

# HASTINGS

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# HASTINGS TOWN CENTRE

## Introduction

11.01 In 1997, the Priory Meadow Shopping Centre opened. This was the culmination of a very clear strategy by the Council to regenerate the town centre which took over a decade to bring about. The result is a range of shops able to compare with other neighbouring towns, pedestrianisation of most of the town centre area and improved traffic access.

11.02 Now the work towards regenerating the town centre is set to move on a stage further following the creation of the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force. Following the results of an extensive public consultation undertaken in Autumn 2002, the Task Force has prioritised work on regenerating the town centre through the development of a number of key projects. These include:-

- taking forward the 'University Centre' proposals through the provision of higher and further educational facilities referred to in Paragraphs 7.75 and 7.76 in Chapter 7b 'Community Needs';
- the development of a Media Centre through the redevelopment and conversion of existing buildings in Robertson Street;
- work to bring forward several major mixed use development schemes on key sites in the town centre to provide for high quality office space, enhanced retail and leisure facilities, and new residential development.

11.03 These projects together offer the potential to have a major and lasting positive impact on the town centre and the Borough as a whole. However, development of specific proposals is still at an

early stage and therefore may not always be referred to in the Plan policies here. Nevertheless, the Plan provides a general planning framework for the town centre which the Borough Council will use to assess all Task Force and other proposals.

## The Town Centre Strategy

11.04 The Borough Council, working closely with the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force, will support and encourage a programme of comprehensive proposals for the improvement of the town centre, including:-

- (i) taking forward the proposals for the 'University Centre' through the provision of space for educational facilities;
- (ii) provision of new high quality business floorspace;
- (iii) maintaining and enhancing its role as a sub-regional shopping centre and focus of leisure and business activities;
- (iv) increasing its attraction as a place to visit, including development of the evening economy, development of 'business tourism', promotion and the provision of a wide range of events and activities.
- (v) encouraging residential uses within the town centre. This will include conversion or refurbishment of buildings to maintain and increase the stock of flats and houses - including the re-use of vacant buildings and floorspace above shops;
- (vi) pedestrianisation and transport improvements, including managing transport and parking provision and developing an enhanced network of pedestrian routes;

- (vii) security and other measures to provide a safe environment for people in the town centre;
- (viii) restoration and conservation of buildings and other important architectural features;
- (ix) improving open spaces as public places and the setting for the town centre's buildings.

## Hastings Station Yard

11.05 The Hastings and Bexhill Task Force has identified this 1.5 hectare site as one of the sites to be developed as a University Centre. The Task Force's proposals are described in more detail in paragraphs 7.75 and 7.76 of Chapter 7b 'Community Needs'.

11.06 The Task Force will however only require to utilise part of the site for higher and further education purposes. The Hastings Station Yard represents the most significant development opportunity likely to become available in the town centre in the next few years. The site is located next to the station and has excellent public transport links. The Borough Council wishes to ensure that the site is developed in a way which contributes to the vitality of the town centre. The Borough Council will adopt a flexible approach to the development of the site and will encourage a mixed-use development. In addition to education uses, the Borough Council considers the site to be suitable for business and residential use and the site is included in Policy H1 to accommodate 80 dwellings. Retail uses will also be supported provided that they do not prejudice the educational, business or residential use of the site and would complement existing shopping provision in the town centre.

## POLICY TC1

### Hastings Station Yard

Land at Hastings Station Yard is allocated for a mixed use development that is likely to include educational, business, residential and retail uses. Planning permission will be granted for this type of scheme provided that the various elements complement each other in a way that contributes towards the vitality and viability of the town centre. The development must include any necessary provision for the upgrading of the station approach and interchange facilities and have regard to any plans for the Greenway.

## **Queens Hotel**

11.07 The former Queens Hotel is prominently located on the seafront and within the town centre. Although not listed, it is a key building in the Town Centre Conservation Area. The building has remained largely vacant for a number of years.

11.08 Planning permission has now been granted for the conversion of the upper floors of the building for residential flats. The owners have also brought forward other proposals for the remaining parts of the building. The main part of the ground floor would be suitable for appropriate commercial uses. However, given that the upper storeys of the building have permission for residential use, a key consideration will be that any use would not cause noise and disturbance, or otherwise affect the amenities of the residential parts of the building.

