Shepway District Council

Day 2 Opening Statement

The Council’s key points regarding the housing and employment matters that will be discussed today are –

The Core Strategy proposes a housing growth level that seeks to meet local housing need and minimises the prospect of future labour supply shortages being a constraint to the development of the local economy, whilst recognising the environmental constraints present within the District.

The growth level has been arrived at through the testing of a range options at the Preferred Options Stage, and through detailed consideration of the local evidence base.

It is recognised that the target figure is higher than the target figure of 5800 set out in the South East Plan but the District Council consider that the approach it has taken is supported by paragraph 7.7. of the SE Plan that states -

Local authorities can test higher numbers of through their development plan documents provided that they are consistent with the principles of sustainable development set out in PPS1 and tested through sustainability appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment

Shepway has significant structural issues, it is the 2nd most deprived district in Kent after Thanet (as defined by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010). It has an overall unemployment rate of 4.7% (Job Seekers Allowance Claimants), rising to around 13% in areas of Folkestone, and both resident and workplace earnings in the district are much lower than for both Kent and the South-East as a whole.

A transitional change is therefore needed to attract new inward investment, to capitalise on the excellent transport infrastructure links and to ensure that existing businesses are supported and allowed to grow.

The CS will ensure that contraction in the existing labour supply is minimal and that there are a sufficient number of skilled local people living in the area to support both existing companies and new companies looking to relocate to Shepway.

The CS recognises the importance of there being a range of employment opportunities available to the district’s households that can support a sustainable standard of living, reduce unemployment and benefit dependency and provide for income levels that will in turn underpin the viability of local small businesses and services.
The level of housing growth proposed in the Core Strategy is essential if these transformational economic and social objectives are to be achieved.

As well as making sure that Shepway has the quantity of land it needs for housing and employment investment, it is also essential that quality development is delivered in terms of being modern, well designed, accessible and responsive to market needs.

The policies of the plan will deliver a range of housing that meets the needs of the whole of the district’s population and produces balanced neighbourhoods. This means providing appropriate levels of affordable housing and lifetime homes, recognising the needs of vulnerable people and making sure that buildings are sustainably constructed.

The infrastructure requirements needed to deliver this growth have been identified and the framework put in place to ensure that it can be delivered by working with our partners and as part of the delivery of the the key strategic development proposal identified within the plan.

While the plan recognises the need for urban regeneration, particularly in Folkestone and the Romney Marsh, it also recognising the special character of other settlements such as Hythe and those in the North Downs.

The vision and policies of the core strategy therefore capture the aspirations of the NPPF by delivering sustainable development that builds a strong and competitive economy and delivers a wide choice of high quality homes.