

**Matter 3 – Spatial Strategy and Distribution of Development (Policy STR1, STR3, STR9 and STR10)**

**Issue 1 – Spatial Strategy**

Q1. Does the submission version Local Plan contain a settlement hierarchy in the same way as the adopted Core Strategy (2010) does?

1.1 The adopted CS (CD 3.118) at box 4<sup>1</sup> sets out a detailed settlement hierarchy thus:

Hierarchy	Settlement
Main Urban Area	Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough
Small Rural Towns	Cranbrook, Hawkhurst and Paddock Wood
Villages	Benenden, Bidborough, Brenchley, Five Oak Green, Frittenden, Goudhurst, The Moor (Hawkhurst), Horsmonden, Iden Green, Kilndown, Lamberhurst, Langton Green, Matfield, Pembury, Sandhurst, Sissinghurst and Speldhurst

1.2 Table 3 of the CS then sets out the division of total quantities of key types of development across the settlement hierarchy. Para 5.139 goes on to indicate that in quantitative terms, housing will be distributed in accordance with the settlement hierarchy set out in Box 4.

1.3 Policy ED8 of the Submission Plan sets out the Town, Rural Service and Neighbourhood Centres, and Village Settlements Hierarchy thus:

Type of Centre	Centre
Primary Regional Town Centre	Royal Tunbridge Wells
Town Centre	1. Cranbrook 2. Paddock Wood 3. Southborough
Rural Service Centre	Hawkhurst
Neighbourhood Centres	Village Settlements
1. Hawkenbury	1. Benenden
2. High Brooms	2. Bidborough
3. Knights Wood	3. Brenchley
4. North Southborough	4. Five Oak Green
5. Sherwood	5. Frittenden
6. Showfields	6. Goudhurst
7. Silverdale	7. Horsmonden
8. St Barnabas	8. Lamberhurst
9. St John's	9. Langton Green
10. St Peter's	10. Matfield
11. Within Paddock Wood and east Capel*	11. Pembury
12. Tudeley Village*	12. Rusthall
13. Sandhurst	

<sup>1</sup> NB the settlement hierarchy in the CS materially differs from the retail hierarchy set out in Table 10 of the CS

14. Sissinghurst 15. Speldhurst 16. Tudeley Village	
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1.4 Whilst slightly different in its approach, the settlement hierarchy set out in the Submission Plan is if anything more detailed in its approach. To this end we note that Paddock Wood continues to be identified as a town centre location.

**Q2. The Settlement Role and Function Study Update scores settlements and groups them together between A and G. Is the methodology used robust and are the outcomes accurate?**

2.1 The Settlement Role and Function Study 2021 (CD 3.72) groups settlements in terms of the range of services and facilities they currently provide. Based on the scores and evidence collected in the Study, Table 6 sets out the following groupings

Grouping	Settlement
A	Royal Tunbridge Wells (RTW) *
B	Southborough*, Cranbrook, Paddock Wood and Hawkhurst
C	Rusthall and Pembury
D	Goudhurst, Langton Green, Benenden, Brenchley and Horsmonden
E	Lamberhurst, Speldhurst, Sandhurst, Five Oak Green, Sissinghurst and Bidborough
F	Matfield and Frittenden
G	Kilndown and Iden Green

2.2 Para 5.1 of the Settlement Role and Function Study advises that: *‘These groupings give an indication of the level of sustainability and appropriateness of these settlements to accommodate further growth in terms of access they provide to services and facilities that support their sustainability.’*

2.3 Again we note that Paddock Wood continues to be identified as a tier 2 settlement, and having regard to the information contained in appendix 1 (p58 and 59) believe the methodology used to be robust and the scoring accurate.

**Q3. What is the purpose of the Settlement Role and Function Study Update? How has it informed the Plan?**

3.1 Whilst this is primary a question for the council to answer, the Settlement Role and Function Study appears to have been produced to help reaffirm the settlement hierarchy and thus the suitability of certain area to accommodate further growth – albeit caveated as per para 1.8 and 5.2 which makes it clear that: *‘the results of the Settlement Role and Function Study are only one of a number of factors, such as transport, employment/economic, environmental, landscape, heritage and flooding, which need to be considered in the selection of appropriate locations for new development’.*

3.2 As one of only a series of studies that informed the Local Plan, we do find it intriguing that despite what it says about the sustainability of Southborough, Rusthall and Pembury,

the latter two are not given any specific reference in Policy ED8 of the Submission Plan, rather they remain grouped with the other village settlements.