## **POLICY TC2**

### The Queens Hotel

The former Queens Hotel building is allocated for a mix of uses which would secure the future of the existing building, including hotel, retail, offices, other commercial, leisure or residential uses.

## Upper Queens Road

11.09 The retail centre of gravity of the town centre has moved northwards as a result of Priory Meadow. This should have some beneficial effects further up Queens Road and pedestrian count figures suggest this to be the case. The Council will welcome improvements to the area, and where opportunities occur will take steps to add to its attractions as a shopping area. The fundamental nature of the most northerly end of Queens Road is unlikely to change. Here, there is a case for encouraging a shift from retail to residential and other uses.

## **POLICY TC3**

### **Queens Road – Conversions**

Planning permission will be granted for the conversion of properties, between 94–168 Queens Road, from retail to residential or other suitable uses that would not lead to traffic congestion/parking problems or adversely affect the amenity of surrounding properties.

## **Site of Sussex Chambers**

11.10 The site of the former Sussex Chambers is located in a prominent position within the Town Centre Conservation Area. The Council is keen to achieve the early redevelopment of the site for a suitable scheme, including residential and A2 office uses. To ensure that the eventual scheme would preserve and enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, the Council will prepare a planning brief or guidelines in co-operation with the prospective developer(s) and other interested parties.

## **POLICY TC4**

### **Site of Sussex Chambers**

Land at the former Sussex Chambers at Havelock Road and Priory Road is allocated for a mixed use development. Suitable uses are likely to include Class A2 offices, and residential accommodation. Planning permission will not be granted for any scheme that would not accord with the building line, height and scale of nearby buildings on Havelock Road.

## **The Observer Building**

11.11 The former Observer Building in Cambridge Road has been vacant for a number of years and the Council is keen to see its refurbishment and re-use. A mixed use proposal would be appropriate, and could include, in addition to education uses, housing, offices and 'live-work' units.

11.12 The building occupies a prominent position on the edge of the town centre. The Council will therefore prepare a planning brief or guidelines in co-operation with the prospective developer(s) and other interested parties to ensure that the eventual scheme would preserve and enhance the character or appearance of the Town Centre Conservation Area.

## **POLICY TC5**

### **The Observer Building**

The former Observer Building in Cambridge Road is allocated for a mix of uses including higher and further education, residential, offices and 'live-work' units.

### **The BT Building, Havelock Road**

11.13 The BT Building in Havelock Road is currently being converted by the Task Force for higher and further education use as part of the proposed University Centre described in Chapter 7b 'Community Needs'. Not all of the building may be required for education purposes and the Borough Council considers that the commercial use of part of the building would be appropriate in this location. There are existing shop units on part of the ground floor.

## **POLICY TC6**

### **The BT Building, Havelock Road**

The BT Building in Havelock Road is allocated for higher and further education and commercial uses.

### **Hastings Station**

11.14 The station is unusually well located in relation to the town centre, especially following the completion of the Priory Meadow Shopping Centre. It has great potential, not only as a railway facility, but also as the main town centre interchange point for buses and cars. The forecourt area could also be a valuable public space for visitors to Hastings and should provide an attractive entrance to the town. The Borough Council has been working in partnership with the landowners and rail operators to secure a major improvement scheme for the station. Planning permission was granted in December 1999 to provide a new station building and a new forecourt arrangement to serve buses and taxis and provide staff and customer car parking, with improved pedestrian access along Station Approach. Redevelopment of the station has now commenced.

## **Seafront A259**

11.15 The town centre section of the A259 seems likely to remain the most heavily trafficked part of the seafront. Nevertheless, there are some opportunities for environmental improvement, particularly at the eastern end associated with proposals for the Old Town area (see Chapter 11c). Pedestrian crossing points should also be examined critically with a view to improvement.

11.16 The Council will work with the Highway Authority in seeking environmental and safety improvements to the town centre section of the A259, in accordance with the Local Transport Plan. These changes will concentrate on improved crossings and, where possible, pavement improvements.

