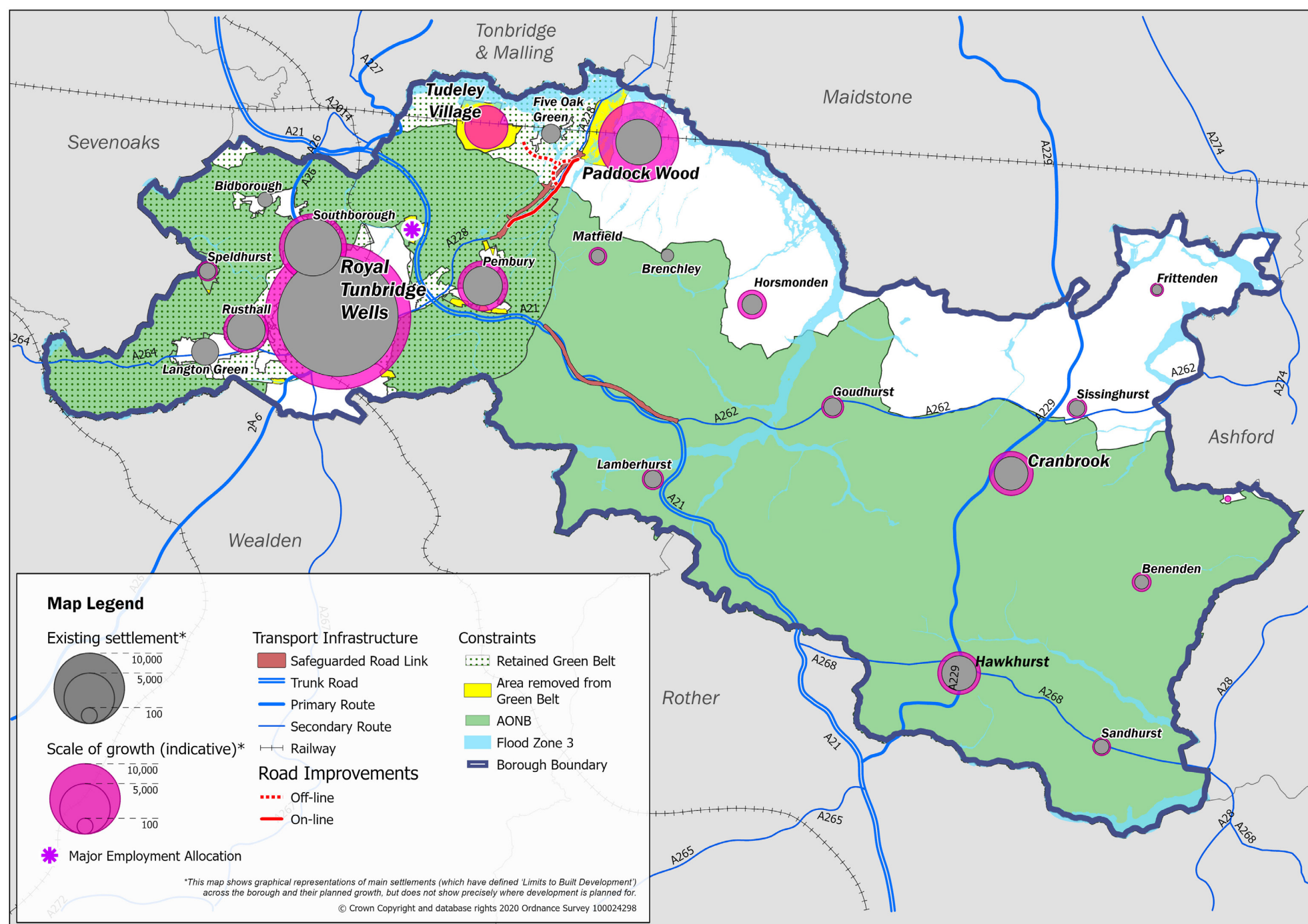
The strategic expansion of Paddock Wood is to be planned to bring about transformational benefits, including in terms of flood risk. The creation of Tudeley Village will be based on 'garden village' principles.

While the proposals mean some loss of Green Belt, studies show that there is scope to provide improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt, and it will still be effective in maintaining the separate identity of settlements.

While housing is a key component of the Local Plan, allocated sites are set within a context of a 'place shaping' strategy for each parish or town, which includes provision for other uses, such as employment, local green spaces, and for supporting infrastructure.

