

The Chief Executive
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Town Hall
Royal Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN1 1RS

15th July 2013

Dear Sir

Proposal for designation of Paddock Wood Town Council as a qualifying body for the production of a Neighbourhood Development Plan and allocation of Neighbourhood being that of the Town Council boundary.

Under Section 61F&G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 2 Regulation 5 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012; an application is being made by Paddock Wood Town Council to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for Paddock Wood covering the area defined on the attached map.

The Town Council is a 'relevant body' under Section 61F of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, for the purpose of producing a Neighbourhood Plan and designating the Neighbourhood Plan area under Section 61G; and is therefore qualified to undertake neighbourhood planning

Please accept this letter as an application to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) for Paddock Wood Town Council to be recognized as an appropriate body to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan and for the area defined on the attached map to be designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Following a successful application it is the Council's intention to proceed with the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council formally approved this course of action on 17/06/2013 and has an interim group which is establishing a steering group to formulate the plan.

The intention is to cover the whole of Paddock Wood as defined on the map. At the current time, approximately 8500 people live within the boundaries of the town. Paddock Wood is defined as a main service centre in the Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy. The town provides valuable transport, education, services and recreational facilities to a large number of adjoining villages and parishes. As part of this

consultation, the adjoining Parish Councils will be invited to comment and take part in the formulation of this plan.

Existing services include (but this is not exhaustive) a primary school, a secondary school, children's nurseries, a supermarket, convenience stores, department store, independent traders, recreational facilities and soon, an athletics track. There are a large number of light industrial and storage and distribution companies north of the railway line, which serves to separate most of the residential areas from the commercial areas, those being Eldon Way and the Transfesa Estate.

Paddock Wood has one of the best-connected rail stations in Kent, with mainline services to London, the coast and the Medway Areas / Thames Gateway. In the last 15 years Paddock Wood has become increasingly popular with commuters, in particular the Hunters Chase developments. A large number of commuters from the outlying villages also use Paddock Wood as their main transport hub, underlying the town's importance and its future development impacts, on the surrounding villages. Thus, strategically, Paddock Wood is of high importance.

It is accepted that Paddock Wood is set to receive 600 additional houses in the Local Plan period to 2026. However, this would suggest a notional population increase of 20-25%, in a town where the existing facilities and infrastructure are already struggling to cope. Schools are oversubscribed, nursery places are limited, and communities facilities are either inappropriately located, or not of the standard that Paddock Wood, as a hub, requires.

Core Policy 11 of the Core Strategy states that "Paddock Wood serves a large rural hinterland and provides a range of retail, community and small and large-scale business uses. In accordance with the Spatial Strategy (Box 3, Chapter 4) and the settlement hierarchy, as outlined in Box 4 (Chapter 4), Paddock Wood is identified as a small rural town and the objective of the Core Strategy is to provide sufficient development at Paddock Wood to support and strengthen it as a local hub for the Borough's rural area." (Para 5.242)

Paddock Wood is the most likely destination for additional future development. Although constrained to the North by Flood Risk and to the West by Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB), areas to the east are not so protected, and are devoid of any special Landscape Designation such as High Weald AONB. In this regard, the future development of Paddock Wood must be formally managed and developed over time with a document that is flexible enough to respond to the needs of future generations.

In addressing flood risk, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 2 was conducted in 2009 by TWBC, with the results published on the TWBC website. The majority of Paddock Wood has been designated as an 'Area of Critical Drainage' meaning all future developments must consider flood risk and consequential harm arising from the proposed development.

Additional provisions within CP11 suggest that approximately 900sq/m (net) of additional comparison floor space will be delivered by 2017 unless a different retail need is identified in future studies, to increase the vitality and viability of the Town

Centre. Key Employment areas have already been identified north of the railway line in both of the industrial estates. Smaller, and high quality industrial units should also be provided in these estates.

Sites capable of accommodating 10 or more dwellings will be required to provide affordable housing in accordance with Core Policy 6 (Housing). It is also envisaged that a Community Facility would be allocated and a facility provided during the Core Strategy Period. A Neighbourhood Plan would identify where the residents would like to see this, and what form it should take.

It is also considered that public transport and infrastructure links within the town should also be improved. There is an opportunity to create a public communal area within the town centre and give people better opportunity to visit the town from the outlying rural villages. Improvements can take place in the town centre to improve public realm and stop the town centre from becoming a 'thoroughfare'.

Existing drainage problems within the town can also be addressed as part of the larger pending developments on the edge of town.

The Council is in the early stages of plan preparation and therefore no structure as to the preparation of the plan has yet been identified, however, it is anticipated that the process is likely to take 12-15 months to complete. The formation of a steering group has been initiated. This will include diverse representation from the community and the first task will be to prepare a detailed timetable and initial scope of works to be undertaken.

The exact scope, form and content of the Neighbourhood Plan will be determined through stakeholder and public engagement. However, it will most likely address the following;

- 1) Community infrastructure improvements
- 2) Flood Risk
- 3) Drainage
- 4) Community facilities
- 5) Transport
- 6) Parking
- 7) Improvements to public realm
- 8) Recreation and open space allocation and delivery
- 9) Affordable/DDA compliant housing
- 10) Future housing allocations

An appropriately qualified independent inspector will be engaged to undertake a public examination into the soundness of the Plan within the existing and emerging statutory planning framework. Taking account of the examiners recommendations and any amendments deemed necessary, the Plan would then be put to a public referendum. The Steering Group, Town and Borough Council would together discuss and determine the best means by which to undertake the referendum.

After appropriate consultation, examination and following a successful outcome of referendum, it is hoped the plan would be adopted by TWBC as part of the Statutory Development Plan.

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 please find enclosed a map, showing the area to be covered by the Neighbourhood Plan outlined in red. This area encompasses Paddock Wood.

Paddock Wood Town Council have a democratic Mandate and statutory standing to act in relation to Neighbourhood Areas for the purpose of producing a Plan under Section 61F of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

For the reasons above we trust you will consider Paddock Wood Town Council as an appropriate body to undertake the Plan.

Yours faithfully

Nichola Reay
Clerk to the Council