



PLUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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Wednesday, 28 January 2009

Simon Cole, Esq.
Planning & Development Services
Ashford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
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TN23 1PL

Dear Mr Cole,

Pluckley and Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy

Thank you for your letters of 5 December 2008 and 9 January.

We do acknowledge that the Inspector may not have provisionally included Pluckley in Tier 3 as a result of the wishes expressed in the letter of 4 March 2008 alone. It seems clear, however, that he only reviewed Pluckley's position as a result of this letter.

This letter clearly influenced the Inspector "Other villages in this area do not appear to have a similar desire for development and Pluckley has therefore been provisionally included in the third tier." So the Inspector was endeavouring to meet the wishes of the village, as he understood them.

To do so, he added the planning argument that Pluckley had "the potential to act as a local service centre." He did not say that Pluckley was already a local service centre since, patently, it is not as Ashford's own planners had already recognised. Even then, the Inspector only recommended that Pluckley be provisionally included. We now have confirmation from the Inspectorate that this provides Ashford Borough Council with the discretion to remove Pluckley from Tier 3 at a later date.

There are sound planning reasons as to why Pluckley cannot fulfil its potential to act as a local service centre. We need to look wider than the Ashford Core Strategy to see this.

To the north and west, Pluckley is close to Headcorn and Lenham/Harrietsham. These much larger settlements are already local service centres. Both are earmarked in Maidstone's emerging Plan to receive more housing and retail development, further increasing their spheres of influence. The only settlement between them and Pluckley, i.e. Egerton will therefore be drawn even more towards them and away from Pluckley.

To the south and east, the pattern is the same. Ashford itself, Charing, and Tenterden are all likely to receive significant development. The smaller settlements between them and Pluckley i.e. Little Chart, Hothfield, and Smarden will similarly be drawn more into these spheres of influence and away from Pluckley. The same is true of Bethersden, which is in any event already larger than Pluckley and scores more highly on the matrix.

Pluckley's sphere of influence therefore is limited to little more than the village itself. It cannot realise its potential to be a local service centre, given the provisions in the Core Strategy for the surrounding settlements.

You say in your letter of 5 December, that Pluckley is now placed above Rolvenden. We should be grateful for clarification on this point as Pluckley similarly "seems to serve only a modest catchment" and Rolvenden, which is half as big again as Pluckley, scores significantly higher on the matrix.

We urge you to exercise your ability to remove Pluckley from Tier 3 because:

- It reflects the wishes of the village
- There are sound planning arguments for its removal.

Removal would also be consistent with the spirit of the Local Service Agreement for Ashford.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Buchanan BSc (Hons) MBA
Chairman, Pluckley Parish Council
