WEALDEN LOCAL PLAN

EXAMINATION

HEARING STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF

RYDON HOMES LTD

MATTER 4

SUPPLY OF HOUSING
Issue 1: Is the Council’s approach to its housing supply justified, effective and consistent with nation policy?

58. **Is reliance on the scale of windfall housing predicated within the LP being delivered, realistic, justified and consistent with national policy? In particular, how have the Core Areas been determined? How does the projected contribution from windfall housing compare with recent housing delivery? Is it appropriate to rely to such an extent on windfall housing rather than the allocation of housing sites within a plan led system?**

Paragraph 48 of the Framework sets out the criteria for reliance on windfall housing delivery.

There should be:

- Compelling evidence that such sites have consistently become available in the local area;
- Compelling evidence that such sites will continue to provide a reliable source of supply;
- Realistic support from the SHLAA, historic windfall delivery rates and expected future trends;
- No residential gardens.

This is acknowledged in Paragraph 8.4.1 of the WDC Housing Background Paper 2019, but there is an additional reference to the restriction of windfalls to p.d.l. sites being released by the Framework 2018. There is an implicit inference that residential garden land has been included in the Council’s windfall allowance. This would not be acceptable given that the Plan is being prepared under the Framework 2012.

Evidence of past windfall completions on p.d.l land between April 2014 and 31 March 2017 shows an annual contribution of 170 dpa from this source but, by definition p.d.l sites are a declining opportunity and, with an up-to-date Plan p.d.l sites should be capable of identification as allocations. There is therefore little evidence that this source will continue.

The WDC expectation for windfall delivery 2017 - - 2028 is 1357 units, but this is not based on the SHLAA or historic delivery rates. It is based on a complicated and arbitrary approach based upon the flawed Ashdown Forest Traffic Model and Middle Super Output Areas. This is a very unspecific model and is put into effect by arbitrary extensions of existing development boundaries which include significant areas of land where the delivery of housing is not practicable or appropriate and has not been the subject of capacity assessment. This makes the prediction of final capacity and deliverability extremely tenuous. The total of 2516 dwellings expected to arise from this source therefore fails the Framework
test of “compelling evidence” necessary to justify the inclusion of an unidentified windfall allowance in the housing land supply.

Furthermore Policy RAS1 which aims to deliver windfall housing development within and adjacent to Core Areas is completely unworkable

- The relationship between the settlement capacity and windfall allowance for each core area is not evidence-based and is arbitrary;

- The hierarchy of settlements to which different capacity limits are ascribed is similarly not evidence based and is highly arbitrary;

- Restricting each development to a total of 2, 5 or 10 dwellings, each of no more than 1 or two bedrooms, within or adjoining the defined Core Areas is not good planning practice and is unduly prescriptive. It demands that village expansion can only be fully delivered through the development of 10 different and separate sites in the smallest settlements and 5 different and separate sites in the larger villages. From knowledge of many of these settlements there are simply insufficient opportunities for such a development pattern to be accommodated, even if there were sufficient promoters of development that would be so small as to challenge viability. There would also be little prospect of affordable housing being delivered.

The methodology behind this intricate and unduly complicated approach to the delivery of windfall development is therefore based on a flawed transport model, arbitrary assessment and categorisation of capacity and highly questionable deliverability. This falls very far short of the “compelling” evidence required by Paragraph 48 of the Framework. The soundness of the Plan is also seriously undermined by the fact that windfalls constitute 38.5% of the new housing proposed in the Plan. The purpose of the plan-led system is to provide certainty and to identify suitable housing land. The submitted plan fails significantly to achieve this.