

Examination of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Note Requested by the Inspector

Local Plan Examination Note for Inspector in response to Action Point 14 regarding Housing Delivery at Tudeley Village

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Contents

- 1.0 Housing Delivery at Tudeley Village..... 3
 - Introduction 3
 - Local Plan Position..... 3
 - Delivery per annum 4
 - Start on Site..... 5
 - Concluding remarks 7
- Appendix 1: Chapelton Delivery..... 10

1.0 Housing Delivery at Tudeley Village

Introduction

- 1.1 During the Hearing Sessions on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan, the Inspector asked the Council to prepare a number of Notes on “Action Points”, essentially to clarify its position on certain matters that were discussed.
- 1.2 This Note relates to Action Point 14 relating to Housing Delivery at Tudeley Village. It follows the hearing session for Matter 9- Housing Land Supply on Wednesday 22nd June, at which the Inspector requested additional information regarding the proposed housing delivery trajectory for Tudeley Village as set out in the Submission Local Plan.
- 1.3 This was specifically in relation of the housing delivery at Chapelton; a new settlement in Aberdeenshire (5 miles south of Aberdeen) which is being delivered by the same professional team supporting Hadlow Estate (the Master Developer for Tudeley Village).
- 1.4 This note provides the Council’s position on this matter and the further information sought.

Local Plan Position

- 1.5 By way of reference, the Submission Local Plan sets out the housing trajectory for Tudeley Village as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 (Housing Trajectory Tudeley Village)

Yr	25/ 26	26/ 27	27/ 28	28/ 29	29/ 30	30/ 31	31/ 32	32/ 33	33/ 34	34/ 35	35/ 36	36/ 37	37/ 38
No.	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	200	200	200

- 1.6 This assumes the first units will be delivered in 2025/26, and will deliver 150 units per annum from the start. 150 units will be delivered per annum for ten years, rising to 200 units from 2035/36 for the remainder of the build out period (2,100 to the end of the Plan period, 2038)
- 1.7 Mr Paul Roberts who represents Hadlow Estate confirmed in some detail at the Tudeley Village examination session on 14 June (Matter 6, Issue 1) that he was satisfied the housing trajectory for Tudeley Village as set out in the Local Plan is achievable. Further explanation is provided below, in terms of both the number of units which can be delivered per annum, and the timeframes for first builds in 2025/26 in light of the anticipated adoption of the Local Plan (March 2023).

Delivery per annum

- 1.8 The key reasons why TWBC considers the delivery of 150 units per annum from the first year is achievable has stemmed from ongoing discussions with the Hadlow Estate throughout the preparation of the Plan to understand its development model. In summary:
- a. The landowner, Hadlow Estate, will be in control of the process to facilitate start on site as master developer. It will fund and control the planning application process in terms of obtaining planning permission and carrying out the detailed design. Further, Hadlow Estate will implement the on-site infrastructure that will be necessary to allow the first housebuilders to commence development. This is to ensure that the housebuilders selected will be taking on a confirmed design and having access to land that is serviced and ready for the on-plot development phase. This will greatly simplify and accelerate the housebuilder phase of activity.
 - b. Hadlow Estate expects to operate with three local/regional SME housebuilders who will be focused on the private market content of the scheme.
 - c. As the affordable housing policy states a requirement of 40%, this equates to the following in terms of private delivery per annum (these numbers are a

worst-case scenario as there will be an element of custom and self-build that comes forward as part of the policy requirements:

- i. 90 private delivery units for the period 2025 to 2034, which equates to 30 per housebuilder
- ii. 120 private delivery units for the period 2035 onwards, which equates to 40 per housebuilder

d. It is anticipated that there will be plenty of interest in the affordable elements of the scheme given its location, and also having regard to the high-quality design and new settlement status of the scheme. Hadlow Estate's experience is that affordable housing providers are especially keen to form partnerships where there is going to be a consistent stream of housing over the long term.

1.9 Overall, both the Council and Hadlow Estate are content that these delivery targets are achievable on the three-housebuilder model proposed, and having regard to the likely level of interest in the site, and general market expectation for transactional activity in this area.

Start on Site

1.10 At the examination, Mrs Young for TWBC indicated that she understood housing had been delivered at Chapelton at a similar rate as proposed at Tudeley i.e. around 150 units per annum. This understanding was incorrect for the reasons set out below, and the Council would like the Inspector to note this. Chapelton provides a good example of how housing can be delivered quickly from adoption of the Plan, however, we are informed by the promoters that its rate of delivery is slower than forecast at Tudeley for reasons related to the associated housing market and the reliance of the economy at Aberdeen on the oil and gas industry.

