

TLAG – response to MIQs (6 September 2019)

Matter 3 – The spatial strategy

MIQ number	Question	Cross reference to TLAG representations	TLAG response
Q3.1	<p><i>Have all realistic options for the distribution of development within the District been identified and considered robustly in the formulation of the Plan?</i></p>	<p>Para 4.22 – 4.25 Paras 4.108 – 4.115)</p>	<p>TDC have not adequately considered all the realistic options for the distribution of development and have instead developed a spatial strategy which is at odds with their own draft policies designed to ensure the best use of land.</p> <p>TLAG believe that TDC have not provided robust justification for a strategy that relies heavily on an unsustainable Garden Village, as opposed to increasing densities, maximising brownfield opportunities and allocating more land in and around the Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements (and even Tier 3 settlements), which are the most sustainable locations in the district.</p> <p>Our representations primarily address the unsoundness of the proposed South Godstone garden village – in terms of its evident lack of sustainability, deliverability and viability. However, notwithstanding that it is not for TLAG to show how housing can be delivered elsewhere, we believe that accommodating TDC’s target housing figure, or indeed a higher one, would be entirely possible without the need for a new satellite settlement in the Green Belt. In our Regulation 19 representations (paras 4.7-4.20) we outlined why a similar level of housing can be achieved through TDC’s rejected, but much more sustainable ‘Approach 2’, which would consist of sites entirely within the boundaries of Tiers 1 and 2. We will not reiterate our representations but our comments at 4.11 – 4.19 highlighted the considerable flaws in the reasons for discounting Approach 2 through the consideration of alternatives in the SA.</p> <p>We also, at paragraph 4.22, provided a high level example of how (adopting TDC’s strategy of allocating sites on the edge of settlements) a similar, or a greater, level of housing could be provided over the plan period by increasing densities and new allocations in Tier 1 and 2 settlements, adopting existing rates of windfall allowance and through more ambitious targets for town centre initiatives and conversion of empty homes. We do not repeat this here though supplement it where appropriate in response to Q3.1.</p>

		<p><i>Higher densities</i></p> <p>The sites proposed for allocation through the Local Plan have an average density of 30dph. As referenced above, it is not TLAG’s responsibility to meticulously assess each site for its development potential, but there are instances where TLAG do consider that the density of sites could be increased, and that the policy imperative on TDC to optimise densities has not been adhered to. These examples serve to demonstrate that all proposed allocation sites should be re-assessed to determine whether the density proposed is appropriate and whether all opportunities have been taken to maximise the yield of sites in existing sustainable urban areas.</p> <p>TLAG consider that particularly in Caterham, there are sites which would be able to accommodate increased densities. Coulsdon Lodge, Coulsdon Road – whilst relatively small scale – represents a case in point. The site is currently proposed for 15 dwellings, just 38dph¹. Yet the Urban Capacity Study found that the optimised density for a location such as this is between 60-75dph.². This is just one example where we consider the density of the site could potentially be almost doubled without impacting significantly on the surrounding character, whilst making best use of land in a non-Green Belt location.</p> <p>Another example is the former Shelton Sports club in Warlingham which is proposed for allocation at a density of approximately 18dph, which would yield 110 dwellings. TLAG consider that this site is relatively free from constraint, and is located in a sustainable area, close to transport links and retail and leisure facilities. The Urban Capacity Study found that the optimised density for this area is 45 dph. This could therefore conceivably yield approximately 280 homes.</p> <p>It is clear that from considering just these two examples that there are likely to be further sites within and around urban areas that could accommodate an increased density of development.</p> <p>Furthermore, there are sites that were considered deliverable and developable through the HELAA yet which did not pass the exceptional circumstances test and are therefore not proposed for allocation. For example, CAT 019 is adjacent to the Tier 1 settlement of Caterham Valley. The HELAA cites that there is likely to be a high level of contamination risk at the site due to the previous use of part of the site as landfill and it also raises concerns over the viability of the site once the removal of the existing covered</p>
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¹ TLAG acknowledge the presence of a blanket TPO at the site, but are also aware of the recent Oakgrove development, which is subject to the same blanket TPO yet the development there is at a higher density. Also, the presence of particular site constraints on land within the urban area should be balanced against the alternative of releasing significant amounts of Green Belt land in the open country.

