



## TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL 'OUR LOCAL PLAN: 2033' (REGULATION 19 - JULY 2018) – REPRESENTATIONS

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 These representations to 'Our Local Plan: 2033 (Regulation 19)' are submitted by the Tandridge Lane Action Group (TLAG), a residents group representing approximately 300 households living in Tandridge, Crowhurst, Blindley Heath and South Godstone.
- 1.2 These representations are based on the policies in the 2012 NPPF as we note that it is TDC's intention to submit the plan prior to the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019 under the transitional arrangements of paragraph 214 of the 2018 NPPF. TLAG reserve the right, however, to amend these representations to reflect the 2018 NPPF in the event that the plan is not submitted in these timescales.
- 1.3 We are disappointed with the number of people that have received letters from the council because their submissions do not strictly address 'soundness' or 'legal compliance' – it would seem as if the general public (lay people) are being discouraged from writing in. The consideration of alternative options is, after all, fundamental to the tests of soundness.
- 1.4 TLAG have had regard to the Guidance Note for Submission of Comments. Whilst these representations duly focus on the tests of soundness for local plan preparation, the legislation is clear<sup>1</sup> that there are no limitations on the content of representations at Regulation 19 stage. We disagree for example with the suggestion in the Guidance Note that the Regulation 19 consultation no longer seeks views on alternative options.
- 1.5 In addition to this report, TLAG submit:
  - The Legal Compliance and Soundness Questionnaire.
  - Critique of BNP Paribas Viability Assessment (Gildersleve & Payne).
  - Land at South Godstone – Green Belt and Landscape Appraisal (Arc).
  - Redhill Aerodrome – Green Belt and Capacity Review (Arc).
  - Ecological Evidence Review (Greengage).
  - Highway & Transport Issues (Bellamy Roberts).
- 1.6 TLAG trust that these representations will be given due regard by Tandridge District Council prior to the submission of the Local Plan for examination.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation 20 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

## Summary of representations

1.7 TLAG consider that Our Local Plan: 2033 as currently drafted is unsound for the following reasons:

- **Positively prepared:** TLAG fully recognise that housing delivery is an important facet of delivering sustainable development. As such we do not seek to challenge the housing delivery targets set in draft Policy TLP01: Spatial Strategy as we accept there is a need for housing, but also because we do not have the technical knowledge to challenge the proposed quantum of housing over the plan period. TLAG has, however, examined the proposed spatial strategy and is fundamentally opposed to it - and especially to meeting a large part of the housing target through a Garden Village in an important part of the Green Belt.
- **Justified:** The proposed spatial strategy is not the most appropriate strategy when considered against all reasonable alternatives. The housing targets can be delivered through a more sustainable dispersed strategy across the district and / or through greater cooperation with neighbouring authorities. The area of search around South Godstone is, in any event, neither an appropriate nor a sustainable location for a Garden Village. The alternative location at Redhill Aerodrome would (notwithstanding that TLAG consider that any Garden Village is unnecessary to deliver sustainable development over the plan period) represent a more suitable and more sustainable location if a garden village is deemed to be necessary.
- **Effective:** The proposal for a Garden Village at South Godstone is based on a number of flawed or unevidenced assumptions with regard to deliverability and viability - with most meaningful details deferred to a later Area Action Plan. It is therefore not credible to include this proposal as a key element of the Council's future housing delivery strategy.
- **Consistent with national policy:** A Garden Village at South Godstone would not be in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>2</sup>. The area of search around South Godstone is exclusively Green Belt land, and the primary policy test is whether 'exceptional circumstances' exist that would justify an alteration to Green Belt boundaries (in accordance with paragraph 83 of the NPPF). TLAG consider that it is demonstrably the case that exceptional circumstances do not exist. A Garden Village at South Godstone would also fail to satisfy other key policy tests of the NPPF, including that the proposal i) does not support sustainable development, ii) contains considerable uncertainties with regard to the delivery of viable infrastructure (paragraphs 31 and 177), iii) would not be capable of delivering self-sustainable employment opportunities (paragraph 38), iv) would result in unacceptable impact on landscape character (paragraph 110), v) would have an unacceptable highways impact and not promote sustainable travel (paragraph 34) and vi) is likely to result in unacceptable impacts on sites of ecological value (paragraph 117).

1.8 TLAG consider that Our Local Plan: 2033 can, however, be made sound through modifications to the spatial strategy for housing delivery to provide housing needs by focussing residential development in existing inset areas in accordance with the settlement hierarchy.

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<sup>2</sup> Tandridge District Council intend to submit the plan for examination in accordance with the transitional arrangements set out in the revised 2018 NPPF, to therefore be determined against the old 2012 NPPF.

### **Structure of these representations**

- 1.9 Section 2 – sets out Government policy and guidance relevant to plan making and TLAG’s representations.
- 1.10 Section 3 – provides TLAG’s comments on TDC’s approach to consultation, decision making and evidence base methodology.
- 1.11 Section 4– provides TLAG’s representations having regard to the tests of soundness.
- 1.12 Section 5 – sets out TLAG’s recommendations for modifications to the plan in order to make it sound.

## 2 Government policy and guidance

- 2.1 The legislative framework for the local plan making process is provided by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) as enacted by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and amended by the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 (“the 2017 Act”).
- 2.2 Government policy in relation to plan making is provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance. The NPPF was originally adopted in March 2012 (“the old NPPF”) and has now been replaced with a revised edition published in July 2018 (“the new NPPF”).

### NPPF transitional arrangements

- 2.3 As set out at paragraph 214 of the new NPPF, the policies in the old NPPF will continue to apply for the purposes of examining plans that are submitted on or before 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019.
- 2.4 We understand that TDC intend to submit the plan before this date in order for it to be considered against the policies of the old NPPF.
- 2.5 TLAG note however, that paragraph 212 is clear that plans may need to be revised to reflect policy changes in the new NPPF and that this should be progressed as quickly as possible.
- 2.6 TLAG also note that TDC propose that the majority of the details of the proposed Garden Village would be deferred to a later Area Action Plan (AAP). We comment on this further below, but with regard to the transitional arrangements any examination for a future AAP would, of course, be assessed against the new NPPF.

### Key NPPF policy

- 2.7 It is not our intention to provide a comprehensive policy review here, though it is useful to provide references to key policies to set some context for TLAG’s representations.

#### Plan making

- 2.8 The policies on plan-making in the old NPPF are contained at paragraphs 150-185.
- 2.9 Paragraph 150 provides a very clear statement that Local Plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspiration of local communities. Paragraph 69 of the old NPPF states that local planning authorities should aim to involve all sections of the community in the development of local plans. Paragraph 155 also notes that engagement with communities should be “early and meaningful” and is essential to reflect a collective vision for sustainable development in the area. We will come back to this point as community engagement, community ownership and benefit to the community are all integral to the Garden Village Principles.
- 2.10 Paragraph 153 advises local planning authorities to produce a Local Plan for their areas, and that these can be reviewed to respond flexibly to changing circumstances. The 2017 Act now sets a period of five years within which an authority should undertake an assessment of whether its development plan documents remain up to date. It is also clear that “*any additional development plan documents should only be used where clearly justified*”. This is particularly relevant to the proposal by TDC to defer the determination of a significant number of important strategic matters in relation to a Garden Village to a future AAP.
- 2.11 TLAG fully appreciate that Local Plans must plan positively for development but crucially, as confirmed by paragraphs 154 and 173, they should also be realistic and deliverable. As these representations demonstrate, notwithstanding that a Garden Village is not necessary in any event, this is a fundamental flaw in TDC’s proposal for a Garden Village at South Godstone.
- 2.12 Local Plans must also be informed by a sustainability appraisal. Paragraph 165 of the old NPPF notes that this must meet the requirements of the European Directive on strategic environmental assessment and should “*consider all the likely significant effects on the environment, economic and social factors*”.
- 2.13 It is not necessary to replicate the ‘tests of soundness’ for the examination of a Local Plan in full here though they are integral to TLAG’s representations.

- 2.14 The fourth test of soundness is a catch all, requiring the plan to enable sustainable development “in accordance with the policies in the Framework”. This section provides a brief review of the key policies relevant to TLAG’s representations.

#### Achieving sustainable development

- 2.15 There is an overarching legal requirement (under section 39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act) for local plans to be prepared with the objective of contributing towards the achievement of sustainable development.
- 2.16 Paragraph 14 of the old NPPF provides further context by requiring plans to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It requires local planning authorities to positively seek opportunities to meet objectively assessed needs, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits or specific policies in the NPPF and would indicate that development should be restricted. This includes policies protecting the Green Belt (as well as designations such as SSSI or AONB).

#### Green Belt

- 2.17 The policy in relation to the protection of Green Belt land in section 9 of the NPPF is clearly critical to testing the soundness of TDC’s proposals for a Garden Village at South Godstone. Paragraph 79 confirms their importance and the fundamental role of policy to keep Green Belt land permanently open. Paragraph 80 sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt.
- 2.18 Paragraph 83 confirms that once established Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, and through the preparation or review of a Local Plan. We highlight again, however, TDC’s proposal to defer the review of Green Belt boundaries at South Godstone (and consideration of exceptional circumstances) to a future AAP, which we consider to be fundamentally wrong.
- 2.19 The new NPPF provides additional text at paragraph 137 in relation to the justification of exceptional circumstances. This states that:

*“Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. This will be assessed through the examination of its strategic policies, which will take into account the preceding paragraph, and whether the strategy:*

*a) makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;*

*b) optimises the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of this Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and*

*c) has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground”.*

- 2.20 Whilst not directly applicable to the examination of the Local Plan, this policy would be applicable to the consideration of any future AAP. These principles are in any event well established planning principles that all alternative options must be exhausted before there are exceptional circumstances that might justify removal of land from the Green Belt.
- 2.21 TLAG note that TDC refer to the case of Calverton Parish Council V Greater Nottingham Councils [2015] which sets out matters that any planning judgement in relation to exceptional circumstances should “*at the very least identify and grapple with*”. We agree that the Calverton case provides relevant guidance, but rather than being strict tests that should be applied rigidly (they are not policy) they only provide a guide to the matters that should be balanced in considering exceptional circumstances. What the case does clearly establish is that housing need alone is not a sufficient reason to justify releasing an area of land from the Green Belt.

- 2.22 The case of *Gallagher Homes Limited v Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (2014)*, which preceded *Calverton*, established (amongst others) that whilst a material consideration planning guidance has no statutory force; the process of preparing a plan is not in itself be regarded as exceptional circumstances; what is capable of amounting to exceptional circumstances is a matter of law and that *“once a Green Belt has been established and approved it requires more than general planning concepts to justify an alteration”*.
- 2.23 This reinforces the fundamental principles of Green Belt policy which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. This cannot be overridden by the need to deliver a new Local Plan or in order to meet housing needs where the de-designation of Green Belt land would otherwise be inappropriate.

#### Meeting objectively assessed needs

- 2.24 Paragraphs 47-48 of the old NPPF deal with identifying land for homes. The role of the strategic housing land availability assessment is to identify what land is available in the area for housing and for which land should be identified taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. Local plans should identify specific ‘deliverable’ sites for the first five years and ‘developable’ sites for the second and preferably third five year periods. For a site to be deliverable it should be available and in a suitable location for development now and achievable with a realistic prospect of delivery within five years. For a site to be developable it should be a suitable location for housing with a reasonable prospect that it would be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged (i.e. with references to the housing trajectory in the plan period).
- 2.25 In identifying potential sources of supply, windfall allowances can be included as long as they are based on compelling evidence that they are a reliable source of supply (paragraph 48 of the old NPPF).
- 2.26 Paragraph 52 of the old NPPF recognises that the supply of large number of homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for large scale developments (including new settlements, extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities). Importantly, however, paragraph 52 again emphasises that local planning authorities should work *“with the support of their communities”* to consider whether such opportunities provide the best way of achieving sustainable development<sup>3</sup>.

#### Cross boundary planning

- 2.27 Local authorities have a legal duty to cooperate on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. Section 33A of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 (as subsequently amended by the Localism Act 2011), introduced the requirement to demonstrate evidence of having made every effort to co-operate with regard to issues with cross-boundary impacts. This ‘duty to co-operate’ is already tested through the examination of the local plan, where authorities must demonstrate how they have complied with the legal duty on authorities to *“engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness”*<sup>4</sup> of local plans.
- 2.28 The old NPPF (paragraph 181) noted that there was an ‘expectation’ on authorities to demonstrate evidence of having cooperated to plan for issues with cross boundary impacts (suggesting this could be through joint policies or a memorandum of understanding, or a joint strategy presented as an agreed position).
- 2.29 The PPG notes that *“the duty to cooperate is not a duty to agree. But local planning authorities should make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters before they submit their Local Plans for examination”*.

