

- 2.9 Finally, the CS meets the fifth requirement by having appropriate regard to the sustainable community strategies for the area adopted by the County and Borough Councils.
- 2.10 I therefore find that the legal requirements have all been met.

3 Is the CS sound in terms of its justification, effectiveness, and consistency with National Policy?

- 3.1 I examine the soundness of the CS against the above matters by considering 14 issues identified and dealt with beneath.
- 3.2 Before turning to those issues, I record that the Council (TWBC) issued a list of 'minor' post-publication/pre-submission changes in response to certain representations made under Regulation 28. I agreed that all but one of these were 'minor' (ie, not related to soundness) and have treated them as if they were embedded in the CS at submission. The only exception was a proposed insertion at paragraph 4.21 of the CS, expressing TWBC's view of the conclusions of its IDP, dated August 2009. This change was advertised and I have taken the subsequent representations into account in considering Issue 3 in this report.

Issue 1 Is the CS founded on a spatial vision and strategic objectives/sustainable development objectives which are sound?

- 3.3 The spatial vision set out at paragraphs 3.4-3.12 is appropriately locally-distinctive and proved largely uncontroversial.
- 3.4 Alternative spatial options (greater concentration at RTW/Southborough; more widespread dispersal; or a 'new expanded town') were considered at issues and options stage. However, I accept that the chosen option (most development at RTW/Southborough with modest development at the small rural towns) is the most appropriate and deliverable, having regard to:– (i) the SEP's designation of the RTW-Tonbridge joint regional hub, (ii) the needs and opportunities presented by the main settlements, their individual sustainability credentials, and their locations in relation to the major constraints such as the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Green Belt, and functional floodplains, and (iii) the distribution among the towns of development opportunities on previously developed urban land (PDL).
- 3.5 The CS also establishes a set of 7 strategic objectives and 5 objectives for sustainable development. However, it is somewhat unclear whether (a) the two sets of objectives in boxes 1 and 2 are of equal priority in relation to each other, or (b) the individual objectives within the two boxes are themselves in any priority order. Since the Council has clarified that no priorities are implied, a note needs to be introduced beneath box 2 to make the CS effective in communicating that point.
- 3.6 As for the 12 objectives themselves, most are somewhat general in nature and have little local focus. In particular, the very high level

APPENDIX 3 – MERGED/EDITED VERSION OF CP14 and CP15

Core Policy 14

Development in the Villages and Rural Areas

At the villages: Development in the Villages and Rural Areas:

1. Approximately 6% of the Borough's total housing requirement 360 net additional dwellings will be delivered in the villages and rural areas on sites to be allocated and released in accordance with Core Policy 1: Delivery of Development. Sites capable of accommodating 10 or more dwellings will be required to provide affordable housing in accordance with Core Policy 6(5).
2. New development will generally be restricted to sites within the Limits to Built Development (LBD) of the villages in accordance with Core Policy 1: Delivery of Development. Development will be appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement
3. ~~Approximately 3% of the Borough's total housing requirement will be delivered in the villages on sites to be allocated and released in accordance with Core Policy 1: Delivery of Development~~
4. 3. Outside the LBD of the villages, affordable housing to meet an identified local need in perpetuity may be allowed in accordance with Core Policy 1(2) and 1(4) and Core Policy 6(6). All other housing sites, other than those provided under Core Policy 14(3), will be required to provide affordable housing in accordance with Core Policy 6(5) if they are capable of accommodating 10 or more dwellings.
5. 4. Village centres will be enhanced to provide a focus for communities. The loss of local services will be resisted and the development of facilities, including community facilities, to meet local needs will be encouraged. The rural economy will be strengthened and its long-term sustainability safeguarded by providing opportunities for commercial activities that utilise rural buildings and resources appropriately, including rural buildings that are no longer required or suitable for agricultural use. Employment uses related to the land will be encouraged, including appropriate forms of tourism, agriculture, forestry and equestrian activity
6. 5. Designated buildings and areas of historic or environmental importance will be conserved and enhanced to ensure the special character of the villages is maintained
7. ~~Non-motorised modes of transport within and between the villages and higher order settlements will be encouraged by ensuring that the existing network of public footpaths and bridleways is protected, maintained and improved~~
1. 6. The natural environment countryside will be protected for its own sake and a policy of restraint will operate in order to maintain the landscape character and quality of the countryside

2. 7. The interrelationship between the natural and built features of the landscape will be preserved, enhanced and, where necessary, restored, this being the principal determinant of the character of the rural areas. Development will maintain the local distinctiveness of particular localities
3. 8. Non-motorised modes of transport between the rural settlements and within the rural areas will be encouraged by ensuring that the existing network of public footpaths and bridleways are protected, maintained and improved. Opportunities for new green routeways within, and between, settlements, and between settlements and areas of recreation, will be identified and planned for to encourage non-vehicular non-motorised modes of transport and to enhance biodiversity
4. The hierarchy of settlements consisting of small rural towns, villages and settlements in the countryside will be maintained and the Borough Council will work with its partners to improve access between them

5.2754 The rural areas are characterised by a thriving network of towns, villages and hamlets. There are 17 villages within the Borough, as listed in Box 4: Settlement Hierarchy (Chapter 4). Each of these settlements has, each with a defined LBD, together with a number of smaller hamlets. The diverse nature of the rural areas is highlighted by the different settlement types it accommodates and their various functions, all being located within a predominantly high quality rural landscape. Future development should aim to strengthen the interrelationship of the rural settlements, both within and outside the Borough boundaries.

