TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN - EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC 2019
WRITTEN HEARING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF WOOLBRO HOMES

1.1 I write on behalf of Woolbro Homes, in respect of their interest in “Land at The Old Cottage, Station Road, Lingfield” (“the site”). This Written Hearing Statement follows previous representations made through earlier stages in the preparation of the emerging Local Plan for Tandridge District Council (TDC).

1.2 The site at “land at the Old Cottage” comprises a Site Allocation (HSG12) within the Submission Draft Local Plan (Reg.19) which is proposed for release from the Green Belt and to be ratified at Examination in Public (EIP). Appendices to this Statement comprise:

- Heritage Statement completed by Bidwells (Appendix A)
- Landscape & Green Belt Appraisal completed by LDA Design (Appendix B) including Parameters Plan
- Alternative Lingfield Sites Assessment (Appendix C)

1.3 This Hearing Statement has been prepared ahead of the EIP of Tandridge District Council’s (TDC) Local Plan 2033, which is due to commence on 8th October 2019. This Hearing Statement responds to the specific matters and issues identified in the Inspectors ID/5 V2, specifically addressing the above site (allocation HSG12) and covers:

- Matter 2A – Objectively Assessed Need for Housing;
- Matter 2B – The Housing Requirement;
- Matter 2D – Five Year Housing Land Supply;
- Matter 3 – The Spatial Strategy;
- Matter 4 – Green Belt Boundary Alterations; and
- Matter 6 – South Godstone Garden Community and Housing Allocations: HSG12: Land at the Old Cottage, Station Road, Lingfield.

1.4 Matter 8 (Development Management Policies) will be addressed in a separate Written Hearing Statement in accordance with the later deadline for this matter.

2.0 Matter 2A – Objectively Assessed Need for Housing

2.1 It is considered that the objectively assessed need for housing is sufficient, but only as a minimum to provide a sound basis for the preparation of the Local Plan. Further consideration to increasing housing supply by optimising residential density in suitable locations must be had and is evidenced below.
3.0 **Matter 2B – The Housing Requirement**

3.1 In considering whether or not the Plan is positively prepared and justified in that it provides for 6,056 homes over the plan period, against an OAN of 9,400 (as set out in the Publication Plan) and 7,960 (as set out in the document Updating the Objectively Assessed Housing Needs of Tandridge), it should first be noted that Tandridge as a District is constrained by a number of factors. This includes, as is referenced in the Local Plan: two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); land overwhelmingly designated as Green Belt; areas of flood risk; Extensive Ancient Woodland; and other natural designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Such constraints limit the proportion of land which can be justified for residential development.

3.2 Given these constraints, it is considered that the Plan is to an extent justified in not meeting the full OAN for Tandridge and is consistent with paragraph 14 of the NPPF in this regard (2.7). However, it is also considered that not all realistic options for meeting the OAN within Tandridge have been exhausted (2.8). Rather, TDC should maximise housing supply by securing all opportunities on Green Belt release sites where to do so would not compromise other material planning considerations, and best meet the exceptional circumstance criteria in advocating such release.

The current indicative capacity of 60 dwellings for site HSG12 is not consistent with this approach. Site HSG12 could feasibly deliver approximately 120 to 150 units, without causing harm to heritage, landscape or Green Belt objectives. Optimising residential density to this extent would provide approximately 48 to 60 affordable houses which would have significant social benefits and would deliver a sound Local Plan by way of demonstration that the exceptional circumstances test is met.

3.3 It is considered that the consequences of not meeting the OAN within the Housing Market Area (HMA) are wholly negative for the District and its residents (2.9). Whilst it is considered that the LPA is justified in not meeting the full OAN, further analysis of the Green Belt release sites’ capacities must be explored further.

This would mitigate risk of any need for an early review of the draft Local Plan, which would otherwise prejudice its soundness. Elsewhere, this has been deemed an inappropriate manner in which to deal with addressing housing land supply within the statutory development plan. This is referenced within the Examiner notes regarding the Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) Local Plan (Examination Interim Findings, dated 29 August 2018) which summarises:

- The Proposed Submission Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan set out a housing requirement of 27,400 to be delivered across the District over the plan period;
- Following initial comments from the Examiner, AVDC proposed to modify and increase the housing requirement to 28,600 dwellings to be delivered over the plan period;
- However, the Examiner is suggesting that the total OAN is 31,500 dwellings over the plan period. The Examiner’s favoured approach is to present a series of Main Modifications (which are scheduled for consultation in September 2019), rather than an ‘early review’ of the adopted Local Plan;

This highlights the direction of travel in the preparation of Local Plans. These should plan to provide sufficient housing to meet the OAN, and citing constraints such as Green Belt and AONB is not justification in its own right for adopting suppressed housing targets in comparison to the OAN without full consideration to optimising housing supply either within unconstrained land or on land where development impact can be mitigated.

