Rother District Council

Local Development Framework

Draft
Rural Settlements Study

Part 1 - Main Report

Contents

The following are contained in separate volumes;

PART TWO: VILLAGE APPRAISALS

APPENDICES & MAPS

1 Introduction

Context

1.1 This document is to be used as a background paper and as part of the evidence base to inform Rother District Council's Core Strategy Development Plan Document.

Scope

Geography of the Study

1.2 Rother is a predominantly rural district. Bexhill is the only settlement of significant size, whilst Battle and Rye are best described as small market towns of historic interest. This Rural Settlements Study focuses on Rother's other settlements – predominantly consisting of the rural villages that are scattered across the remainder of the district. It also encompasses a handful of settlements that would arguably be better described as urban fringe or ribbon development on the outskirts of Hastings, which nonetheless fall within the jurisdiction of Rother District.

1.3 It is important to make the distinction at the outset between 'settlements, which are the focus of this study, and 'Parishes'. The term 'settlements' in this context is defined as a contiguous or coherent area of housing and services, not fragmented by large expanses of intervening countryside.

1.4 In contrast, Parishes may contain any number of villages, in addition to large areas of countryside containing dispersed dwellings.

1.5 However, whilst this study is concerned with settlements, much of the statistical information utilised to inform the study is only available on a wider parish basis. Such statistics have been used as a proxy indication as to the likely socio-economic conditions within settlements, but nonetheless have to be treated with care. It is also important to note that in 'Part 2 – Village Appraisals' information on businesses, facilities and services that are outside the villages may often be referred to where they are used by village residents or have an impact on village life.

Criteria for Settlement Inclusion

1.6 This Rural Settlements Study (RSS) Background Paper has investigated and appraised over 40 Villages across the District, including all of those with Local Plan defined development boundaries as well as a number of others.

1.7 The definition of settlements may be controversial, but the general threshold for inclusion for in-depth study as part of this strategy is a population of at least 100.

1.8 There are a handful of villages with a population of less than 100 that have been included for more in-depth appraisal due to the presence of a key service (i.e. primary school, community hall or post office respectively). Villages with less than 100 population that have been included for more in-depth investigation are;
- Dallington (population 86) and Johns Cross (population 50), which have primary schools.
- Woods Corner (population 80) which has a post office,
- Brightling (population 86) which has a community hall.

1.9 A section at the end of Part 2 'Village Appraisals' entitled 'Other Villages and Hamlets' discusses some of the smaller villages that have not been included for more in-depth appraisal due to their small scale.

1.10 A number of settlements have defined 'development boundaries' (as identified in Local Plan Policy DS3). All settlements with an existing development boundary are included for in depth appraisal in this Rural Settlements Study. In addition, a number of villages without a Local Plan defined development boundary have also been included on the basis set out above.

1.11 Villages are assessed in this study as part of the planning process. This assessment aims to shape places and to respond to local needs. For this purpose it is necessary to include all villages of any significant scale. However, the inclusion of a village for more in-depth

appraisal in this strategy does not necessarily indicate that it has a need, or is a suitable location for development. Nor does its inclusion indicate that the village does, should, or will in the future have a development boundary.

The Aim of Place-Shaping

8.1 This study aims to contribute towards the 'Place-Shaping' of individual villages. It has helped inform the Core Strategy by defining villages in terms of their service role, and need/suitability for development.

8.2 The concept of 'place-shaping' was strongly advocated in the May 2007 White Paper 'Planning for a Sustainable Future'. The concept envisages a wider role for local government as the voice of a whole community, which includes:
- building and shaping local identity
- representing the community
- maintaining community cohesiveness
- working to make the local economy more successful
- understanding local needs and preferences

6.2 The key vehicles for place-shaping will be the Sustainable Community Strategy and a single delivery plan – The Local Area Agreement, although the LDF also has a key role.

6.3 All the villages covered in this Rural Settlements Study are unique, with differing settlement patterns, social history and economic legacies. These range from the ancient Cinque Port of Winchelsea, to the historic ridge top villages of the High Weald and the beach resort of Camber. This strategy aims to understand the distinctive local perspective on issues and emphasise local priorities. This will help set an individual and distinctive agenda for each village.

Sources of Information

1.12 A selection of data studies, from the 2001 census as well as various research papers undertaken or commissioned by Rother District Council, has been used to provide a methodology to make the most

appropriate selection of settlements for growth.

1.13 This selection will then be used to devise a spatial strategy for development that will best meet the needs of the district, without harming the quality of the district for its residents, workers and visitors.

1.14 The Issues and Options Paper was published in October 2006 under regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. The responses to that document will also inform the strategy.

Structure of Document

1.15 The Rural Settlements Study is presented in three parts, this 'part one' constitutes the 'Main Document', while part two contains detailed 'Village Appraisals'. Both documents are supplemented by a set of 'Appendices and Maps' contained in a separate third document.

1.16 This main document starts with a review of relevant Government Guidance, national and regional planning policy informing this strategy (section 2). There follows a review of county and district wide strategies and consultations (section 3) including the Local Plan, LDF Issues & Options as well as policies of partners such as the Parish Councils and High Weald AONB Forum. Section 4 of part one reviews the other strategies adopted by other local planning authorities. Section 5 contains a profile and assessment of Rother, including a detailed analysis of the function of settlements in relation to a set of topics. Finally, Section 6 examines spatial development options for the rural areas.

1.17 Subsequently in Part Two this will lead into a commentary on each of the settlements with the information gleaned from the method. This will inform the strategy for individual villages.

1.18 The appendices and maps at the rear of the document contain more detailed information that is cross-referred to throughout the document. Appendix 1 comprises a section on alternative methods to conform to Government requirements that rejected alternatives

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are always tabled at all stages of evidence gathering.

Relationship between 'Part One: Main Report' and 'Part Two: Village Appraisals'

1.19   A spatial portrait of individual villages has started to emerge through Part One of this Rural Settlements Study, via;
• population profiles
• environmental profiles,
• assessments of service role,
• assessments of accessibility,
• economic profiles
• assessments of housing needs.

1.20   In Part Two, the appraisals of individual villages are developed further with more detailed reference to a number of sources, including the following:
• Parish Action Plans,
• Local responses to the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation, and;
• Local responses to the Parish Council event held in November 2007;
• LDF Evidence Studies

1.21   Together this wealth of background information has informed the strategies for individual villages that have been developed more fully in Part Two. The strategies and appraisals for individual villages include an assessment of the likely level of development that would be appropriate in the light of local needs and environmental context. This local assessment has been produced in combination with the scale and spatial distribution options set out below.

2 K Review of National anK Regional Policy 8

Planning for a Sustainable Future – White paper (May 2007)

2.1 The White Paper sets out a vision for a planning system that supports 'vibrant, healthy, sustainable communities' (paragraph 1.3.) It is a response to the need to tackle climate change through reducing the need to travel, making walking and cycling accessible, supporting integrated public transport, encouraging the use of renewable energy and ensuring appropriate design and the provision of new development. The paper also outlines local authority's place-shaping role.

2.2 It confirms that the Local Development Framework portfolio of Development Plan Documents is intended to guide development to the most sustainable locations to meet a set of local sustainable objectives.

2.3 The White Paper proposes that development should be focused in 'suitable locations, making effective use of land and existing infrastructure such as road networks, and services such as schools or hospitals.

2.4 This is the starting point for the Settlement Strategy and the vision for Rother District. This Settlement Strategy will set out, using the information available, how to determine which settlements are the most suitable for growth to meet the sustainability objectives.

Planning Policy Statements

2.5 The White Paper expects all local authorities to take account of Planning Policy Statements, which represent national planning policy, in formulating Development Plan Documents. Planning Policy Statement 12 is the Government's policy statement on the preparation and testing of Development Plan Documents.

Planning Policy Statement 12 (Creating strong safe and prosperous communities through Local Spatial Planning) June 2008

2.6 PPS12 expects all authorities to adopt a spatial planning approach to planning. This goes beyond land-use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and the way they function.

2.7 Policies should be focused on a thorough understanding of the nature of the area; its needs, opportunities and constraints. The evidence base is therefore critical to the preparation of Local Development Frameworks, particularly the Core Strategy. The evidence will be relied upon to test the soundness of the Development Plan Document at Examination in Public and should be kept under review.

2.8 The principle physical, economic, social and environmental characteristics of the area, the size, composition and distribution of the population, communications and transport are all key factors.

2.9 PPS12 stresses that councils need to develop a clear vision for their area, based on a local emphasis with the focus on deliverability.

2.10 The strength of the evidence base is critical to the robustness of the Development Plan Document, and Government recommends a broad range of data is used. However, local authorities need to be realistic about the information for evidence bases, and use that which largely already exists in existing strategies.

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) 2005

2.11 PPS1 sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. It explains that sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning and highlights the Government's four main aims for sustainable development as:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;

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- Effective protection of the environment;
- The prudent use of natural resources; and, the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment. (paragraph 4).

2.12 To help meet these and other objectives identified in the Statement, it explains that a transparent, flexible, predictable, efficient and effective planning system is required that will produce the quality development needed to deliver sustainable development and secure sustainable communities. It also emphasises that plans should be drawn up with community involvement and present a shared vision and strategy of how the area should develop to achieve more sustainable patterns of development (paragraph 7).

2.13 PPS1 stresses that regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should ensure that development plans contribute to global sustainability by addressing the causes and potential impacts of climate change - through policies which reduce energy use, reduce emissions (for example, by encouraging patterns of development which reduce the need to travel by private car, or reduce the impact of moving freight), and take climate change impacts into account in the location and design of development (paragraph 13(ii)).

2.14 The document states that development plans should promote development that creates socially inclusive communities and amongst other measures ensures that the impact of development on the social fabric of communities is considered and taken into account. Development should address accessibility (both in terms of location and physical access) for all members of the community to jobs, health, housing, education, shops, leisure and community facilities and take into account the needs of all the community (paragraph 16). At the same time, it emphasises that planning policies should seek to protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside with a high level of protection given to the most valued townscapes and landscapes,

wildlife habitats and natural resources (paragraph 17).

2.15 In applying the principles of sustainable development to development plans, local planning authorities are required to ensure that plans are based on analysis and evidence.

Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing) 2006

2.16 PPS3 is the Government's policy on housing provision and again embodies the principles of sustainable development. To achieve the strategic policy objectives, a range of principles are identified, including an evidence - based policy approach (paragraph 11).

2.17 Paragraph 10 of the document identifies the Government's housing policy objectives which include the delivery of housing in suitable locations which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure through the planning system. This approach is repeated at paragraph 36.

2.18 Paragraph 38 explains that Local Development Documents should set out a strategy for the planned location of new housing which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. It emphasises that there is a need to provide housing in rural areas, not only in market towns and local service centres but also in villages in order to enhance or maintain their sustainability. It explains that this should ensure that growth is distributed in a way that supports informal social support networks, assists people to live near their work and benefit from key services, minimise environmental impact and, where possible, encourage environmental benefits.

2.19 PPS3 also states that housing sites should be deliverable (i.e. available, suitable and achievable within the plan period) and be located according to the most appropriate strategies and policies for their areas, based on need and demand within the context of a spatial vision.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) 2004

2.20   Again, PPS7 embodies the principles of sustainable development in providing policy principles for rural areas. This includes preventing urban sprawl, raising quality of life, promoting the rural economy and supporting agriculture.

2.21   The document advocates the protection of designated landscape and the concentration of development in or near to local service centres where employment, housing, services and transport can be provided close together (paragraph 3). If facilities are closely located and accessible by public transport and walking/cycling, a reduction in car use and an increase in sustainability of the settlement can be achieved.

2.22   Paragraph 6 states that local planning authorities should, through their Local Development Documents, facilitate and plan for accessible new services and facilities where there is an identified need for them whilst paragraph 8 stresses that it is essential that local planning authorities plan to meet housing requirements in rural areas, based on an up to date assessment of local need.

2.23   It explains that robust, up-to-date local information can inform local authorities which settlements act as local service centres (which could be a town, large village or a cluster of settlements).

2.24   Paragraph 15 advises that local planning authorities should continue to ensure that the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and, where possible, enhanced. It adds that they should have particular regard to any areas that have been statutorily designated for their landscape, wildlife or historic qualities where greater priority should be given to restraint of potentially damaging development.

2.25   Paragraph 21 adds that nationally designated areas including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been confirmed by the Government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. It explains that the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should therefore be given great weight in planning policies in these areas.

2.26   It is important to note that paragraph 21 adds that in addition to reflecting the above priorities, planning policies should also support suitably located development necessary to facilitate the economic and social well-being of designated areas such as AONB including the provision of adequate housing to meet identified local needs. Paragraph 22 stresses that major developments should not take place in these designated areas, except in exceptional circumstances.

South East Plan

2.27   The South East Plan was published in 2006 and was subject to an Examination in Public in 2006/7. The Inspectors Report and proposed alterations have been published. Adoption is expected in Spring 2009. The South East Plan will replace the Regional Planning Guidance 9 (South East) and represents the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East of England.

2.28   The South East Plan advocates the majority of development needs to be met in the region's urban areas, but recognises that there is also a need to encourage sufficient development and investment to develop thriving and socially-inclusive rural areas (see draft policies SP2 and H2[1]).

2.29   The Plan divides the region into sub-regions for the purposes of spatial planning. The Sussex Coast Sub-Region includes Bexhill and its rural hinterland together with Rye and other smaller coastal settlements within Rother District (for example Catsfield and Winchelsea). The policy direction here is to reduce deprivation and enhance economic performance whilst protecting and enhancing the environment.

2.30   Indeed, Policy BE5 of the Draft Plan confirms the aim of supporting rural communities which are sustainable in terms of infrastructure and access to services while maintaining and

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enhancing local distinctiveness. The Plan does not seek to impose a standard approach to housing in rural areas as it is more appropriate that rural housing issues are treated as a strand that runs through the range of housing policies. It does, however, stress that Local Development Documents will need to consider the needs of local communities including the potential for maintaining and creating new services. Policy numbers are those in the Proposed Changes to the South East Plan.

2.31 It also includes a policy identifying the role of small rural towns ('market' towns) within draft Policy BE4. This states that local planning authorities should encourage and initiate schemes and proposals that help strengthen the viability of small rural towns by amongst other measures, providing for sufficient housing development where this would reinforce and develop the distinctive character and role of the town, and meet identified needs. During the Examination in Public there was some debate over the definition of such towns and the Panel Report has recommended that they should generally be up to about 20,000 population.

2.32 Draft Policy H2 of the Plan concerns the location of housing in the region and repeats the general approach identified in PPS1, PPS3 and PPS7 with the emphasises on selecting sustainable locations which have the necessary infrastructure and services or where this is planned. In the case of rural areas, it advises that local authorities should identify areas which are in need of renewal and should give particular consideration to the benefits that could arise from encouraging housing development in these areas. It adds that some housing development will be needed in order to meet identified social or economic needs and advises that parish plans and local housing assessments will have a key role to play to establish the extent and type of needs for housing in villages.