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<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 72 of the new NPPF, whilst not applicable to the consideration of the Local Plan if submitted prior to the 24 January 2019, provides further useful principles for meeting housing needs in these locations in a sustainable way.

<sup>4</sup> Planning Practice Guidance

2.30 The NPPF notes at paragraph 31 that local authorities should work with neighbouring authorities to develop strategies for the provision of viable infrastructure necessary to support sustainable development.

#### **Deliverability and flexibility**

2.31 In being positively prepared plans also need to be deliverable. This is recognised in paragraph 173 of the old NPPF which notes that sustainable development requires careful attention to viability, and at 177 in relation to ensuring that there is “*a reasonable prospect that planned infrastructure is deliverable in a timely fashion*”.

2.32 The need for plans to also be flexible in order to adapt to change is covered by paragraphs 14 and 153 of the old NPPF.

#### **Other policy**

2.33 Other relevant NPPF policy includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- The core land use planning principles that should underpin both plan making and decision taking are set out at paragraph 17 of the NPPF. We cross refer to these later in section 4 of this report.
- Local plans should support patterns of development that facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport (paragraph 30).
- Plans should ensure that developments which generate significant movements are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised (paragraph 34).
- For large scale residential developments in particular, planning policies should promote a mix of uses in order to provide opportunities to undertake day to day activities including work on site (paragraph 38).
- The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by *inter alia* protecting valued landscapes, minimising impacts on biodiversity (paragraph 109).
- In preparing plans to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in the NPPF (paragraph 110).
- Planning policies should encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (paragraph 111).

### 3 Approach to consultation and methodology

- 3.1 This section provides TLAG's comments on the approach to consultation on the Local Plan, the decision-making process and the methodology adopted in preparing its evidence base.

#### Consultation and decision making

- 3.2 As set out in Section 2, Local Plan preparation must involve all sections of the community and consultation should be early and meaningful.
- 3.3 The requirement for public participation in the preparation of a local plan is dealt with by Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 ("the 2012 Regulations"). Authorities are required to notify particular bodies of the subject of a local plan which the LPA propose to prepare and to invite each of them to make representations as to what a local plan with that subject ought to contain. Regulation 20 then provides that representations can be made to a local authority about a local plan which it proposes to submit to the Secretary of State. Regulation 23 provides that the inspector appointed to carry out the independent examination of the local plan must consider any representations before they make a recommendation.
- 3.4 The requirement to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement is set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The purpose of the document is to set out how the public, organisations and other interested parties will be involved and engaged in the preparation of new Local Plan documents.
- 3.5 Section 18(2) provides that *"the statement of community involvement is a statement of the authority's policy as to the involvement in the exercise of the authority's functions under sections 19, 26 and 28 of this Act and Part 3 of the principal Act of persons who appear to the authority to have an interest in matters relating to development in their area."* The SCI therefore sets out the intentions of the local planning authority with regard to community involvement in the preparation of local plans.
- 3.6 An SCI for Our Local Plan was produced by TDC in September 2015. It confirms that all comments made and received during the formal Publication Stage (Regulation 19) will be made directly available to the Planning Inspector appointed to carry out the examination of the plan.

#### Regulation 18 Consultation - Issues and Approaches (December 2015 - February 2016)

- 3.7 The first round of consultation in 2015 / 2016 made only a very brief reference to a new settlement or garden village under 'Approach 6'. This simply said that *"there is no map or housing numbers associated with the approach and that a new settlement or large urban extension could be located anywhere in the district"*. This provided the public with no information on potential scale or location. Residents were not asked if they wanted a Garden Village, just whether they wanted the option of an urban extension or new settlement investigated.
- 3.8 The Statement of Consultation (2016) acknowledged that at the Issues and Approaches stage *"there is currently little detail in the Spatial Options Topic Paper 2015 to allow an understanding of the realistic deliverability of Approach 6. It is considered that further work should be undertaken to explore the potential for Approach 6, either as a stand-alone approach or as part of a wider strategy"* and *"it is considered that to do this the Council should undertake work to understand the spatial potential for accommodating such an approach and ensure that this is explored as a reasonable alternative in meeting identified needs"*.
- 3.9 It is however of note that, prior to this first round of consultation (which provided no details or potential locations), a letter sent to key stakeholders in August 2015 introduced Approach 6 describing it simply as *"a large urban extension of 4,000 homes and 33,500sqm at South Godstone"*. It is therefore clear that as early as 2015 the council was considering South Godstone as a location for a large new settlement of c. 4000 homes.
- 3.10 As recorded in the Statement of Consultation (2016), representations were received from 3,171 individuals and interested parties (a total of 5,202 separate comments). The figures provided at Appendix 6 suggest

that only 527 responses were received in relation to the delivery strategy approach, and that only 3.14% of the total responses were directly applicable to Approach 6.

- 3.11 In total less than 130 individuals supported the idea of *investigating* Approach 6 (about 4% of all respondents). Of those that supported the idea some specifically noted the development potential on the northern boundary with Reigate and Banstead – and TDC’s response noted that Reigate and Banstead’s Local Plan does include areas for new development to the east of Redhill. Crucially, no supporters of the investigation of Approach 6 similarly propose South Godstone as a possible location. In fact, a large number of objections were received to the proposals for development at the land at Posterngate Farm for housing development (which is a large parcel of land within the Garden Village area of search and which TDC ironically ruled out for further consideration through the Local Plan).
- 3.12 Significantly more of those that commented on the delivery strategy approach objected to Approach 6. This was due to a number of factors including: the need to significantly amend Green Belt boundaries; unrealistic economic assumptions; dramatic changes to the character of Tandridge; that it would not be deliverable; requirement for significant infrastructure investment; unsustainability of the location; breach of national policy in relation to conservation of the natural environment; that the proposals are not yet defined; and that existing settlements should be enlarged rather than a large scale urban extension.
- 3.13 Despite the clear lack of support from the local community, the new settlement idea was still taken forward to the next stage of consultation.

#### **Regulation 18 Consultation - Sites Consultation (November 2016 – December 2016)**

- 3.14 The subsequent Sites Consultation at the end of 2016 (like the Issues and Approaches Consultation, conducted over a holiday period) identified South Godstone and Blindley Heath as two potential locations for a new settlement. It was not clear, however, how TDC, through the evidence base it referred to in the consultation documents, concluded that these sites would have the potential to accommodate a new settlement, or why other alternatives such as Redhill Aerodrome were excluded. The details presented were vague and the scale of development suggested was at around 2,000 homes, half the size now proposed (and half the size suggested in the August 2015 letter). As set out above, there was no evidence of any community support for a new settlement in either of these locations.
- 3.15 The Sites Consultation noted that TDC would determine the preferred delivery strategy for the Local Plan at the next stage of the Local Plan process and that a new or extended settlement could be included should the Council have sufficient evidence to pursue such an approach.
- 3.16 The Sites Consultation acknowledged that at that stage the information had been gathered at a high level and further evidence would be required. However, only three months after the Sites Consultation ended, and while representations were still being considered by the council at its own admission, TDC adopted its Preferred Strategy in March 2017, which included a Garden Village as a key part of the strategy approach for delivering development over the plan period.
- 3.17 The results of the Sites Consultation analysis were not released until the summer of 2017, after TDC had already published a strategy which assumed a new settlement of 4000 homes, something of a scale that had never been consulted on before. It is hard to understand how the council could credibly come to this preferred strategy in the absence of a) support for a large new settlement and b) completed analysis of the feedback from the Sites Consultation.
- 3.18 When the results were eventually published they demonstrated that the largest number of responses were in opposition to the two locations chosen as potential locations.

#### **Preferred Strategy (March 2017)**

- 3.19 The ‘Our Local Plan - Preferred Strategy’ was published in March 2017 following a decision at Policy Committee on 16 March 2017.

- 3.20 This explained that TDC had decided (in advance of the consideration of representations to the Sites Consultation) that a combination of a new Garden Village and “*some limited development of our urban and semi-rural areas is the right way forward*”. The strategy is articulated in more detail at section 6 of the report.
- 3.21 With reference to the consultation responses received at Issues and Options stage, paragraph 5.28 suggested that “*although a new or extended settlement was not universally considered to be an appropriate approach during consultation, many wished to see more detail so they could make more informed judgements. Some also felt this approach was a good solution to preventing incremental development which they felt could be more detrimental to the district overall*”. As set out above, this is a misrepresentation of the views of a very small number of individuals who supported *investigating* a new settlement approach and a much larger number that objected. Again, this decision was made by TDC before they had even considered the responses received to the Sites Consultation (which similarly do not support a new settlement at either South Godstone or Blindley Heath). As such we would argue that adoption of the preferred strategy was premature.
- 3.22 The Preferred Strategy adopted by the Council was also never subject to formal consultation so the general public were never consulted on the idea of a 4000 home new settlement.

#### **Regulation 18 Consultation - Garden Village consultation (2017)**

- 3.23 In 2017 TDC undertook a third stage of Regulation 18 consultation (this time commencing in the middle of the summer holidays). This consultation presented the principle of a Garden Village somewhere in the district as a *fait accompli*. However, as noted above, there has not been any consultation on the principle of a scheme of 4,000 homes. Neither the Issues and Approaches consultation in 2015 nor the Sites Consultation in 2016 made the extent of the proposal clear and neither demonstrated a level of support from the community to warrant the promotion of this spatial strategy.
- 3.24 And yet the 2017 consultation only asked about themes and the relative merits of four shortlisted sites (which now also included Land to the West of Edenbridge and Redhill Aerodrome as potential locations, although the former was rather shambolically withdrawn part way through the consultation due to objections from Kent County Council, Sevenoaks District Council and Edenbridge Town Council). Notwithstanding the way the consultation questionnaire was set up (with nowhere to comment on the principle of a garden village) a vast number of people took this (their only opportunity) to comment on the principle of a 4000 home new settlement.
- 3.25 The literature produced by the council for the consultation roadshow was, in TLAG’s opinion, biased towards a site in the center of the district. Information for both Redhill and Edenbridge was negative in its language whilst that for South Godstone and Blindley Heath was far more positive. It was clear from the outset which direction the council wanted to skew the consultation results.
- 3.26 TLAG have serious misgivings with regard to the presentation of the results of the 2017 Garden Villages consultation in the Statement of Consultation. The report presents a picture that opinion was evenly split for and against the idea and the report openly said that it only discussed ‘themes’. This is despite TLAG knowing that hundreds, if not thousands of people, had written in to object.
- 3.27 TLAG submitted a Freedom of Information request, asking to see the statistical survey results, but TDC advised that no quantitative analysis had been undertaken (and if TLAG wanted this analysis it would have to pay TDC £17,500). TLAG has therefore undertaken its own analysis and has reviewed every one of the 5,134 comments submitted (by 2,807 individuals) (other than where these cannot be found – see below).
- 3.28 In the TLAG analysis we have scored these as being either ‘Strongly Against a Garden Village’, ‘Unclear’ or ‘Strongly For a Garden Village’. Where it was not clear what someone was saying we have adopted a conservative approach and included them as ‘Unclear’. As such we feel our assessment is fair and objective.
- 3.29 Because of the way the comments are all recorded on the council’s consultation portal it is not easy to identify every individual comment so the total number of comments we have recorded is 131 short of the

5,134 reported by TDC (although we note that the number of consultees and comments in the Statement of Consultation also do not tally with the information on the TDC website).

- 3.30 The results shown in **Table 1** below demonstrate that only 5% of people were in favour of a GV. It also has to be taken into account that this number includes representations made by agents acting for landowners or developers in favour of each of the sites (which would push the proportion of the general public opposed even higher).

