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By e-mail and post
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17 May 2012

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Dear Ms Benton

PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE CORE STRATEGY AND ITS CONFORMANCE WITH THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

We write on behalf of our client, Valad Property Group, in respect of the consultation on the proposed modifications to the Core Strategy and its conformance with the recently published National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Indigo Planning previously submitted representations on behalf of Valad throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy, most recently we responded to the Inspector's matters and issues. We would like to take this opportunity to comment on the proposed modifications and the implications of the NPPF, which we consider fundamental to the soundness of the Wealden Core Strategy.

Conformance with the National Planning Policy Framework

Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development

The NPPF constitutes guidance for local Planning Authorities in the preparation of plans. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan making this means that:

- Local Authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area; and
- Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs with sufficient feasibility to adapt to rapid change unless the impact of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits.

The NPPF states that Policies in Local Plans should follow the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development so that it is clear that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay.

As the overarching framework in the District the Wealden Core Strategy should set out the presumption in favour of sustainable development with clear policies

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that will guide how the presumption will be applied at a local level in accordance with the NPPF. Furthermore, at paragraph 182 the NPPF states that plans should be positively proposed in order for it to be sound.

Delivering Sustainable Development

With regard to building a strong and competitive economy, the Government sets out that it is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Paragraph 19 of the NPPF states that planning should operate to encourage sustainable growth, not act as an impediment and that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system. Local Authorities are asked to help achieve this by planning positively to meet the development needs of businesses.

The NPPF also sets out a series of objectives that Local Planning Authorities should adhere to when preparing Local Plans. This includes supporting existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting and, where possible, identify and plan for new or emerging sectors likely to locate in their area. Also policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

These objectives are not followed through to the Wealden Core Strategy, there is no policy provision to allow the intensification of existing employment sites and as, drafted, the policy is not sufficiently flexible to respond to economic changes. This is fundamental to the growth of the local economy and the soundness of the Core Strategy. Without the essential policy provisions to enable economic growth the Core Strategy is detrimental to the local economy and ineffective.

This Policies WCS3 and WCS6 should be amended to make it clear that new economic development will be encouraged across all settlements in the District and, where appropriate, the intensification of existing employment sites will be encouraged.

Lifespan of the Core Strategy

The NPPF states that Local Plans should be drawn up over an appropriate time scale, preferably a 15 year time horizon, taking account of longer term requirement and be kept up to date. It is proposed that the Core Strategy be amended to run from 2006 to 2027, a period of 21 years, six more than the NPPFs recommended life span of Local Plans. Furthermore there is no flexibility to allow the plan to be updated to reflect to changes in circumstance. As a result the Core Strategy is inconsistent with National Policy, ineffective and therefore unsound.

Proposed Modifications to the Core Strategy Development Plan Document

Policies SPO6 AND WCS3- Distribution of Employment and Retail

We were disappointed to see that no amendments are proposed in relation to policies SPO6 and WCS3. Policy SPO6 sets out Wealden's special planning objectives in relation to retail and employment floorspace, while the purpose of Policy WCS3 is to identify land to meet employment provision. However, these policies limit the allocation of new floorspace (and associated economic development) to only three areas in the district. No land in the rural area (such as Westham with its long established industrial estates), is identified even though the Employment Land Review 2008 indicates that such areas could accommodate further development. Such restrictive policies do not allow for change in circumstances, they stifle economic development and the growth of existing business in the district.

In order to make policies SPO6 and WCS3 sound and compliant with the Policies within the NPPF they need to encourage economic development across all settlements in the district, including 'rural' settlements with large industrial estates in them.

Policy WCS6 – Rural Areas Strategy

We also note that no significant changes are proposed to Policy WCS6. This Policy sets out the Rural Areas Strategy, which applies to the majority of categories of settlements in the Settlement Hierarchy. The policy indicates that development boundaries will be retained or provided at a number of centres, including Westham. In addition the policy states that any 'retained or new development boundaries will be reviewed as part of the Strategic Sites and Delivery and Site Allocations DPDs as appropriate'.

Development boundaries are key to ensuring a clear understanding of the parameters of development in the district. Policy WCS6 sets out a vague notation that development boundaries may be considered at a later stage in the Local Development Framework, which is unhelpful and un-justified. Development boundaries are of such importance they should be considered up front in the Core Strategy.

We also consider that Westham should also be re-classified as a service centre to reflect the facilities, transport links and employment sites in this location.

In summary, as currently drafted the Wealden Core is not in accordance with the policies and principles set out in the NPPF. For this reason, and the lack of support for economic growth in the district, the Core Strategy is ineffective, not in accordance with national planning policy and should either undergo further changes or be found unsound.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss our representations further please contact my colleague Caroline Huett or me.

Yours sincerely

Helen Greenhalgh

Enc: Completed Proposed Modifications Representation Form
cc: Matthew Girling, Valad Property Group

Wealden District (Incorporating part of the South Downs National Park) Representation on the Proposed Modifications to the Core Strategy

Wealden District Council

Working in Partnership

South Downs National Park Authority

This response relates to the proposed modification	
MM PLEASE SEE LETTER DATED 17 MAY 2012 FROM INDIGO PLANNING	**WS** PLEASE SEE LETTER DATED 17 MAY 2012 FROM INDIGO PLANNING
(Please add numeric reference e.g. MM22 or Wealden District Council/ South Downs National Park Authority modification WS e.g. WS 23)	

Declaration:	I consider the proposed modification will assist the submitted Core Strategy to be found ~~sound~~/unsound (*delete as applicable) for the following reasons:
Reasons Given:	PLEASE SEE LETTER DATED 17 MAY 2012 FROM INDIGO PLANNING

If this is a new matter that you have raised please complete the following
I wish/~~do not wish~~ (*delete as applicable) for this matter to be heard in front of the Inspector

Signed:	

Name and Address:	INDIGO PLANNING LTD
E-Mail Address:	
If on behalf of a company, please state:	INDIGO PLANING ON BEHALF OF VALAD PROPERTY GROUP
Date:	17.05.2012

Please delete as appropriate	
I would wish to be notified of the publication of the recommendations of any person appointed to carry out an independent examination of the Core Strategy	(Yes) / No
I would wish to be notified of the adoption of the Core Strategy	(Yes) / No

Note: If completing this in hardcopy form, please use additional sheets if necessary.

Please return this form by **5pm on Wednesday 23rd May 2012**:

By post to: Head of Planning and Environmental Policy, Wealden District Council, Freepost SEA 10959, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 1BR

By email to: ldf@wealden.gov.uk

Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000
Representations cannot be treated in confidence. Regulation 30 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, as amended, requires copies of all representations to be made publicly available. The Council will also provide names and associated representations on its website but will not publish personal information such as telephone numbers, e-mails or private addresses. By submitting a representation on the Proposed Modifications you confirm that you agree to this and accept responsibility for your comments.

Please telephone 01892 602007 or e-mail ldf@wealden.gov.uk if you require assistance in submitting your representation or if further information is required. If you, or somebody you know, would like the information (guidance notes, forms etc) in large print, braille, audio tape/CD or in another language please let us know.