Overview of the Pre-Submission Local Plan

Key Diagram



Changes from the Draft Local Plan

The Local Plan contains a number of changes to the Draft Local Plan consulted on in autumn 2019, in response to comments received and further evidence. The main refinements in the Pre-Submission Local Plan are:

- a more strategic approach to climate change, in line with the Council's declaration of a climate emergency, supported by ambitious policies
- provision for more use of urban and brownfield land opportunities, following further assessment
- a more limited scale of development in the High Weald AONB, in line with national policy
- reductions in development levels at some smaller settlements, to be more compatible with their roles
- further elaboration of policies to meet particular housing needs, including for older people
- confirmation that the strategic sites will include 40% affordable housing (or 30% if brownfield) as elsewhere in the borough

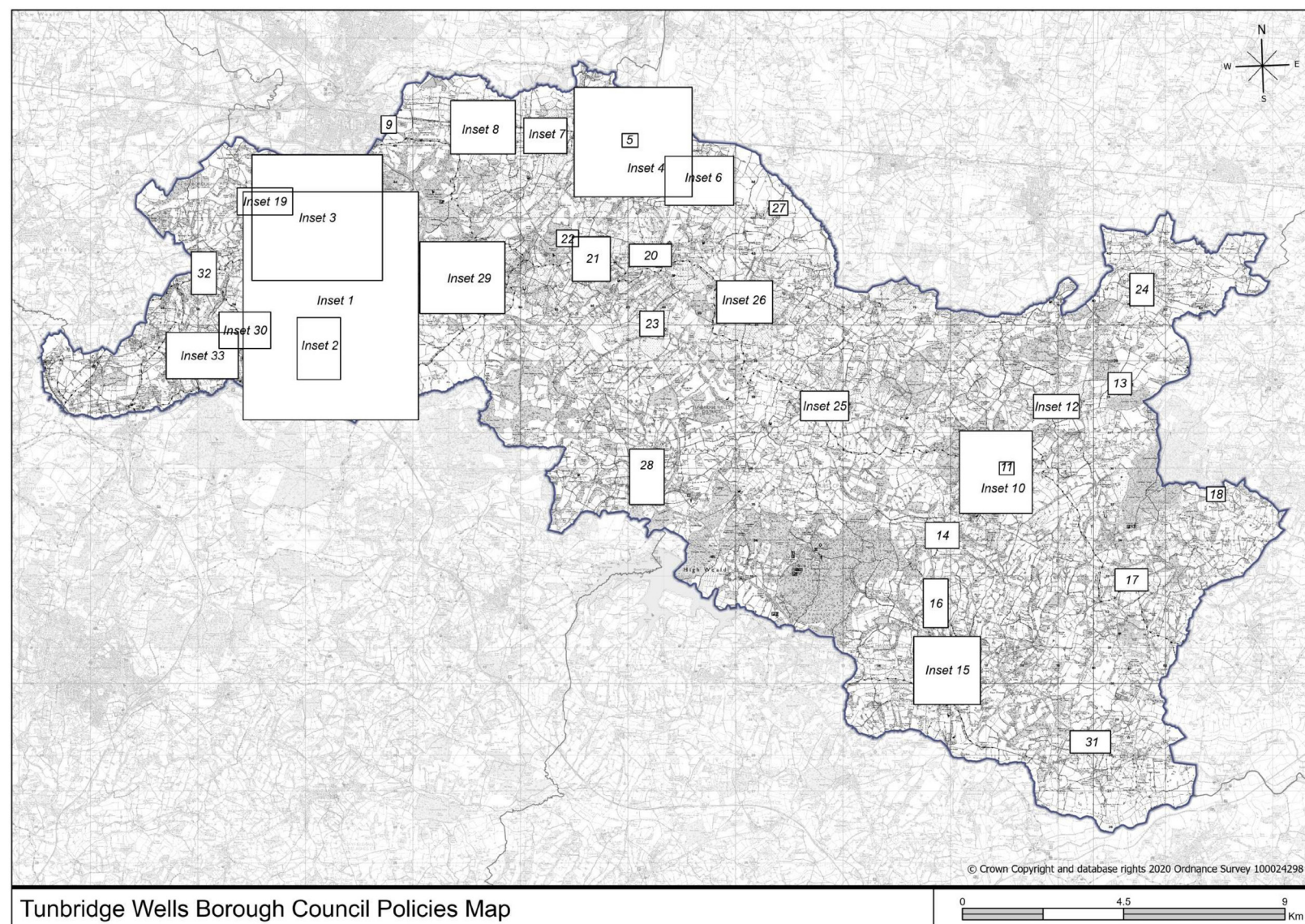
In addition, the Local Plan includes a strategic policy for the town centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells, which will provide a framework for the development of a Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Area Local Plan. This will be developed with significant engagement and will need to take account of changes to working patterns which have been accelerated by the current Coronavirus pandemic.