**Q4. The Development Strategy in Policy STR1 supports the “...major, transformational expansion of Paddock Wood (including land at east Capel)...”. At a strategic level, what are the reasons for promoting significant new development at Paddock Wood? Is this justified?**

4.1 The Development Strategy Topic Paper (CD3.64) starts by reviewing the settlement hierarchy established in the Settlement Role and Function Study, and then finesses this by reference to environmental designations, including, the High Weald AONB, Green Belt, Nature Conservation designations, Heritage designations, and areas of flood risk; before reviewing the development needs of the borough and the evolution of the spatial strategy through the issues and options, Reg 18, and Reg 19 plans. It then considers issues such as the opportunities for meeting development needs, possible alternative strategies, and the infrastructure needs of the borough. It’s clear when looking at Paddock Wood that unlike the other category A, B and C settlements listed in the Settlement Role and Function Study, Paddock Wood is not as constrained in terms of the environmental considerations, has good access to shops and services and good access to public transport facilities. Whilst we acknowledge that the land to the west of Paddock Wood falls within the Green Belt, and there are parts of Paddock Wood that fall within flood zones 2 and 3, as set out in para 6.186 (bullet point 2) of the Development Strategy Topic Paper/ para 2.10 of the Strategic Sites Topic Paper (CD 3.67) the scale of development as proposed will actually deliver betterment in terms of flood risk.

4.2 Para 7.12 of the Development Strategy Topic Paper supports this proposition, advising that:

*‘Broadly, Paddock Wood is a logical choice for strategic growth for a number of reasons; being an existing service and employment centre, having a central railway station and main road links, giving wider accessibility. It is also outside the AONB and, except for land to the west, beyond the Green Belt. It is notable that Paddock Wood is on the very outward edge of the Metropolitan Green Belt and is not a inset town. One of the main purposes of the Green Belt land here is to prevent neighbouring towns form merging into one another and the Green Belt Study shows that whilst the cumulative release of land at Paddock Wood and for Tudeley Garden Village “will significantly weaken the Green Belt separation between Tudeley Village and Paddock Wood, the remaining Green Belt land will continue to play a strategic role in preventing these neighbouring ‘towns’ merging’.*

4.3 Furthermore, section 6 (g) of the Development Strategy Topic Paper esp para’s 6.81 – 6.84 and 6.90 – 6.96 and 6.186, explain the rationale behind the proposed development at Paddock Wood (including land at east Capel), whilst pages 167 – 174 of appendix 6 of the Development Strategy Topic Paper review the proposed strategic expansion of Paddock Wood (including land at east Capel), against paragraph 72 of the NPPF. In doing so the Development Strategy Topic Paper identifies the opportunities the proposed expansion of Paddock Wood could generate in terms of infrastructure improvements, how it could help strengthen the towns economy and how it could facilitate net environmental gains, in terms of environmental quality, public accessibility, ecology and biodiversity. Appendix 6 of the Development Strategy Topic Paper also explains how the size and location of the proposed strategic expansion will support a sustainable community, with sufficient access to services and employment opportunities; how the wording of policy STR/ SS1 is clear about the

expectations of the high quality development, with specific reference made to a requirement for development to proceed on garden community principles; and that the assessment of delivery rates and timelines are realistic.

4.4 We believe, having regard to the findings of the Development Strategy Topic Paper and associated reports, such as the Strategic Sites Topic Paper that the strategic expansion of Paddock Wood (including land at east Capel) is both justified and sound.

Q5. The Development Strategy also supports the "...creation of a new garden settlement: Tudeley Village...". What were the reasons for pursuing a new, standalone settlement, rather than the expansion of existing towns and villages? Is this justified?

No Comment

Q6. Paragraph 4.45 of the submitted Plan states that Royal Tunbridge Wells is surrounded by the High Weald AONB, except for areas to the west and the north. What options has the Council therefore looked at for new development to the west and the north of the town? Why were they discounted in favour of a standalone new settlement (which also requires land to be removed from the Green Belt)?

No Comment

Q7. The Development Strategy Topic Paper refers to constraints to such as the Green Belt, the High Weald AONB and areas of flood risk. Which areas of the Borough are not constrained by flooding and/or the Green Belt and AONB? Why could housing needs not be met in these areas?

