

Barcombe Parish Council's response to Lewes DC Emerging Core Strategy

Section 2. A portrait of Lewes District

- **Have the correct characteristics that are relevant to Lewes District been identified, or not? Have any characteristics been misinterpreted?**

Barcombe Parish Council feels your description of the Low Weald on pages 20/21 is broadly right. As to the social mix and vitality being undermined, this is not a complete picture so far as Barcombe is concerned:

- in Barcombe, we have addressed the shortage of affordable housing for local people on local salaries (or on benefits) and expect to continue to do so;
- the high level of commuting is a threat but also a resource, in that wealth is brought in which undoubtedly helps certain of our local businesses such as the relatively new Farm Shop, local builders etc;
- as to the range of local services, we did lose shops, a garage and a pub in the twentieth century but we are not declining now. The village pub, the village general store and post office, the primary school, the church, the recreation ground, the new village hall – all appear to be thriving, as is a farm shop established in recent years by a longstanding Barcombe farming family.
- We do suffer from limited public transport and lack a mains gas supply
- Part of Barcombe Mills is subject to periodic serious flooding
- We agree that the non-farming rural economy has grown in Barcombe in recent years. Several redundant farm buildings are now used for new businesses which are a welcome addition to our scene. There is an increasing level of self-employment and home working, sustained by a reasonable broadband service (which is crucial).

Section 3. Key Strategic Issues and Challenges

- **Do you agree with the issues and challenges that have been identified in this section?**

Yes, we broadly agree. In particular:

- We agree that rural villages such as Barcombe can make a distinct contribution to the District's economy
- We agree on the importance of providing decent recreational facilities and open spaces, particularly for children and teenagers. In Barcombe, we have facilities but not enough space.
- We agree on the need to look after the rapidly growing elderly population – provision in Barcombe itself is lacking and this is a local preoccupation with no obvious solution in sight. We look forward to initiatives and constructive planning from LDC in this area.

Section 4. A Vision for Lewes District

The rural area of the Low Weald

- **Do you consider the vision to be achievable, realistic and relevant to Lewes District?**

We do not share your enthusiasm for the reinstatement of the Lewes to Uckfield railway line (para 4.4, page 26). The question of reinstatement was examined at great length and it was considered to be unviable. That was supposed to be the final enquiry into the subject.

We broadly agree with the vision for the rural area of the Low Weald on page 28. We agree that linkage to Cooksbridge Station needs to be improved. We applaud the recent extension of services at Cooksbridge Station but more is needed if the station is to be used other than as now for commuters.

Section 5 – Strategic objectives

- **Do you consider that the strategic objectives will achieve the vision?**
- **Can the strategic objectives be achieved by 2030?**
- **Will the objectives help achieve the vision and priorities that are set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy?**

We find nothing in this section to disagree with.

Section 6. The Spatial Strategy – where development and change could take place – options available

The Settlement Hierarchy

- **Do you agree with the settlement categories identified and the functions that have been defined?**
- **Do you agree with how the settlements have been categorised? If not, what changes should be made to the settlement hierarchy?**
- **Do you agree with the levels of growth that are considered appropriate to the type of settlement (appreciating that opportunities and constraints to growth are not factored into these ‘theoretical’ figures)?**

Para 6.4 states: *In developing ... the Core Strategy it is essential that an understanding of the role that each of the existing settlements plays is developed.*

Quite so. It is important to get Para 6.6 right. Your draft strategy continues the old confusion about Barcombe and Barcombe Cross. We have repeatedly tried to get across that this wrong. This is one village, not two. It is one community, not two. There are **not** two settlements here. Barcombe Cross is part of Barcombe, as are Barcombe Mills, Town Littleworth and Spithurst. The small group of houses around St Mary’s Church (which you name “Barcombe”) is part of the village, not a separate entity. We have pointed out this confusion in the past and you pretty well ignored us. Please let’s get this right once and for all.

We note the categories:

- Rural Service Centre,
- Service Village,
- Local Village and
- Hamlet

Barcombe (including Spithurst, Barcombe Mills, Barcombe Cross, Town Littleworth and what you have called Barcombe) clearly comes into the category of Service Village (lacking only frequent transport services to qualify as a Rural Service Centre). That being so, we are happy with the aspiration that we accommodate 30 dwellings over 20 years, which would represent growth of less than 1% per year. In the chart in paragraph 6.26 you mention 30 for Barcombe/Barcombe Cross combined. That is an average of 3 dwellings every two years. We understand that in addition to your figure of 30, there would still be windfall sites and exception sites such as you mention in paragraph 6.31. The Parish Council would be content to see up to 1% (6-7 dwellings) per year overall.

