



Mr James Gleave
Sevenoaks District Council
Council Offices
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Date: 21 November 2019

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Dear Mr Gleave

I write further to our joint meeting with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and officers from Sevenoaks District Council on the 12 November, following the initial hearing sessions for the Sevenoaks District Local Plan and the subsequent concerns raised by the Inspector in her letters of the 14 October and 28 October in relation to the cancellation of the further Hearing Sessions and the consideration of the Duty to Co-operate (DtC).

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council submitted a statement to the planning inspectorate and an officer representing the Borough Council attended the first day of the hearing sessions, including the session on DtC. At the Hearing session, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council re-iterated the fact that all three West Kent Authorities have worked collaboratively over a number of years and in particular since the commencement of work on their respective Local Plans in 2015. This has involved active, ongoing and constructive DtC engagement. It was also highlighted that Tunbridge Wells Borough and Sevenoaks District have produced joint evidence base studies in particular the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Economic Needs Study. This has involved close collaboration with officers and members of the two authorities as well as liaison with stakeholders across the respective areas.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's position is set out clearly within the Hearing Statement submitted and the Statement of Common Ground prepared by officers of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council and signed by the relevant elected members. Additionally, details of the meetings/discussions that have taken place over the course of the Local Plan preparation are recorded within the Duty to Co-operate statement prepared by Sevenoaks District Council. Although, the relevant timings of DtC discussions were discussed at the hearing session and are noted in the Borough Councils hearing statement, it was re-iterated by the West Kent Authorities present, that all of the areas are subject to significant constraints, including Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well as others and therefore the authorities faced similar challenges in meeting their own identified needs, with no prospect of being able to meet the needs of neighbouring authorities despite ongoing discussion and engagement at both officer and member level during preparation of the respective Local Plans.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council note the content of the most recent letter sent from Sevenoaks District Council to the Planning Inspectorate and can confirm that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council attended the PAS workshop of the 24 April 2019. Officers of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council agree with the conclusions reached at the workshop, including paragraph 3.3 of the meeting note.

Planning Services

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Tunbridge Wells Borough Council would also be interested to see the Inspectors consideration of the other aspects of soundness that she raised in her initial letter.

Do please contact me if you would like to discuss any of the above further.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Baughen
Head of Planning

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