

Examination of the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan

Inspectors: Mr Simon Berkeley BA MA MRTPI and Mr Luke Fleming BSc (Hons) MRTPI

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Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

FAO: Mr Ian Bailey

By email only

1 March 2019

Dear Mr Bailey,

Examination of the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan

Following the submission of the Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan (the Local Plan) for examination, we have now commenced our initial review of the Local Plan, the evidence supporting it, and the representations made to it. We write to make a few requests and raise a few queries with you.

Main issues raised in representations

The Consultation Statement provides a summary of the representations and consultation undertaken. However, Regulation 22(c)(v) requires a summary of the main issues raised in the representations made pursuant to Regulation 20. It is likely this will prove helpful to us. We therefore ask that this be provided at the earliest opportunity.

Website

We note that very basic information regarding the examination has been published on the Council's website. However, the examination webpages need to be fit for purpose as the main information point for all those involved or interested in the examination. As such, now that the examination is underway, we ask that the Council undertakes the following actions immediately.

- Publish on the examination webpages all documents submitted alongside the Local Plan, ordered thematically and indexed, as soon as possible preferably by close of play on 8 March 2019. This should include the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) (January 2019) submitted to us on 22 February 2019.
- Publish on the examination webpages all representations made in response to the Regulation 19 consultation in a manner which allows interested parties to easily identify and access individual representations and representations made to specific Policies or parts of the Local Plan as soon as possible, by close of play on 29 March 2019 at the very latest.

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Please can you continue to work with our Programme Officer to ensure the website is fit for purpose. Mrs St John Howe is very experienced in such matters and will be happy to offer guidance on format, content and structure, amongst other things.

Evidence

We note that Natural England raised concerns in relation to the original HRA. However, the Council has produced a revised HRA. Whether or not this has been the subject of consultation or discussion with Natural England is unclear to us. If it has not been, then it should be, and this should be progressed as soon as possible. Please confirm the position on this.

We also understand that the Council is working on the following documents which it intends to submit to the examination.

Title	Date for Submission
Landscape and Visual Appraisal	8 March 2019
A20 VISUM Study: Update	8 March 2019
M26 Junction 2a Diverge/Merge Assessment	8 March 2019
Updated Sustainability Appraisal	29 March 2019
Spatial Strategy Topic Paper	29 March 2019
Green Belt Topic Paper	29 March 2019
Paragraph 116 of NPPF 2012 Topic Paper	29 March 2019

You will be aware that the Local Plan should be appropriately justified at the point of submission. This evidence has not, thus far at least, influenced the submitted Local Plan. There must be, therefore, the possibility that this new evidence may lead to the need for main modifications to the Local Plan.

Once this evidence is completed, it will be necessary for the Council to consider whether any main modifications are indeed necessary. If so, we ask the Council to draft them and provide the draft to us for our consideration.

Interested parties will need to be given a reasonable opportunity to consider this evidence in advance of the hearing sessions. Please make sure each document is completed and published on the website by the 'date for submission' shown in the table above to avoid delays. In addition, it is likely that any main modifications put forward by the Council will need to be the subject of consultation ahead of any hearing sessions.

Next Steps

You will appreciate that until the evidence base is complete we cannot complete our initial assessment of the Local Plan. Clearly, until our initial review of the Local Plan is completed we are also unable to develop our Matters and Issues for the examination and fully plan the hearing sessions. In short, the absence of a completed evidence base will unavoidably delay progress.

That said, to ensure the examination does progress as efficiently as possible, all documents and actions required in this letter should be completed and submitted by no later than close of play on 29 March 2019 or earlier, as indicated above. We will then hopefully be in a position to complete

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our initial assessment of the Local Plan. We may well have initial questions to put to you at that point. Thereafter, subject to your responses, we will move forward with programming and scoping the hearing sessions.

We trust that this clarifies the present position and next steps. However, if you do have any questions then please do not hesitate to ask, via Mrs St John Howe.

Yours sincerely

Simon Berkeley and *Luke Fleming*

INSPECTORS