

Retention of Visitor Accommodation - Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted 16 December 2015

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The tourism industry is an important contributor to the local economy in Hastings. 6.8% of people were employed in the accommodation and food service sector in 2009, rising from 6% in 2007. Tourism contributes £253 million to the local economy and supports an estimated 5,280 jobs, equating to 3,911 Full Time Equivalents (source: Tourism South East, 2013).
- 1.2 Staying visitors are particularly important to the local economy. In 2013, an estimated 427,000 staying trips were spent in the Borough, up 1.3% compared to 2012. These overnight visitors spent just under £91.5 million on their trip, compared to 3.2 million day visitors spending just £82.4 million, giving a spend of £180 per head for staying visitors compared to £30 per head for day visitors (Source : Tourism South East).
- 1.3 Whilst there has been some improvement in recent years in the numbers of visitors to the area and the money being spent in the town, the lack of quality visitor accommodation is still a significant issue, and the Council are working hard to improve the contribution tourism makes to the economy as a whole.
- 1.4 The town currently has around 1000 serviced visitor bed spaces, not all of a good quality, compared with a total of around 8,000 in 1951. This represents a low base compared with many of Hastings' competitors, such as Eastbourne with around 7,000, Brighton with 13 000, and Bournemouth with around 23,000. Visitor accommodation continues to be lost, although some very good quality boutique hotels have opened in the area in recent years.
- 1.5 The provision of new visitor accommodation, the maintenance and, where necessary, the improvement of existing accommodation are therefore of key importance to the town. Our main aim is to encourage more all year round short stay visitors with a higher spending power, leading to the provision of permanent jobs in the tourist sector and contributing to the regeneration of the town. Our events programme, concentrated on the 'shoulder'/low season, helps in this respect, as does our positioning of Hastings as a great base from which to visit the whole of 1066 Country. We also particularly target overseas visitors, who traditionally spend more than domestic visitors (many of whom stay with friends and relatives).

Development Plan Background

- 1.6 The Hastings Local Plan currently comprises two key documents that provide the statutory framework for land use and development in Hastings up to 2028. These documents include the Hastings Planning Strategy 2014 and the Development Management Plan 2015.
- 1.7 Policy E4 of the Hastings Planning Strategy seeks to deliver the Council's priorities for Tourism, particularly focusing on visitor attractions, visitor accommodation and language schools. This is set out below.

Policy E4: Tourism and Visitors

The Council will work to promote and secure sustainable tourism development in the town. A more diverse and high quality tourism offer will be encouraged that seeks to lengthen the tourism season, increase the number of visitors, provide job opportunities and sustain the tourism economy.

Visitor Attractions:

New visitor attractions will be encouraged and those that already exist will be protected, unless it can be demonstrated they are no longer economically viable either in existing or adapted form. The upgrading of provision will be encouraged where it increases the range and/or quality of tourist facilities.

Proposals for new visitor attractions will be considered sympathetically anywhere within the Borough subject to other policies. The seafront is seen as the core resort area and particular support will be given to measures and proposals which are well related to the seafront.

Visitor Accommodation:

New visitor accommodation will be directed to the Seafront, the main arterial routes, and close to other generators of demand. Extension to existing visitor accommodation will also be supported, subject to design and location policies.

The priority areas for retention of serviced visitor accommodation are the Seafront (including Warrior Square), the Old Town and the Town Centre. In these areas, there will be a presumption against a change of use away from existing facilities unless the facility is no longer viable or is incapable of improvement to a good standard. Outside these areas, change of use away from visitor accommodation (including camping, caravan and chalet sites) will be resisted, unless the criteria of the Visitor Accommodation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) are adhered to, and the unviable nature of the business can be demonstrated. The SPD contains guidance in support of this policy approach.

Language Schools:

In recognition of their importance to the local economy, the Council will also support proposals that improve, protect or make new provision for language schools in suitable locations. Proposals for changes of use of language schools to other uses will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the use is no longer economically viable.

- 1.8 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides additional guidance and support for the Visitor Accommodation element of Policy E4 above, and constitutes a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

2.0 Purpose and objectives

- 2.1 The overarching objective of the Retention of Visitor Accommodation SPD is to secure the proper implementation of Policy E4 of the Hastings Planning Strategy 2014. This is supported by two further objectives:
- a) To ensure an adequate supply of visitor accommodation (including caravan, camping and chalet sites) in Hastings Borough.
 - b) To protect existing visitor accommodation premises where there is a good prospect of the use continuing.
- 2.2 This SPD is necessary to provide certainty and detail for potential applicants in terms of the evidence the Council requires to be submitted in support of any planning applications for the change of use away from visitor accommodation. Providing the correct information at the outset will also help to avoid delay in processing such applications.

3.0 Information requirements

Which establishments are included?