5.2765 Many of the issues that affect the rural areas of the Borough are covered elsewhere in the Core Strategy, but there are some particular issues that need specific reference.

The Villages

5.2776 The strategy for the villages is to promote a sustainable economy while maintaining and enhancing their distinctive character and environment and also that of the surrounding countryside. All the villages have some general facilities that serve local residents, such as a primary school, shop, public house, doctors surgery and church, together with basic recreational facilities; for example, a village or community hall, recreation ground and children's play area. Most of the villages are located within the Green Belt and/or the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ~~or the currently designated Special Landscape Area~~. These rural settlements often lack a variety of local employment sources and suffer from poor public transport provision that at best can be sporadic and costly, leading to social and economic isolation among

those sections of the community without regular access to private modes of transport.

5.2787 Key issues for the rural villages, which are highlighted in other chapters in this strategy relating to the rural areas, include:

- meeting local needs for affordable housing
- the loss of local facilities such as schools, village shops, pubs and rural employment opportunities
- a limited supply of employment opportunities
- ongoing decline in agriculture and rural industries
- poor and expensive public transport and isolation for people who do not drive
- growing demands for recreation

~~Economic vitality of the villages~~

The Rural Areas

5.279 The Borough contains a significant amount of high quality countryside and it is essential that the Core Strategy seeks to conserve and enhance this resource for existing and future generations, while supporting a thriving rural economy. Core Policies 11: Paddock Wood, 12: Cranbrook, and 13: Hawkhurst and 14: The Villages provide additional principles for development in the rural towns and in the villages. The overall thrust of these policies will be to provide flexibility to enable development to meet the individual needs and support the individual identities of the small rural towns areas, while recognising the overall importance of the landscape quality and character.

5.2808 As identified in Chapter 2: Context for Development, the Borough's rural landscape is of a high quality and a large percentage of the Borough is covered by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) ~~and currently designated Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)~~. The diverse, locally distinctive and historic landscape has been formed over a long period of time and is identified by a patchwork of agriculture, woodland, heathland and rural settlements intersected by lanes and routeways. This intrinsic character and the attractive appearance of the countryside is one of the Borough's principal assets, making a significant contribution to the special landscape character of the Borough's rural areas and quality of life to those living, working in and visiting the Borough. These assets can also be used to facilitate economic development and tourism.

5.2819 The Landscape Character Assessment and Capacity Study 2009 will be used to inform possible future expansion around the settlements in the main urban area and small rural towns. The study defines the relative capacity of the landscape to accommodate housing and/or business development around these

settlements. The findings of the study will be considered in conjunction with other background evidence and policies to enable the boundaries of any future development to be determined and to identify the landscape infrastructure required to integrate development proposals into the existing landscape character.

~~5.28290~~ Within AONBs, it is Government policy to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, while having due regard to social and economic considerations. Restoring and maintaining the interrelationships between the natural, social and built features of the landscape and recognising biodiversity and cultural heritage and the impacts these have had on the development of the rural landscape, plays a significant part in this management. It is vital to identify and encourage these interrelationships in order to maximise the potential of the rural assets in promoting long-term sustainability in the rural areas and to maintain the natural and built features. Major development within the rural areas should not take place except where it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances apply. ~~Within the areas that have been identified as being of particular landscape character importance, development will only be permitted if it would conserve or enhance the natural beauty and special character of the landscape.~~

~~5.28391~~ The extensive network of rural lanes and Public Rights of Way that intersect the rural areas are considered to be one of the most attractive and readily appreciated features of the Borough. The network of routeways, which includes historically important droeways and sunken lanes, is a key component of the High Weald landscape, both reflecting its historical context and being an integral part of its present-day character. Improving access to, and within, the rural areas by these routes will increase their desirability for tourist and other recreational activities and encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport more generally. It is also important to maintain and enhance their essentially undeveloped character. Core Policy 4: Environment sets out the importance of green links to the enhancement of biodiversity.

~~5.28492~~ The landscape of the High Weald is characterised by a dispersed pattern of historic farmsteads, visually distinctive clusters of oasts and Wealden hall houses. It is important that the potential of the historic buildings and the historic and social context that created the settlement patterns are recognised, as they form an intrinsic part of the landscape character that can, in turn, be used as an asset to facilitate rural development.

~~5.28593~~ Within the Borough there are a number of Historic Parks and Gardens that are an important part of the national and local heritage. A positive approach to the management and maintenance of these Historic Parks and Gardens is encouraged. The Borough Council is currently working with Kent County Council and the Kent Gardens Trust to update the Kent Gardens Compendium that was originally compiled in 1992 and first updated in 1996. Gaining a

wider knowledge and understanding of these heritage assets and making the information available to landowners and the wider public, will help to ensure that the cultural and landscape importance of the Historic Parks and Gardens is recognised and will facilitate a recognition and an understanding of their future management requirements.

