

Issue 10 Housing Policies

Question ii) Policy SP7 Unsound / Not effective

Statement:

1. Policy SP7 was created following a clear indication of need from responses in the 2016 consultation. SPC supports the concept of the policy, but in its current form it is not effective and hence is unsound. As stated in comment 896 to MC50 (page 148), this policy does not go far enough to protect Shadoxhurst. Other comments are on page 151.
2. Sustainable development covers social, economic and environmental factors. With a settlement like Shadoxhurst, we have little employment opportunities and so car use is often favoured by residents to get them to work. There are environmental consequences to this.
3. The bus service running hourly does little to encourage commuting. The degree of use is unlikely to increase its frequency to half hourly and the service was listed as under threat from a reduction of KCC subsidies in 2017. If the service was lost, then we would be even 'less sustainable'.
4. Developers cite that the village is sustainable, though having no shop, medical or school provision, requiring a car to access these. The small shop and post office is walkable, but the traffic on Tally Ho Road makes this an uncomfortable walk for many with no footway.
5. To have these provisions in such a small village would change the character and identity for ever. Building them would necessitate a significant sized development that would dwarf the village.
6. We have some 1,200 residents, Kingsnorth next door has over 11,000 and the difference when travelling in each Parish is so markedly different, Kingsnorth is no longer a village, but a small town. Managing that size of population requires different skills and needs. Skills we don't have.
7. Social factors are very important in retaining a cohesive and positive community. The Parish Council has worked hard to build up a good community spirit in the last two years. This goes far to having a sustainable settlement. Communications with the villagers is manageable and there is a great feeling of friendliness and belonging. The well being of the village results from this.
8. People who have lived here all their lives have seen a reduction in the community spirit as the village continues to grow. SPC is battling to restore this as more people come to live here.
9. However, there is a downside, and there is a lot of worry and threats from development and this has a very real and negative effect on people. Developers and their staff never consider this when 'just doing their job'. As an example, in mid-December there was a small exhibition by a German Developer Company, GreenVolt, which now has a five year legal option on the land. The exhibition manned by staff introduced the forthcoming planning application for 60 houses on what is our last buffer field on Tally Ho Road. What a great Christmas present that was for all those that will be affected. In one day it demoralised a large number of people, causing stress and dismay.
10. The application is not (to date) validated yet but hangs over the village like a black cloud. It is shown as Site WS12 in the Map of central Shadoxhurst as Appendix 1 "Woodchurch road / Central Shadoxhurst Current and Future Development proposals" and also on the map of omission sites as Appendix 2 "Shadoxhurst Omission Sites in App.10".

11. People have moved to the village for very valid reasons, the character and identity of the village very likely drew them there in the first place. If the village became attached to Ashford, or simply becomes an urban non-entity, then many have said they would leave.
12. Sustainability is about leaving the village in a good way for our future generations. It is also about inclusiveness. The rush to build executive homes in Shadoxhurst, does nothing to sustain the next generation as they cannot afford to buy a house in the village. They are thus excluded.
13. Although not a 'planning matter' we are told, there is the question of built but unsold houses. The 17 houses on Oak View were built in 2016, even in March 2018 there are still a few yet unsold houses. So the rush to build may help solve the five year housing land supply but if they can't be sold, then developers will be reluctant to continue building and it will mean empty houses, not a sustainable situation.
14. SP7 is not effective and thus unsound as it does not contain sufficient power to separate settlements in the long run.
15. There is no specific guide to what constitutes a separation. Interpretation by developers could mean simply a field boundary or a hedge. To others it could mean a whole field. We argue that it must be substantial, natural and strategic.
16. We submitted to the LP process recommending a Landscape Protection Policy (LPP). This SP7 policy may have been the result of accepting the other policies in 2016 did not go far enough.
17. This is still insufficient, and an LPP would be able to properly define the character of place and could define acceptable separation zones.
18. Shadoxhurst is very vulnerable to absorption into another settlement. In Appendix 3 "Shadoxhurst Proposed Buffer Zones" to this statement, we show a map of the village with the threats of encroachment from Chilmington Green (in blue) and Kingsnorth Local Plan sites in orange. We also show a proposed green outer buffer area around the village in very light green. The darker green one is a proposed green buffer area which can protect the Conservation Area (shown in purple).
19. We believe that there should be a much firmer commitment to having defined green corridors around both Ashford and some specific settlements. Shadoxhurst is one such settlement and we hope the maps in the Appendix 1, 2 & 3 show graphically our need and reasoning.
20. In the form of a sort of umbilical cord, Tally Ho Road has a continuous string of housing on the south side that connects Shadoxhurst to Stubbs Cross in Kingsnorth.
21. Indeed, this string of housing continues for a mile and a quarter, almost to the other end of the village to the west with no green space. There is a long distance view to the North Downs on the north side of Tally Ho Road, this will be lost if the 60 houses are granted permission, damaging considerably, the 'Shadoxhurst Wooded Farmlands' character designation we are fighting to protect. (Jacobs Study 2008).
22. The emerging SP7 will thus soon be put to the test with this pending planning application for 60 houses on the north side of Tally Ho Road which is our very last field on the east of the Parish and abuts the land reserved for Chilmington Green. This was the field mentioned above in paragraph 9.
23. As it stands, we don't think SP7 is effective enough to oppose this application. This is why we need the Landscape Protection Policy to underpin SP7 and for the wording of SP7 to be strengthened.
24. As well as our last green buffer, we know that the adjacent fields are likely to be developed if the first field goes. They have been on the books as an omission site (WS12) for some years.

