

# Hastings Local Plan - Development Management Plan

Introductory Workshops Consultation Report

February 2012

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Hastings Borough Council is consulting on a draft Development Management Plan, as required by Regulation 25 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended). This is a 12 week period of consultation, taking place between 3 February 2012 and 27 April 2012.
- 1.2 Prior to the commencement of the consultation on the draft Development Management Plan, two “Introductory Workshops” were held at Hastings Town Hall during January 2012. These workshops were targeted at representatives of community groups and residents associations to help spread the word about the upcoming consultation, and to help communities and residents understand more about the planning process and the Development Management Plan itself.
- 1.3 This report provides a summary of the introductory workshops. An outline of the format of the workshops is in section 2, followed by questions raised and the answers to these, resulting from officer presentations at section 3. This section also provides links to where further information can be found. Section 4 goes on to summarise the comments made during the break-out discussions, with details of next steps and contact details provided at the end of this report.

## **2.0 Workshop format**

### **Who was invited?**

- 2.1 There are 101 voluntary groups, residents associations and community groups registered on our Planning Policy database. In January 2012, each of these was invited by email and letter to send a representative to one of the workshops that were arranged. Out of those invited, 27 people attended the workshops.
- 2.2 The workshops were also attended by several representatives from Planning Aid, who provided an overview to the planning process and Planning Aid, and led the facilitation of the break-out discussions

### **When and where were they held?**

- 2.3 The first workshop was held on Monday 16 January 2012, between 4pm and 6pm. The second workshop was held on Friday 20 January 2012, between 9.30am and 11.30am.
- 2.4 Both were held in the Council Chamber, Hastings Town Hall, Hastings, TN34 3UY

### **The outline of the workshop**

- 2.5 The workshops were chaired by Paul Adams, Planning Policy Manager, Hastings Borough Council.
- 2.6 The running order was as follows:
  - 1. Welcome and introduction (Paul Adams, Hastings Borough Council)
  - 2. An outline of the planning system and the role of Planning Aid (Mark Chessell, Planning Aid)
  - 3. A brief overview of the Hastings Planning Strategy, including questions from audience (Stephanie Roots/Kerry Culbert, Hastings Borough Council)
  - 4. Break
  - 5. The Development Management Plan – purpose, aims, the upcoming consultation and questions from the audience, (Peter Canavan, Hastings Borough Council)
  - 6. Break-out discussions
  - 7. Further questions and closing comments
- 2.7 The PowerPoint presentations used are provided at Appendix A.

## 3.0 Presentation questions and responses

- 3.1 Questions and officer responses presented during the first half of the workshop are summarised below.

### Planning Strategy

**Question 1 - How was the target of 3,400 homes in the Planning Strategy arrived at? Is it still a legal requirement to set a housing target considering the changes with the government?**

- 3.2 Various factors contribute to the local housing targets, including demographic projections, the town's capacity to accept change and employment generation. We need to ensure we have the right balance between catering for the future requirements and having the capacity in the town to meet this growth.
- 3.3 The original target of 4,200 homes was set out in the South East Plan, which covered the period 2006-2026. The National Planning Policy Framework now requires us to set a local housing target.
- 3.4 How we arrived at a new local target of 3,400 homes between 2011-2028 is set out in our housing background paper prepared as part of the Informal Consultation on the Core Strategy, published during the Summer 2011. This paper sets out in detail how we arrived at a local housing target, and is available to view or download at [http://www.hastings.gov.uk/environment\\_planning/planning/local\\_development\\_framework/ldf\\_documents/#cs](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/environment_planning/planning/local_development_framework/ldf_documents/#cs) (See Appendix A).
- 3.5 Please note that the final housing target may be amended slightly in the final version of the Planning Strategy due to updating of information.

**Question 2 – The new per annum housing number is 205 dwellings which is only 5 dwellings less than the South East Plan stated. This hardly seems like a revised approach and the number should be much lower.**

- 3.6 The Examination in Public will look independently at the Planning Strategy and assess it to see if the evidence base is sound. If any part of the plan, including the housing figures, is found to be based on unsound evidence then the Inspector will find the plan unsound and make recommendations to the local authority.

