

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

SESSION 7 – RURAL SERVICE CENTRES

Boyer Planning on behalf of Bovis Homes

ID Reference R19521

Qn7.28 Given the planning history of applications for housing development in Harrietsham, what practical difference would it now make if Harrietsham were re-designated as a Large Village?

There is no justification to re-classify Harrietsham as a large village.

The Local Plan identifies that development must be delivered at the most sustainable towns and villages where employment, key services and facilities together with a range of transport choices are available.

Paragraph 6.5.5 of the Sustainability Appraisal states that *“the five Rural Service Centres of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst all provide a good range of services which serve both the villages and the surrounding hinterland. All provide a nursery and primary school; a range of shops (including a post office); a doctors surgery, at least one place of worship, public houses, restaurants and community hall as well as open space provision. All have a range of local employment opportunities. The Centres are connected by at least four bus journeys on weekdays and all have a frequent train service”*.

The Sustainability Appraisal goes on to conclude at Paragraph 12.8.2 that *“the rural service centres are capable of receiving a significant amount of housing development and appropriately scaled employment opportunities”*.

Local Plan Policy SS1 confirms that Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst rural service centres will be the secondary focus for housing development with the emphasis on maintaining and enhancing their role and the provision of services to meet the needs of the local community.

The larger villages of Boughton Monchelsea, Coxheath, Eyhorne Street (Hollingbourne), Sutton Valence and Yalding will be locations for only limited housing development consistent with the scale and role of the villages.

Large villages are lower in the settlement hierarchy and therefore considered less sustainable locations to accommodate future housing growth with only limited growth anticipated.

The Local Plan will be subject to future review, and if Harrietsham is classified as a large village, then in line with the settlement hierarchy, the expectation would be that it should only accommodate limited growth in accordance with its classification.

Whilst re-classification may not have any practical implications now (given that a number of the proposed allocated sites have permission), it would clearly have implications for the longer term growth of Harrietsham.

Given that the evidence has identified Harrietsham as one of the most sustainable locations in the Borough it would be simply perverse to then re-designate it as a large village. Its re-classification would be contrary to the principles of sustainable development which seeks to direct growth to the most sustainable locations.

We therefore support the Council’s classification of Harrietsham as a rural service centre.

However, whilst we support the Council in terms of its classification, we continue to object to the provision of only 242 dwellings through new allocations in Harrietsham (which equates to only 12 dwellings per annum).

This compares to the distribution in the larger villages as follows:

- Boughton Monchelsea: 193 dwellings
- Coxheath: 506 dwellings
- Eyhorne Street (Hollingbourne): 39 dwellings
- Sutton Valance: 40 dwellings
- Yalding; 265 dwellings

The level of housing in Harrietsham is already significantly below other rural centres including Headcorn (423 dwellings), Malden (447 dwellings) and Stapleton (710 dwellings) and also below two of the larger villages identified above (Coxheath and Yalding) which the Council has deemed as less sustainable than Harrietsham and suitable for 'limited development'.

In summary, we support the Council's proposed classification of Harrietsham as a rural service centre, but we continue to submit that Harrietsham is a sustainable location to accommodate higher levels of growth than currently proposed. In particular, the Council should allocate land at Tongs Meadow, Harrietsham for residential development (which would increase total level of housing in Harrietsham to around 314).