

3 February 2015

Hastings Local Plan – Development Management Plan

Dear Mr Phillips

1. I have now taken into account all the written and spoken evidence concerning this Plan and have inspected all the sites proposed to be allocated, together with their surroundings. I am now able to set out my preliminary thoughts on the Plan.
2. I consider that your Council has abided by all the statutory requirements including the Duty to Co-operate and those relating to consultations.
3. In the main, I consider that the Council has done an excellent job in seeking to reconcile the often competing economic, social and environmental roles of planning in so far as they relate to the Borough. Bearing in mind the demanding housing need and requirement and the valuable historic and environmental assets of this unique Borough, the task has been a challenging one. Of particular merit is the re-use of well-located previously-developed land within the main urban area.
4. Whilst I appreciate that there is a substantial need and requirement for new housing in the Borough, I am of the view that, with some aspects of the Plan, there is not enough emphasis on environmental, community and design considerations. In this respect, the Plan in its submitted state is not sound. Nevertheless, I consider that it can readily be made sound with the incorporation of the proposed Main Modifications which I set out below. They are set out in the order in which I propose to deal with them in my Report.
5. MM1 – deletion of site at Upper Wilting Farm (FB12) on the grounds that at present there appears to be no realistic prospect of the proposal proceeding during the foreseeable future.
6. MM2 – Former Convent of Holy Child Jesus, Magdalen Road. There have been a number of suggested useful changes to this Policy by various parties, with all or most of which you agree. This is a valuable historic asset in St Leonards and in the Borough as a whole, and in view also of the significance of the suggested changes I think that it would be prudent to treat them as a Main Modification. I therefore invite you to take account of all of them and set out a revised Policy. I suggest that it starts as follows: *Planning permission will not be granted for development within the curtilage of the Former Convent of the Holy Child Jesus unless it would secure the long term suitable use and future of the existing Listed Buildings and Planning permission for enabling development will not be granted unless such development would.....*
7. MM3 – The Plan should make it abundantly clear that matters of design are of greater importance than figures of indicative capacity of the various sites. A Policy along the following lines would, I believe, assist the Council in its determination of planning applications particularly where the quality of the site and surroundings is especially high. This consideration is of sufficient importance to qualify the suggested change as a Main

Modification. I suggest that it be drafted as follows: *The number of dwellings set out in the Proposed Allocations Policies is purely indicative, showing what might be achieved on each site. Of principal and greater consequence for every scheme, however, will be matters which include the design, height, mass and appearance of the proposed building(s), layout (including the provision of a safe and convenient access), trees and relationship with the surroundings including nearby buildings and views of the Borough's natural and historic assets (including of Hastings Castle). These considerations, rather than indicative numbers, will provide the guidelines to secure a development worthy of the site and its surroundings. For development within Conservation Areas, the Council will insist on schemes of distinctive design, quality and character consistent with the statutory requirement to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Area. A similar approach will be taken with regard to any scheme which would affect the setting of a Conservation Area. The Council will advise and work with prospective developers from the inception of each scheme to ensure a development of distinction.*

8. MM4 – Deletion of proposed allocation at Harrow Lane, essentially on the grounds that future residential schemes in the neighbourhood and elsewhere could result in a need for recreational facilities on this land. It would be prudent to retain this land in its open state at least until the review of the Plan.
9. MM5 – Deletion of proposed allocation of land at Robsack A, Church Wood Drive (GH1) essentially on the grounds that environmental and community considerations outweigh the need/requirement for housing development. A designation of some type of open space would appear to be suitable, maybe a Local Wildlife Site.
10. MM6 – Addition to proposed allocation of land adjacent to Sandrock Park (SH1), the revised Policy including i) and iii) as set out in Document HBC/9. You may also wish to reconsider the western boundary of the enlarged site, as noted at my accompanied site inspection.
11. MM7 – Proposed inclusion in the proposed development at Cornwallis Street Car Park of a children's play area or "pocket park", essentially on the grounds that this is a busy part of Hastings Town Centre with limited provision for children's play facilities within safe and convenient reach. I would suggest that the Policy be drafted as follows: *Planning permission will be granted for residential development (possible net capacity of 10 dwellings) on the Cornwallis Street Car Park provided that the development includes i), ii), iii), iv) and v) a children's play area, "pocket park" or similar open recreational space.*
12. MM8 – Deletion of proposed allocation of land at Victoria Avenue (CVO1) essentially on the grounds that environmental and community considerations outweigh the need/requirement for housing. Again, a designation of some form of open space would appear suitable.
13. MM9 – Deletion of proposed allocation of land at Rear of Old London Road, for similar reasons as MM8, with a suitable designation.
14. Apart from MM6, I agree with you that there is no need at present to allocate any other "omission" sites as alternative or additional allocations.

15. I now invite you to place these proposed Main Modifications on deposit for a period of not less than 6 weeks to enable me to take account of any representations made upon them, including those submitted by your Council. Please advise the parties that there is no need for them to repeat evidence already submitted and taken into account. I request that you do this as soon as possible, so that the modified Plan can be adopted as a matter of urgency.
16. The modest enlargement of the proposed allocation adjacent to Sandrock Park may result in a few more dwellings, but otherwise the Main Modifications comprise deletions and changes/additions to existing policies. That being the case, I see no need for these proposed Main Modifications to be the subject of a Sustainability Appraisal.
17. I understand that the Council proposes to determine the planning application concerning the Queensway Gateway Road this February. Please keep me informed. Presumably if planning permission is granted, you will show it as a proposal on the Proposals Map. I would expect it to be dealt with as an Additional, rather than a Main Modification, in that it would be a matter of updating, but I should welcome your views on this.
18. I hope that all this is clear, but please come back to me via the Programme Officer if need be.

Yours sincerely

Richard E Hollox

Inspector

5 February 2015