

Section Two

The Plan preparation process

- 2.1 Preparation of the AAP builds on the Hastings Planning Strategy (February 2014) and Development Management Plan (September 2015), both of which cover the whole of the Borough. The AAP will take forward the objectives and aspirations of the adopted Hastings Planning Strategy (2014). The AAP has been informed by a number of other supporting documents including the Hastings Town Centre and White Rock Retail and Leisure Assessment and Urban Design Analysis (Bilfinger GVA, March 2016) and the White Rock Park & Bohemia: A Strategy for the future of the White Rock area (White Arkitekter, July 2017) to be called the White Rock Park and Bohemia Strategy throughout the rest of the AAP document.
- 2.2 The town centre is an important sub-regional retail centre, transport hub, higher/further education and employment centre and serves as a major cultural and economic anchor for the town. Together with the town centre, Bohemia can be a game-changer: a celebration of the Hastings spirit, which builds on the area's existing qualities and unlocks the potential of this part of town. The AAP sets out the Council's vision for the area and provides the policy framework to guide future development and change. It seeks to enhance the area's character and environment, promote sustainable development and improve the quality and range of facilities and services available to residents, businesses and visitors. In particular it seeks to:
- create a distinctive destination;
 - encourage investment in new high quality development and improvements;
 - create new cultural, leisure and tourism opportunities;
 - improve pedestrian links between Bohemia, the town centre and the seafront;
 - protect and enhance the built and natural environment;
 - enrich the existing character of the seafront and the town's cultural heritage;
 - phase proposals to make best use of available funding and investment;
 - promote a stronger image for the town.
- 2.3 The AAP provides a framework for managing change through the redevelopment of key sites and improvements to the built and natural environment. It focuses on promoting the area as an attractive place to live, as an employment location, retail centre, visitor and tourist destination, a centre for sports, leisure, arts and cultural activities, and a place to invest in. It demonstrates how future development requirements can be accommodated in order to maintain and enhance Hastings' competitive position, whilst at the same time respecting the heritage and character of the area.
- 2.4 The challenge will be to balance future development requirements with the protection and enhancement of the area's unique built and natural environment. Whilst some parts are in need of revitalisation, the area offers significant opportunities for high quality new development. The area also contains buildings and open spaces of heritage importance which have significant cultural and environmental value and should be protected and enhanced for future generations and provide the potential for new uses.

Scope of the Area Action Plan (AAP)

2.5 The Hastings Town Centre and Bohemia AAP covers a 15 year period up to 2033. The AAP provides:

- Policies for the use of land and buildings;
- development and design guidance for key sites;
- proposals for new and enhanced parks and civic spaces and other environmental improvements;
- an Action Plan for the delivery of key proposals and initiatives.

2.6 Once adopted, the AAP will form part of a suite of Local Plan documents with the Hastings Planning Strategy (February 2014) and the Development Management Plan (September 2015) and their successor documents and will be used for Development Management purposes in the determination of planning applications.

Policy context

2.7 The Plan is required to be in conformity with National and Local Policy. A summary of relevant planning policy documents is set out in Appendix 1.

National Policy

2.8 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 promotes high quality and sustainable development. Sustainable communities require sufficient quality housing to meet their needs, a flourishing local economy supported by adequate infrastructure, a high quality safe and healthy environment and the amenities and facilities required to support a diverse and vibrant local community. The NPPF requires planning policies to positively promote competitive town centre environments and manage the growth of centres over the plan period.

2.9 The draft revised National Planning Policy Framework was published for consultation in March 2018. This document incorporates policy proposals previously consulted on in the Housing White Paper and the 'Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places' consultation. The draft revised NPPF reiterates that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led and that plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings. It places particular importance on the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and ensuring that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

Local Policy

Hastings Planning Strategy (adopted February 2014)

2.10 The Hastings Planning Strategy (2014) provides the strategic framework for development within the Borough for the period 2011-2028. This includes the provision of at least 3,400 new homes, and up to 70,000m² of employment space over the plan period. The Hastings Planning Strategy (HPS) maintains Hastings Town Centre as the main retail centre in the Borough as a sub-regional centre with a variety of shops and other facilities. The HPS identifies the provision of 20,500m² of additional comparison retail within the town centre for the period 2014-2028.

2.11 The HPS promotes Hastings and St Leonards Town Centres as the focus for employment in the office, retail, leisure, cultural and service sectors with Hastings Town Centre being the primary focus. The need for new retail floorspace is clearly set out, but the requirements for convenience and comparison floorspace and commercial leisure facilities have been updated in the Hastings Town Centre and White Rock Retail and Leisure Assessment and Urban Design Analysis (Bilfinger GVA, March 2016). Developing the diversity and quality of the tourism offer is seen as central to the HPS, having the ability to drive visitor numbers and longer dwell times. In parallel, the HPS aims to promote competitiveness in the range and types of shops, develop the evening economy, improve the public realm, and protect and enhance the architectural and townscape heritage.