			<p>reservoir is accounted for. TLAG contend that the site, which has a gross area of 2.05ha (1.12ha once contaminated land is removed), could be proposed for a far higher density than the current yield of 27 homes. A recent development to the north west of this site is built at an approximate density of 36dph, whereas this site is proposed at just 13dph, when using the whole site area, or 24dph if just the 'developable' area is used. Neither of these density outcomes are particularly ambitious and if the density were to be increased the viability would improve and the site could contribute to the delivery of more homes. It is also a brownfield site, which should assist in the demonstration of exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>TLAG therefore contend that if some of these sites assumed an increased density of development it may be appropriate for them to be reconsidered for allocation.</p> <p>Further consideration should be given to the suitability of increased densities within the Tier 3 settlements. Whilst acknowledging that the long established HELAA methodology for TDC does not consider sites at Tier 3 settlements to be suitable, TLAG suggest that further exploration is warranted, in an attempt to increase the supply that can be achieved from allocations within existing settlements.</p> <p><i>Additional site allocations</i></p> <p>In addition to optimising the density of sites that TDC are proposing to allocate, it is evident that sites that would contribute to a more sustainable strategy than the South Godstone garden village have been rejected. If it is deemed necessary to encroach into the Green Belt at all, this should be around the edges of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements, rather than as a large stand-alone settlement – which will not be anywhere near self-sustaining in terms of employment and will lack the necessary infrastructure to make it sustainable.</p> <p>Indeed, TDC's own figures, published in the Sustainability Appraisal, show that adding such sites around the edges of these settlements could effectively treble the amount of housing that would be available through Approach 2.</p> <p>The SA shows that this approach (Approach 3) scores particularly well in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and in the move to a low carbon economy since the sites are located near existing public transport systems, services and infrastructure. It therefore – unlike the proposed garden community – avoids creating a vehicle-based community. Meanwhile, it scores equal to the garden community approach in having the ability to deliver additional services and facilities.</p>
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<https://www.tandridge.gov.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Planning%20and%20building/Planning%20strategies%20and%20policies/Local%20plan/Evidence%20base%20and%20technical%20studies/Regulation-19-Housing-Topic-Paper-2018.pdf>

⁴ We also understand that there is potential for the Surrey National Golf course to become available with the potential to deliver 1,200 homes on previously developed land.

			<p>An additional site in Warlingham is that known as WAR 038 in the HELAA, Land west of the Green and Land at Westhall Road. This site is 4.69 hectares and located at the edge of the centre of Warlingham and The Green. At a density of 45dph, the site could accommodate some 200 dwellings, although the lower density of housing to the south and west would need to be considered too.</p> <p>This sample selection of sites identified as either deliverable or developable in the HELAA, yet which are not allocated due to not having been considered by TDC to pass the exceptional circumstances test, demonstrate very clearly that a number of sites exist, including quite large sites, that could contribute to meeting the housing need whilst not requiring a garden community. Remember that TDC have not even sought to demonstrate exceptional circumstances for South Godstone yet – deferring this to a future AAP.</p> <p><i>Brownfield Land</i></p> <p>We contend that TDC has also failed to maximise brownfield opportunities. One such example is the large site south of Rooks Nest Farm at the junction of the A25 & A22, used as a motorway compound. This is a large brownfield site that could deliver hundreds of houses.</p> <p><i>Alternative Site Allocations</i></p> <p>There is also evidence of the wrong sites being allocated, such as in Lingfield where the currently proposed site (HSG12) would only deliver 60 units against the 120 units that would be delivered by a better, more sustainable site at Lingfield Gardens (LIN 031 in the HELAA). This site was deemed both deliverable and developable in the HELAA and is also supported by the Parish council and local residents. It is perverse that TDC have chosen a highly sensitive site in a conservation area, adjacent to a listed building instead of a larger, less sensitive site on the edge of the village that has local support and which would deliver a mix of market, affordable and retirement housing and the council’s reasons for not selecting LIN 013 are highly spurious.</p> <p><i>Further Site Allocations</i></p> <p>In addition to the sites identified as being deliverable in the HELAA but not included for allocation, there is further evidence of potential supply of land that is not proposed for allocation. For example, the Caterham, Chaldon and Whyteleafe (CR3) area is arguably the most sustainable place for housing development in Tandridge. The Neighbourhood Plan that has recently been consulted on marks a dramatic scaling down of the amount of housing it was previously prepared to accept. The previous draft,</p>
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			<p>dated April 2017, adopted a target of 102 units a year. It said that this figure was determined by “the available supply of brownfield land” and that the resulting 1,027 new units built between 2015 and 2025 would be constructed without impacting on the Green Belt. It added that once the Local Plan was completed the Neighbourhood Plan's steering committee would 'seek to identify sufficient specific developable brownfield sites for years 2025-2035' in the area.</p> <p>The recent draft, however, undertakes only to provide “at least 1,348 additional net new units in the period 2015-2033”, which it says is “an appropriate and proportionate delivery for this period”. However, only 438 of these remain to be built as the others are all complete. That represents a reduction of nearly 500 dwellings from what would have been built if the 102 a year rate of the previous draft had continued to 2033. Thus, a hugely important contribution to meeting any housing target through building on urban brownfield land has been lost.</p> <p>The examples above give an idea of how increasing densities to optimised levels – as required by the new NPPF – and allocating additional sites and maximising brownfield opportunities, could provide whatever housing is needed in Tandridge without the need for a new Garden Community.</p> <p>Our Regulation 19 representations also demonstrated (see paragraphs 4.108 – 4.115) that, in the event that a large new settlement is deemed necessary somewhere in the district, the Redhill Aerodrome represents a much more suitable and sustainable location than South Godstone, not that we support the need for a garden village at all.</p> <p>In summary, whilst alternatives have been considered by TDC (i.e. alternative spatial strategies and alternative locations for a garden village) the decision-making process that has led to the Preferred Strategy and the proposed allocation of South Godstone was fundamentally flawed. Although it is not for TLAG to demonstrate how housing needs can be met (our focus is the unsuitability of South Godstone for large scale housing development) it is evident that alternatives exist which align much more closely with sustainable planning principles and the Council’s own settlement hierarchy, plus policies on the best use of land.</p>
Q3.2	<p><i>Is the proposed distribution of housing and other development supported by the Sustainability Appraisal, and will it lead to the most appropriate pattern of housing growth?</i></p>	Para 3.39 – 3.56	<p>TLAG provided an appraisal of the SA methodology in our Reg 19 representations (see paragraphs 3.39-3.56), concluding that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The SA is not based on up to date evidence related to the likely significant effects on the environment; - The consideration of reasonable alternatives was inadequate; and

