## **Tunbridge Wells Borough**



**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council** 

# Consultation Statement for Submission Local Plan (Part 1 of 2)

(Including arrangements for consultation on the Pre-Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) and the summaries of main issues raised through its consultation 26 March to 4 June 2021 and responses to them)

October 2021



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# Part 1

# **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The first part (Part 1) of this Statement sets out the consultation procedures to date in relation to the preparation of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan, with particular regard to the consultation arrangements for the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Local Plan.
- 1.2 The second part of this Statement (Part 2), which is a separate document, sets out the main issues raised in the responses received to the consultation on the Pre-Submission Local Plan and its accompanying Sustainability Appraisal document, which took place between the 26 March and 4 June 2021, and the Council's response to them.
- 1.3 In 2020, the Council reviewed its 'Statement of Community Involvement'(SCI). The SCI sets out how the Council does/will involve the community in the preparation and review of planning policy for the borough, through the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents, and in decision making on planning applications. Whilst not exclusively, this update was undertaken to make provision for exceptional circumstances such as the Covid-19 pandemic (see the Statement of Community Involvement 2020 here).
- 1.4 The Council has also worked closely with a wide range of agencies and bodies in preparing the Local Plan. In particular, it has actively engaged with all of its neighbouring authorities within Kent and East Sussex, as well as undertaking extensive liaison with Kent County Council (notably as its role as the minerals and waste, local highway, flooding and education authority), and infrastructure providers. Details of the cooperation with neighbouring councils and other bodies on strategic matters, such as housing, economic development, infrastructure and the environment, are set out in the Council's 'Duty to Cooperate Statement'.
- 1.5 In addition, the Council has also worked closely with Parish Councils, including their Neighbourhood Plan groups where they are preparing neighbourhood development plans (NDP). Further information on the relationship between the Local Plan and neighbourhood plans is set out in Section 4 at Policy STR 10: Neighbourhood Plans of the Submission Plan, as well as on the Council's website under <u>Neighbourhood Plans</u>.

## Local Plan Timescales

1.6 The Pre-Submission Local Plan, to which this Consultation Statement primarily relates, is the final stage in preparing the new Local Plan. The first stage was the publication of the <u>Issues and Options</u> in the summer of 2017, for public consultation. Followed by the second stage, the publication of the <u>Draft Local Plan 2019</u>, which was subject to an eight week consultation from 20 September to 15 November 2019. Figure 1 below sets out the various stages of producing the Local Plan.



#### Figure 1: Local Plan timescales

1.7 Full details of the Local Plan timetable are set out in the latest Local Development Scheme (LDS) Local Development Scheme.

# 2.0 Pre-Submission Local Plan Consultation arrangements

- 2.1 As mentioned above, the Pre-Submission Local Plan follows on from two previous consultations under Regulation 18, the first on <u>Issues and Options</u> in 2017 and the second, on a full <u>Draft Local Plan</u> in autumn 2019. Details of all the responses received to the Issues and Options consultation and how they were taken into account in the preparation of the Draft Local Plan can be viewed in the <u>Consultation Statement for the Draft Local Plan</u>, while the responses received to the Draft Local Plan consultation and how they were considered in the preparation of the Pre-Submission Local Plan can be viewed in the <u>Consultation Statement for the Pre-Submission Local Plan</u>.
- 2.2 Following further evidence base work and consideration of comments received at these stages, the <u>Pre-Submission Local Plan</u>, accompanying <u>Sustainability Appraisal</u> and <u>Supporting Evidence Base</u> were subject to public consultation under Regulation 19 for a period of 10 weeks from 26 March to 4 June 2021. Further details of this consultation are set out below.

## Who was consulted?

2.3 Consultation material was made available for comment to a wide range of organisations and individuals and in a range of ways, in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Those consulted include the following:

- Statutory consultees
- Parish and town Councils
- Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum
- Developers and agents
- Local organisations
- General public (including residents and businesses)
- Contacts on the Council's planning consultation database
- Adjoining Local Authorities and Duty to Cooperate partners as set out in Section 18 of T&CP (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

## **Consultation Material and Methods**

- 2.4 The Pre-Submission Local Plan consultation material included the following documents:
  - Tunbridge Wells Borough Pre-Submission Local Plan (PSLP) (Regulation 19)
  - Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
- 2.5 Information comprising the evidence base to support preparation of the new Local Plan was referenced in the consultation documents and published on the Council's website. Response forms were also made available for both the PSLP and SA documents.
- 2.6 The Pre-Submission Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation differs to that carried out at the Regulation 18 stages for the Draft Local Plan and the Issues and Options document, as the main focus is on:
  - Legal and procedural compliance matters including Duty to Cooperate
  - Tests of Soundness (whether the Plan has been positively prepared, is justified, effective and consistent with national policy)
- 2.7 It is realised that, given Covid19 restrictions, the Regulation 19 consultation would be more reliant on virtual means. Therefore, thorough consideration was given to how this could be made as simple as possible for consultees by using electronic methods; as well as other means, as set out below.

