Representations on behalf of
The Gribble Family
In respect of land at Pyrcroft Road, Chertsey etc (Site SL6)
relating to the
Runnymede 2030 Draft Local Plan Examination
Matters 1 to 4

Matter 1
Matter 1 Legal requirements, the Duty to Cooperate and the Plan period.

Introduction

These representations are made by Carter Planning Limited (CPL) for the Stage 1 Hearing in respect of the Runnymede Local Plan 2030 Examination, on behalf of the land owners of most of site SL6 Pyrcroft Road, Chertsey, the Gribble Family.

CPL is promoting the development of land at Pyrcroft Road, Chertsey Policy SL6. Discussions with the Council have been held with a view to the submission of a planning application for the required circa 175 dwellings early in the plan period. Much technical work demonstrating the sites availability, suitability and achievability has already been carried out. This area was previously a reserve housing site R3 in the adopted Local Plan 2001. However our original representations go further and explain how a larger area of land to the west in a sustainable location under our Clients control could also be developed to assist with any overall shortfall in housing or to replace an other sites which may not come forward.

In respect of Matter 1 our principal comments relate to the Inspector’s question 1.4 and 1.5 the Duty to Cooperate and the Plan period.

Matter 1 Legal requirements, the Duty to Cooperate and the Plan period.

Question 1.4 Has the Council engaged constructively, actively and in an on-going basis with all relevant organisations on the strategic matters that are relevant to the Plan’s preparation as required by the Duty to Cooperate?

The Duty is set out in the 2018 Framework at paragraphs 24 to 27. The duty to cooperate was introduced in the Localism Act in 2011 and was required so that the Plan can be found sound.

The Inspector in 2014 was very clear that the Council had not met the duty to co-operate. In 2014 he concluded in relation to the duty to co-operate that: ‘I am not satisfied that all available options for co-operation have been properly explored, that the Council has engaged constructively, actively and on an on-going basis and that the guidance in the NPPF has been given sufficient regard,’ (paragraph 42).

In this latest Plan all parties need to be satisfied that the Council has co-operated with adjoining Authorities, especially in respect of the provision of housing. Failure to fulfil the duty may undermine the overall housing provision (and its location).

In our original representations we explained that the statement signed on 23 January 2018 with RBWM and Surrey Heath Councils was a vague commitment
Pressure from the other Councils in the Update Statement on Cooperation also of January 2018 seemed to agreed to a commissioning of a SHMA update to ensure that level of housing need in Runnymede is up to date and accurate; redoubling efforts to identify sites suitable for development through the 2018 SLAA; reassessing the capacity of all SLAA sites; and looking at assumptions used to calculate 5 year housing land supply as well as contributors of supply.

It is not clear whether these are future aspirations or whether the Council can now confirm that they have been carried out. If all of these factors are combined it apparently results in the Council being able to demonstrate that it is able to meet almost all its identified housing needs. This means that reliance on Local Authority partners will not be required. However this position is not accepted as it is not clear that the housing need figure is either up to date or accurate, further sites have not been identified and the capacity of existing sites has not been reassessed. If adequate housing provision is not made the pressure on adjoining Authorities, especially Spelthorne, to meet Runnymede’s housing shortfall will resume.

Furthermore there does not appear to be any agreement with Spelthorne and Elmbridge Borough Councils and the Council do not appear to be pursuing Statements of Common Ground with Epsom and Ewell, Hart, the London Borough of Richmond, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, South Bucks and Chiltern, Tandridge, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Guildford Wokingham Borough Council and Waverley.

It may be that more evidence of further work is forthcoming and is to be placed before the Inspector but in the meantime we remain concerned that it appears that the duty to cooperate is not fulfilled and consequently this may undermine the overall housing requirements. We discuss this further under later Matters.

**Question 1.5 Is the Plan period (2015-2030) justified? If not, how should this be rectified?**

The Council decided that the strategy of this pre submission version of the Local Plan should be adjusted to reduce the plan period to a 15 year period from the original 20 years to ensure that the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for the Borough can be met in full. This means that it will only be a Plan for the next 11 years from adoption. This implies that there would not have been any need to reduce the Plan period if a suitable supply of housing sites could have been demonstrated.

This conflicts with what is said in the previous Framework (para. 157) that ‘Crucially, Local Plans should ….be drawn up over an appropriate time scale, preferably a 15-year horizon, take account of longer term requirements, and be kept up to date’. In light of this, common convention is for plans to have a 20 year plan period to
accommodate the preparation of the Plan and to provide flexibility and contingency, as well as to address the Framework policy point. The 2018 Framework at para. 22 again states that “Strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption.”

The Plan, if adopted, would not have a minimum 15-year horizon. The strategy will not be one that has ‘taken account of longer term requirements and opportunities’. This is a change the Council has made and it has not so far given any reason why a short plan period of 11 years from adoption is an appropriate timescale other than it is expedient to do so. Document CD_001A modification 7 refers.

This appears to be an artificial device to try to ensure that the updated Runnymede-Spelthorne SHMA which incorporates a reduction in the OAN for the Housing Market Area can be met. It is noted that the 2017 updated SHMA refers to the period 2015-2030 whereas the 2015 SHMA is for the more appropriate period of 2015-2035.

The only comment on the matter made in the originally published documents by the Council appears to be at para. 2.3 of the Report to the Planning Committee on 20 December 2017, where it says ‘At this level, over the period of the Local Plan, officers are of the opinion that Runnymede’s proportion of the OAN largely be met through the implementation of the draft Local Plan’. This has been confirmed by modification 7 of document CD_001A.

The Plan is not therefore seeking to meet the objectively housing need.

The 2018 Framework (para. 67 b) requires local planning authorities to ‘identify a supply of: specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible for years 11-15 of the plan.’ The Draft Plan does not do this.

If a limited Plan period is accepted it has implications for housing provision. If the Plan covered 15 years from adoption, or 20 years from adoption, this would justify an increase in housing figures which would bring other sites into consideration as part of a more appropriate strategy.

Therefore we remain concerned that the Council have taken an expedient route rather than dealing with the long term planning of the area, and in doing so this approach is merely storing up housing problems for the future. Modification 7 of document CD_001A refers to a future plan which will be better coordinated with neighbours. This rather confirms our comments on the duty to cooperate as it infers this Plan is not well coordinated and there is no guarantee a future Plan would be more integrated since any update of the Spelthorne Plan is unlikely to be undertaken in parallel as it they will have different timescales and is also unlikely to be prepared under the same guidelines or using the same information.