2.33 The draft South East Plan and its Panel Report advocate a criteria-based approach to the determination of areas suitable to accommodate growth. The draft Plan also recognises that certain market towns and villages, when functioning as service centres, could benefit from some growth, where it reinforces and promotes economic growth, contributes to local social needs and protects high quality environments. An overall aim is thriving and socially inclusive settlements.

Key Findings from Section 2

National and regional policy points towards;

- Focusing development in sustainable locations to make effective use of land, infrastructure, services and facilities, improve accessibility to them and reduce the need to travel. In particular, concentrate development where there is a good range of such services and facilities or where there is potential to maintain and/or increase this range.
- Facilitating economic and social well-being of villages by providing sufficient housing to enhance or maintain their sustainability.
- Promoting development that creates socially inclusive communities and minimises impact on the social fabric.
- Protecting and enhancing local distinctiveness – particularly nationally and internationally protected landscapes and the character of settlements.
- Promoting sustainable economic growth, particularly within the area of the study area covered by the Sussex Coast Sub Region.

Box 1

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**3 K Review of CoKnty anK
DistKict-wi e Plans, K
StKategies anK K
ConsKltations K**

East Sussex Brighton and Hove Structure Plan 1999 – 2011

3.1 The Structure Plan was adopted in 1999 and will be superseded in due course by the South East Plan.

3.2 Some of the policies within the Structure Plan have been saved beyond September 2007 during the preparation of local planning authority Development Plan Documents and the South East Plan. Some are relevant to the spatial distribution of housing and employment land, and the protection of the environment.

3.3 The Structure Plan supports the concept of a living working countryside and policies are designed to ensure that development is appropriate to the location and function of settlements. Strategic Policy S4 determines the pattern of development, focusing growth on the existing towns and the efficient and effective renewal of land and seeking to ensure that development is well related to the strategic transport network, infrastructure and employment opportunities.

3.4 Policy S4 also allows for some development in the countryside which is appropriate in scale and type where this would contribute to the objectives of achieving prosperous and attractive rural areas and the protection of the environment.

3.5 Policy S8 identifies the following considerations to be used when determining the scale and nature of change in villages within the County;

- The relationship of the village to its neighbouring towns and villages and the services and facilities they provide and the transport links between them in order to minimise the need to travel;
- The availability and capacity of infrastructure and services;
- The character of existing development in the vicinity, of the village as a whole and its setting in the surrounding countryside;
- The practicable and acceptable level of traffic and parking;
- The need to preserve and enhance buildings of historic, architectural or local interest and their settings, historic parks and gardens and conservation areas;
- The need to maintain adequate open space and gaps in development which contribute to the character or amenity of the village.

Rother District Local Plan

3.6 Rother District's Local Plan was adopted in July 2006. Chapter 4 of the adopted Local Plan sets out the development strategy for the District and identifies the approach towards development in rural areas. This identifies the importance and value of the historic settlement pattern and character and the need to manage the recognised development pressures in rural areas.

3.7 Policy DS1 identifies 14 principles to be used when determining whether development is appropriate in a particular location. These are;

1. Priority to making the best use of urban land especially through the re-use of previously-developed land;
2. Fostering sustainable and socially inclusive communities including support for local services and helping to meet local needs;
3. Ensuring sufficient continuing supply of employment sites;
4. Ensuring good accessibility to services and jobs by public transport;
5. Making best use of existing infrastructure;
6. Avoiding prejudicing the character and qualities of the environment (particularly the AONB and undeveloped coastline);
7. Protecting sites of nature conservation importance;
8. Protecting historic parks and gardens and Battle battlefield;
9. Respects the importance of the countryside;

10. Protects ancient woodland from development that would prejudice its ecological and landscape value;
11. Ensures development is safe from flooding;
12. Protects vulnerable countryside gaps;
13. Ensures a sufficient continuing supply of housing land; and
14. Avoids development on unstable land unless actual or potential instability can reasonably be overcome.

3.8 Policy DS2 confirms that only relatively limited growth of Battle and Rye in line with the Structure Plan approach is appropriate together with small scale growth distributed amongst selected medium sized villages with a reasonable range of services.

3.9 These selected villages were identified as Burwash, Etchingham, Fairlight, Flimwell, Northiam, Robertsbridge and Westfield.

Rother Community Plan

3.10 The Community Plan for Rother District was prepared by the Local Strategic Partnership for the period 2004 – 2009. The Strategy identifies issues of concern to local residents and translates these issues into positive action and provision.

Key issues raised were:

- Community safety,
- Children and young people
- Education
- Culture
- Waste and recycling
- Health
- Housing
- Jobs
- Transport

3.11 Where these issues cross over into spatial planning and uses of land, they are relevant to the Core Strategy and the settlement strategy. This applies to the following issues:

- Services and support to children and young people.
- Schools provision and expansion/adaptability to meet needs of other residents

- Promote cultural tourism through provision of tourist accommodation.
- Protection and enhancement of natural and built heritage.
- Provision of homes to meet the needs of residents, including affordable homes.
- Promote the local economy and work opportunities.
- Secure safe and convenient access to services and employment.
- Locate development in areas with good accessibility.

3.12 These aspirations are applicable to Rother District in its entirety and the Community Strategy does not make distinctions between different areas of the District.

3.13 The Rother Community Plan is now absorbed into a new Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex, as outlined below.

East Sussex Integrated Sustainable Community Strategy

3.14 The task of developing the Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex was undertaken by the six Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), namely: East Sussex, Eastbourne, Hastings and St. Leonard's, Lewes District, Rother and Wealden.

3.15 The Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex 2008-2026, called 'Pride of Place', sets out the vision for East Sussex to 2026: to address the inequalities in the county, and create successful people, successful businesses and a sustainable environment. It is available to view at http://www.essp.org.uk/essp/esiscs.htm

Parish Action Plans

3.16 Local Action Plans are being prepared on a number of themes for Battle, Rye and some parishes. The Local Action Plan for Battle was completed in April 2007. The Rye Local Action Plan is at an early stage and is not yet reportable. Some parishes have been the subject of Local Action Plans but these are not yet adopted.

Battle

3.17 The Battle Action Plan highlights need for more sport and recreation facilities, particularly a swimming pool, traffic calming and management, higher police presence, young people's services, enhanced community buildings, affordable housing, recycling facilities, and better access to health facilities.

Parishes

3.18 Parish Action Plans have been prepared for a number of parishes.

- Brede Parish Council Action Plan 2003
- Crowhurst Village Action Plan 2007
- Etchingham Action Plan 2007
- Northiam Parish Action Plan 2007
- Peasmarsh Parish Plan 2006
- Salehurst & Robertsbridge Local Action Plan 2007-08
- Sedlescombe Parish Plan 2002
- Ticehurst, Flimwell and Stonegate Village Action Plan 2003-2012
- Westfield Parish Survey & Action Plan 2006

3.19 The particular issues raised in each parish that have a planning dimension are discussed in Part Two Village Appraisals.

3.20 In addition, Village Design Statements have been prepared for Burwash and Sedlescombe. They will be useful in helping to inform the Development Control process.

Housing Needs Survey 2005

3.21 The District wide housing needs study (2005) concluded that 91% of the population was satisfactorily housed.

3.22 The affordability of housing in the south east of England is a persistent theme that has significant social and economic implications. Affordability remains a particular problem in Rother, especially for newly forming households.

3.23 The Housing Needs Survey examined the issue of 'concealed' or 'hidden' households. Concealed households predominantly have lower incomes (just 5% earn more than the national average)

and most cannot afford either private rented or privately owned homes.

3.24 The housing needs survey estimates that 3.9% of all households (some 1000 households) contain one or more hidden households. Most are the children of existing residents who cannot afford to move away to form their own households.

3.25 Although the current housing needs analysis is at District level, and further work needs to be carried out on actual housing numbers required to meet local needs within individual settlements, existing Local Plan policy is to require an element of affordable housing in all new housing development over 15 units at a level of 40%. However, the option of raising the requirement to 50% in rural areas is being considered in the emerging Core Strategy. PPS3 also allows the identification of land solely for affordable housing.

3.26 The need to address this issue is particularly acute and development that can act as a driver to provide affordable housing for local people needs to be considered favourably.

3.27 A Housing Needs Study took place in 2001 on a parish basis. Although the figures are now some 6 years old, they provide a more detailed understanding of needs in the parishes than the 2005 District-wide study, which has no parish breakdown. The 2005 study did however analyse the need for affordable housing on an 'area' basis, the areas being Bexhill, Battle, Rye, Battle Rural, Rye Rural and Ticehurst Rural. The results of this analysis are discussed in the following paragraph.

3.28 The locational preferences expressed by concealed households up to 2009, suggest a major need in Battle and Rye relative to other parts of the District. Within the villages, the hinterlands of Rye and Ticehurst appear to have the most pressing need whilst villages around Battle appear to have less need for affordable housing.

Housing Needs Survey Individual Parish Reports

3.29 As a Rural Housing Enabler (RHE), Action in Rural Sussex (AirS) aims to provide support, advice and information to Parish Councils concerned about the lack of affordable housing in their rural communities. The following Rother parishes have asked AirS to carry out a Housing Need Survey (two still in Draft form) which have been produced in partnership with Rother District Council.

- Brede Parish Report
- Salehurst and Robertsbridge Report
- Ticehurst Report
- Brightling Parish Report (Draft Stage)
- Camber Parish Report (Draft Stage)

3.30 The implications and findings of these reports are discussed in the respective chapters in Part Two: Village Appraisals

Hastings & Rother Housing Market Assessment June 2006

3.31 This study was carried out by DTZ consultants on behalf of Rother District Council and Hastings Borough Council. It noted that the rural parts of Rother experience major issues in terms of affordability. This is a product of high average house prices associated with a stock of larger dwellings, attractive market towns and villages set within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but low local wages.

3.32 The study acknowledges that Rother DC seeks to achieve a target of 40% affordable houses within the District but suggests that in rural Rother it would probably be realistic to seek to achieve a target of 50% of affordable housing on development sites, and justifiable in terms of housing need. It also suggests that since the majority of sites coming forwards for development in rural Rother will be small, consideration should be given to lowering the threshold for application of affordable housing policies.

3.33 DTZ state that the stock of social rented housing in rural Rother has been eroded by the Right to Buy, and therefore the majority of towns and villages are owner occupied (Appendix 7 identifies the relative proportions of owner-occupancy by parish). In the light of this, and the small average size of new developments, DTZ see no major issues in seeking to ensure that all of the affordable housing component on sites in Rural Rother is social rented housing. However, the report acknowledges that funding may present a constraint on the development of social rented housing. Moreover high costs of entering the owner occupied sector in rural Rother means that there may be more of a market for intermediate housing than in Bexhill. DTZ suggest that it may also be desirable to offer people with strong local connections the opportunity to buy in the rural area and hence there may well be circumstances where it is appropriate to plan for a proportion of intermediate housing – say up to 20% of the total housing provision.

3.34 PPS3 Housing also contains a proposal that authorities can allocate sites in market towns and larger villages solely for affordable housing. DTZ suggest that this could be a very useful tool for Rother DC to use in encouraging provision of additional affordable housing in its rural area. Existing powers to foster new development on exception sites remain unaltered and should also be reflected in policy and active steps taken to identify and bring forward such sites.

3.35 The study also suggests the introduction of smaller homes, to counter the bias for large high quality homes in the District and to broaden entry level housing in the area and increase younger people. This will help to create more balanced communities, since the bias to larger, more expensive properties has a tendency to be reflected in a bias towards older age groups among the resident population.

Hastings & Rother Employment Strategy and Land Review (2008)

3.36 This study forms part of the Background Evidence for Rother's LDF. It was undertaken jointly with Hastings Borough in recognition of the relationship between the two districts and overlapping Travel to Work Areas. More detail on the findings of this study have been outlined

in section 5e 'Economic Profile & Assessment of Economic Vitality'.

WARR Partnership 8

3.37 Wealden and Rother Rural (WARR) Partnership area covers the rural parishes of the Wealden and Rother Districts in East Sussex and includes the market towns of Hailsham, Heathfield, Battle and Rye.

3.38 The WARR Partnership has been awarded funding of £2.4 Million, to help revitalise and support rural businesses and communities over the next five years. The Leader programme is a source of funding from the EU and Defra, through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). Leader is a locally-led approach, which will support a range of schemes to regenerate rural areas. Individual projects will be eligible for grants of up to £50,000, with funding available to cover a wide range of activities such as farm diversification, tourism, renewable energy projects, collaboration to develop new products and services, and innovative community projects.

3.39 WARR is a locally rooted group, which has been very successful in delivering a previous Leader programme.

Rother District Wide Shopping Assessment (2008)

3.40 This study is being prepared for Rother District Council by GL Hearn Consultants. The study focuses on the main shopping centres of Bexhill, Battle, Rye and Ravenside. However the study does have information of relevance to the rural villages.

3.41 The Assessment divides the District into six broad areas based on post code sectors (Bexhill East, Bexhill West, Battle, Rye, NW Rother and 'Westfield, Guestling, Fairlight'). Since the first four areas overlap with larger towns it is difficult to draw conclusions from them regarding shopping patterns of village residents. However the last two areas are solely comprised of villages and provide useful insights as a result.

North West Rother

3.42 North West Rother consists of post code areas TN5 7 and TN19 7 which includes Ticehurst, Hurst Green, Burwash, Etchingham, Flimwell, Stonegate, Burwash Common and Burwash Weald.

3.43 Residents preferred destinations for their *main* food shopping appears to be Heathfield (19 respondents), Hastings/St Leonards (19), Other (13), Tunbridge Wells (11). It is assumed that the bulk of the 'Other' category is comprised of more local village stores of too small a scale to warrant a specific mention in the survey. A significant minority (7) rely on internet home delivery shopping, in this area (a much higher proportion than anywhere else in the District).

3.44 Interestingly by far the most popular reason given for choosing their destination was that is 'convenient to home', which was given by 45% of NW Rother respondents.

3.45 The vast majority (84%) get their main food shopping by car, 5% walk and 11% have it delivered.

3.46 Interestingly it seems many more people use local village stores for their secondary 'top-up' food shopping. Destinations cited by North West Rother residents included Burwash (22%), Ticehurst (17%), Etchingham (11%), Heathfield (8%), Wadhurst (7%), Hawkhurst (6%), Hurst Green (6%) and Other (8.4%). 14.5% don't do any top up shopping.

3.47 For 'Clothing, footwear and other fashion goods' Tunbridge Wells is by far the most popular destination (69%), with much smaller numbers preferring Hastings (8%) and Eastbourne (7%).

Westfield, Guestling, Fairlight Area

3.48 The 'Westfield, Guestling, Fairlight' area covers the TN35 4 postcode. It comprises the villages of the same name plus Fairlight Cove, Pett, Pett Level, Three Oaks, Bachelor's Bump and Friars Hill. The vast majority of respondents do their main food shopping in the Hastings/St. Leonards area (56). The only other destinations of significance were Bexhill (11) and other (6).

