

## **Rural Sustainability Scrutiny Review**

### **Background**

The Review was instigated following concerns at the challenges facing rural communities and their ability to ensure their long-term futures, beyond just becoming dormitory communities for commuting workers. The concern identified by the project scope is:

“Local, national and international pressures mean that the sustainability of rural communities is increasingly under threat.”

These issues will be discussed in greater detail in section 1

### **Panel**

The Member panel consists of Cllr Charlotte McCaul (Chairman), and Cllrs Nee, Anderson and McCabe.

### **Methodology**

Rural policy has developed greatly in the past few years and this has meant a large amount of policy documents exist at every layer of government, from the European level, national level, regional, county and district level. These documents are examined in detail in section 1.

The review also received evidence at the local level from officers involved in every aspect of service delivery to the rural areas. This information is incorporated into the relevant sections of the report.

The review also considered specific data from the “Your Council, your district, your future” survey which was conducted in February 2006. The review looked at the responses from rural areas only, and compared these responses with responses from urban areas.

In conjunction with the Local Plans team the review conducted an audit of village amenities, and the panel would like to acknowledge the outstanding effort that was put into the survey by the team, and the extensive analysis carried out by Carlo Caruso, Research Assistant.

## Rural Policy Review

### What is a sustainable community?

This would seem to be the fundamental issue with regard to this review. The government's Sustainable Development website says a sustainable community should be:

- Active, inclusive and safe - Fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities.
- Well run - with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership.
- Environmentally sensitive - providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment.
- Well designed and built - featuring a quality built and natural environment.
- **Well connected** - with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services.
- **Thriving** - with a flourishing and diverse local economy.
- **Well served** - with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all.
- Fair for everyone - including those in other communities, now and in the future

This list gave the review a focus on what a sustainable community should look like, and from this the panel decided to focus on challenges around Well connected, Thriving, and Well Served, i.e access to services, economic issues and housing issues. It also looked at environmental issues with regard to the use of land, as this is of huge significance to the sustainability of rural areas.

These areas are reflected in the government's three priorities for rural policy as outlined in Defra's Rural Strategy 2004

1. Economic and Social Regeneration – supporting enterprise across rural England, but targeting resources at areas of greatest need.
2. Social Justice for All – tackling rural social exclusion wherever it occurs and providing fair access to services and opportunities for all rural people.

3. Enhancing the value of the countryside – protecting the natural environment for this and future generations.

These priorities are derived from the evidence base that Defra is creating, which identified the major issues as:

P8 “the evidence available so far suggests that rural areas are dynamic and that rural society is rapidly changing in ways that are reshaping communities and blurring urban/rural distinctions. The main features include:

- Population growth: net migration of 60,000 people per year into wholly or predominantly rural districts between 1991 and 2002;
- An ageing population: the number of people aged 65 or over in wholly or predominantly rural districts increased by 161,000 (12%) between 1991 and 2002, whilst the number aged 16-29 decreased by 237,000 (18%)
- Relative prosperity especially in more accessible areas: higher income per head than the national average – but with a disadvantaged minority amidst prevailing affluence;
- Economic weaknesses, with associated social deprivation, in a minority of ‘lagging’ rural areas: characteristically in areas adjusting to a decline in mining, agriculture and fishing, and tending to be in more peripheral areas;
- Convergence between the urban and rural economies: though agriculture is still at the core of the rural economy and society, employment in agriculture has decreased by 30% (151,000) in the last 20 years; employees in rural businesses are now more likely to be in manufacturing (25%), tourism (9%) or retailing (7%), than in agriculture (6%);
- Increased mobility through the car: bringing benefits for many but reducing the customer base for public transport and thus creating difficulties for those without access to a car. Half a million (14%) rural households do not have a car and many people in households which do have a car do not have access to it when they need to travel; and
- Pressures on the countryside – especially through demand for housing and transport: rural areas remain a rich resource; valued by both residents and visitors for fine landscapes, biodiversity and open space; these contribute to enjoyment and general well-being as well as to education and health. The aim of sustainable development is to ensure that the enhancement of this resource is achieved for the benefit of all.

The causes of these trends include technological development, restructuring in the global and national economy, and the social, environmental and cultural changes that have resulted.

Assuming these underlying drivers of change continue to operate, we can expect the future to bring:

- Further convergence between urban and rural lifestyles and economic activity in most rural communities, but with a minority of areas continuing to lag behind economically;
- Continuing population growth as a result of migration by (mostly) affluent and older people into accessible rural areas, combined with increased life expectancy;
- Continuing ageing of the population in rural areas, with consequential demands on public and community services that support the elderly; and in some areas difficulty in maintaining facilities for young people, such as schools;
- Greater demands for rural housing, much of it resulting from migration to the countryside and an increase in the number of one-person households;
- Continuing increases in the mobility of the majority as more people own a car, threatening a further reduction in local shops and other outlets and the increasing isolation of those who do not have a car;
- A continued reduction in the proportional direct contribution of farming to total economic activity, but as farmers respond to the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the challenges of the Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food, they could make an increasingly important contribution to sustainable development through the provision of public benefits;
- Increasing demands on – and therefore an increasing need to take action to prevent damage to and improve the quality of – natural resources in the countryside (such as water resources) that support all communities, rural and urban; and
- A greater premium on the contribution (including economic contribution) of the countryside to the quality of life, and therefore on the importance of linking improved land and resource management, including biodiversity, with providing access for all – for recreation, health and education, and the economic, work contribution.

## **European Rural Development Programme.**

In its early days European rural development policy was essentially sectoral (dealing mainly with agricultural structures) with limited territorial aspects. However Agenda 2000 established rural development policy as the second pillar of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and brought rural development under a single regulation to apply across the whole of the union for the period 2000-2006.

Besides the need for agricultural restructuring it addressed environmental concerns and the wider needs of rural areas.

It had three main objectives:

1. To create a stronger agricultural and forestry sector, the latter recognised for the first time as an integral part of rural development policy
2. To improve the competitiveness of the rural areas
3. To maintain the environment and preserve Europe's rural heritage

In 2003 the mid-term review of the CAP added new measures to promote quality and animal welfare, and help for farmers to meet new EU standards. It also led to a strengthening of rural development policy via the provision of more EU money for rural development through a reduction in direct payments (modulation) for bigger farms.

The move towards a greater role for environmental stewardship in the CAP has been further embedded in the Community strategic guidelines for rural development programming period 2007-2013. These guidelines will help to:

- Identify and agree the areas where the use of EU support for rural development creates the most value-added at EU level
- Make the link with the main EU priorities (Goteburg sustainability principles, and the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs) and translate them into rural development policy
- Ensure consistency with other EU policies, in particular in the fields of cohesion and environment
- Accompany the implementation of the new market-oriented CAP and the necessary restructuring it will entail in the old and new member states.