**Question 3 - The consultation of Summer 2011 was not a valid consultation. The planning department are not advertising widely enough and getting enough people to show an interest in the plans and policies.**

- 3.7 This was an informal consultation and we made every effort to consult with a wide range of people. To put it into context, this consultation followed several other stages of plan development and consultation. There will also be a formal deposit stage later this year where your views will be considered by the planning inspector at Examination in Public. The public will be invited to speak at Examination if they don't feel their views have been taken into account.

- 3.8 Suggestions for additional publicity methods are also welcome.
- 3.9 A consultation report was prepared that sets out a summary of the comments made and how they have been addressed. It also provides details of the methods used to publicise the consultation. This is available to view or download from our website at [http://www.hastings.gov.uk/environment\\_planning/planning/local\\_development\\_framework/ldf\\_consult/#planning\\_strategy](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/environment_planning/planning/local_development_framework/ldf_consult/#planning_strategy)

**Question 4 - Is it true that the Inspectors report is not binding on the Council? Could the Council ignore the Inspector's recommendations if they want to without penalty?**

- 3.10 Changes to regulations now mean that Inspectors report is no longer binding. However, the Council would not just ignore the report as they need to publish a very good reason for ignoring it or face legal challenge. During the final stage before adoption, the Plan could still be open to legal challenge but this would have to be on a point of law, or related to the Council not carrying out something the way they are supposed to, a procedural error.
- 3.11 [Note: Although the report is not binding, in practice an inspector's report that finds a document 'unsound' cannot be 'ignored' because this would mean a planning document could not be used in the determination of planning issues.]

**Question 5 - The Planning Strategy presentation talked about high quality design. Who decides what is good enough?**

- 3.12 Ultimately it is the planning committee, but the Planning Strategy and Development Management Policies are essential in guiding this decision making process. The Development Management Plan presents an opportunity to begin the debate of how we can draw out what is good design, and whether just existing national design guidance is appropriate or whether we need something more local.

**Question 6 - The Council should follow CABE's recommendations for space standards**

- 3.13 The Development Management Plan provides an opportunity to look into internal space standards for new development.

**The Development Management Plan**

**Question 1 - Will focus areas form Neighbourhood Areas?**

- 3.14 They could do, but not necessarily. Focus areas are based on areas of similar character and some statistical boundaries, including Super Output Areas.

**Question 2 - Are focus area boundaries fixed or are they up for discussion? Ore looks uncomfortable, and could be done differently.**

- 3.15 These are a way of dividing up the town, and it is unlikely that development management policies are going to be different in each area. If a

neighbourhood want to develop different boundaries for a Neighbourhood Plan they can, although this is not the main focus of our consultation. If you feel particularly strongly about the boundaries, please address this in your consultation response.

**Question 3 - Access to and from key services across the town is a key issue. Is the Council going to be working with East Sussex County Council to ensure infrastructure is in place to support this issue?**

3.16 Yes, the County has input into this process, and we want to hear from the community as well.

**Question 4 - Site stability is a big issue in Hastings and the provisions of PPG14 are being ignored in current applications.**

3.17 Site stability is considered in the Development Management Plan.

**Question 5 - Is tourism going to be an important part of the Plan as this would provide a large amount of employment? We need 5\* Hotels and good access and parking.**

3.18 Yes. Tourism is considered as part of both the Planning Strategy and in the Development Management Plan.

**Question 6 - Will allotments stay as they are or are they likely to be included as sites for development?**

3.19 Allotments are not being considered for development at the moment.

3.20 [Note: All our allotments now have statutory status, so cannot be considered for development, without the permission of the Secretary of State, and without suitable alternative allotment space being found for the allotment holder]

**General comments**

3.21 The following points arising from discussion will be taken on board in the preparation of the Development Management Plan. However, attendees were encouraged to make these comments using the official response forms as well.