3.49   The main reason given by 'Westfield, Guestling, Fairlight' residents for choosing their favoured destination were 'convenient to home' (52%), 'quality of goods' (15%).

3.50   88% get their main food shopping by car, with smaller numbers using bus/coach (4%), walking (6%), cycling (1%).

3.51   Hastings is still the main destination when it comes to secondary 'top-up' food shopping, cited by 25%. Other destinations included Fairlight (21%), Winchelsea Beach (6%), Westfield (4%) and other (10%). A large proportion (29%) don't do any top-up shopping.

3.52   For 'Clothing, footwear and other fashion goods' Hastings is by far the most popular destination (59%), with a smaller number preferring Eastbourne (13%).

Conclusions

3.53   Although this analysis does not give us comprehensive picture of all villages, it gives an interesting insight into the typical shopping patterns in two areas – 'North West Rother' and 'Westfield, Guestling, Fairlight'. The two areas in question ('North-West Rother' and 'Westfield, Guestling, Fairlight') are relatively far apart and have fairly different socio-economic characteristics, so in combination provide useful insights into shopping patterns that are probably not untypical of rural villages as a whole.

3.54   It can be concluded that although residents generally travel to larger towns for their main weekly shopping, they will be more prepared to use smaller village stores for secondary 'top-up' shopping. For example this may entail popping to the local shop for milk and a newspaper.

3.55   There are differences between the two study areas. The 'Westfield, Guestling, Fairlight' is generally less self-sufficient and is heavily reliant upon neighbouring Hastings, even for top-up shopping.

3.56   Local shops appear to used more by North-west Rother residents, probably as a result of both its relative remoteness Internet shopping / home delivery is patronised more which may also be as a

result of remoteness as well as relative affluence.

Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study (2007)

3.57   This study was completed by PMP consultants on behalf of Rother District Council in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport & Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).

3.58   It included an audit and assessment of the District's open space, sport and recreation and was supported by a series of consultations, including with parish Councils. It produced local provision standards (quantity, quality and accessibility) for each type of open space. The quality standard is an aspirational statement of intent for each type of open space, the access standard is in terms of travel time/distance to nearest facility and quantity standard is recorded in terms of hectares per 100-people and surpluses and deficits by area are derived from this. Standards for Rural Rother are as follows;

Recommended Access and Quantity Standards for Rural Areas

	Access Standard	Quantity Standard (Ha per 1000 population)
Outdoor Sports 8	20 mins. walk time 8	4.84
Parks and Gardens 8	20 mins. drive time 8	0.71
Amenity Green-space 8	15 mins. walk time 8	1.73
Allotments & Community Gardens 8	20 mins. walk time 8	0.17
Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace 8	15 mins. walk time 8	2.00
Provision for Children 8	10 mins. walk time 8	0.20
Provision for Older children /teenagers 8	15 mins. walk time 8	0.20

3.59   These standards were used to inform recommendations for new or improved provision, and where applicable, recommendations for individual villages have been outlined in part two of this

Rural Settlements Study, 'Village Appraisals'.

3.60 The Study divided Rural Rother into two, east and West along a north-south axis. The East comprises Westfield, Broad Oak, Brede, Cackle Street, Northiam and all villages further east including Peasmarsh, Fairlight, Icklesham, Pett , Iden and Camber. The West comprises Crowhurst, Catsfield, Sedlescombe, Staplecross, Bodiam, Ewhurst and all villages further west including Robertsbridge, Ticehurst, Hurst Green and Etchingham.

3.61 In the East, the study suggests there is a plentiful amount of natural and semi and natural greenspace, sufficient outdoor sports and allotments but a slight shortage of amenity greenspace and parks and gardens and a further deficit of young people's facilities.

3.62 In the West, the study also suggests there is a plentiful amount of natural and semi and natural greenspace. However there is sufficient parks and gardens a slight shortage of allotments and outdoor sport facilities and a more significant shortage of amenity greenspace and young people's facilities.

3.63 The study has translated the standards (quantity, access and quality) into more localised recommendations for new and improved facilities. These recommendations have been summarised in Part 2 'Village Appraisals' as they apply on a village by village basis. There is also further information on the results of PMP's Parish Council consultation.

3.64 It is important to clarify that the recommendations contained in the Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study (and repeated in this Rural Settlement Strategy) are not the final say. They will need to go through the statutory LDF process (including consultation stages) of the 'Site Allocations DPD' in order to be allocated. However, many of the smaller scale recommendations, such as for new children's play areas or qualitative improvements to open spaces, would not generally warrant a development plan allocation at all.

High Weald AONB Management Plan

3.65 Policy C2 of the Draft South East Plan requires local authorities to have regard to statutory AONB Management Plans.

3.66 The High Weald AONB covers 15 local authorities and its Management Plan is the first statutory plan produced under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for the area. The primary purpose of AONB designation remains rooted in natural beauty. Recent government guidance provides a useful non technical definition: "Natural Beauty" is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries'

3.67 The plan notes that the High Weald AONB is characterised by dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets, and late medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.

3.68 Most Rother villages are within the High Weald AONB (the only exceptions being those in the coastal area including Camber, Winchelsea, Fairlight, Pett and Netherfield). As such, the AONB Management Plan is a highly relevant document to this Rural Settlements Study.

3.69 The Vision for 2024, in its own words, takes a 'positive view – not a cynical one' whilst facing up to likely realities: demographic changes that increase demand for housing, lifestyle and technological changes, increase in traffic, climate change and the decline of traditional farm businesses. Particular points within the vision of relevance to the villages include;

'An increasing number of households have been accommodated without compromising the characteristic historic settlement pattern. Strong planning policies and a sound understanding of the dynamic of sustainable communities have influenced development. Environmental building technologies have improved the construction of buildings and the High Weald now supports 'green' modern designs using local materials…..

…..Many parishes now support a combined heat and power plant running on local wood, or a small scale wind turbine.'

3.70　The plan notes that 38% of the AONB population and 64% of businesses are located in the countryside outside villages, rather than within villages themselves. 100 years ago there were more High Weald houses outside villages than in them: this has reversed, with many villages tripling in size since 1945.

3.71　The top 5 issues for settlement are identified as:

- Need for greater understanding – e.g. of the dispersed settlement pattern of the High Weald, and the connections between settlements and the countryside.
- Loss of rural function – becoming dormitories for commuting or places of retirement.
- Suburbanisation – erosion of AONB character through extension of curtilages, and inappropriate modifications, or treatments, of boundaries and buildings.
- Inappropriate new development – e.g. large-sized residences failing to meet needs of local community.
- Inappropriate design and building materials – architecture not respecting AONB character, quality and objectives.

3.72　The 3 objectives for settlement are identified as:

1. To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside.
2. To protect the historic pattern of settlement.
3. To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald.

3.73　The Management Plan is currently undergoing review.

Core Strategy Issues and Options

Area Strategy for Rural Areas

3.74　The Core Strategy Issues and Options paper posed a number of questions of relevance and the responses are summarised in turn below.

Balance, Safe and Inclusive Communities: Strategy Directions

Question 4 'What actions can best support rural communities'?

3.75　A number of Parish Councils responded to this question. Crowhurst Parish Council want there to be an integrated mix of housing. They want locals to be listened to and there views respected especially concerning link road and urban sprawl. Etchingham and Bodiam Parish Councils are concerned with lack of affordable housing. The demand is for small properties for young and old, highlighting the large number of elderly in inappropriate large properties.

Overall Vision and Objectives for Rural Areas

Question 20 'is it appropriate to have an overall vision and objectives for rural areas and, if so, what should the guiding objectives be?

3.76　The overall majority of the 17 respondents comment that there is a need to have a rural vision within the Core Strategy.

3.77　Of the Parish Councils, Crowhurst Parish Council thinks that there should be an overall vision and objective for rural communities. The guiding objectives should be to preserve the character of small villages; they have a special 'quality of life'. Etchingham Parish Council thinks that sustainability, protecting the landscape qualities and the economic and social needs of communities are important. Bodiam Parish wants there to be acceptance by local government and incomers of the differences between rural and urban areas.

3.78　From a developers perspective The Home Builders Federation feels it is necessary to have a spatial vision for rural areas. They believe that the guiding objective is to ensure the sustainability of rural communities through providing for their needs, in the form of housing provision.

3.79　Comments from individual development companies include 'It is essential that rural areas in the Core Strategy have a specific vision' and 'Priority should be given to creating mixed communities that

support local services and employment rather than giving priority to conserving and preserving the AONB.'

3.80 High Weald AONB Unit sees it as important to have a rural policy and vision. They believe that to conserve and enhance the AONB requires supporting land management and local based industries and activities as well as promoting the sustainable character of small rural settlements. English Village Projects think that it is important to have an overall rural vision. However, they note that no attempt has been made to identify those characteristics of the individual's villages which harm their appearance and character and no consideration has been given to how to redress harm.

3.81 Rye Conservation Society supports all strategy directions proposed. The National Trust supports objectives and feels they should include support for rural diversification and the protection and enhancement of the built environment of villages. The Forestry Commission thinks that the vision needs to consider more than just housing development.

3.82 Rother Voluntary Action comments that there should be an overarching vision with the flexibility to respond to local needs. Rother Valley Railway will help secure the following objectives for rural areas (h) –the fostering of tourism that is compatible with and draws on heritage and countryside qualities of rural areas. (i) Improved access for basic day to day goods and services by public transport, and (n) the encouragement of access to the countryside and appropriate leisure activities.

3.83 A leading local Registered Social Landlord (RSL) thinks that derelict agricultural buildings should be converted and the existing village boundaries reviewed.

3.84 Generally, individual respondents support a development strategy that provides residential development within rural areas but doesn't encroach on AONB.

Area Strategy for Rural Areas: Future Development Options

3.85 The Core Strategy Issues & Options paper contained four development options. These four options and their implications are all discussed in more detail in Section 6, but in summary the four options are;

>Option 1: Continue to focus on Service Centres

>Option 2: Development to Support Community Needs and Deficiencies

>Option 3: Focus Development on a few larger Villages

>Option 4: Dispersed Development

3.86 The paper asked the following question, the responses to which are summarized below.

Question 21 'Which option for the distribution of new development in rural areas is most appropriate and why?

3.87 From the 17 responses received it can be concluded that there is no consensus between any of the above option. The responses received were mixed however all groups were in favour of development of some kind.

3.88 East Sussex County Council think options 1 and 3 seem to be the variation on the theme. They reflect the methodology adopted by the County Council in determining the housing distribution for the "Rest of Sussex". However, ESCC see little to differentiate between options 2 and 4.

3.89 Of the parishes, Crowhurst Parish Council thinks that new development should be distributed in accordance with paragraph 16.25 from policy DS2 (iv). – development where village already have a range of services which will support it. Beckley Parish Council support Rother District Council Local Plan which, for Beckley contains five delineated development areas along Main Street and Hobbs Lane. They would strongly resist development in other areas of their village. Etchingham Parish Council support Option 2.

3.90 The Highways Agency expects the local planning authorities to assess the impact of the new trunk road network of rural growth options. They would to see emerging policies that would minimise demand at the source and require the mitigation of trunk road impacts throughout all stages of development planning, implementation and operation.

3.91 The Government Office for the South East think that Option 1 and 3 overlap and Option 2 and 4 overlap in relation to PPS 7 for (a) focusing development in, or near existing local rural services, together with (b) some provision for limited development in other settlements as well.

3.92 The Crown Estate support option 4. The Home Builders Federation think that Option 1 and 2 are most appropriate.

3.93 High Weald AONB would like Option 4 to be explored in detail, supporting the dispersed development approach. Rye Conservation Society think Option 2 should be pursued. The National Trust support Option 1 because it is most likely to meet local needs in the District. Rother Voluntary Action believes that all options have their merits.

3.94 A leading local Registered Social Landlord (RSL) feels that rural settlements need more affordable housing even if they have lost most or all of their services. However, rural development is preferable in settlements where there is a range of existing services. They think that where services are at risk they should benefit from preferential and flexible planning decisions.

3.95 Generally individual respondents support development in suitable rural locations.

Residents' Questionnaire

3.96 A residents questionnaire was also included as part of the Core Strategy Issues & Options process. It asked four basic questions about the qualities that make settlements a good place to live and priorities for development.

3.97 The results were broken down into three geographical areas: Battle, Rye and the Villages. The results of the responses

are available in other formats but for the purposes of this exercise, it is the value placed on different local facilities that is interesting and whether the respondents feel this is available in their local area. This gives a broad idea of what is required and a first impression of local need.

3.98 It is the discrepancies between these two figures that give an early indication of needs in an area. The areas of need that stand out can be identified below:

Battle

3.99 In Battle, discrepancies between important facilities and provision appear to indicate that the following facilities could be said to be lacking in provision:

• Convenience Shopping
• Access to regular bus services
• Convenient parking at facilities
• Jobs and businesses within the area
• Mix of house types

Rye

3.100 In Rye, discrepancies between important facilities and provision appear to indicate that the following facilities could be said to be lacking in provision:

• Convenience Shopping
• Doctors surgery
• Access to regular bus services
• Convenient parking at facilities
• Easy access to railway station
• Jobs and businesses within the area
• Mix of house types

Villages

3.101 There were 216 respondents from the villages (i.e., excluding respondents from Bexhill, Battle and Rye). Their responses to each of the questions are discussed below. More detailed results for these questions on a village by village basis are detailed in the 'Village Appraisals' section in Part 2. When considering these figures, it is important to note that the age range of respondents could have been an influence on findings – 39% of respondents were over retirement age.

Q1 How important do you feel each of the following qualities are in making a town or village a good place for you to live in?

3.102 The list below indicates the responses of residents of rural villages. Clearly access to post offices and shops rank as highly important in making a village a good place to live.

Q1 Rural respondents	Essential or Important (%)	Unimportant (%)
Access to...		
Post office	83	2
Shops for day to day purchases	81	1
Doctors surgery	74	3
Regular Bus services	72	4
Village/community hall	71	4
Safe/convenient pedestrian access	71	3
parking	68	7
Primary school	68	0
Access to countryside	64	6
Mix of house types/sizes/prices	63	9
Play space	55	6
Sports/leisure facilities	52	21
Railway station	50	7
chemist	48	10
Jobs/business site locally	46	17
Safe/convenient access by bike	36	18
Cash point	29	29

Q2 Thinking about the town or village you live in, or closest to, how do you rate the following qualities?

3.103 The following list indicates the views of rural residents regarding their local village.

Q2 Rural respondents	Very Good or Good	Very Poor or Poor
Village / community hall	79%	2%
Post office	78%	15%
Access to countryside	77%	4%
Primary school	65%	5%
Shops for day to day purchases	57%	20%
Play Space	55%	9%
Doctors surgery	52%	17%
Safe/convenient pedestrian access	33%	27%
Regular bus service	32%	34%
Parking	30%	27%
Railway station	28%	34%
Chemist	27%	39%
Cash point	24%	39%
Sports/leisure facilities	21%	30%
Mix of house types/sizes/prices	18%	41%
Safe/convenient access by bike	14%	40%
Job/business site locally	6%	53%

3.104 From the above table it is clear that there is a lot of positive satisfaction with village/community halls, primary schools, post offices and not surprisingly – access to countryside.

