



LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

CORE STRATEGY SUBMISSION DOCUMENT

HOUSING BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

Housing Background Document

This report deals with the following aspects of housing policy:

1. Overall Scale of Housing Provision
2. Affordable Housing
3. The Approach to the Location of New Housing in Rural Areas

1. The Overall Scale of Housing Provision

1.1 RPG9 Chapter 12 specifies that over the period 2001- 2016, the Ashford growth Area should seek to deliver 13,100 dwellings. The draft South East Plan (March 2006) specifies a provision of 22,400 dwellings in the period 2006-26.

1.2 The LDF time period runs to 2021 and based on the housing targets in RPG9 (to 2016) and the draft RSS (to 2026), the housing target figure for the Ashford Growth Area is 20,350 dwellings from 2001-21. This figure mirrors the approach to development phasing taken in the GADF for the same period and is therefore the target that the LDF's spatial strategy needs to address.

1.3 However, development within the Borough should not exclusively be in the Ashford Growth Area. There is a lack of clear regional guidance on appropriate levels of residential development in the rest of the Borough but policy H1 of the Structure Plan indicates that 900 units should be provided outside the Growth Area between 2001-16. By extrapolating that figure forward to 2021 (and based on the Draft Structure Plan that did go up to 2021) a target of 1500 units for the rest of the Borough can be derived. The Council considers that to be a reasonable target given the inherent landscape and historic constraints in much of the rural part of the Borough balanced by the need for carefully controlled growth to support the continued vitality of key local service centres.

DEVELOPMENT QUANTITIES	2001-2006	2006-2016	2016-2021	TOTAL 2001-2021
Housing units – Ashford Growth Area	3,950 (RPG9)	10,400 (draft RSS)	6,000 (draft RSS)	20,350
Housing units – Rest of the Borough	300 (KMSP)	600 (KMSP)	600 (KMSP)	1,500

Housing Provision in the Ashford Growth Area

1.4 The overall provision of 20,350 units in the Ashford growth area is made up of the following set out in the table below.

1.5 Since 2001, the monitoring of residential completions in the Borough has shown that 3582 net additional dwellings were completed in the Ashford Growth Area up to the end

of March 2006. This leaves a rounded **residual housing target in the Growth Area of 16,770 new dwellings to 2021.**

Residential Land Position – Ashford Growth Area

(see the attached numbered notes for the explanation of each figure)

HOUSING REQUIREMENT		
1.	Housing requirement – Ashford growth area 2001- 06 (policy CS2)	20350
2.	Housing Completed 2001 – 06	3582
	Residual requirement	16768
3.	Commitments	2752
	Residual requirement	14016
PROPOSED ALLOCATIONS		
4.	Town Centre	2500
5.	Urban Area	4380
6.	Chilmington Urban extension	3400
7.	Cheesemans Green / Waterbrook	4310
	TOTAL	14590

Note 1. RPG9 (as amended in 2004) sets down regional planning guidance for the South East region for the period to 2016 and confirms the status of the Ashford urban area as a Growth Area within the wider South East region. Since the publication of RPG9, work has been ongoing on the new RSS or ‘South East Plan’, for the period to 2026 which, when adopted, will replace RPG9 as the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East. The draft South East Plan was submitted to Government by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) on 31st March 2006. Policies for Ashford are carried forward from RPG9 and are reproduced and endorsed in full in this draft RSS.

The Kent and Medway Structure Plan was adopted in July 2006 and covers the period from 2001 to 2016. Based on the housing targets in RPG9 (to 2016) and the draft RSS (to 2026), the housing target figure for the Ashford Growth Area is 20,350 dwellings from 2001-21. This figure mirrors the approach to development phasing taken in the GADF for the same period and is therefore the target that the LDF’s spatial strategy needs to address. (see policy CS2)

Note 2. The number of dwellings completed in the geographical area of the Ashford Growth area in the period 2001 – 2006

Note 3. Existing commitments with planning permission (or resolution to grant permission) on allocated Borough Local Plan sites outside the major proposed growth areas in the Core Strategy:

Barracks (BLP site S22)	-	1200
Brisley Farm (S19)	-	204
Godinton Park (S23)	-	15
Henwood (S37)	-	25
Park Farm (S17)	-	780
Singleton (S20)	-	528
Total	-	2752

(Cheesemans Green with a capacity of 1100 is an existing allocation but this is included within the figure for the capacity of the Cheesemans Green/Waterbrook urban extension)

Note 4. Sites allocated for residential development within the town centre area – see Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan Preferred Options (and policy CS3) and the Ashford Town Centre Development Framework

Note 5. The extent of residential allocation proposed within the Ashford Urban Area – see policy CS4. The following locations are identified in the GADF masterplan (page 138) as being potential areas for residential development in this category:-

Kennington Circle (the Core Strategy only proposes the northern part of this area for development)