From this the EU council has determined that "future Rural Development policy focuses on three key areas: the agrifood economy, the environment and the broader rural economy and population. The new generation of rural development strategies will be built around a competitiveness axis for agriculture, food and forestry, a land management-environment axis and a quality of life/diversification axis in rural areas." (Commission of the European Communities 2005/0129 (CNS) p6)

The report goes on to say that the new programming period provides “a unique opportunity to refocus support from the new rural development fund on growth, jobs and sustainability. Rural Development policy must help rural areas meet these objectives in the period 2007-2013. There must be increased focus on forward-looking investments in people, know-how and capital in the farm and forestry sectors, on new ways of delivering win-win environmental services and on creating more and better jobs through diversification, particularly for women and young people. By helping the EU’s areas to fulfil their potential as attractive places to invest, work and live, rural development policy can play its part in the sustainable development of European territory.” (ibid p8)

The report (ibid p 9-11) outlines guidelines that Member states should focus on. These are:

**Axis 1. Improving the competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sectors –**

- Facilitating innovation and access to research and development
- Improving integration in the agrifood chain
- Encouraging the take-up and diffusion of ICT
- Fostering dynamic entrepreneurship
- Development of new outlets for agricultural and forestry products
- Restructuring of the agricultural sector

**Axis 2. Improving the environment and countryside –**

- Promoting environmental services and animal friendly farming practices
- Preserving the farmed landscape
- Combating climate change
- Consolidating the contribution of organic farming
- Encouraging environmental/economic win-win initiatives
- Promoting territorial balance (between rural and urban areas)

**Axis 3. Improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification –**

- Raising economic activity and employment rates
- Encouraging the entry of women into the labour market
- Developing micro-business
- Training young people in traditional rural skills
- Encouraging the take-up and diffusion of ICT
- Developing the provision and innovative use of renewable energy sources
- Encouraging the development of tourism
- Upgrading of local infrastructure, particularly in the new member states.

At present the UK government is still awaiting finalisation of the rural development programme for the period 2007-2013, and this is expected to be approved by spring 2007.

The funds for Axis 1 and Axis 3 will be administered by the respective regional development agency, whilst Axis 2 will be administered on a national basis. At present the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is predicting that the allocation to the UK for this period will total £1.3 billion, not including match funding, voluntary modulation or state-aid funded elements of the programme. (DEFRA Q & A's on Rural Development Programme on DEFRA website).

The Q& As go on to describe the amount of funding that will be allocated to each axis of the programme as follows

“We expect that in England, approximately 20% of European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funds will be directed to Axis 1 and 3 measures and will be match funded pound for pound with exchequer money. It is also expected that 80% of EAFRD funds will be directed to Axis 2 measures and are likely to be match-funded at the ratio of 45% exchequer money to 55% EU money.”

From this DEFRA is assuming that RDAs will be guaranteed a minimum budget for Axis 1 and 3 of at least £35m for each of the 7 years of the new programme. Of this the South East & London will receive an approximate total of £5.26 million per year.

## **South East Rural Delivery Framework 2006-2009**

The 2006-2009 Rural Strategy asked each region to set up a partnership arrangement. The South East Rural Partnership, chaired by GOSE, is a partnership of senior officers representing key delivery partners in the public, private, and voluntary sectors at regional and local level.

The strategy is based around 10 themes of equal priority:

- Biodiversity
- Economic Development and Enterprise
- Exclusion
- Food and Farming
- Forestry
- Green Space
- Heritage
- Housing
- Landscape
- Water and Waste

Transport is addressed by all the themes, particularly in Exclusion.

### **Biodiversity**

Some elements of biodiversity are under threat from a range of pressures, including development and historic changes in land management and immediate action is required

### **Economic Development and Enterprise**

The countryside is a major economic asset and conserving it is crucial to retaining the region's competitiveness. Dealing with problems such as increasing global competition, decline in skills base, and freedom from subsidy regimes (CAP reform) will provide opportunities for new market needs.

### **Exclusion**

The South East's overall relative affluence brings with it other problems: lack of funding and infrastructure to support poorer communities, hidden poverty within communities (especially children and the elderly).

### **Forestry**

Suggests that trees, woodlands and forestry could be doing more. For instance, more of the timber used to build and heat homes could come from our forests.

### **Green Space**

The countryside provides opportunities for putting sustainable development into practice. There is a need to improve the accessibility of green spaces and promote their intrinsic value.

**Heritage**

Experience shows that where the historic environment is maintained, social and economic benefits can be generated for everyone, creating distinct and economically successful places.

**Housing**

The lack of affordable or appropriate homes is one of the biggest issues facing rural communities, and has a significant impact on the sustainability of vibrant communities.

**Landscape**

The value of the landscape and environment is high and gives an element of competitive edge to the region. It is a key factor in bringing visitors and business to the region, boosting tourism and the economy.

**Water and Waste**

Ensuring sufficient awareness of waste legislation, guidance and good practice for minimising waste production are key priorities for the region. The quality of the region's rivers and coastal waters needs to be as high as possible, and delivery of the EU Water Framework Directive is a key priority.

## **Kent Rural Delivery Framework: A Summary**

### **Introduction:**

Kent County Council is currently reviewing rural delivery services in the County under a newly produced rural delivery framework. The Kent Rural Board, founded in 2005, has commissioned work to devise a 'Vision for Rural Kent':

- The rural economy is productive, innovative and sustainable
- Local food and rural products are promoted and purchased across Kent
- Sustainable management of Kent's environmental resources
- The quality and attractiveness of Kent's rural heritage is maintained and enhanced
- Development is consistent with local rural needs without unacceptable impacts
- Rural communities are vibrant, provide a local work force, and are able to access the majority of facilities and services locally

The purpose of the delivery framework is to shape issues arising out of change in rural Kent and highlight areas for action under the following headings:

1. The Rural Economy
2. The Rural Environment
3. Fostering Vibrant Rural Communities

### **The Rural Economy**

This objective highlights challenges facing rural Kent in the form of the decline in land-based employment, increased global competition, and tackling the limited rural skills base, whilst setting out opportunities in the form of recent CAP<sup>1</sup> reform, attracting investment from knowledge-based SMEs<sup>2</sup>, and developing a strong link between Kent as a tourist destination and its agricultural assets.

### **The Rural Environment**

This centres on the host of obstacles facing rural Kent: tackling climate change, managing the environment, increased environmental regulation and addressing urban expansion. Opportunities arise in strengthening land management, promoting Kent's cultural distinctiveness, encouraging rural sustainable development and through reform of the CAP.