**Table 1 – TLAG analysis of Sites Consultation responses**

Comment type	Total no. of comments	Clearly OBJECTS for whatever reason	Comment is unclear	Clearly SUPPORTS for whatever reason
Vision	108	55	37	16
Principle	90	33	50	7
Housing and Employment	82	29	41	12
Governance	50	18	28	4
Land Capture & Investment	61	28	27	6
Design and Quality	59	20	31	8
Landscape & Green Infrastructure	64	28	27	9
A Social Community	59	19	35	5
Sustainable Transport & Infrastructure	80	33	38	9
Blindley Heath	524	411	100	13
Land W of E	319	215	95	9
Redhill Aerodrome	1053	826	128	99
South Godstone	586	458	104	24
Additional Comments	1891	1681	171	39
General Feedback	31	4	26	1
	5057	3858	938	261
		76.3%	18.5%	5.2%

- 3.31 With specific regard to South Godstone our analysis shows that only 24 of the comments received were clearly in support of a Garden Village in this location. That is just 4% of all of the comments in relation to South Godstone and less than 0.5% of the total responses received to the consultation in total (and again some of these will be from the site promoters). By comparison around 78% of responses that specifically related to South Godstone clearly objected to the proposal.

#### Regulation 19 - Our Local Plan: 2033

- 3.32 Despite the outcome of the various consultations, Our Local Plan: 2033 includes a Garden Village as part of the Spatial Strategy (TLP01) and South Godstone as the proposed location (SGC01).
- 3.33 TDC note in the Guidance Note for Submission of Comments that “the remit for this consultation relates to representations on legal compliance and the ‘tests of soundness’ and that the Council are no longer seeking views on alternative options.
- 3.34 Whilst TLAG acknowledge that at the examination stage the Inspector will judge the plan in terms of legal compliance and soundness, this does not impose any restrictions on the nature of comments that can be made in representations and the Regulation 19 stage. It is, for example, possible that TDC would consider the outcome of this further consultation and decide to amend the plan prior to submission to the Secretary of State. In any event, as noted earlier, the consideration of alternative options is integral to the tests of soundness and it is entirely appropriate to continue to consider views at the Regulation 19 stage.
- 3.35 We also note that whilst TDC say on their website that “a fact sheet containing information about the plan’s contents in relation to each area is being delivered to every household in the district”, this has demonstrably

not happened. Many households have either never received these fact sheets or have only received them in the last week of the consultation, meaning that people will not have had enough time to consider and prepare a response. The process has not been well handled.

### Summary

3.36 TDC's consultation process can be summarised as follows:

- The Issues and Approaches consultation asked whether residents wanted the option of an urban extension or garden village investigated. Of the 3,171 individuals who responded only around 4% supported the idea of even *investigating* Approach 6.
- The Sites Consultation identified South Godstone and Blindley Heath as potential locations for a Garden Village of about 2000 homes.
- Before considering the responses to the Site Consultation TDC approved a Preferred Strategy that included a Garden Village somewhere in the district.
- The Garden Village Consultation did not deal with principles (despite the larger number of 4,000 homes not having been included in any previous consultation), only location. The consultation material was skewed towards South Godstone or Blindley Heath.
- Only 5% of respondents to the Garden Village Consultation were in favour of a Garden Village and 0.5% expressed clear support for a Garden Village at South Godstone (which is likely to include representations from site promoters).

3.37 In our view this does not meet the requirement, as set out in the NPPF, for Local Plans to deliver sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspiration of local communities. Paragraph 52 is clear that local planning authorities should work with the support of their communities to consider whether a new settlement or large extension is the best way of achieving sustainable development.

**3.38 Given the outcome of consultation, Our Local Plan: 2033 fails on this policy test alone.**

### Sustainability Appraisal methodology

3.39 In line with the relevant SA Regulations, there should be an "early and effective" consultation procedure which should also be in line with the requirements of the Aarhus Convention.

3.40 The Council's Preferred Strategy in March 2017 stated that the Local Plan was to focus development on Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements, together with a new Garden Community. An SA at this time considered further alternative approaches to spatial delivery of housing (Approaches 7a to 8b) to those considered in the 2015 SA (Issues and Approaches SA). This Preferred Strategy was however, not subject to public consultation and the SA stated at para 1.7 that "*the earlier assessments in 2015 (Approaches 1 – 6) are no longer relevant*". It follows therefore that the previous SA was considered no longer relevant to plan making and whilst the 2018 SA Report provides evidence of this SA stage, TLAG consider this critical stage of plan making (i.e. selection of the preferred spatial strategy which included a Garden Village) appears to have been selected without an SA which had the benefit of public scrutiny.

3.41 Within the 2018 SA Report, information on the context and scope of the SA is provided in Volume 1: Context. Commentary on what plan-making has involved to date and the accompanying SA stages and options (i.e. alternatives) assessments is provided in Volume 2. Volume 2 summarises each stage of the SA process to date, before presenting the options considered and the assessment matrices. This Volume extends to over 320 pages with no overarching commentary. TLAG considers that the information is largely inaccessible and lacks clarity for members of the public seeking to understand:

- The Council's reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with;
- Why certain alternatives were rejected; and
- The various SA and Plan making stages and how these have informed decision making.

3.42 TLAG consider that consultation related to the SA process has therefore not been “early or effective”, with particular regard to selection of the Preferred Strategy and presentation of the alternatives.

#### Approach to Assessment

3.43 The Sites Consultation SA (2016) and Garden Villages SA (August 2017), which assessed 10 potential locations for a Garden Village, apply a simplistic site appraisal criteria which was criticised at earlier SA stages, with performance being scored against each SA Objective. This method and its presentation style mean that it is difficult for the reader to interpret the reasons for sites being selected/rejected.

3.44 The 2017 Garden Village SA provides an appraisal of 10 potential garden village locations based on the provision of 2,000 homes. However, it appears to undertake this assessment by treating the locations as individual sites and policies in isolation. The 2017 Garden Village consultation report stated that it was important that at the next stage of the SA process, “*the cumulative impacts of any potential Garden Village in combination with the impacts of other plans and policies, are also taken into account*”. TLAG would therefore urge the Council to re-examine the SA to ensure that the effects of the Garden Villages have been considered in the context of the plan as a whole rather than in isolation. Of particular relevance is the potential for cumulative effects with other plans, including relevant Infrastructure and Transport Plans.

3.45 The 2018 SA re-presents the findings of the 2017 Garden Village SA (South Godstone, Blindley Heath and Redhill Aerodrome). Since the 2017 Garden Village SA report the Council has published further technical evidence work, including a Transport Assessment, Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Study, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Ecological Site Assessments, Air Quality Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment. Whilst some comment is made on biodiversity resources, the SA of the Garden Village locations appears to make no reference to the other available evidence base. It is therefore unclear how this evidence base has informed either the SA or plan marking process.

3.46 Given that the location of the Garden Village is of such critical importance, TLAG consider that the SA should be based on the latest up-to-date evidence base information related to the likely significant effects on the environment, with particular reference to cumulative effects, transport, air quality effects and effects on ecological designated sites and heritage assets.

#### Consideration of Alternatives

3.47 In accordance with relevant regulations, the SA report must identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the reasonable alternatives to the plan taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan. The SA Report must also include, having regard to case law, a summary of the reasons for rejecting earlier options in the SA Report. Alternatives must also be subject to the same level of analysis as the preferred option.

3.48 In 2015, the Issues and Approaches SA (Table 1: Delivery Strategy Approaches Appraisals) considered 6 strategic options to delivery, all of which provided a different number of homes and jobs. Further ‘reasonable alternatives’ in respect of Delivery Strategy Approaches are then assessed at Section 5.8 of Volume 2 (Approaches 7a to 8b). Approaches 7a to 8b however, all included a Garden Village.

3.49 Overall, there is a lack of clarity in the reasons given for selecting the alternatives for assessment and there is no substantial account of the rationale for choosing those particular alternatives.

3.50 Considering the assessment method applied to this stage of the SA process, with particular regard to the SA of the preferred delivery strategy, TLAG question the following:

- How the Council arrived the list of (reasonable) site options and the reasons for selecting the preferred spatial strategy approach;
- Why other spatial delivery approaches capable of meeting the housing need (e.g. options which did **not** include a Garden Village) were not re-examined at Section 5.8 of the SA, together with Approaches 7a to 8b, to ensure that reasonable alternatives are presented in a transparent and comparable way. For example, options which did not include a Garden Village such as the

combination of increasing density in existing settlements and allocating new sites on the edge of Tier 1 and 2 settlements, or the combination of Garden Village sites as assessed in the Transport Assessment. No justification for these earlier alternatives being rejected is provided in the SA Report;

- Whether the level of site selection and sustainability appraisal, given the absence of explicit assumptions about the amount of housing in each option, lack of spatial information on delivery options, and lack of reliance on the available evidence base, is adequate to justify selection of Approach 7a as the preferred option of Tier 1 and 2 settlements plus a 'Garden Village';
- Why the Council has not re-examined the 2016 Sites Consultation and 2017 Garden Villages SA in light of consultation responses and considered if further 'reasonable alternatives' are available within the District; and
- Why the Council has not re-examined the reasons for rejection and SA of the Garden Village locations based on the updated technical evidence base, e.g. transport modelling together with the potential for cumulative effects with other plans (including infrastructure/ transport infrastructure/employment opportunities).

3.51 The 2017 SA of Garden Village locations assessed 10 locations. Section 5.13 of Volume 2: Options Assessment identifies that these were subsequently reduced to three reasonable options, namely South Godstone, Blindley Heath and Redhill Aerodrome. The reasons for the other 7 locations being considered no longer 'reasonable options' are stated in the SA and primarily relate to their Suitability or Availability. In respect of the 'Suitability Assessment', the stated reasons solely reference sites being unsuitable due to 'landscape impact'. cursory reference is made to other factors with no reference to evidence base.

3.52 TLAG considers that given the strategic importance of this spatial planning decision, the reasons for rejection should have been more robustly considered in this process or at least should be re-examined before options were rejected. For example, flood risk, accessibility, lack of previously developed land, loss of high grade agricultural land which are also key sustainability objectives.

3.53 In respect of 'Availability', 6 out of 7 of the garden settlement broad locations were identified as being Unavailable or Partially Unavailable. National Planning Guidance paragraph 018 states *"Reasonable alternatives are the different realistic options considered by the plan-maker in developing the policies in its plan. They must be sufficiently distinct to highlight the different sustainability implications of each so that meaningful comparisons can be made. The alternatives must be realistic and deliverable."*

3.54 It is apparent that 6 out of the 7 alternative sites were reasonable in 2016 when they were considered in the 2016 Sites Consultation SA report. It is therefore unclear why these were identified as being realistic and deliverable at the outset but not at this later stage.

#### Summary

3.55 **In summary, whilst TDC have been through the SA process throughout their consultation stages, we are concerned that has not had the effect of leading to robust and informed decision making.**

3.56 This is extremely important as the rejection of spatial strategy options on the basis of the SA has major consequences for the Local Plan as a whole. For example, the rejection of Approach 2 (the reasons for which – as we come onto in Section 3 – are spurious at best) has been used to justify an alternative approach which involves a significant amount of Green Belt release and a Garden Village in an entirely unsustainable location.

## 4 TLAG representations

- 4.1 TLAG consider that Our Local Plan: 2033, as currently drafted, fails each of the four ‘tests of soundness’ and is therefore not sound. It can, however, be made sound through modifications to the proposed Spatial Strategy.
- 4.2 Whilst TLAG acknowledge the need to deliver new homes in Tandridge over the plan period it is fundamentally opposed to the proposed Spatial Strategy in draft policy TLP01. An alternative approach should be progressed, whereby housing need is dispersed across the district and focussed in (and if needs be around) the Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements. There is no need for a Garden Village.
- 4.3 In any event, the area of search around South Godstone is simply not a suitable or appropriate location for a Garden Village. If it were to be decided – despite our strong opposition – that a Garden Village is necessary, the site at Redhill Aerodrome would represent a more sustainable and logical location.

### Housing targets

- 4.4 The target of 6,056 set out in draft policy TLP01 is below the Objectively Assessed Needs of 9,400 units for the plan period, but represents what TDC consider is deliverable from existing supply, new sites, windfalls and the 1,400 homes at South Godstone.
- 4.5 TLAG have not sought to challenge the overall housing target figure as it does not have the technical capability to do so. It therefore takes, as a given, the level of housing TDC evidently consider will provide an appropriate balance for a sustainable plan. We fundamentally disagree, however, with the way it has been derived through the Spatial Strategy. We also feel that with the district’s significant constraints the figure certainly should not be higher.
- 4.6 There are, demonstrably, alternative sources of supply in more sustainable locations which mean that there is no need for the delivery of 1,400 homes at a Garden Village at the end of the plan period.