Housing in the Villages and Rural Areas

5.286 Approximately 3% 6% of the Borough's total housing requirement will be delivered in the rural areas; that is, on sites located outside the main urban areas and small rural towns. small rural towns and villages as listed in the Settlement Hierarchy shown in Box 4 (Chapter 4) ; almost one third less than in recent years This rate represents approximately 360 dwellings over a 20-year period, which is a significantly lower rate than over the last five years (2003/08), during which period 17% of the Borough's housing occurred at the villages and in the rural areas, representing 325 dwellings in total. The justification for this proposed lower level of housing development in these areas is that, within the rural areas and outside of the villages with a defined LBD, development or conversions for new residential development will not generally be allowed. One of the few exceptions to this may be for the development of a permanent dwelling that is required to support an existing agricultural or forestry activity to enable such workers to live at, or very close to, the site of their work. It will be necessary to demonstrate that having a person living within close proximity is essential for the running of the agricultural activity throughout the year.

~~**Previously para 5.282 New para number 5.286:** Within the LBD of the villages, development should accord with Core Policy 1: Delivery of Development and will be limited to schemes that are considered appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement. The SHLAA will inform the Allocations DPD, ensuring that appropriate sites within the villages are identified and, where possible, allocated for housing over the period of the Core Strategy. This development will help to ensure the vitality and viability of the villages.~~

5.287 Table 7 in Core Policy 6 indicates that, after taking into account housing completions after from 01 April 2006 to 31 March 2008 and the housing potential from extant consents, the majority of the 6% housing required (approximately 360 dwellings) allocated by the Core Strategy to the villages and rural areas has been provided. Within the LBD of the villages, development will be limited to schemes that are considered appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement. Small-scale allocations may be made to accommodate market and/or affordable housing. Outside the LBD of villages, affordable housing to meet local identified housing needs in perpetuity may be allowed in accordance with Policy CP1(2). As stated in paragraph 5.155 (CP6: Housing Provision), the

affordable housing delivered from market housing development in the small rural towns of Cranbrook, Hawkhurst and Paddock Wood will absorb some of the local housing needs in the rural areas. Any residual local housing needs within other parts of the Borough will be met through the development of rural exception housing sites.

Rural Exceptions Housing

5.288~~3~~ Paragraph 5.153~~5.154~~ of Core Policy 6: Housing Provision gives details of the level of housing need within the rural areas of the Borough. It is recognised both by Central Government (for example, in Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing) and by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (for example, in the Borough Housing Strategy 2006-2011) that there is a need for more affordable housing within the rural areas. Such provision will enable local people on modest incomes to remain in, or move back to, the local community in which they already live or work, or with which they have strong local connections.

5.289~~4~~ The approach to housing development in rural areas will be one that seeks to sustain rural communities, recognising the need within rural areas for both market and affordable housing and a choice of tenures. The Borough Council has developed the 'Rural HeLP Project' to work in partnership with the Parish/Town Councils and Action with Communities in Rural Kent to address the issue of the lack of affordable homes in the rural areas to meet local needs. This will help the Local Authority to identify small sites for local needs affordable housing where it is required. Such sites may otherwise be subject to policies of restraint (such as Green Belt) and would not be released for market housing. Sites must, however, be contiguous with the LBD of the village they are intended to serve, or be well related to that village. Core Policy 6: Housing Provision sets out the Borough Council's policy for providing such sites.

Economic vitality of the villages

5.290~~5.278~~ While many of the villages still provide a variety of services for their communities, the range in some of the villages is limited. It is important that existing local services are encouraged and supported by policies to ensure that these facilities remain and continue to meet the needs of local communities. Economic development within rural settlements that would assist in creating thriving and sustainable rural communities will be encouraged.

5.291~~9~~ The South East Plan recognises the importance that small rural market towns play within the countryside by acting as a focal point for the surrounding rural areas. These settlements have, in recent years, been successful in economic and social terms and their role as local hubs will be supported. The local character and identity of these settlements should be reinforced and enhanced, as

it is recognised that their individuality is a key component of their success.

5.292 Paragraph 5.2265 of Core Policy 8: Retail and Leisure Provision sets out how community facilities can be developed to serve a broad range of local needs that may not be met by more formal service providers. In the smaller villages that are less well served, the development of community facilities will ensure a wider service provision, providing an economic and social focus for the village.

The wider rural economy

5.293~~80~~ Although agriculture (including hunting, horticulture, forestry and fishing) only provides 3% of employment within rural Kent as a whole, it remains an important part of the Borough's rural economy and is also instrumental in protecting the character and appearance of the landscape. ~~The complex relationship between the natural, social and built features of the Borough's landscape is discussed in Core Policy 15: Development in the Rural Areas.~~ The rural economy has been changing during the past decades, with a trend towards rural businesses diversifying from traditional rural activities, primarily through the re-use of farm and other rural buildings for commercial, non-agricultural purposes. This has not only helped to retain economic activity within rural areas, but has also enabled some farms to remain operational, as the diversified activities financially support the remaining farming business.

