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BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Pluckley Community Workshop

Notes of the Pluckley Community Workshop held in Pluckley Village Hall on the **29th January 2009**

### **Present:**

31 attendees

### **Also Present:**

Cllr Clair Bell

Planning Policy Manager, Simon Cole; Principal Planner, Ian Grundy; Policy Planner, Danielle Brough; DC Planning Officer, Brenda Fazzani  
Independent Workshop Facilitator, Keith Nicholson

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The Workshop began with an introduction from Keith Nicholson.

The introduction

-outlined the key steps the Planning Department had undertaken to date with regard to the preparation of the Tenterden and Rural sites Development Plan Document.

-explained the format of the workshop exercise

Simon Cole then introduced the wider Policy Context of CS6. Please see pages 31-39 in the ABC Adopted Core Strategy. There was a debate around the issue of Pluckley's inclusion, or otherwise, as one of the Tier 3 settlements in the LDF Core Strategy and it was agreed that there should be some further legal advice and consideration given as to what the Council could do in this respect and that this would then inform consideration of what the appropriate response to whether Pluckley should be removed or not from Tier 3.

[http://www.ashford.gov.uk/pdf/Planning\\_Adopted\\_Core\\_Strategy\\_July08.pdf](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/pdf/Planning_Adopted_Core_Strategy_July08.pdf)

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### **Workshop Exercise:**

No. of workshop break-out Groups: 3

Key Themes Identified by the Groups-

The particular nature of Pluckley's shape and form was an issue given the main village sits as physically separate to Pluckley Thorne and Chamber's Green (Pluckley Station). The distinct nature of the settlement is characterised by having the three areas and the open spaces between these areas. For planning purposes, the Council's planners confirmed that the sites in Pluckley Thorne and around the Station area would not be regarded as being within Pluckley village.

The traffic capacity of the roads in Pluckley has already reached its limit and there are sub-standard pedestrian pavements or none at all. Smarden Road and Station Road were both seen as accident black-spots where there was a clear problem of large lorries using the roads and mounting the pavements.

It was identified that the sustainable development potential on the sites at Pluckley Station would be very limited due to the distance between the station and the village centre. In some places there are no pavements and people from Pluckley Station would find it difficult accessing the services in the village centre.

The Pluckley Village Design Statement is a key document to adhere to when outlining the characteristic areas and the wishes of the village residents. For example, the central envelope of the village is a key open area for, providing character to the area.

Housing development at Pluckley is very low density in nature, with the majority of housing situated in large gardens and complemented by trees. There is a sporadic nature and form to the housing development with many of the roads only developed on one side, which enables an 'open feel' to be achieved.

A 'Villagers' comments on development Sites' document was produced at village meetings held on the 25<sup>th</sup> September, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 23<sup>rd</sup> October and 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008. This document outlines the village views on each site and was given to the ABC Planners at the community workshop.

#### **PLUC01:**

This site is located to the west of Smarden Road adjacent to the Pluckley Conservation Area. The area has very limited development, with only one or two large detached dwellings residing on the western side of the road. The views to the northwest are outstanding and the countryside undulates out towards the village of Edgerton and the Greensand Ridge. Access to the site would be achieved off of Smarden road, but this road was identified by the workshop attendees as being particularly dangerous in nature, with limited footpaths. There was a bend in the road located to the front of the site that was identified as being an accident hotspot.

It was agreed between the Ashford Borough Council Planners and the workshop attendees that this site had limited development potential.

#### **PLUC02 and PLUC07:**

These two sites are located adjacent to the Church and to the east of the recreation ground and sports pitches. The site PLUC02 is the larger of the two sites extending further eastwards than the site PLUC07. Both sites are located adjacent to the Pluckley Conservation Area, with the southwestern corner of both site proposals located within the conservation area. It was decided to look at these two sites in two separate sections; the southern area, adjacent to the church and the northern area adjacent to the recreation ground and Swan Lane.

The southern area adjacent to the Church was identified by all groups and the planners at ABC as being unsuitable for development. The site is partially located within the Conservation Area and directly adjacent to the Listed St. Nicholas' Church. Development here would harm the setting of the Church and the entrance to the village centre. Additionally, development of this site would require partial removal of the church wall, which would be detrimental to the character of the larger area and the church.

