

**Tonbridge & Malling
Borough Council**

Local Plan

Position Statement

October 2018



www.tmbc.gov.uk

Local Plan

update



Why has a Local Plan been prepared?

The Council's current Development Plan is reaching the end of its lifetime (2021). A new Local Plan needs to be in place to manage change in the borough for the period up to 2031, including addressing assessed local needs and protecting natural and heritage assets. The Government expects local authorities to have an up-to-date Local Plan in place which responds to local evidence and is in conformity with national planning policy and practice guidance.

Development Plans are used by Local Planning Authorities like Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council to determine planning applications and guide future growth and development over a 10-15 year period.

The Local Plan will set out policies on what will or will not be permitted and where, including new homes, employment space and other facilities.

Once formally adopted by the Council the Local Plan will replace the current suite of policies contained in the Core Strategy, Development Land Allocations, Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan, Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Documents and the Saved Policies that form the current Local Development Framework.

Having a sound and up-to-date Plan means that the Borough Council has more control over the amount, type and location of development taking place.

Consultation

On 12th September 2018 the Council approved the Local Plan and its supporting documents for the purposes of public consultation.



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Consultation

The Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Publication Local Plan, and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment, are now out to public consultation.

Consultation will run for a period of six weeks from **1st October –19th November 2018**. The focus of the consultation is on the soundness of the Plan which will be tested by an independent Planning Inspector at the Examination. The Council believe the Local Plan to be sound.

Copies of the consultation documents are available at all local libraries, as well as the Council offices at Gibson Building and Tonbridge Castle. The documents can also be accessed at www.tmbc.gov.uk/localplanreg19

All representations should be sent to:
Planning Policy
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
Gibson Building
Gibson Drive
Kings Hill
West Malling
ME19 4LZ

or emailed to localplan@tmbc.gov.uk

As part of the consultation, two public drop-in sessions have been arranged where Council officers will be available to answer any questions. Details of the events are:

- Monday 15th October 9am-8pm at Gibson Building, Kings Hill; and
- Wednesday 17th October 9am-8pm at Tonbridge Castle.

We hope to see you there.

Timetable

The timetable for preparing the Local Plan was revised in March 2018 and can be viewed on our website.

www.tmbc.gov.uk/localplan.

Following this period of consultation, the Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State by the 24th January 2019. The Examination is anticipated to be held in the Spring of next year, with adoption of the new Local Plan by the end of 2019.

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What is the housing requirement for the Local Plan?

The housing requirement for the new Local Plan is 13,920 homes over the plan period (2011-2031), which translates to 696 dwellings per annum (dpa). This is taken from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (September 2016). This requirement was calculated by using the most up-to-date Household Projections available at the time the evidence for the Local Plan was being prepared (2014-based). The outputs from the projections were subject to sensitivity testing taking account of matters including housing affordability and economic forecasts.

Taking into consideration completions from the base date of the Local Plan, extant planning permissions and a conservative projection from small windfall sites, the net need that the Local Plan must address from 1 April 2017 is approximately 6,500 homes. The Local Plan has allocated land to accommodate approximately 6,800 homes.

Why has the standardised methodology not been used to assess housing need?

The Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2018) makes it clear in para.214 that for those Local Plans submitted on or before 24 January 2019 the policies in the previous Framework (March 2012) will apply for the purposes of examining plans.

The timetable for the Local Plan identifies that the Borough Council intends to submit the relevant documents to the Secretary of State for examination before the end of 2018.

Given that the standardised methodology did not feature in the March 2012 edition of the NPPF, it has not been used to calculate the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing and it will not be used to assess the soundness of the Local Plan at examination. Instead, the Council calculated the OAN using the most up-to-date projections available when the evidence was being prepared taking into consideration the version of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance that was available at that time.

Local Plan

myth-busting

“I don't want change and don't think it should happen”



The Borough has changed and grown throughout its history and will continue to evolve in response to the needs of a changing local population. You only need to travel back just 60 years to see that the majority of what we know and love, including Aylesford, Ditton, Larkfield, Lunsford Park and Leybourne (the Medway Gap) did not exist and the suburbs of Tonbridge were less extensive.