### **Fostering Vibrant Rural Economies**

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<sup>1</sup> Common Agricultural Policy

<sup>2</sup> Small and Medium sized Enterprises

Key issues here are the lack of local jobs, affordable housing, decline in services and facilities, demographic change, and changing consumer behaviour.

### **Relevant Council Policy/Strategies/Budgetary Documents**

The content of the rural delivery framework has relevance to several Council strategies, plans and policies. However more worryingly the framework does not identify links to other regional, sub-regional or district strategies:

- (a) Community Strategy – five of the six themed actions plans – community, economy, environment, transport and wellbeing.
- (b) Local Plan / – fits with Chapter 2 providing decent housing, Chapter 3 boosting our local economy and Chapter 5 promoting our countryside.
- (c) Corporate Plan – fits with 5 of the identified 7 themes, community, economy, environment, transport and wellbeing.
- (d) Economic Strategy – fits with all RED themes, A Investing in infrastructure, B Promoting a stronger economy, C Investing in learning and skills, D Investing in quality of life.

### **Key Points from the response of Canterbury City Council (Regeneration and Economic Development):**

- This document does not mention District Councils as delivery partners; it mentions Parish Councils but not in great depth. This must raise a large question on how the proposals are to be achieved.
- The document does not specifically mention any Canterbury District rural wards.
- Looking at the composition of the Kent Rural Board, apart from the KCC representation there is no one there who is actually going to implement these issues so one would have to draw the conclusion that it is probably mainly a debating arena. The districts seem to be excluded from this process yet we are probably the most suitable bodies for delivering many of the suggested actions.
- How does the framework fit with GOSE's Regional Rural Delivery Framework, the Regional Economic Strategy, the East Kent Partnerships and other AIFs strategies and lastly District Council strategies and plans?
- There should be a greater emphasis to the accessibility of services in rural Kent.
- The City Council cannot see what existing or new funding streams would be available to deliver the identified actions.
- The alignment and coordination of activities in the rural area (by the various public bodies) is an issue that is not commented on.
- The actions are not all deliverable by KCC – other agencies have to be involved and that integration/linkage element seems to be missing.
- The linkages between the public sector organisations and defining their various roles for delivery services is missing.
- Exclusion and accessibility are not separated as major issues
- Housing is not given enough emphasis within the document.

- The draft framework refers to the relative differences in the costs of housing in East and West Kent, and identifies the risks of local people being unable to afford housing in their particular rural community. However this would be more meaningful if it could be presented in the context of average local household incomes. For example a chart showing the ratio of house price to average household income, would show that Canterbury district has the largest ratio in Kent.'

KCC are planning a series of follow up meetings with stakeholders (in which CCC have indicated they would like to part) and the intention is that a finished document be published by the end of June.

Finally it is worth returning to DEFRA's Rural Strategy 2004:

“People in all areas deserve access to high quality public services. For all rural areas, our strategy is to ensure that communities benefit from the government's programmes to modernise and improve public services by ensuring that intelligent service delivery solutions follow appropriate rural proofing”<sup>3</sup>.

Social Exclusion exists in all rural communities – both in prosperous and less well-off areas. In contrast with social exclusion in urban areas, which is very often concentrated in particular neighbourhoods, rural social exclusion tends to be more dispersed and therefore harder to identify. Our strategy is to target our efforts at socially excluded groups and empower them to improve their lives and communities.

All the policies identified above are reflected in some way by the policies adopted in the Canterbury District Local Plan that affect the rural areas, namely policies R1 –R 14, NE1 – NE5.

*Recommendation 1: That under the Implications section of committee reports an item is added for “Implications for rural communities.”*

As we have seen from the policies reviewed above there is an increasing focus on diversifying the rural economy, and as the statistics on page 4 show, manufacturing, tourism and retail are now larger employers than agriculture in the rural areas.

The panel therefore recommends

*Recommendation 2: Regeneration & Economic Development examines the opportunities for increasing tourism in the rural areas of our district.*

*Recommendation 3: Regeneration & Economic Development continues to promote and market training for small rural businesses.*

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<sup>3</sup> Rural Strategy 2004, DEFRA

## **Organisations that are active in supporting rural communities in Kent**

### **Action for Rural Communities in Kent**

- Rural Housing Enablers: attempts to influence policy and address issues by providing information to national, regional, and local authorities, and consumers.
- Community Action Plans: provides funding for consultation projects used to identify local needs and influence policy decisions.
- Community Halls: provide advice on increased role of community halls, e.g. IT facilities, farmers' markets, OAP lunch clubs, and giving advice on charitable status.
- Rural Community Safety: helps communities to form such groups.
- Rural Transport: offers advice and funding to support Parish and Town councils and community groups to develop transport projects. E.g. Dial-a-Ride, Taxi buses, Volunteer car schemes.
- Community Rail Projects: attempts to improve community links with Rail Service operators.
- Kent Rural Towns programme: all towns eligible for support and advice. Town performs a 'health check' to determine its economic viability, and create an action plan to meet challenges and fulfil local ambitions.
- Village Post Offices: works closely with the Post Office to sustain and develop services.

They also provide the following grants:

- Community Initiatives in Rural Kent: funding towards community planning exercises and projects arising from these exercises.
- Weald of Kent Shop Development Scheme: helps to sustain village shops in Kent
- Rural Transport Delegated Fund: help fund small-scale projects improving transport for local people.
- Community Rail Partnership Delegated Fund: aid communities to improve rail transport facilities.

They also advise on the following grants:

- Rural Revival: targets unemployment for disadvantaged / under represented groups.
- EK Coalfield Community Chest: Parish / Town Council grants for community projects.

### **Countryside Agency**

- Rural advocate that works with all government bodies providing evidence and advising decision makers.

- Develops solutions and spreads good practice to influence policy and its delivery.
- Designating: national parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), National Trails.

### **English Nature**

- Works with all government departments and agencies at national and regional levels, and private interests (e.g. farmers) acting as 'Wildlife' advisors.
- Selection, establishment, and management of national nature reserves.
- Identification of Sites of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI), and advice on nature conservation.

### **Kent Association of Parish Councils**

Does not provide services directly to communities, but supports the work of Parish Councils by providing:

- Training
- Specialist services: arbitration, free banking, insurance, IT, investment, and current affairs awareness through publications.
- Advisory: legal, procedural, financial, technical.
- Representation to: Parliament, government, LAs, Local Government commission, Police & Community consultative groups.

### **Department for Food Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)**

- Government departmental body.
- Responsible for environmental leadership, and putting sustainable development into practice through policy formulation.

### **Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)**

- Campaigns to promote rural sustainability through independent, authoritative arguments; and active campaigning.
- Focus is on landscape, planning and development, and farming and food.
- Works with business, government, other campaigning groups to influence policy at all levels.