- 3.1 This SPD relates only to cases where a planning application is being submitted to change existing visitor accommodation such as a hotel, guest house, caravan, camping or chalet site, to an alternative use. It may also apply in certain situations where a partial change of use is proposed.
- 3.2 The SPD does not apply to dwelling houses where one or two rooms are being used for guests and they share facilities with the family. This type of establishment is classed as residential accommodation and is therefore not covered by Policy E4 of the Planning Strategy.
- 3.3 Each application is, however considered on a case by case basis, and on its own merits. If you are in any doubt as to whether the SPD applies to your property, you are advised to contact the Council's Development Management team using the contact details at the end of this document.

What evidence is required?

- 3.4 Appendix A provides a checklist of the evidence required to be submitted with any planning application to change the use of existing visitor accommodation to an alternative use.
- 3.5 The requirements in appendix A apply to the town as a whole, and not just identified priority areas. The Council does however recognise that the information required may be onerous for smaller establishments to provide. Therefore, visitor accommodation with 3 or fewer guest bedrooms will only be required to provide the evidence required in Appendix B.

When is the evidence required?

- 3.6 Planning applications for changes of use of visitor accommodation that has 4 or more guest bedrooms should be accompanied by the evidence required in Appendix A.
- 3.7 Planning applications for changes of use of visitor accommodation with 3 or fewer guest bedrooms should be accompanied by the evidence required in Appendix B.
- 3.8 Applicants should attempt to respond to all items listed in the relevant appendix. If an applicant is not able to provide evidence on a particular item or does not consider it relevant to the application, they should provide reasons for this in writing at the time of submitting the application. If an applicant considers that there are special circumstances that should be taken into account they should include an explanation of these with their application. The Council will be better able to process applications in a timely manner if they are accompanied by reasonable levels of evidence/explanation as set out above.

What will be done with the evidence?

- 3.9 The Council's lead officer for Tourism will be consulted and will provide advice to the planning officer dealing with the application in the form of a written report. This will inform the planning officer's final report. In exceptional circumstances the Council may seek external advice and verification of the evidence submitted.

4.0 Further information

Status of this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

- 4.1 This SPD is a material consideration to be taken into account in determining planning applications. Planning Inspectors will also have regard to it in deciding appeals against refusals of planning permission.

Contact details

Hastings Borough Council Development Management team

- 4.2 For further information regarding the implementation of this SPD, or clarification of any of the information requirements required, please contact the Council's Development Management team using the following details:

Telephone: 01424 451090

Email: dcenquiries@hastings.gov.uk

By post:
Aquila House
Breeds Place
Hastings
East Sussex
TN34 3UY

This SPD is available to view or download from our website at www.hastings.gov.uk/spd

Appendix A - Evidence Checklist (4 or more guest bedrooms)

Information required in support of a planning application for the change of use of a hotel or guest house with 4 or more guest bedrooms.

1. Location – evidence that the character of the area has changed to such an extent in recent years that it is no longer suitable for a tourism use. For example, if the area has become industrialised and is no longer an attractive location for staying visitors.
2. Evidence that the property has been marketed for sale for at least 2 years at a market price which reflects the existing use as a hotel or guest house, and the condition of the building. Evidence of marketing of the property should be submitted. This should include details of agents used, copies of brochures and advertisements with dates, records of response, interest shown and offers received with reasons for being rejected, if appropriate.
3. Evidence of business planning and performance against targets. This would normally take the form of an annual Business Plan. Where no such plan exists applicants should provide a reasoned justification as to why it has not been prepared.
4. Evidence of marketing of the building as a tourist facility over the last three years or number of years trading if less. This would include brochures, advertisements, web-sites, entries in Accommodation Guides etc.
5. Evidence of any capital upgrading of the premises by the present owner.
6. Evidence of the management experience of the present owner/manager.
7. Profit and loss account.
8. Evidence of the physical condition of the building, including surveyor's reports, which should include an estimate of cost, if significant repair is required. Evidence should also be provided of the impact of this on future viability of the business.
9. Evidence of the scope for refurbishment of the building to upgrade facilities. A surveyor's report, to include an estimate of cost, will be required, together with evidence of the impact of this on future viability of the business.
10. Evidence of the market value of the premises: (a) in their present condition, (b) after repairs, if required, and (c) after refurbishment, if required.
11. Evidence of whether the premises could be converted to other tourist accommodation e.g. language school

Appendix B - Evidence Checklist (3 or fewer guest bedrooms)

Information required in support of planning applications for the change of use of hotels and guest houses with 3 or fewer guest bedrooms:

1. Location – evidence that the character of the area has changed to such an extent in recent years that it is no longer suitable for a tourism use.
2. Evidence that the property has been marketed for sale for at least 1 year at a market price which reflects the existing use as a hotel or guest house, and the condition of the building. Evidence of marketing of the property should be submitted. This should include details of agents used, copies of brochures and advertisements with dates, records of response, interest shown and offers received with reasons for being rejected, if appropriate.
3. Profit and loss account