2.12 The Hastings Planning Strategy (HPS) provides a long term plan to deliver regeneration and sustainable growth in the Borough up to 2028. It sets out a number of key strategic objectives and priorities of relevance to the future of the Hastings Town Centre and Bohemia areas:

- **Achieve and sustain a thriving economy**- developing the key economic growth sectors including the creative industries;
- **Ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community in which they want to live**- providing more opportunities for people to live in Hastings Town Centre through mixed use development;
- **Safeguard and improve the town's environment**- conserving and managing the historic environment, protecting and enhancing green infrastructure and biodiversity and providing open spaces, recreation facilities and streets that are well designed, safe and accessible;
- **Address the impacts of climate change**- requiring developments to include appropriate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures such as green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems, multi-functional green space and biodiversity enhancement and protection;
- **Support sustainable communities**- improving the quality of life, enabling an increased take-up of sports, leisure and cultural activities by residents and visitors through the provision of accessible facilities and promoting access to a healthy natural environment;
- **Provision of an efficient and effective transport system**- providing a network of safe, good quality walking and cycling routes;
- **Making best use of the Seafront and promoting tourism**- ensuring a range of day long and year round activities and facilities that attract residents, workers and visitors; working with local communities to secure a sustainable future for Hastings Pier and other key landmark sites along the Seafront and encouraging artists and related tourists and visitors through increased opportunities for art and craft studios, markets and retail

2.13 The Hastings Planning Strategy (HPS) requires the development of at least 3400 homes in the Borough up to 2028. Through the AAP there is an opportunity to help meet and potentially significantly exceed this target.

Development Management Plan (adopted September 2015)

2.14 The purpose of the Development Management Plan (DMP) is to guide the determination of planning applications. Any scheme to be considered by the Council will be determined using both the HPS and its policies for overall sustainable growth in the Borough, and the policies in the Development Management Plan. The DMP requires development proposals to give specific consideration to design, amenity and access taking account of the area within which it is located. The DMP identifies a number of development sites within Hastings Town Centre and Bohemia.

2.15 The DMP sets out development management policies including for the protection of retail uses within the defined Hastings Town Centre Shopping Area. The DMP identifies two cultural quarters within the town centre boundary. The White Rock and America Ground Cultural Quarter includes Robertson Street which is located within the Town Centre Shopping Area; and the Academic Cultural Quarter includes the Priory Quarter site (Site Allocation HTC6) adjoining the Hastings Town Centre Shopping Area. Within the Town Centre Boundary, two sites are identified as having the potential to accommodate some retail floorspace as part of a wider mixed use development; the Observer Building (HTC3) and Priory Quarter (HTC6).

Local Plan Policies Map (adopted September 2015)

2.16 Policies in the adopted Hastings Planning Strategy and Development Management Plan will be applied to the Hastings Town Centre and Bohemia area in addition to the policies and proposals set out in this AAP. In accordance with legislation a new Policies Map is required as each plan is adopted to cover all adopted Borough planning policy documents (i.e. the Hastings Planning Strategy, the Development Management Plan and the Hastings Town Centre and Bohemia Area Action Plan). A new Policies Map will therefore be published at the same time as the AAP is adopted.

Preparation of the Preferred Approaches Area Action Plan

In developing the draft Area Action Plan we have prepared supporting documents to demonstrate how the principles of sustainability and equality have been taken into account in the development of this version of the Plan. This includes a Sustainability Appraisal Report and an Equalities Impact Assessment. It is also important that we have a substantial and robust evidence base to support the policies presented in the draft plan.

Sustainability Appraisal

2.17 The AAP is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) undertaken to meet the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations¹. The purpose of the SA is to inform and influence the AAP's development process and maximise its contribution to sustainable development.

2.18 An initial SA Report has been prepared to accompany the current consultation. In addition to setting out an appraisal of the draft plan, it presents an appraisal of a number of alternative options concerning different elements of the AAP. For ease of reference the alternatives together with the preferred approaches are set out within appendix 2.

2.19 Following the completion of the current AAP consultation, additional appraisal work will be undertaken and a further SA report prepared to accompany the forthcoming 'Regulation 19' consultation on the AAP.

Question 2: Do you have any comments on the supporting Sustainability Appraisal Report (SA/SEA)?

¹ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Evidence base documents

White Rock Park & Bohemia Strategy

- 2.20 Several further studies have been undertaken, notably the 'White Rock Park & Bohemia Strategy'. The overarching aim of the strategy is to use the Bohemia area as a catalyst to drive forward the continued transformation and regeneration of Hastings. The key principle which underpins the Strategy is to celebrate the assets of the Bohemia area and to transform it into a high quality and distinctive place which will create new opportunities for the town, local businesses and residents. The overall objective is to generate a critical mass of activity that is deliverable and distinctive whilst at the same time, creating a high quality cultural and leisure destination with a strong sense of place and good connections with the wider town centre. The goal is to reinvigorate this part of Hastings through a programme of key initiatives and development proposals including:
- performance/cultural space;
 - improved leisure provision;
 - outdoor recreational space;
 - a mix of uses including housing appropriate to the site and as potential source of finance for other projects;
 - retail opportunities that might complement the town centre or the visitor economy
 - hotel/visitor accommodation;
 - access, including transport and parking;
 - the possible re-configuration of public service buildings.
- 2.21 The document has been prepared in consultation with key stakeholders including existing occupiers, land owners and local groups and organisations. The proposals provide a framework for sustainable change and a shared plan of action. It seeks to create a distinctive place and a shared belief in the future of the town and opportunities for all. Several zones of activity have been identified along with a number of key projects which will be delivered through close partnership working between the Council, other public sector bodies, landowners, developers, local businesses and the community. These have been incorporated into the Hastings Town Centre and Bohemia AAP.
- 2.22 The document includes a robust delivery plan and a programme of measures to change the image of Hastings such as celebrating cultural heritage, local people and food, an extended 'year round' events programme and improved marketing and branding. The Action Plan sets out how the projects and proposals can be effectively phased over time and the key actions and interventions which will be required to realise the vision for the Bohemia area. It recognises the importance of coordinated action on the part of all stakeholders and the need to improve connections with Hastings Town Centre, Old Town and St Leonards to achieve regeneration objectives and continue the process of transformational change.
- 2.23 Full details of the evidence base and supporting documents can be found at www.hastings.gov.uk/planning/policy/emergingpolicy_guidance/towncentrewhiterock/