

TLAG – response to MIQs (6 September 2019)

Matter 5 – Employment land provision

MIQ number	Question	Cross reference to TLAG representations	TLAG response
Q5.2	<i>Will the provision of the employment land proposed improve the 'self-containment' of the District in terms of the commuting patterns of residents?</i>	4.76 (and appended paper from Gildersleve and Payne)	<p>Figures published this year by the Office for National Statistics shows that residents in Tandridge spend an average of 44 minutes travelling to work every day (based on the period October – December 2018). This is the one of the highest travel to work times for anywhere in the UK.</p> <p>The draft policy SGC01, in relation to the South Godstone garden community, suggests 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” – to support TDC’s vision that residents will work as well as live there as part of a self-sufficient community.</p> <p>However, this is very vague and yet the details of precisely what employment opportunities would be provided at the garden community are proposed to be deferred to the future AAP.</p> <p>We have addressed in our regulation 19 representations, and in our response to Q2.12, why the development of offices is not financially viable in this location and why developers will not be willing to speculatively build offices at the garden community, based on realistic rents and yields. Nor can we see any reason why office occupiers would want to be based in this location where are few, if any amenities and a railway line that serves little purpose. Office occupiers would far prefer to be located in established commercial locations / towns, even if offices could be viably developed at South Godstone, which they cannot.</p> <p>TDC themselves have since acknowledged this as there was no mention at all of offices in the subsequent piece of work on viability produced by Avison Young – all mention of offices has been withdrawn since we submitted our evidence from Gildersleve & Payne at Reg 19 stage. This is damning evidence of the apparent ignorance of officers about how the commercial property market operates and shows that their hopes for an employment led scheme are simply that, just hopes, not based on any science of true market understanding.</p>

			<p>Although it is possible that some smaller, light industrial units could be developed, it is not credible to suggest that this will deliver a self-sustaining community, particularly given the findings of the Tandridge Strategic Economic Assessment (TSEA) (Nov 2018) which finds that the highest proportion of jobs required by the new residents would be in professional services (which will not be accommodated within the garden community), followed by construction (which will be provided on the site but only in the relative short term).</p> <p>There is really very little to add to the damning conclusion of the TSEA at paragraph 4.66 that <i>“in reality only a small proportion of residents will both live and work in a settlement of this size”</i>. The council’s very own work shows that South Godstone will not be a sustainable community, with high levels of out-commuting. This fails one of the key Garden City principles that it should provide a wide range of jobs within easy commuting distance of homes.</p> <p>We also address (in response to Q2.12) the inadequacies of the train services at Godstone (over an hour to get into London Bridge) and the compelling evidence that this service will not improve at any time in the near future, if at all. Commuters from the garden community will inevitably drive to stations like Oxted, Hurst Green or Lingfield, where there are direct links to London – or indeed to towns at the top of the settlement hierarchy in Tandridge where the focus for new homes and jobs should be directed in order to deliver sustainable growth.</p>
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