5.294~~81~~ The Council's approach towards economic development, including tourism, within the rural areas is set out in Core Policy 7: Employment Provision ~~and Core Policy 15: Development in the Rural Areas.~~ The main approach will be to strengthen the rural economy and encourage employment uses related to the land. A balanced approach to farm diversification, including the conversion of redundant rural buildings for business uses, will continue to be taken. As discussed in Core Policy 7: Employment Provision, paragraph 5.200~~199~~ (Visitor Attractions), the development of tourist and recreational facilities within the rural areas that utilise existing rural resources and attractions will be encouraged.

5.295 4 The development of a range of locally-based commercial enterprises will provide a range of employment opportunities and underpin a strong local economy. Within the rural areas, the local settlements are often at the heart of a rural community providing essential services and facilities. The Tunbridge Wells Economic Strategy 2006-2009 recognises that developing the local economy while maintaining and improving existing local services will encourage sustainable development within the rural areas. Locally-based economic development will help to address pockets of deprivation that exist within the rural areas, while encouraging vibrant rural communities.

5.2965 Agriculture, horticulture and forestry have an important and varied role in the rural economy, including the maintenance and management of the countryside. Land management will need to follow best practice to ensure that the conservation of biodiversity is a priority. Core Policy 4: Environment sets out how biodiversity can be enhanced through policies to ensure that this approach is followed. Within the context of economic development, farmers should be encouraged to be more competitive and more sustainable and, where appropriate, to diversify into new agricultural and commercial ventures, including renewable energy crops, in order to ensure a farm's viability and to maximise opportunities to strengthen the rural economy, while maintaining the character of the rural landscape.

5.2976 Development of sites for commercial uses within the rural areas will need to follow the criteria set out in Core Policy 1: Delivery of Development. Part (2) of Core Policy 1 states that an exception to the Land Release strategy may be considered where a need has been identified that provides employment in the countryside. Such commercial development would be required to demonstrate a direct link to the land and/or utilise rural resources and buildings. The re-use and adaptation of redundant rural buildings that are worthy of retention can be an important resource for meeting the needs of new and expanding rural enterprises, while encouraging farmers to diversify their operations. Consideration will need to be given to the retention of these buildings for future agricultural related development, but, where conversion is appropriate, priority should be given to business use, including tourism, where suitable.

5.2987 Parts of the rural areas of the Borough within, or adjoining, the High Weald AONB are characterised by a distinctive dispersed settlement pattern of historic farmsteads. In recent years, structural changes in the farming industry have meant that there is often no longer a use for these buildings within modern agriculture, or the buildings have been separated from the land and agricultural enterprise that they would traditionally have served. The future of these historic groups of buildings, that both reflect the changes in the rural economy over past centuries and are also considered to be an important component of the High Weald landscape, is largely dependent on a use being found to ensure that it is economically viable to maintain them. In light of the previous paragraph, consideration should primarily be given for their commercial use, including tourism where appropriate.

5.2998 Due to the unavailability of suitable land and to environmental constraints within or adjoining the small rural towns of Cranbrook and Hawkhurst, brownfield land at the former Hawkhurst railway station in Gills Green was allocated in the Local Plan 2006 for Class B1, B2 and B8¹ use, subject to the uses causing

¹ The Use Classes Order defines B8 uses as storage and distribution

no significant harm to the amenities or character of the area. There is still some unused capacity at this site that could provide economic development opportunities for the surrounding area, while utilising previously developed land.

5.300~~299~~ Forestry operations mostly lie outside the scope of planning controls, although the planning system is the principal means for regulating the rate at which land is transferred from woodlands to other rural and urban uses. The Government's forestry policy, set out in the England Forestry Strategy 1999 has two main aims: (i) the sustainable management of existing woods and forests; and (ii) a continued steady expansion of woodland area to provide more benefits for society and the environment. Regard will be given to those aims when determining planning proposals.

Retail, Leisure, Community Facilities and Tourism

5.301~~0~~ Paragraphs 5.225 and 5.226 ~~5.224 and 5.225~~ in Core Policy 8: Retail and Leisure Provision refer to 'Community Facilities', their importance in providing a wide range of facilities for the local community and their role in sustaining the local community, particularly in the smaller, more remote, areas of the Borough that are not otherwise well served. The retention and development of such facilities will be actively encouraged and a policy will be provided in the Development Control Policies DPD. In those rural areas that currently lack local retail facilities, the establishment of social enterprises such as 'community shops' will be encouraged.

5.302~~1~~ Tourism and recreation can provide important sources of employment and income to the rural areas, while also contributing to the maintenance and development of existing local services. Appropriate land management will ensure that the high quality rural landscape is maintained and improved, providing an important environmental resource that will also support a wide range of rural-based recreational activities, including walking, fishing, golf and horse riding. It is important to ensure that the level and intensity of such activities does not have a detrimental impact upon the character of the rural areas. In the appropriate circumstances, existing rural buildings worthy of retention and in suitable locations could be converted to provide tourist accommodation.

5.303~~2~~ Horse riding and other equestrian activities are popular forms of recreation in the countryside that can fit in well with farming activities and help to diversify rural economies. It is important to ensure that all equestrian development, whether domestic or larger commercial activities, is of an appropriate scale and design to reflect its rural location. Careful attention should be given to siting and landscaping details to ensure that proposals do not detract from the locality's character and appearance. Farm diversification schemes could include schemes for the re-use of rural buildings to accommodate small-scale equestrian development.

