

## **Matter 7 – Economic Development**

### **Issues**

**Whether the plan and its policies on employment needs and economic development are clear, positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.**

**Whether the employment land strategy and allocations in the Plan align with the evidence base and are deliverable.**

### **Questions**

#### **Policy T14: Rural Economy**

**7.47 What evidence demonstrates that Policy T14 is justified and responds to the current and future needs of rural businesses, agriculture, land-based industries and rural enterprise within Medway?**

**7.49 How does Policy T14 balance support for rural economic growth with the need to protect the countryside, Green Belt, landscape character, heritage assets and environmental designations?**

Despite acknowledging at paragraph 7.8.2 of the Local Plan that Medway has almost 9,000 ha of farmed land, of which a high proportion is Grade 1, policy T14 does not effectively prioritise retaining productive agricultural land within this part of the Garden of England.

No mention is made in the pre-ambles to the policy of issue regarding food security – either in terms of geo-political issues or climate change.

Policy T14 is framed in terms of employment growth, but doesn't reflect the importance of agricultural land in terms of the contribution it makes to the rural economy. This is a retrograde step when compared to the position the Council took with regard to agricultural land in current local plan (policy BNE48).

Standalone policy for loss of agricultural land is needed.