

Examination of the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan

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Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

FAO: Mr Ian Bailey

By email only

12 September 2019

Dear Mr Bailey,

Examination of the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan

We write in response to your letters dated 28 June and 31 July 2019 regarding the examination of the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan (the Local Plan). Thank you for the additional explanations and evidence you have provided, following our request. This is very helpful.

However, notwithstanding all of this, our significant concerns¹ with regard to parts of the evidence base, particularly that relating to the Green Belt, sustainability appraisal and the site selection process remain. Having considered carefully the best way forward, we have decided to proceed to hearing sessions but taking a phased approach. The first phase of hearings will broadly cover the following:

1. Legal compliance and procedural matters, including the duty to cooperate (this is to ensure that any potential 'show-stopping' legal problems that we are unable to rectify are explored first)
2. The Green Belt
3. The site selection process, including the sustainability appraisal

We will set out detailed Matters, Issues and Questions in due course. At present, we envisage that around three days of hearings will be required. Phase two hearing sessions will only be scheduled once the phase one hearings are completed. This is because discussion of other soundness matters is likely to be dependent on our views following the outcome of the discussion at the phase one hearings. For example, it may be that further work will need to be undertaken and completed before the phase two hearings can take place.

¹ As raised in our letter dated 23 May 2019

We are aware that you are keen to progress the consultation on the evidence submitted so far during the course of the examination. We share that eagerness and request that the consultation on the additional evidence commences as soon as possible. We ask that you prepare a draft of the consultation material for us to consider before commencing the consultation. This should include:

1. Draft consultation letters
2. Draft web pages publicising the consultation
3. Any other draft publicity materials

We also ask that you prepare a programme/timeline outlining when you envisage that the consultation will start and finish, when the representations received can be processed, summarised and provided to us, and when you consider the phase one hearings could take place. Please can you liaise with us in this regard, through the Programme Officer Mrs St John Howe, with a view to agreeing a programme/timeline within two weeks of the date of this letter at the latest.

We turn now to the issue of publishing the representations on the Council's website. The publication of the names, ID number, organisation where appropriate and the first part of the post code for residents is acceptable. However, we require representors to be listed in this format against components of the Local Plan so that people are able to see who has commented and on what matters. The existing search facility is not adequate as it does not allow people to see who has submitted representations without searching 'blindly'. Please can you make these changes to the webpages as soon as possible and advise us when you have done it.

I hope this letter clarifies the current position. We look forward to hearing from you shortly via Mrs St John Howe as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Simon Berkeley and Luke Fleming

INSPECTORS