



### Matter 6 – The Strategy for Cranbrook and Sissinghurst

#### *Issue 1 – Turnden Farm, Cranbrook – Policy AL/CRS3*

#### **Q1. What is the latest position regarding development proposals for the site?**

All parties formally involved with the previously refused but subsequently quashed decision (planning application 20/00815/FUL) were advised on the 21 March 2024 that the Secretary of State (SoS) considered that he had sufficient information to make a decision and that this decision would be issued as soon as practical.

CPRE Kent sought an update from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 23 May 2024 as to likely timings of a revised decision. At the time of writing, we are still awaiting a response.

It therefore remains that we are waiting upon the SoS to issue a revised decision.

#### **Q2. Have there been any material changes in circumstances since the Stage 2 hearings to suggest that the allocation is unsound?**

Ahead of the SoS re-issuing his decision, his previous and comprehensive reasons for refusal must remain a material consideration. This includes identifying harm to the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald National Landscape (AONB) and concluding exceptional circumstances did not exist to justify the proposed development.

It is therefore CPRE Kent's firm view that neither the proposed scheme advanced within planning application 20/00815/FUL, or any alternative proposals for development at this site, would be able to overcome the restrictive nature of NPPF paragraph 183 or demonstrate exceptional circumstances.

In addition to this, and as previously highlighted within CPRE Kent's response to the Inspector's Initial Findings Letter and the new duties arising from Section 245 of Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023, mean it is now even less likely that there could ever be an acceptable scheme at this location. It now seems illogical to conclude that developing a site at a location where the SoS agrees the landscape and scenic beauty attract great weight in the context of the National Landscape could also be developed in a way that actively "furthers the purpose" of conserving and enhancing that protected landscape, as is now required by the new duty.

This statutory duty now clearly constitutes a material consideration for the purpose of the emerging Local Plan.

**Q3. Are Main Modifications necessary to Policy AL/CRS3 to rectify any soundness matters?**

CPRE Kent remains firmly of the view that Policy AL/CRS3 is not justified as an allocation and that this view is strengthened following the Secretary of State's previous decision regarding the site.

The TWBC Updated Local Plan Housing Trajectory (position as of 1 April 2023) published December 2023, identified that there was a healthy surplus of dwellings assessed against the new 10-year period, with an anticipated five-year supply of 6.13 years at assumed point of adoption. There is therefore sufficient flexibility for the emerging Local Plan to be found sound with regard to NPPF paragraph 69 should AL/CRS3 be removed

It is therefore our view that AL/CRS3 should be deleted from the plan for this plan

In conclusion, CPRE Kent would like to reserve the right to make further representations should the Secretary of State's decision on the planning application be issued before the examination of the Local Plan has concluded.