3.105 However, rural residents think that other qualities are relatively poor, including access to local businesses/jobs, access to a mix of house type/sizes/prices and over safe and convenient access by bike. However, the qualities considered poor are not necessarily those which are considered the most important.

3.106 It is the discrepancies between questions 1 and 2 that give an early indication of needs in an area. Based upon relative numbers of rural residents who felt facilities were 'essential' or 'important' vis-à-vis the numbers who were satisfied with the quality of these same facilities, discrepancies appear to indicate that the following facilities could be said to be lacking in provision:

- Affordable housing/Mix of house types/Smaller homes
- Convenience Shopping
- Post Office
- Doctors Surgery
- Chemists
- Sport and Leisure facilities

- Access to regular bus services/railway station
- Jobs and businesses within the area

3.107 Some of the above can be addressed through the forward planning process and others are dependent on the local market. Development could be a driver to the provision of some of these provisions in areas of deprivation or need.

Q3 Some new development will be needed in Rother over coming years. In planning this new development, how important are the following?

3.108 The following list indicates the responses of rural residents to this question.

Q3 Rural respondents	% essential or important	% unimportant
Ensuring that Design is in keeping with surrounding	87.5	3.7
Promoting energy efficient features	86.1	3.7
Providing more Housing for elderly	68.1	6.9
Providing more Affordable housing	66.7	13.0
Providing more Housing for families	58.8	9.7
Providing more Small houses and flats	58.3	9.3
Providing more Community facilities	50.9	13.0
Providing more Tourism based on area's assets	35.6	31.5
Providing more Shopping in town centres	33.3	25.9
Providing more Business land and premises	31.0	31.0
Promoting innovative design	27.8	42.6

3.109 From the above responses, two issues stand out above all others as being the most important in making the villages good places to live in – 'Ensuring that design is in keeping with the surrounding area' and 'Promoting energy efficient features'.

Q4 Given that some new development will be needed over coming years, including for the uses mentioned in Question 3, what general locations should be considered? (We are not looking at specific sites at this stage)

3.110 The following list indicates the responses of rural residents to this question.

Q4 Rural respondents	% good or some potential	% little or no potential
On sites in towns, by infilling/higher densities	81.9	11.1
On the edges of Bexhill	73.1	10.2
On the edges of Battle	53.7	28.2
On the edges of Rye	52.8	35.2
On the edges of villages that have a range of services	48.6	45.8
On sites in villages, by infilling/higher densities	47.2	46.3
In the countryside where there are already small groups of houses	26.9	67.6
On the edges of smaller villages with few or no facilities	17.6	75.0
Other, please specify	6.0	0.9

3.111 Rural respondents tended to favour sites in towns (by infilling/higher densities) or sites on the edge of Bexhill. Whilst they generally opposed development on the edges of poorly serviced village or in the countryside, opinions were split on whether village infilling/higher densities or sites on the edge of service villages were a good idea.

Parish Councils Planning Seminar

3.112 Rother District Council also organised a Parish Council seminar in November 2007 for the purposes of consulting on the Rural Settlements Study and on Local Development Framework issues. The aims and purposes of the Rural Settlements Study were presented, and the following next steps proposed;

- Developing an individual approach to the settlements based on a range of issues specific to the local area.
- Assessment of settlements
- Producing a hierarchy of Service Centres and Local Service Villages with potential to accommodate some additional development

3.113 Draft Core Strategy Strategic objectives for parts of the district were also presented at the seminar including the following of relevance to this study;

'For Villages: to continue to promote strong, supportive rural communities,

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with improved access to a mix of housing, local shops, services, learning and job opportunities, including by public transport, and to retain their essential character and relationship with their surroundings.'

'For the Countryside: to protect and promote its character, its role as a living and working landscape and as an ecological, leisure and tourism asset.'

'For the High Weald: to effectively conserve the 'natural beauty' of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and to meet the needs of its communities in a way consistent with its distinctive landscape character and cultural identity.'

'For Coastal Areas: to protect coastal communities from flooding and manage risk, protect and manage the high quality ecology, support economic development, including leisure/tourism.'

3.114 As a follow-up to that event, Parish Councils were invited to comment on the options presented. Several Parish Councils responded. Where their responses relate to District level options they are summarised below. More locally relevant responses are summarised within Part 2 Village Appraisals.

3.115 Beckley and Iden Parish Councils both supported the draft strategic wide objectives.

3.116 Bodiam Parish Council supported the broad strategic objectives for development and change in Rother. They support the approach to development in rural settlements being based on the circumstances of individual villages in terms of services, accessibility, economic role, environmental characteristics /constraints and local needs. They point out that there are real differences in levels of service between otherwise similarly sized settlements.

3.117 Crowhurst Parish Council were pleased to note the importance given to protection from flooding for coastal area, but expressed concern that proposed Hastings/Bexhill link road may exacerbate flooding problems. They

supported the proposed 'next steps' of the Rural Settlements Study.

3.118 Sedlescombe Parish Council stated they were not against the idea of building a profile of each settlement on which to base future development but it believes that it is important to include in the constraints issues such as local school numbers and doctors' lists and availability of land. The use of the Housing Needs Survey to substantiate development is also a concern because the Parish Council objected to its conclusions at the time.

3.119 Westfield Parish Council agrees with the objective to support villages in Rother in terms of promoting improved access to a mix of housing, shops, services, public transport and learning and job opportunities while striving to maintain their essential character and relationship with their surroundings. They felt that the planning framework should be flexible enough to support a strongly held local view. They felt the criteria used to understand the make-up of villages provides a valuable tool is assessing a base line of population, economy and environment.

3.120 Whatlington Parish Council had no objections to the strategic objectives for development and change in Rother. They agreed with the stated approach to development in rural areas taking local needs into account. They are concerned that environment and character is maintained and that there is no overdevelopment especially where infrastructure is not in place.

Conclusions from Review of County and District-wide Plans, Strategies and Consultations

3.121 The key issues of relevance to the settlement strategy emerging from this review of County and District-wide Plans, Strategies and Consultations are set out in Box 2;

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ey Findings from Section 3

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The Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation process indicated no preference regarding the village spatial distribution options that were presented.

Rural residents considered that 'design that is in keeping with surrounding areas' and 'energy efficiency' are the two most important factors for new development.

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In terms of location for development, rural respondents favoured sites in towns or on the edge of Bexhill. There were mixed opinions were split on whether village infilling/higher densities or sites on the edge of service villages were a good idea.

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A number of facilities were perceived to be lacking in the villages.

- Affordable housing/Mix of house types/Smaller homes
- Convenience Shopping
- Post Office
- Doctors Surgery
- Chemists
- Sport and Leisure facilities
- Access to regular bus services/railway station
- Jobs and businesses within the area

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A number of Local Action Plans have also been produced which have all informed the process of developing a Rural Settlements Study.

The Housing Needs Survey 2005 suggested particularly high levels of housing need in Rye and Battle.

The Hastings and Rother Housing Market Assessment indicates a real need for affordable housing in rural areas. It suggests that a threshold of 50% affordable housing in rural Rother may be justifiable in terms of housing need.

Box 2 8

4.1 Settlement Strategies or Hierarchies have been prepared to inform Core Strategies by a number of local planning authorities under the Local Development Framework system. A number of the Core Strategies have been adopted following the Examination in Public into their 'soundness.' This review examines some of the methods used in other settlement strategies in order to inform this exercise as many of the authorities quoted here have been pioneering in this work and it helps to provide markers for others.

4.2 In reviewing other strategies, a particular focus has been on examining those with similar local contexts to Rother District; largely rural areas constrained by significant levels of high quality landscape or other environmental constraints.

Criteria-based approach

4.3 By far the most popular means of distributing development appears to be by categorising settlements according to a pre-defined set of criteria to determine their role or hierarchy. Many use the existence of schools/shops/public transport as a means to determine 'sustainability'. This approach has generally been supported by Inspectors at Public Examination stage. This is based on the premise, advocated in national planning policy, that development should be directed to the most sustainable settlements.

4.4 Local planning authorities using this method have selected a slightly different approach to this hierarchy. Some authorities have kept the criteria relatively simple. Others have suggested a more complex audit of services and travel times. However, of those that have been found to be sound, the sustainability audit has included population size, an assessment of services, particularly schools, convenience shopping and transport opportunities.

4.5 Some have weighted the value of each element of service provision according to its relative importance (for example Ashford Borough[2], although the Inspectors report had not been received at the time of writing).

4.6 The definition of 'accessible' is dealt with in different ways: Wealden District Council[3] has suggested that a 5 minute travelling time at 40mph to reach services counts as 'accessible'. South Cambridgeshire[4] settlements can claim a service if there is 'good public transport accessibility'.

4.7 Chichester District Council[5] also presented a criteria based approach to its EIP. The approach was based on an assessment of the community facilities of each settlement and a hierarchy imposed. The inspector noted Chichester's method as a 'blunt tool', not taking into account the number and range of services, and the accessibility of settlements. The assessment gave equal weight to unequal facilities. Employment provision was not sufficiently detailed and failed to set out locations for employment generating development, and did not tie this information to housing provision. Similarly it is acknowledged that there are development needs in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but these are again insufficiently justified using the tools utilised by the Council. The Core Strategy was found to be unsound.

Travel data

4.8 Following the criteria based approach used by Horsham[6], a further level of research was undertaken examining the categorisation of settlements against travel to work data. The Council sought to indicate which settlements were more self-contained with respect to working patterns. This insightful piece of work was supported at Examination in Public.

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[2] 8A hford 8Boro8gh 8 o8n8l 8Ho8 ng 8Strategy 8and 8 ore 8 Strategy 8
[3] Wealden D8tr8t 8o8n8l draft 8ettlement 8trategy 8
[4] So8th 8ambr dge8h re 8ore Strategy 8
[5] 8 h8he8ter 8D8tr8t 8 ore 8Strategy 8and 8In8pe8tor8 8report 8 J ne 2007. 8
[6] Settlement S 8ta nab l ty and Greenf eld 8 te allo8at on8 n 8 the Hor8ham D8tr8t Sept 2005 8

4.9 The study acknowledged gaps in the work on travel to work by Horsham District. The lack of information on the *use*, rather than the existence, of services was highlighted.

4.10 Work on the travel to work data indicated unsustainable patterns of travel to work. In the rural areas of Horsham commutes and journey times were longer than the national average. Assumptions were made about the distances and journey times to services. It was accepted that these may not necessarily follow travel to work patterns, but that further surveys based on householders use of services and public transport would be required.

4.11 This 'gap' in information was addressed by the work commissioned by the High Weald Unit and the Countryside Agency[7]. As well as examining the profile of the High Weald area in terms of available census data, a series of householder surveys and telephone interviews established patterns of use of services in sample settlements. This, combined with the census data and travel to work data, resulted in some useful strategic information relating to the level of sustainability of settlements. In general it was found that the more remote settlements tended to have higher levels of self containment for work and services and those settlements closer to larger urban areas tend to rely on them for work and services, particularly if transport routes are good.

4.12 The travel to work data, and that revealed from householder surveys on the use of services can therefore be used to determine the level of self-containment within a settlement. Such data can also reveal links between settlements or where settlements function as a group.

Sector Reviews

4.13 One reviewed authority, South Hams District[8], informed the Core Strategy with a series of reviews of different sectors; housing, employment, retail and transport. The Principal Urban Areas were defined and a hierarchy for Area Centres, local centres and villages,

defining them in terms of their role to the district. Although this approach was accepted by the Inspector, it was felt that there was insufficient local dimension or spatial vision and that further work would be required to inform other Development Plan Documents.

4.14 In a similar vein, Epsom and Ewell[9] relied on the County wide Housing Land Availability study and a Housing Needs Study, and presented little spatial strategy. The Inspector approved the Core Strategy but noted that the evidence base was poor and that if the Borough had taken more time, it would have been differently presented. The Green Belt land surrounding the borough and the relative wealth of identified brownfield land helped in this regard. The Inspector agreed that given the situation, alternative development patterns need not be explored at this stage.

Strategic and Regional Policy

4.15 Some authorities (e.g. South Cambridgeshire, South Hams, Blyth Valley[10] and Horsham) are subject to existing regional and strategic policies distributing development. In these cases the strategic locations for development have already been established and it is the remaining housing land supply, if any, that must be distributed in the Core Strategy.

4.16 In some areas the criteria for auditing settlements and determining the strategy are set out in the Structure Plan. This is the case with South Cambridgeshire Core Strategy.

4.17 Plymouth City Council[11] has taken a different approach. As identified in both the Regional Strategy and in the Structure Plan as a Principal Urban Area, the city council appointed architects to prepare a city vision. In conjunction and consultation with local groups, companies, business leaders, residents and the Local Strategic Partnership, a strong Vision based on population and economic growth, connecting elements and joining up strategic opportunities for

[7] Planning for S 8tainable Settlement8 n the H gh Weald 8
So8th Ham8 8ore Strategy De8 2006 8

[9] Ep8om and Ewell 8ore Strategy J ly 2007 8
[10] Blyth Valley 8ore Strategy 8
[11] Plymo8th 8 ty 8o8n8l 8ore Strategy 8

growth, city management and key players for implementation.

4.18 This Vision, which was based on master planning and spatial growth and development was supported by the Inspector and adopted by the city council.

4.19 This approach can be readily applied to an urban area but would not be appropriate in a large disparate rural area.

Size constraints

4.20 Some authorities have applied development size constraints to certain settlements. This often appears as an arbitrary figure with little evidence to justify it. Wealden District Council has consulted on the option of using a 10% increase in the size of the existing settlement population (based on household size census data) but this is untested at Examination in Public. Other districts have chosen to set out size limits based roughly on population size.

4.21 If size constraints are to be applied, they could be related in scale to settlements or linked with an element of identified needs.

Linked settlements

4.22 PPS7 recognises that some settlements have functional relationships that depend on each other, or are inter-related in some way. This is addressed in some Core Strategies.

4.23 Hambleton District[12] for example uses two spatial principles (Areas of Opportunity and Areas of Restraint) as a starting point, following which settlements are categorised into service centres, service villages and secondary villages. The Service and Secondary Villages are said to have a functional relationship with the Service Centres and are situated in their hinterlands. At the Examination in Public the Inspector concluded that its approach was sound, but noted that the spatial dimension was not as clear as it could be.

4.24 Linking settlements functionally has not been addressed by all authorities surveyed. This is a difficult aspect to address given the availability of information to local authorities. Census data and travel to work data, which is readily available, cannot reveal these types of relationships. Specialist surveys are required and given the volume of evidence data required to demonstrate the soundness of the Local Development Framework priorities have to be set.