Housing

~~5.282 Within the LBD of the villages, development should accord with Core Policy 1: Delivery of Development and will be limited to schemes that are considered appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement. The SHLAA will inform the Allocations DPD, ensuring that appropriate sites within the villages are identified and, where possible, allocated for housing over the period of the Core Strategy. This development will help to ensure the vitality and viability of the villages.~~

~~5.283 Paragraph 5.154 of Core Policy 6: Housing Provision gives details of the level of housing need within the rural areas of the Borough. It is recognised both by Central Government (for example, in Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing) and by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (for example, in the Borough Housing Strategy 2006-2011) that there is a need for more affordable housing within the rural areas. Such provision will enable local people on modest incomes to remain in, or move back to, the local community in which they already live or work, or with which they have strong local connections.~~

~~5.284 The approach to housing development in rural areas will be one that seeks to sustain rural communities, recognising the need within rural areas for both market and affordable housing and a choice of tenures. The Borough Council has developed the 'Rural HeLP Project' to work in partnership with the Parish/Town Councils and Action with Communities in Rural Kent to address the issue of the lack of affordable homes in the rural areas to meet local needs. This will help the Local Authority to identify small sites for local needs affordable housing where it is required. Such sites may otherwise be subject to policies of restraint (such as Green Belt) and would not be released for market housing. Sites must, however, be contiguous with the LBD of the village they are intended to serve, or be well related to that village. Core Policy 6: Housing Provision sets out the Borough Council's policy for providing such sites.~~

The Natural and Built Environment

~~5.285 Core Policy 4: Environment discusses the Borough's distinctive rural landscape characteristics and its variety of heritage assets. The villages are located within this rural setting and many contain a number of heritage assets (as defined in Core Policy 4: Environment) and/or designated conservation areas. Development proposals will need to demonstrate that the character of the designated conservation areas and/or heritage assets will be conserved and enhanced and key open spaces and areas of landscape importance protected. These natural and built assets are an important resource for local recreation and tourism; their careful~~

management will ensure that this source of rural income is retained.

Core Policy 15

Development in the Rural Areas

In the rural areas:

5. The natural environment will be protected for its own sake and a policy of restraint will operate in order to maintain the landscape character and quality of the countryside
6. The interrelationship between the natural and built features of the landscape will be preserved, enhanced and, where necessary, restored, this being the principal determinant of the character of the rural areas. Development will maintain the local distinctiveness of particular localities
7. The rural economy will be strengthened and its long term sustainability safeguarded by providing opportunities for commercial activities that utilise rural buildings and resources appropriately, including rural buildings that are no longer required or suitable for agricultural use. Employment uses related to the land will be encouraged, including appropriate forms of tourism, agriculture, forestry and equestrian activity
8. Non-motorised modes of transport between the rural settlements and within the rural areas will be encouraged by ensuring that the existing network of public footpaths and bridleways are protected, maintained and improved. Opportunities for new green routeways within and between settlements will be identified and planned for to encourage non-vehicular modes of transport and to enhance biodiversity
9. The hierarchy of settlements consisting of small rural towns, villages and settlements in the countryside will be maintained and the Borough Council will work with its partners to improve access between them
10. Housing development will generally be restricted to the small rural towns and villages in accordance with Core Policies 11-14. No more than 3% of the Borough's total housing requirement will be met in other rural locations and any sites capable of accommodating 10 or more dwellings will be required to provide affordable housing in accordance with Core Policy 6(5)

Environment

- 5.286 The rural areas are characterised by a thriving network of towns, villages and hamlets. The diverse nature of this part of the Borough is highlighted by the different settlement types it accommodates and their various functions, all being located within a predominantly high quality rural landscape. Future development should aim to strengthen the interrelationship of the rural settlements, both within and outside the Borough boundaries.
- 5.287 The Borough contains a significant amount of high quality countryside and it is essential that the Core Strategy seeks to conserve and enhance this resource for existing and future generations, while supporting a thriving rural economy. Core Policies 11: Paddock Wood, 12: Cranbrook, 13: Hawkhurst and 14: The Villages provide additional principles for development in the rural towns and in the villages. The overall thrust of these policies will be to provide flexibility to enable development to meet the individual needs and support the individual identities of the rural areas, while recognising the overall importance of the landscape quality and character.
- 5.288 As identified in Chapter 2: Context for Development, the Borough's rural landscape is of a high quality and a large percentage of the Borough is covered by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and currently designated Special Landscape Areas (SLAs). The diverse, locally distinctive and historic landscape has been formed over a long period of time and is identified by a patchwork of agriculture, woodland, heathland and rural settlements intersected by lanes and routeways. This intrinsic character and the attractive appearance of the countryside is one of the Borough's principal assets, making a significant contribution to the special landscape character of the Borough's rural areas and quality of life to those living, working in and visiting the Borough. These assets can also be used to facilitate economic development and tourism.
- 5.289 The Landscape Character Assessment and Capacity Study 2009 will be used to inform possible future expansion around the settlements in the main urban area and small rural towns. The study defines the relative capacity of the landscape to accommodate housing and/or business development around these settlements. The findings of the study will be considered in conjunction with other background evidence and policies to enable the boundaries of any future development to be determined and to identify the landscape infrastructure required to integrate development proposals into the existing landscape character.
- 5.290 Within AONBs, it is Government policy to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, while having due regard to social and economic considerations. Restoring and maintaining the