7.1 Please see our response to question 4. There are very few parts of the borough not affected by constraints such as the Green Belt, the High Weald AONB and areas of flood risk. The Development Strategy Topic Paper however explains that Paddock Wood is the least constrained higher order settlement in the borough and thus the most suitable for further growth, a point supported still further by the access it enjoys to other services and facilities.

Q8. Could housing needs be met in a way that did not require land to be removed from the Green Belt and/or require development in the AONB?

8.1 No – please see our response to matter 2 issue 1 question 5 - given the findings of the SA and the Development Strategy Topic Paper we believe the council have met the tests in paragraph 141 and 177 of the NPPF in relation to Green Belt and AONB i.e that it needs to amend its Green Belt boundaries and/or develop in the AONB if it is to meet its housing needs in full.

Q9. Do policies relating to the Green Belt, the High Weald AONB and/or flood risk provide a strong reason for restricting the scale, type and distribution of development in Tunbridge Wells?

No Comment

## **Issue 2 – Distribution of Development**

**Q1. How was the distribution of development established? Has the Council sought to direct housing growth towards settlements based on their scoring in the Settlement Role and Function Study, or by another means?**

1.1 Having regard to our response to matter 3, issue 1, questions 1 – 3, it appears to us that the Settlement Role and Function Study is just part of a suite of studies that have influenced the final distribution of development as set out in the Submission Plan.

**Q2. When taking into account commitments and completions since the start of the Plan period, what proportion of new housing will be distributed to each group of settlements, as per the Settlement Role and Function Study?**

2.1 Whilst this is something for the Council to comment on as they have all the facts and figures available to them, it's clear that the scale of development proposed in Paddock Wood is significant and will be transformational for the town, being well beyond that which would be deemed to be proportional. That said, as set out in response to our matter 3, issue 1, question 4, the scale of development proposed brings with it social, economic, and environmental benefits that in our opinion justify the approach set out in policy STR1.

**Q3. Is the strategy consistent with paragraph 105 of the Framework, which states that significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes?**

3.1 We believe the distribution of development strategy is consistent with para 105 of the NPPF. The proposed development at Paddock Wood (including land at east Capel), has direct access to the main line railway at Paddock Wood. The station is located on the South Eastern Main Line and the Medway Valley Line, also serving the villages of Matfield, Brenchley and Horsmonden, which do not have stations of their own. The station has up and down platform with a pair of fast lines between them. Typical journey times to a selection of direct destinations are summarised in the table below.

Direct Rail Connections from Paddock Wood Station

Destination	Frequency	Journey Time	Destination	Frequency	Journey Time
Tonbridge	1 per hour	7 minutes	Ramsgate	1 per 2 hours	75 minutes
Maidstone	1 per hour	20 minutes	Sandwich	1 per hour	86 minutes
London Charing Cross	1 per hour	49 minutes	Strood	1 per hour	105 minutes

3.2 The town also benefits from regular bus services. The nearest bus stop to that part of the proposed development to the east of at Paddock Wood is located on Warrington Road approximately 300m to the proposed site access on Church Road. Other key stops are at Elm Tree and Buttercup Close. A sufficient network of bus stops are also located within the town centre. The table below provides a summary of the bus services operating from the bus stops within the vicinity of the site.

Local Bus Services

Route No.	Bus Stop	Frequency (No. of buses per hour)			Route
		Mon - Fri	Saturday	Sunday	
296	Warrington Road	3pd*	-	-	Paddock Wood – Horsmonden – Pembury – Tunbridge Wells
6/A	Mascalls Corner	1 per hour	1 per hour**	4 pd	Tunbridge Wells – Pembury – Paddock Wood – East Peckham
205/6	Waitrose (opp)	2 per hour	2pd	-	Paddock Wood – Five Oak Green – Tudeley – Tonbridge
215	Mascalls Academy Grounds	2pd	-	-	Mascalls School – Kings Hill – West Malling – Ditton – Aylesford
260	Mascalls Academy Grounds	2pd	-	-	Mascalls Academy – Brenchley - Lamberhurst
267/8	Woodbury Park Road	2pd	-	-	Tunbridge – Paddock Wood - Hawkhurst
287	Mascalls Academy Grounds	1pd	-	-	Mascalls School – Pembury – Tunbridge Wells
296	Warrington Road	3pd*	-	-	Paddock Wood – Horsmonden – Pembury – Tunbridge Wells

\* Tuesday & Thursday only \*\* peak hours only

3.3 The location of the proposed development at Paddock Wood (including land at east Capel) reflects the requirements of para 105 of the NPPF in ensuring that patterns of growth make the fullest possible use of walking, cycling and public transport, and focus significant development in locations which are sustainable. The location of the site provides a realistic choice in travel modes to cater for daily journeys which would act to reduce prospective residents' reliance on the private car.

