

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME JULY 2012

BRIEFING NOTE TO TOWN FORUM

Purpose of the LDS

The Borough Council adopted a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) on 25 June 2012. The main purpose of the LDS is to describe the planning documents the Council intends to prepare and to provide a timetable for their preparation so that organisations wishing to be involved can know when consultation will take place.

Main Changes from Previous LDS

For a number of reasons, it was necessary to update the timetable for document preparation as set out in the previous LDS, of September 2011. In addition, the implementation of the Localism Act, in November 2011, and the publication of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in March 2012, caused the Council to reconsider the nature/format of the documents it is preparing.

The LDS is available in full at www.tunridgewells.gov.uk/LDS and a copy has been provided to the Town Forum for circulation. The main points to note are as follows:

- While the September 2011 LDS included reference to the preparation of the Core Strategy Review, the new LDS does not, reflecting the decision taken by Full Council on 22 February 2012 to cease work on this document and prioritise the preparation of (then) the Town Centres Area Action Plan (TCAAP) and Site Allocations DPD. The report to Full Council is available at:

<http://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=1505&Ver=4>

The Town Forum should note that the policies in the adopted Core Strategy, June 2010, including those on the quantity of development to be delivered in Royal Tunbridge Wells, will remain as set out in that document. No further public consultation will take place in relation to these strategic policies in the near future. Plan preparation and, therefore, forthcoming public consultation (see below), will focus on site allocations inside and outside the town centre; on specific policies and guidance for the town centre; and on detailed, topic based policies for planning application purposes. However, any comments that were made in response to consultation on the Core Strategy Review, will, if relevant, be taken into account as these supporting policies are prepared.

- The September 2011 LDS indicated that the Council would prepare three separate documents to support its Core Strategy – a TCAAP; a Site Allocations DPD; and a Development Management Policies DPD. As suggested above, the Council still intends to prepare policies in all these areas, but they will be presented in one document, to be called a Local Plan, rather than in three separate documents.

The Town Forum has expressed a particular concern that the TCAAP might be abandoned in the move to one document. This is not the case and the Local Plan will include a dedicated section on Tunbridge Wells town centre. The change of format is primarily intended to reflect the Government's own move away from multiple policy documents (i.e. from multiple PPGs and PPSs to the NPPF) and to maximise efficiency in document preparation and examination. The main aspects of the work to be done

remain the same and it was always intended that the separate documents would be prepared and consulted upon according to the same timetable in any case.

The Town Forum should therefore expect to be consulted on policies for Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre; site allocations in the wider area beyond the town centre; and detailed development management policies for housing, environment, retail, employment etc. later this year, in November 2012, as would have been the case if the Council had decided to continue with three separate documents.

- In response to changes in legislation that will affect the S106 regime for securing financial contributions from developments, the Council has started work on a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule. While this will not have quite the same status as planning policies in the Local Plan and Core Strategy, it will still be examined by an independent Planning Inspector. We hope that it will be possible to prepare this on the same timetable as the Local Plan and, therefore, consultation will take place in November.

In November, the Town Forum will have the opportunity to comment on proposals for introducing a CIL charge in the Borough.

Summary of the Timetable for Document Preparation

It is intended that the Local Plan (including town centre policies, site allocations and development management policies) and the CIL Charging Schedule will be prepared on the same timescale, which is set out in full in the LDS. The Town Forum, along with other stakeholders, will have the opportunity to comment as follows:

- **Public Consultation 26 November 2012 – 01 February 2013:** Consultation will take place on 'preferred options' style draft documents. The Council will be able to take account of any comments received during this stage, and, if appropriate, amend its proposals before finalising them for examination.
- **Publication/Pre-submission Representations: October/November 2013:** The Council will publish its 'final' proposals intended for submission to the Secretary of State to be examined by an independent Inspector. The Town Forum will have the opportunity to make comments before the plan is submitted, but at this stage, the audience for the comments is really the Inspector rather than the Council. He will take them into account when conducting his examination of the document.

Provided that comments are made during the publication stage, the Town Forum may also have the opportunity to participate in Hearing Sessions as part of the examination if invited to do so by the Inspector. Following the examination process, it is hoped that the Council will be able to adopt the documents by June/July 2014.

The Status of the Town Plan Panel Report on Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre

The Panel submitted this report to the Council on 12 July 2012 and it was immediately published on the website. The report was submitted as a representation into the plan-making process, to inform the preparation of the TCAAP. As explained above, the Council is still preparing the policies for the Local Plan that it would have prepared for the separate TCAAP, so the Panel report remains relevant. In principle, the report will have the same status as a representation made by any other group or individual, but it is clear that a lot of detailed work has gone into preparing it and it will be treated accordingly.