

SHAPING HASTINGS



Hastings Local Plan **The Hastings Planning Strategy** **Proposed Submission Version**

25 May - 17 August 2012

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Please call 01424 451098

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Foreword

Planning shapes our environment: where we live, work and play. The new Hastings Local Plan presents an opportunity to improve the way we do things in the future - how we use land, what we build, how our town centres will develop and change, and how planning decisions fit with other policies and strategies.

Hastings Borough Council has reached an important stage in the preparation of this plan. The Hastings Planning Strategy sets out the key planning policies that will guide how the borough develops. 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. But none of this is straightforward. We have to stick to government rules about what we put in the plan, and in particular how many new homes we need to provide. And it's important to note that the Hastings Local Plan is just that: a plan. We can't make development happen, nor can we make developers do exactly what we want them to. What we have 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.

We need to make sure that the regeneration of our town continues, and that 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: what's best for Hastings town centre might not be best for St Helens, nor even St Leonards Town Centre. We need to develop the character, diversity and uniqueness of every part of our borough, recognising the different needs of our increasingly diverse communities. This requires bespoke tailoring, not a blanket thrown over the whole town. 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.

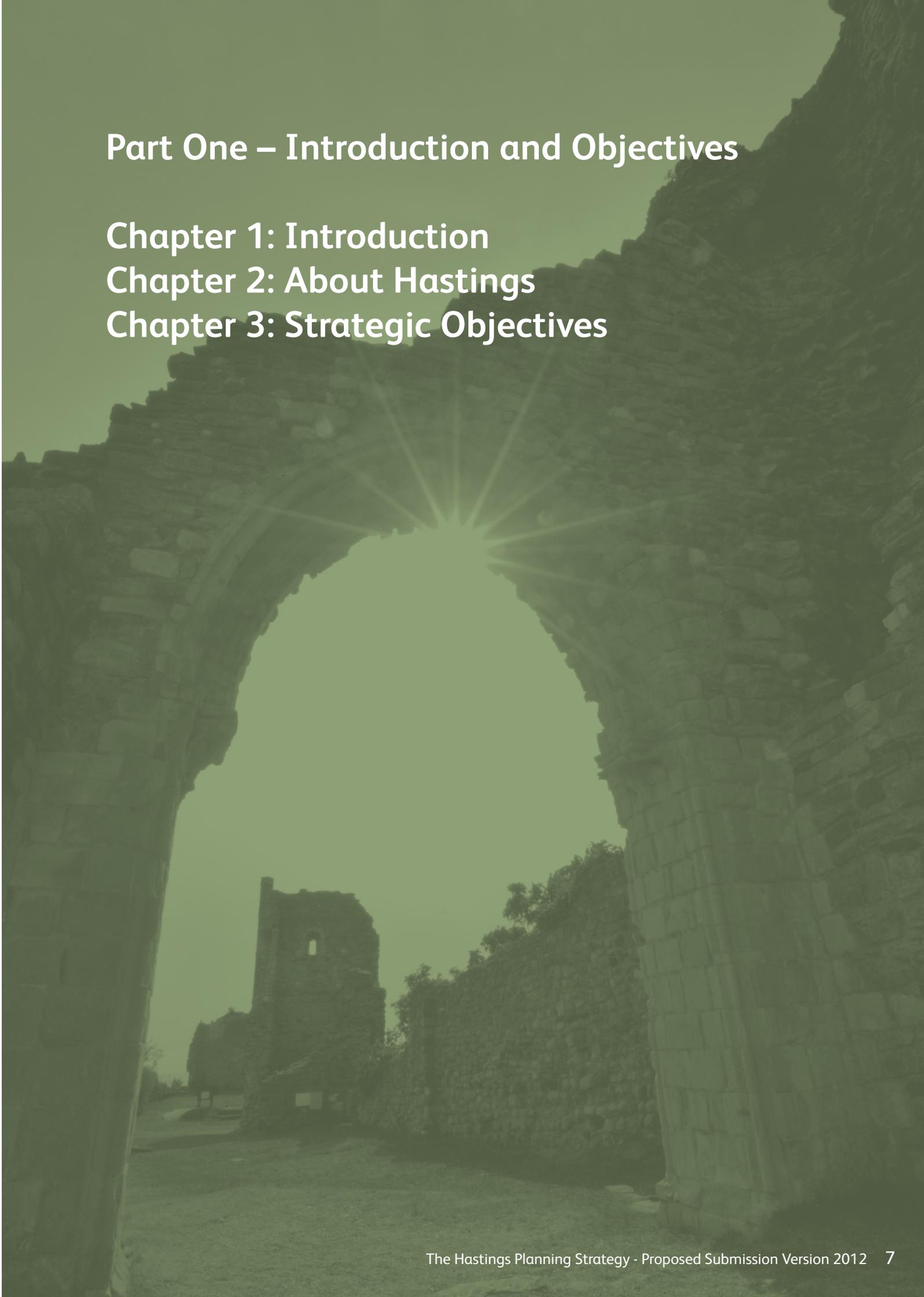
This is where you come in. We've already taken into account the views of local people, businesses and other organisations through earlier consultations, and we're very grateful for the contributions made. The next step is to ensure your support, consider any final comments and then submit the document to the Secretary of State for examination. Then we'll prepare the Hastings Development Management Plan which will set out how specific parcels of land will be developed or conserved, and will refresh the detailed policies the council currently uses to manage development in Hastings.