### **Electronic consultation**

#### **TWBC Website**

2.8 The Council's website prominently advertised the consultation in advance of the start date, and notifications were sent to the consultation bodies/persons listed above in section 2.3.

#### TWBC weekly newsletter (email alerts)

2.9 The TWBC online weekly newsletter (sent out as email alerts) provides information on services, news and events across the borough with some items being specific to local areas depending on the postcode given when signing up. Local residents can sign up to receive the newsletter via the Council's website (twbc.online/alerts). There are currently 6,000 local residents on the list. The Pre-Submission Local Plan Consultation was featured (including a link to the relevant webpage) as the main story in this newsletter at the beginning of the consultation period on 26th March 2021. It was then mentioned in the list of Council consultations in this weekly letter throughout the consultation, including advertisement of the two Facebook Question and Answer Sessions held in April and May(below) with a final, more detailed reminder two weeks before the end of the consultation period (the relevant features are attached at **Appendix 1**).

#### **Virtual Exhibition**

2.10 As face-to-face exhibitions were not able to take place owing to Covid-19 restrictions, the Council identified new ways to allow exhibitions to go ahead in some form and this was a key change to the consultation procedures set out in the SCI compared to how the Council have previously undertaken formal consultation. The Council therefore included a "virtual exhibition" (Virtual Exhibition), which received over 200 clicks during the course of the consultation. Also, a short presentation via YouTube (YouTube Presentation) on the Council's website was published at the start of the consultation explaining more about the Local Plan, including the scope of the consultation, how to find out more information and how to make representations. A total of 704 YouTube viewings were recorded at the end of the consultation period.

#### **Consultation Portal**

2.11 The Council's consultation portal <u>https://consult.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/kse/</u> was used to enable people to view the relevant documents and comment online during the consultation period. Further details in relation to the submission of comments are given below.

#### Facebook

- 2.12 The Council's Facebook page was used to advertise the consultation and invite comments, as well as providing updates during the course of the consultation.
- 2.13 Live question and answer events (in written, rather than audio form) took place on 13 April (this event reached out to 1,770 people, with 535 engagements and 78 questions/comments made) and on the 12 May 2021(this event reached out to 2,301 people, with 579 engagements and 62 questions/comments made). These events were advertised in advance on the Facebook page, allowing people the opportunity to submit (written) questions via Facebook before and during the sessions and receive a direct response from Council Officers during the sessions.

#### Viewing consultation documents – The Gateway

2.14 For those without access to a computer, hard copies of the consultation documents were made available for viewing at the Tunbridge Wells Gateway, Grosvenor Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells on an appointment basis, following Covid-19 safety regulations. This took place in a dedicated room where paper copies of the Pre-Submission Local Plan, Sustainability Appraisal, Policies Map and the supporting evidence base

documents, as well as access to a laptop, were made available. Paper copies of the response form were also available to take away and return by post. Less than 10 people visited the Gateway during the consultation.

### Letters

2.15 In accordance with Regulation 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, letters were sent out prior to the start of the consultation period, by post or by email to all the above consultees in section 4.2, who are on the Council's database, informing them of the consultation and inviting them to comment. A copy of the letter sent for the Regulation 19 consultation is attached at **Appendix 2**.

### Posters

2.16 Posters were sent to Town and Parish Councils asking that these be displayed where most appropriate e.g., village hall, local shop, notice boards and encouraging further distribution of the poster to any local organisation or outlet willing to display a copy. Posters were also displayed in the window at the main reception in the Town Hall, at the Council Gateway and in the Royal Victoria Shopping Centre, all in Royal Tunbridge Wells. A copy of the poster for the Regulation 19 consultation is attached at **Appendix 3**.