“The housing need in the evidence is too high”



The evidence is robust having been prepared in accordance with the National Policy and Guidance. It is clear that the assessment must meet household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change to assess the need for new homes. This is what we have done.

“I own my home, I won't benefit from anymore development”



New developments are not just about the housing. They can deliver improvements to community facilities and services as well as providing new infrastructure which existing people as well as the residents of the new homes can enjoy and benefit from.

“We should not have anymore homes because we have taken a lot of development recently”



The new Local Plan is looking forward to 2031 and needs to plan for the needs of the growing community. What has happened so far has been in response to previous and existing need; we must make sure that we respond to the needs of the changing population going forward. We are living longer and household sizes are getting smaller which puts pressure on the stock of housing which we must find a positive response to.

“I like our small local centre just the way it is”



Shops and facilities in local centres are dependent upon customers and users to survive. If there is no injection of new people to local communities there is a serious risk that locally valued facilities will close because it will no longer be viable for them to keep running.

“We should be developing brownfield land first”



Seeking opportunities to re-use brownfield land to meet development needs has been part of the Council's local planning strategy for many years. This approach has resulted in over 96% of housing completions in recent years* being on previously developed sites. However there are very few large brownfield sites left and so alternatives will have to be considered.

* average annual housing completions on previously developed land between 2006/7 and 2011/12 - please see Annual Monitoring Reports

Local Plan

myth-busting

“We should only build homes to meet the needs of local people”



Population change has and will continually include an element of people moving to Tonbridge and Malling from other areas, including London. This is understandable because the borough is a very desirable place to live. It is also unavoidable, particularly for market housing, because people have the freedom to choose where they live in the UK, subject to affordability. The only type of housing where the Council can exert some influence over occupancy is affordable housing (including starter homes) but this will not represent the majority of housing that will need to be built in the future.

If we were to constrain the housing supply so that it only responded to the natural change occurring amongst the existing resident population this would only have the harmful effect of freezing out many local people from the housing market.

This is because people from outside of the borough will continue to desire a home in Tonbridge & Malling and they will, in many cases, be able to compete and outbid local people for properties because of their financial means. This is an undesirable outcome. To give local people a reasonable chance of accessing the housing market we need to plan sensibly for a housing need that not only addresses natural change occurring locally but also takes account of movement from other areas. Indeed this is required by the Government in National Policy.

“We do not need anymore flats; more than enough have been built in recent years”



The need for different types of housing is affected by the market and, in particular, the profile of the local community, both now and going forward. Household sizes in Tonbridge & Malling have and are projected to decrease, reflecting the aging population, the break-up of existing households and the formation of smaller households amongst younger generations. This means that there will continue to be a need for smaller sized units (1 and 2 bedrooms). This need is widespread across the borough and includes Tonbridge where there is also a significant need for family-sized properties as well.

Effectively responding to this need can not only achieve an efficient use of land in urban areas but also help support the retail and service businesses in places such as Tonbridge, particularly the High Street, through the injection of residents. The consequences of not planning for this are that not only will certain members of the community find it increasingly difficult to access homes that meet their specific needs but also the pressure to release greenfield land to accommodate more lower density housing will increase. It could also put at risk the long-term viability and vitality of local businesses who need a continued supply of customers and workers of all ages.

“New growth will mean loss of countryside and Green Belt”



In thinking about providing new homes and jobs we must obviously give careful thought to the most important parts of the countryside and heritage. As ever with planning, balanced choices have to be made. To inform our work a review of the Green Belt is required in accordance with National Policy. This is clearly a critical part of the work to prepare a new plan.

* average annual housing completions on previously developed land between 2006/7 and 2011/12 - please see Annual Monitoring Reports

Contact:

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this leaflet and would like the
information in another format,
please call 01732 876266

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