William Harvey Hospital area

Bockhanger Wood

Newtown Works / Hunter Avenue

Canal District

Cobbs Wood / Chart Estate

Discovery Park

The Council's Urban Capacity Study highlights a number of other possible brownfield development sites that will be considered as part of the of the Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan Document

Notes 6/7. The proposed site capacity of the major urban extensions at Chilmington Green and Cheesemans Green/Waterbrook (see policy CS5)

The total supply is estimated to be 14590 units compared with a requirement of 14018 units. This represents an over-supply of around 4%. The likely supply of new housing takes no account of windfall sites and any contribution that would make to the overall level of provision – when this is taken into the account the likely scale of over provision is more likely to be around 10%. The Council's view is that given the scale of development proposed in the LDF to 2021, the potential amount of brownfield supply on sites in the urban area identified in the Urban Capacity Study and the potential flexibility of the major urban extensions at Chilmington Green and Cheeseman's Green / Waterbrook to continue development post 2021, this planned level of over-provision in allocations in the urban area is considered to be reasonable and gives an appropriate degree of flexibility to ensure an adequate supply of housing, in line with accepted targets, is maintained.

Housing Trajectory

1.6 The Council's housing trajectory – see appendix 1 of this report and appendix 4 of the Core Strategy - sets out the likely supply of proposed new residential development. There is an adequate supply of residential land to meet required targets up to 2021.

Housing Provision in the Rural Areas

1.7 Based on an extrapolation of the residential targets in policy HP1 of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan, and consistent with the emerging Regional Guidance, an assumed contribution of 1500 dwellings over the period to 2021 is required from the rest of the Borough outside of the Ashford growth area. These figures are calculated to represent sustainable balanced growth targets for the rural area of the Borough.

1.8 Of this 1500 figure there have been 143 units already completed on Local Plan allocations sites since 2001 and 177 completed on windfall sites. This gives a rounded residual housing target in the rest of the Borough of 1,180 new dwellings to 2021.

1.9 Taking into account the likely contribution of windfall sites - a figure derived from examining recent trends in windfalls – typically small infill sites, conversions, etc - coming forward for development which show an average of 37 units per year completed in the rural areas over the past 5 years.

	Rural Windfall Completions
2001/02	46
2002/03	23
2003/04	34
2004/05	45
2005/06	40

1.10 It is reasonable to assume this trend will continue and therefore a rounded average assumption of 35 completions per year from windfalls over the whole period 2006-21 would result in 525 new units being created.

Rural Housing Requirement 2006 – 2021	
Ashford Rural Area 2001 – 2021	1500 units
Completions - Local Plan allocations 2001-06	143 units
Completions - windfall sites 2001-06	177 units
Residual Requirement to 2021	1180 units
Assumed windfalls at 35 p.a. 2006 - 2021	525 units
Rural residual requirement 2006 - 2021	655 units

1.11 Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy explains how this residential requirement should be planned spatially in terms of the proposed hierarchy of settlements.

2. Affordable Housing

Strategic Policy background

2.1 RPG9 (paragraph 8.9) makes it clear that:

The provision of affordable housing in the South East is an important component in the development of mixed and balanced communities, to help meet the housing needs of the whole population.

Policy 1: Scale of Growth of RPG9 goes on to specify that “up to 30%” of new homes should be affordable.

South East Plan

2.2 The Submission South East Plan Core Document published in March 2006 sets the regional context for the provision of affordable housing. It states at paragraphs 1.6.1 and 1.6.2 that:

There is substantial housing need in the South East. In 2004/05 there were 12,400 homeless households in priority need accepted by local authorities. While this figure is lower than in any of the previous six years, it is just one indication that the region needs to build more affordable homes.

To assess the need for affordable housing in the South East over the period covered by the Plan, the Regional Assembly commissioned the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research to carry out two research projects. The first concluded that 25% of housing provided needs to be social rented accommodation, and the second that an additional 10% of housing should be provided as shared-ownership, low-cost home ownership and sub-market rent.

2.3 The Plan goes on to state at paragraph 1.6.4 that:

Up-to-date and robust assessments of housing need and demand have a fundamental role in helping to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of a decent home.

Paragraphs 5.3 and 5.5 continue:

...there needs to be a significant increase in affordable housing provision across the region. The regional Growth Areas and development on other major greenfield sites will provide significant opportunities to deliver new affordable housing. However, development in these areas will not solve all the region's affordable housing shortages and therefore the general principle will be that affordable housing needs, particularly needs for social rented housing, should be met where they arise.

Local Development Documents will need to set targets for the provision of affordable housing, both for social rented and other forms of affordable housing, based on the results of assessments of housing need and demand.

2.4 Policy H4 of the South East Plan states that:

Local Development Documents will contain policies to deliver a substantial increase in the amount of affordable housing in the region, reflecting both this Plan and the Regional Housing Strategy. Local Development Documents will set targets for the provision of affordable housing, taking account of the results of housing need and market assessments and having regard to the overall regional target that 25% of all new housing should be social rented accommodation and 10% other forms of affordable housing. Where justified by housing need assessments, Local Development Documents should specify the tenure of housing being sought. There will be a presumption in favour of on-site affordable housing provision.

