



Kent Downs AONB Unit

Representor Number 592

Issue 6/Policy HOU1

Issue 6 – 1st May AM

ii) In Policy HOU1 what is the justification for departing from national policy in the Written Ministerial Statement of November 2014 and referred to in the PPG on Planning Obligations (ID23b-031-20160519) regarding the site thresholds for affordable housing?

The Kent Downs AONB Unit maintains its request for the threshold for the requirement of affordable housing to be lowered to 5 units on sites within the Kent Downs AONB. Such an approach would be in accordance with the nPPG and Written Ministerial Statement (November 2014). The request is also supported by the High Weald AONB Unit.

As referred to in the Kent Downs AONB Unit's original representation, there is a general lack of affordable housing in rural areas however there is a need for social provision of affordable homes in such areas, and particularly in AONBs where AONBs generally have higher house prices than the regional average (research by Lloyds TSB in 2012).

While the primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape, a secondary purpose, as identified in a policy statement in 1991 by the Countryside Commission that further defined the purpose of AONB designation, is taking into account the needs of land based and rural industries and the economic and social needs of local communities. The provision of affordable local needs housing falls within this category and in recognition of this, the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan policy VC3 states:

Initiatives that are in line with existing policies of the Local Planning Authority that increase and improve the supply of affordable housing for (i) those with proven local needs, and (ii) workers whose activities directly contribute to the purposes of the AONB designation, will be supported where it is demonstrated that the proposals are of high quality design, limited quantity and scale and are built to the best current environmental standards.

The incorporation of a lower threshold for affordable housing on sites in the AONBs would help achieve the objectives of this Management Plan policy and in doing so would help demonstrate compliance with S85, the Duty of Regard set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

The requirement for a lower threshold is considered particularly important in Ashford in view of proposed allocations on sites within the AONB and in particular the proposed allocations at Chilham and Brook, both of which are indicated to have an indicative capacity of up to 10 dwellings and would therefore be likely to fall under the affordable housing threshold in the policy as currently worded and therefore the opportunity for securing affordable housing provision in these parishes would be lost. Furthermore, there are several sizable villages within the AONB in Ashford District, including Wye, Brook, Chilham, Challock, Westwell, Hastingleigh, Godmersham, Crundale and Boughton Lees/Eastwell, all identified as settlements for the purposes of proposed Policy HOU3a

where the principle of new residential development is acceptable and where windfall sites of between 5 and 10 units may feasibly come up.

It is therefore requested that policy HOU1 is amended as follows:

The Council will require the provision of affordable housing on all schemes promoting 10 dwellings or more (and on sites of 0.5 ha or more)..... In addition, for sites within the Kent Downs and High Weald AONBs, a financial contribution towards affordable housing will be required on all sites of between 6 and 10 units.

The following text should be incorporated into the explanatory text:

Committed sums shall be collected on sites within the Kent Downs and High Weald AONBs of between 6 and 10 units. Such sums shall be ring-fenced and used towards the provision of affordable housing with the respective AONB that the contribution was made.