

## **TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN 2024 – 2044**

### **EARLY ENGAGEMENT CONSULTATION**

This report has been prepared by the Limpsfield Parish Council Planning Committee for consideration by Limpsfield Parish Council prior to the submission of a response to Tandridge District Council's consultation on the preparation of a new local plan

#### **Background**

Tandridge District Council has started to prepare a new local plan for the District. Although, under Government plans for the reorganisation of local government, Tandridge District will cease to exist in the Spring of 2027, Government guidance is not to delay the preparation of a new plan when it is needed. The timetable for preparing the Plan suggests that a draft plan should have been prepared by early 2027 and that the draft would then be passed over to the new authority in April 2027.

Alongside this, a new plan making system is expected to be brought into force during 2026 underpinned by new regulations. The current consultation is seen as a way of gathering initial views and identifying priorities before the Council prepares detailed policy options in line with the new regulations.

Notwithstanding the many and varied issues which the new local plan must address, underlying them all is the scale of housing development which, given national guidelines, is needed in the District and the extent to which it can be accommodated.

The Parish Council has prepared its own Neighbourhood Plan, the 'Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan' (the LNP). This was adopted in 2019 and forms part of the 'development plan' for the District. The Parish Council has recently updated the Plan, an update which is currently awaiting approval by Tandridge District Council. It has also prepared and had adopted the 'Limpsfield Village Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan'.

This proposed response to the District Council's consultation has been put together in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan, including its vision and its priorities, and the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. As the Local Plan emerges, it may be necessary to undertake a further review of the Neighbourhood Plan in order to ensure that it remains up to date and relevant.

At this stage, it is not possible to be definitive about the role which the Parish Council, along with other Parish Councils, will play in the later stages of the Plan preparation. However, with the replacement of Tandridge District Council by a much larger authority covering all of East Surrey, it is to be expected that Parish Councils will become increasingly important as a conduit for local views and concerns.

In considering the District Council's consultation document, the Planning Committee has concluded that it would be more appropriate to offer general comments rather than seek to complete the detailed questionnaire which accompanies the consultation document.

## **An initial vision**

The initial vision is a strong statement about the future of the area as a place in which to live and work, with clear commitments to the quality of the environment and the sustainability of new development. Although much wider and more detailed, it is broadly in line with the Parish Council's own vision for Limpsfield Parish as set out in the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan, seeking to accommodate new development in sustainable ways, whilst protecting the local environment including open spaces, green belt and countryside.

This is not to say that there will not be new development and, for some areas, a significant amount of new development. In due course, and as the Plan progresses, it may be appropriate for the vision to recognise this. At this stage there are, perhaps three points which might be made:

- An important element of the vision of the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan (LNP), is the emphasis given to the character of individual roads and streets. The quality and variety of living environments is a strong and important feature of Limpsfield and of the District as a whole. This could be reflected in the Vision by a clause which echoes the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan as follows:
  - Change and new development will have been accommodated within the District's towns and villages, but the underlying quality of individual roads and streets will have been protected
- The vision refers to the delivery of infrastructure and services to keep pace with growth; this might be strengthened to recognise that in some places and some services there are already issues with the scale and accessibility of local services. This could be addressed by including in the Vision wording of the following nature in bullet point three of the last section of the Vision
  - Deliver infrastructure and services in locations which improve their accessibility to the local community, and which keep pace with the growth in population and housing
- The vision for the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan makes specific reference to the role of local shops and services. Town and village centres play a fundamental role in the life of the community and might warrant specific mention in the Vision. This could be addressed by an additional bullet point in the final section of the Vision
  - Maintain and strengthen the role of town and village centres in the delivery of services to the local community

## **Where development should go**

It is difficult to give a simple answer to the question raised. In principle a mix of options is considered the most likely to deliver the growth which is needed although a lot depends on the precise balance that is made. It is, however, **not** considered appropriate to seek an even distribution of development across the District. This would fail to reflect the character and needs of different parts of the District or the location of opportunities for new

development which could be accommodated to the benefit of existing and future communities.

Given the sensitivity of the character of towns and villages to the impact of new development, a focus on new settlements should be part of the Vision. However, it should be recognised that, within and around existing settlements, there may be opportunities for development which, even though in some cases involving green belt land, may offer suitable locations for accommodating new development in general and housing in particular.