In rural areas, Local Development Documents will promote small scale affordable housing sites within or well-related to settlements, possibly including land which would not otherwise be released for development.

2.5 South East Plan in its section on the East Kent and Ashford Sub-region (paragraphs 2.11 and 2.12) makes particular reference to affordable housing:

Housing markets in East Kent and Ashford are less buoyant than in most other parts of the South East and given the need to seek developer contributions for education, access and other services required by new developments, 30% affordable housing is the maximum practical in the sub-region. Even so, this would mean 750 new affordable dwellings each year in the sub-region compared to recent average completion of about 250 per annum.

At Ashford the planned scale of new housing is more than sufficient to meet the local need for affordable housing, and a higher proportion of key worker and shared equity housing as a step to ownership would be appropriate.... The delivery of affordable housing will depend on the scale of public funding, and in East Kent affordable housing programmes that do not depend entirely on the volume of market housing will be needed to meet the overall target.

2.6 Policy EKA2 states that:

An indicative target for affordable housing of 30% of all new dwellings applies to East Kent and Ashford. This will be subject to regular review in the light of housing market conditions and delivery of the policy. The provision of affordable housing in individual districts should be set in Local Development Documents, taking account of the results of local housing needs assessments, the funding for affordable housing and the circumstances of the major development sites. Where justified by local needs assessments, Local Development Documents may also specify the tenure of housing being sought.

Kent and Medway Structure Plan

2.7 The recently adopted Kent & Medway Structure Plan follows the same broad policy approach on affordable housing. Chapter 7 of the KMSP recognises the importance of affordable housing refers to the position that on the basis of household growth alone some 30% of all new homes should be in the affordable sector but that this should be informed at the district level by local need assessments. Policy HP8 sets out the requirements for LDDs in dealing with affordable housing.

Historic Provision in Ashford

2.8 The Ashford Borough Local Plan adopted in June 2000 specifies that on new housing sites of 25 dwellings or more or an area of over 1 hectare acceptable proposals will need to provide an appropriate proportion of new dwellings at affordable levels. This has equated to 20% of housing on such sites being provided as “affordable” units. The

Council's policy has been relatively successful in delivering affordable housing. The table below sets out the level of provision that has been successfully delivered since 1998.

	Affordable Units Built
1998/99	96
1999/2000	125
2000/01	40
2001/2	18
2002/3	64
2003/4	203
2004/5	171
2005/6	97
TOTAL	814

2.9 The Local Plan policy was based on a housing needs assessment carried out in the mid 1990's. Significant changes in house prices and income levels since that time have justified a re-assessment of the policy.

The Housing Needs Assessment

2.10 The Housing Needs assessment carried out in 2005 judges that there will be an annual affordable housing shortfall of 655 units, 3930 units in total to 2011. The needs assessment acknowledges at paragraph 1.16.3 that:

“The annual level of outstanding affordable need of 655 units, after allowing for current re-let supply, will be difficult to sustain, bearing in mind past new supply levels.”

2.11 The Needs assessment acknowledges at paragraph 11.10.3 that despite the evidence of the scale of need there is a need to build viable, sustainable communities and accordingly the report states that

Our significant experience of affordable subsidised housing in mixed developments leads us to recommend that 35% of new units negotiated should be the level applied from the total of all sites negotiated. Policy H4 of the Draft South East Plan also suggests an overall regional target of 35% to 40%. This proportion includes both affordable housing for rent and subsidised low cost market housing to meet the needs of low income households, key workers and those on average incomes unable to purchase. Targets may vary above and below this level on a site by site basis.

2.12 It also recommends 1.16.8 that:-

The increases in house prices over the last four years have excluded many of ‘first time buyers’ from the owner occupied market. We believe therefore that the proportion of affordable housing provided on new sites should encompass more subsidised low cost market housing than would have been the case four years ago when it was a more marginal element of affordable need.

2.13 Within this type of provision paragraph 1.19.1 of the report states that:

Within this target the major requirement is for rented housing and we recommend a balance of around 60% i.e. 21% for rent with around 40% of provision 14%, as low cost market or ‘intermediate’ housing provided it is delivered at a cost below the cheapest entry level costs in the general market and would be available on a similar basis to subsequent purchasers.

2.14 On the issues of site thresholds the report states at paragraph 11.11.2 :-

The annual scale of affordable need is almost seven times the average annual new unit delivery over the last three years and justifies an exceptional case for a lower threshold.

Paragraph 1.19.1 concludes:

It is anticipated that a new lower site threshold of 15 units or 0.5 hectares will be standard level in the new Planning Guidance and this should be adopted as soon as new Guidance is issued. A strong case exists to justify a lower threshold across the Borough and the Council should give consideration to adopting a lower threshold as soon as practicable.

