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Cllr J M Hill

Chairman

Matter 6. Employment.

Matter 6.1. Policy framework for employment land provision.

Matter 6.4. How effective is the Plan at protecting employment sites from other uses, such as housing?

Matter 6.5. Does the Plan address the need for housing/employment balance?

Matter 6.9. Should there be a more proactive emphasis in the Plan to support the rural economy?

6.1 Ringmer Parish Council has been extremely disappointed that its employment-led Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan (RNP) has not been recognised as a model of good practice for development of the rural economy throughout the District's rural areas.

6.2 There certainly are needs for some larger scale employment development in urban areas, such as the requirement in the South East Water 2019 Water Resources Management Plan for additional land adjacent to the Newhaven Waste Water Treatment Works to recycle water from the Peacehaven WWTW prior to its transmission to its water treatment works at Barcombe Mills, Ringmer, for re-purification. However, there are currently more under-used or unused urban brownfield sites available in the District than are required for employment purposes. There are also some village centre employment sites that, if they become available, would be more suitable for housing use than other alternatives. Such redundant brownfield sites should be the priority for sustainably-located new housing.

- 6.3 However, the RNP has demonstrated that there is also a strong demand for rural employment sites. These can meet different categories of needs, especially the needs of new and small businesses. Allocation of sites for such purposes in the RNP has proved extremely successful. Important benefits include facilitating the establishment and survival of new employment activities and reducing the need for rural residents to commute for employment. A key feature of such rural sites is their relatively low cost. Recent Ringmer experience has seen important high quality employment opportunities planned for appropriate rural locations (including a private sector hospital offering NHS cancer care and a retirement village) lost to the District because of the inflexibility of the present planning policies.
- 6.4 The RNP has demonstrated that this can be achieved without harm to the rural landscape both by the conversion of existing rural buildings and the sensitive construction of new accommodation. Farm diversification can play an important role in delivering this new employment. Ensuring that only sites with good road access are selected is crucial. The RNP has also demonstrated public support for this approach.
- 6.5 Economic forces dictate that only rural sites unsuitable for new housing are likely to be made available for rural employment uses. It is thus essential for maintaining public support that allocated rural employment sites are not permitted to leak into residential use.
- 6.6 It is our contention that because they ignore these important rural employment opportunities the employment policies in the draft Local Plan part 2 are not positively prepared and will be ineffective in delivering the local economic growth the District needs.