Matter 8/Mr & Mrs D.Vine

Wealden District Council & The South Downs National Park Authority

Core Strategy Examination

Matter 8: Polegate and Willingdon and Stone Cross Area Strategy

Statement on behalf of

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WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL & THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION

MATTER 8: POLEGATE AND WILLINGDON AND STONE CROSS AREA STRATEGY

Main issue: Whether the strategy for the Polegate and Willingdon and Stone Cross Area, including the Strategic Development Areas, is soundly based and deliverable

a) Have reasonable alternatives to the strategy been considered?

1. The Core Strategy Spatial Options Consultation in July 2009 set out six strategic spatial housing options and four strategic employment options. The Summary of Core Strategy Consultation and Participation Background Paper (BP8) explains at paragraph 7.9 how the Spatial Development Options Consultation has been taken into account. It is evident therefore that reasonable alternatives to the strategy have been considered.

b) Is there a clear audit trail showing how and why the preferred strategy was arrived at?

2. The Development of the Proposed Submission Core Strategy Background Paper (BP1) explains how the evidence base from consultations and technical studies has been used to develop the spatial strategy. All the earlier consultation documents, background papers and technical studies are available on the Council's web-site and provide a clear audit trail showing how and why the preferred strategy was arrived at.

c) Have the infrastructure implications of the strategy clearly been identified and supported by the evidence base? Is it clear who is going to deliver the required infrastructure and by when?

3. The critical and key infrastructure requirements for growth in Polegate/Willingdon/Stone Cross are clearly identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan Background Paper (BP11) at Table 4 and is supported by the evidence base as further explained in Appendix A.

4. Implementation of the infrastructure is discussed in general terms in Section 5 of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Appendix A sets out who is going to deliver each of the items of the required infrastructure and the timescale where known.

d) Has the impact of the strategy on the Strategic Road Network been adequately assessed and is there a reasonable prospect that the transport infrastructure required is deliverable?

5. East Sussex County Council's Supporting Statement to the Examination (October 2011) confirms at paragraph 3.2.1 that the modelling work undertaken as part of the South Wealden and Eastbourne Transport Study (SWETS) identified that the housing and employment allocations will require implementation of a number of capacity creating transport interventions on the strategic road network but that these can be accommodated. These include the transport infrastructure requirements contained in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

6. At paragraph 3.3.3 the County Council advises that preliminary designs and costings for some of these interventions are being developed and that further work will be undertaken during 2012/13 and 2013/14 as part of the Strategic Sites DPD. It is notable that at paragraph 3.2.5 the County Council states that there appears to be reasonable certainty that these schemes will be delivered and from their more detailed recent work and discussions with developers, they have no evidence to indicate that these identified interventions are not deliverable within the timeframe of the plan.

e) Is the strategy sufficiently flexible to respond to an unexpected change in circumstances?

7. The Core Strategy at paragraph 6.32 states that the risk to the strategy relates to the highways infrastructure required for the south Wealden area, in order to mitigate the impact on the strategic routes and more localised junctions. Infrastructure delivery is to be monitored, and if necessary, the spatial strategy will be reviewed in accordance with monitoring arrangements. The Implementation and Monitoring Framework Background Paper (BP13) further explains at paragraph 1.13 that the performance of Core Strategy policies will be monitored through the Council's Annual Monitoring Report. Significant

variation from performance may trigger the need to consider a review of the Core Strategy (paragraph 1.14).

f) Is SD4 justified and deliverable?

8. The Council has justified this location through its Sustainability Appraisal of broad locations, its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and other background papers. These demonstrate that development at SD4 would be well integrated into the Polegate/Willingdon area and have limited visual impact being seen against the backdrop of the surrounding built up area. Being to the east of the town, development would have a minimal visual impact on the South Downs National Park compared to land to the west or north of Polegate. Good links with the town centre and the railway station can be established.

9. The Council has established that the site is deliverable in terms of infrastructure, as stated above, and in terms of land ownership. The Vine family own the majority of the land within SD4 (Mornings Mill Farm) and as a long standing local family are committed in their desire to help create a new and sustainable development for the local community. The family would be willing vendors and would cooperate with the other landowners, subject to appropriate safeguards and agreements. Their ownership includes a long frontage to the A2270 which would facilitate one or two vehicular accesses, together with opportunities for other access points elsewhere within the site.

g) Is SD5 justified and deliverable?

10. We have no view on this issue.

h) Is SD6 justified and deliverable?

11. We have no view on this issue.

i) Is SD7 justified and deliverable?

12. We have no view on this issue.

j) Is there appropriate justification for the phasing of housing at SD4 from 2019?

13. At paragraph 5.16 of the Core Strategy it states that the development at south Polegate and east Willingdon will be phased to commence from 2019 to enable integration of development in relation to transport infrastructure requirements and interventions in south

Wealden. This would appear to assume that the required transport infrastructure could not be provided before 2019. However, no explanation is given as to why this might be the case.

14. Policy WCS5 states that the release of land will be dependant on the timely provision of infrastructure necessary to deliver housing, including affordable housing (2nd sentence). Whilst the provision of the required transport infrastructure will largely determine the phasing of development at south Polegate and east Willingdon there is no justification for a precise start date of 2019 to be stated in paragraph 5.16 as an earlier date may be achievable.

k) Have reasonable alternatives to SD4, SD5, SD6 and SD7 been considered – omission sites?

15. The Council appears to have undertaken a comprehensive assessment of deliverable sites, including through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, the Landscape Character Assessment and Development Option Evaluation Study. In the light of these studies it would appear that reasonable alternatives to the proposed strategic development areas have been considered.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out above we believe that the strategy for the Polegate and Willingdon and Stone Cross Area, including the Strategic Development Areas, is soundly based and deliverable.