

Core Strategy Background Paper: New Settlements

- 1.0 The possibility of planning a new settlement to address Mid Sussex District Council's housing need was discussed in workshops, including the Area Community Forums, during the Issues and Options stage. The approach was also broadly tested in the Sustainability Appraisal accompanying the production of the Core Strategy Pre-submission Document. At this stage the approach is not supported as an option for delivering housing in Mid Sussex in the short- to medium-term of the Plan period, but it is recognised that more detailed work on this topic should be undertaken to inform development options in the future.
- 2.0 The option of developing a new settlement to deliver the housing requirement of the sub-region is one that will need to be explored jointly by Mid Sussex, Crawley and Horsham local authorities and West Sussex County Council. Such work will inform the Core Strategy reviews for all three authorities. Approximately 1,000 dwellings could be delivered within the plan period due to the practical limitations on the build-out rate of strategic sites.
- 3.0 Over the past decade government planning guidance has focused on urban extensions rather than new towns. Planning Policy Guidance note PPG3: 'Housing' paragraph 30, stated:

"In identifying sites to be allocated for housing in local plans and UDPs, local planning authorities should follow a search sequence, starting with the re-use of previously-developed land and buildings within urban areas identified by the urban housing capacity study, then urban extensions, and finally new development around nodes in good public transport corridors".
- 4.0 This approach was based on the acceptance that, in most cases, it is more viable and sustainable to tap into existing infrastructure than start from scratch. In this way, growth supports improvements and renewal of existing facilities, as well as the provision of additional facilities.
- 5.0 Recently, however, Planning Policy Statement PPS3: 'Housing' has opened up the opportunity to consider planning a new settlement in response to large housing shortages:

"Where need and demand are high, it will be necessary to identify and explore a range of options for distributing housing including consideration of the role of growth areas, growth points, new free-standing settlements, major urban extensions and the managed growth of settlements in urban and rural areas and/or where necessary, review of any policy constraints" (paragraph 37).
- 6.0 In addition, recent research undertaken by the University of West of England has looked at whether urban extensions are, by dint of their proximity to an existing urban area, *guaranteed* to be sustainable. This research examined housing growth in Lincolnshire. Whilst the findings are provisional, the indication is that development on the outer suburbs of Lincoln City might be less sustainable than development at Lincolnshire's sub-regional centres, main towns and small towns, although it remains more sustainable than rural development (Allinson and Barton 2007: 205). Whilst this is not immediately

transferable to Mid Sussex, as the towns in Mid Sussex are much smaller than the City of Lincoln, it does raise a question that could be explored: at what point does building at the edge of towns become less sustainable than starting afresh, or developing a rural settlement into a town?

- 7.0 The Town and Country Planning Association has recently written “Best Practice in Urban Extensions and New Settlements – a report on emerging good practice” published by the department of Communities and Local Government (March 2007). It supports the view that considerable time and resources are needed to successfully plan a new settlement. The report sets out a number of case studies and concludes with 7 ‘lessons’ that can guide the investigation of a new settlement:
- 1) ... the choice of a new town or major urban extension should be made through strategic design at the regional or sub-regional level, not by application of a fixed theory or sequence set at national level;
 - 2) ... there needs to be a long lead time. It is not possible for a major urban extension or new town to yield completed homes or other development for a number of years, and implementation is almost certain to continue beyond current statutory development plan periods;
 - 3) ... [a] cluster of linked new settlements ...[is an] appropriate form of the new town model. Previous goals of ‘self containment’ need to be tempered by an understanding of the benefits of interoperability of places to their mutual advantage. ... excellent public transport is essential to the operation of a networked cluster;
 - 4) ... [a] new town or urban extension is best achieved by comprehensive assembly of land, and by capture of a major proportion of the land values created by the grant of planning permission. Re-investment of land value gains in green infrastructure is key to realising carbon emission reduction and other sustainability gains;
 - 5) The need for a specialised team - ... the implementation of the project is a serious and distinctive task requiring a highly focused and motivated team. It cannot be undertaken in the margins of another task or occupation;
 - 6) ... the project needs cross-party support; and
 - 7) ... significant investment is needed early on to prepare and plan the location and to create the infrastructure....
- 8.0 Whether a new settlement will be the most sustainable option emerging through the review of the Core Strategy remains to be seen, but it is important that it is thoroughly investigated for the next Plan period. The Best Practice report cited above suggests that a 20 year time horizon from start of planning to commencement of development should be allowed (paragraph 9.2.2). It also supports the approach that new settlements are best considered at regional or sub-regional level. This would enable locations that cross district/borough boundaries to be evaluated.
- 9.0 The investigation and, if supported, implementation of a new settlement will need to be resourced. The work will involve looking at the feasibility of a new settlement, including possible locations and the range of infrastructure

required/ supported by the proposed settlement size. For example, the “Technical Report on Infrastructure Requirements in the South East 2006-2026” (SQW report for SEERA) assumed that:

- each 1,750 dwellings would trigger the need for a primary school of 420 places;
- each 5,000 dwellings would require a 1,500 place secondary school;
- a population of just over 6,500 would support a new health centre with 4 GPs. Assuming an average household size of 2.4 this equates to about 2,750 homes;
- each 1,500 dwellings should be accompanied by 750 sq m of community space;
- a population of just over 14,000 is needed to patronise a sports hall and 20,500 to patronise a swimming pool. Assuming an average household size of 2.4 this equates to about 5,850 homes for a sports hall, and 8,500 homes for a swimming pool.

10.0 To implement the project, land would need to be assembled and significant investment (whether public and/or private) secured early on. This will be a challenge and will require consensus in support of the project from a wide range of stakeholders.

References:

Allinson J. and Barton H. (2007) “extending sustainably?” in *Town & Country Planning* **June/July** pp. 205-208

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SQW, September (2006) “Technical Report on Infrastructure Requirements in the South East 2006-2026. Final Report to the South East of England Regional Assembly”. http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/key/infrastructure/sqw_infrastructure_report-oct06.pdf

Town and Country Planning Association (2007, March) “Best Practice in Urban Extensions and New Settlements. A report on emerging good practice”
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