## Other Pedestrian Improvements

11.17 The town centre is identified as a Pedestrian Priority Area (see Chapter 6 'Transport') and schemes will continue to be identified which assist those on foot and improve the general environment. Such schemes should include specific consideration for people with disabilities. This includes improvements to pedestrian links between the town centre and the Old Town in the Pelham Place area, which are also mentioned in Chapter 11c 'Old Town'.

## Greenway

11.18 The Greenway is a project being progressed by a partnership of various agencies including the Council. Single Regeneration Budget funds have been committed towards it. The aim is to create a series of linear parks which will link key locations and green spaces around the town. The Greenway will provide safe, secure and attractive routes away from traffic.

### **POLICY TC7**

#### **Greenway**

**Land is safeguarded for a Greenway as set out on the Proposals Map. Planning permission will not be granted for any development that does not ensure its implementation as an integral part of the overall design and route of the Greenway scheme.**

## Land Uses in the TownCentre

11.19 Successful town centres thrive not just through their shopping centre role, but by supporting a range of activities throughout the day. Town centres need to be lively after the shops close – to provide for entertainment activities and people living in the area. This is especially relevant to Hastings with its tourist industry. It is an approach which is also in keeping with sustainability

objectives. Mixed land uses are particularly welcome as they provide diversity – for example, flats above shops. Any proposals for such developments must accord with the Council’s policy on flat conversions.

11.20 To date, there has been little success in attracting office employment to the town centre except for small local services. However, the University Centre and other Task Force proposals are intended to have a significant impact in generating new employment in the town centre. It will therefore be an objective to increase the amount of office employment in the town centre during the Plan period.

11.21 A thriving town centre will contain a variety of retailing activity. The success of some of the older established areas depends on developing an identity distinctly different from the prime frontages. It is also important to ensure that the stock of commercial property has uses which reflect the attractions and capacity of different parts of the town centre. The suitability of eating and drinking establishments, retail shops and offices, and the conversion to residential or business uses will vary in different parts of the town centre. Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 8 on the 'Town Centre Retail Area' addresses these issues more fully. The Council will use this guidance at the planning application stage to assist in determining whether proposed uses other than retail should be permitted in different locations within the town centre.

## Car Parking

11.22 The Council's strategy for car parking in the town centre is to achieve the most effective use of the spaces which exist, both off-street and on-street. This involves a twin-track approach of greater control and charging for on-street spaces, and progressive improvements to the quality of off-street car parks. To this end:-

- The controlled parking zone for central Hastings has been introduced.
- Public car parks are being improved year on year.

11.23 Policy DG2 in Chapter 9a 'Development Guidelines' sets out the council's approach to car parking provision in new development. Because the town centre enjoys relatively good accessibility by public transport, cycling and on foot, permitted levels of car parking will be correspondingly lower. Parking standards and detailed guidance have been prepared in partnership with the County Council. All development should meet its operational requirements. Development will be required to fund any other transport measures to support it, including through the development of green travel plans.

## Conservation – Shopfronts

11.24 The Council will encourage the retention of any valued intact shopfronts or architectural details within the town centre. Insensitively designed security shutters are of special concern because of their unfriendly and bland appearance when closed. Proposals for shopfronts will be assessed against the criteria set out in Policies DG14 and DG15 in Chapter 9a 'Development Guidelines', as well as Policies C1 and C3, as appropriate. Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 3 'Shopfront Design' sets out the detailed design criteria which the Council will use when considering planning applications.

## **Memorial Replacement**

11.25 The original Albert Memorial was demolished in the 1970s but a new local feature will complete and complement the improvements which have been brought about in the town centre's core in recent years.

### **POLICY TC8**

#### **Memorial Replacement**

**The Council will safeguard the location shown on the Proposals Map to allow a replacement for the old Memorial to be erected.**

## **Town Centre Security**

11.26 The Council is keen to create a 'cafe society' in the town centre which is welcoming to all ages – including a non-threatening night-time atmosphere. Whilst welcoming the reduction in town centre crime and vandalism resulting from the introduction of CCTV cameras, the Council is aware that the Police are concerned regarding the link between the proliferation of town centre pubs and increasing crime. Any proposals for further drinking establishments, which in the view of the Police would have an adverse effect upon town centre amenities and public safety will therefore be refused. (Please see Policy DG17).