

TOURISM

Introduction	39
Tourism for the 21st Century	40
Heritage / 1066 Country	40
New Visitor Attractions	41
Amusements	41
Staying Visitors	42
Accommodation	42
Hotels and Guest Houses	43
Change of Use of Hotels and Guest Houses	43
Self Catering Accommodation	44
Caravan and Camping Sites	44
Language Schools	45
Conference Facilities	47
Pedestrian Access from Hastings Station	47
National Cycle Network	47
Water-Based Recreation	47
Enhancement of Hastings Pier	48

TOURISM

Introduction

- 5.45 Tourism is a key element in the local economy. As a resort, Hastings annually attracts some 2 million day visitors, 300,000 staying visitors and 35,000 'English as a Foreign Language' students, contributing £75m a year to the town in total. This expenditure is estimated to support over 3,000 jobs in the town, either directly or indirectly, in areas such as accommodation, shops, restaurants and pubs, attractions and entertainment and transport.
- 5.46 The Council therefore wishes to build on the quality of the Hastings tourism 'product' with its history, architecture and unique setting to attract more visitors to the town whilst seeking to reduce the effects of overcrowding and congestion that can occur at peak times.
- 5.47 Although, like most other British resorts, Hastings has lost much of its traditional longer stay domestic holiday market to foreign competition, it remains attractive for day trips, shorter breaks, long weekends and second or third holidays. The Council is therefore seeking to move the tourism product into the new and growing markets in this field, and is supporting projects which will help achieve this aim. In particular, it expects to significantly extend the visitor season by a movement into 'new tourism'. This will help to create full time jobs instead of seasonal employment, assist the local economy and promote social inclusion.

In addition, with the opening of the Channel Tunnel, increasing numbers of overseas visitors are travelling along the South Coast and staying in Hastings. Their numbers are substantially swelled by the many language school students who visit the town, particularly in the summer.

A breakdown of the expenditure levels of these different sectors provides some interesting comparisons.

	Average Expenditure in Hastings per Trip
Day Visitor	£11.80
UK Visitors 1 + nights	£162.00
Overseas Visitors 1 + nights	£246.00

- 5.48 Although day visitors account for the vast majority of trips generated, they spend on average only £11.80 per trip (though this does add up to 22% of total expenditure by tourists). By comparison, overseas visitors contribute nearly £250 each to the local economy, but only account for 2% of the total number of trips. Language students are estimated to inject in the region of £20 million into the local economy each year.
- 5.49 The challenge for the town's tourism industry, therefore, is how to adequately cater for the day trip market, whilst also promoting and encouraging the higher spending UK and overseas staying visitor.
- 5.50 The Borough Council is already heavily involved in tourism promotion through the '1066 Country Campaign' and the resulting marketing. Continued emphasis on the quality of Hastings and the surrounding area is seen as the way to attract more of the higher spending staying visitors to the town, who tend to have a more manageable impact on existing tourist facilities than day visitors.

Tourism for the 21st Century

- 5.51 With the above aims in mind, the Council's broad strategy for the future direction of tourism in the town can be summarised as follows:-
- Continue to promote Hastings as a quality destination in association with the 1066 Country Campaign.

- Aim to increase tourism revenues by extending the season, with new attractions, leisure facilities and events and encouraging investment in all year round facilities.
- Look for new tourism markets which may not have been fully explored – for example cultural and green tourism and visitors from long haul markets such as North America and the Far East.
- Continue to encourage a diversity of visitors to the town – whilst not actively promoting the day visitor market.
- Seek to satisfy the more manageable and sustainable demand for facilities arising from the staying visitor.
- Promote The Stade/Rock-a-Nore/Winkle Island area as a ‘Maritime Heritage Area’ for tourism and cultural purposes.
- Seek to reduce the environmental impact of high volumes of visitors on the Old Town seafront area by generating complementary attractions elsewhere.
- Encourage the enhancement of facilities for visitors on the former White Rock Baths site and the creation of improved formal and informal recreational facilities on the White Rock Gardens, Oval and Summerfields open spaces.
- Seek to enhance the existing attractions on the Pier.
- Continue to promote Hastings Country Park and its scenery as a recreational attraction for visitors.