Statement of RN925 Shadoxhurst Parish Council (D Ledger)

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Week 3 Session 5 (1st May) pm

Indeed, we have on record an email from the above mentioned developer about the intention to build up to 200 houses. We know you could not get that number on that single field, so they clearly intend to continue into the next fields with subsequent applications and eventually connect with a development to the west granted in 2017. In so doing, remove a substantial part of the 'Shadoxhurst Wooded Farmland'.

25. Another omission site is still in the Local Plan WS33 REF SD12 SHELAA Appendix 5 – Housing Sites Remaining for Land Supply put in originally for 100 homes, it is in the Plan on page 32 for 16+ years for 1000 homes. This is on our last field on the western side of the village. We need SP7 to be effective here too, and we don't consider it will be. This too is shown in Appendices 1 & 2.
26. However, confusingly, the site was assessed in January 2017 and the survey rejected it (SD02 SA-SAA Addendum Report July 2017 pages 190-194). The diverging information makes this Plan unsound and not positively prepared.
27. On the eastern side along Ashford Road we have yet another single field separating our villagers this time from an industrial estate at Kingsnorth. It is a rejected omission site, but once again, we are vulnerable to this coming in as a windfall site and SP7 would again not be strong enough.
28. These are serious concerns whereby our village will be eroded at the edges. The question posed is related to a defined commitment so obviate these fields being looked at case by case. This is strongly supported. Identifying a necessary buffer and keeping it in place will help retain the sense of place and ensures coalescence does not occur through stealth or slippage.
29. We are a very vulnerable settlement and we need ABC to be stronger here. We have cited three places where there is simply a field width of separation. In other places we have more, but they are part of the beautiful wider views that make the 'Shadoxhurst Wooded Farmlands' what it is.
30. We also need to have the proposed urban edge of Ashford properly delineated. At the moment, we must assume that it is the pink Zone B on the Affordable Housing Viability Areas Map on Local Plan page 339 (paper copy) (the web version has it at page 338).
31. Our comment at MCLP886 (page 151) asks ABC to actively encourage all Parishes to define their green spaces and buffers. Coupled with this is the needs to define character and sense of place.

How can this Plan be made sound?

32. The Plan requires to have a firmer commitment to define green buffers as well as green corridors that link areas in and around villages, properly worded and defensible.
33. The Plan also needs to define a firm boundary of where the whole urban area of Ashford ends.
34. The Plan should incorporate a Landscape Protection Policy that a number of villages have worked on to preserve the rural setting. This should apply across the rural areas of the borough to ensure that the unique characteristics of Ashford's villages and their surrounding landscapes are appropriately protected. This would give definition to retaining significant buffers between settlements.