interrelationships between the natural, social and built features of the landscape and recognising biodiversity and cultural heritage and the impacts these have had on the development of the rural landscape, plays a significant part in this management. It is vital to identify and encourage these interrelationships in order to maximise the potential of the rural assets in promoting long-term sustainability in the rural areas and to maintain the natural and built features. Major development within the rural areas should not take place except where it can be demonstrated that exceptional circumstances apply. Within the areas that have been identified as being of particular landscape character importance, development will only be permitted if it would conserve or enhance the natural beauty and special character of the landscape.

5.291 The extensive network of rural lanes and Public Rights of Way that intersect the rural areas are considered to be one of the most attractive and readily appreciated features of the Borough. The network of routeways, which includes historically important droveways and sunken lanes, is a key component of the High Weald landscape, both reflecting its historical context and being an integral part of its present-day character. Improving access to, and within, the rural areas by these routes will increase their desirability for tourist and other recreational activities and encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport more generally. It is also important to maintain and enhance their essentially undeveloped character. Core Policy 4: Environment sets out the importance of green links to the enhancement of biodiversity.

5.292 The landscape of the High Weald is characterised by a dispersed pattern of historic farmsteads, visually distinctive clusters of oasts and Wealden hall houses. It is important that the potential of the historic buildings and the historic and social context that created the settlement patterns are recognised, as they form an intrinsic part of the landscape character that can, in turn, be used as an asset to facilitate rural development.

5.293 Within the Borough there are a number of Historic Parks and Gardens that are an important part of the national and local heritage. A positive approach to the management and maintenance of these Historic Parks and Gardens is encouraged. The Borough Council is currently working with Kent County Council and the Kent Gardens Trust to update the Kent Gardens Compendium that was originally compiled in 1992 and first updated in 1996. Gaining a wider knowledge and understanding of these heritage assets and making the information available to landowners and the wider public, will help to ensure that the cultural and landscape importance of the Historic Parks and Gardens is recognised and will facilitate a recognition and an understanding of their future management requirements.

Economic development in the rural areas (including agriculture)

- 5.294 The development of a range of locally based commercial enterprises will provide a range of employment opportunities and underpin a strong local economy. Within the rural areas, the local settlements are often at the heart of a rural community providing essential services and facilities. The Tunbridge Wells Economic Strategy 2006-2009 recognises that developing the local economy while maintaining and improving existing local services will encourage sustainable development within the rural areas. Locally based economic development will help to address pockets of deprivation that exist within the rural areas, while encouraging vibrant rural communities.
- 5.295 Agriculture, horticulture and forestry have an important and varied role in the rural economy, including the maintenance and management of the countryside. Land management will need to follow best practice to ensure that the conservation of biodiversity is a priority. Core Policy 4: Environment sets out how biodiversity can be enhanced through policies to ensure that this approach is followed. Within the context of economic development, farmers should be encouraged to be more competitive and more sustainable and, where appropriate, to diversify into new agricultural and commercial ventures, including renewable energy crops, in order to ensure a farm's viability and to maximise opportunities to strengthen the rural economy, while maintaining the character of the rural landscape.
- 5.296 Development of sites for commercial uses within the rural areas will need to follow the criteria set out in Core Policy 1: Delivery of Development. Part (2) of Core Policy 1 states that an exception to the Land Release strategy may be considered where a need has been identified that provides employment in the countryside. Such commercial development would be required to demonstrate a direct link to the land and/or utilise rural resources and buildings. The re-use and adaptation of redundant rural buildings that are worthy of retention can be an important resource for meeting the needs of new and expanding rural enterprises, while encouraging farmers to diversify their operations. Consideration will need to be given to the retention of these buildings for future agricultural related development, but, where conversion is appropriate, priority should be given to business use, including tourism, where suitable.
- 5.297 Parts of the rural areas of the Borough within, or adjoining, the High Weald AONB are characterised by a distinctive dispersed settlement pattern of historic farmsteads. In recent years, structural changes in the farming industry have meant that there is often no longer a use for these buildings within modern agriculture, or the buildings have been separated from the land and agricultural enterprise that they would traditionally have served. The future of these historic groups of buildings, that both reflect the changes in the rural economy over past centuries and are also considered to be

an important component of the High Weald landscape, is largely dependent on a use being found to ensure that it is economically viable to maintain them. In light of the previous paragraph, consideration should primarily be given for their commercial use, including tourism where appropriate.

5.298 Due to the unavailability of suitable land and to environmental constraints within or adjoining the small rural towns of Cranbrook and Hawkhurst, brownfield land at the former Hawkhurst railway station in Gills Green was allocated in the Local Plan 2006 for Class B1, B2 and B8² use, subject to the uses causing no significant harm to the amenities or character of the area. There is still some unused capacity at this site that could provide economic development opportunities for the surrounding area, while utilising previously developed land.

