Appendix A

OUR REF:

Appendix A

ASK FOR: Mary Clare Dean or Mike Fleming

DATE: 26th January 2010

YOUR REF:

Emma Sawyer,
Regional Committees
7 Millbank,
LONDON,
SW1P 3JA

Director of Environmental Services

Dear Emma Sawyer,

SE Regional Committee Inquiry into Housing in the South East

We are responding to the call for views into future housing provision in the South East. Wealden District Council's position of objection in relation to housing growth identified in the South East Plan remains the same as that set out in our responses to the consultation on that Plan. Thus our headline view is that the number of houses required in Wealden in the plan period to 2026 is far lower than the 11,000 allocated. Nonetheless, we continue to develop our Core Strategy in general conformity with the SE Plan.

We support the view that those houses which are provided should contribute to the maintenance or development of sustainable communities. However, many major sites with planning consent are not being built out and developers for many of those that are, seek significant reductions in affordable housing provision. The inherent weaknesses of the current S106 based policies, fully exposed in a faltering economic climate, are a major contributor in this regard.

Our emerging Core Strategy is also drawing into sharp focus the disconnect between the current mechanisms available for the provision of infrastructure and the way in which the housing market delivers.

We believe that significant benefits to our understanding of the need for new affordable housing could be created by the development of further toolkits in the area of Housing Need Assessments. Currently, we believe we have an accurate understanding of our Housing Need, having just signed off a major review conducted for us by Fordham Consultancy who used the CLG approved methodology in their study. A key finding from the survey was that in Wealden we have 862 households in housing need. However, we are also aware that the solutions to housing need are varied and often interacting. These solutions include improving job opportunities and the quality of jobs on offer, improving skills and education, providing improved and affordable transport links so that people can travel to work more readily and of course, new affordable housing. What we do not have is a way of measuring the contributions that

the various solutions might reasonably make to addressing the problem in a co-ordinated way.

We understand such a toolkit, if able to be designed, could be complex and of necessity, contain generous confidence limits. However, without such a resource, it is difficult to see how a numerically accurate relationship can be identified between "Housing Need" and the need for additional affordable housing. In turn, the degree of difficulty that we encounter in trying to consult effectively with our communities on the question of affordable housing in relation to need, remains significant.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Fleming
Director of Environmental Services