



Brenchley Parish Council



Information Sheet

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local Plan and Call for Sites

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) is in the process of forming a new Local Plan, which will cover development proposals within the Borough for the period up until 2033. TWBC, in common with all councils in the South East, is under considerable pressure to demonstrate that it has made provision for sufficient land to be allocated for development, of all kinds, but particularly for housing. At the present time, TWBC has, at best, only a three-year supply of housing, rather than the five years it needs to demonstrate that it has available.

The latest notified requirement is that TWBC should find space for upwards of 13,000 houses in the period up until 2033, which equates to roughly 650 houses per year. TWBC is severely constrained because approximately 70% of the borough is within the High Weald AONB. There are other landscape constraints as well. It is highly likely that, after a recent statement by Sajid Javid, the Communities Secretary, that target will be increased.

TWBC is duty bound to show that it has made the very best attempt to satisfy the government's housing requirements when the draft local plan goes before the Government's planning inspector for approval prior to adoption. To this end, it has, in conjunction with the draft Local Plan, made two Calls for Sites, inviting local landowners to submit their land as potential sites for development. The submission under the Call for Sites is not a planning application but simply a request that land should be considered as having development potential, for allocation in the new Local Plan.

TWBC then enters into a detailed evaluation of each and every site to assess whether it has potential for development, having reference, inter alia, to the Borough's own recently determined planning policies, as well as to nationally applicable policies such as the National Planning Policy Framework. Those local policies include the Role and Functions of Settlements Study and the Landscape Character Assessment Study. All of these policies can be found at

<http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-policy/new-local-plan>

Many sites will be ruled out because they do not match the criteria of, or because they conflict with, those policies. The PC has asked TWBC several times about when everybody, including the PC, will have the opportunity to have their say on the submitted sites; the reply is that the sites are not open for consultation at present, probably because TWBC will rule out a substantial number. It seems that the first opportunity to comment will be when the sites deemed appropriate for development are allocated in the draft plan, which should appear next year. In reply to a recent e-mail, the Head of Planning Policy at TWBC stated: -

"There is no separate consultation process on the call for sites element of local plan preparation. It should be remembered that just because a site has been promoted it does not mean that it will be considered acceptable and stated as such in the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment when this is complete.

"Furthermore, even if stated as acceptable within the SHELAA it does not mean a specific site will be allocated in the draft Local Plan which is due to be consulted on next year. In other words, many of the sites will not complete the process and be allocated.

At present a significant amount of our resources are focused on the analysis of representations to the Issues and Options consultation and until this is complete and documented we will not be in a position to know for certain what form the next stage of the draft Local Plan will take."

The first Call ended in September last year and yielded insufficient sites across the borough to meet the need. The second Call was held earlier this year running for a six-week period, concluding on 12th June. This yielded many more sites, including several in Matfield.

Under these Calls, any landowner is entirely free to submit to the TWBC their land for consideration for development. So, although the call is initiated by the borough, it is entirely up to the landowners whether they submit their land for consideration. It is not a government initiative at any level, but a personal decision by land owners.