- The town suffers from sewerage problems and this should be addressed within the Plan.
- The plan should set minimum design standards for developments and construction.
- Wildlife within the Borough should be considered more thoroughly.
- The map showing the potential sites for allocation needs to be bigger. It can hardly be seen. Needs to be as big as the map for the 'Big Map' consultation.
- Ore Village needs its own exhibition

## **4.0 Workshop discussions**

- 4.1 Following completion of the presentations and questions, attendees were then asked to split into groups and begin the break-out discussions. Each break-out group was facilitated by a member of Planning Aid, as well as an officer being present to answer questions.
- 4.2 The following questions were posted as a guide to aid discussion:
1. What should be the priorities when deciding where to allocate?
  2. What is good enough for Hastings?
  3. How can people be better involved in the local planning process?
- 4.3 The notes taken in answer to these questions have been grouped together by subject area, and are summarised as follows:

### **What should be the priorities when deciding where to allocate?**

#### **Types of housing**

- Flats are bought 'Buy-to-Let' and so people lack sense of ownership.
- More mixed housing to achieve mixed and balanced communities. We don't want to live in ghettos. Have a variety of housing, employment units.
- Design should be decent and proper
- Defining "needs" is important
- Hastings currently has a large number of flats in old Victorian houses. The town needs a much more balanced provision of housing types/ sizes, and more houses rather than flats.

#### **Density**

- Cannot continue to build flats in high density. Need more family accommodation with gardens.
- Too many flats that do not meet the needs of families. Need for more open space and gardens, communal gardens are not treated as belonging to individuals.
- High rise development is not appropriate
- Lower density developments are more appropriate
- Provide information on population density so implications of enlarged communities can be better understood

#### **Design**

- Better signs/information boards should be provided near the main railway station
- It should be more obvious how to move around and away from the station – high buildings and railings make it difficult to tell which way you are supposed to go.
- The Seafront is not very well connected to the town
- Queens Road could be made more attractive
- Priority given to expanding existing estates and areas that do not work as communities at the moment – further development and investment needed, e.g. Mayfield estate.

## **Employment**

- Issues around lack of employment in the town. Tourism has declined which used to be a big employer. Consider trials for Seafront and tourist attractions first to determine viability
- More business development and wealth generation is required if the town is to improve
- Hastings is a low wage economy. Some local firms pay very low wages because of high unemployment and lack of other job opportunities

## **Infrastructure**

- New development should only be permitted on stable land. (There seem to be more and more developments being approved on land which is unstable). Many areas of vacant land not suitable, and may not be suitable for open space either.
- Hastings generally has a major problem in terms of lack of capacity for dealing with sewage disposal. This problem can be exacerbated by very heavy rainfall/local flooding/underground stream water entering the sewerage system and causing overflows. Maybe there should be a major review/upgrade of the town's overloaded sewage disposal system before any large new developments are approved
- Important to consider the provision of essential infrastructure (schools, sewage disposal, local roads, etc) when deciding where new homes should be built.
- Improve bus routes, timetables and accessibility for residents

## **Environment**

- Ore village - There are some precious relics of old woodland that are under threat from new housing development. These are a very important local resource for residents and wildlife and should form part of a network of green spaces/ corridors in the town (green infrastructure)
- Creation of a safe network of green lanes to reach community facilities within 0.5 mile range
- There needs to be better pedestrian access to the new countryside park
- What is the environmental capacity of Hastings to accommodate new development?
- Protect ancient woodland, environment and wildlife - No further loss of green space.
- Recognise valued spaces
- Consider existing green spaces and play areas that parents do not think are suitable for children and therefore not used, for alternative development

## **Heritage and character**

- New buildings should be designed to harmonise with adjoining historic buildings and their surroundings. Some poorly designed buildings are currently being given planning permission. Why can't Hastings be innovative and set standards for other towns? Better quality design is required across the whole town. Hastings has some fantastic architectural treasures from different time periods back to medieval times
- Architectural and cultural heritage (e.g. the castle, Old Town, Burton's legacy)
- Special events are important (e.g. art exhibitions, half marathon, etc)
- What is the unique pull of Hastings?
- Within conservation areas good design and landscaping should be the planning priorities

## **Transport**

- Parking standards relating to new development need to be carefully set.
- Better park and ride facilities are required in the town to reduce traffic congestion in the town centre.
- A21 should be upgraded (many of Hastings' problems will remain until this occurs), although someone else mentioned that this was not essential
- Better train links to and from Hastings are also important to future prosperity and development
- New station should be provided at Ravenside

## **Retail**

- It is hard to sustain existing shops
- People should be encouraged to walk to other shops outside the town centre with improved signposting
- Vacant shops should be used for temporary purposes to avoid them sitting unused