5.299 The South East Plan recognises the importance that small rural market towns play within the countryside by acting as a focal point for the surrounding rural areas. These settlements have, in recent years, been successful in economic and social terms and their role as local hubs will be supported. The local character and identity of these settlements should be reinforced and enhanced, as it is recognised that their individuality is a key component of their success.

5.300 Paragraphs 5.224 and 5.225 in Core Policy 8: Retail and Leisure Provision refer to 'Community Facilities', their importance in providing a wide range of facilities for the local community and their role in sustaining the local community, particularly in the smaller, more remote, areas of the Borough that are not otherwise well served. The retention and development of such facilities will be actively encouraged and a policy will be provided in the Development Control Policies DPD. In those rural areas that currently lack local retail facilities, the establishment of social enterprises such as 'community shops' will be encouraged.

5.301 Tourism and recreation can provide important sources of employment and income to the rural areas, while also contributing to the maintenance and development of existing local services. Appropriate land management will ensure that the high quality rural landscape is maintained and improved, providing an important environmental resource that will also support a wide range of rural-based recreational activities, including walking, fishing, golf and horse riding. It is important to ensure that the level and intensity of such activities does not have a detrimental impact upon the character of the rural areas. In the appropriate circumstances, existing rural buildings worthy of retention and in suitable locations could be converted to provide tourist accommodation.

² The Use Classes Order defines B8 uses as storage and distribution

5.302 Horse riding and other equestrian activities are popular forms of recreation in the countryside that can fit in well with farming activities and help to diversify rural economies. It is important to ensure that all equestrian development, whether domestic or larger commercial activities, is of an appropriate scale and design to reflect its rural location. Careful attention should be given to siting and landscaping details to ensure that proposals do not detract from the locality's character and appearance. Farm diversification schemes could include schemes for the re-use of rural buildings to accommodate small scale equestrian development.

5.303 Forestry operations mostly lie outside the scope of planning controls, although the planning system is the principal means for regulating the rate at which land is transferred from woodlands to other rural and urban uses. The Government's forestry policy, set out in the England Forestry Strategy 1999 has two main aims: (i) the sustainable management of existing woods and forests; and (ii) a continued steady expansion of woodland area to provide more benefits for society and the environment. Regard will be given to those aims when determining planning proposals.

Housing development in the Rural Areas

5.304 Approximately 3% of the Borough's total housing requirement will be delivered in the rural areas, that is on sites located outside the main urban areas, small rural towns and villages as listed in the Settlement Hierarchy shown in Box 4 (Chapter 4); almost one third less than in recent years. The justification for this proposed lower level of housing development in these areas is that, within the rural areas and outside of the villages with a defined LBD, development or conversions for new residential development will not generally be allowed. One of the few exceptions to this may be for the development of a permanent dwelling that is required to support an existing agricultural or forestry activity to enable such workers to live at, or very close to, the site of their work. It will be necessary to demonstrate that having a person living within close proximity is essential for the running of the agricultural activity throughout the year.

Examination of Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy

APPENDIX 4 SCHEDULE OF TWBC'S SUGGESTED MINOR CHANGES

The changes below are expressed either in the conventional form of ~~strikethrough~~ for deletions and underlining for additions of text, or by specifying a change in words in *italics*.

The page and policy/paragraph numbers below refer to the "Track Changes" Version of the Core Strategy and do not take account of any pagination/paragraph alterations flowing from the deletion or addition of text as a result of either (a) the content of the table below or (b) the Inspector's recommendations on soundness.

Page	Policy/ Paragraph	Suggested Change
13	Heading before 3.13	Strategic Objectives <u>and Sustainable Development Objectives</u>
16	Table 3	<i>Existing employment land will be maintained and the position reviewed in light of the forthcoming Partial Review of the South East Plan <u>review of the South East Plan through the production of the Single Strategy.</u></i>
29	Core Policy 3	<i>In the 1st point, bullet point 3:</i> ...and enhance pedestrian routes <u>for non-motorised users, including pedestrians and equestrians</u>
29	Core Policy 3	<i>In the 1st point, bullet point 4:</i> ...to ensure that they remain <u>are</u> convenient and safe for users
33	5.66	<i>In the 2nd sentence:</i> The introduction of PIPKIN (Prioritising Investments Programmes for Kent's Integrated Network), <u>which has since been updated to the Scheme Prioritisation System</u> , requires...
33	5.67	<i>In the last sentence:</i> Any widening improvements will need to be the subject of a PIPKIN <u>Scheme Prioritisation System</u> submission...
33	5.71	<i>In the last sentence:</i> All would be included in the 2010/11 PIPKIN <u>Scheme Prioritisation System</u> process.
34	Cycling and Walking	<i>Alteration to the heading Cycling and Walking:</i> Cycling and Walking <u>Cyclists, Walkers and Equestrians</u>
35	5.79	As mentioned in Core Policy 8: Retail, and <u>Leisure and Community Facilities Provision.</u>
35	5.80	<i>Additional sentence to be added at the end of paragraph:</i> <u>The needs of all non-motorised users will be considered before new routes are created so that the best choice of status for a new route is made.</u>
35	5.82	As stated in Core Policy 4: Environment and Core Policy 8: Retail, and

