OUR REF: DP/LDF 0440

ASK FOR: David Phillips ext 2587

DATE: 18th August 2011

YOUR REF:

Mrs L Benton
Programme Officer
C/O Wealden District Council
Pine Grove
Crowborough
East Sussex
TN6 1DH

David L Phillips
Head of Planning and Environmental Policy

Dear Mrs Benton,

Wealden District (Incorporating Part of the South Downs National Park) Core Strategy Examination

With regard to your letter dated, 17th August 2011, I can confirm that I have forwarded the Inspectors various queries regarding the South Downs National Park (SDNP) direct to officers of the South Downs National Park Authority (NPA) in order that I may forward these responses via yourself to the Inspector.

In the interim, however, I am responding to the other matters which are queries solely of Wealden District Council but also, with an indication only, of my understanding of the queries in respect of the South Downs National Park.

I can confirm that the submission Core Strategy is the same one as that which was subject to representations during the period 14th February - 18th April 2011 (with the minor changes schedule that you already have/ refer to).

My understanding from the report on the emerging Core Strategy that was considered by the predecessor body, shadow board, to the National Park is that the support was for the strategy overall in particular, as the overall distribution of growth proposed in our document clearly supported the much more restrictive approach to growth expected within the SDNP itself, and thus its broad objectives. As indicated, however the SDNP will be responding to confirm and clarify.

In light of the fact that the SDNP only formally came into being as a Planning Authority in April of this year my understanding is that the SDNP has not yet formally consulted upon or approved a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) or Local Development Scheme (LDS). However I can again confirm that the NPA will confirm and clarify as soon as possible, together with the suggested approach of it endorsing the Councils LDS, SCI and consultation process. This will also be considered in the light of the Inspectors query regarding the other submission documents and evidence base.

Whilst Wealden would be happy to be any first point of contact for yourself the detail of any future joint working arrangements with the NPA would need to be agreed with the NPA itself. As to NPA attendance at the Hearing again my understanding is that officers at the NPA would be likely and willing to attend relevant sessions, however they will no doubt be able to advise further including as to the prospect, if appropriate, of the Council acting as their agent. My understanding is that it would indeed be the intention that the Strategy be adopted by both Authorities.

Finally on the question of the Council's LDS we are aware that our latest Government Office of the South East (GOSE) approved LDS timetable is now out of date. In this regard we will be intending to amend our LDS to reflect current anticipated timetables. In the interim and on the advice of Mr Stephen Carnaby at The Planning Inspectorate we have updated our website reference to the LDS to show how and when we intend to publish and consult upon our three constituent Development Plan Documents. This was done in order that we did not find that officer resource was deflected from submission itself however we have noted on the website the need to refer to the original LDS in respect of the content and governance arrangements for the production of each of our Development Plan Documents.

Yours sincerely,



David L. Phillips
Head of Planning Policy and Environment