Tandridge District Council ‘Our Local Plan: 2033’ Examination Hearing Statement in response to the Inspector’s Initial Matters, Issues and Questions, Document ID/5 V3 submitted by the Woldingham Association

Matter 3 The Spatial Strategy

Issue: Is the spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy as set out in Policies TLP01, TLP06, TLP07, TLP08 and TLP09 justified as the most appropriate strategy and is it based on robust evidence?

3.1 Have all realistic options for the distribution of development within the District been identified and considered robustly in the formulation of the Plan?

3.1 No, not all reasonable alternatives for the distribution of both housing and employment development have been identified. This is because the settlement hierarchy (SBC8, SBC1) is not robust and other important factors have not been taken into account in identifying all of the realistic options for distribution of housing and employment.

3.2 The settlement hierarchy is not robust because it is factually inaccurate and does not accurately portray:

   a. the lack of essential services (supermarkets, healthcare, education) available in each settlement, particularly the smaller settlements like Woldingham,

   b. the lack of local employment opportunities in the settlements because employment is scored as either 1/0 which does not assess the balance or structure of local employment,

   c. the reliance on the car for both day to day living and travel to work.

3.3 The consequence of the above that not all reasonable alternatives have been identified or considered robustly because:

   a. the self-sufficiency and employment availability of the smaller settlements like Woldingham is considerably over-stated,
b. the reliance on the car for both travel to work and day to day living is ignored.

3.4 More details on why the settlement hierarchy is not robust can be found in paragraphs 11.2-11.12 of our Regulation 19 representation.

3.5 For the reasons above and in Chapters 11 and 18 of our Regulation 19, we conclude that not all reasonable alternatives have been identified and considered robustly.

Suggested alternative

3.6 We suggest amendments to the settlement hierarchy SBC8/SBC1 in Chapter 11, page 4 of our Regulation 19. In summary, we suggest that the settlement hierarchy be amended to:
   a. be factually accurate,
   b. include travel to work patterns and the reliance on the car.
   c. make it more apparent that residents in the smaller settlements have no choice but to travel outside of their settlement for access to day to day services and employment and,
   d. that most of these journeys are by car.

3.2 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?

3.7 We have answered this question because it is related to our Chapter 23 Regulation 19 comments on employment land allocations which we believe is covered by “other development”.

3.8 We conclude that the spatial strategy for employment land is not the most appropriate because:
a. The employment growth assumptions on which the employment land needs are is based are unrealistic and so identified and assessment of options based on this is not robust,

b. Paragraph 84 of the Framework requires local authorities to take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. However, second tier sites like IES06: Paddock Barn Farm that are identified as suitable for intensification and expansion are remote and only accessible by car/van. We do not believe this is compatible with paragraph 84 of the Framework.

Suggested alternative

3.9 Tandridge is located adjacent to London Borough of Croydon to the north and Crawley Borough to the south which is central to the Gatwick Diamond. Both of these boroughs are undertaking significant business expansion and regeneration projects that build on existing skills and/or locational advantages.

3.10 We believe that locating employment land adjacent to these boroughs would be more likely to attract businesses to Tandridge than the current approach due to:

a. the proximity to much larger, higher density catchment areas in these other boroughs which is more attractive to new businesses than the disparate and remote collection of employment sites currently proposed in the Plan, and

b. the “cluster” effect (Paragraph 21, fourth bullet of the Framework) that arises when there a critical mass of businesses and supply chains located in the same area. There is already a critical mass in these adjoining boroughs that will grow and this
alternative spatial strategy could enable Tandridge to capture some of this growth.

3.11 Locating employment land on the north/south border would minimise – as much as practically possible - distances travelled by car.

3.12 Paragraph 84 of the Framework does not require authorities to consider the issue of sustainability only in the context of their own administrative boundaries. We believe that a spatial strategy that directs employment (and housing?) development towards Crawley, which is an urban area “beyond the outer Green Belt boundary” and towards Croydon, which is inside the inner Metropolitan Green Belt boundary, would be compatible with paragraph 84.

3.13 We believe that this alternative spatial strategy would lead to a more appropriate pattern of employment land growth and development than the disparate and disjointed approach that is currently proposed in the Plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TLP08: Rural settlements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Is the Policy sufficiently clear and would it be effective in respect of Woldingham which is inset, in part, from the Green Belt?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.14 Further to his Advice which we included in our Regulation 19 representation on TLP08, Mr Hobson, QC, has also provided the answer to this question, as follows, in italics, with emphasis added:

3.15 The reference in the Inspector’s question to Woldingham being inset in part from the Green Belt is erroneous and reflects the confusion at the heart of the Policy. It is a matter of fundamental importance that it is appreciated that Woldingham in its entirety is inset from the Green Belt.
3.16 In contrast to the other settlements mentioned in Policy TLP 08 no part of the defined settlement of Woldingham is in the Green Belt or subject to Green Belt policy.