Page	Policy/ Paragraph	Suggested Change
		Leisure and Community Facilities Provision, the Council...
35	New paragraph after 5.82	<i>Add additional paragraph after 5.82:</i> <u>In many areas of the Borough, equestrians have to use the roads. Although people ride or drive horses primarily for leisure and exercise, they may also ride or drive as part of their work in the industry, or in order to reach services such as farriers, veterinary surgeries and riding schools, to travel to and from school or for weddings and funerals. Equestrian routes will be safeguarded, developed and enhanced to maximise safety and sustainability.</u>
37	Core Policy 4, part 5	The Borough's heritage assets, including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Historic Parks and Gardens will be preserved and enhanced and positive <u>special</u> regard will be had to their settings
40	5.105	The draft Heritage Protection Bill 2008, however, sets out a new approach to the preservation and enhancement of heritage features and will give further clarification to the heritage planning system, which will be incorporated into a new Heritage Planning Policy Statement. The draft Bill currently proposes grouping together features of "special historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest" under the term 'heritage assets'.
43	5.114	<i>Insert space between 'and' and 'manage':</i> ...and_manage flood risk
43	5.116	<i>Delete inverted comma:</i> ...produced by Environment Agency".
46	5.132	The design of developments must be integral to improving legibility. Developments should contribute to a sense of place and create places that are easy to navigate; through the use of landmark buildings and recognisable routes, for example. The environment should be easy to move within, having clear distinctions between public and private spaces and putting the needs of pedestrians and cyclists <u>non-motorised users</u> before motor vehicles.
56	Core Policy 7, introductory wording	Sufficient good quality employment land will be provided for strategic and local requirements, as set out within the emerging South East Plan and the relevant Tunbridge Wells Borough Employment Land Study. The Borough Council will, if necessary, review its Employment Land Study following the early partial review of the South East Plan to refine job numbers and identify any further sectoral requirements in light of new information provided at the regional level. Employment provision in the Borough during the Core Strategy period will be achieved by:
57	5.175	Unemployment in the Borough remains very low, with <u>2.0% unemployment at October 2009 (ONS/Kent County Council)</u> 2.1% unemployment at February 2009 (March figures to be released in April, ONS/Kent County Council).
58	5.180	This document is currently being reviewed and will be replaced by the West Kent Investment Strategy in late 2009 2010.
59	Table 9	<i>Second to last row:</i> Other <u>Services</u> (e.g. personal services, tourism and media)

Page	Policy/ Paragraph	Suggested Change
61	Heading	Other Employment-Generating Uses
62	5.197	The Tunbridge Wells Hotel Futures Study 2005-2021, undertaken by Tourism Solutions, reviews hotel needs and development potential in the Borough. <u>It identified a need for approximately 483 new hotel bedrooms by 2021.</u> The study concludes...
71	5.228	<i>In the penultimate sentence:</i> ...on the provisions of Core Policy 8: Retail, and Leisure <u>and</u> <u>Community Facilities Provision</u> in relation...
71	5.229	<i>In the first sentence:</i> Expansion of Royal Victoria Place, which was <u>is</u> allocated in <u>saved policies</u> in the Local Plan 2006.
71	5.229	<i>In the penultimate sentence:</i> ...within the town centre and local neighbourhood centres (as defined in Core Policy 8: Retail, and Leisure <u>and</u> <u>Community Facilities Provision</u>).
72	5.232	<i>In the final sentence:</i> The TCAAP <u>DPD and Allocations DPD</u> will take this further...
74	5.239	<i>In the 1st sentence:</i> ...opposite its junction with Western Road, was <u>is</u> allocated in <u>saved policies</u> in the Local Plan 2006.
79	5.255	<i>In the third sentence:</i> It has a high concentration of listed buildings, particularly in the central area, which means that these buildings play a cumulative <u>vital</u> role in the town's character and appeal.
78	5.257	<i>After second sentence:</i> Approximately 5% of the Borough's total housing requirement will be delivered at Cranbrook. <u>This rate represents approximately 300 dwellings and is higher slightly more than in recent years the last five years 2003/08 during which period 1% of the Borough's housing occurred at Cranbrook, representing 22 dwellings in total.</u>
80	Core Policy 13, part 1	All new development will have particular regard to preserving <u>conserving</u> and enhancing...
80	5.267	<i>After second sentence:</i> Approximately 4% of the Borough's total housing requirement will be provided in Hawkhurst. <u>This represents approximately 240 dwellings compared with the last five years 2003/08 during which period 3% of the Borough's housing occurred at Hawkhurst, representing 65 dwellings in total.</u>
iii	Table 13, column 6	CP3a: Completion of Key Specific Projects identified <u>in the</u> Plans; Programmes; and Strategies column
ix	Table 15, column 6	CP5b: Completion of Key Specific Projects identified <u>in the</u> Plans; Programmes; and Strategies column
x	Table 16,	NI155: 1,800 (excluding <u>including</u> rural exceptions sites)

Page	Policy/ Paragraph	Suggested Change
	column 6	
x	Table 16, column 6	NI159: Maintain rolling five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (<u>100%</u>)
xii	Table 17, column 7	Review of the Employment Land Study in light of partial review of the South East Plan in relation to job numbers <u>the findings of the Single Strategy</u>