

Hastings Borough Council

Hastings Planning Strategy Examination

Introductory Statement

Councillor Peter Chowney - Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Planning and Regeneration

Thank you, Inspector, for giving me the opportunity to present a brief opening statement ahead of the Examination into the Council's Planning Strategy.

I'd like to welcome you and all participants in the Examination to the Town Hall.

The Hastings Planning Strategy sets out the key planning policies that will guide how the borough develops over the period up to 2028. The Strategy shows how much development will be allowed, where and when. It shows what we'll need to do to provide homes and jobs for Hastings residents, and to continue the regeneration of the area. What we have sought to do is make sure our plan and the policies in it are as robust as possible, to give us the strongest possible influence over development proposals that come forward whilst planning for the objectively assessed development needs of the area.

Hastings is in the South East region, after London the most prosperous in the UK. However, the combination of a peripheral location, generally poor physical communications, and a weak economic structure means that Hastings does not enjoy the prosperity of much of the region. Hastings is the most deprived urban area in the region and 19th most deprived in the country. So we welcome the emphasis placed on using planning as a means to promote economic growth in the National Planning Policy Framework. The biggest single priority for the Borough is economic and physical regeneration. We need to make sure that the regeneration already in train continues. Economic growth and prosperity are at the heart of our plan. But we also need to protect the heritage of Hastings, in terms of both historic buildings and open spaces, while ensuring new development is of the highest possible quality, particularly in our town centres and seafront. At first sight, these principles might seem to be at odds. But to maximise the economic opportunities for our town and its residents, we need to make Hastings an attractive and desirable place to visit, live, and do business. In this way, we can do our best to maximise both the prosperity and quality of life for our residents. But we must also be precise, and targeted. We need to develop the character, diversity and uniqueness of every part of our borough, recognising the different needs of our increasingly diverse communities.

We also recognise that over the lifetime of this plan, demands for new housing accommodation will grow. While continuing our interventionist programme of CPOs to bring the high number of empty homes back into use, we will also need a good supply of new homes, especially affordable and socially rented homes. This is a challenge in a small, urban, densely-populated borough like Hastings, but we believe that our plan has provided for the housing we'll need to keep pace with a growing population and changing lifestyles.

Our new Plan looks ahead to the next 15 years, during which time all manner of unpredicted changes might happen. So the plan is intended to be flexible, and will

need to be kept up to date. We will regularly monitor the plan to assess its progress and effectiveness, and carry out reviews when they are necessary.

Preparation of the Planning Strategy has been given a high priority as a means of delivering the strategic aims for Hastings for both the Local Strategic Partnership and the Council. There is a strong, local vision to the Strategy.

Extensive public consultation has been undertaken to ensure the views of local people have been taken into account, and we have worked closely with our neighbouring authority Rother Council, East Sussex County Council and other councils and organisations to address shared issues. This is not only important under the Duty to Cooperate requirement but also because of the strategic position Hastings has as an economic centre for the wider Hastings/Rother travel to work area.

We are clearly in a period of transition in strategic planning guidance from the South East Plan and the new National Planning Policy Framework: but we have been mindful of Government advice and have sought to bring forward a plan as soon as practicable which is in general conformity with the South East Plan and fully compliant with the NPPF.

In conclusion, we are committed to a 'plan-led system', with a presumption in favour of sustainable development and we have prepared what we believe to be a sound Strategy supported by an appropriate evidence base. The Council wants a sound plan that is best for Hastings and to ensure this is achieved we have formally invited the Inspector to propose modifications to the Planning Strategy if they are considered to be necessary to make the plan sound.

A copy of this Introduction will be made available to the Programme Officer.

Councillor Peter Chowney - Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Planning and Regeneration

Hastings Borough Council
Tuesday 5th February 2013