

Dear Rosemary

I am pleased to attach the completed questionnaire as requested in advance of the deadline.

However, I am sorry to note that the feedback from does not permit a more detailed response to the Pre-Submission Plan.

I have been asked on behalf of the Balcombe Estate to make the following points:

Housing supply

1. The housing needs assessment (63) is significantly larger than that proposed in the neighbourhood plan (42) . On this basis it is clear that the Neighbourhood Plan does not meet its own objectives.
2. Using the District Plan allocation proportionally to local population is open to challenge, as most commentators do not agree the District Council proposed 10,600 houses are sufficient to the housing needs of the district. We have seen arguments that suggest the number should be at least 14,500 in the plan period.
3. Moreover, averaging development needs across the District negates the assessment of local need which has been made, and which in the opinion of the Balcombe Estate should be accorded the highest importance. If the Neighbourhood plan can do one thing, it should be to secure enough places for local people to live.
4. It is for this reason that we again urge the Village to designate the Vintens site, which we see as far less damaging to the amenity and landscape of the village than the alternative Rectory/ Balcombe House site.
5. Moreover, were the village to be persuaded that the housing number allocation should be at least the 63 identified as necessary to meet housing need, further land at Vintens would be readily made available without harm to the village.

Community views

6. Under “Challenges” the plan reinforces the mis-representation of the proposed oil well at Lower Stumble. It would be better either to explain that it is not shale, it is not gas, and it is not fracking, or alternatively not mention the subject in this context – unless you mean by the inclusion in the plan that the mistaken perception that fracking is proposed is a challenge to public order.

Ashdown forest SAC

7. at para 3.14 the plan records the zone of influence applied by MSDC without drawing attention to the fact that visitor numbers are determined by isochrones of journey times, not by distance. It is thus illogical to place a 7km cordon around the forest.

Policy 1 – Built up area boundary

8. The Balcombe Estate argues that a rigid approach to fixing the boundary of the built up area of the village risks ossification. Balcombe has grown organically over time, as clearly

illustrated in the report prepared on behalf of the Estate by Douglas Rule Associates, following the natural shape of the landscape, and should be enabled to continue to do so, not least in order to secure an allocation to meet housing needs, but also to support service provision within the village.

9. In particular three sites should, in our view, be allocated which lie outside (but are well related to) the village boundary:
- a) The area known as Vintens Nursery, which comprises previously developed glasshouses (and still contains the remnants of those structures) for which a plan was developed by Douglas Rule Associates (attached)
 - b) The area known as the Walled Garden, to the north of the village
 - c) A further allocation of housing at Vintens field, to the south of the former waste tip which would provide public open space, sufficient to meet the housing needs of the village, and thus avoiding the need to develop the Rectory / Balcombe House field with the attendant damage to the important vista when approaching the village from the north

Policy 2 = Housing site allocations

10. accordingly, the housing site allocations set out in Policy 2 should be amended as follows

- i delete 14 dwellings at Balcombe House gardens and Rectory Gardens, retaining an allocation of 10 car parking spaces*
- ii delete the re-siting of the Rectory*
- iii retain 14 dwellings at Barn Field*
- iv retain 14 dwellings on land north of Station House*

and add

new i 10 dwellings at Vintens Glasshouses (see VINTENS Balc South option C above)

new ii 6 dwellings on land at the Walled Garden (see Walled Garden – Site North West above)

new v Up to 19 further dwellings on the field south of the former waste tip at Vintens - in order to meet the overall housing need for the village of 63 dwellings

Policy 5 – Balcombe Village Centre

11. The Balcombe Estate is concerned that the proposal that commercial properties should be left vacant for two years is unreasonable and has the potential to harm the village. Property left vacant for long periods will detract from the village centre. A maximum of one year is preferable, as proposed below.

Policy 5 i *the village centre unit has been vacant for at least one year*

Policy 8 – skateboard park

The land proposed for the skateboard park is not vacant – it is let to the Scouts along with their Scout Hut.

Policies map

The policies map should be replaced with the attached Balcombe Estate housing policies map, with the addition of the allocations in policies 4, 8, 10, 11 and the proposed additional allocation at Vintens to meet housing need.

I trust this is helpful

Yours sincerely

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For and on behalf of the Balcombe Estate

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