4.25 The High Weald Sustainable Settlements survey found that some villages rely on larger settlements for the purposes of service provision. For example, Bodiam relies on Hawkhurst and Tenterden for socialising, convenience shopping and banking. Detailed householder surveys and telephone questionnaires were used in sample settlements to reveal general trends. Some settlements, such as Robertsbridge, displayed high levels of self containment for socialising and convenience shopping. This work only covered a sample handful of villages from the Rother area so has limited application to this project.

4.26 The level of detail required to determine linked settlements is high. However to determine the functional role of places, it is a fundamental and revealing aspect of settlements' relationships that cannot be overlooked.

Need

4.27 The question of addressing needs has been considered when determining the spatial distribution of development in rural areas.

4.28 Horsham District Council has addressed this significantly by limiting all development outside main service centres to that which addresses identified need. This was supported by the examining Inspectors, who advocated a clear definition of 'need' when presented with information demonstrating that development in small centres was likely to re-enforce unsustainable development patterns. This is more readily achievable when the Housing Land Supply is adequately met as was the case in Horsham District.

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[12] Hambleton D8tr8t 8o8n8l 8ore Strategy 8

Rother D8tr8t 8o8n8l Lo8al Development Framework - R8ral Settlement8 St8dy November 200 8

4.29   South Cambridgeshire District Council's approach explains that development in minor rural centres will be dependant on existing services and facilities being improved. In areas where the settlement performed poorly in the Structure Plan criteria, any developments over 8 dwellings must address the criteria performance.

4.30   The South Hams approach recognises that rural centres should not only be the focus for housing and employment development but that development should support the diverse needs of its own community and that of its hinterland. Development outside the permitted settlements will only be permitted where it relates to a demonstrable local need.

4.31   Similarly in Hambleton District Council's strategy development in secondary villages will only be permitted where sustainability can be supported or local needs, for example housing, can be met.

4.32   Tandridge[13] District Council has concluded that development outside the main service centres should be dependent on needs and the availability of brownfield sites, with affordable housing being the pressing need identified. However, it should be noted that this approach has yet to be subjected to an Examination in Public.

4.33   Needs have not been clearly defined or identified in the documents examined under this exercise. Aside from Housing Needs Surveys, which are often District, rather than Parish based, limited evidence of local needs appears to have been presented with definitions often broadly defined, leading to potential inconsistency in interpretation.

4.34   If local needs are to be included as a driver for development, they should be clearly defined.

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[13] Tandr dge D8tr8t 8o8n8l S bm8 on Draft 8ore Strategy 8

5.1 The Rural Settlements Study for Rother District has been devised using the assessment of a wide variety of data to develop a thorough understanding of the nature of the study area as required in PPS12.

5.1 This section contains the information underpinning the assessments and where appropriate sets out how the method has been devised. It is structured as follows:

> 5a Population Profile
> 5b Environmental Profile
> 5c Assessment of Local Facilities & Services
> 5d Assessment of Accessibility
> 5e Economic Profile and Assessment of Economic Vitality
> 5f Assessment of Housing and Community Needs

Alternative Methods

5.2 The examination of the hierarchy of settlements in this section has been devised using the most appropriate method identified by Government guidance, the experience of other local authorities and an understanding of the issues facing Rother District.

5.3 Appendix 1 is an assessment of alternative methods which examines the alternatives considered and rejected, in the light of the specific circumstances in Rother District.

5a   Population Profile

5.4   The population of Rother District is 87,505 people in 39,489 households (2007 estimates).

5.5   The population of the District is largely aging. At the time of the 2001 census, Rother District accommodated the highest proportion of residents age 85+ in the country.

5.6   The census also reveals that Rother District has fewer young people and a lower proportion of people of working age compared to the national average. This imbalance in the population has implications for the future economic development of the district.

5.7   The highest proportions of 65+ years are in Bexhill and Fairlight. In contrast the northern parishes tend to have a lower proportion of retired age population, which seems related to the proximity of Tunbridge Wells. Another inter-district disparity is that there appears to be greater health issues for people living at the eastern and coastal parts of the district.

5.8   Bexhill is the largest settlement in the District, with a population of approximately 41,600, and is a strategic focus of new development. It falls outside the scope of this study but has an influence on the villages and settlements it serves.

5.9   Similarly Hastings, which is a large coastal urban centre, is beyond the administrative boundary of Rother District but is a focus for some rural settlements which use its services and social infrastructure.

5.10   Although relatively small market towns, Battle and Rye operate as local foci for shops, services and facilities. Both offer a range of services and shopping high streets. Both towns are historic, which means they also offer a tourist experience and can become congested.

5.11   The rural area beyond the three main settlements of Bexhill, Battle and Rye is characterised by a large number of settlements, varying considerably in size, layout and relationship with each other. Just over 35,000 people live in the rural

part of Rother District, of which some 27,500 (almost 80%) live in villages of sufficient scale to be included in the analysis of this study.

5.12   The composition of household types in Rural Rother are couples (with/without children) – 48%, single person - 27%, pensioner – 15%, lone parent - 6%.

5.13   The largest villages in terms of population are Robertsbridge, Northiam, Ticehurst, Westfield, Fairlight Cove, Burwash, Camber, Hurst Green, Peasmarsh and Broad Oak. These all have populations larger than 1,000 but less than 3,000.

5.14   Larger villages that offer a good variety of services often act as 'village centres' for their surrounding hinterlands. The table of Service Level Indicators in Appendix 2 also identifies those Rother villages that perform such a role and section 5c discusses the issue in more detail.

5.15   Other settlements, or groups of settlements, despite population size, tend to rely on either proximity to large urban centres (Bexhill or Hastings) or local service villages for day to day needs.

5.16   There are a number of settlements with very small populations, which are physically cohesive as settlements, but which have low population levels and little in the way of social or economic infrastructure (for example Burwash Weald). Similarly, some other small settlements lack physical cohesiveness but are relatively well served by services (for example Bodiam).

5.17   Population values for the rural settlements of Rother District have been estimated. Census data is generally presented by parish or ward, and this does not indicate individual settlement populations. The population estimates used in this study are produced by Rother District Council and are based on household numbers combined with parish average household size.

5.18   It is readily recognisable that the larger settlements tend to have a wider variety of services and social and economic infrastructure. It therefore makes sense

to say that these larger settlements also would tend to act as hubs for the rural hinterlands and the very small settlements.

5.19   Small settlements can be physically closely related to other small settlements and can operate as a group or cluster. Appendix 4 shows which villages operate in this way by virtue of having other towns and villages within easy reach and this issue is discussed further in section 5d.

Key Findings on Population

Population provides a starting point for consideration of which settlements may be suitable for growth. Other attributes to be factored in to the consideration, including environmental constraints, service role, accessibility, economic profile and housing and community needs are discussed in the remainder of this section.

Box 3

5b   Environmental Profile

5.20   This section can be read alongside Appendix 8 'Environmental Factors', Map 1 'Environmental Designations' and Map 2 'Flood Risk Areas'. All can be found in the separate Appendices & Maps document.

5.21   As Map 1 illustrates, the District is highly constrained by environmental and landscape designations which should be afforded the highest level of protection available. This is in line with national policy set out in PPS1 and PPS7 and in order to protect biodiversity and landscape of intrinsic value.

5.22   The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a significant constraint and covers some 80% of the district. Major development in the AONB should normally only be approved if it is in the national interest. In addition, all development should respect the objectives of designation, which are to preserve the natural beauty of the landscape and quiet enjoyment of the countryside.

5.23   An important policy implication for the AONB is that Local Development Documents and Regional Plans should support suitably located and well designed development necessary to facilitate the economic and social well being of designated areas and their communities, which may include the provision of adequate housing.

5.24   Much of the remainder of the district, outside urban areas, is covered by Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

5.25   The Pevensey Levels an area of internationally recognised nature conservation interest. It is in part designated as a SSSI and is also a National Nature Reserve and a Ramsar site. Its importance as a wetland habitat for birds and flora is renowned.

5.26   Significant areas of the levels between Dungeness and Pett are also a designated SSSI and Special Area for Conservation and a proposed Special Protection Area for birds. These are both of European importance. Rother also contains significant areas of Ancient Woodland, which it is important to protect.

5.27   As Map 2 demonstrates, the District is also considerably constrained by the risk of flooding along the main river valleys and in the coastal areas around Rye, Camber and Winchelsea.

5.28   Conservation Areas are areas of special historic or architectural interest the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Conservation Areas are designated at Battle, Bexhill (two locations), Burwash, Northiam, Robertsbridge, Rye, Sedlescombe, Ticehurst and Winchelsea. It is primarily the historic centres of villages that are covered with this designation and reflects the quality of the buildings and spaces between them. Development is not precluded in Conservation Areas, but should be designed and scaled to preserve or enhance the quality of the townscape.

5.29   South East Plan's policy NRM 5 identifies areas of strategic opportunity for biodiversity improvement. These include the wetlands of the Romney Marsh / south east corner of Rother District as well as the ancient woodland that covers much of the remainder of Rother. In line with this, policies in Rother's Core Strategy Preferred Options are proposing to *'Identify, with partners, strategic areas of opportunity for biodiversity improvement in the coastal areas of the Romney Marshes as identified in the South East Plan's policy NRM 4, by developing and supporting of the 'Romney Marsh Living Landscapes Project'*

5.30   The Council is also proposing to prepare a 'Green Network Strategy' which will use the mapping of key green spaces within the Natural England's Accessible Natural Green Space Strategy, to identify gaps and strategic opportunities in the ecological and recreational networks

5.31   Although this Rural Settlements Study is primarily concerned with the villages there may be opportunities to pursue biodiversity improvements, including any that may be identified in the forthcoming 'Green Network Strategy'. This may be achieved either alongside new

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development or indirectly via developer's contributions.

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Key Findings on Environment

A number of relevant environmental constraints affect the study area and the individual settlements within it. The Sites of International biodiversity importance, the High Weald AONB and the SSSIs and are the most significant designations affecting the study area. Equally relevant is the frequency of Ancient Woodland, which characterises the district and the High Weald.

There are also large areas at risk from flooding along the coastal levels, and along the banks of rivers.

In combination, these factors cause significant environmental constraints across most of the District. The predominantly coastal areas beyond the AONB boundary are generally the same areas that are at risk from flooding and/or covered by international habitat designations.

Whilst suitably designed and located development to support local needs is supported by Government policy, the significant environmental constraints, require careful planning. Where other factors demonstrate that a settlement is suitable for growth, development will need careful planning around environmental factors.

There may indeed be opportunities for net improvements to habitats via planning gain and/or developer's contributions. Such improvements will need to be identified in the Council's forthcoming 'Green Network Study'.

Box 4

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5c Assessment of Local Facilities/Services

5.32 This section can be read alongside Appendix 2 'Service Level Indicators'.

5.33 The identification of Local Service Centres as areas suitable for growth is identified in national planning guidance (Planning Policy Statement 7).

5.34 As outlined in more detail in Chapter 2, the Draft South East Plan and its Panel Report also advocate a criteria-based approach to the determination of areas suitable to accommodate growth.

5.35 It is recognised that certain villages, when functioning as service centres, could benefit from some growth, where it reinforces and promotes economic growth, contributes to local social needs and protects high quality environments.

5.36 The approach advocated here is the examination of a range of important local services and their distribution in settlements, as a means to determine which act as service centres. This has been presented in matrix form by settlement.

5.37 This information is not examined in isolation, but will be overlaid with information on the accessibility of a settlement, economic and population profiles and information on environmental constraints. Coupled with information on local needs, a spatial analysis of the role of settlements will emerge enabling the identification of settlements that could accommodate growth, and where that growth would be of economic, social or environmental benefit.

5.38 Account needs to be taken of the role of adjacent towns, especially Battle and Rye that act as service centres for many villages. In rural areas, as has been established in other surveys,[14] the use of services is not limited to those who live nearby. Equally, those living in a village/market town may not always use local services. Due to the relative isolation of homes from a full range of services, car ownership is high; people are more mobile and willing to travel further. The section 'Village Clusters and Relationships with other Settlements' in section 5 of this document, examines this issue in more detail.

5.39 Each settlement will therefore be examined in terms of the services available within it (see Appendix 2). In addition, within the assessment of Accessibility (see Appendix 3), the relationship of that settlement to a service centre or larger urban area will be noted.

5.40 The services considered appropriate to highlight are those which respond to the day to day needs of the population, within the economic and social context in which they live. The full analysis of services is contained in Appendix 2, but in summary the services are:

- Convenience shopping
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Doctors Surgery
- Dentist
- chemist
- Post Office
- Public House
- Community Hall
- Play Area
- Sports Pitch
- Place of Worship
- Library (Permanent or Mobile) Nursery School
- Petrol Filling Station

5.41 This list is devised by examining other districts' studies and the use of judgements regarding the role of such facilities in the social, economic and cultural life of a settlement. It is notable that in response to the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation, rural residents emphasised the importance of local facilities. For example, more than 80% of rural residents considered that post offices and shops for day to day purchases were either 'essential' or 'important' in making a village a good place to live in. Sections 3.71 to 3.80 contain more detail on these results.

5.42 Those settlements which have a broad range of services could be said to act as a Service Centre.

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[14] Plann ng for S 8ta nable Settlement8 n the H gh Weald 8

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5.43 Depending on the local range, a '**Rural Service Centre**' is defined as a settlement with at least 14 service level indicator services within the settlement.

5.44 If a settlement contained a more limited range of services, but acts as a local hub for smaller settlements, it has been defined as a '**Local Service Village**'. Depending on the local range, a Local Service Village is defined as having at least 10 service level indicator services within it. The presence of a primary school is also considered a pre-requisite of classification as a Local Service Village, which explains the exclusion of Camber (No primary school) as a Local Service village in Appendix 2.

5.45 A settlement acting as a 'Service Centre' may be considered suitable for growth if development can address identified needs and should other factors (economic, accessibility and environmental) also indicate suitability.

5.46 Some interesting background information regarding shopping patterns in Rother were contained in the 2008 District Wide Shopping Assessment and some of the more relevant results were summarised at section 3.36. Generally they indicate that rural residents may tend to use local village shops for secondary top-up shopping, but for their main weekly shop the tendency is to travel to a larger town.

Key Findings on Service Centres

The identification of Service Centres is an important part of the development of the Rural Settlements Study.

(i) Rural Service Centres

For the purposes of this study Service Centres are defined as those with a good range of local shops, services and social infrastructure (at least 14 out of 18 of the identified service level indicators) serving an area that extends beyond its own boundaries. Rural Service Centres are identified at Robertsbridge and Ticehurst.

(ii) Local Service Village

For the purposes of this study, a Local Service Village has a smaller range of local shops, services and social infrastructure which caters for a more local population. They are defined as those with a minimum of 10 of the 18 identified service level indicator services, and include a primary school.

