

TENTERDEN AND RURAL SITES DPD  
REGULATION 30 SUBMISSION VERSION

## FURTHER STATEMENT

May 2010



---

### **That the overall strategy on Housing Distribution is unsound.**

#### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 In addition to our submitted Representation, we wish to draw the Inspector's attention to the following points which, it is our contention, undermine the soundness of the distribution of housing sites in the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD Regulation 30 Version.
- 1.2 The distribution of housing sites, and specifically the removal of the village of Challock from the Tier 3 Settlements with the result that no housing site allocation is proposed for this village, is unsound as it is not justified or consistent with national policy.

#### **2. That the omission of Challock is not justified**

- 2.1 PPS12 provides that to be justified a DPD needs to be:
  - founded on a robust and credible evidence base involving:
    - o evidence of participation of the local community and others having a stake in the area
    - o research/fact finding – the choices made in the plan are backed up by facts
  - the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives
- 2.2 The village of Challock is included in Core Strategy Policy CS6 as a Tier 3 settlement, accorded the same status as the settlement of Rolvenden, on the basis of the community's desire to have some small scale allocated development in order to address specific local concerns about the continuing vitality of the village (Core Strategy paragraph 6.18) The village was included in the Tenterden and Rural Sites Issues and Options Report, once again on the grounds that specific local concern existed about the vitality of the village and the specific local support for the allocation of land for small scale housing development.
- 2.3 The role for such locally expressed views in the housing distribution process, and thereby the genuine engagement of communities in the

planning process, accords with national policy as set out in Section 3 below and is in accordance with:

- the Council's adopted rural spatial planning policy approach of allocating small amounts of development in settlements in order to reflect the specific wishes of local people (Core Strategy paragraph 6.10 [my emphasis]), specifically in addition to the results of the sustainability matrix
  - with the concerns expressed in the Inspector's Report into the Core Strategy (Core Strategy Inspector's Report 2008 paragraph 4.208) as to the robustness of the sustainability matrix as the sole determinant of the selection of rural housing allocation sites
  - the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (paragraph 1.2) which establishes the Council's commitment to the active involvement of all sections of the public and the community in the preparation of LDF documents
- 2.4 Local support for the allocation of a site for small scale housing development in Challock has been consistent throughout the preparation of both the Core Strategy and this DPD. It has not altered. Appendix A is a copy of the latest correspondence from Challock Parish Council on this matter.
- 2.5 The removal of Challock from the defined Tier 3 settlements in the Tenterden and Rural Sites Regulation 30 submission DPD is based on the alleged ground that there are no suitable sites available in the village (Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD Regulation 30 Version paragraph 5.24). This directly ignores the very specific reason why Challock was categorised in the Core Strategy (Core Strategy paragraph 6.10) and the Issues and Options Report as a Tier 3 settlement. Alongside the points made in Section 3 of our original submission, and the Further Statement we will be submitting to Issue 9 on behalf of our clients (the owners of the site which the Challock Community Workshops concluded had the most potential for small scale housing in the village), we wish to expose the reality that the grounds for this assertion are categorically unsound given the following flaws in the evidence base.
- 2.6 Paragraph 5.7 of the Tenterden & Rural Sites submission DPD states that the Council has undertaken a detailed assessment of the settlements mentioned in Policy CS6 to establish the potential for new development within those settlements.
- 2.7 In 2004 The Council commissioned Halcrow to undertake an independent Housing Capacity Study of nine rural settlements in the Borough (Core Documents 10). In 2006 the Council commissioned Tony Fullwood MRTPI to undertake an additional Housing Capacity Study of four further settlements. These studies examined the availability of sites for housing within the villages. The Council selected the villages to be studied.
- 2.8 Neither study included the village of Challock despite its categorisation as a Tier 3 Settlement in the Core Strategy.
- 2.9 The capacity of all other villages in Tier 3 as selected in the submission DPD was assessed in these background studies, along with the villages of Brabourne Lees and High Halden.

- 2.10 This means that paragraph 5.7 of the Tenterden & Rural Sites submission DPD is factually incorrect in the case of Challock. The Council has in fact, in omitting Challock from the Rural Capacity Studies which examined the availability of sites for housing within villages, not undertaken a detailed assessment of the all settlements mentioned in Policy CS6 to establish the potential for new development within those settlements.
- 2.11 Such apparent pre-determination of the selection of rural settlements where housing allocations were to be considered undermines the commitment of the Council to genuinely involve villages themselves in this area of rural planning, provides serious questions as to the sincerity and purposes of both Challock Community Workshops (the inspector's attention is drawn to Chapter 15 of the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD Issues and Options Report), reflects a reliance solely on the Sustainability Matrix in the allocation of Housing Sites and brings into question the credibility of the evidence base in this instance.
- 2.12 With regard to the robustness of the Sustainability Appraisal undertaken by the Council of this DPD together with the issue of whether this is the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives the inspector is referred to Section 3 of our original submission. The inspector is also requested to read this Further Statement in conjunction with that we have submitted on Issue 9 which highlights the inconsistent approach of the Sustainability Appraisal of the DPD undertaken by the Council to our clients site in the centre of Challock when compared with the site ROLV1, and which appears to reflect such previous decisions taken in 2004 and 2006 on the scope of the Rural Capacity Studies.
- 2.13 It is our contention therefore that the removal of Challock from the Tier 3 Settlements in the Regulation 30 submission DPD is not justified. It is not founded on a clear and robust evidence base involving either evidence of participation of the local community (the evidence base from this process as fact directly conflicting with the Settlement Hierarchy selection) or of research/ fact finding- rather given the exclusion of Challock from the two Rural Capacity Studies undertaken to inform the preparation of this DPD the research has simply not been done.