2.15 The Council has used this guidance to include a much lower site threshold in the rural areas

Core Strategy Policy Approach

2.16 The South East Plan, policy H4 supports the provision of 35% affordable housing to be split between 25% as social rented accommodation and 10% other forms of affordable housing. Policy EKA2 gives an indicative target of 30% of **all** new dwellings for the East Kent and Ashford sub region. The findings of the Housing Needs Survey recommends a target of 35% affordable provision on suitable sites.

2.17 It is the Council's view that the proposed Core Strategy policy approach of 35% on sites greater than 15 units - together with a lower threshold in rural areas - presents a level of provision that meets the policy guidance whilst taking on board the recommendations of the Needs Survey.

Likely Level of Provision

2.18 The table below shows the projected housing completions for the next 5 year period based on the Housing Trajectory.

2.19 A number of sites have planning permission already. On these sites, the provision of affordable housing will be based on adopted Local Plan policy which requires 20% of dwellings to be provided as affordable housing. The contribution of affordable housing from these sites is therefore estimated by calculating 20% of the total number of dwellings.

2.20 Sites which do not have planning permission will be subject to emerging planning policy based on the updated Housing Needs Study. The proposed Core Strategy policy requires that 35% of the total number of dwellings on eligible sites is provided as affordable housing. As most sites will be large scale developments, it has been assumed that 80% of the total number of dwellings still to receive consent will be eligible for an affordable housing requirement. Thus, if 100 dwellings are projected to come forward from a site in a particular year, 80 are assumed to be on larger sites. Of these 35% will be required to be affordable units, giving a total yield of 28 affordable units.

The annual estimated total of affordable units is set out in below:

2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	TOTAL
103	245	340	280	440	1408

2.21 The conclusion of the Housing Needs assessment specifies a requirement for 3930 affordable units in the period to 2011. The likely provision based on the housing trajectory set out above falls some way short of that scale of provision. However, the Housing Needs assessment acknowledges that the scale of provision required to meet the affordable need is substantial and would be difficult to maintain. The Council's policy approach will ensure a level of provision that will ensure a balanced and sustainable community that is deliverable.

2.22 Further information about the Council's detailed approach to affordable housing provision will be set out in the forthcoming Affordable Housing SPD.

Affordable Housing Approach in the Rural Area

2.23 The affordability issue is even more acute in the villages and rural areas. Local needs housing schemes have helped to provide housing for local people at affordable levels. Local needs housing will continue to be provided in accordance with the saved Local Plan policy. Affordable housing is different because it is not critically related to a local residential qualification.

2.24 The amount of affordable housing in villages is limited because of the existing site Local Plan threshold of 25 units. Very few, if any, housing sites in the villages fall within that threshold. The only sites that have come within that threshold are allocations made through the Local Plan process and significant one –off windfall sites such as the Aldington prison site.

2.25 Even with the proposed new threshold of 15 units the supply of affordable units would still be limited and therefore the Council's suggestion is that the site threshold for rural affordable provision be reduced radically to three units. At this level, windfall sites within villages are likely to fall within the policy and affordable provision increased. The supply of affordable housing is still likely to be relatively small but this could contribute towards addressing affordability issues.

3. The Approach to the Location of New Housing in Rural Areas

3.1 As already set out in section 1 of this document, the Rural area will seek to accommodate 660 (rounded up from 655) new allocated dwellings on identified sites through the LDF, as set out under CS6 of the submitted Core Strategy.

National Context

3.2 Rural settlements differ in their scale and their ability to sustain growth. Larger settlements generally offer more service provision as they incorporate more houses, jobs, existing infrastructure, better public transport provision and leisure facilities. These types of larger settlements provide a critical service centre role for a wide surrounding rural hinterland.

3.3 National planning policy, contained within Planning Policy Statement 7, 'Sustainable Development in the Rural areas' encourages Local Authorities, through their Local Development Framework to allocate growth levels in rural areas proportionally, with the larger, better equipped settlements accommodating proportionally higher levels of growth.

Existing Local Approach

3.4 This hierarchical approach to the distribution of development in the rural areas of the Borough was reflected in the Council's existing Local Plan both through identifying new site allocations on a settlement hierarchical structure and through the windfall policies of HG5 & HG6. These policies are as follows:

HG5 Residential development (of five or more dwellings) will not be permitted on sites other than those shown on the Proposals Map, except on 'windfall' sites which come forward for development within the confines (*) of Ashford, Tenterden, Charing, Hamstreet and Wye.