#### **Local News Media**

#### **Publicity and Advertising**

- 2.17 Information about the consultation was advertised in the following local newspapers:
  - Wealden Advertiser on 26 March 2021, see extract at Appendix 4
  - Kent & Sussex Courier on 26 March 2021, see extract at Appendix 5
  - Kent Messenger (Weald edition) on 25 March 2021, see extract at Appendix 6
- 2.18 Also through the 'Local Magazine' (Spring 2021), published in the week commencing the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021, which is produced by the Council and posted in paper form to all 49,000 households across the borough on a quarterly basis and is also available to read electronically on the Council's website <u>https://www.scribd.com/document/498457217/Local-Spring-2021.</u>

### Other groups/briefing sessions

2.19 A Strategic Sites Working Group ('SSWG') was established in July 2019, following the finalisation of the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan which sets out the approach to growth around Paddock Wood and east Capel, and Tudeley Village. The SSWG provides a forum that facilitates collaborative working in the delivery of the two strategic sites. A range of interested parties are members of this group, including representatives from Tonbridge and Malling BC and Maidstone BC, given their close proximity to the TWBC strategic sites. Between its establishment and up to Summer 2021, meetings were held monthly and provided a round table forum to update and discuss key items in progressing the strategic sites through the Local Plan and beyond. Moving forward,

SSWG meetings are to be held less frequently (every quarter) but in the intervening period smaller stakeholder meetings and technical stakeholder workshops are taking place to progress the delivery of the sites in a positive and collaborative manner.

- 2.20 Further meetings were also held by TWBC's Head of Planning Services to brief the following groups on the Pre-Submission Local Plan consultation arrangements:
  - Parish Chairmen (a gathering of all chairmen of parish/town councils (parished areas) across the borough of Tunbridge Wells) a briefing session was held virtually on 7 April 2021.
  - Tunbridge Wells Town Forum (a partnership between representatives for residents and ward councillors who discuss/address local issues affecting the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells (unparished area of the borough of Tunbridge Wells) a briefing session was held virtually on 12 April 2021.
- 2.20 In line with the SCI, positive consideration was given to reaching out to sections of the community that may be less able and/or disposed to participate in plan-making. Contact was made with the local Accessibility Forum and respective disability groups. The Local Plan itself was made available in different formats, as set out below, to aid access.

### **Councillor information**

- 2.21 Over the course of the preparation and development of the Local Plan, planning officers presented the proposed strategy and policies to the elected Borough Council Members for consideration and discussion at monthly Planning Policy Working Group (PPWG) meetings. This is a cross-party group which provides information and feedback on draft documents and policies and serves to generate a consensus on the potential strategies and content of the Local Plan. Throughout the period of preparing the Plan, the papers for the PPWG meetings have been (and continue to be) distributed to all Members of the Council, and all Members have been invited by the Chair of the Working Group (Councillor Alan McDermott, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation) to attend and contribute to the discussions. Attendance has been broad and considerable and there has been much debate of issues.
- 2.22 Additionally, briefings about the Pre-Submission Local Plan consultation arrangements were provided on the 13th and 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 by TWBC's Head of Planning Services for all new Members following the May 2021 elections, at which specific questions about the Local Plan were answered.

#### **Submission of Representations**

- 2.23 Representations were able to be made in the following ways:
  - The consultation document and supporting studies/information were made available for viewing and allowing comments to be made directly online, using the Council's consultation portal.
  - Alternatively, a response form (for filling in electronically or printing out) was available for downloading on the Council's website or a paper copy could be requested by phoning the Planning Policy Team or picked up at The Gateway as above (where an appointment is made); and returned by email or by post.
  - It was also possible to make written representations by letter or email.

# 3.0 Overview of comments received

## Number and type of representations received

- 3.1 A total of 2,084 individual representations were received from 650 respondents to the Pre-Submission Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation. Multiple representations came mainly from organisations and development interests. All of the representations made are available on the Council's website: <u>Representations</u>.
- 3.2 In addition, two petitions were received which are considered to not be 'duly made', as one petition of 39 additional signatures was not submitted to TWBC during the consultation period, however an individual representation did make the overarching points referred to in this petition regarding closure of the railway bridge in Paddock Wood. The other was a petition in relation to the proposed site allocation for the new business park to the north of North Farm/Kingstanding Way. However, this petition commenced prior to the start of the Regulation 19 consultation and was still live after the consultation period ended.
- 3.3 A small number of late submissions were received after the prescribed closing date/time to receive representations set out in the Statement of Representation Procedure and as such, these have not been recorded as duly made. All those who submitted late representations were notified that their submissions were not duly made and that it would be at the discretion of the Inspector to decide whether the issues raised should be considered further at the Examination. Those who submitted late representations were given the opportunity, if appropriate, to demonstrate that there was a genuine reason, such as technology outage or similar, for the representations being received late. It should be noted that in all instances, save for those late representations submitted by National Highways (formerly Highways England), the issues raised in the late representations have been raised by other duly made submissions. Any main issues raised in late representations are considered in a separate table in Part 2 of this consultation statement.
- 3.4 In terms of the form of responses, 64% were received by email, 29% via the planning portal on the Council's website, while the remaining 7% were received via the submission of a paper form or letter.
- 3.5 All respondents provided details of their name and address to prevent multiple responses from the same individual or organisation. No anonymous responses were therefore received.
- 3.6 Respondents' contact details were also used to deal with any queries relating to the submission of comments where needed.