So this plan is important: it will affect dramatically how the town changes in the coming years. It will shape the look, feel and prosperity of Hastings not just for us, but for generations to come. When the Normans came almost a thousand years ago, they had no development plan. And they didn't consult local people. But their developments influenced the town in ways we can still see today. We can be every bit as influential!



Councillor Peter Chowney
Lead Member, HBC





Part One – Introduction and Objectives

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: About Hastings

Chapter 3: Strategic Objectives

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is this document about?

- 1.1 Planning affects many aspects of our lives – from where we live, work and shop to where and how we can spend leisure time. Effective planning is about managing change rather than letting it happen in an unplanned way.

The Hastings Local Plan

- 1.2 The Hastings Local Plan will be a set of planning documents, maps and written policies to show where, in what form and in what quantities development can take place. It will set out how Hastings is expected to change over the time period up to 2028, and will reflect other strategies and policies in the area including matters such as education, health and economic development priorities. The documents that make up the Hastings Local Plan are shown in the diagram below:

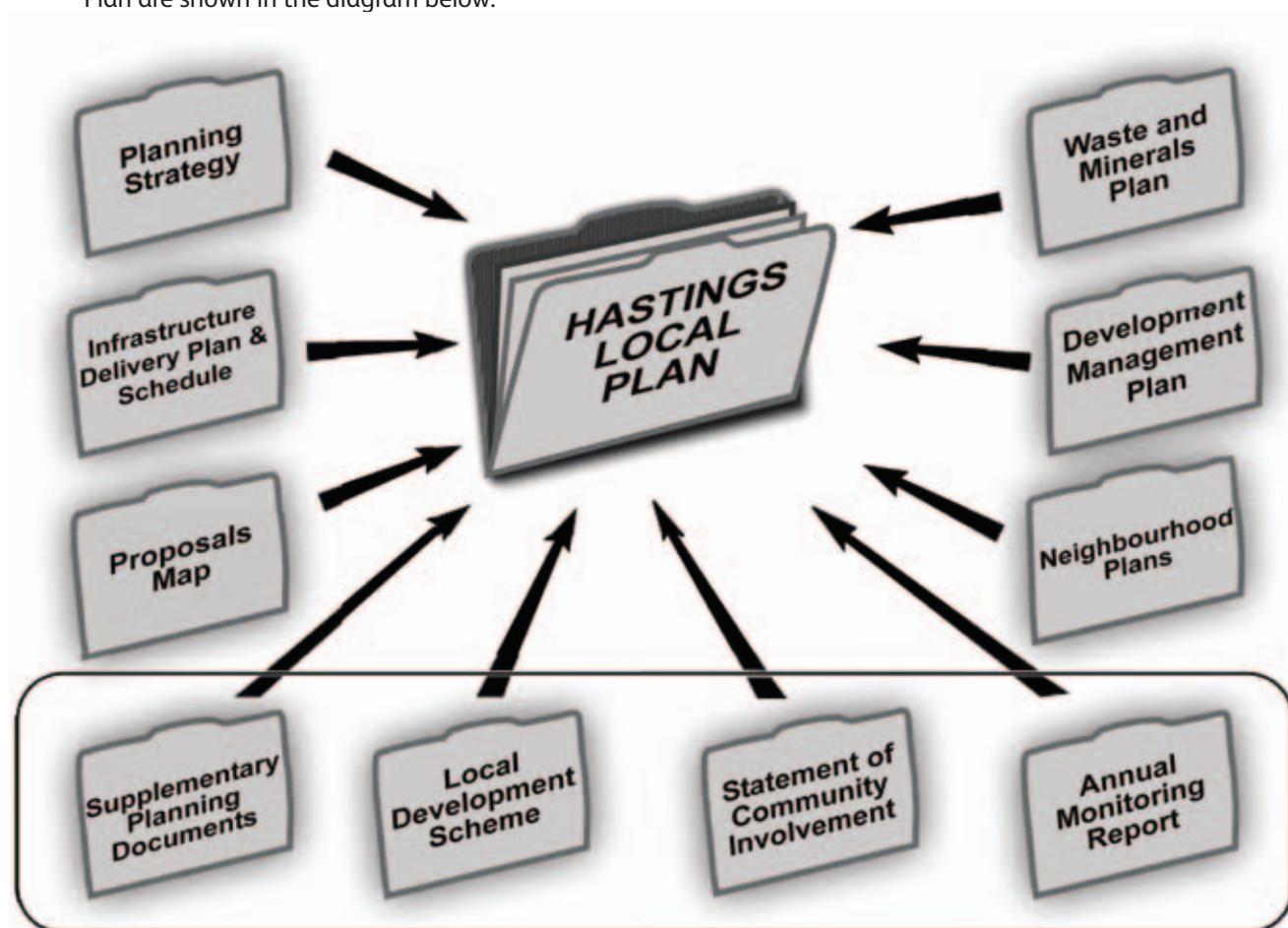


Figure 1: The documents which make up the Hastings Local Plan

- 1.3 **The Hastings Planning Strategy** - this is what you're reading now. It will inform the other plan documents as they're written over the next few years. More detail about developing the Hastings Planning Strategy is given below.
- 1.4 **The Hastings Development Management Plan** – this will identify proposed development sites to meet the vision identified in the Planning Strategy and will contain detailed policies for development management, against which planning applications will be assessed. Work began on this document in autumn 2011 with adoption due in December 2013.
- 1.5 **Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Schedule** – this provides supportive evidence of what physical, social, and environmental infrastructure is required to support delivery of the Planning Strategy.

- 1.6 **Neighbourhood Plans** – these provide the opportunity for local people to prepare detailed plans for their own local area.
- 1.7 **Supplementary Planning Documents** - These will provide greater detail on policies in the Local Plan.
- 1.8 **The Local Development Scheme, Statement of Community Involvement, Annual Monitoring Report and Proposals Map** are procedural elements undertaken as part of the planning process. More detail on these documents is available on our website at www.hastings.gov.uk/localplan/ldfexplained

Changes to the planning system

- 1.9 This Strategy was formerly known as the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. The National Planning Policy Framework¹, which was published in March 2012 aims to simplify the plan making system, and in the interests of keeping things simple, we have renamed the Core Strategy the Hastings Planning Strategy.