### **Kent Downs (AONB)**

- Strategic Body that works with partners (local, regional and national government bodies) to achieve the conservation and enhancement of Kent Downs AONB.

### **Southern Housing Group**

Housing association that focuses on providing affordable housing.

### **Kent County Council**

- Rural Revival Grant: to promote environmental issues, employment, and community involvement.
- Kent Rural Towns Program: all towns eligible for support and advice. Town performs a 'health check' to determine its economic viability, and create an action plan to meet challenges and fulfil local ambitions.
- Works in partnership with Action with Communities in Rural Kent and Rural Transport Wardens, to improve rural transport issues and improve transport in specific areas.

### **Forestry Commission**

- Advocacy group, providing advice and guidance on policy and implementing it.
- Reports to the relevant forestry minister in England, Scotland, and Wales.

### **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds**

- UK charity concerned with the welfare of birds.
- Also concerned with bio-diversity, conservation, and environmental policy.
- Advise farmers on how their practices affect birds and habitats.

### **National Trust**

- Works to preserve and protect the coastline, countryside, and buildings of England, Scotland and Wales.
- Contributes to: regeneration, education, local environment, through the injection of funds and expertise.
- Supports local business by investing in the environmental infrastructure, not unlike a development agency.
- Contributes to community by youth and adult volunteer training.
- Protects and manages public spaces. Has custody of the largest and most diverse open spaces in the country.

### **Kent Wildlife Trust**

- Conservation charity that manages nature reserves.
- Provides information and fact sheets
- Offers a consultative service for advice on nature conservation, and conducts ecological surveys.

### **Kentish Stour Countryside Project**

- Involved in general countryside management of the Stour valley.
- Encourages access, educates people about the countryside, and supports rural economies.
- Advises on managing community land.
- Works with schools and youth centres, getting them involved in projects.

### **Rural Housing Trust**

- Charity that provides affordable housing for local people in villages in England, providing rented and shared ownership schemes.
- Works in partnership with Parish Councils.

### **National Farmers Union**

- Offers lobbying, advocacy, and legal aid; to benefit farmers and other countryside workers.

*Recommendation 4: That rural communities/businesses have access to advice on external funding opportunities.*

## Identification of Local Issues

Our district is typical in that it mirrors many of the issues identified in the policy review above. However the review also gathered first hand evidence in the form of a village amenities survey (whereby the amenities available in each village were recorded). This survey was conducted in conjunction with the Local Plans team. The source documents are available at Appendix B.

## Rural Amenities Survey

### Introduction

This part of the review will be looking at the different amenities that rural communities have access to within different settlements, and use this to develop a picture of service provision across the district's rural areas so as to identify any gaps. Where possible we will compare this to the state of the countryside regionally or nationally.

### Discussion

In conjunction with officers from Local Plans, surveys have been completed during visits on a settlement-by-settlement basis looking at service provision under the following categories:

1. Retail Services
2. Family & Community Services
3. Employment Sites
4. Public Transport provision

The surveys were later sent to the relevant Parish Council to ensure the information was accurate<sup>4</sup>

The survey was broad with a comprehensive list of different amenities to consider. However, to tackle the question of the 'sustainability' of our rural areas, the report will highlight the services the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC), in its State of the Countryside Report, perceives as being important to the sustainability of our rural communities<sup>5</sup>. They are as follows:

1. Banks
2. Petrol Stations / Car Sales / Repairs
3. Shops
4. Post Office
5. GP surgery
6. Dentists
7. Primary School

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<sup>4</sup> Completed survey forms available in Appendix A

<sup>5</sup> Commission for Rural Communities, 2006, pg. 38

In addition, the IDeA Agency highlights other services that contribute to the quality of life in rural areas<sup>6</sup>. They are:

1. Pubs/Cafes/Restaurants
2. Place of Worship
3. Community/Village Hall
4. Pre-School/Nursery

As mentioned before, they will be categorised under the following headings: Retail, Family and Community, Transport, and Employment Sites. Again, the purpose of the review is to identify if there are any gaps in service provision in each of our rural areas, as opposed to assessing the number of any individual service in any particular area.

## Analysis

In total there are 39 rural settlements in the survey, located in 26 parishes. The maps available at Appendix A show the following information in pictorial form.

### Key

- ☒ With Post Office
- ⊗ includes Restaurant/bar food
- ◆⊗ Separate restaurant/bar food and pub
- ⊗🏠 Pub with Restaurant and Accommodation
- ☒ Restaurant
- 🏠 With Accommodation
- ◆ Service available
- ✕ Café

### Retail Services

Parish	Village	Retail	Post Office	Pubs / Restaurants / Cafés	Bank	Cash Machine	Petrol Station / Car Sales	Hotel / B&B
Herne & Broomfield	Broomfield	☒	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
	Herne	☒	.	◆	.	.	.	◆

<sup>6</sup> Fair Access to Rural Services, 2006, pg 17

Parish	Village	Retail	Post Office	Pubs / Restaurants / Cafés	Bank	Cash Machine	Petrol Station / Car Sales / Repair	Hotel / B&B
Chislet	Marshside, Highstead & Chislet	.	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
	Fordwich	.	.	⊗	.	.	◆	.
Hoath	Hoath & Maypole	◆	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
Ickham & Well	Ickham	.	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
Wickhambreaux	Stodmarsh	.	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
	Wickhambreaux	.	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
	Upstreet & Grove	✉	.	◆	.	.	◆	.
Adisham	Adisham	◆	.	⊗	.	.	.	◆
Barham	Barham & Derringstone	✉	.	⊗ 🏰	.	◆	◆	.
Blean	Blean	✉	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
Chestfield	Chestfield	◆	.	⊗	.	◆	◆	◆
Littlebourne	Littlebourne	✉	.	⊗ 🏰	.	◆	.	✉
Kingston	Kingston	.	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
Upper Hardres	Bossingham	.	.	◆	.	.	.	.
	Upper Hardres	.	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
Hackington	Tyler Hill	.	.	⊗	.	.	.	◆
Bishopsbourne	Bishopsbourne	.	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
Womenswold	Woolage Village	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Woolage Green	.	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
	Womenswold	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Bekesbourne with Patrixbourne	Bekesbourne with Aerodrome Road	◆	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
	Patrixbourne	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Westbere	Westbere	.	.	◆	.	.	◆	.
Harbledown	Rough Common	✉	.	◆	.	.	.	.
	Harbledown	.	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
Lower Hardres	Lower Hardres & Nackington	◆	.	⊗	.	.	.	.