3.4 If housing need is unmet and justified through the various constraints apparent in TDC (although by no means unique) it is likely that a neighbouring authority would need to accommodate additional dwellings through duty-to-cooperate. If this was not possible then it is likely that the unmet housing need will remain as such (2.10) unless a robust approach to site selection is undertaken.
Socially, a lack of housing is likely to trigger serious implications for existing and prospective residents in the Housing Market Area, this includes both market and affordable housing delivery. The knock-on effect of this is a rise in house prices; prejudicing supply and potentially a lower quality of life for residents.

4.0 Matter 2D – Five Year Housing Land Supply

4.1 Both the NPPF 2012 and 2019 place significance importance on the identifying and updating annually a supply of deliverable housing sites to provide five years’ worth of housing against their housing requirements. In the case of this Local Plan, it is considered that upon adoption it will provide for a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (2.17). However, despite this it remains the case that densities should be optimised on sites which are to be released from the Green Belt to further increase supply over the plan period. In this regard, it should be noted that the requirement to keep a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites should be seen as an absolute minimum, rather than an upper limit.

4.2 It is considered that it is justified to apply a buffer of 5 per cent within the calculation of the five year supply (2.18) bearing in mind that Tandridge is not a persistent underdeliver of housing supply (years 2013/14 – 2018/19 housing land supply was in excess of requirements, albeit with a significantly reduced identified overall need).

4.3 The Housing Delivery Test will have a material impact on five-year housing supply after the Plan is adopted (2.19), as February 2019 figures confirm that Tandridge had delivered only 65% of identified housing need. Therefore, in accordance with the guidance and the Housing Needs Test (HNT) TDC must add a 20 per cent buffer onto the Objectively Assessed Need for housing. This materially increases the number of houses TDC will need to demonstrate are deliverable in order to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.

5.0 Matter 3 – The Spatial Strategy

5.1 With reference to the Spatial Strategy, we consider that this and the settlement hierarchy set out in policies TLP01, TLP06, TLP07, TLP08 and TLP09 are justified as the most appropriate strategy based on robust evidence and are thus sound on this basis. Within Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements (defined as those with access to the highest level of accessibility to services – Urban and Semi-Rural service settlements) densities should be maximised on previously developed land and given the constraint, Green Belt release sites.

5.2 Policy TLP01 notes that “in the short to medium term development is directed towards the most sustainable settlements which are our most built-up (Urban – Tier 1) and semi-rural service settlements (Tier 2) … For the longer term and beyond the plan period, new homes will be delivered through the development of the South Godstone Garden Community”. In line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, it is considered that the principle underpinning this strategy is appropriate in that the most sustainable locations are identified as a priority to deliver housing. Given this, it is considered that all realistic options for the distribution of development have been identified and considered robustly in the formulation of the plan (3.1).

Various sites with capacity and environmental constraints have been dismissed during the earlier drafts of the plan, given likely impact upon these constraints. Therefore, it is considered that the Local Plan identifications for additional housing are sound and justified. The proposed distribution of housing is supported by the Sustainability Appraisal and will lead to the most appropriate pattern of growth (3.2) through focusing upon existing settlements and sensitive alteration to boundaries, extending these where minimal impact upon greenbelt is had. In addition to this, it is also considered that the distribution of new homes between the Tiers of settlements and proposed garden community has been justified and has been established using a robust evidence base (3.3). Additional sites within Lingfield have also been assessed against the Greenbelt purposes and are demonstrated to fulfil various purposes and are
5.3 Further to the above, it is considered that policy TLP07 is effective and consistent with national policy in its accordance with the Council’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan (3.6). In line with national policy, development should be directed towards the most sustainable locations in relation to social, economic and environmental factors. By delivering a substantial amount of housing within ‘Tier 2’ settlements the Local Plan accords with national planning policy by helping to ensure that homes are delivered in sustainable locations. Clearly, where possible development should be directed towards settlements that are already well served by sustainable methods of transport (most pertinently public transport) which also have good service and amenity provisions. By providing development in these locations, economic benefits will be accrued as a larger critical mass of people will use the services on offer within the settlements. Lingfield is a good example of this, with this settlement being well served by public transport options. For example, Southern and Thameslink Trains run from Lingfield Train Station providing good quality access to locations both within and outside of the District. In addition to this Lingfield has an excellent range of services and amenities, thereby reducing the need for existing and future residents to travel. Given the constraints of the District (see 3.1 above) it is considered that a considerable amount of residential development should be focused in and distributed between the Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements.