Q4. Having established the principle of significant growth at Paddock Wood (see Matter 3, Issue 1, Question 4 above), how did the Council determine the scale of additional housing proposed in the Plan?

No Comment

Q5. Where new development is proposed in towns and villages, is the scale, type and distribution of housing development proportionate to their character, role and function?

No Comment – please see answer to matter 3, issue 2, question 3 above concerning Paddock Wood.

Q6. What is the justification for distributing new housing development to settlements within the High Weald AONB? How did the AONB designation influence the scale, type and distribution of housing development?

No Comment

Q7. How have flooding constraints been taken into account in determining the spatial distribution of development? Is the Plan consistent with paragraph 161 of the Framework which states that all plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of



development - taking into account all sources of flood risk and the current and future impacts of climate change – so as to avoid, where possible, flood risk to people and property.

Please see our answer to matter 5, issue 1, question 5 and matter 6, issue 3, questions 9 and 10. We believe the plans approach to flood risk is consistent with para 161 of the NPPF.

Q8. Does the Plan identify any areas of safeguarded land, in between the urban area and the Green Belt in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching beyond the plan-period?

No Comment

### **Issue 3 – Limits to Built Development**

Q1. How have the Limits to Built Development been defined? What are they based on and are they accurate?

1.1 The Limits to Built Development (LBD) Topic Paper (CD3.82) explains that the LBDs are used to differentiate between the built up areas of settlements and areas of countryside beyond; and that generally, and subject to compliance with other policies in the plan, there will be a presumption that the principle of proposed development such as infilling, redevelopment, and/or changes of use will be acceptable inside the LBD, while land and buildings outside the LBD will be considered as countryside where there is much stricter control over development.

1.2 Having regard to the above we note that Policy STR 1 indicates that the Submission Local Plan

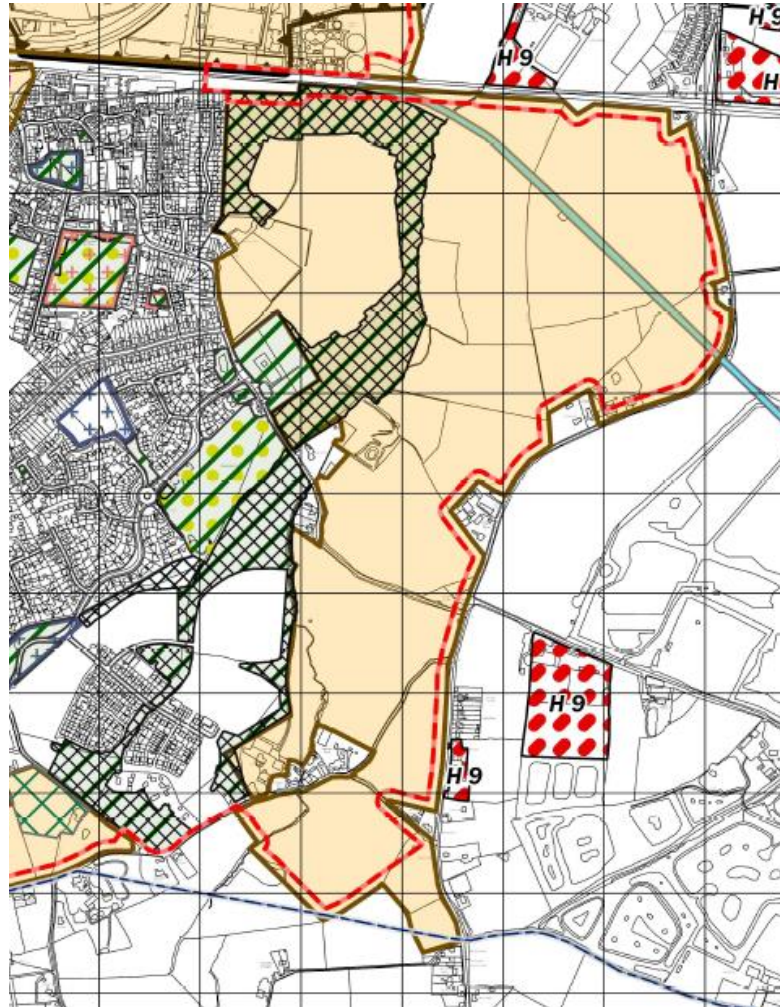
*‘(2) Looks to focus new development within the Limits to Built Development of settlements, as defined on the Policies Map, where proposals accord with other relevant policies of this Plan’*