- 1.10 The Localism Act 2011 provides for the abolition of regional spatial strategies, including the South East Plan. Removing this regional tier of planning will, as a consequence, remove local authority housing targets determined through the South East Plan process. However, at this time, the South East Plan remains effective, and a statutory part of the ‘development plan’, with which the Planning Strategy should generally conform.
- 1.11 As part of the preparation of the Planning Strategy, the Council has undertaken further work with regard to a locally determined housing target. Therefore, while the evidence underpinning the preparation of the South East Plan provides the foundations, the Council has supplemented this through further examination of more recent information in order to determine the most appropriate level of future housing development.

Planning for waste and minerals

- 1.12 The management of waste and production of minerals are carried out in a manner that usually extends beyond the boundaries of a single District or Borough Council. It is important therefore that the need for such activity is considered in a wider geographical context and for this reason, planning for waste and minerals is carried out by East Sussex County Council. Local planning policy for this is contained in the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Waste Local Plan and the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Minerals Local Plan². Alongside this Hastings Local Plan, these plans form the development plan for the area and District and Borough councils therefore also need to take relevant policies in these plans into account when reaching decisions on planning applications. Planning applications for waste and minerals activity are considered by the County Council.

Further information about the Hastings Planning Strategy

- 1.13 This document; the Hastings Planning Strategy, provides a long-term plan to deliver regeneration and sustainable growth in the town over the next 15 years. In accordance with National Planning Policy, the Planning Strategy seeks to achieve this, following the approach of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The next document, the Hastings Development Management Plan is more specifically concerned with individual development sites and specific details. The purpose of the Planning Strategy is to set an overall framework for the future of the town and it:
- sets out the vision for the future sustainable development and regeneration of the town up to 2028.
 - identifies the key issues to be addressed through the planning system and sets out generally how we intend to deliver new housing, jobs and infrastructure and also contains policies for protecting our most important green spaces and historic townscapes.
 - sets out how we’ll accommodate future levels of housing growth.
 - sets guidelines for the pattern of land uses around the town.

¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicyframework/>

² The Waste Local Plan and Minerals Local Plan will be replaced by a Waste and Minerals Plan and subsequent site allocations documents in due course. For more information go to the ESCC website: <http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/planning/development/mineralsandwaste/default.htm>

Chapter 1: Introduction

- forms the context for other Local Plan documents that will be prepared in the future.
- clearly shows how planning policies and the use of land will support the key targets in the Hastings & St Leonards Sustainable Community Strategy 2009 - 2026.
- joins up planning and land issues with plans and proposals affecting health, equalities, community safety, housing, regeneration, community development, employment, education, transport and the environment set out in the Hastings & St Leonards Sustainable Community Strategy.

1.14 During the period up to 2028 the Hastings Planning Strategy will be reviewed to reflect progress in its delivery, and it is anticipated that this would be carried out in time to have a revised Strategy adopted by no later than the mid - point of the plan period (i.e.2023).

Writing the Hastings Planning Strategy

1.15 We have gone through three stages in producing the Planning Strategy. The first stage – “Issues and Options” was carried out at the end of 2006, when we presented an overview of the local issues, and suggested options for addressing them. We asked for comments, inviting further issues and options to be identified too.

1.16 The next stage “Preferred Approaches” took into consideration the comments we received as part of the ‘Issues and Options’ consultation, studies on issues such as flood risk and land for housing, and assessments of the environmental, economic and social impacts of the different issues and options that have been put forward.

1.17 In July and August 2011 we carried out a further round of informal consultation to gather views on a locally set housing target for the period up to 2028, as well as new policies and changes to policies since the previous consultation.

1.18 This is now the final version and will be submitted to the Government for approval in 2012. It takes on board comments received on the earlier draft versions of the Strategy. The shape and form of the Planning Strategy has inevitably evolved over time in response to our understanding of the key issues, and to points raised by those who responded to the earlier stages in its preparation. We have tried to make the document succinct and easy to understand; while sufficiently comprehensive to provide a clear explanation about the spatial planning approach the Council intends to follow.

Making your representations

1.19 This document is the result of a significant amount of research, assessment and consultation, and it represents the Council’s final view on what the Planning Strategy will contain.

How to respond

1.20 There are two ways that you can submit your formal representations:

1. Online (this is our preferred method of response).

Visit our website at www.hastings.gov.uk/localplan/consultations and follow the instructions.

2. Written response

Complete a response form and post (or deliver) it to:

Hastings Planning Strategy Consultation

Planning Policy Team

Hastings Borough Council

Aquila House

Breeds Place

East Sussex

TN34 3UY

1.21 Alternatively you can hand your completed response form to the counter staff at the Hastings Information Centre, Town Hall and they will forward it to us.

- 1.22 You can post comments on Facebook at www.facebook.com/shapinghastings or contact us through Twitter [No longer available], although these will not be taken forward as formal representations. We will make sure we will reply to any queries posted this way.
- 1.23 Additional copies of the document and response form can be downloaded from www.hastings.gov.uk/localplan/consultations
- 1.24 Representations must be received by 4pm on Friday 17 August 2012.

What happens next?

- 1.25 Your formal representations will be passed to an independent Inspector who will be conducting a public examination into the legal compliance and ‘soundness’ of the document. This is expected to be between February and March 2013. The Inspector will then issue a report with recommendations which will be considered by the Council. The Council intends to adopt the Planning Strategy in July 2013.
- 1.26 The Planning Inspectorate has produced a useful guide to the examination process – you can view it at <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/planningsystem/localplans>

Confused by the process?

- 1.27 We have done our best to keep jargon and technical terms to a minimum and we have included an explanation of some of the terms used in the glossary at the back of this document. If you would like further clarification please contact us on 01424 451098 and we will try to help.
- 1.28 You can find further information about the Hastings Planning Strategy by looking on our website at www.hastings.gov.uk/localplan/ldfexplained

Spreading the word

- 1.29 We have made every effort to inform local people, businesses and organisations about this consultation. It has been advertised through local newspapers, direct mail outs, leaflets and posters, however, we would be grateful if you could help spread the word too – if you know someone who is interested in these issues do encourage them to submit formal representations.

Chapter 2: About Hastings

- 2.1 Hastings is a community of some 88,000 people located between the sea and the High Weald behind it. Its issues and potential are distinctly urban rather than rural. Together with Bexhill there is an urban area with a population around 140,000. Its history is shaped partly by its relationship to the sea, but also by its distance (60 miles) from London and the physical constraints of geography. The town has 8 miles of coastline and is surrounded by the mainly rural district of Rother, bordered by the High Weald to the north, Combe Haven Valley to the west and Fairlight to the east.