HG6 Minor development or infilling will be acceptable within the confines of the following towns and villages:

Ashford, Tenterden, Aldington, Appledore, Appledore Heath, Bethersden, Biddenden, Bilsington, Brabourne Lees, Challock, Charing, Chilham, Egerton, Godmersham, Hamstreet, High Halden, Hothfield, Kenardington, Kingsnorth, Mersham, Newenden, Pluckley (including Pluckley Thorne), Pluckley Station, Rolvenden, Rolvenden Layne, Ruckinge, Shadoxhurst, Smarden, Stone, Warehorne, Wittersham, Woodchurch and Wye.

3.5 The identification of the key service centres of Tenterden, Charing, Wye and Hamstreet in policy HG5 was based on a series of 'sustainability matrix indicators', contained within Background Document 12 to the Local Plan, '*Principles Guiding the Location of new Housing Sites*'. These indicators weighed various criteria by awarding points to the number of households, public transport provision, doctor facilities, shops etc, that were provided in each parish so as to provide a guide to which settlements scored highest in terms of service provision. Only the highest scoring settlements were then considered to be appropriate for new allocations and larger scale windfall proposals.

3.6 In volume 1 of his report into objections to the Deposit Draft Borough Local Plan, the Inspector was particularly supportive of the sustainability matrix approach as it *'provides a straightforward and easily understood means of assessing villages against key indicators relating to services, facilities and public transport'* and *'it does provide a consistent and objective basis for comparing villages in terms of their suitability for new housing allocations'*. (paragraph 5.18, p89)

3.7 In the Borough Local Plan, only a limited number of additional allocations in the rural areas were required to meet the Council's housing land availability targets derived from the Kent Structure Plan. Undeveloped allocations from the previous Rural Ashford Local Plan were re-allocated in the Borough Local Plan and new residential allocations were limited to Tenterden, Charing, Hamstreet and Wye:-

Tenterden	23 (land off Tilden Gill Road)
Charing	35 (land off Hitherfield)
Hamstreet	70 (former orchard land & land south of Warehorne Road)
Wye	35 (former Oil depot and railway sidings)

3.8 As these figures show, Tenterden was allocated only a small amount of new housing during the Borough Local Plan period. Under the previous Development Plan system in the Borough, the planning policy approach for Tenterden was dealt with separately to the rest of the rural area, under the Tenterden Local Plan. This plan ran from 1990 – 2000 and allocated 128 residential dwellings on identified sites during this period. Therefore, only a small amount of allocated housing growth was needed in Tenterden during the Borough Local Plan period, given the scale of growth it had already accepted in previous years.

3.9 During the Borough Local Plan period, the overall allocated housing growth levels within the key rural service centres of Tenterden, Charing, Hamstreet & Wye equated to just 163 dwellings.

Developing the Submitted Core Strategy Approach

3.10 Given the past scale and nature of allocated housing growth in the rural area in general, the Preferred Option report established the need to expand the list of rural settlements accepting allocated housing growth. To only identify the settlements of Tenterden, Charing, Hamstreet and Wye would result in these settlements having to accept inappropriately high levels of growth and as such would be detrimental to their character. In addition, it would mean that a number of larger rural settlements which function as more local service centres would be excluded from the opportunity of some development, which in turn may help to sustain village services.

3.11 The Preferred Options report originally identified Biddenden, Chilham and Aldington as potential additional settlements. There were various policy drivers in determining this list, including the role of the sustainability matrix and the role of a settlement to act as a local service centre (both processes are described in more detail below). An additional initial driver was the parish 'wish list' process. This involved active participation between the Borough Council and Parish Councils on a wide range of community issues not only related to land use planning. They were seen as a key element of engaging with local people at the earliest opportunity in the plan making process for the rural parts of the Borough. The principle of this approach underpins the new planning system.

3.12 An important point to note is that the settlements selected in the Preferred Option report represented a starting point for debate. Discussions on this issue were ongoing throughout the process of evolving the policy contained within the Core Strategy submitted document. The representations made at the Preferred Option stage, ongoing correspondence with Parish Councils, discussions with elected representatives through the Borough's task groups and the progression of the principal strands that were contained in the Preferred Options report all played a role in developing and formulating the submitted core strategy approach. The principal strands identified in the Preferred Options Report took account of the following areas:-

Sustainability matrix

3.13 The principle of using a sustainability matrix approach was taken forward from the methodology contained within Background Document 12 (BD 12) of the Borough Local Plan. The original Local Plan BD 12 matrix was amended during the process of the production of the Preferred Option report. The following criteria (including the points awarded) were added to the BD 12 sustainability matrix.

Households (*ranging from 1-3*), Other Shops (*2*), Recreational Facilities (*1*), Organisational clubs (*1*), Recycling facilities (*1*), public open spaces (*1*), Church or Chapel (*1*), Library (*1 point for temp 3 for permanent*) & Surgery (*3*)

3.14 The sustainability matrix used in the Preferred Option report was then further revised to better reflect some concerns about the relative weighting of the criteria and the current nature of the settlements in question and to be as transparent as possible. This revision incorporated the following changes.