			<p>- The SA has not led to a robust decision-making process.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the fundamental inadequacies of the SA approach, the conclusions that it supported were ignored in any event. The SA firmly supported TDC’s Approach 2 for higher densities in the Tier 1 and 2 settlements and <u>not</u> the need for a garden village.</p> <p>Our representations explained at paragraphs 4.11 – 4.19 why the SA process does not robustly support TDC’s spatial strategy. Instead it showed that Approach 2 scores best of all the alternatives for the use of previously developed land, protecting and enhancing landscape character, reducing land contamination, safeguarding soil quantity and quality and using natural resources prudently and were amongst the best in reducing the need to travel, encouraging sustainable transport options, improving accessibility to all services and facilities and reducing greenhouse gases and moving to a low carbon economy.</p> <p>With regard to the comparison of alternative potential garden village locations, the methodology for the SA unfairly and consistently inflated the scoring of South Godstone and deflated that for Redhill Aerodrome. This has led to a conclusion that is not objective and therefore is not a reliable source of evidence. Redhill Aerodrome in fact performs better than South Godstone in 9 of the objectives but the conclusions are not reflective of this. The site should have been explored further, particularly in relation to its suitability and the consideration of the site by RBBC. This is clearly demonstrated in our representations at paragraph 4.112.</p> <p>We also draw attention and our support to Godstone Parish Council's Reg 19 submission, which similarly judges that the SA “has all the appearance of being a justification for a decision having already been made rather than a meaningful assessment of all the opportunities in a sound planning balancing exercise leading to an informed choice.” It similarly concludes that the SA “does not approach the proposed Local Plan in a coherent and rational manner, it lacks clarity and has no real comparison of all the reasonable development alternatives” and that it “does not give a clear indication of the reasons why other alternatives were rejected and what the rationale really is for choosing South Godstone.”</p> <p>In summary, the proposed spatial strategy is not supported by a robust SA and this has clearly led to a Local Plan which promotes inappropriate patterns of growth which do not accord with its own settlement hierarchy, or compulsion to make the best use of land.</p>
Q3.3	<i>Is the distribution of new homes between the Tiers of settlements and</i>	Para 4.11-4.21	For a plan to be justified it must be an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence (NPPF paragraph 35).

	<i>proposed garden community justified and how has it been established?</i>		TLAG would refer the Inspector back to the response for Questions 3.1 and 3.2 which demonstrates our view that the spatial strategy, which places greater emphasis on the delivery of homes in an unsustainable location to the settlements at the head of the settlement hierarchy, is not appropriate and has not satisfactorily assessed reasonable alternatives. It therefore fails the NPPF test.
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