Dear resident,

At the Planning Policy Committee on 3 July, the Council voted to approve the Draft Local Plan for Regulation 19 consultation, which will take place between 9am on 30 July and 5pm on 10 September. This was confirmed at the Council meeting on 19 July. Here we address some myths and answer some commonly asked questions.

We have to prepare a Local Plan. Not just by law, but because we need a long term plan (up to 2033 in this case) to guide the future of the district.

As a district we are facing some really tough challenges. Our population is ageing which leads to increasing demand on healthcare providers. Our young people can’t afford to buy homes in the area and most local jobs don’t pay enough to encourage them to stay. Growing families struggle to find suitable and affordable homes to move to. Meanwhile the volume of cars is having a negative impact on our roads.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to balance the needs of the district, to secure a strong economy fit for the future, encourage our young people to stay and work here and create local well paid jobs to help get them on the property ladder. All of this while building the infrastructure they need to live well and comfortably.

This is very much about new roads, healthcare facilities and schools to support existing and future generations. Our strategy for the Local Plan is the best approach we have been able to identify which will deliver infrastructure.

We need to build council houses to help the 1,300 people on the housing waiting list. We will also be helping people by ensuring there is a mix of housing schemes which support home ownership and wherever possible will ensure those with an existing connection to the Tandridge district have priority.

Councillor Keith Jecks
Chair of the Planning Policy Committee
It also needs to provide a number of flats and starter homes to help people trying to buy their first home, as well as those who own a larger home and want to downsize. There are a disproportionate number of larger properties in Tandridge, with just under 30% of houses containing four or more bedrooms and the plan aims to encourage a better mix of private housing.

**Myth:** By affordable the Council means £400,000 houses.

**Fact:** There is a real lack of council housing in this district and though we have begun an ambitious building programme to address this, we don’t have enough land to build on. This plan will help us deliver substantially more high quality affordable homes which local people on average salaries can afford. Apart from providing council housing, we will also be encouraging other home ownership schemes such as shared ownership to bring home ownership within reach of young families.

**Myth:** Tandridge District Council is not responsible for some infrastructure like roads and schools, so how can it ensure delivery?

**Fact:** The Council has already begun the work with Surrey County Council, other agencies and private companies including Govia and Network Rail to set out the detail around the delivery of the plan. The money will be provided through a combination of developer contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy and it is in the interests of all our partners to improve local services.

**Myth:** The new homes will just mean lots more people from London will settle here.

**Fact:** People move in and out of our district from a wide range of locations, not just London, just as they do in other areas. The Local Plan encourages building the right types of home for people so they can continue to live in Tandridge when they want to. In addition the Area Action plan, which will set out the detail of and guide the development of the Garden Community, will stipulate at least 1,000 of the homes will be shared ownership, self-build and other rented homes. The Council will have nomination rights to these so we can make sure they are made available for Tandridge residents.

**Myth:** It will be just lots of new houses.

**Fact:** The Local Plan is designed to deliver the infrastructure the district needs alongside the houses. This will include new primary schools, a new secondary school, improvements to the A22 (from and including its junction with the M25 to help keep traffic moving from Caterham to Felbridge), new and improved doctors’ surgery, flood relief measures in a number of locations including Caterham, Whyteleafe and Smallfield, better rail connections and improvements to parking facilities.

In addition, the plan seeks to generate thousands of new jobs, many of which will be high value jobs, by supporting the delivery of a significant amount of employment space, as well as encouraging the development of existing employment sites.

**Why do we have to give up any Green Belt land?**

This district is 94% Green Belt, the largest proportion of anywhere in the country. It is likely to remain in the top three when our Local Plan is adopted and implemented.

We have looked at all brownfield sites, as well as whether we can build more in our urban areas and only on sites in the Green Belt in exceptional cases and which provide wider community benefit. Despite allocating all these sites there is still a shortfall and like all our neighbouring councils we have been forced to allocate some Green Belt land for housing.

Land is assessed to be Green Belt if it meets a particular set of purposes. These purposes are set out in a national policy. For example settlements such as towns and villages, commercial units, roads and railways can be within the Green Belt.

Our cohesive strategy will mean releasing a small amount of Green Belt, to put the Council in a better position to protect the rest.

In preparing the draft Local Plan over 300 sites were sent to us for consideration by land owners and developers. Having carefully considered all the evidence, we will only be proposing 10 of these sites which would allow the development of 1025 homes on Green Belt sites and only when they can deliver a clear community benefit.