If a balanced approach of this nature is to be adopted, it is essential that some fundamental guidelines are adopted

- Within towns and larger villages policies are maintained which, whilst allowing for new development where appropriate, ensure that the essential character of the District's streets and neighbourhoods is protected from a gradual densification which changes their character to the detriment of the quality and variety of living environments which the District currently enjoys
- On the edges of the towns and villages, land which is to be released for development, including green belt land, should be considered on a comprehensive basis. Only in this way can the maximum benefit to the District in terms of housing type and numbers and in terms of the infrastructure delivered be achieved
- Any review of Green Belt boundaries should result in new, robust boundaries which minimise the potential for the future sprawl of urban areas into the countryside
- Whether in new or existing settlements, the scale of infrastructure investment and the costs of delivering improved local services should be clearly factored in to the financial and other contributions made by new development.

The Parish Council would ask the District Council to note that it is fully willing to participate in an exercise designed to review greenbelt boundaries.

## **Housing Provision**

The delivery of new homes in the context of the Government's targets is recognised as a major challenge. In this context the Parish Council's comments in relation to 'where should development go' and the review of green belt boundaries are applicable.

This section also addresses in broad terms, the type of housing which is required. In the context of Limpsfield Parish, and potentially the wider area, a focus on smaller dwellings, containing three (3) or less bedrooms, appears to be appropriate. This would reflect the need to accommodate an older generation which is looking to downsize, thereby making larger dwellings available to families that need more space, and to accommodate first and second-time buyers who are looking to acquire housing that meets their needs. Whilst there is an argument for flatted development in the most accessible locations (within and adjacent to Town Centres), elsewhere the focus should be on smaller houses, providing first time buyers and other smaller households (including downsizers) the opportunity to acquire properties that meet their need for outdoor as well as indoor space. In due course the new

Local Plan should indicate not just the number of bedrooms but the floor area of new dwellings, to ensure that the objective of delivering smaller dwellings is achieved.

### **Affordable housing**

Whilst there will undoubtedly continue to be a need for social rented housing, in an area where property prices are high, the use of affordable housing as a stepping stone to full ownership should also be considered. Shared equity and other models of this type should be included with provision made for properties to be returned to the social housing provider if and when the occupier moves to a new home.

### **Economy, Employment and Retail**

The approach indicated in the consultation document is, at a very local level, echoed in the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan and the Parish Council is supportive of the principles set out in the 5 bullet points in this section. The Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan also highlights 'home working' which is an increasingly common feature of the local economy; this should be supported subject to controls which prevent any adverse impact on the character of the area and the environment of adjoining or nearby residential premises. Although retailing is mentioned in the title, more attention could be given to the importance of retaining retail and other activities, such as restaurants and coffee shops, which draw people to and add vitality to town centres. In this respect the accessibility of the town centres by a variety of transport modes, including, walking cycling, public transport and suitably managed car parking is important.

The support for the rural economy is also echoed in the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Infrastructure, Transport and Delivery**

This section is important in seeking to secure the improvements to infrastructure that are needed. As indicated in the comments in relation to 'where should development go', it is essential that the level of contributions made by developments reflects the substantial needs which should be met within the District.

### **Our Places**

In the context of the scale of development which the District seeks to accommodate, the approach outlined in this section is essential, and reference should be made to the importance of neighbourhood plans, such as the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan, and the development of character assessments, and design codes in general, which seek to protect the valued character of our local area.

There will be a case for parish councils, such as Limpsfield Parish Council, to become involved in developing new design codes to help ensure that new development is accommodated without undermining the character of valued roads and neighbourhoods.

### **Historic Environment**

The approach put forward is to be supported in its protection of the District's heritage. It is perhaps worth noting that the concepts of 'adding value' 'reinforcing local identity' and

contributing to sustainable placemaking are also applicable in the context of the many areas within the District, which have strong and much-loved character, but which are not defined as heritage assets. Where there are existing conservation area statements and programmes, there will be a case for them being updated

### **Natural Environment and Nature Recovery**

The positive approach adopted is to be welcomed and again fits closely with the approach taken by the Parish Council in the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan and its programme of implementation projects.

### **Health, Wellbeing and Communities**

This is a positive approach which is to be supported. Particular note should be made of Local Green Spaces, as designated in the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan, amenity space within new developments, and indeed the garden space allowed for within residential curtilages. Alongside some of the wider initiatives referred to in the consultation document, this space contributes directly to the quality of the living environment.

### **Climate Change and Sustainable Design**

Again, this is an approach to be supported and echoes the Limpsfield Neighbourhood Plan which looks forward to an increasingly sustainable community.

### **Monitoring and Delivery**

The Plan should refer to the role of Parish Councils in helping to deliver the Plan and in preparing or helping to prepare local policies and guidance. The role of Parish Councils and other local bodies will become increasingly important as planning and other local services are moved to a larger unitary authority.

Limpsfield Parish Council Planning Committee

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026