**3. That the omission of Challock is not consistent with national policy**

- 3.1 The Inspector's attention is drawn to the following areas of national planning policy, which, as requested, are set out in this Statement in summary only. These examples of national planning policy are not consistent with the decision taken to ignore the request of the community for a small scale housing allocation in the village of Challock to retain its vitality and to alter the Tier 3 settlements as established in the Core Strategy and advocated in the Tenterden and Rural Sites Issues and Options DPD Report to remove Challock, thereby denying the village the housing allocation it has long sought.
- 3.2 PPS1 (2005) promotes genuine community participation in the planning process, based not on a "reactive, tick box process" (paragraphs 41 – 43)
- 3.3 PPS3 (2006), paragraph 38, requires local planning authorities to "provide housing, not only in market towns and local service centres but also in villages in order to enhance or maintain their sustainability". The

maintenance of the current vitality of the village of Challock with a good range of services is the reason for the community's support for additional housing and the inclusion of the village in Policy CS6 of the Ashford Borough Core Strategy.

- 3.4 PPS7 (2004) paragraph 4, similarly requires planning authorities to set out policies for "allowing some limited development in, or next to, rural settlements that are not designated as local service centres, in order to meet local business and community needs and to maintain the vitality of these communities".

#### **4. Conclusion**

**Challock is a village which has grown organically and incrementally over the years. As a result today it is a small, vibrant settlement with a wide range of facilities. The reliance on a Sustainability Matrix to define housing distribution in the Borough artificially stunts the ability of small villages such as Challock to continue to grow in such a way, resulting in any expansion in its housing provision being solely comprised of windfalls, exception sites and infill developments, none of which provide for a mix of housing type and tenure as delivered by a housing allocation.**

**Such concerns over a strategic approach to rural housing distribution which relies on assessments of a settlement's sustainability are not new. Raised by the Barker Report (2006) and the Affordable Rural Housing Commission (2006), the problem is referred to as the Sustainability Trap in the Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing (2008). This Review recommends a change in emphasis within the planning policy system away from asking is this settlement sustainable, to will this development enhance or decrease the sustainability of this community balancing social, economic and environmental concerns. An Extract from the Living Working Countryside: The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing is attached as Appendix B. There is no evidence that the overall strategic approach to housing distribution in this DPD has drawn on such current work in this field in addressing the particular needs of the small but currently vibrant, well serviced village of Challock.**

**In the case of Challock, and in conjunction with our Further Statement on Issue 9, our client's site has long had the support of the local community for the delivery of a small housing development. Such support was reflected in the outcomes of the Community Workshops. No evidence has been submitted to explain why such local desire was reflected in Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy and the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD Issues and Options Report and then abandoned or why the capacity of Challock was not assessed in the Rural Capacity Studies which have provided the evidence base for this significant element of this DPD.**

**We therefore request that the Inspector reinstate Challock as a Tier 3 Settlement so that the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD is compliant with the adopted Core Strategy Policy CS6, and to allow the modest request of the community of this small, vibrant rural village to be upheld in accordance with PPS1, PPS12, the Ashford Borough Core Strategy paragraph 6.10, and the Ashford Borough Statement of Community Involvement.**

## APPENDIX A

Dear Dan

Challock Parish Council added a comment to the Consultation Portal on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2009 but it does not appear to have registered.

I know the consultation period has closed but please can you let me know if our comment can still be added.

“Challock Parish Council is extremely surprised and disappointed to learn that Challock has been dropped from the third tier of settlements.

The LDF workshops were very constructive and positive and it was considered that at least three sites had development potential. The Parish Council would be grateful if you could explain the reasons why Challock has not been allocated any development sites.”

Dan, please can you give me a ring on 01233 740653 to have quick chat just to clarify above.

Thanks very much.

Best wishes

Kirstie

Mrs Kirstie Woollorton  
Challock Parish Clerk

[parishclerk@challock.org](mailto:parishclerk@challock.org)  
01233 740351

Parish Office  
Laurenden Forstal  
Blind Lane  
Challock  
Ashford  
TN25 4AU

## APPENDIX B

### Extract from Living Working Countryside: The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing (2008) pgs 42-46

#### The sustainability trap

69. Prior to this review there have already been a number of criticisms of the way planning policy for sustainable development is interpreted and implemented at the regional and local levels. In particular, the way regional and local planners are applying these requirements through prioritising certain narrow environmental indicators (namely the objective to reduce energy use and emissions, measured almost exclusively by transport use).

