



Department for  
Communities and  
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The Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP  
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Thank you for your letter of 21 June on behalf of Mrs Pauline Raymond, Clerk to Sedlescombe Parish Council in your constituency.

I regret that because of my role in the planning system I am unable to comment on Local Plans that are currently subject to independent examination. However, I am able to offer the following general comments in response to the issues you raise.

The Government considers that having an up to date plan is at the heart of its planning reforms and at the heart of the planning system. The National Planning Policy Framework reinforces the role of plans as the primary basis for identifying what development is needed in an area, deciding where it should go and dealing with planning applications. By identifying sites in its Local Plan, Rother Council can guide development to the most suitable locations, supported by the right infrastructure. This will ensure that local communities in Rother get the right development, in the right place, at the right time, reflecting the principles of sustainable development.

The revocation of the South East Regional Strategy has removed regional housing targets meaning that all authorities are better placed to work with their communities to work out what housing is needed and where it should go. The National Planning Policy Framework does not set national housing targets or require councils to provide more houses than are needed. It asks local councils to identify and plan to meet the objectively assessed needs of their communities based on robust evidence. Rother Council will need to ensure there is sufficient infrastructure available to accommodate proposals brought forward in the Local Plan. This is an integral part of an evidence base, and will be tested at the examination once it resumes.

The Independent Inspector's role is to examine whether the submitted plan is sound. For a plan to be sound it must be positively prepared, justified, effective, legally compliant and consistent with national policy. The inspector may recommend modifications to the plan that he or she considers are necessary for the plan to be considered sound. The council may also propose its own modifications. I understand that the examination on Rother Council's Local Plan is currently suspended to enable the council to reassess their local housing need and options for meeting this need. When this is complete the Council will consult with local people on its revised proposals.

Where authorities do not have an adequate land supply the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the National Planning Policy Framework applies. However, the presumption is clear that applications should not be approved if the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits; or if specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted. This ensures that important safeguards are respected, including protection for nationally designated landscapes such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

I am pleased to hear that Sedlescombe Parish Council is developing a neighbourhood plan for its area. Neighbourhood Planning is a vital part of the Government's reforms to help local communities play a stronger role in shaping the areas in which they live and work and supporting new development proposals. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies. Neighbourhood plans are an opportunity for communities to shape the development of their local area in a positive manner. The Neighbourhood Plan can set policies on where development should go, its phasing or design as well as other policies to support and guide the development of the area for example they may include employment, transport, community facilities and design policies.

Once the plan is 'made' it will form part of the statutory development plan and form part of the policy framework when planning applications are being determined.



**NICK BOLES MP**