## **What is good enough for Hastings?**

### **Policies/standards**

- Look at existing planning policies. Keep those that are working well and amend those that are working less well.
- Build on Hastings' strengths (e.g. its fantastic heritage in the built and natural environment)
- Look to maintain the quality in what already exists (e.g. within conservation areas)
- Landlords are making money and not putting anything back into the Borough. Buildings then decline, not cared for or maintained.
- There are large numbers of empty homes that could be put into use. More could be done.
- Issues of the Council taking on development to deal with migration from London for accommodation. Use the New Homes Bonus?
- Larger housing may not meet local needs but will encourage different people to migrate to the area.
- Maybe have a policy for lower density of new development
- Car parking standards need to be realistic for new housing development
- Perhaps a policy needs to be introduced recommending larger room sizes in new housing schemes.
- Highest levels of probity required in the local planning process.
- Design Standards/Codes – should not be abandoned
- Policies should be prescriptive
- Loss of trust so need a safeguarding policy. Please include a safeguarding policy and all sign up to it
- Policy suggestion: Sustainable transport included in travel plans as part of new development.
- Disabled access in all new housing irrespective of number of Lifetime Houses built
- Transport – Tramway to prevent traffic congestion and promote tourism
- Zoned area for electric vehicles
- Consider disadvantaged people and cost of electric cars.
- Neighbourhood plans for local areas are key

- Hastings needs to get the town more attractive first, then better quality development will follow
- Development and design ideals are currently not high enough. Standards should be set higher to encourage better quality development.
- Maybe different density standards should be set for different sites
- New developments to be mixed use and incorporate green space around them

### **General design issues**

- At the moment it's the lowest common denominator for development.
- Need for a design standard highlighting appropriate material should be used.
- Quality Victorian Buildings are being destroyed and replaced by rubbish. Not listed. These areas need protection
- Distinction between 'general housing' and 'Conservation Area' housing
- General housing needs to be good quality, 3 or 4 beds with parking for up to 4 cars, room sizes bigger than minimum standards

### **Site specific**

- Concerns raised over empty sites Magdalen Road and Archery Road. At Archery Road there are Grade 2 listed buildings in a terrace. There is concern the site will be set on fire and then redeveloped.
- Look at other options above Observatory. Flats above shops?

## **How can people be better involved in the local planning process?**

### **Consultation material**

- Bigger map of sites for allocation is needed.
- The map needs a clear key as the current legend doesn't make sense.
- Need to use names and not numbers to label sites.
- Detailed local map for each area workshop specific to each area exhibition.
- Detail of discussion points for each area to make it relevant
- Clear simple (specific to your area and focus on 13 areas to make relevant) information for everyone in the post.

### **Consultation methods and publicity**

- Publicise better in newspapers and leaflet drops. Make the press adverts etc bigger, easier to find
- The online consultation form needs to be much easier to use
- A4 publicity leaflets would be more useful for publicising future consultation events (e.g. as posters in shop windows and on community notice boards)
- Maybe some public meetings should be held for the wider population (in addition to community group involvement)
- Perhaps it would also be good for the Council to have specific meetings with some community groups to discuss their views in more detail
- Put notices on boards for example at the town hall. Put posters in each area and get the Councillors involved more
- Ways need to be found to make planning policy issues more newsworthy (so as to get more coverage in the local press and media)
- Young people should be engaged more to seek their ideas, via schools, social media, libraries, etc.
- Pass on information to community organisations and groups to spread the word
- Include a prize draw to encourage people to comment

## **Feedback**

- Consultation feedback needs to be given to local communities as soon as possible after key events/ stages in the process
- What has happened to the results of previous consultations? The results need to be published.

## **General**

- Architectural drawings – for specific applications should reflect the site and be realistic. Use real pictures
- Lack of trust exists – Accept Probity in Planning from the Local Government Association.
- More transparent, have annual assessment of last year to be clearer publicising.
- There have been some examples of poor communication/ dialogue between community groups and planners in the past. There is a need for some bridge building to improve relationships.
- The Chairman of the Planning Committee appears to exercise too much personal control over the planning officers.
- Council and planning need to listen
- Hearing loops
- Legal input to policy formation
- More “participation” is required rather than “consultation”
- One person was keen that there should be a Neighbourhood Plan produced for the St. Andrews area (Mark Chessell stated that Planning Aid might be able to arrange a separate meeting in the future with Hastings Borough Council to explain the opportunities for local communities in Hastings to produce neighbourhood plans, if required)