1.3 Policy STR/SS 1 goes on to indicate that:

*‘The development strategy for Paddock Wood and east Capel is to:*

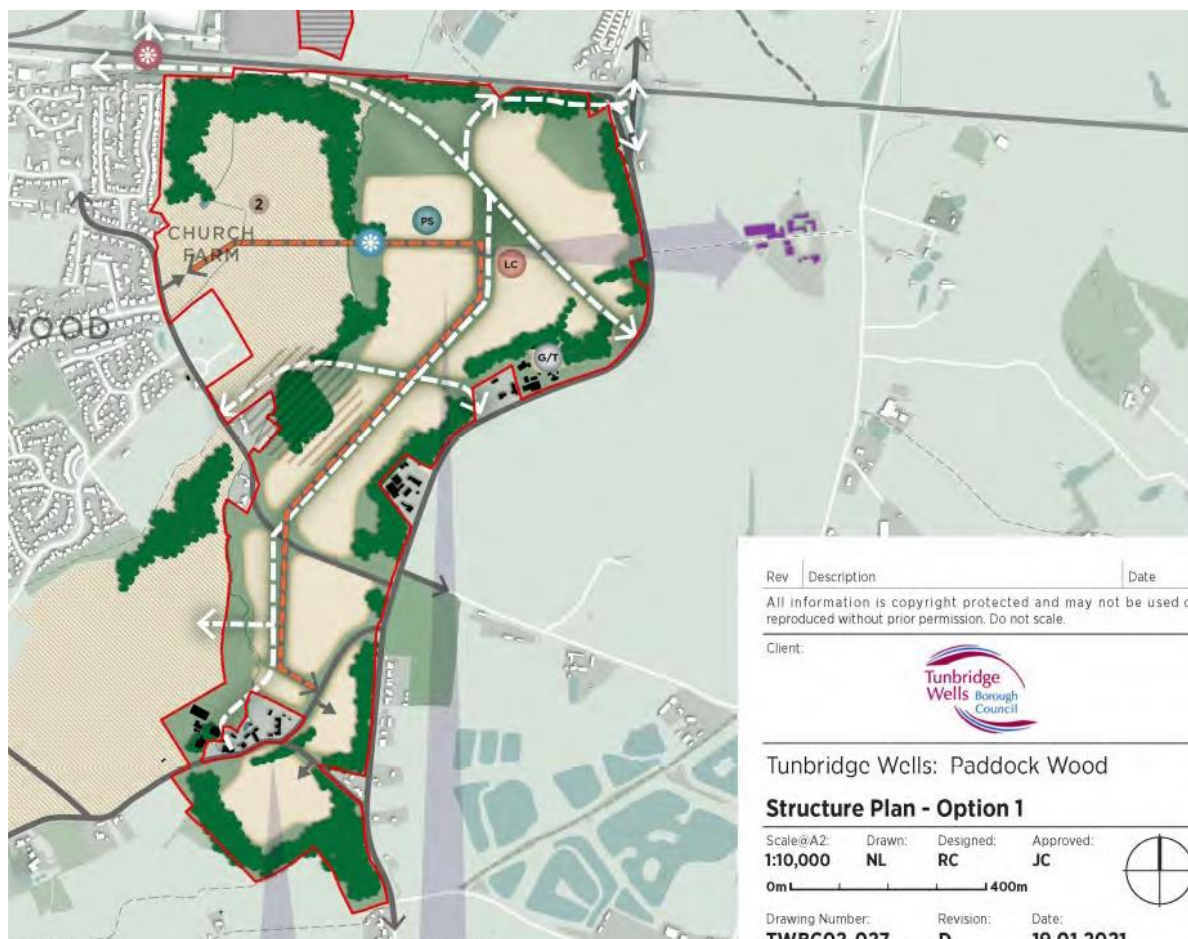
*1. With Policies STR/PW 1 (the Strategy for Paddock Wood (parish) and STR/CA 1 (the Strategy for Capel parish), set provisional Limits to Built Development for Paddock Wood and east Capel on the Policies Map (Inset Map 4) as a framework for the provision of an extended settlement over the plan period and beyond. This is facilitated through the release of Green Belt land;’*

1.4 The proposals map for Paddock Wood shows the Provisional Limits to Built Development (LBD) lying within the strategic sites, albeit by some distance at the far southern end of the land east of Paddock Wood – see below.