Households

The sustainability matrix used for the PO report incorporated a Household point allocation. This was removed for the CS submitted version as it was felt that the issue of a parish's size was already reflected by the existing population criteria. A household and population criteria would result in undue weight being given to a parish's size. This was not considered to be fair or necessary.

Population Criteria

PO Version	CS Submitted Version
Less than 1000 = 0 points	under 300 = 0 points
Between 1000 – 2000 = 1 point	300 – 599 = 1 point
Above 2000 = 3 points	600 – 899 = 2 points
	900 – 1199 = 3 points
	1200 – 1499 = 4 points
	1500 + = 5 points

Rural settlements are generally of a small scale. Therefore the difference between a parish containing a population of 1001 people can be vastly different in nature to one that has a population of 1999. However, under the

previous scoring system they both would have scored the same. The amended version better reflects the smaller-scale nature of rural settlements.

Bus Service Provision

PO Version	CS Submitted Version
Hourly service = 3 points	Hourly service = 3 points
Less than hourly = 0 point	Less than hourly = 1 point
	No service = 0 points

These changes better reflect the nature of rural service provision as a settlement that has regular, albeit less than hourly bus service, is more sustainable than a rural settlement that doesn't have a bus service at all and as such should be reflected in the matrix.

GP Clinic

PO Version	CS Submitted Version
Any provision of a clinic = 3 points	Permanent provision = 3 points
No provision = 0 points	Temporary provision = 1 point
	No provision = 0 points

This is a fairer way of reflecting rural GP clinic provision.

3.15 Overall, it is felt that these amendments to the sustainability matrix better reflect the true nature of rural settlements and is a provides a more sophisticated weighting of the various criteria. Although this methodology inevitably represents a 'snapshot', this approach continues to be very useful guide as to a settlement's relative sustainability as a local service centre and its potential to either carry on that role or enhance it. The matrix represents a consistent method which is able to be used throughout the Borough,.

3.16 The results of the Sustainability Matrix used to help shape the policy formulation of CS6 of the submitted Core Strategy can be viewed in Appendix 1.

Role of service centres

3.17 Larger settlements generally offer more service provision, providing a key service centre role for a wide surrounding rural hinterland. The key rural service centres of Tenterden, Charing, Wye and Hamstreet were principally derived and taken forward from the existing local plan policy approach as they clearly represent the largest and most established settlements within the Borough. Tenterden provides a wider range of services than all rural settlements in the Borough and Charing, Hamstreet and Wye all sit at the top of the sustainability matrix.

3.18 In addition to the key rural service centres, some smaller settlements within the rural area have roles to play as localised service centres for their immediate rural

hinterland. This approach is also entirely consistent with PPS7, 'sustainable development in the rural areas'. Although these types of local service centres do not provide the scale of services that the larger more established rural settlements do, they still provide important services for the settlements in their own direct surrounding rural hinterland. These local service centres, although lower down the sustainability matrix compared to the larger centres, play a critical role in the overall sustainability of the rural areas in general. The rural service centres of Chilham, Bethersden, Biddenden, High Halden, Rolvenden and Woodchurch are identified in CS6. These settlements clearly have an established localised service centre role and all score highly in terms of the sustainable matrix.

3.19 Aldington was also identified as a localised rural service centre. Although Aldington doesn't score particularly highly in the sustainability matrix, it does act as a significant local service centre for the rural area in the south-eastern part of the Borough with several smaller settlements surrounding it.

3.20 The key diagram (Fig.1) of the Core Strategy illustrates that the principal Rural service centres are well distributed in relation to each other and Ashford. Similarly, the other local service centres are also spatially dispersed between the principal centres across the Borough. Such a spatial distribution can assist in meeting community needs locally and reduce the number and length of journeys.

3.21 An important point to note is the omission of both the settlements of Kingsnorth and Great Chart from policy CS6. Both these settlements score highly in terms of the sustainability matrix but are considered to part of the Ashford Growth Agenda. As such it is not appropriate to deal with these settlements under the policy approach for the rural area of the Borough.

Local Views

3.22 Involving the community at the earliest stage of the planning process, frontloading consultation is one of the key driving forces to ensuring sustainable development and is a fundamental part of the new planning system. Local views in villages are therefore welcomed as they offer people an opportunity to influence the outcome of a plan content by sharing their in-depth knowledge of local issues and circumstances. The Council is pro-active in its approach to community engagement in the planning system.

3.23 It is important that the rural spatial planning policy balances the wishes of local people and the underlying planning merits. For example, if a Parish Council reflects through consultation with the Borough Council that they would like small scale allocated development in their settlement, but the settlement does not score well on the sustainability matrix and is not considered a local service centre, then there is a need to demonstrate that there is a justifiable local exceptional planning case relating to that settlement. Such exceptions may relate to a specific local social, community or economic-related issue. It is important to note that this surrounds the issue of a settlement's desire to accommodate allocated small-scale market-led housing development and does not refer to the issue of local needs housing.

