Examination of the Shepway Core Strategy  
Submission by The Royal Foundation of St. Katharine in Ratcliffe  

Matter 5 - Areas of Strategic Change – and Other Matters  
(Core Strategy Policies CSD6, CSD7, CSD8, CSD9)  

Issue 5: Are the Core Strategy’s proposals for other identified Areas of Strategic Change realistic, deliverable, adequately justified and consistent with national and regional policies?  

5.1 “Is the level of detail presented in policies CSD6-CSD9 (and supporting text and diagrams) appropriate for inclusion within a Core Strategy? For example, does the identification of “broad locations” for development prejudice the consideration of detailed sites in future DPDS? Is it clear how these proposals will be taken forward in forthcoming DPDs?”  

1. My comments address only the proposals in CSD9: Sellindge Strategy.  

2. This statement addresses the relevant questions in the paper entitled “Inspector’s Matters, Issues & Questions dated 14 March 2012”. Any representations on the matters raised in the NPPF, as far as they relate to the proposals for Sellindge, will be addressed in a separate statement that will be submitted by 27 April 2012.  

3. I believe that Policy CSD9 and supporting text provide an adequate level of detail for the Core Strategy, which is a strategic document about spatial planning, that brings together a range of aims for managing land use and planning in Shepway through to 2031. This statement refers to the July 2011 document, “Shepway Core Strategy: Proposed Submission Document July 2011”  

4. The supporting text to Policy CSD9 makes it clear that the rural master-planning exercise carried out has involved local residents and other interested parties in developing priorities for how the village might change in the future.  

5. Equally, the text and policy itself make it clear that any major residential-led development in Sellindge should meet a series of criteria, including the use of a further master-planning exercise involving extensive community engagement and consideration of a range of detailed design issues including transportation, landscape and education matters.  

6. Whilst the policy is entirely clear in terms of identifying a broad location for development to deliver a central village green/common and other community facilities, it is important to itemise other parts of the Core Strategy which show that the approach here has been developed having regard for key policy aims, demographic information and other evidence. The illustrative layout included in the Core Strategy, with the St Katharine in Ratcliffe land holding at its core, is entirely consistent with the policy context set out below.  

7. The village of Sellindge is in the south west part of the North Downs area of Shepway District, and is outside the Kent Downs AONB. The area is bisected by major transport routes along which the linear and fragmented community within Sellindge parish has developed.
8. The strategy for this transport corridor seeks to harness these transport routes, within what is described on page 23 of the Core Strategy as 'The Strategic Corridor'.

9. Strategic Need C, on page 29 of the document refers to the challenge to improve the quality of life and sense of place, vibrancy and social mix in Shepway. Many of the nine aims therein are pertinent to Sellindge, and the proposals in Policy CSD9 seek to take the opportunity to improve the quality of life and sense of place at Sellindge.

10. Thus the indicative proposals, which embody the criteria for development proposals within Policy CSD9, comply with the aims within Strategic Need C.

11. The supporting text in respect of this Strategic Need describes the evidence based assessment of key drivers and how they can best be tackled through sustainable development options in Shepway.

12. For instance, there is reference on page 25 to a combination of national and local factors that means there is pressure for Shepway's population base to become heavily middle or later aged, over the period of the evidence base for the strategy (2006-2031). The "typical household" will become much smaller because of older single person households and other social changes. This means that in the absence of new housing the population will fall.

13. The Future Vision for Shepway includes at page 32, reference to the North Downs area's future which states that villages set at the foot of the Downs (including Sellindge) will become better served communities with expanded schools & healthcare, and there will also be improved transport facilities, including bus services.

14. To summarise, three policies within The Spatial Strategy for Shepway are particularly relevant to the proposals for a major residentially led development in Sellindge:

   - Policy SS1: District Spatial Strategy (page 38) which refers to accommodating major new development in the North Downs area within the Strategic Corridor;

   - Policy SS2: Housing and the Economy Growth Strategy, including supporting text, (pages 42 to 45) that describes the role of rural centres, including Sellindge, consistent with enhancing the natural and historic environment, to be integrated tourist and local centres providing shops and services for a significant number of residents, visitors, and also for other villages in the North Downs area;

   - Policy SS3: Place Shaping and Sustainable Settlements Strategy which at page 51 says that "change in settlements will be managed to occur in a form that contributes to their role within the Settlement Hierarchy and local place shaping objectives, to promote the creation of sustainable, vibrant and distinct communities".