Figure 2: map showing Hastings location in the South East

- 2.2 The Borough has developed from a small fishing port to a substantial town in several phases but two of them have particularly shaped its development:
- The creation of St Leonards by James Burton and the expansion of Hastings in the Victorian era led to the establishment of the towns as successful resorts, mainly for Londoners
 - The development of both new housing and employment through the town Development Area (TDA) scheme, which was initially promoted, with the Greater London Council, as a London overspill project in the 1970s and early 80s.
- 2.3 Although tourism no longer has the pre-eminent role it enjoyed up until the 1960s, it will continue to be an important part of the Hastings economy. Indeed current signs are that the traditional seaside tourism is in fact experiencing something of a revival in Hastings and the UK in general. However, following its decline in the 1960s, in an effort to broaden the economic base of the town, a significant manufacturing employment was established on new employment estates as part of the TDA developments but, with a new younger population introduced to Hastings with the accompanying housing developments, it was insufficient to fully make up for

the decline in tourism. Conditions were therefore set for the beginning of an extended spiral of decline – in common with many other seaside towns. Poor road and rail links meant that Hastings was too isolated from the commercial opportunities and markets of London for rapid recovery. Poor communication continues and, indeed, with transport improvements in other parts of the region, such as the High Speed One (HS1) rail link and trunk road improvements elsewhere, Hastings has continued to fall further behind in relative terms over the last two decades. Thus, local business is at a disadvantage and it is a disincentive to investment. Slow journey times also make it difficult for local people to commute to jobs elsewhere, not only to London, but also to other employment centres such as Crawley/Gatwick and Brighton. As a result, Hastings has become one of the most disadvantaged communities in the UK.

- 2.4 In 2004 the conditions were created to begin the town's revival. Following a decision by government not to support the creation of a Hastings by-pass the local councils and MPs persuaded government to invest substantially in the regeneration of Hastings and Bexhill. Around £200m has been invested to create a new University Centre, College and employment space through the Hastings & Bexhill Task Force. Simultaneously partners have taken dramatic action to improve education, reduce crime and begin to improve the private housing stock. A real effort has been applied to encourage and enforce improvement to the built and natural environment.
- 2.5 We have embraced the potential that culture has to raise aspiration locally and attract visitors from abroad and the UK. Our beach based fishing fleet has been joined by the new Jerwood Art Gallery and performance area. Local people are working hard to restore the Victorian Pier to new life with the help of Heritage Lottery funding.
- 2.6 Our Planning Strategy is aimed at developing a town which is economically and socially dynamic. This means creating sufficient opportunity for new homes, employment and retail activity. Without growth we cannot provide the context for addressing the needs of those currently excluded from the economic and social life of the town, or attract and retain a balanced population.
- 2.7 We reject the idea that environmental action is a barrier to growth, and consider the town's superb built environment and natural environment as a key factor in our continued revival. They are assets to be both enjoyed and used to attract new people and investment to our town.
- 2.8 Our ambition is a town which is:
- Prosperous
 - Inclusive and cohesive
 - "Green"
 - Interlinked to the wider economy
 - Skilled
 - Healthy
 - Diverse
- 2.9 This document balances these demands and is interwoven with the planning policies of the neighbouring Rother District Council reflecting our combined economic and functional linkages. It puts in place policies designed to attract and retain the people and investment we need for the future and the changes in population.
- 2.10 The economic downturn has slowed Hastings' ability to build upon regeneration investment. The Planning Strategy aims to put the right planning policies in place to enable Hastings to continue its regeneration as the economy grows; and to provide the framework for future economic, environmental and social action.

A changing population

- 2.11 Hastings population has tended to be younger than the rest of East Sussex and currently, we have an age group profile more similar to the national picture. Based on the housing growth proposed between 2011 and 2028, the population is forecast to grow by 1.6%. At the same time a growth in the number of households is expected from 39,800 in 2011 to 43,000 in 2028 (an increase of 8.1%). This is a reflection of changes in how

Chapter 2: About Hastings

we live, with more people living longer and more people living alone. Of concern, however, is the fact that the working age population is forecast to decline to 39,000 between 2011 and 2028, a decrease of 5.5 %.

- 2.12 As figure 3 shows, by 2028 there will be a greater proportion of older people, with particular growth in the post retirement age group (29.3 % in 2028, compared to 21.6 % in 2011). Although we need to plan now to provide the housing, health and social provision for older people, this does not mean simply accommodating projections, but requires a comprehensive strategy to make the area more attractive to younger people and people of working age.