1.11 Chapelton does, however, provides confidence that the first units at Tudeley Village can be completed in 2025/26 as set out in Table 1 above; a point noted by the Council at the examination session and this is summarised below.

1.12 Enclosed at Appendix 1 is the programme for delivery of first units at Chapelton from Regulation 19 stage of the respective Local Plan in which the concept of a new

settlement was identified. In summary it took three years to move from project inception to starting on site with the infrastructure works, and then a further two years until the first residents moved in. The key Chapelton milestones were:

- a. Reg 19 Site announced: 2010
- b. Planning application submitted 2012
- c. Planning permission granted 2013
- d. Infrastructure works commence 2013
- e. First Houses completed with residents moving in February 2015; with 62 units completed that year.

- 1.13 By comparison, it is anticipated that a planning application for Tudeley Village will be submitted in the first half 2023, and planning permission likely to be granted in Spring 2024. Infrastructure will be procured alongside, and the first units constructed in 2025 with residents moving in early 2026.
- 1.14 As set out at the examination session, the Strategic Sites and Delivery team is a dedicated Council resource and has been working closely with Hadlow Estate and through the Planning Performance Agreement process is geared up to work proactively and expeditiously on the determination of the applications to meet these timeframes.
- 1.15 Furthermore, it is important to note that the work which has already been carried out to underpin this allocation is extensive. As set out in the Tudeley Village Delivery Strategy [PSLP_1630], the allocation has been subject to detailed masterplanning. Furthermore, there is a comprehensive infrastructure framework which has been prepared setting out the detailed infrastructure requirements stemming from both this proposed new settlement, and the significant expansion of Paddock Wood including land in east Capel. Triggers for the infrastructure delivery are understood and this information means delivery of the sites can be moved forward expeditiously. The work which has been undertaken means the SPD to inform this allocation is being prepared, and will be completed in line with the timeframes set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme [CD 3.57] i.e. SPD adopted July 2023.

- 1.16 The delivery of housing at Chapelton has been slower than is forecast for Tudeley. The market conditions and locational issues are fundamentally difficult and contrast markedly to Tudeley. Chapelton is based in the north-east of Scotland, has a far smaller pool of suitable housebuilders to call upon, and has seen its first phase built through the oil price slump of several years ago. This latter point is particularly significant given the proximity of the development to Aberdeen. Aberdeen is closely linked to the oil industry in terms of employment; 80% of jobs in the British oil and gas industry are based in Aberdeen, and around 10% of jobs within Aberdeen are directly related to the industry. This provides a relatively unstable housing market given the reliance of the economy on one sector. Negative fluctuations in the oil and gas industry (including slumps in oil prices, declines in recovery operations and new fields becoming harder to find and to commercially exploit), will cause unemployment in the local area which will in turn affect expenditure within the wider economy resulting in a slowdown of the housing market.
- 1.17 The economy in the southeast of England is more stable, there is no reliance on one single sector and the proximity to London means the housing market is typically far stronger. In this respect, the Council notes the delivery of housing in the south east is more buoyant, given the stronger and more stable economy. The Council has already noted in its Statement of Common Ground with Dandara [CD 3.138], that housing has been delivered at a pace at Dandara's Knights Wood development in the borough (75-100 dwellings per annum). This is for a one house builder scheme of c. 500 units, which is easily within the 30-40 dwellings required to be delivered by each of the three housebuilders per annum expected at Tudeley Village, as set out above.

Concluding remarks

- 1.18 The Council has worked closely with Hadlow Estate to ascertain the housing trajectory as assumed in the Local Plan. Reasons for this are summarised above. The proposed delivery model for the new settlement, on a three-housebuilder basis, provides confidence that the delivery of 150 units in this part of the country is achievable. The Chapelton example provides evidence that from application stage

to first units being occupied can be achieved within ambitious timeframes, but no comparison should be drawn between delivery numbers for Chapelton given the markedly different market conditions that have prevailed there.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Chapelton Delivery



CHAPELTON OVERVIEW

- Located 8km south of Aberdeen
- 840 hectares
- Up to 8,000 homes
- Outline planning granted for initial 4,045 homes
- Phase 1a detailed planning granted for 802 homes

COMPLETED:
316 residential units, including 94-unit retirement village, two shops, nursery and one office

2008 Creation of Elswick Development Company (EDC)

2010 Chapelton named as preferred development site in LDP

2010 Chapelton Charette: intensive 10-day design workshop

2013 Planning permission granted

2013 Infrastructure works commenced

2015 First residents move in