The programme for the preparation of this Area Local Plan is set out in the Council's current [Local Development Scheme](#).

Overview of the Pre-Submission Local Plan

Maps

The Local Plan is accompanied by a Policies Map and a series of individual Inset Maps, which present the policy designations/site allocations applicable to different settlements and areas across the borough.



Limits to Built Development (LBDs)

Limits to Built Development (LBDs) are policy lines used to differentiate between the built-up areas of settlements and areas of countryside beyond.

LBDs are drawn around settlements to help focus growth in sustainable locations within existing settlements and to protect more rural areas from inappropriate development.

Outside LBDs, much stricter countryside policies over new development apply, although some specific exceptions exist, such as for agricultural and woodland activities, equestrian and tourism uses, and affordable housing to meet local needs.

The proposed LBDs are shown on the accompanying Inset Maps .

Overview of the Pre-Submission Local Plan

Place Shaping Policies and Site Allocations

The Place Shaping section of the Local Plan sets out the policies and site allocations for the different areas of the borough.

Those for the larger settlements of Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough are set out first, followed by the strategic sites at Tudeley Village and Paddock Wood, which includes land at east Capel.

Policies and site allocations for the parishes of Cranbrook & Sissinghurst and Hawkhurst then follow.

The policies and site allocations for the smaller parishes across the borough are then set out in alphabetic order as follows: Benenden, Bidborough, Brenchley & Matfield, Frittenden, Goudhurst, Horsmonden, Lamberhurst, Pembury, Rusthall, Sandhurst and then Speldhurst.

Each site allocation policy sets out the expected uses of the site with an indicative amount of residential development in instances where sites are allocated for residential use. Each site allocation is accompanied by an indicative plan setting out how the Local Plan envisages the site being developed.

The growth at different settlements and parishes in the borough is summarised by Table 4 of the Local Plan, set out opposite.

Distribution of housing allocations

Table 4

Parish/Settlement	Local Plan allocations	
	Lower	Upper
Royal Tunbridge Wells	1,416	1,536
Southborough	42	42
Paddock Wood	3,932	4,032
<i>Strategic urban expansion*</i>	3,490	3,590
<i>Town centre</i>	30	30
Capel*	2,100	2,100
<i>Tudeley Village - new settlement</i>	2,100	2,100
Cranbrook and Sissinghurst	453	467
<i>Cranbrook</i>	415	429
<i>Sissinghurst</i>	38	38
Hawkhurst	161	170
Benenden	87	95
<i>Benenden</i>	43	45
<i>East End</i>	44	50
Bidborough	0	0
Brenchley and Matfield	56	60
Frittenden	25	30
Goudhurst	25	25
Horsmonden	240	320
Lamberhurst	25	30
Pembury	389	417
Rusthall	15	15
Sandhurst	20	30
Speldhurst	10	12
Sub-total	8,996	9,381
Allocations with existing planning permission (to be discounted to avoid double counting)	920	920
Total (with existing planning permission discounted)	8,076	8,461

Overview of the Pre-Submission Local Plan

Development Management Policies

There is a range of new or updated policies to address particular issues associated with certain aspects or types of development. These are the key planning policies against which future planning proposals will be considered.

These policies are grouped under the following five themes:

Environment: Covering environmental and design matters including the natural environment and matters associated with climate change. This section includes policies for example that seek to protect and conserve the boroughs built environment including heritage assets and natural environment.

Housing: These policies cover housing delivery and types of housing, including affordable housing provision and policies to meet particular housing needs such as housing for older people and those with specialist care needs. Policies also cover custom and self build housing provision.

Economic Development including Employment Provision:

The policies here set out the approach taken towards matters relating to economic development and employment provision. This includes retaining existing employment sites and also covers matters such as digital communications and fibre to premises to aid sustainable economic development. Rural diversification is addressed, as are tourism and retailing.

Transport and parking: These policies cover a range of matters including the need for transport assessments, travel plans and mitigation, in addition to design and accessibility. The Local Plan's parking standards are also set out and there are transport infrastructure policies.

Open Space, Sport and Recreation: These policies seek access to high quality open spaces and retention of existing provision. They seek to secure the provision of appropriate open Space, Sport and Recreation space in relevant development proposals.

For the full scope and wording of policies, please see Section 6 of the [Pre-Submission Local Plan](#).

The Sustainability Appraisal

Sustainable Development is defined as:

‘Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’
(World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)

Local Plans are required by legislation to be informed by a Sustainability Appraisal.

The Sustainability Appraisal evaluates the social, economic, and environmental impacts of policies and strategies to determine to what extent they are in agreement with sustainable development objectives. This includes assessing alternative strategies and policies, and whether alternatives are ‘reasonable’.