Accommodating and delivering growth

- **Do you agree with the level of housing and employment growth proposed for the plan area?**
- **Do you have a view on any of the options that have been considered?**

We do broadly agree. We agree that none of the other options is superior.

The distribution of development

- **Do you have any views on the options for the levels of growth that are being considered for the settlements identified in table 5?**

See above

- **Do you agree with the approach to housing development for the villages within the National Park (see para 6.31)?**

No objection

- **Should Ringmer have a planned level of housing growth that meets a wider District housing need?**

We are not really in a position to say but the figures for Ringmer look to us like too much too fast. Can the infrastructure bear it?

- **Do you have any views on the options that have been identified for strategic housing allocations/broad locations for growth?**

No

- **Which, if any, of the options do you consider should be taken forward in the Core Strategy document?**

Presumably this refers to para 6.37 and we have no comment.

- **Do you agree that the broad location options at Ringmer should be considered through the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan, and not the Core Strategy?**

We applaud the Ringmer initiative and watch its progress with interest

- **Are there any development principles that will need to apply to certain**

sites if they are to be allocated or identified in the Core Strategy?

We have no suggestions.

• Do you consider that there are other options for strategic housing allocations/ broad locations for growth that need to be considered?

Only as mentioned above. We do feel that the rural villages such as Barcombe can make a contribution to district-wide growth, pro rata. And – as far as concerns Barcombe – we are in favour of limited development as mentioned above.

Meeting the employment land need

Do you agree with the proposed strategic planning approach to the North Street area?

Do you have a view on any of the options that have been considered?

We are not equipped to contribute on the subject of North Street.

- Do you agree with the proposed strategic planning approach to meeting the employment land needs for the plan area?**
- Do you consider that there are other approaches that the District Council/ National Park Authority should consider? If so, what are they?**

We would like rural employment opportunities (such as employment opportunities where farm buildings have become redundant) in places like Barcombe to be taken into account in your strategy, even if these are likely to make only a small contribution to the District-wide need. Bevern View in Barcombe now employs over 50 people, for example, though mostly in low-paid employment.

Caburn Enterprise Area

- Do you agree with the proposed strategic planning approach to the Eastside area?**
- Do you have a view on any of the options that have been considered?**
- Are there any additional options that should be considered for this area?**

We have no view on all this.

7. Core Delivery Policies

Core Policy 1 – Affordable Housing

- Do you agree with the preferred policy approach identified?**
- Do you have any comments on the other options that have been considered?**

We note the proposal of a quota of 30% in the coastal towns, 35% in Lewes and 40% in rural areas. We applaud the smaller threshold for rural areas.

- Are there any options that have not been identified that should be considered in developing this policy area?**

Many very small developments take place in villages. It would be possible – and surely fairer – to require a payment in lieu from developments under the threshold.

We understand South Hams District council in Devon, for example, has a similar huge gap between local incomes and house values and since 2008 has required a payment in lieu of quota in all cases of developments of two houses or more.

Core Policy 2 – Housing Type, Mix and Density

- **Do you agree with approach that is proposed?**
- **Do you have any views on the policy options that have been discounted at this stage?**
- **Do you think there are other options that should be considered in relation to housing types, mix or density?**

We commend the flexible approach suggested here.

Core Policy 3 – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

- **Do you agree with the approach that is proposed, including the level of pitches to be planned for?**

Yes

- **Do you consider the most suitable sites identified through the Site Assessment work (Land North of Offham Filling Station, A275, Offham and Denton Depot, Newhaven) to be suitable for use for Gypsy and traveller accommodation?**

We have no reason to think otherwise. The small site at Offham filling station seems apt – as long as it remains small

- **Do you know of any other sites that may potentially help meet the need for additional pitches?**

No

Core Policy 4 – Encouraging economic development and regeneration

- **Do you agree with approach that is proposed?**

Yes. We particularly note and approve “Promote modern and high speed e-communications and IT infrastructure” and “Support sustainable working practices (eg. homeworking and live/work)”

- **Do you think there are other options that should be considered that would help support economic development and regeneration in the District?**

None come to mind

Core Policy 5 – The Visitor Economy

- **Do you agree with preferred approach that is proposed?**

Yes, broadly.