### Spatial strategy

- 4.7 The Local Plan Spatial Strategy was approved by TDC’s Planning Policy Committee in March 2017. This document sets out, at paragraph 6.2, the principles of the strategy for meeting development needs, namely:
- *An infrastructure-led approach that ensures new development is capable of delivering infrastructure improvement to meet the needs of the existing and future population throughout the plan period;*
  - *allocating a strategic site capable of delivering development based on garden village principles, including a primary school and which facilitates the delivery of a secondary school provision, primary health care facilities, highways improvements and employment space commensurate with the scale of housing;*
  - *the utilisation of previously developed land at densities appropriate to the character of the existing area and by utilising higher densities in close proximity to public transport;*
  - *the delivery of sustainable development through allocated sites on the edge of Tier 1 and 2 settlements and in locations supported by Neighbourhood Plans, by adjusting the Green Belt boundary where none of the purposes which define Green Belt are served and where exceptional circumstances are considered to exist;*
  - *Supporting economic growth through intensification and/or expansion of existing employment sites, where appropriate; and by allocating additional employment land in sustainable locations to support the local and rural economy.*
- 4.8 TLAG are fundamentally opposed to the principle of a Garden Village (bullet point 2).
- 4.9 TLAG are strongly supportive of the promotion of higher densities within existing settlements and consider that the third bullet point in the strategy is not strong enough to support this. Optimising densities at all opportunities in existing settlements should be the absolute priority, before even considering altering

Green Belt boundaries, and especially a Garden Village option in the Green Belt. This is clear from the message in the housing White Paper and explicit in the new NPPF tests for exceptional circumstances.

- 4.10 TLAG have no in principle objection to the fourth principle where the rationale for removing land from the Green Belt is established by providing robust evidence that it no longer serves any of its purposes. TLAG's strong preference, however, would be to ensure that all opportunities are fully explored within the built up area prior to any such Green Belt release. We believe that the housing numbers proposed can be met by an alternative strategy of optimising opportunities within existing settlements, and that Approach 2 was incorrectly discounted by TDC.

#### Meeting needs within existing settlements (Approach 2)

- 4.11 Approaches 2a and 2b, considered by TDC, would consist entirely of sites within areas inset from the Green Belt in Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements, with 2b at the greater density of at least 70dph. By the council's own figures Approach 2a would deliver 2,336 dwellings and Approach 2b 3403 dwellings.
- 4.12 The SA recognises that Approaches 2a and 2b score well against many of the Council's own objectives as they "seek to protect the environment around the existing built up areas" (page 130 of the SA).
- 4.13 Specifically they score the highest of any of the approaches considered by TDC for the use of previously developed land (pages 125 and 127), using natural resources prudently (pages 125 and 128), reducing land contamination and safeguarding soil quantity and quality (pages 125 and 128) and protecting and enhancing landscape character (pages 125 and 129). By definition they also do the most to preserve the Green Belt.
- 4.14 They are also amongst those that do the best in reducing the need to travel, encouraging sustainable transport options, improving accessibility to all services and facilities (page 127) and in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and moving to a low carbon economy (page 128).
- 4.15 The SA does rate approaches 2a and 2b lower than others against some criteria, but these seem debatable. The approaches score poorly for the economy and employment (pages 125 and 127-8) mainly on the grounds that they would put pressure on the conversion of offices to dwellings. But it is not clear how building more homes in Tier 1 and 2 settlements would do this. Indeed, it would be more likely to have the opposite effect by satisfying demand that would otherwise be met by converting offices. The evidence provided in the paper from Gildersleve & Payne has clearly shown that new office development is more viable in Tier 1 centres than, say, a new Garden Village at South Godstone.
- 4.16 Approaches 2a and 2b also come out poorly in terms of air pollution, but so does every other approach (pages 125 and 129). While they might slightly increase it in urban areas, this is not a major problem in the district (there are no AQMAs) and they reduce traffic movements since they concentrate on areas with good public transport.
- 4.17 The one area in which approaches 2a and 2b evidently perform less well than the alternatives is in the numbers of dwellings they provide, and it is for this reason that TDC has discounted them. But while that decision was perhaps understandable when the council was aiming to fulfil an OAN of 9,400 homes, it is no longer justified under its new target of just over 6,000. When added to the 2,334 homes already built or with extant planning permission, the 435 windfall sites (notwithstanding that we believe this should be higher), 250 from town centre initiatives and 336 "other supply" the 2,336 provided by approach 2a (i.e. at 30 dwellings per hectare) would provide a total of 5,691 houses. It would only require the development of a handful of schemes at a higher density than the blanket 30 dwellings per hectare for this approach to reach the same level. Meanwhile, the 3403 dwellings provided by Approach 2b would more than meet Tandridge's stated target.
- 4.18 Whilst the Preferred Strategy suggests that Tandridge is not a densely populated district, Approach 2a (at 30 dwellings per hectare) does not involve very high densities. With good design this density can be accommodated within the Tier 1 and 2 settlements without 'inevitably altering their character' as suggested at paragraph 5.9 of the Preferred Strategy document.

4.19 The Preferred Strategy also discounts Approach 2 on the basis of insufficient infrastructure. However, the approach scored well through the SA for reducing the need to travel, encouraging sustainable transport options and improving accessibility to all services and facilities. Whilst infrastructure may need improving to accommodate new development, there is already a baseline of services, and development will contribute towards infrastructure needs through CIL and s106 payments in the usual way. The alternative of a Garden Village at South Godstone is effectively starting from scratch, requiring huge levels of investment in new infrastructure (which as we address below is in part uncosted and undeliverable).

**4.20 In summary, a similar level of housing to that proposed by TDC in draft Policy TLP01 can be achieved through the more sustainable strategy of the discounted Approach 2.**

4.21 Notwithstanding this, a similar level of housing can even be delivered without a garden village adopting TDC's approach in draft policy TLP01, which involves the allocation of new housing sites on the edge of Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements, and substituting more appropriate assumptions on densities and windfall allowances for those applied by TDC. This is set out, for illustrative purposes, in the subsection below.

#### **TDC assumptions on housing supply**

4.22 Draft Policy TLP01 identifies the potential sources of housing supply, which comprise the total 6,065 homes, and TLAG make the following comments.

- **Existing Supply:** TDC have included the 1,280 homes delivered for the first five years of the plan to 2018 (1,280) and assumed that another 1,054 would be delivered over the period up to 2020/21 through existing commitments. Paragraph 229 of the Housing Topic Paper explains however that some planning permissions have been removed as the Council 'has evidence that they are unlikely to come forward'. Whilst the paragraph gives some examples of situations where TDC have reached this judgement there is no explanation of how many units this involves. These are sites that have been deemed appropriate for housing development, through the grant of planning permissions. TDC must be obliged to fully and robustly explore the potential for these sites to come forward at some point in the plan period before taking the drastic step of significant Green Belt release and infrastructure investment required for a Garden Village.
- **New Urban Settlement Sites:** The figure of 768 units is derived from the proposed housing allocation sites in the draft Local Plan. Some of the sites are included in the plan at an extremely low density. For example, the sites at Salmons Lane West, Limpsfield Road, Green Hill and Shelton Sports ground, which have a combined site area of 24.7ha would only deliver a total of only 425 homes. This represents a density of only 17 dwellings per hectare. This is directly contrary to TDC's own draft policy TLP19 – which requires all developments to make the most efficient use of land. If the density of these sites is increased to 40 dwellings per hectare (which would be more appropriate for Tier 1 settlements, and in line with the obligation on authorities to maximise densities) the yield of these sites increases to 1,331 dwellings.
- There are also a number of sites within the built-up areas of Tier 1 settlements that were considered to be suitable, available and achievable but have not been progressed for site allocation, in favour of a Garden Village. Oxted, the town at the top of the settlement hierarchy, would not deliver any new housing at all. The two sites listed as Oxted (which in any event would deliver only 110 units over the plan period) are actually in Hurst Green, which is listed as a separate settlement in its own right (at number six in the hierarchy). Caterham, which is number three in the hierarchy, is only due to receive 170 dwellings, despite an apparent willingness in its draft Neighbourhood Plan to accommodate many more. This is all despite the SA's emphasis on the importance of a settlement hierarchy. On both pages 254 and 255 the SA states that *"ensuring that tier 1 and tier 2 settlements are the focus for development improves sustainability in economic, social and environmental respects. It ensures new populations are focused where access to services and public transport is most advantageous. It also reduces pressure on smaller settlements and rural locations where environmental constraints are typically greater. Therefore the inclusion of this policy is the sustainable option"*.

There are 26 sites in Tier 1 settlements that the HELAA considered to be 'deliverable or developable' but which were not progressed as site allocations. Adopting TDC's density assumptions (which again are exceptionally low in some cases<sup>5</sup>), the total yield of these sites would be 3,312 dwellings. These have been discounted by TDC for various reasons including ecological, Green Belt, infrastructure and landscape impact. TLAG appreciate that not all sites included in a HELAA are suitable for development, solely on the basis that they can be deliverable or developable. TLAG has not undertaken a detailed analysis of each of the sites, we simply do not have the time or resources to do so, but given the emphasis on the settlement hierarchy and the sustainability credentials of existing settlements these options must be fully explored before resorting to a Garden Village approach. This is especially so when the proposed garden village would be in a location that would experience comparable impacts to those that have been deemed to be sufficient reason for the rejection of edge of settlement sites, but is actually less sustainable and lacks the benefit of existing facilities and infrastructure.

- **New Semi-rural Service Settlement Sites Tier 2:** Similarly, in deriving the figure of 533 dwellings TDC have adopted some exceptionally low densities, and in some cases with no obvious justification. The site to the north of Plough Road, for example, is a 9ha site with few evident constraints but with an indicative yield of only 120 units. That is only 13 dwellings per hectare, whereas the existing residential area to the west is at least 30 dwellings per hectare. Another site at land to the west of Godstone has an approximate developable area of 7.2ha but an indicative yield of only 150 homes. Adopting a higher density of 30 dwellings per hectare (reduced from the 40 adopted above to reflect the Tier 2 settlement status) increases the total yield from these sites from 533 to 755 units.
- TLAG consider that sites within built up areas of Tier 3 settlements can also make a valuable contribution to housing needs. No provision has, however, been made by TDC .
- **Windfall Allowance:** The Housing Topic Paper (p40) addresses extant and future windfalls. In doing so it looks at historical windfall delivery and differentiates between completions on residential garden land and those that were not on residential garden land, to provide average annual delivery rates for both. For the purposes of predicting future housing supply TDC have chosen to rely on the annual average delivery rate excluding garden land, of 29 dwellings per annum (435 in total from 2018 to 2033). We consider that the Local Plan should adopt the higher annual average of 51 dwellings per annum which represents a true reflection of actual past completion rates. The Housing Topic Paper provides no reason for adopting the lower rate. Indeed, the decision of the Planning Inspector following the Whyteleafe Road Caterham Inquiry supports the higher figure. The Inspector, in setting out his reasoning for supporting a scheme of 13 dwellings on garden land, noted that "*the proposals will contribute to much needed housing in a sustainable location*" (paragraph 25). Notwithstanding windfalls on garden land, the TDC Housing Topic Paper at paragraph 233 provides valid reasons why the rate of windfall completions in the future may be greater than the current trend. For these reasons, and that garden land rates should be accounted for, it is robust to adopt the higher figure of 51 dwellings per annum which would equate to 765 in total for the remainder of the plan period.
- **Town Centre Initiatives:** TLAG note that TDC estimate that 250 dwellings can be delivered through town centre initiatives over the plan period. This appears to be close to the total of what the Council is proposing for the urban areas of Oxted, Hurst Green and Caterham, which as Tier 1 settlements high in the settlement hierarchy should be taking very much more.
- **Other Supply (e.g. empty homes):** TLAG do not challenge the figure of 336 dwellings over the plan period from empty homes. We do note, however, that TDC's methodology for reaching this figure is less than clear and it may be that more homes could be delivered through reuse of empty properties. Page 41 of

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<sup>5</sup> Site CAT42 for example has an estimated developable area of 12.73ha but an estimated yield of only 80 dwellings at around 6 dwellings per hectare.

the Housing Topic Paper suggests that the number of empty properties at one time in Tandridge is less than 1,000 and refers to Table 4b. As there is no table 4b we assume this refers to table 4. We also assume that this is showing that the total number of empty properties at 2017 is 366 (although that does mean that the earlier description of “less than 1,000” is particularly confusing). The figure in the trajectory at Appendix 3 of the Housing Topic Paper is 300 based on 20 dwellings per annum (which does not correlate to the 336 included in TLP01). If the total number of empty properties is currently 366 then the aspiration to bring 336 back into use over the plan period is laudable. However, on the basis that Capacity Grid have suggested that they could bring 92 properties back into use by October 2018 it suggests that the 20 dwellings per annum could be a conservative estimate. For the purposes of this exercise we have simply included the 336.