3.24 The interaction between the Parishes and the Borough with regard the expression of interest concerning general small-scale development is strongly welcomed. If an exceptional planning case is justified for a settlement which falls outside

the selected settlements in policy CS6 of the Core Strategy Submission document then further interaction and dialogue between the Parish and the Borough Council will occur. The Council will work with local communities on issues such as site identification, size of allocation and design issues through such processes as design workshops, in an attempt to get as much consensus locally as possible in identifying a site in the Tenterden & Rural Sites DPD.

3.25 This input of local views allows some flexibility within the system when looking at small scale allocated growth in the rural areas. It is important to reiterate that this approach solely relates to small scale allocated growth, as a high proportion of the allocated growth will be located in the larger, more established settlements in the hierarchy. There is therefore a level of control placed on the process which will ensure that the development does not damage the unique character and nature of the settlement in question. This approach encourages local wishes to play a role in the future planning of their community which is consistent with the objectives of public involvement embedded in the new planning system

3.26 Challock and Hothfield are principally identified in policy CS6 as a result of this process. Both settlements only have an average score on the sustainability matrix, but are included as they have indicated a strong desire to have more small scale allocated development beyond just local needs housing in order to address specific local concerns about the continuing vitality of the village. They are therefore worthy of further assessment through the site allocation process. Further consultation regarding the suitability of these settlements for allocated growth as outlined above will be carried out during the production of the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD.

Appendix 1

Rural Sustainability Matrix – Sheet 1

PARISH	Population	Village Shop	Post Office	Primary School	Village Hall	Public House	Bus service	Rail service	Distance from nearest urban centre (<i>miles</i>) (Ashford or Tenterden)	Total Points		
<i>Weighting</i>	<i>under 300 = 0 300-599 = 1 600-899 = 2 900-1199 = 3 1200-1499 = 4 1500 + = 5</i>	<i>2 points</i>	<i>2 points</i>	<i>3 points</i>	<i>2 points</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>Hourly = 3 points less than hourly = 1 point</i>	<i>3 points if near to village, 1 point if not</i>	<i>10 miles or more = 0 points between 5 miles and 10 = 1 point less than 5 miles = 3 points</i>	<i>Total Points</i>		
Aldington	981	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	0	8 miles - Ashford	1	15
Appledore	754	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	6 miles - Tenterden	1	15
Bethersden	1443	4	2	2	3	2	1	3	0	6 miles - Ashford	1	18
Biddenden	2434	5	2	2	3	2	1	3	0	4 miles - Tenterden	3	21
Bilsington	274	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	7 miles - Ashford	1	5
Bonnington	109	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5 miles - Ashford	1	2
Boughton Aluph	1099	3	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	3 miles - Ashford	3	10
Brabourne and Smeeth	1442	4	2	2	3	2	1	1	0	6 miles - Ashford	1	16
Brook	307	1	0	0	3	2	1	0	0	3 miles - Ashford	3	10
Challock	843	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	0	6 miles - Ashford	1	14
Charing	2694	5	2	2	3	2	1	3	3	6 miles - Ashford	1	22
Chilham	1595	5	2	2	3	2	1	3	3	10 miles - Ashford	0	21
Crundale	168	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	9 miles - Ashford	1	3

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PARISH	Population		Village Shop	Post Office	Primary School	Village Hall	Public House	Bus service	Rail service	Distance from nearest urban centre (miles) (Ashford or Tenterden)	Total Points	
<i>Weighting</i>	<i>under 300 = 0 300-599 = 1 600-899 = 2 900-1199 = 3 1200-1499 = 4 1500 + = 5</i>		<i>2 points</i>	<i>2 points</i>	<i>3 points</i>	<i>2 points</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>Hourly = 3 points less than hourly = 1 point</i>	<i>3 points if near to village, 1 point if not</i>	<i>10 miles or more = 0 points between 5 miles and 10 = 1 point less than 5 miles = 3 points</i>	<i>Total Points</i>	
Eastwell	119	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4 miles - Ashford	3	3
Egerton	1104	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	0	8 miles - Ashford	1	15
Godmersham	366	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	7 miles - Ashford	1	5
Great Chart with Singleton	4206	5	2	2	3	2	1	3	0	2 miles - Ashford	3	21
Hastingleigh	247	0	2	2	0	2	1	0	0	8 miles - Ashford	1	8
High Halden	1463	4	2	2	3	2	1	3	0	7 miles - Ashford	1	18
Hothfield	880	2	2	2	3	2	1	1	0	3 miles - Ashford	3	16
Kennardington	210	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	9 miles - Ashford	1	5
Kingsnorth	6709	5	2	2	3	2	1	3	0	3 miles - Ashford	3	21
Little Chart	239	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	5 miles - Ashford	1	5
Mersham	1022	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	0	3 miles - Ashford	3	17
Molash	249	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	9 miles - Ashford	1	6
Newenden	193	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	7 miles - Tenterden	1	4
Orlestone (including Hamstreet)	1281	4	2	2	3	2	1	3	3	6 miles - Ashford	1	21
Pluckley	1050	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	8 miles - Ashford	1	16