3.17 This is a matter of historic significance for two reasons: it was inset when the original Metropolitan Green Belt was defined, and has remained inset, and not subject to Green Belt policy, ever since; also, Woldingham was developed as a planned settlement where parameters eg building lines etc were specified at the outset, thus enabling its special character to be preserved.

3.18 The protection of the historic and distinctive character of the settlement has been a key aspect of planning policy that has been addressed by the inclusion of specific Woldingham policies in previous Local Plans.

3.19 The draft Local Plan by including Policy TLP08 breaks this traditional approach and combines washed over Green Belt settlements in the same Policy as inset areas of Woldingham.

3.20 This is confusing. Apart from Woldingham, all the other settlements mentioned are washed over by the Green Belt, and Green Belt policy eg with regard to infilling, is applicable to them.

3.21 It is however misleading and ambiguous in the case of Woldingham. As a consequence of its inset status, no part of the settlement, as defined by its settlement boundary should be subject to Green Belt policy. So the circumstances in which infilling development in the Green Belt would be permitted should not apply to Woldingham. However it is listed together with the other settlements without any distinction between them. The criteria in A, covering Green Belt policy, purport to apply to all the settlements listed, without any explanation that they do not and cannot in fact apply to Woldingham. Indeed the only reference to the
inset status of Woldingham occurs after criterion VI. Although it mentions that Woldingham is inset, it does not however identify any consequence of that distinct status.

3.22 There is some reference to Woldingham’s position in the explanatory text, in paragraphs 17.28 to 17.29 but this does not however have the clarity or force of formal policy; and even here there are errors. Paragraph 17.28 implies that Green Belt policy will apply at least to part of Woldingham. This is wrong and directly misleading. This paragraph should certainly be deleted from the Plan. Woldingham should not be included in a Policy together with washed over Green Belt settlements.

3.23 These errors go to the heart of the soundness of the Plan. The change of approach regarding Woldingham’s status is unjustified. It isn’t clear from the text whether and to what extent Policy TLP 08 applies to Woldingham as well as the other settlements listed. It is incoherent and ineffective.

3.24 A clearer distinction is required between the position of Woldingham, reflecting its special character, and the other settlements listed. This would be best achieved by a discrete policy for Woldingham.

3.25 Further to Mr Hobson’s answer above, it is important to understand that infilling outside of the inset area of Woldingham is not allowed as explained in MD1: paragraph 17.27 of the supporting text:

As such, the role of the boundaries for our rural settlements accords with the core built form of the settlement and will be used to ensure that, in line with Green Belt policies, appropriate development can be contained.

3.26 However, the reference to both “Green Belt” and “appropriate development” in this paragraph confuses the issue because neither are relevant to the inset area of Woldingham.
3.27 A more detailed explanation as to why the approach in the Local Plan is not sound can be found in paragraphs 17.1-17.8 of our Regulation 19 and in the Opinion from Mr Hobson, QC.

3.28 For all of these reasons and those given in our Regulation 19, we conclude that the answer to Q3.8 is “no”.

3.29 As explained above, these do not apply to either the inset area of Woldingham or to the surrounding Green Belt and so we have not answered this question.

3.30 No. The HNS1(E) 2019 Housing Strategy is not required to be sound, and so policies that are required to be sound should not include the requirement to be in accordance with it.

3.31 This answer is also prepared by Mr Hobson, QC (in italics):

3.32 The inclusion of Woldingham in Policy TLP 08 is not sound for the reasons set out above. Specifically, it is neither positively prepared nor justified. The Plan’s ambiguity with regard to its applicability to Woldingham renders it ineffective. As emphasised previously, a clear and coherent framework that meets the tests of soundness, reflecting and protecting the special character of Woldingham would be through the promulgation of a Woldingham specific policy which didn’t muddle Woldingham with the Green Belt settlements. The draft Plan should be modified accordingly.
Further proposed modifications

3.33 Remove MD1: paragraph 17.28 as recommended by Mr Hobson in paragraph 3.22 above.

3.34 Amend MD1: paragraph 17.27 to clarify that infilling is not allowed outside of the Woldingham settlement boundary.