Source of supply	Our Local Plan: 2022	TLAG analysis	Comment
Existing supply	2,334	2,344 +	The + denotes sites that have been excluded by the Council but for which there are no figures or evidence
New Urban Settlement Sites (Tier 1)	768	1331 +	Proposed allocation sites with higher densities + potential for additional site allocations
New Semi-Rural Service Settlements (Tier 2) + Tier 3 Settlements	533	755 +	Proposed allocation sites with higher densities + potential for Tier 2 allocations
South Godstone Garden Community	1400	0	
Windfall	435	765	Adopting existing rate of delivery including Gardens
Town Centre Initiatives	250	250 +	
Other supply (empty homes)	336	336	Included at same rate though difficult to fully understand the basis for the figure
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,056</b>	<b>5,781 +</b>	

4.23 This analysis is purely an illustrative alternative approach to TDC’s figures. It shows, however, that a similar (if not greater) number of dwellings could be delivered over the plan period – following TDC’s own preferred strategy – but without the need for a Garden Village by:

- Increasing densities on new Tier 1 and 2 sites in accordance with the NPPF and draft policy TLP19;
- Including a more robust assumption for windfalls based on past rates;
- Allocating more sites in Tier 1 and 2 settlements in accordance with the settlement hierarchy;

- Recognising the contribution of sites in Tier 3 settlements.

4.24 We must, however, make it entirely clear that, in providing this example, we are not endorsing the release of any particular site from the Green Belt. TLAG does not have detailed knowledge of these sites, but in at least some cases – such as the land at The Old Cottage, Station Rd, Lingfield – this seems inappropriate and unjustified. The above is just an illustrative example of how, if sites were established not to meet Green Belt purposes and exceptional circumstances were demonstrated, they could make a greater contribution. There are likely to be non-Green Belt sites that TDC have discounted that would be more appropriate housing locations (in accordance with the settlement hierarchy) that have not been allocated.

4.25 To emphasise again, TLAG believe that Tandridge’s housing needs can be met through development exclusively within existing settlements through Approach 2 and increasing density.

#### **Agreements with other authorities to meet unmet need**

4.26 The above analysis does not address the fact that the plan does not propose that any other authorities would help to meet TDC’s unmet need. We have reviewed the Duty to Cooperate Statement Update (2018) and from the information provided it does not demonstrate any serious attempt to negotiate with neighbouring authorities.

4.27 The 2018 update provides very brief minutes of meetings (or in some cases telephone discussions) with surrounding authorities. The summary output of each of these discussions is summarised as a) TDC setting out their approach to meeting circa 6,000 homes b) a brief conclusion that the other authority could not help TDC meet unmet needs and c) that they would enter into a statement of common ground later in the year.

4.28 There is no evidence in the document of any serious discussion in practical terms with regard to cooperating to help meet needs. Most notably, though the draft Reigate and Banstead plan proposes to safeguard the Redhill Aerodrome, the notes of the discussions with Reigate and Banstead show that TDC stated that they would only be looking to protect their part of the site as employment use given the uncertainty of a new junction on the M23. It could reasonably be expected that further discussions could and should have taken place about a joined approach which combines resources for the delivery of infrastructure. Indeed, Reigate and Banstead’s future spatial strategy involve the potential for large scale development to the east of the district and has proposed to ‘safeguard’ land at Redhill Aerodrome for potential development beyond their plan period. Given the Reigate and Banstead plan period is to 2027 this would coincide with the back of the plan period for Tandridge (to 2033).

4.29 Whilst TLAG are fundamentally opposed to any Garden Village, the site at Redhill Aerodrome would be significantly more appropriate in the event that one was nevertheless approved. We consider this in further detail below.

#### **Conclusion**

4.30 The ‘justified’ test of soundness as set out in the NPPF requires that a plan must be the most appropriate strategy having regard to all reasonable alternatives.

4.31 TDC have considered a range of alternative approaches to meeting development need. They have however simply chosen the wrong option, based on a decision to promote a Garden Village over development within and on the edge of existing settlements at an early stage of the plan preparation.

4.32 A more appropriate and sustainable strategy would be to ensure that densities are maximised in existing settlements. Adopting TDC’s own figures a similar level of housing delivery can be achieved over the plan period by adopting a density of just 30 dwellings per hectare. This is not high density for towns at the top of the settlement hierarchy. Whilst the Preferred Strategy rejects Approach 2, it did so ultimately on the basis that it would not meet the full OAN, but now TDC’s preferred approach does not plan to meet it either. Making the most efficient use of land within existing settlements has to be TDC’s priority. It is in line with NPPF policy and even TDC’s own draft policy at TLP19.

- 4.33 Even adopting TDC's preferred strategy, it is evident that by adopting more appropriate assumptions the other sources of supply deliver a similar if not greater number of houses without the need for Garden Village.
- 4.34 TDC have, however, taken a leap away from the basics of making most efficient use of land in accordance with a defined settlement hierarchy, to the notion of a Garden Village as a panacea to the district's housing needs. This was a decision that, as we have set out in Section 3, does not reflect the views of the community and is not robustly supported by its own Sustainably Appraisal process. It is clearly an approach which seeks to avoid making potentially difficult decisions in relation to existing settlements by taking a single hit at South Godstone. This is clearly not in the interests of good planning.
- 4.35 For these reasons the plan's spatial strategy as drafted is not positively prepared (it has not demonstrated that all opportunities for neighbouring authorities to contribute to needs have been fully explored) or justified (it is not the most appropriate strategy having regard to alternatives – as demonstrated by the SA process).
- 4.36 Even if the strategy to deliver a Garden Village were robust and founded on good evidence, the simple fact is that South Godstone is an entirely inappropriate location in any event and the next section demonstrates this is neither effective (it is simply undeliverable) nor consistent with national policy.

### **South Godstone**

- 4.37 This section of our representations demonstrates, with reference to the attached reports, why South Godstone is not an appropriate location for a Garden Village (notwithstanding that a Garden Village is not required anywhere in Tandridge).

#### **Working with the support of communities**

- 4.38 The Government recognise that one of the key requirements of new settlements is the support of local communities. This is also central to the Garden City principles. The approach to consultation and decision adopted by TDC has, however, been entirely unsatisfactory. As noted above, during the 2017 Garden Village only 5% of the total of 5003 comments made supported a Garden Village. Of the 581 comments that specifically mentioned South Godstone, only 24 responses explicitly supported a Garden Village in this location. This is clearly not working with the support of the community.
- 4.39 The draft policy SGC01 even goes as far as suggesting that "the Garden Community will enhance the existing settlement of South Godstone...". There is no evidence, however, that this is reflective of the views of the local community.

#### **Green Belt.**

- 4.40 As noted above, TLAG's strong preference would be for TDC to meet housing needs within existing settlement boundaries by making the most efficient use of land. Based on TDC's own figures this is entirely possible.
- 4.41 TLAG do however recognise that there are circumstances where it may be appropriate to release land from the Green Belt to meet challenging development needs. It is critical, however, that this is only done in the right places and is fully justified against stringent Green Belt policy (as the fundamental principles of Green Belt land are its openness and permanence). The Council have simply not demonstrated that 'exceptional circumstances' exist to justify this in Tandridge.
- 4.42 The delivery of a Garden Village at South Godstone would require a significant amendment to existing Green Belt boundaries. As TDC note, whilst Our Local Plan: 2033 proposes a broad location for the Garden Village, the amendment to the boundary, and therefore assessment of 'exceptional circumstances' would come later through an AAP.
- 4.43 Given the scale of development required (a significant amount of the area of search would be required for the 1,400 homes and potentially all of it for the full 4,000) it is simply not appropriate to completely defer a judgement on whether exceptional circumstances exist.

- 4.44 The new NPPF (which would be in force for the preparation and consideration of an AAP) provides further guidance to the consideration of exceptional circumstances, and that these should be considered and assessed through the examination of strategic policies. We consider each in turn below:
- a) Whether the strategy makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underused land*
- 4.45 TLAG acknowledge that Tandridge is a geographically constrained district with an extremely high proportion of Green Belt land. There are however evidently opportunities to deliver development in existing inset areas. Sites in Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements inset in the Green Belt, are largely on such brownfield land, score well by this measure in the Sustainability Appraisal (page 127) and should thus be preferred.
- 4.46 It is also evident that there are brownfield sites that have been considered and rejected by TDC through the site allocation process. The site at Rooks Nest Farm (GOD018) for example is brownfield land but was considered unsuitable in the HELAA on the basis that it is unconnected to the boundaries of a sustainable settlement. We do not consider this a good enough reason to reject this site, or indeed others like it.
- 4.47 The area of search at South Godstone on the other hand has very little previously developed land and scored a double minus for it in Appendix C of the 2107 Sustainability Appraisal (table at para 4.24)
- b) Whether the strategy optimises the density of development...including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport*
- 4.48 This is fundamental to the point we have made above. It expressly supports the principles of Approach 2, which has been rejected by TDC.
- 4.49 TDC has also explicitly removed any requirement to optimise densities from the Local Plan, despite Government policy and its importance in establishing the existence of exceptional circumstances. Piers Mason, its Strategic Director of Place, told a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on July 19<sup>th</sup> 2018 that the Plan had been amended “to remove reference to ..... the idea of optimised densities” adding “So, despite the fact that that is mentioned in the Government’s housing White Paper and is also in the draft new version of the NPPF, we have rowed back to the position which is very little different from the existing position in the existing plan.” He also announced that a provision for new developments to meet average existing densities in the area had been deleted. This speech can be viewed online at ([https://tandridge.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/365792 - 25<sup>th</sup> minute](https://tandridge.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/365792 - 25th minute)).
- 4.50 Where TDC have not demonstrated a policy approach which first promotes a significant uplift in densities - and, indeed, specifically rejected optimising them, despite the requirements of the new NPPF it cannot possibly justify exceptional circumstances for removing a large area of Green Belt that is unconnected to an existing major settlement.
- c) Whether the strategy has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated in the Statement of Common Ground.*
- 4.51 As we noted above, whilst the Duty to Cooperate Updates demonstrate that there have been discussions with neighbouring authorities, if the minutes represent the full extent of negotiations these appear to be nothing more than lip service to attempts to cooperate in delivering housing needs. Statements of Common Ground are recorded as being ‘in progress’.
- 4.52 On the basis of these high-level questions, as posed in the new NPPF, it is simply not possible to conclude that exceptional circumstances exist for changes to green belt boundaries, and especially for the removal of hundreds of hectares of land within the South Godstone area of search from the Green Belt. Whilst we note that TDC propose to defer this assessment to a future AAP, this sort of key strategic decision must be made through the Local Plan. It is simply not credible to progress a Local Plan on the basis of a strategy that relies on a future consideration of exceptional circumstances for the delivery of nearly 25% of the housing target over the plan period.

4.53 TDC have sought to provide further justification at the strategic level on the basis of the Calverton principles, in the Green Belt Assessment Part 3. As we covered in Section 3, these are principles that this case concluded are matters that should at the least be identified and ‘grappled’ with. It is not an exhaustive list or planning policy but a useful checklist of considerations in considering whether exceptional circumstances exist. We comment on this assessment as follows, having regard to the South Godstone area of search:

*i) Acuteness / intensity of OAN*

4.54 The GBA Assessment says very little on this point. It simply refers to the calculation of the OAN of 9,400 homes over the plan period and what it would be if the standardised methodology was applied (which is not applicable if determined under the old NPPF).

4.55 TDC have however already accepted that this OAN would not be met in full and have benchmarked what they consider to represent a sustainable level of housing delivery at just over 6,000 units.

*ii) Constraints on supply / availability of land prima facie suitable for sustainable development*

4.56 The GBA Assessment notes that the “*land supply available for meeting the district's development needs in sustainable locations is extremely limited*” and lists constraints in two categories. Type 1, the highest levels, form “*major barriers*” to the delivery of development, and include Flood Zone 3, AONBs, ancient woodland, landfills etc. Type 2 - “*significant*” barriers which might be mitigated but only at too great a cost or timescale - include SSSIs, SNCIs, scheduled monuments, surface water flooding, local nature reserves etc.

4.57 The document also refers to the need to deliver land for other development needs including traveller sites and employment.