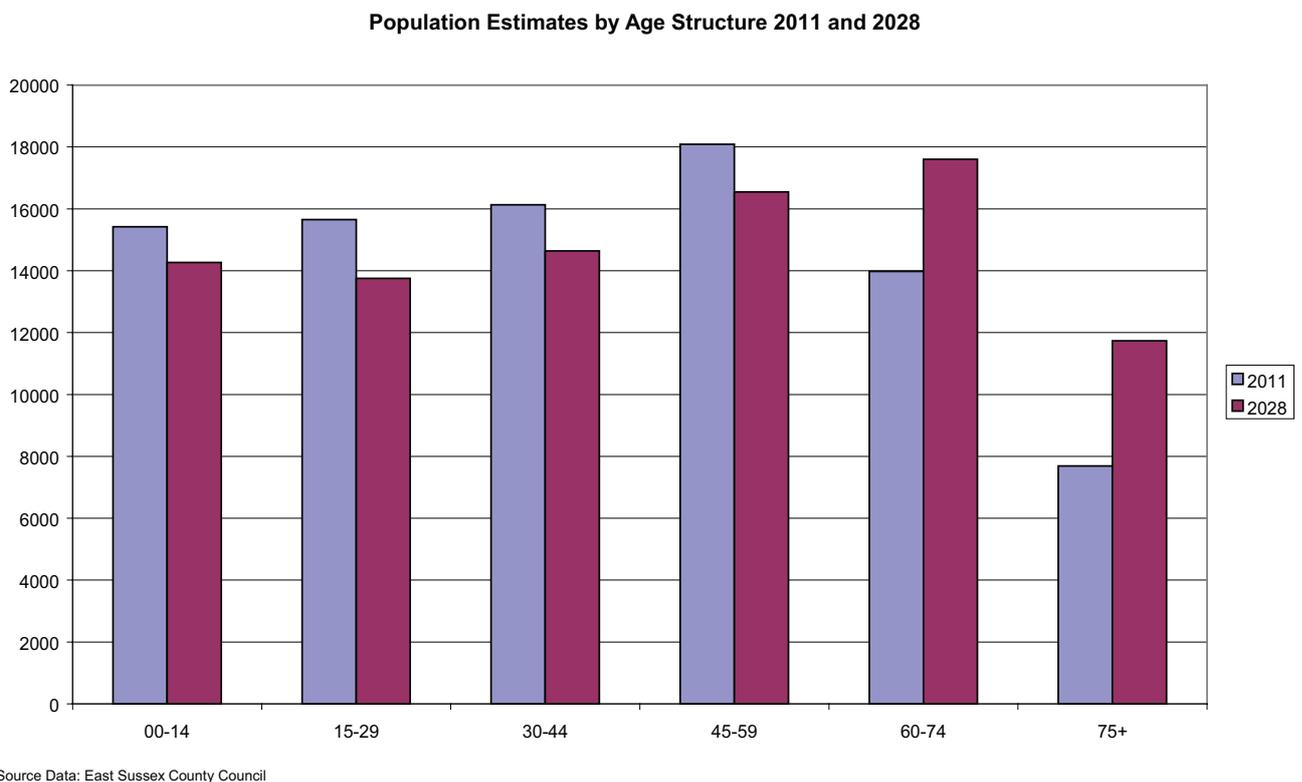


Figure 3: Population estimates by age structure 2011 and 2028

Deprivation

- 2.13 In common with a number of coastal areas in the UK, Hastings has suffered from several discouraging economic trends in the recent past, a vulnerable and low wage mainly service sector economy, unemployment issues and significant levels of deprivation. The town's economic revival is a long term process and although significant advances have been made Hastings is still one of the most deprived Local Authority areas in England (19th most deprived out of a total of 326). Deprivation is widespread and this is reflected in the fact that of the 53 Super Output Areas in Hastings, 15 of these neighbourhoods fall within the worst 10 % in England and a further 9 rank in the worst 20 % (Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2010). Furthermore, 12 of the town's 16 wards contain one or more of these neighbourhoods.
- 2.14 The Council as part of a multi-agency effort, will need to have a particular focus on addressing the causes of deprivation which result in low skills, poor educational attainment, ill health, poverty, lack of job opportunities, poor quality housing and high crime rates.

Achieving a step change in the economy

- 2.15 The Hastings economy is weak in south-east terms, and wages are correspondingly low. Hastings has an economically active rate of 74.9 %, well below the South East average, at 79.3 % (NOMIS Apr 2010 – Mar

2011). Analysis of 'job density' is important in terms of the potential to find work locally, compared to the South East, Hastings has a lower job density (0.62 and 0.80 respectively) – by implication there are therefore fewer jobs per person.