5.4 Bearing in mind the evident constraints of the District, development densities should be maximised in sustainable locations. This is particularly the case for sites which are proposed for release from the Green Belt, in line with paragraph 137 of the NPPF (2019).

5.5 It is considered that the proposed Modifications to Policy TLP07 are necessary for soundness (3.7). These modifications, whilst being minor, illustrate that the Plan (and this policy specifically) has been positively prepared and supports development that is sustainable and will not have a negative impact on the character of the area.

6.0 Matter 4 – Green Belt Boundary Alterations

6.1 It is considered that the Green Belt Assessment (TDC, June 2018) has been undertaken on the basis of a clear methodology consistent with national planning policy for protecting Green Belts (4.1). As is made clear within the Assessment, TDC have identified the exceptional circumstances which they consider justify the proposed alteration of Green Belt boundaries and have established a methodology for assessing these. TDC have therefore identified the sites consistent with these circumstances, that are considered appropriate for release from the Green Belt to meet identified housing need. The Assessment also makes recommendations as to which settlements should be ‘inset’ from the Green Belt and provides evidence for this. Consequently, the proposed modification of Green Belt boundaries, including through policy HSG12, have been correctly identified as being appropriate for release from the Green Belt given the exceptional circumstances demonstrated. Lingfield has hitherto been identified as Inset from the Greenbelt and therefore sensitive alteration of the boundary to widen the inset is justified and considered sound.

6.2 It is considered that the proposed alterations to the Green Belt boundaries have taken into account the need to promote sustainable patterns of development and are consistent with the Local Plan strategy (4.2). The sites identified as being suitable are within or around existing and sustainable settlements (to varying degrees) and thus promote sustainability by encouraging development which can utilise and contribute to and benefit from settlement vibrancy and the services and amenities they offer. Site Allocation HSG 12 meets these criteria. It is demonstrated within Appendix B that the Green Belt purposes can be maintained where the boundary to accommodate HSG 12 is amended.

6.3 It is considered that all realistic alternatives to releasing land from the Green Belt have been considered (4.3), with development being directed to existing Urban Settlement Sites (Tier 1) and Semi-Rural Service Settlement Sites (Tier 2). Green Belt release is necessary mindful of the various constraints
characterised by the District and in order to meet identified housing need. It is notable here that full OAN for housing is not being met across the Plan period, therefore, to do so increased densities should be considered on allocated Green Belt sites, including HSG12 which can deliver considerably in excess of 60 homes whilst still being in accordance with planning policy. NPPF (2019) identifies the three areas which should be given priority before any exceptional circumstance test is triggered (whilst the plan is examined under the 2012 NPPF, these tests are considered relevant as hitherto were not formally defined): -

- Maximises use of brownfield sites and underutilised land;
- Optimises the density of development, including promoting the uplift in minimum densities in towns and locations well served by public transport;
- Addressing the ability of neighbouring authorities to accommodate a proportion of identified housing need.

6.4 It is considered that the site selection methodology for sites to be released from the Green Belt is robust and the proposed alterations to the Green Belt boundaries are justified (4.4). In the case of HSG 12, it is clearly demonstrated that it does not make a strong contribution to meeting any of the five Green Belt purposes, as the accompanying document completed by LDA Design illustrates (Appendix B). The purposes tests are identified as such: -

- The site is located at the settlement edge of Lingfield and the site built up on three sides. Built form is therefore visible in all directions from the site (Purpose 1).
- The Site makes no contribution to the scale and separate identity of Lingfield from neighbouring settlements (Purpose 2).
- There are a number of built developments within the Green Belt in the locality of the Site and to the south east is Lingfield Racecourse which represents a substantial development within the Green Belt (Purpose 3).
- Whilst the Site is partly located within Lingfield Conservation Area and its development setting, there are several examples of new development within the Conservation Area and planning policy would ensure that any future development (through submission of a planning application) would have no negative impact on this (Purpose 4).
- The Site already reads as part of the town (but its enclosure results in any impact upon the existing open space being diluted) and therefore the wider countryside setting of Lingfield would not be harmed. Finally, development on this site would not impact on the likelihood of existing brownfield sites coming forward (Purpose 5).

