

Examination of the Tunbridge Wells  
Borough Local Plan

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**  
**Hearing Statement**

**Matter 3: The Strategy for  
Tudeley Village**

**Issue 4: Meeting Future Housing Needs**

**Document Reference: TWLP/126**



# Contents

Matter 3 – The Strategy for Tudeley Village.....	3
Issue 4 – Meeting Future Housing Needs .....	3
Inspector’s Question 1: [re. Inclusion of reference to Tudeley Village] .....	3
TWBC response to Question 1.....	3
Conclusion .....	5

# Matter 3 – The Strategy for Tudeley Village

## Issue 4 – Meeting Future Housing Needs

### Inspector’s Question 1: [re. Inclusion of reference to Tudeley Village]

The Council’s suggested changes to the Plan include a commitment to an early review. Should the suggested early review of the Plan also include reference to Tudeley Village, either as a future development option or broad locations for growth?

### **TWBC response to Question 1**

#### Introduction

1. The Council’s Submission Local Plan (SLP) has been in preparation since 2016 and was submitted for examination in November 2021, indicating a long period of drafting, public consultation, and consideration has already been undertaken in its progress to date.
2. The Council’s Development Strategy was formed as a result of detailed consideration of a significant amount of evidence and is set out in the Development Strategy Topic Paper (CD\_3.126), and the Submission Local Plan (SLP) (CD\_3.128). The strategy has evolved over this time and sought to provide a thorough basis for the inclusion of development sites in the SLP to meet, amongst other things, the objectively assessed housing need.
3. As part of this process of drafting the SLP, opportunities for meeting the development need by reducing the pressure on Green Belt land and limiting the level of major development in the High Weald National Landscape, in addition to the exploration for a new settlement between Five Oak Green and Tonbridge.
4. Paragraph 73 of the NPPF identifies that ‘the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new

settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes)'.

5. The Council was proactive in seeking to explore development sites by undertaking a series of 'Call for Sites' starting in early 2016 and effectively keeping this process open until the publication of the Draft local Plan in 2019.
6. The Initial Findings [ID\_012] states that 'The principle of seeking to help meet housing needs through a high-quality, mixed-use new settlement is a reasonable and positive approach to take. Officers have also clearly worked hard in bringing relevant stakeholders together through the Strategic Sites Working Group.' But it goes on to state that '...exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated to justify removing the site from the Green Belt.' (paragraphs 36 and 37).
7. The SLP is supported by a significant amount of hard work which has been positively prepared in seeking to meet housing needs despite the significant constraints of the borough with large areas of Green Belt and High Weald National Landscape.

## Consideration

8. There are clear benefits from delivering housing through larger scale development such as significant extensions to existing villages and towns or new settlements where infrastructure and transport needs can be met in a sustainable manner.
9. As set out in the Council's Development Strategy Topic Paper Addendum ([PS\\_054](#)) there are some matters which it is felt would unlikely be able to be resolved without significant further work, and which would result in significant further delay to the adoption of the local plan. Hence the decision to remove the site allocation for Tudeley Village (STR/SS 3) from the plan.
10. The Council's commitment to an early review in the context of a 10-year housing land supply, is not contrary to national policy. The inability of the Council to meet the 15-year housing growth needs in full does not mean that the Plan is unsound. The manner in which the plan could control an early review is set out in the Council's response to Matter 1 Issue 3 (Local Plan Review).

11. The approach to progressing the plan to adoption with an identified 10 year housing land supply is not in conflict with paragraph 68 of the [NPPF](#) (Sept 2023 version) where the expectation is for planning policies identifying a supply of –
  - a) specific, deliverable sites for years one to five of the plan period, and
  - b) specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the plan.

## Conclusion

12. Given the work undertaken to date, particularly on identifying sites in the borough where there are many constraints to development, Tudeley Village has been explored in significant detail and, ultimately, it remains a reasonable option to consider as part of that early review. It is inevitable, therefore, that the Council will have to evaluate it further as an option to form part of its growth strategy in the future, alongside any other reasonable alternatives as they come forward through the local plan review process.
13. Without prejudice to this exercise, given the limited options available to the council at this stage and the extensive level of evidence supporting the Tudeley Village option, the early review of the Plan should also include reference to Tudeley as a broad location for growth.