- **Do you think there are other options that should be considered that would help support the visitor economy in the District?**

We have no suggestions to make at present.

Core Policy 6 – Retail and Sustainable Town and Local Centre

No comment

Core Policy 7 – Infrastructure

- **Do you agree with the approach that is proposed?**
- **Do you think there are other options that should be considered that would be help to provide suitable infrastructure in the District?**
- **Do you have views on key pieces of infrastructure that should be included in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan?**
- **Do you consider a combination of s106 planning obligations (for on-site provisions) and CIL (for off-site provisions) to be an appropriate funding mechanism for infrastructure? Should the Council consider other mechanisms?**

We believe this matter of infrastructure is an important one and your draft does not deal in specifics. We are not unhappy with anything you have said but urge that this subject is kept in the forefront of your minds. Infrastructure must keep up with development in the district.

Core Policy 8 – Green Infrastructure

- **Do you agree with the approach that is proposed?**
- **Do you think there are other options that should be considered that would help protect, enhance and provide green infrastructure in the District?**

Broadly, we have no quarrel with your approach and strongly support point 4.

Core Policy 9 – Air Quality

Questions to consider:

- **Do you agree with the approach that is proposed?**
- **Do you think there are other options that should be considered that would help improve air quality in the District?**

We applaud the notion of promoting opportunities for walking and cycling. We would be interested in any scheme to provide a pedestrian/cycle route to Lewes, perhaps along the old rail track from Barcombe Mills with a link to Barcombe Cross.

Core Policy 10 – Natural Environment and Landscape Character

Questions to consider:

- **Do you agree with the approach that is proposed?**
- **Do you think there are other options that should be considered for this policy area?**

Whilst accepting that the “highest priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape qualities of the South Downs National Park”, we are glad to see it recognised that “the Low Weald is a landscape that is highly valued” and deserves protection also.

Core Policy 11 – Built and Historic Environment and High Quality Design

Questions to consider:

Do you agree with the approach that is proposed?

Do you think there are other options that should be considered that would help ensure the delivery of well designed new development and contribute to high quality built environments in the District?

Our experience has been that you do not listen to our views. We know our village better than anyone. A case in point has been the treatment of conservation areas. We provided a very detailed and authoritative critique and suggested substantial changes. These were treated in a thoroughly cavalier fashion. We don't object to a difference of opinion. We do object when our contributions are ignored, lost, and not responded to. It is simply silly for LDC not to make use of our local knowledge and expertise.

Core Policy 12 – Flood Risk, Coastal Erosion and Sustainable Drainage

- **Do you agree with the approach that is proposed?**
- **Do you think there are other options that should be considered that would help manage flood risk and coastal erosion in the District?**

We note you will “liaise closely with the Environment Agency on development and flood risk.” Our own flood risk at Barcombe Mills is probably more dependent on what goes on upstream in Wealden District, particularly in Uckfield, and we hope you will also liaise with Wealden.

Core Policy 13 – Sustainable Travel

- **Do you agree with the approach that is proposed?**

We do agree with the broad drift of your proposed policy. However where you say: “Ensure development is located in sustainable locations with good access to schools, shops, jobs and other key services by public transport, cycling and walking, in order to reduce the need to travel by car (unless there is an overriding need for the development in a less accessible location),” we urge some flexibility. We are not convinced that the words in brackets are sufficient. Communities such as Barcombe are worth sustaining and should be allowed limited, closely controlled, development, particularly job-creation development, even if we do not have good public transport.

- **Do you think there are other options that should be considered that would support and encourage sustainable transport use in the District?**

See above as to pedestrian/cycle links with e.g. Lewes.

Core Policy 14 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Sustainable Use of Resources

- **Do you agree with the proposed approach for this policy area?**
- **Do you have any comments on the alternative options that have been considered, but not recommended for inclusion in the Core Strategy at this stage?**
- **Are there any additional options that should be considered?**

We are not equipped to comment on this highly technical area.

2nd December 2011

Nick Lear

Chairman, Barcombe Parish Council

Authorised by Barcombe Parish Council to make this submission on its behalf.

Knowlands Farm Granary

Barcombe, Lewes, Sussex BN8 5EF

Tel: 01273 400321

Email: nicklear@barcombe.net