Heritage /1066 Country

5.52 The continued promotion of quality tourism initiatives using the 1066 Country Campaign and marketing promotions is considered central to the future of tourism in Hastings. The Borough Council will continue to support proposals which promote the economic, recreational and tourist potential of the historic and cultural heritage of Hastings and the 1066 Country.

New Visitor Attractions

5.53 To maintain the popularity of Hastings as a resort, there must be a continuing commitment to the improvement of attractions and entertainment facilities, especially 'all-weather' facilities. There has been considerable success with attractions such as the Sealife Centre, Smugglers Adventure and the 1066 Story in Hastings Castle. Local residents also take advantage of these attractions.

5.54 The Borough Council supports further private sector involvement that would bring 'added value' to the tourism facilities already on offer – provided that developments respect the existing built and natural environment of the town and do not affect the amenity of nearby residents.

5.55 The Council also supports quality interpretation of the town's unique heritage.

5.56 Sympathetically designed attractions proposed outside the Old Town/ Stade area will be encouraged as a means of reducing some of the tourism pressures on that area and spreading the range of tourist facilities around the town.

POLICY T1

New Tourist Attractions

Planning permission will be granted for tourist attractions and facilities provided that:

- (a) they complement the existing built and natural environment of the Borough;**

- (b) they do not cause harm to the amenity of the area;
- (c) the scale and appearance of the development is in keeping with the surroundings;
- (d) the proposal does not result in the loss of identified areas of open space; and
- (e) they can be reached by a frequent public transport service and are on convenient pedestrian and cycle route(s).

Amusements

5.57 Special problems can be created by inappropriate siting of amusement arcades and other seaside amusements such as scenic and novelty rides. A spread of these activities along the seafront from their present location in The Stade area into the Old Town or the Town Centre Conservation Areas would lead to an unacceptable loss of character and amenity, especially in existing commercial areas and areas of special architectural or historic interest.

POLICY T2

Amusements

Proposals for amusement arcades, scenic and novelty rides and other amusement facilities will not be permitted in the Town Centre or Old Town Conservation Areas, other than within the Stade area of the seafront defined on the Proposals Map. In the Stade area, and other parts of the town, they will only be permitted where:-

- (a) It would not cause harm to the living conditions of people residing in the area and/or its surroundings as a result of noise, other disturbance or the intended operating hours;
- (b) They are designed in such a manner as to respect the traditional characteristics of the resort; and

- (c) They would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of any conservation area.

Staying Visitors

- 5.58 Whilst the Council recognises the importance of the day visitor market, it is intended that the emphasis in the future will be on encouraging the higher spending staying visitor (who generates a more manageable demand for facilities and entertainments), and addressing the problems of seasonality.
- 5.59 The Borough Council will, subject to other amenity considerations, support proposals that will increase the attraction of Hastings to the domestic and overseas staying visitor – particularly by the provision of more evening entertainment, cultural activities and ‘all weather’ visitor facilities (see also Policy SS1 in Chapter 11g ‘Seafront Strategy’ which supports the development of new visitor facilities on The Stade.)

Accommodation

- 5.60 The Borough Council will support investment proposals to improve the quality of serviced accommodation stock in the town in line with the national classification and grading scheme for accommodation.

Hotels and Guest Houses

5.61 For a resort of its size, Hastings has a relatively small hotel and guest house sector – and the Council would actively support any new seafront proposals including bed and breakfast accommodation that come forward together with improvements to the existing accommodation. A minimum accommodation grading standard of one star for hotel accommodation, or one diamond for guest accommodation (including guest houses, bed and breakfast establishments and inns), is considered to be desirable for any new proposal that may arise.

