

Matter 1 – Green Belt Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal and Local Plan Review

Issue 3 – Proposed Strategy and Early Review

Q1. What is the justification for suggesting Main Modifications to the Plan, and subsequently requiring an immediate Review, rather than seeking to meet housing needs as part of this examination?

1.1 Whilst policy STR 1 - The Development Strategy advises that the broad development strategy for the borough over the period 2020-2038, is to ensure that a minimum of 12,006 dwellings are delivered, this in effect only delivers sufficient housing to meet the needs to 2034/35 i.e. 10 yrs. post adoption assuming adoption in 2024/25. It is on this basis that policy STR1 also advises that *'following adoption, the Council will undertake an early review of the Local Plan, which will include further investigation of ways of meeting identified housing needs for the period post 2034'*.

1.2 The above is clarified by the updated Local Plan Housing Trajectory (PS_062) which explains that shortening the plan period to 10 years from adoption (i.e. to 2034/35) would deliver 10,280 dwellings against a target of 10,005¹, i.e. a surplus of 275 dwellings.

1.3 Whilst this does not reflect the requirements of para 22 of the NPPF (Sept 23)² or Paragraph: 064 Reference ID: 61-064-20190315 of PPG, it is for the Council to explain why it has chosen to look to promote what is in effect a 10 year plan with an early review rather than a 15 year plan meeting the LHN in full. In this respect we note that Brentwood, which is also heavily constrained by the Green Belt and has looked to promote a major green belt release to accommodate a new Garden Village at Dunton Hills, and thus at policy MG01³ only look to deliver 7,752 new residential dwellings (net) over a plan period of 2016-2033⁴, has a very prescriptive policy approach for an early review. The review mechanism as set out in policy MG06 of the Brentwood Local Plan is set out below.

'The Council will bring forward a partial update of the Plan with the objective of meeting the full Objectively Assessed Housing Needs. The review will commence immediately upon the adoption of this Plan with submission of the review for examination within 28 months. Specific matters to be addressed by the update shall include the following (amongst all other matters that need to be assessed and taken into account for the purposes of plan preparation):

1. *An update of Objectively Assessed Housing Needs in accordance with the NPPF 2021 and related guidance;*
2. *An updated full green belt review and an updated spatial strategy (informed by the green belt review) in turn to inform the sustainable allocation of further sites to meet the full Objectively Assessed Housing Needs as assessed in part A above;*
3. *The allocation of further sites to meet as a minimum the full Objectively Assessed Housing Needs in accordance with the updated spatial strategy for the full period of the plan review;*

¹ 667 x 15 = 10,0050

² Given para 230 of the NPPF Dec 23 we are in these reps working to the Sept 23 version of the NPPF.

³ See <https://www.brentwood.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/20124/533660/Brentwood+Local+Plan+2016-2033+Adopted+March+2022.pdf>

⁴ As the plan was adopted in 2023 this meant the plan only ran 10 yrs. from adoption

4. A review of transport and highway issues to cater for local plan growth throughout the period of the review (in consultation with National Highways and Essex County Council) taking into account:

a. the optimisation of existing, and the introduction of further, sustainable transport measures where appropriate along with the need to provide improvements to and around:

i. A12 junction 12;

ii. M25 Junction 28;

iii. M25 junction 29;

b. any additional transport and highways infrastructure that will be needed to meet in full the updated Objectively Assessed Housing Needs and facilitate the further allocations taking into account implemented and committed highway schemes'

1.4 An alternative would be a review mechanism such as that adopted in Bedford, wherein Policy 1 (Reviewing the Local Plan 2030⁵) states:

'The Council will undertake a review of the Local Plan 2030, which will commence no later than one year after the adoption of the plan. An updated or replacement plan will be submitted for examination no later than three years after the date of adoption of the plan. In the event that this submission date is not adhered to, the policies in the Local Plan 2030 which are most important for determining planning applications for new dwellings will be deemed to be 'out of date' in accordance with paragraph 11 d) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

The plan review will secure levels of growth that accord with government policy and any growth deals that have been agreed. The planning and delivery of strategic growth will be aligned with the delivery of planned infrastructure schemes including the A421 expressway, Black Cat junction, East West Rail link and potentially the A1 realignment.

The review will also serve to build stronger working relationships with adjoining and nearby authorities and may result in the preparation of a joint strategic plan based on a wider geography'.

1.5 Given the position TWBC are now looking to promote we would suggest a similarly worded policy approach, utilising elements of both approaches is adopted here i.e.

'The Council will bring forward a partial update of the Plan with the objective of meeting the full Objectively Assessed Housing Needs. The review will commence immediately upon the adoption of this Plan with submission of the review for examination within 28 months.

In the event that this submission date is not adhered to, the policies in the Local Plan 2020 - 2038 which are most important for determining planning applications for new dwellings will be deemed to be 'out of date' in accordance with paragraph 11 d) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