**You keep talking about affordable homes, but will the homes really be affordable?**

Tandridge district is one of the most expensive areas in the country for housing. We are committed to building more affordable homes for local people. We want to make sure local families with average earnings can afford to rent or buy a home and will ensure the new Garden Community at South Godstone will provide a number of different options for housing including shared ownership, council housing and rent to buy.
Myth: You plan to concrete over the Green Belt.

Fact: We are only considering the release of Green Belt in exceptional circumstances or where we can demonstrate through robust evidence that releasing it would provide a real community benefit. We will remain a district with one of the highest proportions of Green Belt in the country.

How many houses do we have to deliver?
The total number of new homes proposed by the Draft Local Plan is around 6,100, which is significantly beneath the current need of 9,400 homes or the government’s calculation of 12,900.

It is the planning inspector’s job to test how we have used this evidence and make sure our plan delivers the number of houses to meet the government’s aspiration of increasing housing delivery. It is very likely we will be challenged about our much lower figure during the inspection process, by the government and by developers.

The evidence gathered highlights the constraints to development faced by the district. The Council feels the plan and the housing delivery target reflect those constraints and its ability to accommodate development over the plan period.

Myth: We don’t need a Local Plan or any more houses. We can just refuse to build any more houses.

Fact: A Local Plan once adopted gives the Council control over where and what development can take place. Without one the government will step in and give permission to developers without the supporting infrastructure our plan delivers. If we do nothing to provide more housing our children and grandchildren will continue moving out to find homes in places they can afford.

What about people living in South Godstone where the garden community is proposed?
We, working and consulting with the local community and key stakeholders such as infrastructure providers, will prepare an Area Action Plan (AAP) to set out the detail of and guide the development of the Garden Community.

As well as delivering around 4,000 homes over the long term, the Garden Community will also deliver significant new infrastructure for the area including new schools, a health hub, rail and road improvements, play pitches, flood mitigation and employment sites.

The development of a garden community is unlikely to begin for at least 6 to 10 years and a lot of detailed planning, including making sure all necessary infrastructure is made available, needs to take place before any building can even begin.

For those who will be most affected, we will work hard to do everything we can to minimise the impact and maximise the opportunities. We will continue to listen to you and work closely with you.

Myth: The new houses will put more strain on our creaking infrastructure.

Fact: The plan could deliver at least £63 million of Community Infrastructure Levy, as well as significant infrastructure provision by way of legal agreements. The plan will also create thousands of local jobs which will mean more people will be able to work locally too, instead of commuting.

This is a Regulation 19 Consultation – what does it mean?
The Draft Local Plan has taken over three years to prepare. So far we have held three public consultations to involve local people and other interested parties in the shaping of our Local Plan up to 2033. This has included consulting on the potential approaches to delivering development, the sites submitted, and the potential locations we considered for the Garden Community. At each stage we have listened to the feedback and this has helped shape the plan.

Some significant changes have been made to the plan as a result, for example giving greater consideration to farming, agriculture and the rural economy in the district and widening plans for employment creation.

Unlike earlier consultations which considered alternative options, Regulation 19 seeks comments which respond to specific technical and procedural matters which will help the planning inspector, once appointed, to determine whether the plan is both sound and legally compliant. We have prepared a guidance note to help people respond to the consultation.

All comments will be considered before any amendments are made and the plan is presented to a government planning inspector.

Myth: The Local Plan is flawed.

Fact: The Local Plan has been shaped through a process of rigorous evidence gathering and public consultation by experts in their field, as well as wider expertise where needed. It has been formed and scrutinised by all councillors. It is a detailed, technical and robust document which safeguards and plans for the development of the economy of this district for future generations. It’s aim is to provide a vibrant, sustainable place to live.
Tell me more
- In addition to the Draft Local Plan, which is available to view online at www.tandridge.gov.uk/localplan, the Council has also published a fact sheet for every ward in the district which includes maps, sites for new homes, employment and infrastructure improvements. A leaflet containing information relating to where you live will be delivered to every home in the district. If you have not received one by Friday 27 July, please e-mail customerservices@tandridge.gov.uk.
- You can sign up for our Local Plan e-newsletter to keep up to date with all developments by visiting www.tandridge.gov.uk.
- The Planning Policy Committee of 3 July where the plan was approved, with some amendments, is available for everyone to view live online through the new council webcast by visiting www.tandridge.gov.uk/webcast. It will remain online for six months. It was also discussed at Overview and Scrutiny on 19 July. This meeting can also be viewed online.