- 2.16 Our research has shown that we need to achieve a big improvement in the town's economy if we are to achieve regeneration benefits for everyone. We need to diversify the town's economic base and reduce its reliance on public sector jobs; support small businesses to set up and grow; get more people into work through skills training and education, and provide better paid jobs. As well as providing major new space in the town centre and elsewhere, our older employment areas need to be renovated and improved if they are to meet the needs of modern business requirements. This would help to encourage inward investment as well as sustaining the existing businesses in the town.
- 2.17 Hastings has been pursuing an ambitious, collaborative approach to economic and cultural renaissance. Since its formation in 2003, Sea Space and the wider Hastings & Bexhill Task Force has:
- constructed over 18,000m² of high quality business space in Hastings, including Lacuna Place and a Creative Media and Innovation Centre
 - facilitated over 7,000m² of education space for higher / further education use – Hastings is now a University town;
 - established Enviro21, a modern industrial park focused on the growth of environmental technology companies and advanced manufacturing, now known as the Queensway Employment Corridor;
 - created capacity for 1,700 new jobs, including the decision by SAGA in late 2010 to locate into Hastings' Priory Quarter, creating up to 800 additional private sector jobs.
- 2.18 These developments offer a real and lasting opportunity to promote the town as a thriving, high quality business location and a desirable place to live and enjoy quality recreation time. With the abolition of the regional development agency, SEEDA, Sea Space and the local mechanisms for taking regeneration forward are being recast but local partners are determined to continue and build on the progress achieved to date.

Housing – supply and demand

- 2.19 The supply of new housing and ultimately the number of new homes that are built in the town over the plan period will have an important role in the town's continuing revitalisation. There are some key features of the Hastings housing market which distinguish it from other parts of the south-east. These include comparatively low house prices; but declining affordability for local people, a bias to smaller dwellings; imbalanced immigration; a large private rented sector and high levels of deprivation. Left unchecked, some of these processes will continue to act as drivers of change making housing less affordable for local residents, and doing nothing to improve the prospects for economic development and regeneration. Instead, diversifying and renewing our housing stock through new development has an important role to play in fostering much needed economic regeneration and countering the processes that can lead to blighted neighbourhoods.
- 2.20 Both the quality and type of existing homes and future homes have a part to play in assisting regeneration efforts. The quality and mix of new homes within Hastings will be important to the local economy in terms of (i) existing businesses and their ability to attract employees; and (ii) new businesses setting up or locating in the town. The right type of housing could also help retain and attract skilled workers and their families to the town. A more skilled workforce should enhance the ability of Hastings to attract mobile business investment and thus contribute to economic development.
- 2.21 At the same time, access to a decent home for everyone is the foundation for a decent quality of life and a key priority for the Council and its partners. Increasing the availability, affordability and quality of housing for all sections of our community, and enabling residents to access homes that are affordable, accessible and appropriate for their needs and aspirations is a priority.
- 2.22 The need for affordable housing far exceeds supply. Throughout a decade of rising prices (1998-2008) and through the current economic downturn, average house prices in Hastings have consistently remained below the average for the South East – the gap being around £40,000. This is due to a range of factors including the mix of housing³. However, the affordability of housing is about the relationship between income and house

Chapter 2: About Hastings

prices. In Hastings, this ratio is on a par with many areas in the South East because of our low wage economy. The average “lower quartile” or cheapest 25 % of available market housing, is currently priced at 6-7 times the “lower quartile” or lowest 25 % average yearly income in Hastings⁴.

- 2.23 There is also a significant number of people who want a home but lack the finances to either buy or rent one without assistance, and so rely on private renting with top-up support from local housing allowance. Data on housing benefit recipients shows that 6,350 claimants in Hastings live in the private rented sector⁵. This indicates that the private rented sector is playing a significant role in meeting housing need in Hastings and that the number of households on the housing register would be higher if it were not for this supply of low-cost rented accommodation. However, we also know that there is a high proportion of this privately rented accommodation, often in multiple occupation, which is well below minimum acceptable standards. There are some 2,800 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) throughout the town⁶. Evidence shows that 64 % of all HMOs fail to meet the Government’s Decent Homes Standard. Many suffer from low standards of fire safety, management and maintenance, and in some cases, tenants are treated very poorly and the buildings are a focus for crime and anti social behaviour.
- 2.24 There is, therefore, a pressing need for more housing to help support the regeneration agenda in Hastings, and more choice of housing, especially affordable housing, to ensure that people have somewhere to live and somewhere that meets their needs.

Limited space for growth/development

- 2.25 There are limits to the amount of land available for development and regeneration purposes within the town and outward expansion is constrained by protected landscape and countryside such as the Hastings Country Park and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We are aiming to make the best use of previously developed land in the urban areas for both residential and employment development purposes. We also need to work closely with neighbouring Rother District Council. Hastings, together with most of the neighbouring district of Rother, functions as a labour market or “Travel to Work Area” (TTWA). TTWAs are defined as areas in which the bulk (at least 75 %) of the resident, economically active, population also work. Together, the Hastings and Rother area has one of the weakest economies in the south east and the future of Hastings will be increasingly related to what happens in neighbouring Bexhill. We are therefore working closely with neighbouring Rother District Council to make sure the communities of both Hastings and Bexhill benefit from the regeneration of the two towns.