## Main issues

3.7 An overview of the main issues raised in the responses to the Regulation 19 public consultation and the number of representations received in relation to particular sections of the Local Plan, is given below.

### **Strategic Sites**

- 3.8 The proposed strategic sites (in Section 5: Place Shaping Policies of the PSLP) at Paddock Wood including land at east Capel, and the proposed new settlement at Tudeley, collectively received most representations.
- 3.9 The responses received were generally in objection to the proposed level of development and were seeking to reduce this. The responses also questioned the sustainability of the strategic sites, with concerns about loss of Green Belt, infrastructure requirements, mitigation, and overall delivery.

#### Site allocation policies

3.10 The proposed site allocation policies (in Section 5: Place Shaping Policies of the PSLP) for Royal Tunbridge Wells (RTW) received a significant number of representations, with the proposed site allocations for Land at Caenwood Farm (Policy AL/RTW5) and Tunbridge Wells Garden Centre (Policy AL/RTW14) both receiving around 30 representations. A significant number of representations were also received in relation to Benenden Parish, which were objections mainly relating to the two proposed site allocations at Benenden Hospital (Policies AL/BE3 and AL/BE4). For other parishes, there were over 50 representations for site allocation policies in Hawkhurst, Cranbrook and Sissinghurst, and Pembury. These representations covered a wide range of issues.

### **Strategic Policies**

- 3.11 The strategic (STR) policies (in Section 4: Strategic Policies of the PSLP), attracted a variety of representations, nearly 300 in total, with the development strategy (Policy STR1) itself receiving over 100 representations.
- 3.12 With regard to the development strategy, it was essentially questioned whether there is a need and capacity to accommodate a greater amount of development through the Plan; and also, whether the development strategy, including the scale of development proposed is justified. A number of local bodies, groups and individuals considered that there is no justification or any 'exceptional circumstances', for the proposed removal of a large amount of Green Belt nor for the major developments proposals in the AONB.

### **Development Management Policies**

3.13 With regard to the Development Management policies (in Section 6: Development Management Policies of the PSLP), collectively, the 28 Environment policies (including issues relating to sustainable design/standards, wider climate change matters, heritage assets and biodiversity net gain) received over 200 representations, but with no topic standing out well above others. The housing polices (particularly affordable housing, housing for older people and traveller sites provision) also attracted a sizeable number of representations (90) but were spread across its 12 policies.

#### Meeting the Duty to Cooperate

- 3.14 Although not a distinct part of the Local Plan, representations were received questioning whether the Council has met the Duty to Cooperate (DtC), particularly in relation to wider housing needs. The most frequently raised points questioned whether the Council has cooperated appropriately with Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) (together with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC)) in relation to SDC's apparent unmet housing needs. At the same time, there were some challenges as to whether TWBC has done as much as it could with adjacent Councils to deflect some housing need away from the Green Belt (and also the AONB) in the borough. There were also a significant number of representations disputing the consideration of impacts on the Tonbridge area, from the nearby strategic sites proposed in Paddock Wood and land at east Capel, and Tudeley.
- 3.15 Part 2 of this consultation statement provides a more detailed summary of the main issues received to the Pre-Submission Local Plan consultation, as required by Regulation 22, as well as the Council's response to them. Part 2 also includes a section for the representations received to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and the Council's responses to them. The SA consultation ran in tandem with the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Local Plan consultation.

# 4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 All representations received in response to the Pre-Submission Plan consultation will be submitted to the Secretary of State alongside the Submission Version of the Local Plan and all other supporting evidence base documents for examination, including this Consultation Statement.
- 4.2 It is anticipated that the examination hearings will take place in early 2022.
- 4.3 Subject to the outcomes of the examination and any further modification required, it is anticipated that the new Local Plan will be adopted in early 2023.
- 4.4 Once adopted, the Plan will form part of the Development Plan against which future development proposals will be assessed.