Parish	Village	Retail	Post Office	Pubs / Restaurants / Cafés	Bank	Cash Machine	Petrol Station / Car Sales	Hotel / B&B
Petham	Petham & Garlinge Green	.	.	◆ X	.	.	.	◆
Thanington Without	Thanington	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Chartham	Chartham	◆	◆	⊗	.	.	◆	⊗
	Chartham Hatch	◆	.	⊗	.	.	.	◆
	St Augustines	◆	.	◆	.	.	.	.
	Shalmsford Street	.	◆	⊗	.	.	.	.
Bridge	Bridge	◆	◆	⊗	.	◆	◆	◆
Waltham	Waltham & Anvil Green	.	.	◆ ⊗	.	.	.	◆
Sturry	Broad Oak	◆	.	⊗	.	.	.	.
	Hersden	✉	.	⊗	.	.	◆	.
	Sturry	◆	◆	◆ ⊗	.	.	.	.

### Family & Community Facilities

Parish	Village	Pre School	Primary School	Place of Worship	Doctor	Dentist	Community/Village Hall	Playing Field
Herne & Broomfield	Broomfield	◆	.	◆	◆	.	◆	◆
	Herne	◆	◆	◆	.	◆	◆	◆
Chislet	Marshside, Highstead & Chislet	◆	◆	◆	.	.	◆	
Fordwich	Fordwich	.	.	◆	.	.	◆	◆
Hoath	Hoath & Maypole	◆	◆	◆	.	.	◆	.
Ickham & Well	Ickham	◆	.	◆	.	.	◆	.
Wickhambreaux	Stodmarsh	.	.	◆	.	.	.	.
	Wickhambreaux	.	◆	◆	.	.	◆	◆
	Upstreet & Grove Ferry	.	.	.	.	.	.	◆
Adisham	Adisham	◆	◆	◆	.	.	◆	◆
Barham	Barham & Derringstone	◆	◆	◆	.	.	◆	◆
Blean	Blean	◆	◆	◆	◆	.	◆	◆

Parish	Village	Pre School	Primary School	Place of Worship	Doctor	Dentist	Community/Village Hall	Playing Field
Chestfield	Chestfield	.	.	◆	◆	◆	.	◆
Littlebourne	Littlebourne	◆	◆	◆	◆	.	◆	◆
Kingston	Kingston	◆	.	◆	.	.	◆	◆
Upper Hardres	Bossingham	◆	◆	◆	.	.	◆	◆
	Upper Hardres	.	.	.	.	.	.	◆
Hackington	Tyler Hill	.	.	◆	.	.	◆	◆
Bishopsbourne	Bishopsbourne	.	.	◆	.	.	◆	◆
Womenswold	Woolage Village	.	.	.	.	.	.	◆
	Woolage Green	.	.	.	.	.	.	◆
	Womenswold	.	.	◆	.	.	.	.
Bekesbourne with Patrixbourne	Bekesbourne with Aerodrome Road	.	.	◆	.	.	◆	◆
	Patrixbourne	.	.	◆	.	.	.	.
Westbere	Westbere	◆	.	◆	.	.	◆	.
Harbledown	Rough Common	.	.	◆	.	.	◆	◆
	Harbledown	.	◆	◆	.	.	◆	.
Lower Hardres	Lower Hardres & Nackington	.	.	◆	.	.	◆	◆
Petham	Petham & Garlinge Green	◆	◆	◆	.	.	◆	◆
Thanington Without	Thanington	◆	.	◆	.	.	◆	◆
Chartham	Chartham	◆	◆	◆	◆	.	◆	◆
	Chartham Hatch	.	.	.	.	.	◆	◆
	St Augustines	.	.	.	.	.	.	◆
	Shalmsford Street	.	.	.	.	.	◆	◆
Bridge	Bridge	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Waltham	Waltham & Anvil Green	.	.	◆	.	.	◆	◆
Sturry	Broad Oak	.	.	.	.	.	◆	.
	Hersden	◆	◆	.	.	.	◆	.
	Sturry	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆

## Employment Sites

It is hard to quantify this section, as there is insufficient information about the size and number of employees of these businesses. However they have been listed.

## Transport

### Car Ownership<sup>7</sup>:

This section seeks to identify the percentage of households in each of the wards who have access to a minimum of one car. The instances of households with access to at least one car are 74% for Canterbury. This figure is higher in our rural areas, which averaged 86%. Scores range from 73% in Broad Oak, to 96% in Chestfield. Over half of all rural areas are below the average for car ownership, but all have more than the average level for Canterbury, except for Broad Oak.

Despite levels of car ownership being higher in rural areas locally and nationally, so is transport related disadvantage<sup>8</sup>. Having access to a car is particularly important to areas that do not have access to regular public transport services. Non-car ownership could lead to deprivation as households are unable to access important services or employment opportunities. Also, the relatively high level of car ownership in the rural areas exacerbates the problem for households who do not have access to their own means of transport. The fact that a large majority of the rural population can and do choose to travel further for shopping has meant the closing of local facilities.

**N.B.** The information available for car ownership is only available at ward level, so will only be included in the Parish level assessment in the Summary.

### Trains:

All of the villages with available train stations are well served. This is due in part to their being situated along main lines to London and the coastal areas. Adisham and Bekesbourne are the least served stations, but still have 49 trains stopping throughout the day for both directions. Settlements with train stations are:

- Sturry
- Bekesbourne
- Adisham
- Chestfield
- Chartham

### Bus Service:

To determine the quality of local bus services we will look at village-by-village service provision. The standard for measuring the quality according to the Department for Transport<sup>9</sup> is that of an hourly service. For the purposes of the review, an hourly service with no changes during typical peak periods (0700-1800 Monday to Friday) will be considered as a good service. This is the threshold we will use to distinguish between regular and irregular services.

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<sup>7</sup> Car ownership figures taken from Housing Survey 1999, which collates the results by Ward

<sup>8</sup> State of the Countryside 2006, pg 56

<sup>9</sup> National Transport Survey 2006

We will also highlight those that do not have a service. The survey returned the following:

