

Dear Mr Cookson

Hastings Local Plan

Following what I have read so far in my examination of the Hastings Planning Strategy, I should appreciate your comments on a number of matters. They will, no doubt, be discussed at some length during the Hearings, but your initial views would be welcome and without prejudice to your responses to other participants at those Hearings. So I would emphasise that these are some of my initial thoughts.

Paragraph 4.11 of the Strategy notes that some 7,840 new homes will be needed by 2028, equivalent to an annual average of 461 net completions. Presumably this corresponds with the 7,493 dwellings to which paragraph 35 in the Assessment of Housing Need in the Hastings and Rother Housing Market Area (May 2012) refers. I also assume that these figures reflect the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the Borough. At its paragraph 4.24, however, the Strategy envisages a net addition to the housing stock of no more than 3,407 dwellings (equivalent to 200 annually) and I am not convinced that this should include the 255 long term empty homes to be brought back into residential use during the plan period. I would expect these to be part of the existing stock of dwellings.

The question arises as to how this deficit of 4,500 or so dwellings should best be met. The Strategy refers to the limits to the amount of land available for development and regeneration purposes within the Borough and the constraints to outward expansion imposed by protected landscape and countryside, and the nature and extent of these constraints is a matter which will no doubt be examined in some detail at the Hearings. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) refers at its paragraph 179 to the need for local planning authorities to work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual local plans. Joint working, it says, should enable local planning authorities to work together to meet development requirements which cannot wholly be met within their own areas - for instance because of a lack of a physical capacity or because to do so would cause significant harm to the principles and policies of the Framework.

Bearing in mind the strong relationship between Hastings and the neighbouring authority, Rother District, as set out in your Statement of Compliance with the Duty to Co-operate and in the Strategy itself, I should welcome information on any steps which your Council has taken with a view to ensuring that the Borough's unmet housing needs can be accommodated in another authority's area. For example, has the Council made any formal request to another authority to accommodate this unmet need and, if so, what was the response? Maybe some or all of this unmet need could be accommodated on land which, the Strategy says, will be opened up for housing and employment development following the construction of the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road. Perhaps this land could eventually provide for the 1,300 dwellings to which the above mentioned

Assessment of Housing Need refers. If this is the case, maybe the Strategy should be more specific about the contribution to the Borough's development needs at various stages during the plan period.

It may be helpful to set up an exploratory meeting to discuss these matters, but in the meantime I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Richard E Hollox

Inspector