Local Service Villages are identified as Burwash, Catsfield, Hurst Green, Northiam, Peasmarsh, Sedlescombe and Westfield.

(iii) Other Settlements

Some 39 other villages are included for analysis within this study although not considered to fulfil a service centre role.

This information is not to be used in isolation, but is to be overlaid with information on the other identified factors. When compared to information on the accessibility of settlements, the economic activity levels and a detailed examination of environmental constraints, the settlements' suitability for development can be assessed.

Box 5

5d   Profile of Village Accessibility

5.47   This section can be read alongside Appendix 3 'Accessibility Indicators'

Public Transport

5.48   The accessibility of settlements within the study area is affected by the levels of public transport available to residents. Those settlements that are best served by public transport can be considered to be more accessible, and hence more sustainable, than isolated settlements.

5.49   There are two principal categories of public transport available; bus transport and the railway network.   As fixed transport infrastructure, the railway is considered more permanent and less subject to service level fluctuations and economic circumstance.

Rail Network

5.50   Parts of the study area are connected by rail. Railway stations with a 'full service' are available at:

- Crowhurst
- Battle
- Robertsbridge
- Etchingham
- Stonegate
- Guestling Green
- Rye

Even within the above definition it is acknowledged that some stations have more stops than others.

5.51   In addition there are three stations operating 'partial' services, including;

- Winchelsea
- Three Oaks
- Doleham

Bus services

5.52   For the purposes of this assessment, a village bus service is recognised if it offers peak hour services that run from the settlement before 9.30 in the morning with a return journey before 6.30 in the evening. This enables a day long visit for work or education purposes.

Road Accessibility

5.53   Accessibility to the main road network is an important consideration when considering the appropriateness of village growth and development.

5.54   In particular, locations along the two trunk road (A21 and A259) corridors are inherently more accessible. Proximity to other A roads and to a lesser extent, B roads, also increase the accessibility of a settlement.

5.55   The Highways Agency has a number of major road schemes near within Rother. The schemes are;

a) A21 Baldslow Junction Improvements
b) A21 Flimwell to Robertsbridge
c) A259 Pevensey to Brenzett improvements

Additional schemes just outside the District are

d) A21 Tonbridge to Pembury
e) A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst

5.56   The current Regional Transport Board Programme indicates that's schemes a, d and e will be delivered in the period up to 2016. However schemes b and c are scheduled as post 2016, and are subject to the current refresh of the priorities and these dates may change. Only the A21 Tonbridge-Pembury scheme has been finally approved for construction.

Cycling

5.57   East Sussex Cycling Strategy is a means of informing and co-ordinating all policies and programmes of action which can help to promote cycling in East Sussex. Although the document is non-statutory, it is a useful tool that provides a coherent overview of existing, proposed and potential provision for cyclists. It will inform the statutory planning process and will contribute to other County Council policies and strategies. It dates from 2000 but a new one is currently being prepared by the County Council and is expected in 2009. The primary focus is on utility rather than recreational routes.

5.58   For recreational cycling there are 8 Millennium Cycle rides set through the hearty of 1066 country.

Access to cycle routes comes up as a consistent concern of village residents during consultation.

Village Clusters and Relationships with other Settlements

5.59 This section can be read alongside Appendix 4 'Relationships between Settlements'.

5.60 Car ownership in the study area is high and the majority of residents are highly mobile. This is a function of the relative isolation of some settlements and the relative wealth of parts of the District.

5.61 Services within a settlement may not always be first choice for residents. Where there are close physical links to nearby service centres or large urban areas, it is expected that services within these areas would be used. An example here is Fairlight Cove, with a larger population but few local services. In this case, it is expected that residents would look to Hastings for their immediate needs.

5.62 Similarly, a village with a low service level, which lies close to a village with larger service levels, is likely to use the latter settlements' services. A local example is Rye Harbour, relying on Rye.

5.63 It is for this reason that a key indicator for accessibility is the travel time from one settlement to a larger urban area or a service centre as set out in Appendix 4. An examination of this factor will indicate where settlements rely on others for services and, in particular, whether settlements act as a group or cluster for service provision. A group or cluster can, between them, act as a Service Centre or Local Service Village.

Key Findings on Accessibility

Public Transport
The higher the level of accessibility the more suitable for development a settlement may be.

Relationships with other settlements
Settlements within close range of Bexhill (within 10 minute drive time) include:
- Normans Bay

Settlements within close range of Hastings (within 10 minute drive time) include:
- Friars Hill
- Guestling Green
- Icklesham
- Westfield
- Westfield Lane

Settlements within close range of Battle (within 5 minute drive time) include:
- Netherfield
- Johns Cross
- Catsfield

Settlements within close range of Rye (within 5 minute drive time) include:
- Iden
- Peasmarsh
- Playden
- Rye Harbour
- Winchelsea

Settlements which lie close to Robertsbridge Rural Service Centre (within 5 minute drive time) include:
- Hurst Green
- Johns Cross
- Mountfield

Settlements which lie close to Ticehurst Rural Service Centre (within 5 minute drive time) include:
- Flimwell
- Stonegate

Settlements which act as linked settlements include:
- Broad Oak, Brede and Cackle Street,
- Four Oaks and Beckley,
- Etchingham and Hurst Green,
- Pett, Pett Level and Friars Hill.
- Winchelsea and Winchelsea Beach
- Burwash, Burwash Common and Burwash Weald.

Box 6

5e Economic Profile and Assessment of Economic Vitality

5.64 The Rother and Hastings economy currently underperforms vis-à-vis the South–East average. Earnings are below the regional average, unemployment is higher and economic activity is lower. The economy is described as weak. This is due in part to its inaccessibility, large rented sector, large stock of small dwellings, particularly in Hastings.

5.65 The attractive local environment has the affect of making in-migration selective. Those migrating into the rural sub-region tend to be older people who are down-shifting their work requirements. This causes the economic and age imbalance and exacerbates the lack of affordability in housing.

5.66 The Hastings and Rother Housing Market Study suggests that the existing features of the market will drive this process; the high stock of private rented housing in Hastings, that new affordable homes tend to be in urban areas and that rural Rother District is more expensive due to the attractions of the environment. This creates the selective migration detailed above.

5.67 The importance of considering economic issues when developing the settlement strategy for Rother District is reinforced by these findings. In addition, the inclusion of part of the study area within the Sussex Coast Sub-Region in the South East Plan with its emphasis on socio-economic regeneration also serves to illustrate the need to consider economic indicators within the methodology.

Travel to Work Areas

5.68 Rother substantially forms part of the defined Hastings economic area (Travel to Work Area), with the northern part of the District within the Tunbridge Wells TTWA. Only 4 Rother Parishes (Ticehurst, Burwash, Hurst Green and Etchingham) fall within the Tunbridge Wells TTWA.

5.69 TTWAs are officially recognised "labour market areas", defined by the ONS. They are areas in which the bulk (at least 75%) of the resident economically active population also work.

Hastings Travel to Work Area
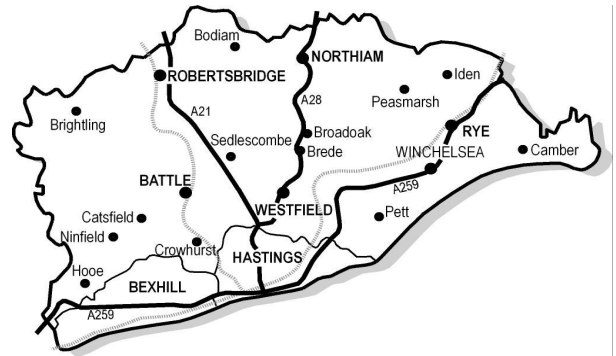
5.70 Whilst rural villages export labour to Hastings, the whole of the Hastings TTWA is also a net exporter of labour to other areas.

5.71 As suggested by the Hastings & Rother Employment Strategy and Land Review, more localised labour markets are also evident in Rother. Rye is an employment focus in the east, as is Battle Town for the surrounding rural central area. Interestingly, Darwell ward (which includes Brightling, Burwash, Mountfield and Whatlington) is highlighted as drawing in commuters.

5.72 Those living in north Rother, in Ticehurst and Etchingham, display considerable dependency on Tunbridge Wells as a centre of employment. In addition, north-east Wealden and southern areas of Tunbridge Wells districts also draw in commuters from the eastern and western fringes of Rother. Robertsbridge draws in workers from across the Tunbridge Wells boundary.

Employment and Earnings

5.73 There are some 23,200 jobs in Rother, some 40% of which are part time.

5.74 Rother District has a high proportion of small firms and a very low proportion of large firms compared to the country, the region and the county.

5.75 In broad terms, the pattern of employment sectors is similar at local and regional levels. The greatest percentage of Rother's working population is employed in the public service sector (27.8%), a

higher rate than for the region as a whole (23.6%). Conversely, the regional importance of financial and businesses services in employment terms (20.7%) is not reflected locally (16.8%), nor is employment in transport, storage and communications (5.4% in Rother, 8.1% in the South East). Whilst low in overall percentage terms, employment in agriculture and related activities in Rother (3.3%) is significantly above the regional average of 1.5%.

5.76 Average weekly earnings of Rother residents are £549, with average full-time male earnings some 50% higher than those of women. Average earnings of all people *working* in Rother are noticeably lower than average earnings of residents, illustrating the higher incomes available by commuting out of the District for work.

5.77 The average household income in Rother falls significantly below the regional average. This may be linked to the high proportion of retired residents. The 2001 Census revealed that of those aged between 16 and 74 in Rother, 22.3% are retired. This is the highest proportion of all the 67 local authority areas in the South East.

Employment Sectors

5.78 Rother District has a low proportion of people in higher professional, higher and lower managerial occupations and intermediate occupations than the national average. This is also the case with lower supervisory technical employment and semi-routine employment.

5.79 The rural areas are by no means homogenous in their economic characteristics. Some parishes enjoy proportionally high levels of higher professional and managerial occupations, particularly in the north (Bodiam, Brightling, Burwash, Dallington, Etchingham, Ewhurst, Ticehurst and Whatlington). Conversely areas in the east (including Camber, Rye and Icklesham) have a proportionally lower percentage of professional and managerial occupations.

5.80 Rother District does however have a higher than average level of small employers and own account workers. Parishes more distant from towns tend to

have more small businesses and self-employed. Brightling, Playden, East Guildeford, Udimore and Whatlington have the highest levels, whereas Bexhill has the lowest.

5.81 The high levels of own account and small employers can indicate a high level of self containment, and it is interesting that the parishes with the highest levels are possibly the less accessible and more isolated settlements in the district.

5.82 At the "micro-business" scale, Rother is highlighted in the Employment Strategy Review as having a high level of home-based employment, being in the upper quartile nationally and having the highest level in the South East region.

Economic Indicators

5.83 This section can be read alongside Appendix 5 'Economic Indicators'.

5.84 PPS7 encourages local economic development particularly 'where there is a need for employment creation and economic regeneration'. There is also a case for arguing for promoting development where there is easy access to a range of employment opportunities by non-car modes. This translates to the following objectives and measures:

Objective	Evidence
To take account of the need to reduce unemployment	Number (and percentage) unemployed
To take account of the need to encourage vibrant communities	Economic activity rate[15]
To take account of the availability of local employment opportunities	Ratio of in:out-commuting
To take account of access to work by non-car modes	Percentage commuting other than by car
To take account of extent of rural deprivation	East Sussex parish rank of index of multiple deprivation

5.85 Appendix 5 contains the detailed results of the above indicators on a parish by parish basis, together with a discussion of likely implications for the need for new business development in villages. It is important to note that parish-based and ward-based

15 E onom8 ally a8t ve pop8lat on 8 the n8mber of people, who 8 are e8onom8 ally a8t ve aged 16 to the 8

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statistics may have some limitations when applied to an individual village, which may be untypical of the parish. Some parishes contain several villages to which the same parish-based set of statistics have been applied.

5.86 The presence of employment areas within a settlement has also been highlighted within individual village appraisals in part 2.

5.87 Where settlements have a high level of unemployment, this may be interpreted as a village with a need for more economic development, particularly if combined with higher levels of economic activity.

5.88 The economic activity rate in this instance measures the number of people who are in employment or unemployed expressed as a percentage of the population aged over 16. In combination with the unemployment rate, it offers a good indication of the employment opportunities offered by the local labour market.

5.89 A low level of economic active populations may suggest a high proportion of retired persons, people looking after offspring or students – although in Rother it seems the former is most likely.

5.90 In principle therefore, settlements with low levels of economic activity would not generally be considered as suitable for growth. However, if other indicators demonstrated a high level of suitability for growth, any development proposed should address economic needs through developments such as mixed uses or home working. This is particularly important within the area of the District which falls within the Sussex Coast Sub-Region in the South East Plan given its emphasis on socio-economic regeneration.

5.918 A high ratio of in:out commuting indicates a village that provides a higher number of jobs relative to its economically active population, which suggests a degree of economic buoyancy. A low ratio suggests a village that would benefit from the provision of more local employment areas. 8

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5.92 The index of multiple deprivation rankings across the District are also lower (i.e. worse) in the east, although there are other areas with lower than average

rankings. Areas suffering from deprivation may also benefit more from economic development.

Rural Industrial Estates

5.93 Appendix 6 indicates the location of rural industrial estates, together with their floor area, vacancy level and use class.

5.94 By far the biggest industrial area is British Gypsum at Mountfield which comprises over half the total rural floorspace.

5.958 Most estates show a high level of occupancy. The vacancy level averages at 4%. 8

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5.968 It is important to note that this is not the full extent of rural employment opportunities. Many smaller scale business uses exist scattered throughout the district in addition to opportunities on larger business / industrial estates. 8

Need for Additional Business Floorspace

5.97 The 2008 Employment Strategy Review (ESR) stated that there is clearly ongoing demand for small workshops and, to a lesser degree, office space in rural Rother, as evidenced by the number of small sites, conversion schemes and high occupancy rates. Most provision is of small workshop and office units, with some demand for larger units.

5.98 The ESR also maintained that business space both serves to support the vitality of rural communities and provide accessible jobs. A broad distribution of accommodation across rural settlements therefore meets wider objectives. Many smaller developments stem from the reuse of former agricultural buildings and these also provide an important source of space for rural businesses.

5.99 Conclusions regarding particular villages that are suitable for employment growth can be found in section 6.69 onwards.

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5f   Assessment of Housing and Community Needs

5.100   When considering new development, the need to foster vital and viable communities and to respond to their particular needs is paramount. A line from the Northiam Parish Action Plan, but one that equally be applied to any of our villages states that *'there is clearly a demand to build more of a community, to create closer ties between people, foster co-operation and reap the benefits that people working together can achieve – socially, environmentally and politically. What people fear is that the village loses its amenities and its identity, that neighbours become strangers and everyone looks to someone else to solve their problems or provide their entertainment.'*

5.101   As identified earlier in this document, both national planning policy and the emerging regional spatial strategy both identify the importance of assessing local needs when considering the option of housing provision in rural areas.