6.5 In conclusion, the site does not contribute to the checking of unrestricted sprawl; or the preventing neighbouring towns from merging; or in the assisting in the safeguarding of the countryside; or in the assisting in urban regeneration in terms of Green Belt purposes as defined by paragraph 80 / 134 of the NPPF. This is primarily because the Site is surrounded on all sides by built form, as it reads as being within the town fabric and as it is contained by the permanent physical boundaries of Station Road and Town Hill Road. The Site would not materially harm the setting and historic character of Lingfield, indeed other development has occurred within this area and planning policy will ensure that any development is respective and reflective of the setting and character (TLP43: Historic Environment). It is therefore considered that the Site could be released from the Green Belt without undue harm to the function and performance of it. It is also considered that the Site can accommodate development without undue harm to the landscape and visual resource.

6.6 It is considered that in strategic terms, there are exceptional circumstances for the proposed alterations of the boundaries of the Green Belt, to accommodate the level of development proposed (4.5). The site is currently allocated for approximately 60 dwellings and has an area of approximately 5.8ha. It is considered that the Site could provide well in excess of this amount (approximately 120 – 150 dwellings) whilst still providing a scheme which would not cause significant harm to the setting of the Conservation Area or individual Heritage Assets, nor to the landscape setting. The substantial contribution that the
Site could make to housing supply (particularly on the basis of 120 – 150 dwellings) is the most pertinent exceptional circumstance which exists, the delivery of site will have important social benefits by providing much needed housing, both market and affordable.

7.0 Matter 6 – South Godstone Garden Community and Housing Allocations: HSG12: Land at the Old Cottage, Station Road, Lingfield

7.1 As mentioned previously, the most pertinent exceptional circumstance which justifies the HSG12 release from the Green Belt (6.58) is the contribution that the site will make to delivering housing and the social benefits accrued from this. The social benefits of the scheme are strengthened by virtue of any full application being required to provide a policy compliant level of affordable housing - as an allocated housing site which has been released from the Green belt the affordable housing requirement would be 40 per cent. This, as well as the provision of market dwellings would make a substantial and important contribution to housing supply in the District. Further weight should be given to the fact that the Site is located in a sustainable location in terms of its access to public transport options and services and amenities, and in accordance with NPPF Paragraph 82 above which identifies the strategic parameters which the LPA should assess before the Exceptional Circumstance test is triggered.

7.2 It is considered that the proposed Green Belt boundary is justified and consistent with paragraph 85 of the Framework (6.59). First of all, the boundary is consistent with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified housing needs for sustainable development, this is by virtue of the boundary including a sustainably located site that is well located in relation to the settlement of Lingfield. In addition to this, the boundary does not include land which is unnecessary, this is due to the fact that the site is required to meet housing targets. In the case of the Site, it is not necessary to identify 'safeguarded land' as the Site will be developed in one phase. In addition to this, boundaries are defined clearly, with roads and existing housing clearly marking the boundaries.

7.3 In accordance with 6.60, a Heritage Statement completed by Bidwells is also submitted in support of the draft allocation HSG 12 which assesses the impact of the proposed development on the significance of heritage assets and/or their settings. It is noted in this Heritage Statement that part of the Site is located within the Lingfield Conservation Area and that the Site is in close proximity to a number of buildings included on the Statutory List for Buildings of Archaeological and Historic Interest as well as buildings included on Tandridge District Council’s list of Local Buildings of Character.

7.4 Bidwells consider these heritage assets to hold significances ranging from low to high. Bidwells also consider that the development of the site will have impacts ranging predominantly from neutral to low. Where it is considered that there is the potential for low impact upon an Asset’s significance, this impact can be partially mitigated through layout and masterplanning, the potential benefits of providing public access to the space (with reference to the erosion of open space within the Conservation Area specifically) and through the introduction of high quality, sensitively designed architecture.