70. Both the Barker Review of Land Use Planning and the Affordable Rural Housing Commission raised the concern that such narrow application of sustainability criteria in the planning system fails to take adequate account of the social and economic factors, placing undue emphasis on certain environmental criteria – at the expense of otherwise beneficial housing and economic development.

71. This is a particular barrier for rural development as national policy both implicitly and explicitly conveys the message to regional and local planners that development should be focused into areas which reduce the need to travel; directing new housing to be located near existing larger service centres and new enterprise to be located near concentrations of existing housing, both of which are more prevalent in urban areas.

72. Representations to this review overwhelmingly echoed these concerns – and also highlighted that as they have been left unchecked, such narrow perceptions of ‘sustainability’ have become embedded in regional and local planning and have affected delivery of housing and economic development.

73. This report picks up from these concerns and identifies that broadening the approach to sustainable development, from a narrow set of environmentally based criteria, to better balance and integrate **social, economic and environmental** characteristics is central to creating truly ‘sustainable communities’. As the Commission for Rural Communities point out “...sustainable development must be shaped and constrained by environmental limits; but also that economic wellbeing and social justice should lie at the centre of thinking about the futures of rural communities.”

[...]

75. At the local level, such approaches have often been drawn down into local plans to prioritise urban development, and effectively write off many smaller rural communities’ needs for affordable housing and economic development.

76. Certainly it is important to focus policy on sustainable development and behaviour change, linked to tackling and mitigating the effects of climate change. What is of concern is that the emphasis on sustainability is too often being interpreted so narrowly at regional and local levels as to describe any or most development in smaller and rural communities as unsustainable in principle. Local authorities are now increasingly defining settlement hierarchies as a basis for determining the permissible scale and nature of sustainable development. However, few if any have devised any means by which a settlement at a lower level can migrate up the sustainability ladder.

77. This all results in a 'sustainability trap'. In essence, otherwise beneficial development can only be approved if the settlement is considered sustainable in the first place. Failure to overcome this hurdle essentially stagnates the settlement – freezing it in time – potentially for the life of the adopted development plan. This cannot be sound planning, since it makes such communities less, not more, sustainable.

78. So many smaller rural settlements without certain services are written off as inherently 'unsustainable', in which case no new housing or economic development may be allowed at all. There is a widespread assumption that because smaller rural communities may have little or no services, shops, or public transport of their own they are fundamentally unsustainable – and therefore not suitable for development on the grounds of an implied greater need to commute and travel by car to access services and employment. This has translated into restrictive regional and local policy, and also reflects aspects of national policy. Increasingly decision making in rural areas is determined solely by reference to limiting car based travel. While current Government policy does provide a more pragmatic stance this is not the interpretation applied 'on the ground'.

79. An interesting parallel might be drawn with the widely accepted criticism of the "key settlement" approach to planning in the 1970s, where resources were concentrated on larger settlements and smaller ones left to dwindle and lose self sufficiency. Durham County Council in the 1950's, provides another parallel where villages defined as in "Category D" were left to decline, the populations encouraged to move away, and vacant homes demolished; though in fact many people refused to move.

80. This narrow view of sustainability is far too simplistic – and wrong. Indeed, it starts from the wrong premise, because it asks the wrong question. If people in rural areas can't live near where they work because it is unaffordable, or can't work near where they live because employment is increasingly directed to towns, economically sustainable. **Since we are not going to bulldoze our villages and start again, and people are going to continue to live in them, the key emphasis of the planning system (at all levels) needs to move away from asking "is this settlement sustainable?", to "will this development enhance or decrease the sustainability of this community – balancing social, economic and environmental concerns?"**

81. Some steps have been taken more recently to try and address this situation, by building in explicit advice for the application of policy in rural areas. The *Planning and Climate Change Supplement to PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development* advises that, “When considering the need to secure sustainable rural development, including employment and affordable housing opportunities to meet the needs of local people, planning authorities should recognise that a site may be acceptable even though it may not be readily accessible other than by the private car.” Similarly, *PPS3: Housing* contains specific advice to planning authorities to provide housing in market towns and villages “to enhance or maintain their sustainability. This should include, particularly in smaller rural settlements, considering the relationship between settlements so as to ensure that growth is distributed in a way that supports informal social support networks, assists people to live near their work and benefit from key services, minimize environmental impact and where possible encourage environmental benefits”.

82. These are very welcome steps, but as yet many planning authorities at all levels do not appear to be willing or confident in applying this more sensitive approach through their emerging Core Strategies and subsequent Development Plan Documents. They remain dominated by a belief that rural areas are inherently unsustainable because their inhabitants make more use of the car. Not only does this ignore the principle of adopting a positive and integrated approach to promote sustainable development, it also flies in the face of the evidence.