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PARISH	Population		Village Shop	Post Office	Primary School	Village Hall	Public House	Bus service	Rail service	Distance from nearest urban centre (miles) (Ashford or Tenterden)	Total Points	
Weighting	<i>under 300 = 0</i> <i>300-599 = 1</i> <i>600-899 = 2</i> <i>900-1199 = 3</i> <i>1200-1499 = 4</i> <i>1500 + = 5</i>		2 points	2 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	Hourly = 3 points less than hourly = 1 point	3 points if near to village, 1 point if not	10 miles or more = 0 points between 5 miles and 10 = 1 point less than 5 miles = 3 points	Total Points	
Rolvenden	1495	4	2	2	3	2	1	3	0	4 miles - Tenterden	3	20
Ruckinge	727	2	2	2	0	2	1	1	0	7 miles - Ashford	1	11
Sevington	354	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3 miles - Ashford	3	4
Shadoxhurst	1135	3	0	0	0	2	1	3	0	4 miles - Ashford	3	12
Smarden	1222	4	2	2	3	2	1	1	0	8 miles - Tenterden	1	16
Stone-cum-Ebony	392	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	7 miles - Tenterden	1	5
Warehorne	374	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	8 miles - Ashford	1	6
Westwell	640	2	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	4 miles - Ashford	3	9
Wittersham	1143	3	0	2	3	2	1	1	0	6 miles - Tenterden	1	13
Woodchurch	1824	5	2	2	3	2	1	3	0	7 miles - Ashford	1	19
Wye with Hinxhill	2384	5	2	2	3	2	1	3	3	6 miles - Ashford	1	22

Rural Sustainability Matrix – Sheet 2

PARISH	Other Shops/ facilities	Recreational Facilities	Organisations/ Clubs	Recycling Facilities	Public Open Space	Church/ Chapel	Library	GP Clinic	Total Points
<i>Weighting</i>	<i>2 points</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>Mobile=1 point, permanent=3 points</i>	<i>Infrequent service =1 point, permanent=3 points</i>	
Aldington	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8
Appledore	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Bethersden	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Biddenden	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Bilsington	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Bonnington	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Boughton Aluph	0	1	1	0	1	1	3	0	7
Brabourne and Smeeth	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	7
Brook	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Challock	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	7
Charing	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	13
Chilham	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	11
Crundale	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	3
Eastwell	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Egerton	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8
Godmersham	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Great Chart with Singleton	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	11
Hastingleigh	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	7
High Halden	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9

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PARISH	Other Shops/facilities	Recreational Facilities	Organisations/ Clubs	Recycling Facilities	Public Open Space	Church/ Chapel	Library	GP Clinic	Total Points
<i>Weighting</i>	<i>2 points</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>Mobile=1 point, permanent=3 points</i>	<i>Infrequent service =1 point, permanent=3 points</i>	
Hothfield	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	4
Kennardington	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Kingsnorth	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	11
Little Chart	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	7
Mersham	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8
Molash	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Newenden	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Orlestone (including Hamstreet)	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	11
Pluckley	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8
Rolvenden	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8
Ruckinge	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Sevington	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Shadoxhurst	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Smarden	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8
Stone-cum-Ebony	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Warehorne	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Westwell	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Wittersham	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5
Woodchurch	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	11
Wye with Hinxhill	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	13

Rural Sustainability Matrix – Overall result

	Sheet 1 Score	Sheet 2 Score	Total Score
Charing	22	13	35
Wye with Hinxhill	22	13	35
Orlestone (including Hamstreet)	21	11	32
Great Chart with Singleton	21	11	32
Kingsnorth	21	11	32
Chilham	21	11	32
Biddenden	21	9	30
Woodchurch	19	11	30
Rolvenden	20	8	28
Bethersden	18	9	27
High Halden	18	9	27
Mersham	17	8	25
Appledore	15	9	24
Pluckley	16	8	24
Smarden	16	8	24
Aldington	15	8	23
Brabourne and Smeeth	16	7	23
Egerton	15	8	23
Challock	14	7	21
Hothfield	16	4	20
Wittersham	13	5	18
Boughton Aluph	10	7	17
Shadoxhurst	12	5	17
Ruckinge	11	5	16
Brook	10	5	15
Hastingleigh	8	7	15
Westwell	9	5	14
Little Chart	5	7	12
Molash	6	5	11
Warehorne	6	5	11
Bilsington	5	5	10
Godmersham	5	5	10
Kennardington	5	5	10
Stone-cum-Ebony	5	5	10
Newenden	4	5	9
Crundale	3	3	6
Bonnington	2	3	5
Sevington	4	1	5
Eastwell	3	1	4