1.5 The Structure Plan referenced in policy STR/SS 1 is reproduced below. Whilst this shows landscaping within the far southern end of the land east of Paddock Wood, the SoCG between Redrow, Persimmon and TWBC makes it clear that: *'The parties agree that the development within the allocation should be delivered in line with the principles of the Strategic Sites Masterplanning and Infrastructure Framework, which has informed policy STR/SS1. The parties also acknowledge that **this is not a fixed blueprint**; instead establishing critical elements which should be secured through the delivery of the growth around Paddock Wood.'* Emphasis added.





1.6 In the context of the above the illustrative masterplan appended to the SoCG between Redrow, Persimmon and TWBC shows a low density farmstead plot in this southern area – see below, the details of which have been agreed in principle with TWBC. As such whilst not opposing the methodology used in reviewing the LBD as set out in section 2 of the LBD Topic Paper, and noting the criteria used to determine what should or should not be included within LBD boundaries as set out in Table 1 of the LBD Topic Paper, we would question criteria III which looks to exclude Landscape buffers which form part of the allocation (apart from those which run along a road frontage), open space and outdoor recreation grounds). To this end we also note that p60 of the LBD Topic Paper in commenting upon the provisional LBD in Paddock Wood as set out in the Reg 19 Pre-Submission Local Plan, indicates that these may be subject to further modifications based on any forthcoming masterplanning work associated with the site allocation, and that the provisional LBD boundary follows the extent of STR/SS 1 at a general 20m buffer from the outer boundaries to allow for any landscape buffers. Given the above, and notwithstanding para 8.24 of the Strategic Sites Topic Paper (CD 3.67), we would suggest that the Provisional LBD Development lying within the strategic sites as defined on the proposals map for Paddock Wood needs to be amended to address what is a clear anomaly now rather than be left until the outline applications have been approved and the LBD can be agreed and fixed through the 5 years post-adoption review of the Local Plan.



Q2. Do the submission version policies maps adequately show the changes to the Limits to Built Development that would arise from the adoption of the Plan?

No comment

Q3. Where new site allocations are concerned, the Limits to Built Development Topic Paper states that only the developable areas have been included. Landscape buffers, open space and outdoor recreation areas have been excluded from the Limits to Built Development. What is the justification for this?

Please see response to matter 3 issue 3, question 1 above

Q4. When taking into account that the detailed design and layout of a site allocation will be determined at the planning application stage, will the approach to defining Limits to Built Development be effective?

4.1 Whilst defining LBD helps to demonstrate the extent of future development, the LBD necessarily in the proposed strategic allocations needs to have some degree of flexibility to address longer term masterplanning options. That is clear from the issues that have arisen

with the land east of Paddock Wood. These should not, as we have indicted above, be issues for resolution during a subsequent local plan review. The policy approach to the LBD needs to be sufficiently flexible to enable variations through agreement with the LPA for sound planning reasons if it is to be truly effective.

Q5. What are the 'Provisional Limits to Built Development' as shown on the Submission Local Plan Inset Map Legend? Which sites/areas do they relate to? Are the justified and effective?

Please see response to matter 3 issue 3, question 1 above.

Q6. Where boundary changes are proposed as part of the submission version Local Plan, are they justified by appropriate evidence and analysis?

Please see response to matter 3 issue 3, question 1 above.

Q7. What is the justification for removing heritage assets and recreation areas from the Limits to Built Developments? Is this consistent with the principles set out in Core Document 3.82, which states that Limits to Built Development are policy lines drawn around the main built-up area of settlements?

No comment

Q8. What is the justification for the removal of the settlement boundaries at Iden Green and Kilndown? Is this justified and is it consistent with the principles of Limits to Built Development which seek to draw lines around the main built-up areas of settlements?

No comment

Q9. Is it clear to decision-makers, developers and local communities how planning applications will be considered for development proposals both within, and outside, Limits to Built Development?

No comment

Q10. Table 7 in the submission version Local Plan lists nine sites that are identified as part of the 'Rural Fringe'. What is the status of these sites and how will they be defined in the Plan? What is the justification for not including them within the Limits to Built Development?

No comment

#### Issue 4 – Management of Development in the Green Belt

No comment