The northern section of the site sparked more debate amongst the workshop attendees. The site is currently an orchard located adjacent to the Conservation area

and sports pitches. It was felt by many people that development of this site would damage the rural setting to the village as you enter the village from the Little Chart direction, and additionally could promote increased development in that area in the future. In addition, the entrance to the site would be achieved off of Swan Lane, which is located close to the existing challenging Tollgate House junction; many people feel this would be unacceptable. Overall, it was decided by the workshop attendees and the ABC planners that this site is not suitable for development. It can be noted that one workshop attendee promoted development of this site.

#### **PLUC03 and PLUC06:**

Considerable discussion was undertaken regarding the former Pluckley Brickworks site. To aid the discussion the site was divided into two sections; PLUC03 the smaller of the sites encompassing the brownfield area of the old brickworks and PLUC06 which encompasses the larger land holding of the Brickworks site owners. The workshop discussion immediately ruled out the extended area of PLUC06 for development as it was felt that development of this size was not required or desirable in the area. It was also identified that further investigation would be needed to access whether the contaminated, historic landfill site could be redeveloped in the foreseeable future. The PLUC03 site was seen as a unique opportunity to create an environmental sanctuary and public open space, utilizing the lake that could be used by local people. It was understood that to enable this open space, limited development would probably have to be provided as a trade-off for the developer. It was felt that any limited trade-off development would need to be provided adjacent to Station Road and only extend a limited way into the site. Suggestions for trade-off development included a small number of houses or a car park.

It can be clearly identified from the workshop discussions that commercial development is not desired in this location, due the increase in traffic, particularly HGVs, that would be stimulated. In addition, it was identified that a needs assessment would have to be carried out as to whether there was demand or need for additional car-parking in the area for the nearby railway station. A number of workshop attendees stated that the current car-parking problem could largely be attributed to the pricing strategy of the existing car-park, as people were trying to avoid payment, although the car park itself still filled up. A number of people stated their desire that the Brickworks Chimney should be retained for posterity.

#### **PLUC04:**

The PLUC04 site is located to the west of the Smarden Road in the Pluckley Thorne area of the village. This site represents a large strategic gap in the sporadic development that fronts the Smarden Road. The area beyond the site comprises of outstanding views towards Edgerton and the Greensand Ridge. It is for these reasons that development should be avoided on this site this was a conclusion agreed by both the workshop attendees and the ABC Planners.

#### **PLUC05:**

Although this site represents a brownfield site, located directly adjacent to the railway line. It was felt that development should be avoided here because of the

extremely poor and dangerous access onto the site and its location distant from the village centre.

**PLUC08:**

This site is a brownfield site along the Egerton Road located relatively near to the centre of Pluckley Village. The site consists of historic hop-pickers huts to the rear of 1 and 2 Kingsland Cottages, the site is located adjacent to a number of listed buildings, these include Munday Oast, Kiln Barn, Munday Farmhouse and 3 Kingsland Cottage. It was decided at the workshop that this site had very little development potential, this was largely due to its close proximity to Listed Buildings, but also because the access to the site would be off of Egerton Road, which is very narrow and visually would have very poor sight lines. Additionally, there are important views southwest towards Smarden and the Dering Wood and Weald.

**PLUC09:**

Development on this site was ruled out by both the workshop attendees and the ABC planners. It was felt that the site was too small to be utilised for a housing allocation. If five dwellings were fitted onto the site, the development would need to be extremely dense and this would be out of character with the area, which are largely detached dwellings in large plots.

**PLUC10:**

This site is located in the Station Area of the village, housing development was not desired here by the workshop attendees as it was felt that this site was located too far from the main village centre and therefore, would not be a sustainable form of development.

**PLUC11**

PLUC11 is a large site located in the central envelope between Smarden Road and Station Road, sometimes known by villagers as the 'green heart'. Development was opposed on this site by the workshop attendees due to the 'green heart' providing much of the character to the village in addition to providing the open views on the approach to the village. It was also identified by the workshop attendees as being a great Crested Newt habitat, although this would need to be verified. Access onto the site would be off of Smarden Road, which is felt by many people to be dangerous.

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The Council's planners confirmed that, on the basis of the work undertaken to date, they did not regard any of the sites put forward in Pluckley to be suitable for allocation for residential development.

The evening was concluded by Simon Cole, who outlined the Key next steps in the process of producing the Tenterden and Rural Development Plan Document. For further information regarding the timetable, please see the ABC Local Development Scheme (LDS)

<http://www.ashford.gov.uk/pdf/Revised%20LDS%20July%202008%20with%20GOS%20Amendments.pdf>