Parish	Village	Destination	First	Last	No. of buses per day
Herne & Broomfield	Broomfield	Canterbury	6:46	22:47	29
	Broomfield	Herne Bay	6:45	22:55	30
	Herne	Canterbury	5:42	22:53	74
	Herne	Herne Bay	6:28	23:19	79
Chislet	Marshside, Highstead & Chislet	Canterbury	13:04	13:04	1
	Marshside, Highstead & Chislet	Herne Bay	9:45	9:45	1
Fordwich	Fordwich	-	-	-	-
Hoath	Hoath & Maypole	Canterbury	7:42	14:12	6
	Hoath & Maypole	Herne Bay	9:41	18:14	6
Ickham & Well	Ickham (incl. Bramling)	Canterbury	7:52	10:27	2
	Ickham (incl. Bramling)	Margate	13:26	18:06	3
Wickhambreaux	Stodmarsh	-	-	-	-
	Wickhambreaux	Canterbury	7:56	10:31	2
	Wickhambreaux	Margate	13:22	18:02	3
	Upstreet & Grove Ferry	Canterbury*	13:11	13:11	1
	Upstreet & Grove Ferry	Herne Bay*	9:38	9:38	1
	Upstreet & Grove Ferry	Canterbury	6:24	22:18	38
	Upstreet & Grove Ferry	Broadstairs	7:13	22:57	39
	Upstreet & Grove Ferry	Canterbury	10:04	17:14	9
	Upstreet & Grove Ferry	Minnis Bay	8:55	18:54	12
	Upstreet & Grove Ferry	Canterbury	06:24	22:18	41
	Upstreet & Grove Ferry	Westwood Cross	07:13	22:57	39
Adisham	Adisham	-	-	-	-

Parish	Village	Destination	First	Last	No. of buses per day
Barham	Barham & Derringstone	Folkstone	7:20	23:26	26
	Barham & Derringstone	Canterbury	7:06	22:54	24
Blean	Blean	Canterbury	5:57	23:45	74
	Blean	Whitstable	6:40	23:32	79
Chestfield	Chestfield	Seasalter - Lucerne Drive	06:41	19:30	12
	Chestfield	Canterbury	07:06	18:42	13
Littlebourne	Littlebourne	Walmer	06:15	23:00	29
	Littlebourne	Canterbury	07:05	20:25	29
Kingston	Kingston	Canterbury	08:03	22:23	13
	Kingston	Folkestone	08:45	22:55	14
Upper Hardres	Bossingham	Canterbury	07:52	07:52	1
	Bossingham	Ashford	16:39	16:39	1
	Bossingham	Canterbury	07:58	17:50	6
	Bossingham	Hythe	09:11	18:36	5
Hackington	Tyler Hill	Canterbury	07:19	18:56	14
	Tyler Hill	Seasalter - Lucerne Drive	09:05	19:16	10
Bishopsbourne	Bishopsbourne	-	-	-	-
Womenswold	Woolage Green	-	-	-	-
	Womenswold	-	-	-	-
	Woolage Village	-	-	-	-
Bekesbourne with Patrixbourne	Bekesbourne with Aerodrome Road	-	-	-	-
	Patrixbourne	-	-	-	-
Westbere	Westbere	Canterbury	06:31	22:22	38
	Westbere	Westwood	07:05	22:53	42
	Westbere	Canterbury	10:07	17:17	9

Parish	Village	Destination	First	Last	No. of buses per day
	Westbere	Minnis Bay	08:52	18:51	12
Harbledown	Rough Common	Faversham	22:46	22:46	1
	Rough Common	Canterbury	7:48	7:48	1
	Rough Common	Canterbury	07:48	14:20	8
	Rough Common	(Canterbury to) Rough Common	09:07	22:35	9
	Harbledown	Canterbury	07:09	23:30	19
	Harbledown	Faversham	06:02	20:59	19
Lower Hardres	Lower Hardres & Nackington	Canterbury	7:59	7:59	1
	Lower Hardres & Nackington	Ashford	16:31	16:31	1
	Lower Hardres & Nackington	Canterbury (circular route)	08:59	17:57	4
	Lower Hardres & Nackington	Canterbury	08:04	17:57	5
	Lower Hardres & Nackington	Hythe	09:04	18:29	5
Petham	Petham & Garlinge Green	Canterbury (Circular route)	09:02	18:02	4
Thanington Without	Thanington	Canterbury	07:14	17:27	14
	Thanington	Ashford	08:48	18:28	13
Chartham	Chartham	Canterbury	07:03	17:15	12
	Chartham	Ashford	08:03	18:32	12
	Chartham Hatch	Canterbury	08:02	10:32	2
	Chartham Hatch	Return to Chartham H	13:50	16:05	2
	St Augustines	Canterbury	07:00	17:37	11
	St Augustines	Return	05:55	18:20	11
	Shalmsford Street	Canterbury	08:07	17:19	12
	Shalmsford Street	Return	07:59	18:28	12
Bridge	Bridge	Canterbury	08:11	22:26	13
	Bridge	Folkstone	08:40	22:50	15

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Village</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>No. of buses per day</b>
	Bridge	Canterbury	07:39	23:19	4
	Bridge	Folkstone	07:13	23:00	3
Waltham	Waltham & Anvil Green	Circular route to Canterbury bus station	09:09	18:07	4
Sturry	Sturry	Canterbury	05:49	23:00	74
	Sturry	Herne Bay	06:20	23:12	79
	Sturry	Canterbury	07:26	14:26	7
	Sturry	Herne Bay	09:27	18:00	6
	Sturry	Canterbury	06:35	22:27	38
	Sturry	Westwood	07:05	22:50	42
	Broad Oak	Canterbury	09:21	17:53	7
	Broad Oak	Herne Bay	07:59	14:29	7
	Hersden	Canterbury	06:28	22:22	38
	Hersden	Westwood	07:10	22:53	42
	Hersden	Canterbury	10:07	17:17	9
	Hersden	Minnis Bay	08:52	18:51	12

\* Service operates on a Wednesday only.

Villages with no service:

- Fordwich
- Stodmarsh
- Adisham
- Bishopsbourne
- Woolage Green
- Womenswold
- Woolage Village
- Bekesbourne
- Patixbourne

Villages with services that are below the threshold:

- Marshside
- Hoath
- Ickham
- Wickhambreaux
- Bossingham
- Rough Common
- Lower Hardres
- Petham
- Chartham Hatch
- Broad Oak
- Upper Hardres
- Waltham & Anvil Green

Villages on or above the threshold:

- Broomfield
- Herne
- Upstreet & Grove
- Barham & Derringstone
- Blean
- Chestfield
- Littlebourne
- Hersden
- Harbledown
- Thanington
- Chartham
- Kingston
- Bridge
- Sturry
- Tyler Hill
- Westbere
- Shalmsford Street
- St Augustines

About 54% of villages surveyed had a bus service that was deemed to be below the acceptable standard. Of these, 23% had no service provided by

either Poynters or Stagecoach. Villages that do not have a bus service have the option of using either the Post Bus or KCCs Dial-a-Ride services. However they are both limited. The Post Bus runs from a Monday to Friday with two return journeys, and only one on a Saturday at specified times, usually when collecting mail from post boxes. Both have late morning, and early afternoon pick ups therefore only providing limited opportunity and time to access the services that are available in Canterbury, nor adequate time for work. 47% of bus services operated above the threshold.