POLICY T3

Hotels and Guest Houses – Serviced Accommodation

The Borough Council will grant planning permission for new and enhanced serviced accommodation (hotels and guest houses), including bed and breakfast establishments on the seafront. Alternative locations will be considered if they are acceptable on amenity grounds and are suitably accessible to visitors to the town.

Change of Use of Hotels and Guest Houses

5.62 Hastings has already lost a considerable quantity of seafront holiday accommodation to other uses. If the town is to maintain and enhance its visitor appeal it is important to safeguard hotels and guest houses – particularly along the seafront wherever possible.

5.63 However, it is accepted that if there is little prospect of them ever being reused as holiday accommodation then other uses may need to be considered.

POLICY T4

Change of Use of Hotels and Guest Houses

Where an application for change of use of hotels and guest houses is made it will only be granted planning permission where:-

- (a) Detailed evidence can be provided that the building is no longer viable as visitor accommodation; and
- (b) The proposal would result in a major upgrading of the structural condition of the building.

Self Catering Accommodation

5.64 Self catering accommodation provides greater flexibility for those considering using Hastings as a touring base for the wider area, and greater provision of this form of accommodation would allow the town to be more competitive in that sector.

POLICY T5

Self Catering Accommodation

Planning permission will be granted for proposals for additional self catering accommodation subject to there being adequate accessibility and the proposal being environmentally acceptable.

Caravan and Camping Sites

5.65 The importance of these sites to tourism in Hastings is shown by a 1994 survey which found that of a total 302,000 staying trips, just over one third was undertaken by domestic tourists accommodated in one of the town's holiday parks. Within the Borough boundary there are 633 touring pitches and 382 holiday park units – accounting

for the majority of the self-catering accommodation in the town.

- 5.66 The Council will seek to protect established sites and support additional sites where appropriate. Proposals that would result in the loss of identified caravan and camping sites identified on the Proposals Map will be resisted.
- 5.67 Most of the town's existing caravan sites adjoin the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The Borough Council considers that any further expansion of the town's existing caravan sites is likely to have an adverse visual effect upon the surrounding area and should be resisted.

POLICY T6

Caravan and Camping Sites

Planning permission will not be granted for additional caravan and camping sites or the expansion of existing sites unless:-

- (a) Safe and convenient access to and from the public highway can be provided;**
 - (b) The proposal would not have an adverse impact on surrounding residential areas or the wider environment;**
 - (c) The use of the site is restricted to a seasonal basis (between the 28th February in any one year and the 14th January in the following year); and**
 - (d) A minimum of one third of the total number of pitches on new or extended static caravan sites is reserved for touring caravans or campers.**
- 5.68 The standard of caravan sites is improving continually but some existing sites may need an enhancement of their facilities so that they can provide more fully for present needs. In addition, given the sensitive location of several of

the town's caravan sites, the Council will encourage proposals which will mitigate their visual impact and enhance their appearance, such as tree planting for screening or the replacement of static caravans with less visually intrusive holiday accommodation such as wooden chalets. Any such development must be sympathetic to the surrounding area.

POLICY T7

Development within Caravan Sites

Planning permission will be granted for development designed to enhance facilities within existing caravan sites, including accommodation and the replacement of static caravans by chalets, provided that:-

- (a) Safe and convenient access to the site can be provided;**
- (b) It would not be visually intrusive;**
- (c) It would not adversely affect the living conditions of nearby residents; and**
- (d) A minimum of one-third of the total number of accommodation units is retained for touring caravans or campers.**

Language Schools

5.69 Overseas students studying English as a Foreign Language make an important contribution to the Hastings economy. It is estimated that on average 35,000 language school students visit 19 language schools in Hastings each year. The expenditure by language school students represents about a quarter of the total income derived from tourism in Hastings – with the main beneficiaries being the language schools and host families, retailers and service providers. As a result, the Borough Council will support the retention of existing language schools and the establishment of new schools, subject to certain criteria being met. A complementary objective of the Council is the

encouragement of an extension of the season during which language schools operate – in order to spread the load during the peak summer months.