4.58 Paragraph 3.23 of the document concludes that “*the amount of land available for meeting the districts development needs in sustainable locations is extremely limited, with land supply exhausted within non-Green Belt settlements and the low density character of the district making the use of land at significantly higher densities difficult*”.

4.59 As we have considered above this is demonstrably not the case. TDC's own figures show that thousands of dwellings can be built within inset settlements, enough to meet its target. And the densities required in order to deliver this housing through Approach 2 is around 30 dwellings per hectare. This is not high-density development in towns at the top of a settlement hierarchy and it is entirely possible to integrate developments of this density into existing townscapes. Indeed, the NPPF advises that “*local planning authorities should not refuse planning permission for buildings or infrastructure which promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape, if those concerns have been mitigated by good design...*”. In many cases this should simply not be a concern in any event. The Tier 1 settlements are not solely defined by low density development.

4.60 TLAG strongly believe that TDC have too quickly (and incorrectly) abandoned its duty to promote higher density development in locations at the top of the settlement hierarchy, in favour of a single hit solution through a Garden Village that is neither needed nor sustainable.

*iii) The difficulties in achieving sustainable development without impinging on the Green Belt*

4.61 We have addressed this matter in detail above. There are alternative strategies for achieving the level of housing proposed in the Local Plan without Green Belt release.

*iv) Nature and extent of harm to this Green Belt*

4.62 The consideration of the first three of the Calverton Principles already confirm that strategically there is no need to even consider a Garden Village at South Godstone.

4.63 The extent of harm that this would create serves to strongly reinforce this at the site-specific level. The attached ‘Green Belt and Landscape Appraisal – Land at South Godstone’ prepared for TLAG by Arc provides a detailed professional analysis of the nature and extent of the harm to the Green Belt within the area of search. It is not necessary to provide any further commentary to the conclusions of this report as they are categoric. It finds that:

*The Area of Search possesses the fundamental Green Belt characteristic of openness and makes a material contribution to the openness of the Green Belt and of the wider area. Development of the Area of Search, wholly or in part, would not only result in the definitional harm implicit in any increase in built form within the Green Belt, but also in actual harm to the fundamental characteristics of openness and permanence.*

*The Area of Search in its entirety fulfils Green Belt purposes 1, 2 and 3 strongly and development would result in unacceptable, inevitable adverse effects that would result from the potential for unrestricted sprawl and ribbon development associated with the settlements of Blindley Heath and South Godstone, encroachment into the countryside and the potential coalescence of neighbouring settlements.*

*Development of the scale proposed within the Area of Search, wholly or in part, would be harmful to the appearance and function of the Green Belt, a fact acknowledged by TDC who allow: "that, whilst unmet objectively assessed housing need can contribute to a finding of exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely on its own to justify a conclusion that exceptional circumstances have been identified, and in the case of the Area of Search, it is evident that any future development would be harmful to the Green Belt by virtue of the impact on its openness and permanence as well as the serious harm which would be caused to three of its five purposes."*

v) *Extent to which the consequent impacts may be ameliorated or reduced*

- 4.64 The Arc report then concludes, quite simply, that "the nature and extent of harm to the Green Belt (or those parts of it which would be lost to development) would be such that the consequent impacts on the fundamental characteristics and purposes of the Green Belt could not be ameliorated or reduced".

*Conclusion*

- 4.65 TDC have deferred the consideration of whether exceptional circumstances exist to a future AAP. This is entirely inappropriate for a proposal that TDC propose would contribute nearly a quarter of the housing target over the plan period.
- 4.66 In any event, it is evident that exceptional circumstances do not and will not exist for the release of vast areas of land (to accommodate 4,000 dwellings it is likely that the majority of the area of search would be required) from the area of search at South Godstone. Indeed, the BNP Paribas report suggests that it will all be needed for the development.
- 4.67 On these grounds alone, it is not credible to include this proposal in the Local Plan. In addition, there are a whole raft of other factors which demonstrate why a Garden Village at South Godstone would be entirely inappropriate and undeliverable.

**Landscape and biodiversity**

- 4.68 In addition to the analysis of Green Belt impact, the Arc report addresses landscape and visual sensitivity. It concludes that the area of search has a high landscape sensitivity and potential visual receptors of high to medium sensitivity. It finds that whilst there may be individual parcels which could accommodate some small-scale development, the Area of Search could not accommodate large scale residential development, such as a garden community, without resulting in significant unacceptable effects on the landscape character or visual amenity of both the area of search and of its surroundings, including the character of Tandrige Lane. Adverse effects would be particularly significant on landscape character and it is unlikely that they could be mitigated.
- 4.69 The South Godstone area of search is dominated by agricultural grassland with areas of ancient woodland, woodland and a good network of hedgerows. The ancient woodland, woodland and hedgerows all have ecological value.

- 4.70 Surrey County Council published a Landscape Character Assessment in 2015 specifically to help councils observe the NPPF core principle of “recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”, when drawing up local plans. (paragraph 1.10). It described the Low Weald Farmland landscape that includes South Godstone (and Blindley Heath) as “*sparse settled, remote and deeply rural*” and laid down that the “landscape strategy” for this area as “*to conserve the rural, largely unsettled landscape*” (page 80). Policy TLP32 of the Local Plan claims that proposals for development will be “*required to incorporate and implement*” this guidance, but the Garden Village plan clearly massively contradicts it.
- 4.71 As the Ecological Evidence Review produced for TLAG by Greengage points out, the area of search is within 2km of two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is in the outer impact zones of these SSSIs. There is a locally designated Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and a Potential SNCI (pSNCI) within the area of search boundary. These locally designated sites support meadow grassland and/or pockets of ancient woodland, both ecologically valuable habitats. The NPPF's core planning principles at paragraph 17 state clearly that “allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value”.

### Highways and transportation

- 4.72 The report by Bellamy Roberts provides an appraisal of highways and transportation issues for a Garden Village at South Godstone. As noted in Section 3 of this report, whilst Bellamy Roberts have some misgivings with regard to the methodology behind the evidence base in the Strategic Highway Assessment it is still possible to draw robust conclusions on the basis of the evidence available (both in relation to South Godstone on its own and also in comparison to Redhill Aerodrome as addressed further below).
- 4.73 The report concludes that South Godstone is not a suitable location for a Garden Village of 4000 dwellings for the following reasons, in summary:
- The site has poor accessibility to high quality public transport and there is no realistic prospect that it could do so;
  - The site is not well located in relation to existing centres of employment (and we demonstrate below why the location itself will not deliver new office-based employment which it relies on to be sustainable). Given the poor accessibility to public transport, journeys to work in employment areas this would result in relatively long commuter car journeys - which is not a sustainable approach;
  - Development of a Garden Village located on the A22 would inevitably give rise to substantial additional volumes of traffic on already heavily loaded parts of the highway network, thereby creating unacceptable further congestion;
  - It will also increase traffic volumes and rat running on unsuitable rural roads
  - The proposed mitigation includes a package of highway improvement schemes associated with the Garden Village proposal. This package has an overall cost in the order of £250 million, including major works to Junction 6 on M25. Contrary to the requirements of the NPPF there is no clarity on how this would be achieved.
  - A number of the proposed improvements would inevitably require third party land acquisition and there is no certainty that this can be delivered.
  - Even if all of the mitigation measures were implemented the highway network would operate with unacceptable levels of delay and congestion with the Garden Village in place and these measures would fail to mitigate the effects of the garden village.
- 4.74 The proposal for a Garden Village at South Godstone would, therefore, be directly contrary to paragraph 32 of the NPPF and would not represent sustainable development. It also demonstrates that the highways improvement works will not benefit the wider district as suggested by TDC, it will **at best** offset the effects of the garden village itself.

### Deliverability

4.75 One of the key tests for the local plan is whether the spatial strategy is realistic and deliverable. Whilst we recognise that the Local Plan is not reliant on the fortunes of any particular commercial interest or promoter / developer it is notable that one of the two parties that have been instrumental in the promotion of a Garden Community at South Godstone (Bonnar Allan) has recently been wound up following a similarly ill-fated attempt to promote a new settlement in the green belt at Drake Park in Elmbridge.

#### *Sustainable mix of uses*

4.76 One of the least credible elements of the South Godstone Garden Community proposal is that *“a mix of employment space including offices, start up space and ‘hot desking’ facilities will be provided to ensure that local employment opportunities are woven across the community”*. The critique of BNP Paribas’ viability assessment by Gildersleve and Payne demonstrates that some of the assumptions adopted, particularly in relation to rents and yields, are clearly unrealistic. This has the effect of inflating the GDV of office floor space to £764 per square foot. This compares to a more credible estimate by Gildersleve and Payne of around £187 per square foot. Gildersleve and Payne advise in their professional opinion that no developer would be willing to build offices speculatively in this location on the basis of the more realistic rents and yields.

#### *Godstone Station*

4.77 The inability of the site to attract the type of employment space it proposes means that it would not be self-sustaining, failing on of the key Garden City principles, and lead to significant levels of commuting to existing employment locations. As concluded above, they would have to go there by car as the public transport system is insufficient and the location is too isolated to realistically walk or cycle to most destinations. This would greatly contribute to already congested roads.

4.78 Policy SGC01 notes that the community would benefit from an upgraded rail station. It is our view that the prospects of the Tonbridge / Redhill line becoming a reliable, regular through service to London even in the medium term are very low. Direct services to London stopped with the recent timetable changes, but even when trains did go direct to London the service was hardly used at all by commuters. TLAG know this for a fact because when Tandridge Parish started preparation of its Neighbourhood Plan it undertook a survey of every house in the parish. This survey showed that of the 121 people who said they used the train, some frequently and some not, only 2 used Godstone station. The rest used Hurst Green (19), Oxted (87), Lingfield (7) or more than one (6). This is despite the fact that for many people Godstone would be their nearest station and it has free parking.

4.79 Commuters will certainly not use the station now and, with neither Govia nor Network Rail able to give any assurances at all about an upgrade, this railway line must be seen for what it is - an east / west shuttle that simply will not make Garden Community sustainable. Even if the developers agree to create a new station with first class facilities, including parking, this fundamental fact will not be altered. Instead, a greatly increased number of commuters will travel to use the already overcrowded services from Oxted, Hurst Green or Lingfield.

#### *Infrastructure delivery*

4.80 The delivery of infrastructure needed for the Garden Community at South Godstone is far too uncertain, whether this in terms of planning, costing or funding.

4.81 The key infrastructure needed to support the development and make it sustainable includes:

- An upgrade to Junction 6 of the M25
- A new relief road to take pressure off the A22
- Flood risk mitigation measures
- The creation of a regular, reliable rail service to a London from Godstone station.

- 4.82 We have already addressed the latter. There are no assurances from Govia or Network Rail that this can be delivered.
- 4.83 An upgrade to Junction 6 of the M25 is believed to be likely to cost more than the £200m and the Garden Community would have to bear the brunt of this cost. In any event, these works are not part of any long-term planning by Highways England, so no timescale is available.
- 4.84 The other two measures are entirely un-costed in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. They are simply left as ‘TBCs’. This cannot be acceptable.
- 4.85 The calculations of cost for South Godstone provided in BNP’s Viability Appraisal suggest a combined CIL, S106 and Accessibility costs of £109m. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan however identifies costs associated with the garden community alone of some £361 million (see next page). And this figure excludes the cost of either a relief road or flood risk mitigation, both of which have the potential to add tens of millions of pounds of extra cost to the scheme. So, it is likely that these costs will rise to over £400m.
- 4.86 By contrast, with the BNP model having only £109m of costs (at least £252 million short) and just £79.55m of residual land value, it can be seen that the garden community at South Godstone is a very long way from being self-financing. Indeed, even if all the land were provided for free, based on the council’s and BNP’s figures there would still be a huge shortfall.
- 4.87 As such there must be huge doubt over how the infrastructure will be funded and thus if this will even be delivered, even if funding can be secured from sources such as the LEP, HIF or other public / private sector investment, as suggested in the Council’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Any additional funding that might be provided by a developer would, likely, lead to a reduction in the amount of affordable housing it could provide.
- 4.88 The NPPF is clear that there must be a reasonable prospect that planned infrastructure is deliverable in a timely fashion. In this case the required infrastructure isn’t even planned, let alone is there any certainty that it would be delivered. It is entirely inappropriate to base a strategic decision on evidence and assumptions with regard to infrastructure delivery that are uncertain at best or completely unknown. It is not acceptable to defer this to a future AAP.