The findings of the Sustainability Appraisal have informed the choices made about the pattern of future development and site allocations, as well as the scope and nature of themed policies.

It is inevitable that many proposals will have a mixture of potentially positive and negative effects. Where potentially negative effects are highlighted, measures to mitigate these are incorporated into policies, wherever practicable.

The [Sustainability Appraisal](#) is published for consultation alongside the Pre-Submission Local Plan.

Supporting Documents

The Local Plan is supported by an extensive range of evidence documents, collectively known as the 'Evidence Base'.

This has included further evidence gathering carried out in response to issues raised during the Draft Local Plan consultation.

The full range of [supporting documents](#) can be viewed on the Council's website and fall under the following broad themes.

Housing, including:

- a Housing Needs Assessment
- a topic paper explaining the Development Strategy
- a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (which assesses whether sites are potentially suitable for development)

Employment, including:

- an Economic Development topic paper
- a Retail Study

Environment & landscape, including:

- a Habitats Regulations Assessment
- the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments
- Green Belt studies

Transport & infrastructure including:

- the Infrastructure Delivery Plan which sets out the infrastructure required to support the proposals in the [Pre-Submission Local Plan](#)
- the Transport Assessment, which models the transport impacts of the proposals, and how this impact can be addressed

Others, including:

a Viability Assessment and a Duty to Cooperate Statement which explains how the Council discusses important planning and infrastructure matters with other Councils and other key organisations.

Scope of this Public Consultation

At this stage, (known as Regulation 19) the focus of this public consultation is on the legal and procedural requirements, including Duty to Cooperate matters, and whether the Local Plan is 'Sound'.

Local Plans are 'sound' if they are:

- **positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs and infrastructure requirements; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development
- **justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence
- **effective** – deliverable over the Local Plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground
- **consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework

The examination of the Local Plan (see [Next Steps](#) panel) will focus on these 'tests of soundness' and legal compliance.

Making representations

You can make representations on any aspect of the [Pre-Submission Local Plan](#) or Sustainability Appraisal.

Representations should focus on matters of legal and procedural compliance and the tests of soundness. To help with this please read the guidance notes. For ease of reference the guidance notes also appear in the representation form.

The simplest way to make representations is through the [consultation portal](#) and you are encouraged to submit comments this way.

Accompanying this exhibition is a [video explaining](#) how to submit representations through the [consultation portal](#).

All comments need to be in written form and a separate representation form should be submitted for each representation.

If comments cannot be made through the [consultation portal](#), the representation form should be either emailed or posted to the Council.

Other ways to comment

If you do not have access to the internet you can phone the Planning Policy team (01892 554056) and make an appointment to view the Pre-Submission Local Plan, Sustainability Appraisal and supporting documents at the Gateway, Royal Tunbridge Wells where paper copies of the representation form will be available.

Please remember - comments must be received by the Council no later than 5pm on Friday 4 June 2021.

[Make your representations here](#)



Further information and assistance

Viewing the Local Plan documents

- ▶ [Pre-Submission Local Plan](#)
- ▶ [Sustainability Appraisal](#)
- ▶ [Infrastructure Delivery Plan and other Supporting Documents](#)
- ▶ [Making Representations and Next Steps](#)

Do you require help?

If you want help viewing the Local Plan, Sustainability Appraisal or other documents that support the Local Plan or require further assistance to enable you to submit representations, please contact the Planning Policy team using the following details:

Email: localplan@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Or telephone 01892 554056.

Next steps

- ▶ the [Pre-Submission Local Plan, Sustainability Appraisal and supporting evidence base documents](#) will be submitted to the Secretary of State along with the representations received through this public consultation. It is expected that these will be submitted in Summer 2021
- ▶ the Secretary of State will then appoint an independent Planning Inspector to examine the Plan
- ▶ the Local Plan will be examined by the independent Planning Inspector. It is expected that the examination will be in Winter 2021
- ▶ following the examination, the Inspector will issue a decision on whether the Local Plan is considered to be sound
- ▶ if the Local Plan is found sound, the final stage is when the Council decides to formally 'adopt' the Plan. This is expected to be in Summer 2022

We hope that viewing this exhibition will have helped you to:

- learn more about the Pre-Submission Local Plan for the borough including the development strategy, the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal and supporting evidence base documents
- know where on the website to look at the Pre-Submission Local Plan, Sustainability Appraisal and supporting documents and for further information
- know how to make and submit representations to this public consultation - please see the [previous board](#), which sets this out
- know how to [contact the Planning Policy team](#) if you have questions on how to view documents, find further information or how to make/submit representations to the public consultation

Thank you for viewing this exhibition