5.102   Indeed, this is particularly emphasised in PPS7 when considering housing development in designated areas such as AONB. This issue is therefore important to the development of the Rural Settlements Study for Rother District given that 80% of the administrative area falls within the High Weald AONB.

5.103   The needs of the District are identified as a means of linking the potential for development with local needs, as ratified in the South East Plan. This approach has also been supported by Inspectors at some Examinations in Public into Core Strategy Development Plan Documents.

5.104   Development can act as a driver to the provision of a wide range of services and facilities. If needs are identified on a settlement basis, development can be directly linked to contribute towards that need.

5.105   Needs have been identified from a number of local sources. It is important to note that this section is to some extent a snapshot of needs at a certain point in time. Nevertheless, it will provide a useful indicator of needs to examine how development can contribute towards sustainable settlements.

5.106   The most pressing local need is that for affordable housing. The lack of affordability is the subject of the Housing Market Assessment, and local housing needs surveys.

5.107   Appendix 7 contains the detailed housing indicators. To inform the distribution of new housing across Parishes, and therein to villages, the following information is used:

Objective	Evidence
To take account of the scale of local need	Number of households in housing need
To take account of the scale of the issue	Number of households in housing need as a percentage of all households
To take account of the tenure balance in the existing housing stock	Percentage of social rented housing (RSL/LA) in the existing stock
To take account of demonstrable current needs	Number of households on the Housing Register seeking accommodation
To take account of demonstrable current needs relative to existing stock of households	Number of households on housing register as a % of all households

5.108   A mixed picture emerges from analysis of the above sources of information in Appendix 6. For example, villages which exhibit high levels of housing need do not always correspond with those for which there is a high demand from the housing register. Peasmarsh is the one example which demonstrates a correlating need for new housing from both measures.

5.109   Other community needs have been highlighted from Parish Plans, the Council's Community Strategy, Local Action Plans, the Council's 'Open Space, Sport & Recreation Audit and Assessment' and the responses to the Core Strategy Issues & Options Paper. There are too

many identified needs to be mentioned here, but in Part Two, individual needs are drawn out on a village by village basis.

5.110 By considering this feedback a strategy can begin to be developed with the involvement of the local community which takes into account its needs in line with the approach also promoted in PPS1 (paragraphs 7 and 16) and PPS7 (paragraph 8) (see earlier).

Key Findings on Housing and Community

Housing is a particularly pressing need in the study area. Analysis of the following key statistics has helped inform the need for new housing provision in the villages.

- Number of households in housing need.
- Proportion of social rented housing in stock.
- Numbers on housing register.

The analysed information is a snapshot at the time of writing, but taken cumulatively with other evidence, can provide a picture of housing need in an area and used as a starting point for housing allocations.

Box 8

Key Findings from Section 5

Rother District is characterised by a wide rage of settlement sizes and types. Development potential will be considered in the context of a broad range of sustainability indicators, including population, services, accessibility, economy, housing/community needs and environment.

Box 9

6 K Concl sions k

Housing

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Scale of Overall Housing Development in Rural Villages

6.1 All growth options are drawn up in the light of the Draft South East Plan requirement for 280 dwellings per annum in Rother District up to 2026 which is in turn split on a 200/80 basis.

6.2 Under Policy SCT7 of the Draft South East Plan, the Sussex Coast Sub-Region of Rother (which includes Bexhill and Rye as well as a number of smaller settlements such as Camber, Winchelsea, Pett, Catsfield, Icklesham) is expected to develop at least 200 dwellings per annum. The remaining rural area that is wholly within the AONB and includes the market town of Battle as well as Robertsbridge, Ticehurst, Northiam, Hurst Green and many other villages is expected to develop at least 80 dwellings per annum.

6.3 The scale of appropriate development is guided by the place-shaping agenda of individual villages. Individual village appraisals have helped inform the quantity of housing growth that is considered appropriate for the rural villages in their entirety.

6.4 The overall level of development in villages is also dependent on a consideration of spatial distribution in the district as a whole. Consideration of these options has taken place as part of the Core Strategy Preferred Options, but in summary the options presented were as follows;

	Villages (per annum figure in brackets)	Bexhill	Battle	Rye
District Option 1 – Population based	**2,075 (104pa)**	2,900	275	350
District Option 2 – Service centres (preferred)	**1,200 (60pa)**	**3,400**	**500**	**500**
District Option 3 – Trend based	**1,880 (94pa)**	3,150	330	235
District Option 4 – Commitment led	**1,665 (83pa)**	2,525	935	475
District Option 5 – Housing needs based	**860 (43pa)**	2,720	920	1,100

6.5 Some options clearly imply more growth in villages, i.e. a distribution based upon population (Option 1) equates to 2,075 dwellings over twenty years (or 104 per annum) for rural villages, as opposed to a distribution based upon the areas of need identified in the Housing Needs Assessment 2005 (Option 5), which equates to just 43 per annum for rural villages.

6.6 As set out in the Core Strategy Directions paper, option 2 (service centre based) is preferred, implying a need for some 1200 dwellings in the rural villages over the period 2006-2026. This is a 'medium growth' option when compared to alternative options that would imply a need in the rural villages ranging from 43 to 104 per annum. The preference for option 2 is moderated by option 5 (needs based) and option 1 (population based).

6.7 The Core Strategy Directions document suggests this is the preferred option since it accords most closely to the Plan's strategic objectives and to the results of the Sustainability Appraisal process.

6.8 The final scale of growth for rural villages will depend on a number of factors, in addition to the results of individual appraisals – such as the relative levels of growth that are considered appropriate for Bexhill, Battle and Rye. These options may of course be subject to amendment in the final spatial strategy.

District Wide Spatial Distribution of Housing 2006 to 2026

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<u>Village Housing Distribution Options</u>

6.9   An important caveat to clarify at the outset of this section is that the options discussed are indicative only. In all examples options will need further moderating on the ground at the local level in the light of more detailed examination of local environmental / landscape constraints and in the light of identified local needs. In part two of this Rural Settlements Study on 'Village Appraisals' the implications of these indicative spatial options are examined in light of the benefits they may bring in meeting local needs and in the light of their realism and achievability on the ground.

Relationship of 'Village' Housing Distribution Options to Preferred 'District' Spatial Distribution Option

6.10   Although there is a district-wide preferred spatial distribution, this still needs interpreting at the village level. Five options for distribution amongst the villages are presented below, four of which were set out in the Core Strategy Issues and Options paper in October 2006. Given the district wide preference for a 'service-centre based distribution' there is an initial presumption in favour of following the same preference down to village level (i.e. option one). The extent to which this should be moderated by other factors is discussed in the following sections. All options for spatial distribution across the villages have also been subject to the sustainability appraisal process (see Appendix 7 for more details).

Relationship of Village Housing Distribution Options to Core Strategy Issues & Options

6.11   Of the five village spatial distribution options discussed below, the first four were set out in more detail in the Core Strategy Issues and Options paper. As section 3.56-3.67 highlighted, there was no real consensus from consultees on a 'preferred' option.

6.12   A fifth option 'Focus Development on Transport Corridors' has been added subsequently in light of comments received. A summary of the strengths and weaknesses of all five options is contained in Table 1.

Village Housing Distribution Option A – Continue to Focus on Village Service Centres

6.13   Option A conforms with the preferred spatial option at the District-wide level and also conforms strongly with government guidance in PPS7 which states;
Paragraph 3 'Away from larger urban areas, planning authorities should focus most new development in or near to local service centres where employment, housing (including affordable housing), services and other facilities can be provided close together. This should help to ensure these facilities are served by public transport and provide improved opportunities for access by walking and cycling. These centres (which might be a country town, a single large village or a group of villages) should be identified in the development plan as the preferred location for such development.'

6.14   This option would see most growth being directed towards the two rural service centres and to a lesser extent towards the seven local service villages.

Rural Service Centres	Robertsbridge
	Ticehurst
Local Service Villages	Burwash
	Hurst Green
	Sedlescombe
	Northiam
	Westfield
	Peasmarsh
	Catsfield

6.15   More detail on this hierarchy can be found in Appendix 2.

6.16   Growth would be dependent on environmental factors would be proportional to current household numbers so that each village would have a manageable growth that is more readily absorbed into the existing community.

6.17   The option allows the maximum amount of people to benefit from the provision of services, which in turn increases the economic vitality of the services themselves. It may also be cost-effective since compared to other options it may require less new infrastructure and services.

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6.18   However, it may be argued that this method places undue importance on service provision at the expense of other factors, particularly public and private transport accessibility.

Option B – Development to Support Community Needs and Deficiencies

6.19   Option B targets those villages which have housing need (based on a number of factors detailed in Appendix 7 including number of households in housing need, number of households in housing need as a percentage of all households and number of households on the housing register seeking accommodation).

6.20   This option also incorporates an element to facilitate specific identified needs within villages such as new play areas or community centres. Such specific needs may have been identified in a number of sources, including Rother District Council evidence studies or Parish Plans.

6.21   An advantage of this option is that it is arguably the one that does the most to address the key issue of affordable housing. It may therefore be popular at the local level if there are clear benefits over costs.

6.22   However, the reliability and robustness of supporting information particularly in respect of housing pressures could be questioned. For example; the choice of preferred location from those on the housing register is arguably influenced dependent on where availability is perceived to be.

6.23   Information on other locally identified 'needs' may be only partially complete where information has only been forthcoming from a minority of parishes. It may also be difficult and expensive to deliver the full extent of needs and deficiencies. Delivery may be dependent on S106 agreements at the Development Control level.

6.24   This method may also result in an over focus on unsustainable locations where services/infrastructure may be lacking as well as providing only limited opportunities in other villages which may be more sustainable locations.

Option C – Focus Development on a Few Larger Villages

6.25   This option builds upon option A, but narrows development options to a smaller number of suitable villages. Essentially this would be villages that are not only well served in terms of services (as visible on Appendix 2), but are also well served by a range of transport options (as demonstrated by Appendix 3).

6.26   Only four villages appear to score sufficiently well on both criteria. They are Hurst Green, Robertsbridge, Ticehurst and Northiam.

6.27   However, focussing development on such a small number of villages may have an adverse impact on the cohesiveness of the settlements in question since they would inevitably need to grow at a high rate in light of their current populations.

6.28   Smaller villages would get proportionally much less under this option. Therefore, it may also deny smaller villages of the development which could be used to facilitate community services and facilities and may result in genuine housing needs within smaller settlements being overlooked.

Option D – Dispersed Development

Option D(i) – Population based across Villages

6.29   Option D(i) would spread development across settlements proportional to their existing populations.

6.30   It may be that this option corresponds more with the existing dispersed settlement pattern of villages and hamlets that is already a key feature of the High Weald AONB. The option would direct more development towards smaller villages more than the alternative options A, B, C and E. As such it would concur with English Heritage and High Weald AONB Unit research that suggests sustainable lifestyles are actually fostered more in smaller settlements than in larger 'service centre' villages.

6.31   In option D(i), the growth would be distributed amongst all villages included in the Rural Settlements Study, as well as the service and most accessible villages. Although very small hamlets would be

excluded, this option generally spreads development more widely.

6.32 This option may be problematic in the context of current Local Plan policy regarding development boundaries. Only a selected group of villages have development boundaries, and policy does not allow for extensive development in the other villages. Therefore the application of this option would require a major change of policy direction regarding development boundaries in the LDF.

6.33 Although this option may distribute development in a way that is perceived as 'equal', population is not always a gauge to accessibility, provision of services or local needs, and therefore this option may be contrary to sustainable planning.

Option D(ii) **Rejected at Outset** *– Developments of Smaller Settlements and Historic Farmsteads*

6.34 This option has been considered but discounted at the outset as a viable alternative. Therefore it does not appear as a rural spatial distribution option in the main Core Strategy.

6.35 Essentially it is an alternative interpretation of 'dispersed development' that concentrates expansion on smaller and remoter settlements and farmsteads has been promoted by the High Weald Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) Unit, and supported by research conducted by English Heritage.

6.36 To an extent the adaptation, conversion and re-use of historic farm buildings happens anyway under existing Local Plan policy HG11, although economic and tourism purposes are generally prioritised ahead of residential.

6.37 However, large scale development at these locations (entailing extensions and new build) would inevitably impact on the historic character and act as an alternative to providing dwellings in and around accessible service centres. Such a policy would clearly be contrary to national (PPS7 and PPS3) and regional planning policy. Therefore it is not a genuine spatial development option in the sense of being a realistic alternative for the overall scale of development required.

6.38 Rather than constituting an alternative rural spatial option, these matters overlap more directly with the issues of exception site policy and key worker affordable housing. Therefore they are dealt with in more detail in the Core Strategy Preferred Options Paper sections on re-use of redundant agricultural buildings.

Option E – Focus Development on Transport Corridors

6.39 Another option that has emerged is to focus upon existing transport corridors. As maps 3 and 4 indicate, the two main trunk roads (A21 and A259) and the two main rail lines follow broadly similar north/south (to London via Robertsbridge) and east/west routes (to Ashford & Kent via Rye).

6.40 A number of villages are located along these two corridors. Focussing development along these villages may facilitate increased accessibility and commuting to larger towns and cities to the north (London, Tunbridge Wells), east (Ashford, Dover, Folkestone) and south (Hastings and Bexhill). As such, option 5 may offer an attractive option from an economic development point of view and may act as a spur to regeneration of Hastings and Bexhill. It may also help re-enforce the rail service and enhance Rother's role in the region.

6.41 Villages that would be main focus for development on this option include Hurst Green, Robertsbridge, and Flimwell (amongst others).

6.42 This option accords to a large extent with national guidance in the form of PPS7 and PPG13. PPS 7 states 'Accessibility should be a key consideration in all development decisions. Most developments which are likely to generate large numbers of trips should be located in or next to towns or other service centres that are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, in line with the policies set out in PPG13, *Transport*. Decisions on the location of other developments in rural areas should, where possible, give people the greatest opportunity to access them by public transport, walking and cycling, consistent with achieving the primary purpose of the development'.

6.43   However, focusing development on transport corridors may withhold development from other buoyant local service villages such as Northiam and Peasmarsh.

6.44   In addition, this objective may encourage commuting further distances, reduce the incentive to provide local jobs, create negative impacts on the character of certain villages, and increase house prices disproportionately, due to access improvements.