#### *Land assembly*

- 4.89 In addition to the lack of certainty with regard to delivery of infrastructure and on-site employment, the land within the area of search is very fragmented and there is considerable uncertainty with regard to the land assembly that would be required for the Garden Community. It would inevitably lead to incredibly complex, contentious and costly CPO proceedings.
- 4.90 TLAG have commissioned analysis through our lawyers in order to understand the full extent of land assembly that would be required by TDC and the developer. The results of this work have established that within a small part of the area of search (only part of the area south of the railway) there are over 350 different parcels of land. We have copies of these title records and have analysed who owns what and what we believe may be for sale. It is our conclusion that there are still over 330 parcels of land to be assembled within this small area alone. Elsewhere within the Area of Search a great many landowners have flatly refused to sell their land for development.

#### **Sustainability**

- 4.91 Having a sustainable, self-sufficient development, is a key part of TDC’s case for a garden village. It is indeed a key Garden City principle. TDC therefore propose that office-based development would fulfil this role by providing local employment opportunities. But we have already demonstrated that the evidence base and assumptions behind the viability of office development in this location is flawed - it is entirely the wrong location for office development and any such aspirations are simply pie in the sky.

- 4.92 The consequence of this is that a Garden Village in South Godstone would be a large dormitory settlement. The problem with this is that it is in an isolated location, and whilst it has a train station no one will use it (for the reasons set out above) even if the facilities are improved as proposed. The consequence of this is that people living in the Garden Village would get in their cars. It would be too isolated to realistically cycle or walk to most existing employment locations other than perhaps a handful of jobs at places like Hobbs Business Park.
- 4.93 Thus the Garden Village will perpetuate already unacceptable levels of road congestion and contribute to all the side effects of car travel including poor air quality.
- 4.94 Such a Garden Village, filled by prosperous commuters moving into the district, would not meet local needs for affordable housing. Indeed, it will hand an effective monopoly on housebuilding in Tandridge to a single developer (or at best, two of them). In the absence of realistic competition, the developer(s) would build at a rate that maximised profits (rather than meeting the needs of the community) and sell at high prices.
- 4.95 In our view this arrangement would also effectively institutionalise 'landbanking', a practice causing the Government much concern, which is currently the subject of an inquiry led by Sir Oliver Letwin.
- 4.96 Add on top of this the fundamental reality that a development of 4,000 units would mean the removal of hundreds of hectares of Green Belt land – which currently serves its purpose and should be left permanently open – and the proposal is simply not sustainable. It is an idea that should not have progressed past the first round of consultation, or if it did need to be further explored, dropped after the Sites Consultation. Instead TDC have ploughed ahead with this, disregarding both the evidence and public opinion despite there being more sustainable options of directing development to existing settlements in accordance with the hierarchy.

### Conclusions

- 4.97 **The evidence presented above and in the attached reports demonstrates that South Godstone is clearly an inappropriate and unsustainable location for a Garden Village.**
- 4.98 With regard to the tests of soundness, it fails to be justified (as it is evidently not the most appropriate spatial strategy for housing delivery) and it is also not effective as it would plainly be undeliverable.
- 4.99 Its lack of consistency with national policy can usefully be summarised by reference to the NPPF core planning principles (designed to “underpin both plan making and decision taking”, which the proposed Garden Village at Sought Godstone breaches in numerous places:
1. **“Empower local people to shape their surroundings”**: The decision to promote South Godstone has been and entirely unilateral one by TDC, on the back of land promotion by a developer that has now folded, and with little or no support from the community.
  2. **“Provide a framework for decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency”**: Key strategic details about the proposals for South Godstone are delegated to a future AAP, not least the consideration of whether the significant amount of Green Belt release would satisfy the exceptional circumstances test.
  3. **“Protecting the Green Belt”**. We have demonstrated that ‘exceptional circumstances’ do not (and will not by the time the AAP is considered) exist for the Green Belt at South Godstone, which serves its purposes and exhibits the “essential characteristics” of openness and permanence laid out in Paragraph 79.
  4. **“Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”**. The reports from Arc demonstrate that the site has high landscape value. This would be lost through the Garden Village proposal.
  5. **“Reusing land that has previously been developed”**. Very little of this is involved at South Godstone, which scored a double minus for it in Appendix C of the 2017 SA.

6. **“Encourage the reuse of existing resources”**. Similarly, the SA commends the development of Tier 1 and 2 sites for giving “scope for the re-use of existing materials onsite in the construction of the new development”. It scores better than the Garden Community approach on this measure (pages 125-6).
7. **“Making the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling”**. The site is not and will not be well connected by public transport (despite the aspirations for the train station) and is too remote to expect a significant number of trips to be made elsewhere on foot or cycling.
8. **“Support the transition to a low carbon future”**. Paragraph 30 of the NPPF states that “encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion”. The Sustainability Appraisal quotes RTPI research showing that dispersed settlements typically result in higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions and resource consumption than compact ones (page 77).
9. **“Contribute to reducing pollution”**. As the SA recognises “air quality is likely to diminish should development go ahead at this potential Garden Community location” primarily because of “increased emissions due to expected high personal car usage, the temporary effects of construction, and the loss of green space which currently acts as a natural air filter”.
10. **“Prefer land of lesser environmental value”**. The South Godstone area comprises high landscape sensitivity and ecological value.
11. **“Taking full account of flood risk”**. Though parts of South Godstone are in Flood Zones 2 and 3, it faces the least risk of the three final Garden Community sites. But the comparison should in fact be with Tier 1 and Tier 2 sites which face no flood risk. As the SA points out, that there is “sufficient land outside the flood zones to accommodate” all the new housing planned (page 128).
12. **“Focus significant development in location which are, or can be made sustainable”**. As the above shows, South Godstone is not sustainable and cannot be made so. Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements, by contrast, are the most sustainable in the district, as the Settlement Hierarchy testifies. Yet the Local Plan not only proposes switching the focus of development from them to South Godstone in the latter half of the plan period, but envisages proportionately very little development in the most sustainable of these areas, like Oxted and Caterham.

4.100 The Garden Community proposal breaches so many of the NPPF's “core planning principles” that it is clearly contrary to national policy and therefore unsound.

### Blindley Heath

4.101 TLAG supports TDC's decision to reject Blindley Heath as the site for a garden community as the evidence amply shows that it would be a worse location even than South Godstone, suffering from almost all the same problems, often to a greater extent, and with additional severe constraints of its own. But TLAG is aware that some interests are continuing to press for it to be developed in this way.

4.102 Development at Blindley Heath would also involve hundreds of acres of Green Belt land which is at present serving its purposes well, and similarly cannot be justified by the exceptional circumstances required. Like South Godstone it ranks at bottom of the league for previously developed land and is covered by the same constraints on development recommended by Surrey's Landscape Character Assessment.

4.103 As the SA has concluded, development at Blindley Heath would be even more dependent on the car than South Godstone, (pages 227 and 233) as it doesn't even have its limited railway line and station. It would be even less viable economically: the Council's Economic Needs Assessment 2017 ranked it as the “poorest commercial location” for a garden community (page 233)

4.104 The SA says it is likely to be smaller than a garden community at South Godstone or Redhill Aerodrome, (pages 231 and 242) with less ability to provide affordable housing or finance infrastructure (page 231).

And its size would be likely to be even more restricted because landowners controlling a large proportion of the eastern part of the site to the east of the A22 are unwilling to sell their land, casting further doubt over its deliverability.

- 4.105 Blindley Heath also has its own unique ecological and flooding constraints. TDCs Water Cycle Study concludes that run-off from the site could have a “significant” impact on the Blindley Heath SSSI, which directly abuts it (page 62), and the SA concludes this would be “a concern for the deliverability of development” (page 242). The Greengage Ecological Evidence Review concludes that it is thus an “inappropriate location for a garden community” in this respect.
- 4.106 Similarly, Blindley Heath is much more flood-prone than either South Godstone or Redhill Aerodrome, with a “large part of the south east of the area” in Flood Zone 3a and a higher proportion of its land at risk of surface water flooding (Appendix C, Potential Garden Community Summary Tables, page 8). And the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Further Details for Tandridge District Council, (Appendix A, page 1) concludes that “flood risk poses a constraint to development in the southern half” of the Blindley Heath area. Run-off from the site is also likely to exacerbate existing flood risks in the Eden Brook and in the Edenbridge area (Appendix C, pages 11 and 17).
- 4.107 As the SA concludes, when assessing individual sites, Blindley Heath is “not a particularly sustainable location for growth” (page 181). There is no case for it as a site for a garden community.

**Availability of an alternative to South Godstone**

- 4.108 As demonstrated above the housing targets for the plan period can be delivered without a Garden Village and the area around South Godstone is unsuitable for a Garden Village in its own right. TLAG opposes any Garden Village in Tandridge as it believes the principle is flawed and it is also unnecessary. It is not incumbent on TLAG to put forward an alternative Garden Village location, however, we have noted that Redhill Aerodrome as an option is being strongly supported by the NHS /East Surrey Hospital and also the Gatwick Diamond. It is also evident, on a without prejudice basis, that it would represent a more sustainable and logical location, should it be deemed that a Garden Village were necessary.
- 4.109
- 4.110 As we have already mentioned this would tie in with Reigate and Banstead’s proposed safeguarding policy for development after their plan period to 2017. There are clear synergies and opportunities to cooperate which have not been fully explored.
- 4.111 It is widely accepted that a Garden Village at Redhill Aerodrome would require a new motorway junction and link road from the M23. But we note that the developer, who has undertaken to fully fund this (and other) infrastructure and deliver full affordable provision, believes that this will soon be given the green light.
- 4.112 The following table seeks to identify specific comments made in Section 5.13 of Volume 2 of the 2018 SA Report which presents the appraisal findings with the potential three Garden Villages locations (South Godstone, Blindley Heath and Redhill Aerodrome). We have addressed Blindley Heath above and, since we fully agree with TDC’s conclusion that it is entirely unsuitable, this table focuses just on a comparison between South Godstone and Redhill Aerodrome:

Comparative appraisal of Garden Village locations
<b>Housing</b>
The GV locations appear comparable (++).
We note however that at Redhill it is proposed to deliver a mix of market housing, affordable housing, key worker housing (for hospital employees) and PRS. As such it can deliver housing

Comparative appraisal of Garden Village locations
<p>faster than at South Godstone. This can make up any shortfall arising from a new motorway junction potentially not being ready until 2027. A stepped approach to delivering housing faster at the end of the plan period is a legitimate approach.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.</b></p>
<p><b>Health</b></p> <p>Redhill Aerodrome scores positively for Health (+), compared to the other two GVs (-), due to its accessibility to East Surrey Hospital. Limited consideration however appears to have been given to other questions identified in the SA Framework, such as the health of the community, encouraging healthy lifestyles, helping people remain independent and providing assistance to single parents, the elderly, those with ill health or disability, or issues of social exclusion and deprivation. A new motorway junction would also provide much faster ambulance journeys to the hospital, potentially saving lives.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.</b></p>
<p><b>Cultural Heritage</b></p> <p>The GVs are scored as comparable (-) however, only South Godstone includes a scheduled monument and Grade II* listed building (Lagham Manor). There is also a wider historic parkland setting and the Park Pale (the surviving boundary of a Medieval deer park), which is a particularly sensitive aspect of this location. The SA refers to the setting of these assets needing detailed consideration in any design and the extent of land necessary for the development would need to be appropriate having regard to any heritage constraints. The risk of harm to the setting of nationally important heritage assets would appear to present an untested, potentially limiting factor to the delivery of housing at South Godstone. For this reason, TLAG suggest that the Council evaluate this further through Historic Environment Characterisation / Suitability study and that this analysis informs the final decision on the preferred location.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.</b></p>
<p><b>Transport</b></p> <p>South Godstone (+). Redhill Aerodrome S/T (-) L/t (++)</p> <p>It is not clear whether or not the transport modelling undertaken as part of the evidence base has actually informed the SA. In any event, it is noted (as addressed by the Bellamy Roberts report) that the Transport Assessment (2018) has not modelled the same number of dwellings for each GV location. The South Godstone garden village is modelled with 5,000 dwellings, Blindley Heath 3,000 and Redhill Aerodrome 7,000. For this reason, the conclusions of the Transport Assessment do not allow the effects of the 'reasonable' alternatives to be compared and therefore treated fairly in decision making. TLAG consider that the scale of the GVs should have been equal when assessing their relative impacts.</p> <p>TLAG question the rationale and objectivity of the South Godstone location assessment of (+). This appears to be entirely reliant on the benefits of single railway station when compared to Redhill Aerodrome (which has 4 stations within 3.5km). We would also challenge the Council's conclusion that South Godstone achieves positive scoring in respect of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- whether the option would reduce the need to travel, particularly by private motorised vehicles. Reliance on its single train station, on a line that doesn't even go direct to London, would only</li> </ul>

### Comparative appraisal of Garden Village locations

benefit a proportion of the new population. It must be assumed that South Godstone would be much more reliant on the private car, compared to Redhill Aerodrome which affords good rail access via a number of stations.

