

Hastings Local Plan – The Development Boundary Report

February 2014

1.0 The Issue

- 1.1 Consultation on the Proposed Submission version of the Development Management Plan took place between January and April 2013. During this consultation, comments were submitted objecting to the lack of a development boundary policy, and the need to amend Policy DM1 to provide further protection to the conservation of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 1.2 The objector suggested that the development boundary is retained through a specific policy in the Development Management Plan, and detail is added to Policy DM1 that deals specifically with the protection and enhancement of the High Weald AONB.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Hastings Planning Strategy features a strategic policy that relates to the conservation and enhancement of the town's landscape, which references the need to protect and enhance the High Weald AONB. Policy EN4 states:

POLICY EN4: Conservation and Enhancement of Landscape

The Council will protect and enhance the town's landscape including:

- **the distinctive landscape setting of the town, particularly the structure of ancient gill woodlands,**
- **open spaces and the relationship and clear division between the unspoilt coastline of Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve, the surrounding countryside and the built-up area**
- **the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**
- **the undeveloped coast**

The Council will have regard to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2004 as a method of protecting and enhancing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and will work with Rother District Council to improve access to and management of urban fringe areas, in line with the shared vision for Hastings and Bexhill.

- 2.2 The remaining policies in chapter 6: Protecting the Environment of the Planning Strategy also provide further protection in respect of internationally, nationally and locally designated green spaces, in addition to policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2.3 Policy DM1 of the Development Management Plan is also relevant. This is a general development management policy that will be applied in most instances to regulate new development. This states:

Policy DM1 – Design principles

All proposals must reach a good standard of design, which includes efficient use of resources, and takes into account:

- a) **Protecting and enhancing local character and showing appreciation of the surrounding neighbourhood's historic context, street patterns, plot layouts and boundaries, block sizes and scale, height , massing and materials.**
- b) **Good performance against nationally recognised best practice guidance on sustainability, urban design and place-making, architectural quality and distinctiveness.**
- c) **The layout and siting of buildings to make efficient use of land, the orientation of frontages to achieve attractive streetscapes and to best take into account the effects of solar gain.**
- d) **An assessment of visual impact, including the height, scale, and form of development that should be appropriate to the location, especially given the complex topography of the Borough and the need, in some instances, to consider the visual effect from key viewpoints**

3.0 The Council's Response

3.1 There are essentially two issues to respond to:

- a) Whether we re-instate the development boundary as was the case in the Hastings Local Plan 2004, and include a specific policy
- b) Whether we amend Policy DM1 to include an additional criterion that protects the High Weald AONB

Issue 1 – the Development Boundary

3.2 During the drafting of the Development Management Plan, it was proposed to remove the Development Boundary because ecological and landscape designations and strategic policies offered sufficient protection to areas on the edge of the Borough. Removal of the boundary could also allow for positive new development opportunities in appropriate locations. Development Management Plan policies would continue to support development that was well related to its surroundings and existing development form. (This is then explained more fully in paras 9/10).

3.3 Appendix A provides a map showing this information, including the extent of land that is no longer protected by a development boundary policy. The map shows that there are only a few areas affected by the removal of the development boundary.

3.4 It is the Council's view that given the existence of policies in both the Planning Strategy and the remerging Development Management Plan to protect ecological areas, landscape, character and heritage¹ there is no need, in a tightly bound urban area, for an extra restrictive policy. Excluding the development boundary in the Development Management Plan will give greater flexibility for decision making, and ensure that we are not placing unnecessary restrictions on developers.

¹ a combination of EN2, EN3, EN7 of the Planning Strategy and DM1, HN8 and HN9 the Development Management Plan as appropriate

3.5 Taken together with existing Plan policies and guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework relating to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, it is not necessary to include a further development boundary policy. In particular the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development will play a greater role in determining the location of future development. The relationship with the existing built up area is also a material consideration as part of policy DM1, which means that any potential impact on these sites will be assessed as part of the planning application process.

Issue 2 – Amending Policy DM1

3.6 It is suggested by the objector that a further criterion is added to Policy DM1 so that it reads:

“All proposals must reach a good standard of design, which includes the efficient use of resources, and takes into account:

(e) the great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)”

3.7 Policy EN4 of the Planning Strategy already states that the Council will protect and enhance the town's landscape including the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Adding this further criterion to Policy DM1 of the Development Management Plan will duplicate existing policy, and is therefore not considered necessary at this time.

Appendix A – Environmental Designations