Furthermore, the Dial-a-Ride scheme does not operate on a weekend and journeys must be booked at least one day in advance; and the Post Bus can be boarded depending on seat availability offering only 9 seats. Both have a charge: from £1.50 to £2.70 for Dial-a-Ride, and between £2 to £5 for the Post Bus. Dial-a-Ride also has certain restrictions on its service. It is available for those who are housebound or unable to use public transport due to a medical condition. Or if you live in a rural area, you must be more than 500 metres from a conventional bus stop. You must also be a member of the Dial-a-Ride scheme. The Dial-a-Ride and Post Bus services fall below the earlier mentioned quality threshold.

*Recommendation 5: That the transport sub-group of the LSP examines the transport issues identified in the amenities survey and passes the findings on to the Joint Transportation Board.*

## **Conclusion**

Three levels of analysis: service, settlement, and parish.

In summary the state of rural service provision leaves a few clear indications as to the predicament of our rural areas. Generally, when considering the provision of rural and family facilities, we can see there is a clear lack of banks, doctor and dentist surgeries; and there are only a few more cash machines. Only half have access to retail facilities, and just over a quarter of settlements have a Post Office (either sharing facilities or independent). There does seem to be an abundance of pubs with or without restaurants (90%), places of worship (75%) and community/village halls (73%). The provision of public transport is also irregular, with just over half of all settlements having a bus service below the threshold, yet almost two thirds do have a service of varying degree of quality (not including the Dial-a-Ride and Post Bus services). Fortunately, where there is a provision, train stations do provide regular and decent links.

On a settlement-by-settlement level, there is still a broad range of results. Some settlements have very few of the services surveyed overall (Thanington, Westbere, and Ickham). However, some settlements boast many of the services surveyed (Bridge, Chestfield and Sturry). Indeed, if we were to look at service provision along parish lines, the same areas would come top

and bottom. This would suggest there is no overall panacea to tackling rural sustainability, and the remedy would require specific measures.

One area that was not examined during the survey was the number and location of farms in the district. This information would be a useful addition to the survey, and would enable the location of redundant farm buildings to be identified, and potentially brought back into use for the benefit of the rural economy.

*Recommendation 6: That the number and location of farms in the district is ascertained.*

*Recommendation 7: A survey of redundant farm buildings is conducted.*

*Recommendation 8: That the location of open spaces, parks, reserves, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest are added to the maps in Appendix B*

*Recommendation 9: That Community Development and Regeneration & Economic Development work together to empower rural communities to create and run their own sustainable community facilities where a need exists, namely Post Offices (as outlined in LGA bid to DTI described in Local Govt First 10/3/07), access to ICT and food retail.*

This recommendation would be in line with 5.50 of the local plan (Canterbury District Local Plan July 2006 p75).

## **BVPI Tracker Survey**

During the course of the review a quality of life/BVPI tracker survey was conducted, surveys were sent to a random selection of 5000 households throughout the district, of which 1018 returned completed surveys. The review used the raw data from the survey to analyse the results by postcode to ascertain if people in rural areas had similar concerns to their counterparts in urban areas. Of the people returning the survey only 90 (approximately 9% of all respondents) were resident in the rural areas of the district, and although the results are therefore limited, they can still be viewed as indicative of the concerns of the rural residents who responded.

### **Summary:**

- All areas placed reducing crime as the most important factor in making somewhere a 'good place to live', and the factor most in need of improvement.
- Affordable housing was slightly more important in rural communities.
- In regard to cultural activities and facilities, all areas placed similar weight upon parks and gardens, and children's play facilities.
- City and rural areas believe performing arts / music facilities to be important to an area.
- Rural areas placed importance upon the countryside as an asset, while coastal areas considered the seaside highly as a cultural asset.
- Rural areas place greater priority upon road maintenance and congestion than coastal and city areas, who emphasise footpaths and pathways.
- All the areas generally concurred on health issues, highlighting waiting times and access to dentists as their biggest concerns.
- Job creation and encouraging new business in the area were the two most important economic issues in rural areas, and across the district.

During November 2006, the council conducted the tri-annual General User Satisfaction survey, which was sent to a random selection of 6,000 households in the district. This survey received over 3,000 responses.

*Recommendation 10: That the recently completed General User Satisfaction survey be analysed to ascertain the response from rural areas.*

*Recommendation 11: If the analysis conducted under 10 shows a similar low response from rural areas as that in the BVPI tracker survey, then a survey be conducted which is focussed on rural residents.*

## Parish Plans

Parish Plans are produced by the community working collectively to identify what is good about their area, and what they feel the area needs to develop. Parishes in our district can call upon the Rural Community Development Officer (from Canterbury Council) and the Parish Plan Support Officer (from ARCK) to guide them through the process of producing a Parish Plan. The Parish Plans have proved a useful source of information for the review. Parish Plans have been produced by the following parishes:

- Herne & Broomfield
- Bridge
- Chestfield
- Upper Hardres
- Barham

Four further Parish Plans are currently in production:

- Hoath
- Sturry
- Blean
- Hackington

Action for Communities in Rural Kent highlight the benefits of Parish Plans as:

- ensures local needs are identified
- influences local authorities and other funding sources
- develops community spirit and increases local pride

These are just some of the benefits identified by communities:

- “We have facts and figures to turn to instead of subjective impression.”
- “The appraisal gave vital support to our Community Hall lottery application.”
- “Volunteers have come forward to offer their services”
- “We noticed an increase in confidence and self-esteem.”
- “We have greatly improved communication with our Borough Council”
- “We now **know** what the people in our community want.”

*Recommendation 12: Encourage rural communities, particularly Parishes without plans to consider the production of their own Parish Plans*

## **Housing**

### **Rural Housing Need and the Council's Strategic Response**

#### **Introduction**

In 2004 the Council commissioned a district wide Housing Needs study, and made recommendations about the need for new affordable homes in rural areas. The study identified a need for approximately 100 new rural affordable homes across the rural areas of the district between 2005 and 2010, linked to the success of economic regeneration strategies and tackling rural disadvantage<sup>10</sup>.

In response to these issues the council has devised an approach to meeting the affordable housing need of the rural communities of the district in its Housing Strategy 2005-2010:

- The demand for new affordable housing within the district's rural areas is high. Emerging households with strong links to their community are unable to find suitable accommodation due to the lack of affordable housing.
- During the course of this strategy the council will continue to work in partnership with the parishes and local rural communities to further establish the need for more affordable housing.
- We will work with parish councils to assess the wider needs of rural communities by encouraging preparation of more comprehensive village appraisals, supported by the councils Community Development service.