- whether the option would reduce congestion or minimise unavoidable increases in congestion. The 2018 TA evidence base has not been used to inform the SA.

- whether the option would improve access to key services (education, employment, health, community -services, cultural assets? The SA acknowledges that the closest secondary schools are located at over 6km away from South Godstone.

- The TA concludes that Scenario 2C, which contains the Redhill Aerodrome garden village site, together with the other smaller Local Plan sites has a lesser impact on the road network in Tandridge than scenarios containing the garden villages at Blindley Heath and South Godstone. This is because trips related to the garden village route via the strategic network or to and from Reigate and Banstead, consequently it is these routes which experience the bulk of the impact.

In the Long Term, the conclusions for Redhill Aerodrome are positive (++) and therefore this would perform the best of all options in the long term.

**Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.**

### Previously Developed Land

Redhill Aerodrome scores as neutral for PDL (0), compared to the other two GVs (--). The SA states that it treats the Redhill Aerodrome GV site as greenfield land. TLAG are aware that the promoter of the Redhill Aerodrome dispute this approach and are therefore urging the Council to review this position. They consider the site to be 50% brownfield / PDL.

**Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.**

### Economics

South Godstone is scored as (+), whereas the other GVs are scored as (-). The SA states that the Economic Needs Assessment concluded that a GV at Redhill Aerodrome was considered to be the best commercial opportunity due to its strategic location on the A23 and M23, and close proximity to Gatwick Airport. Based on the SA commentary the rationale for the negative scoring Redhill Aerodrome appears totally unjustified (-). The Redhill site will provide direct access to the M23, an attraction for office and industrial occupiers. It will be close to Gatwick Airport, a major regional employer, and also to Manor Royal, one of the South East's largest industrial areas and the major town of Redhill. It will also include within its site the East Surrey Hospital. TLAG would also question the balance and objectivity of the SA given that 13 bullet points are discussed under this objective for South Godstone and only 1 for Redhill Aerodrome. As demonstrated above, the assumptions in relation to the viability of office uses at South Godstone are totally flawed and there is no realistic prospect of office development being delivered in this location.

**Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.**

### Employment

Comparative appraisal of Garden Village locations
<p>South Godstone is scored as (+), whereas the other GVs are scored as (-). The SA commentary for Redhill Aerodrome states that the Economic Needs Assessment concluded that a GV at Redhill Aerodrome was considered to be the best commercial perspective due to its strategic location on the A23 and M23, and close proximity to Gatwick Airport. The SA also highlights that its proximity to East Surrey Hospital would make it attractive for key worker housing for medical professions. TLAG therefore question the objectivity of the scoring of South Godstone based on the commentary in the SA. For the same reasons as above, the prospects of delivering meaningful employment opportunities at South Godstone are unrealistic.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.</b></p>
Green Belt
<p>Arc concluded that the Area of Search at South Godstone “strongly fulfils Green Belt purposes 1, 2 and 3 and development would result in unacceptable, inevitable adverse effects”. It also separately concluded that development of both it and the Redhill Aerodrome site would result in “the definitional harm implicit in any increase in built form within the Green Belt” and “in actual harm to the fundamental characteristics of openness and permanence”</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Neutral.</b></p>
Climate Change Mitigation
<p>One of the key questions of the SA Framework relates to whether the option will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. No comment is made on travel distances or modes of travel associated with the location of the GVs. We would however cross refer to our earlier comments about the inevitable propensity for car use from a development at South Godstone.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Neutral</b></p>
Natural Resources
<p>All GVs assessed as (-). The assessment commentary makes little reference to the questions posed by the SA Framework of the Garden Village (but also the Sites Consultation).</p> <p>The commentary, and SA Framework, makes no reference to soil resources, geological conservation interests, mineral resources, or use of best and most versatile agricultural land (these issues are considered under Objective 13).</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Neutral</b></p>
Flood Risk
<p>South Godstone is assessed as (o) and the others as (-). The South Godstone GV includes areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 (medium and high risk) along Eastbourne Road and east of Tandridge Lane. Whether these flood zones impact the ability of the GV to deliver the planned number of homes is unclear. The situation at Redhill Aerodrome is much the same, but there the potential exists to de-culvert and restore the watercourse, which would significantly reduce the risk of flooding to existing and future development. The site should there have (+) scoring. TLAG therefore question the objectivity of scoring on the commentary in the SA.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Neutral / Positive</b></p>

Comparative appraisal of Garden Village locations
<p><b>Water Quality</b></p> <p>South Godstone is assessed as (o) and the other sites are (-). The assessment for South Godstone identifies extensive reinforcement to building a new strategic connection to the trunk main at Blindley Heath would be required which will require a new main between 1.5k and 2km. Given the scale of this associated infrastructure, TLAG question why the scoring is not also (-) for South Godstone and thus the objectivity of the assessment.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Neutral</b></p>
<p><b>Contaminated Land and Soils</b></p> <p>All sites assessed as (-). The Redhill Aerodrome scoring seems unbalanced when considering the site comprises mostly Grade 4 agricultural land.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Neutral or Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.</b></p>
<p><b>Air Quality, Noise &amp; Light Pollution</b></p> <p>South Godstone (-), Redhill Aerodrome (o/-)</p> <p>The SA states the supporting evidence (the evidence source is not stated) suggests that air quality will be more adversely affected by the South Godstone option in comparison to the other two garden settlement options. The SA concludes that air quality is likely to diminish due to the allocation of South Godstone as the GV and states that “This is primarily because of increased emissions due to expected high personal car usage”. TLAG therefore question the rationale behind selection of this GV. The SA refers to enacting the proposals of the Surrey Air Alliance, although the status of these as effective mitigation is unclear.</p> <p>The SA commentary makes no assessment with regard to other SA Framework questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will the option reduce air, noise or light pollution?</li> <li>- Will the option help improve air quality</li> <li>- Will the option reduce pollution from traffic?</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.</b></p>
<p><b>Landscape</b></p> <p>All GV sites assessed as (-). South Godstone: North west section is subject of Area of Great Landscape Value and the southern section will be limited to some extent by the setting of heritage assets. The Council’s own LVIA from 2016 also identified a high ridge of land south of the railway south of which there should be no development and yet the area of search goes well south of this line. The northern edge is also just 500m from the Surrey Hills AONB candidate area. Considering the AGLV designation together with the proximity of the AONB candidate area, the South Godstone site would appear to potentially give rise to a greater level of negative effect (i.e. (--)) comparatively to the other 2 sites. This is supported by the attached analysis from Arc comparing South Godstone and Redhill Aerodrome in terms of landscape value.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.</b></p>

Comparative appraisal of Garden Village locations
<p><b>Biodiversity</b></p> <p>All GV sites assessed as (-). Whilst not explicitly stated, the SA refers to the Ecological Appraisals of Potential Garden Village Locations (2017) document which appraises the potential GV locations. This document assessed Redhill Aerodrome as ‘Ecologically Suitable’ for development, the other sites were assessed as ‘Majority Ecologically Suitable’.</p> <p>The report from Greengage concludes that “from an ecological point of view and based on the documents reviewed, the most suitable site to be allocated for a new garden community development is considered to be the Land at Redhill Aerodrome”.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate.</b></p>
<p><b>Ashdown Forest</b></p> <p>The site at South Godstone is closer to the Ashdown Forest (a Special Area of Conservation) than the Redhill Aerodrome. Is it also situated on the A22, the road that leads directly to the Ashdown Forest. TDC has acknowledged in earlier Committee papers that a garden village would impact on the Ashdown Forest. It now says it will not, but Wealden Council contests this and, under the relevant legislation, the precautionary principle applies.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: Redhill Aerodrome most appropriate</b></p>

- 4.113 This review of the potential GV locations has identified some apparent imbalances in the scoring and aspects of the assessment, particularly with reference to Redhill Aerodrome, and TLAG question the objectivity of the assessment with regard to some areas.
- 4.114 There appears to be no substantial evidence arising from the SA to demonstrate that South Godstone, as the chosen GV location, would have strong benefits over Redhill Aerodrome. On the contrary the site at Redhill Aerodrome is demonstrably the ‘least bad’ option for a Garden Village (notwithstanding that TLAG believes that a garden village remains unnecessary altogether).
- 4.115 This is further supported by the approach that Reigate and Banstead have adopted in their draft Local Plan which is to safeguard the parts of the aerodrome site within their authority boundary for development beyond their plan period to 2027. This timing would coincide with the latter parts of the plan period for Tandridge. There would be clear synergies, opportunities to share infrastructure costs and economies of scale associated with a joint approach that has peculiarly been rejected by TDC.

## Conclusions

- 4.116 In summary, this section of our representations has demonstrated the following:
- The rationale for the inclusion of a Garden Village as part of the spatial strategy is flawed. A comparable number of houses can, on TDC’s own figures, be delivered through Approach 2. The reasons given for discounting that approach (namely that it would not fully meet housing needs and impact on character of existing settlements) do not justify the alternative of a new, isolated settlement that would require the removal of vast swathes of the Green Belt.
  - Even applying the remainder of TDC’s preferred strategy (while removing the Garden Village element) can deliver a comparable number of units by increasing the density of proposed site allocations, making more appropriate assumptions for windfalls and allocating more sites in or – if needs be - on the edge of existing settlements. TLAG do not support this last approach (as we believe the housing numbers can be met entirely within existing settlements as above) but it serves to

demonstrate that the same housing numbers can be delivered by placing more emphasis on the existing settlement hierarchy.

- The most fundamental point made in these representations is, however, that (for the reasons set out above) **South Godstone is simply not an appropriate or sustainable location for a Garden Village.** Whichever alternative spatial strategy is adopted is therefore largely inconsequential with regards to South Godstone.
- Notwithstanding that TLAG have demonstrated that a Garden Village is not a sound proposition as part of the spatial strategy, there is evidently a more logical and appropriate location at Redhill Aerodrome as clearly demonstrated by the comparative analysis above.

**4.117 For these reasons the plan as currently drafted fails each of the four tests of soundness.**

## 5 Recommended modifications

### Primary recommendation

- 5.1 Although Our Local Plan 2033 is unsound as currently prepared (considered against all four tests of soundness as set out in the NPPF) it can be made sound by adopting an alternative spatial strategy, based on the principles of focusing development towards Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements and optimising densities (based on TDC's 'Approach 2'). This approach would represent the most sustainable strategy, protect the Green Belt and deliver development in accordance with the settlement hierarchy.
- 5.2 The principal policy that this modification would relate to is TLP01, which would require wholesale modification to reflect this change in strategy. There would be consequential alterations to the plan throughout to remove the requirement for the Garden Village (including the deletion of SGC01). TLAG have not sought to identify all the necessary consequential amendments to other draft policies (and reserve our right to add further detail if necessary at examination in public) though the strategy would also clearly involve modifications to Chapters 21 (best use of land and densities) and 22 (housing).

### Secondary recommendation

- 5.3 Without prejudice to TLAG's primary recommendation, as we have demonstrated in this report, the spatial strategy as currently proposed by TDC can be adjusted through the adoption of more appropriate assumptions on density and the contribution of other sources of housing (existing permissions / windfall / town centre initiatives etc) which mean that a comparable amount of housing is provided without the need for a Garden Village.

### Tertiary recommendation

- 5.4 Even in the event that TDC continue to propose a Garden Village, South Godstone is an entirely inappropriate location as we have demonstrated. It is unsustainable and could not viably be made so and it is entirely undeliverable. It would involve the development of a large area of Green Belt (which continues to serve its purpose) for the delivery of a commuter settlement (where commuters would inevitably have to get in their cars). The extensive infrastructure improvements proposed would not even offset the effects of such a scheme.
- 5.5 The alternative site at Redhill Aerodrome is a demonstrably more appropriate location for a Garden Village (for the reasons outlined in detail in Section 4) should TDC – against our opposition - decide to carry on with a Garden Village strategy.