The Localism Act 2011 and the newly released National Planning Policy Framework both place considerable emphasis upon local people being able input directly into the way in which their communities are planned and evolve. This is evident from the power given to develop Neighbourhood Plans which after due process and subject to their having obtained approval through a local referendum are to be accorded the status of planning documents. It is a requirement that Neighbourhood Plans must be in conformity with both National Planning policy and adopted Local Plans which will mean the Wealden Core Strategy when adopted. It is therefore important if the purpose of the legislation is not to be avoided and local expectations denied that the Core Strategy so far as is consistent with National Policy is not so restrictive as to deny local input through the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan. It is felt that there are many instances in the Core Strategy where just such a situation will arise and that if these situations are not addressed now then the effect will be to prevent local input through the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

Such situations arise in the proposals contained in the Core Strategy to remove Development boundaries from several of the smaller settlements where hitherto boundaries have existed and to impose artificial and by some considered unrealistic limits on the number of new homes that may be provided in some rural settlements. In several cases a limit of 10 new homes over the 15 year period of the plan is proposed.

The NPPF envisages development meeting the three criteria for sustainable development and recognises the importance of the social role

> *"supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being*;"

It is important for the future wellbeing of many of the smaller settlements that the Core Strategy allows for the flexibility of further growth where this can be justified and where it is consistent with locally drawn Neighbourhood Plans.

To give just one example the Inspector will be aware of the representations made by Arlington Parish Council which falls within part of the Hellingly District Ward that I represent to be allowed to develop upwards of 30 new dwellings over the plan period to compensate for the dwellings needed by St Bedes School. Without such flexibility the local community will suffer with the lack of suitable accommodation for residents not employed by the school and the established community will wither.

It is suggested therefore that further flexibility is now required in many parts of the Core Strategy to ensure that this is in conformity with National Policy

David G White
Hellingly Ward Councillor
Wealden District Council