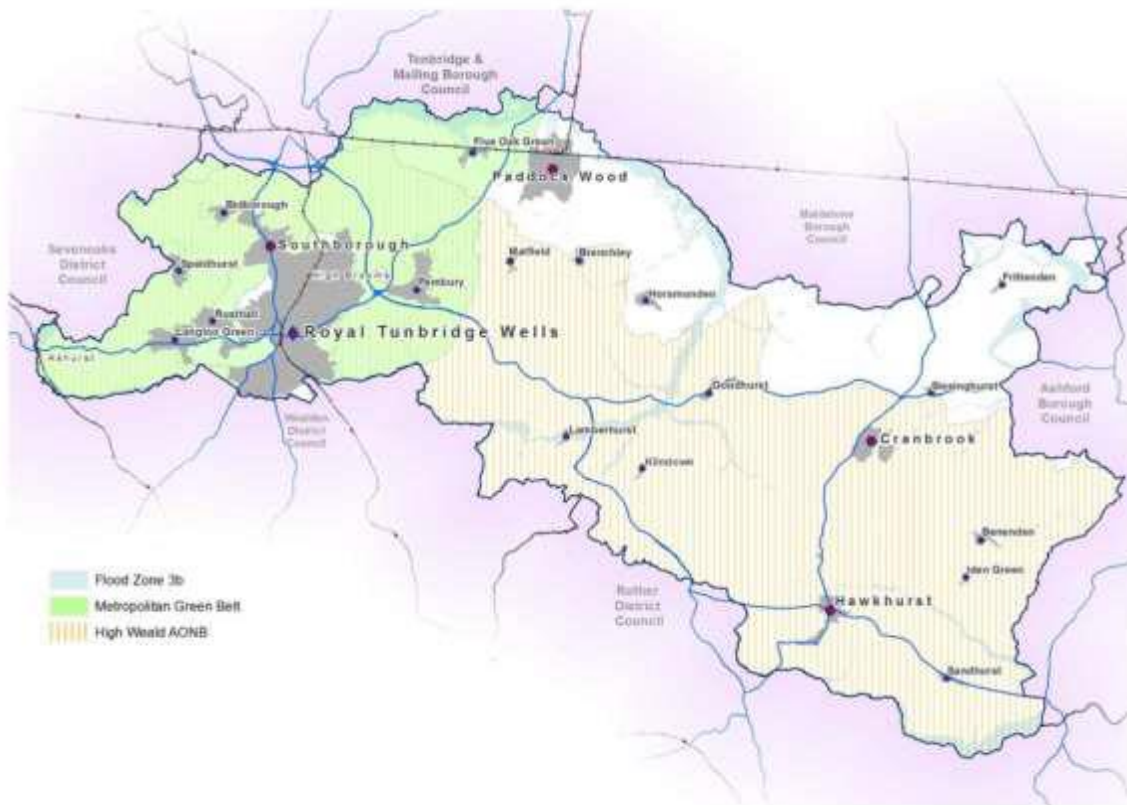
Specific matters to be addressed by the update shall include the following (amongst all other matters that need to be assessed and taken into account for the purposes of plan preparation):

⁵ <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/media/4011/download?inline>

The Bedford LP 2030 was adopted by Full Council on 15 January 2020. And the LP review (Bedford LP 2030) was submitted for examination on 12 January 2023. The examination is now advanced with the Inspector's Initial Findings published and the council currently reviewing the impact of the proposed growth strategy on the A421, and the housing delivery rates advocated on the two new settlements promoted in the Local Plan and any potential shortfall in the housing land supply.

1. *An update of Objectively Assessed Housing Needs in accordance with the NPPF 2023 or any associated update thereto, and related guidance;*
2. *An updated full green belt review and an updated spatial strategy (informed by the green belt review) in turn to inform the sustainable allocation of further sites to meet the full Objectively Assessed Housing Needs as assessed in part 1 above;*
3. *The allocation of further sites to meet as a minimum the full Objectively Assessed Housing Needs in accordance with the updated spatial strategy for the full period of the plan review;*
4. *The allocation of further sites to meet the housing needs of older people and those with disabilities in accordance with the updated spatial strategy for the full period of the plan review;*
5. *A review of transport and highway issues to cater for local plan growth throughout the period of the review (in consultation with National Highways and Kent County Council) taking into account:*
 - a. *the optimisation of existing, and the introduction of further, sustainable transport measures where appropriate along with the need to provide improvements to and around:.....*
 - b. *any additional transport and highways infrastructure that will be needed to meet in full the updated Objectively Assessed Housing Needs and facilitate the further allocations taking into account implemented and committed highway schemes'*
6. *A review of Educational needs to cater for local plan growth throughout the period of the review (in consultation with Kent County Council) taking into account the potential to optimise existing facilities and introduce additional facilities that will be needed to meet in full the updated Objectively Assessed Housing Needs and facilitate the further allocations taking into account implemented and committed highway schemes'*

1.6 Whilst we note that many have called into question what an immediate review would achieve if the Council say they are unable to find any additional sites at present to meet the LHN, a new call for sites and a review of the plans approach to its spatial strategy could elicit new sites; and the proposed approach at least enables those sites that are allocated to proceed and thus provide TWBC with a housing land supply pipeline, which if the plan is delayed further will be pushed back and could prejudice the councils 4 let alone 5 year housing land supply/ leave sites on the edge of settlements outside the Greenbelt/ AONB vulnerable to speculative applications i.e. land south and east of Paddock Wood and land in and around Horsmonden.



Q2. How would the Council's intended early review of the Plan be controlled? What would be the implications (if any) if an update to the Plan was either significantly delayed or not prepared at all?

2.1 If an approach similar to that adopted in Brentwood or Bedford were adopted here then there would be a clear trigger for the Local Plan Review and if it did not progress the plan would in effect be out of date and applications would need to be determined accordingly. As the implications of this would be significant for land south and east of Paddock Wood and land in and around Horsmonden, we do not believe the council would delay this process, let alone ignore it.

Q3. The Development Strategy Topic Paper Addendum states that "...other distribution options that may provide the full 15 years' housing land supply were assessed as part of the formulation of the Pre-Submission Local Plan through rigorous consideration. However, there was not an obvious alternative strategy to the one proposed at the SLP stage."³ What is the justification, therefore, of seeking an early review to the Plan if options without Tudeley Village have already been considered and discounted?

3.1 As per the above an immediate review would enable the council to review their strategy per say / for new site so come forward through a new call for sites and for the council to begin to look to how a longer term strategy could evolve from that previously proposed.