Table 1: Housing Distribution Options between the Villages

Option	Central theme	Main areas of change	Strategy emphases	Strengths/ weaknesses
A	**Continue to Focus on Village Service Centres**	'Rural Service Centres' (Robertsbridge and Ticehurst), and to a lesser extent 'Local Service Villages' (Burwash, Hurst Green, Sedlescombe, Northiam, Westfield, Peasmarsh, Catsfield) and a village cluster such as Broad Oak.	Service role of settlements (i.e. provision of shops, schools, health facilities, post offices, pubs, community halls, play areas, sports facilities, places of worship, library, petrol stations)	**Strengths** • Conformity with 'Preferred Option' at District-wide level. • Conformity with government guidance (PPS7). • Should help to ensure facilities are served by public transport and provide improved opportunities for access by walking and cycling. • Allows maximum amount of people to benefit from provision of services, which in turn increases economic viability of services themselves. • Cost effective – option that would require less *new* infrastructure and services. **Weaknesses** • Does not take into account transport infrastructure, although this typically influences the location of services anyway. • Undue importance placed on service provision at the expense of other factors.
B	**Development to Support Community Needs and Deficiencies**	Housing Needs Assessment identified particular needs in east and north (centred on Rye and Ticehurst respectively), but no need in villages in centre (centred on Battle). Other needs spread across the district.	Led by Housing needs to a large degree. Secondary emphasis on locally identified need for supporting services (e.g. play areas, village halls). Such specific needs may have been identified in a number of sources, including Rother District Council evidence studies or Parish Plans.	**Strengths** • Arguably the option that does most to address key issue of affordable housing. • May be popular at local level if there are clear benefits over costs. **Weaknesses** • Question marks over reliability of supporting information, particularly regarding housing pressures (e.g.; housing registers dependent on where availability is perceived to be) and locally identified 'needs' (where information has only been forthcoming from a minority of parishes) • Difficult and complex to interpret and implement, (e.g. may be dependent on S106

Option	Central theme	Main areas of change	Strategy emphases	Strengths/ weaknesses
				at DC level) • Directs development towards where services are lacking (arguably the opposite of service centre approach advocated by PPS7) • Arguably over-emphasises affordable housing issue. • Expensive – may require new facilities and infrastructure.
C	**Focus Development on Few Larger Villages**	Robertsbridge, Northiam, Ticehurst, Hurst Green	Settlements that have a service role as well as good accessibility.	**Strengths** • Incorporates consideration of service role combined with consideration of accessibility. **Weaknesses** • May result in levels of growth in identified settlements disproportionate to current populations and therefore possible negative impacts on cohesiveness of selected towns. • May result in genuine housing needs within smaller settlements being overlooked.
D	**Dispersed Development 4a: Population based across villages 4b: Historic Farmstead based**	4a – Spread between all 45 villages identified in the Rural Settlements Study. 4b – Spread even more widely, incorporating tiny hamlets and even smaller historic farmsteads	More manageable growth at a greater number of settlements. Reinforces historic pattern of settlement within High weald AONB.	**Strengths** • Spreads development in a way that could be perceived as 'equal' • Conforms to High Weald AONB and English Heritage representations suggesting sustainable lifestyles are fostered in smaller settlements. **Weaknesses** • Population does not necessarily correspond to either accessibility, provision of services, or local needs – all factors that constitute 'good planning'. • Directs development to settlements that may not even have a defined development boundary (i.e. were not considered appropriate locations for development at Local Plan). • New development in unsustainable locations.

Option	Central theme	Main areas of change	Strategy emphases	Strengths/ weaknesses
				• Arguably contrary to government guidance in the form of PPS7, particularly 4b. therefore cannot really be considered as a realistic alternative as a result. • May lead to additional strain on infrastructure and increased travel patterns.
E	**Focus Development on Transport Corridors**	Two existing transport corridors. The two main trunk roads (A21 and A259) and the two main rail lines follow broadly similar north/south (to London via Robertsbridge) and east/west routes (to Ashford & Kent via Rye).	Economic development led. Emphasises strengthening Rother's role within wider South-East England context. Emphasis on connectivity to London (via A21) and Europe (via Ashford, Folkestone, Dover)	**Strengths** • Facilitates greater commuting (north to London and Tunbridge Wells, south to Hastings and Bexhill, and east to Kent). • May have knock-on benefit of facilitating regeneration of Hastings and Bexhill • Enhances Rother's role in region. • Helps re-enforces rail services. **Weaknesses** • Negative environmental impacts - may encourage commuting longer distances and more car travel. • Less incentive to provide jobs and facilities locally. • Possible negative impacts on village identity. • May lead to higher house prices and worsening affordability gap.

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Preferred Option for Village Housing Distribution

6.45 The five options have all been subject to sustainability appraisal (SA), the results of which are published in Appendix 9. Together with an assessment of the options against the Core Strategy Strategic Objectives this has helped inform the preferred option.

6.46 The preferred option for villages is a combination of options including the Service Centre (Option A), whilst taking into account environmental constraints, local needs (Option B) and accessibility (Option E).

Preferred Housing Option for Individual Villages

6.47 The rural housing distribution range for each village in Table 3 equates to the District-wide 'Preferred Option' of approximately 60 dwellings per annum for the rural area.

6.48 The results also reflect the outcome of the sustainability appraisal process by focussing on service centres whilst moderating results to reflect individual village needs and circumstances and incorporate other key factors (as detailed in Part Two: Village Appraisals).

6.49 Although the preferred option for villages is to primarily focus on service centres, a number of villages that have not been defined as service villages have nonetheless been listed as potentially suitable for development. This is because the preferred option also takes into account other factors such as local needs, environmental factors and accessibility.

6.50 Equally, environmental constraints have moderated the level of growth considered appropriate in some *service* villages. For example, whilst Burwash is a local service village the extent of environmental and heritage constraints are such that there are limited opportunities for development.

Timing of Housing Development

A Twenty Year Timescale

6.51 The LDF is planning to a twenty year timescale (2006-2026). National guidance in the form of PPS3 states that Local Planning Authorities should set out in Local Development Documents their policies and strategies for delivering the level of housing provision, including identifying broad locations and specific sites that will enable continuous delivery of housing for at least 15 years from the date of adoption. Rother's LDF is expected to be adopted in 2010/2011. A fifteen year horizon from adoption will extend to the end of the plan period in 2026. In effect, national planning guidance does not normally allow the inclusion of windfalls towards housing supply in that period.

6.52 In Table 2, 20 years worth of housing supply in rural villages is demonstrated. This will include completions from the first 2 years of the 20 year period, supply from allocations, permissions that have not yet been completed as well as new sites identified through the LDF.

6.53 As Table 2 demonstrates, significant housing development already took place in the rural areas during the first two years (2006-2008) of that period.

6.54 Table 3 indicates where the Council intends to meet the need through allocations.

Phasing

6.55 The LDF covers the period 2006 to 2026. It is generally assumed that existing allocations will be developed within the earlier stages of the plan period. In villages which have further proposed housing in addition to existing allocations, these will preferably be developed in the latter part of the plan period to ensure a balanced phasing of development.

6.56 Proposals along the A21 may also be more appropriate to develop in the latter half of the plan period to allow for the resolution of uncertainty regarding the proposed A21 bypass route.

Other proposals may be developed at intervals extending across the whole plan period to allow a gradual assimilation of

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development with the existing villages. It is considered that this will be beneficial to the social cohesion of existing villages.

Windfalls

6.57 National planning guidance in the form of PPS3 does not generally allow for the inclusion of windfalls in demonstrating a 15 year housing supply.

6.58 However, Rother has a good track record of bringing forward windfall housing developments. Therefore in accordance with the principles of 'Plan, Monitor, Manage', regular monitoring of windfall completions will be necessary to help inform appropriate levels of land release. Windfall completions will generally occur in villages with an established development boundary, but government planning policy (PPS3) prevents local authorities from making an allowance for windfalls in demonstrating housing supply.

Development Boundaries

6.59 The housing growth that individual villages will develop in the period to 2026 will not necessarily be accommodated by outward expansion on new allocations. Policy will allow for "internal growth" of other villages within their development boundaries. Development boundaries serve to determine the extent of village envelopes, within which infilling, redevelopment and changes of use are generally acceptable – subject to consideration against other policies in the plan.

6.60 Local Plan Policy DS4 stipulates that settlements without development boundaries are generally covered by LDF policies relating to the wider countryside. At this stage it seems likely that the LDF will continue with this approach, although there should still be an emphasis on retaining valued local services in all villages, whether or not the village has a development boundary.

6.61 Those villages which have Local Plan Development boundaries are as follows;

Beckley
Brede
Broad Oak
Burwash
Burwash Common
Burwash Weald

Cackle Street
Camber
Catsfield
Crowhurst
Etchingham
Fairlight Cove
Flimwell
Four Oaks
Guestling Green
Hurst Green
Icklesham
Iden
Netherfield
Normans Bay
Northiam
Peasmarsh
Pett and Friars Hill
Pett Level
Robertsbridge
Sedlescombe
Staplecross
Stonegate
Three Oaks
Ticehurst
Westfield
Westfield Lane
Winchelsea
Winchelsea Beach

6.62 Development boundaries are established around all service centre villages. However, as the above list indicates they are also established around a number of other villages which offer a good range of local services, and therefore provide for infilling and redevelopment. However, not all villages with development boundaries have been identified for housing allocations in Table 3 due to the lack of opportunities available for development of a sufficient scale to warrant an actual allocation (Allocations will consist of at least 6 dwellings).

6.63 However it can be expected that windfalls in rural areas will predominantly be within those villages with development boundaries.

6.64 Smaller settlements without development boundaries will generally be covered by policies relating to the wider countryside. Policy will generally resist the intensification of sporadic development and existing smaller

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settlements, for which there is no development boundary, whilst promoting sustainable land-based industries and sensitive diversification, primarily for employment uses.

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Table 2: Villages Housing Requirement

Source	Housing Numbers
2006/08 completions	298
Permissions not yet completed	396
Allocations	Approx. 582 (see Table 3 for details)
Approximate Dwellings provided 2006-2026	1250-1300

Table 3: Villages Housing Distribution - Preferred Option

Village	Current Unimplemented Allocations	Proposed Additional Allocations	Total Allocations
Robertsbridge	46	10-55	55-100
Westfield	42	15-30	57-70
Ticehurst	0	15-60	15-60
Flimwell	24	10-25	35-50
Northiam	0	10-50	10-50
Broad Oak	0	10-50	10-50
Winchelsea Beach	0-50	0	0-50
Etchingham	17	0-25	17-40
Peasmarsh	0	10-40	10-40
Hurst Green	0	0-40	0-40
Catsfield	0	0-40	0-40
Fairlight Cove	17	0-20	17-35
Burwash	17	0-15	17-30
Camber	0	0-20	0-20
Icklesham	0	0-20	0-20
Iden	0	0-15	0-15
Crowhurst	0	0-15	0-15
Stonegate	0	0-15	0-15
Netherfield	0	0-15	0-15
Sedlescombe	0	0-10	0-10
Beckley	0	0-10	0-10
Brightling	0	0-10	0-10
Exception sites*	0	est.65*	est. 65*
TOTAL	**188**	**Mid-Point=394**	**Mid-Point=582**

*In accordance with the target for 65 exception sites as set out in the Housing Strategy for Rother 2007-2012

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Business and Industrial Floorspace

6.65   Whilst focussing in particular upon housing, the preferred village spatial development option outlined will need supporting job growth.

6.66   Given the information presented in Appendix 5, several villages in particular would probably benefit from more local employment opportunities, including:
- Broad Oak
- Camber
- Hurst Green,
- Winchelsea, Winchelsea Beach, Icklesham area.
- Northiam
- Peasmarsh
- Robertsbridge,
- Sedlescombe
- Ticehurst / Flimwell area.
- Westfield.

6.67   Based on the information pulled together in section 5e, development of small workshops and office units needs to be encouraged across the rural area. This would be alongside housing development.

Local Shops

6.68   In Section 3, the summary of the 'Rother District Wide Shopping Assessment (2008)' summarised the results of surveys of shopping patterns. These indicated that most rural residents travel to drive to the nearest large supermarket for their weekly shop, although they rely on local village shops to a larger extent for secondary 'top-up' shopping.

6.69   In recent years, local village shops have declined in number – to the detriment of both village community life and of environmentally sustainable travel patterns. Section 3 also demonstrated how this issue was at the forefront of rural residents concerns in their feedback to LDF consultation exercises.

6.70   There are signs that these negative trends could be reversed in the future. At a national level, there is evidence of an increasing consumer propensity to favour locally sourced organic goods. This may be augmented by the affects of rising fuel prices reducing the cost benefits of driving further afield to large supermarkets.

6.71   This is mirrored in a number of initiatives at local level

6.72   Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) have recently conducted a survey of village shops and are also investigating how they can be supported.

6.73   The moves to establish a 'Bodiam Food Hub', supported by SEEDA and Rother District Council will do much to promote local produce once established.

Community Facilities & Open Space

6.74   Rother District Council has produced a separate piece of evidence entitled 'Open Sport & Recreation Study', as discussed in Section 3. This recommended a rural standard for a variety of types of open space as well producing recommendations for new facilities on an area basis.

6.75   Wherever possible it is intended to help facilitate pressing local community needs alongside development via developer's contributions. It is expected that a forthcoming 'Developer Contributions LDD' will address the issue in more detail as part of Rother's LDF.

6.76   Local needs have been identified from a variety of sources including evidence studies, Parish Plans and responses to Rother District Council LDF consultation processes.

6.77   Part 2 'Village Appraisals' identifies local needs for community facilities and open space on a village by village basis.

Infrastructure and Utilities

6.78   All estimates of growth at individual villages will be subject to further feasibility assessments with the various utilities bodies. They will all be subject to further investigation in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and statutory consultation in the forthcoming Site Allocations DPD.

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<u>Highways</u>

6.79 At the Core Strategy Preferred Options stage, the Highways Agency made a number of comments of relevance to this proposed housing distribution. Of particular concern to the HA is development along the Strategic Road Network on the villages along the A21. The HA commented that they expect that the traffic modelling work, being undertaken as part of the Hastings Bexhill Local Area Transport Strategy (HBLATS), will be used to inform the Site Allocations DPD and to ensure that development within this part of the District is located in sustainable areas.

6.80 The HA comment that their A21 model could be of use to assess the impact of development within the villages along this route. However, the HA comment that the level of development envisaged at the villages is relatively small and the need for, and scope of, an assessment at Core Strategy stage for these developments would depend on the proximity of the sites to the A21 and the nature of the development. Further investigations are ongoing.

<u>Water & Sewerage Companies</u>

6.81 At the Core Strategy Preferred Options stage, a number of Parish Council's expressed disquiet regarding the impact of development on mains drainage and flooding due to surface run-off. These
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points were raised in relation to Robertsbridge, Peasmarsh and Etchingham. Further consultation will be required with Water & Sewerage companies on this issue.

<u>Fire & Rescue Service</u>
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6.82 At the Core Strategy Preferred Options stage, the Fire & Rescue Service was also consulted. The Service clarified their response targets for calls are 50% within 8 minutes and 90% within 13 minutes. Their response time however for rural locations is 15-18 minutes, being dependant upon retained fire-fighter coverage.

6.83 Due to this the Service has requested that ALL new developments in rural locations are required to install domestic sprinkler systems.
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<u>Education Authority</u>

6.84 Broadly speaking, the East Sussex County Council Education Authority is supportive of housing development in rural areas ahead of urban, in order to sustain viable rural primary schools. More detailed information regarding individual schools and individual areas is being produced.