The Housing Strategy also sets out two specific targets in relation to affordable housing in rural areas:

- Work with parish councils, RSLs and rural communities to provide affordable homes to meet the needs of rural communities. So far 13 units have been built in Littlebourne in 2006, and 8 units are due in Bridge. Currently we are looking for 6 units in Blean.
- Develop protocol with parish councils to facilitate the delivery and management of new affordable housing in rural areas. Currently working through the Kent Rural Affordable Housing Group.

#### **Delivering Affordable Homes in Rural Areas**

There are two primary mechanisms available to the council to enable construction of new affordable homes in rural areas:

- Section 106 planning agreements
- Rural exception sites

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<sup>10</sup> Regional Economic Strategy for South East England 2002 - 2012

## **Section 106 Planning Agreements**

Section 106 agreements enable the community to extract contributions from developers to benefit the community and to mitigate the effects of development<sup>11</sup>. In 1992, this was expanded to include a mechanism to secure affordable housing to meet local needs, as part of private sector housing developments<sup>12</sup>.

The Council adopted its current Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), 'Delivering Housing for Local People' in March 2001. The majority of local need identified was for new social rented homes, with a relatively small proportion of households in need being able to afford shared equity homes. Therefore, the SPG also detailed that of the 30% target for affordable housing, 25% should be for social renting and 5% for shared equity on all sites providing 25 or more dwellings or any development greater than 1 hectare in size.

Since their introduction, these policies have not provided any new homes for rural areas. The reason being that many rural housing sites identified within the local plan are below the current threshold of 25 units or 1 hectare. The council has recently consulted about reviewing these policies to explore including options to set thresholds in rural areas at a lower level, and following this exercise the council decision was to set the threshold at 5 units.

## **Rural Exception Sites**

Rural exception policies are those where housing development is permitted only for the purpose of providing affordable housing for local people. Certain conditions need to be met prior to approval:

- The need for affordable homes has been established
- The scheme contributes in part or wholly to meeting the identified need
- Scheme supported by the local parish council
- Planning agreement that sets that the new homes are provided solely for the purpose of providing affordable housing for the local community for those with an identified need.
- Suitable land in or close to a settlement can be identified

These factors make delivering affordable homes on rural exception sites a lengthy and complex process. However, the council has achieved some success with this approach in recent years, and completed schemes in Adisham and Littlebourne, with further schemes provided for Bridge and Blean. These schemes will deliver an average of 7 or 8 new affordable homes each year from 2004 to 2008.

The council has had a long and successful partnership with Action for Rural Communities in Kent (ARCK). ARCK employ rural housing enablers in the county, whose role is to facilitate the process of delivering affordable housing projects in rural areas, working closely with parish councils, registered social

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<sup>11</sup> Section 106, Town and Country Planning Act 1990

<sup>12</sup> Planning Policy Guidance Note 3

landlords and land owners to complete local needs studies, identify possible sites, and bring the involved parties together.

The restriction on exception sites to provide affordable housing does have an effect on the value of land involved. Despite reducing the value of the land, schemes are dependent on registered social landlords successfully bidding to the Housing Corporation for Social Housing Grant to fund the costs of development. The Housing Corporation has recognised the need for new affordable housing in rural areas, and has set targets for affordable housing in new affordable homes in its funding programme in recent years. Southern Housing Group has successfully accessed these funds on behalf of the council in developments in Adisham and Littlebourne, and funding has been identified for a further scheme in the district.

*Recommendation 13: Identify whether any council owned land could be used as rural exception sites.*

## Conclusion

This short topic review was intended to identify the issues that are impacting on rural areas within the district. It has pulled together a wide variety of evidence, and in conjunction with the Local Plans team has put together a survey of amenities available in our rural settlements. This is a very valuable tool in identifying amenities that are located in rural settlements, and being able to assess where efforts should be concentrated.

As a result challenges have been identified, and hopefully point the way to possible opportunities for further work recommended.

The future sustainability of rural areas is the concern of a wide range of organisations, as shown in the policy review at the start of this report, from European level, down through government departments, regional development agencies, local government and non-governmental organisations (both national and local). Each one of these agencies produces guidance, strategies and policies, and whilst it is encouraging to see the links between these, it is difficult to see how these groups are coordinated at the district level to ensure the sustainability of our rural areas.

The panel views the Local Strategic Partnership as the main driver of development and change in the rural areas of our district. There needs to be a strategy compiled which takes account of the EU, national and regional policies and schemes and marries these to the aspirations of our own rural communities. We see this as critical in achieving the targets of well connected, thriving and well served.

*Recommendation 14: That the Local Strategic Partnership should give consideration to creating a sub-group to coordinate action on rural issues, which should contain many of the groups outlined on page 15 of this report.*

Finally, the review has shown that the issues affecting rural areas are complex and wide reaching, and the panel felt that all members, whether representing rural or urban areas, should be given the opportunity to hear those issues.

*Recommendation 15: That important rural issues be identified and monitored, and at least once a year an item on rural affairs be included on the agenda for Member Briefings and Parish Councillors invited.*

## **Recommendations**

*Recommendation 1: That under the Implications section of committee reports an item is added for "Implications for rural communities."*

*Recommendation 2: Regeneration & Economic Development examines the opportunities for increasing tourism in the rural areas of our district.*

*Recommendation 3: Regeneration & Economic Development continues to promote and market training for small rural businesses.*

*Recommendation 4: That rural communities/businesses have access to advice on external funding opportunities.*

*Recommendation 5: That the transport sub-group of the LSP examines the transport issues identified in the amenities survey and passes the findings on to the Joint Transportation Board.*

*Recommendation 6: That the number and location of farms in the district is ascertained.*

*Recommendation 7: A survey of redundant farm buildings is conducted.*

*Recommendation 8: That the location of open spaces, parks, reserves, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest are added to the maps in Appendix B*

*Recommendation 9: That Community Development and Regeneration & Economic Development work together to empower rural communities to create and run their own sustainable community facilities where a need exists, namely Post Offices (as outlined in LGA bid to DTI described in Local Govt First 10/3/07), access to ICT and food retail.*

*Recommendation 10: That the recently completed General User Satisfaction survey is analysed to ascertain the response from rural areas.*

*Recommendation 11: If the analysis conducted under 10 shows a similar low response from rural areas as that in the BVPI tracker survey, then a survey is conducted which is focussed on rural residents.*

*Recommendation 12: Encourage rural communities, particularly Parishes without plans to consider the production of their own Parish Plans*

*Recommendation 13: Identify whether any council owned land could be used as rural exception sites.*

*Recommendation 14: That the Local Strategic Partnership should give consideration to creating a sub-group to coordinate action on rural issues, which should contain many of the groups outlined on page 15 of this report.*

*Recommendation 15: That important rural issues be identified and monitored, and at least once a year an item on rural affairs is included on the agenda for Member Briefings and Parish Councillors invited.*