POLICY T8

Language Schools

Planning permission will be granted for language schools provided that they would:–

- (a) Cause no harm to the character of the area or the living conditions of residents;
- (b) Result in no other disturbance due to noise, traffic or pressure on parking spaces;
- (c) Be reached by a frequent public transport service and/or be on convenient pedestrian and cycle routes; and
- (d) Provide adequate recreational space within the school.

POLICY T9

Retention of Language Schools

Planning permission will not be granted for any change of use resulting in the loss of an existing language school unless it can be demonstrated that at least one of the following criteria is met:–

- (a) The continued use of the site as a language school is not practicable; or
- (b) The site is no longer a suitable location for a language school.

5.70 Concerns have been expressed regarding problems of overcrowding both within and outside existing language schools in the town. It is considered important that

visiting students gain a positive image from their visit to Hastings, so that they and their families may return in future years. The Council will seek to minimise any conflict of interest between language school students and local residents.

- 5.71 To enhance the resort's reputation as a centre for learning and to maintain good relations with Hastings' permanent residents, language schools will be encouraged to apply for recognition under the British Council's English Language School Registration Scheme and adhere to the Borough Council's Voluntary Code of Practice. Compliance with these standards should ensure the quality and image of the language schools within the town is generally improved.

Conference Facilities

- 5.72 The conference market provides a similar economic benefit in some resort towns as language schools, but this sector is not currently well developed in Hastings. However, the Council would broadly support any proposal to bring additional business of this sort to the town.

POLICY T10

Conference Facilities

Planning permission will be granted to appropriate proposals that would result in increased conference facilities and business for Hastings. Any proposals should be of a scale and nature appropriate to their surroundings and have easy access to public transport networks.

Pedestrian Access from Hastings Station

- 5.73 The Council is concerned that Hastings Railway Station and the pedestrian access to the seafront and Old Town

should be improved as one of the primary visitor entrances to the town. This is often the first impression that visitors get of Hastings and any improvements would assist both in tourism marketing and promoting sustainable alternatives to road transport. The Greenway scheme will contribute to this aim but other improvements are needed. (See also Paragraphs 11.14 and 11.18 in Chapter 11a 'Hastings Town Centre').

National Cycle Network

- 5.74 The proposed National Cycle Network passes through Hastings en route from Eastbourne to Dover and the Borough Council is strongly supportive of this initiative as a means of promoting 'green' tourism and reducing traffic levels on the A259.
- 5.75 This proposal is discussed more fully in Paragraph 6.37 in Chapter 6 'Transport'.

Water-Based Recreation

- 5.76 Although Hastings is a seaside resort, use of the sea remains relatively low outside the peak tourist season. Any enhancement of this activity would add a further dimension to the town's tourist business. (See also Policy WSL1 which supports the development of a public slipway and associated water and beach-related commercial and leisure uses at Seaside Road, West St Leonards.) Proposals will be expected to comply with other policies for the location of new sports and recreational facilities (see Policies SP2 and SP3). The Council is especially keen to see this type of development to the west of Hastings Pier.

POLICY T11

Water-Based Recreation

Planning permission for water-based proposals will be granted provided that they would not:-

- (a) Conflict with other recreational uses; or
- (b) Cause harm to the living conditions of local residents;
or
- (c) Result in any other harm to amenity or the character
of the area.

Enhancement of Hastings Pier

5.77 Hastings Pier (which is a Grade II listed building) provides an interesting and attractive extra dimension to the seafront, in addition to the many entertainment facilities it houses.

5.78 The Borough Council remains committed to supporting any proposal that would result in the Pier being more attractive to tourists whilst not compromising its listed status or causing undue loss of amenity to nearby residents.

POLICY T12

Enhancement of Hastings Pier

The Borough Council will grant planning permission to proposals that would enhance Hastings Pier in terms of the entertainment facilities provided and its visual contribution to the seafront (subject to the proposals conforming with its listed building status and not adversely affecting the amenity of nearby residents). The refurbishment of the Pier will be supported.