7.5 With reference to criteria IV (6.61), this effectively limits development to the existing development edge and northern part of the site. It is considered that this criterion is unnecessary and only serves to limit the number of dwellings which could be delivered whilst not effectively safeguarding the character and appearance of Lingfield. Rather, it is considered that this criterion should be removed altogether. As noted in the accompanying Landscape & Green Belt Appraisal, there is no justification in landscape, visual or heritage terms for restricting development to this part of the site. Such an approach is overly restrictive and not conducive to good design and place making. In addition to this, any future application would be subject to rigorous assessment against relevant adopted planning policy. It is considered that other policies (for example TLP18, Place-Making and Design) will effectively safeguard the character and appearance of Lingfield by requiring a high quality development that must, “reflect and respect the character, setting and local context, including those features that contribute to local distinctiveness”.

7.6 As identified on the Flood Risk Map for Planning, the site is located largely in Flood Zone 1 with only a
very small area of the site being within Flood Zone 2. It should also be noted that the site has a low probability of flooding (vast majority of site is within Flood Zone 1 as identified on the Flood Risk Map for Planning), with only a very small part of the site being within Flood Zone 2 (medium probability of flooding) and is therefore suitable from a Flood Risk perspective. This is identified in Figure X below:

7.7 Bearing this in mind, it is considered that the proposed allocation is justified in respect of the Sequential Test and that the allocation would be effective in ensuring that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding is avoided (6.62). As part of any full application a Flood Risk Assessment would be submitted, and any necessary works identified within this Assessment would be completed to ensure acceptability from this perspective.

7.8 Flood Zone 2 is referred within the NPPG and confirms that a Sequential Test should be undertaken for major development within this zone, unless already undertaken by the LPA. TDC have undertaken such an assessment and which confirms that there are no further sites within the identified Settlement Hierarchy and which are Flood Zone 1 which are not further constrained by other matters (e.g. Greenbelt) and that the extent of flood impact can be dealt with through mitigation measures, secured as part of a subsequent planning application. The image above shows the extent to which HSG12 is fettered by flood risk and given this, it is clear that development can be delivered without prejudicing strategic flood risk.

7.9 The Lingfield Neighbourhood Plan remains at Designation stage and includes HSG12 within the designated area.

7.10 It is considered that the requirements for financial contributions as set out under infrastructure are consistent with national planning policy for planning obligations and conditions and are justified bearing in mind the size of the site and that any planning application should deliver approximately 120-150 dwellings (6.64). Obviously any S106 contributions and CIL charges will be determined at the full application stage based on the finalised scheme.

7.11 There are no matters that would mean the site is not deliverable or developable (6.65). The site is available for development.

7.12 It is considered that the proposed Modifications are necessary for soundness (6.66). Given the heritage assets located within the site setting it is evident that these will be important considerations in the determination of any planning application. The addition of a Public Rights of Way modification is also
necessary given that one runs through the site.

8.0 Summary

8.1 In summary, it is considered that the OAN for housing is sufficient, but only as a minimum to provide a sound basis for the preparation of this Plan. Opportunities to increase housing supply - particularly through increasing densities on allocated Green Belt sites - should be supported. This is particularly the case as although the adopted Local Plan would demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, this should be seen as a minimum rather than a maximum.

8.2 It is considered that the Spatial Strategy and settlement hierarchy set out in the plan are sound in terms of it placing residential development in suitable and sustainable locations, recognising the importance of semi-rural service (tier 2) settlements like Lingfield. Again, however opportunities to increase density in suitable locations (as in the case of policy HSG12) should be supported.

8.3 It is also deemed that the proposed Green Belt Boundary alterations are sound, with the exceptional circumstances (social benefits) demonstrated. The Site is a good example of such exceptional circumstances and that the correct sites are proposed for release from the Green Belt.

8.4 Finally, it is considered clear that the Site (HSG12) should remain an allocated site and should be released from the Green Belt for residential development. The development of the Site will have large-scale social benefits by providing much needed housing in a highly constrained District. These social benefits will be increased further if the density of the allocation is also increased. There are no valid reasons for the Site not to come forward for release from the Green Belt.

8.5 We trust that the above is helpful in the context of the Examination in Public. It would be appreciated if you could confirm receipt of this Hearing Statement and Appendices. if you have any queries relating to the proposals, please feel free to contact Ben Dakin (ben.dakin@rokplanning.co.uk) or myself.

Yours faithfully,

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