15. Policy CSD9 within the Core Strategy, does makes it clear that there will be further community involvement in taking forward future master-planning, and the Local Development Scheme of November 2011 explains the intention of the Local Planning Authority to produce an Allocations DPD, that would be instrumental in taking forward the guidance in CSD9. This could be explicitly stated in the policy to make the situation entirely clear.
16. Subject to that addition, it is my view that Policy CSD9, with the illustrative layout at page 110, with the core development upon land in the ownership of St Katharine in Ratcliffe, and the supporting text, makes it clear how these proposals will be taken forward.

5.2 "Notwithstanding the above, are the details of developments proposed in policies CSD6-CSD9 (such as broad locations, scale of housing and likely infrastructure needs) adequately justified by the evidence base? Why have other sites (including sites that are now being promoted by representors) been discounted?"

1. Substantial consultation and technical work has been undertaken over the last few years to consider options for growth in Sellindge, including Shepway District Council's Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation exercise, with a Document published in 2009, and more recently, the extensive exercise to produce a masterplan for Sellindge.

2. Urban Initiatives was appointed by Shepway District Council and the Homes and Communities Agency to prepare a masterplan for the village of Sellindge.

3. The aim of the very detailed, and extensive Study, was to provide a clear spatial vision for Sellindge, to ensure growth in the village is sustainable and provides tangible benefits to existing and new residents.

4. The recommendations within the document supersede any previous decisions made by Shepway District Council at the Preferred Options Stage.

5. It is important to stress that the Sellindge masterplan is intended to set a framework for development and provides a strategy to enable that development to proceed.

6. The Masterplan is underpinned by a series of objectives set out to guide the Shepway LDF’s policy provisions for the managed growth and improvement of the village over the long-term, and to potentially inform more detailed proposals that may be submitted by the landowners in relation to a planning application once appropriate provisions have been made in the LDF.

7. Preparation of the masterplan has involved the detailed consideration of a range of sites including landscape assessments, their sustainability (having regard for the location of existing facilities), and their potential to provide new community facilities including a village green.

8. An initial Environmental Appraisal of the St Katharine in Ratcliffe core area has been undertaken which has shown that there are no immediate constraints associated with landscape and cultural heritage, and no evidence of ecological constraints that will undermine the viability of our client's land as the core element of the major residential-led development. Additionally the presence of significant electrical infrastructure to the south of the site will have to be taken in to account also at the planning application stage.

9. An option arrangement, in respect of this land, is about to be signed with Taylor Wimpey, a national builder with a good track record of delivering major development projects in a timely way. This demonstrates the commitment of St Katharine in
Ratcliffe to bring forward development upon their land. Also they have indicated a willingness to engage with other landowners in order to release the value in their own site.

10. I understand that Taylor Wimpey is also about to exchange contracts on land to the west, the Norrington land, that will strengthen further the ability to deliver the preferred scheme.

11. I believe that no other national house builder, or developer, is in such an advanced contractual situation, on any other land in the vicinity.

12. The preparation of the masterplan has involved a very detailed consideration of the development potential of a wide range of sites, both in terms of technical considerations, and consultation with local residents and other interested parties.

13. There are greater benefits in the option shown in an illustrative way in the Core Strategy, than the benefits of any other option, when considered against the policy context, I set out above.

14. They include more new homes, new shops and existing and proposed community facilities, within walking distance of the village green, offers the opportunity of a continuous new route parallel to the A.20 aiding permeability, offers a range of opportunities for access points to the A.20, and good connection with existing properties to the west integrating them into the village.

15. This option includes a core area, the St Katharine in Ratcliffe land, which has the potential to be developed with the land to the west, the Norrington land.

16. A key driver of the proposals is the ability to improve key infrastructure facilities, including transport routes and services, and the level of development proposed at some 250 dwellings, is intended to provide sufficient funding to make such improvements viable.

17. I believe that in respect of the proposals for Sellindge that the Core Strategy is sound.

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