## **Other comments**

- Flats are an issue in the town. There is overcrowding. Don't want more flat development.
- Family accommodation is needed. We aren't like London with lots of single households.
- Flats don't meet the needs of the population of Hastings.
- Wouldn't say an absolute no to flats but needs better balance
- If flats are going to be followed then we need communal gardens and open space to compensate for lack of private gardens.
- Need better housing in St Leonards to attract other people in to improve the community. Won't improve it if you don't get the right people in. Need to create mixed and balanced communities.
- Kenilworth Road. Carisbrooke Road etc have a lot of flats because of conversions; we don't need new flats as well.
- Why don't we have standards for developments like they do in York or Canterbury where you have to use certain materials for example?
- Need the jobs in the town to justify the design standards. How are we going to create the jobs?
- Development is being done badly. Need to improve this.
- The design of developments should fit in with the local area, respect the existing.
- Historic environment is very important and needs protecting.
- Land stability and drainage are huge issues.

- The “Speckled Wood” area is important. Major work would be needed to make it viable for development. Should be considered for other things, wildlife etc.
- Greenway is a huge issue. Should safeguard the land from development even if the project doesn't happen straightaway. Thames Riverside Park did this and stopped development on any of the land designated for the park even though it took 30 years to come to fruition.
- Green Infrastructure strategy is urgently needed!
- Need development of adequate quality
- Need development in order to enable other things like green infrastructure and open spaces.
- Location specific development. For example flats could be appropriate for a site so that the neighbouring natural areas are not swamped by rows of semi detached housing and gardens.
- High density can pay for environmental improvements.

## 5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 Or preferred approach, and the best way for these comments to have most effect, is that they come forward through the consultation, after they are considered alongside the full range of materials during the consultation period – attendees were shown the various ways this could be done – but this report will be used as a record of what was said during the workshops.
- 5.2 Comments made at these workshops will, also, be taken into account in the drafting of the final version of the Development Management Plan, called the “proposed submission version”. Before this however, the wider consultation will be undertaken between February and April 2012, the results of which will also feed in to the final draft of the Development Management Plan.
- 5.3 The Development Management Plan consultation document will be published for a 12 week period of consultation between **3 February and 27 April 2012**. We will be holding exhibitions at various locations across the town, where you will have the opportunity to share your views and concerns and find out more information about the consultation. These are taking place at:

**Monday 6 February, 3pm – 6pm,**

The Bridge Community Centre, 361 Priory Road, Hastings, TN34 3NW

**Wednesday 8 February, 10am – 1pm**

Gensing and Central St Leonards Community Centre, 16 Silchester Road, St Leonards, TN38 0JB

**Friday 10 February, 3pm – 6pm**

The Stade Hall, The Stade, Hastings, TN34 3AR

**Tuesday 14 February, 12noon – 7pm**

Town Hall, Queens Road, Hastings, TN34 1QR

**Thursday 16 February, 10am – 1pm**

Tilekiln Community Centre, Tilebarn Road, St Leonards, TN38 9PA

**Saturday 3 March, 9am – 5.30pm**

Priory Meadow Shopping Centre, Hastings, TN34 1PH

- 5.4 A small display will also be displayed in our Planning Reception at Aquila House, Breeds Place, Hastings, TN34 3UY for the duration of the consultation period.

### How to make your comments

- 5.5 The **Development Management Plan – consultation draft** is available to view or download from our website at [www.hastings.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/consultations). You can also view a copy in Planning Reception, Aquila House. We also have a limited number of hard copies that are available on request.
- 5.6 You are invited to make your comments at any point during the consultation period, although all comments must be submitted to us by **4pm on Friday 27 April 2012**. You can do this using following methods:

**Online** - The easiest way to make your comments is online. Visit our website at [www.hastings.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/consultations) and follow the links provided.

**Paper forms** - paper copies of our response form are available from us to take away, or you can download it from our website using the address above.

- 5.7 You can also post comments on Facebook, or contact us through Twitter, although these will not be taken forward as formal representations. We will make sure that we reply to any queries posted this way.

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/ShapingHastings>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/shapinghastings](http://www.facebook.com/shapinghastings)

- 5.8 For any further information, or to add your details to our Planning Policy database, please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01424 451098 or email [fplanning@hastings.gov.uk](mailto:fplanning@hastings.gov.uk)

## **Appendix A – Workshop Presentation**