# **5.0 Appendices for Part One**

# Appendix 1: Pre-Submission Local Plan Consultation 2021 – Tunbridge Wells Council weekly newsletter e-mail alerts sent out weekly (Fridays)

DATE	SENT TO HOW MANY	CLICKS	SCREEN SHOT
26.03.2021	2,458	462	Helio Here is your weekly update from Turbridge Wells Borough Council Local Plan Consultations on issues and options and a draft local plan, the Council has now approved its final draft, Pro- Submission Local Plan. It sets out policies to guide development and indu use change up to 2038. User the plan to find out more 2
07.05.2021	2,749	76	1 Have your say Join our team on Facebook Deal Plan. Please do pass this information to your friends and neighbours who might also interested in joining us. They can sign up to receive these emails, and stay up to date her 3
21.05.2021	2,911	164	<b>1</b> <b>Consultation period for the Tunbridge Wells</b> Borough Pre-Submission Local Plan ends in two weeks – at 5pm on the 4 June 2021. If you wish to make representations, they must be received by this time. Details about making representations, as well as the Local Plan proposals, can be found on the Local Plan website

# Appendix 2: Pre-Submission Local Plan Consultation 2021 – Letter/email sent out 25 March 2021

(Notification master for email and postal notifications)

#### Notice of the publication of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has published the Pre-Submission version of its Local Plan, which sets out proposed planning policies for development in the borough up to 2038.

It can be viewed, together with its Sustainability Appraisal, Statement of Representations Procedure, and other supporting documents, on the Council's website at <a href="https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan">https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan</a>.

It is also available for public inspection, by prior appointment only (by phoning 01892 554056), at Tunbridge Wells Gateway, 8 Grosvenor Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2AB. The Gateway is open from 9am-5pm (Monday to Friday).

There is a ten-week period during which time representations may be made. Only representations made in writing using the standard representation form (including electronically) and received within this period, which runs **from 9.00am on 26 March to 5.00pm on 4 June 2021**, will be considered.

Representations can be submitted as follows:

- 1. Online at https://consult.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/kse/
- 2. By e-mail to <a href="mailto:localplan@tunbridgewells.gov.uk">localplan@tunbridgewells.gov.uk</a> (a downloadable form is available)
- 3. By post to Planning Policy, Planning Services, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS

Further details are available on the Local Plan pages of the Council's website, as above. If you have any queries or are seeking assistance, please email <u>localplan@tunbridgewells.gov.uk</u> or telephone 01892 554056.

## Appendix 3: Pre-Submission Local Plan Consultation 2021 - Poster for Regulation 19 Consultation





# **Tunbridge Wells Local Plan**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is carrying out a public consultation on its Pre-Submission Local Plan

The Local Plan sets out a vision and development strategy, with related site allocations and policies, for future development in the borough up to 2038.

The consultation starts at 9am on Friday 26 March 2021 and ends at 5pm on Friday 4 June 2021

To view the Local Plan and to make representations please visit:

twbc.online/local-plan

or use the QR code below



If you are unable to access the Local Plan or supporting documents online, a hard copy is available to view, by prior appointment, at Tunbridge Wells Gateway. To make an appointment, for further information or assistance, please contact the Planning Policy Team: localplan@tunbridgewells.gov.uk or 01892 554056

## Appendix 4: Pre-Submission Local Plan Consultation 2021 - Public notice placed in the Wealden Advertiser on 26 March 2021

#### Notices Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Tunbridee Regulations 2012, Regulation 19 Wells tonig Notice of the publication of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has published the Pre-Submission version of its Local Plan, which sets out proposed planning policies for development in the borough up to 2038. It can be viewed, together with its Sustainability Appraisal and other supporting documents, as well as the Statement of Representations Procedure, on the Council's website at https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan It is also available for public inspection, by prior appointment only (by phoning 01892 554056), at Tunbridge Wells Galeway, 8 Grosvenor Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2AB. The Gateway is open from 9am-5pm (Monday to Friday). There is a ten-week consultation period during which time. representations may be made. Representations must be made in writing as set out below and received within the consultation period, which runs from 9.00am on 26 March to 5.00pm on 4 June 2021 Representations can be submitted as follows: 1. Online at https://consult.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/kse/ By e-mail to localplan@tunbridgewells.gov.uk (a downloadable) form is available) 3. By post to Planning Policy, Planning Services, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS Further details are available on the Local Plan pages of the Council's website, as above. If you have any queries or are seeking assistance, please email localplan@tunbridgewells.gov.uk or telephone 01892 554056.

## Appendix 5: Pre-Submission Local Plan Consultation 2021 - Public notice placed in the Kent & Sussex Courier on 26 March 2021



## Appendix 6: Pre-Submission Local Plan Consultation 2021 – Public notice placed in the Kent Messenger (Weald Edition) on 25 March 2021



If you require this document in another format, please contact:

Planning Policy Planning Services Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Town Hall Royal Tunbridge Wells Kent TN1 1RS

Telephone: 01892 554056