Retail and Hastings Town Centre

- 2.26 Hastings town centre underwent a major planned improvement and expansion during the 1990s with construction of the Priory Meadow Shopping Centre and pedestrianisation of the main shopping streets. This enabled it to fulfil its natural role as a sub regional centre. Its catchment area takes in Hastings & St Leonards, parts of Bexhill and the more rural communities to the north and east of Hastings. Competing centres are Eastbourne, Tunbridge Wells and Ashford. It is important the vitality and viability of retail areas in Hastings, including Hastings town centre are safeguarded and enhanced. Failure to plan for future retail needs will mean that these competing centres will begin to absorb the share of the spending that Hastings currently attracts. This would lead to decline of the centre and maybe an inability for it to serve even the needs of Hastings residents.

³ Hastings & Rother Strategic Housing Market Assessment update 2009/10 www.hastings.gov.uk/localplan/evidencebase

⁴ As above, to measure housing market affordability in an area, the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings is used, ie. this ratio shows if people with the lowest income can afford the cheapest housing. A high ratio means that housing is less affordable.

⁵ Hastings & Rother Strategic Housing Market Assessment update 2009/10 www.hastings.gov.uk/localplan/evidencebase

⁶ 2007 Private sector house condition survey

Keeping the special character of the town

- 2.27 Our seaside location, wooded valleys, varied wildlife, attractive Victorian housing and surrounding countryside all contribute to the special character of Hastings. Our challenge is to conserve and enhance the best of this and at the same time enable high quality development to meet future needs.

Dealing with climate change

- 2.28 As a coastal town, we need to plan ahead to deal with the potential impacts of climate change - the risks from flooding now and in the future, the need to reduce carbon emissions through the better design of buildings and reuse of building materials, and the encouragement of development to incorporate on-site renewable energy generation. We also need to support the role of our greenspaces in helping to deal with flooding and providing shade and cooler environments to help cope with global warming.

Low land values

- 2.29 Land values in Hastings are generally lower than surrounding areas and the rest of the South East. This can affect the economic viability of development and in turn, development contributions to affordable housing, transport and community infrastructure. We need to get the balance and flexibility right in terms of securing benefits for the community and promoting the development necessary for the town's regeneration so that it is still economically viable to develop sites and provide the infrastructure to meet community needs arising from such new development.

Accessibility and transport

- 2.30 In terms of the national road network, the primary access is the A21 from London and the A259 which runs along the coast. Rail services run along the coast to Brighton in the west and Ashford to the east. There is a choice of service routes into London. London Charing Cross/Cannon Street is the most direct but there are also services to Victoria and, now, with High Speed One, St Pancras via Ashford is a practical option. However, although the choice of rail routes is good, journey times are slow. For example, the fastest route to London (Charing Cross), only 60 miles away, takes over 90 minutes and is even slower during peak times. Road journeys are similarly slow and it is possible to drive from London to Bath in the time it takes to get to Hastings.
- 2.31 The local business community consistently point to the need for improvements to the A21 and A259, and the rail links to London and Ashford as being vital to making Hastings a more attractive place for businesses to locate in and to operate from.
- 2.32 There have been some improvements to rail services in recent years - in terms of rolling stock and station improvements. However, apart from some expected line speed improvements between Hastings and Ashford, nothing major is currently anticipated that will shorten journey times on the other routes. Nor is there to be a step change in the speed of road connections although some significant improvements are being sought: On the A21, the Tonbridge to Pembury improvement will deal with the biggest cause of journey unreliability between Hastings and London/M25.
- 2.33 In March 2012, the Government confirmed that provisional funding had been approved for the Bexhill Hastings Link Road. Construction is expected to commence early 2013. This will provide an alternative link between the two towns relieving the most congested road on the local network. More importantly, the Link Road will open up land for housing and major employment development in North East Bexhill and is seen as the key infrastructure investment needed to continue economic revival in the two towns.
- 2.34 Decisions about trunk road investment and rail improvements are taken at national and regional levels, and so the Council's role is to lobby for improvements rather than deliver them directly. East Sussex County Council, as the local transport authority, will be responsible for construction of the Link Road but, again, it is substantially reliant on central government and local public funding.

Chapter 2: About Hastings

- 2.35 For local travel within the town, policies are directed towards encouraging greater use by bus, rail, cycling and walking. The rail network offers a good option for some local journeys, particularly between Hastings and Bexhill. For the majority of local journeys though, bus is the main mode of public transport. For some years, efforts to increase the use of buses have been pursued jointly by Hastings Borough Council, East Sussex County Council and the bus company through the Quality Bus Partnership. It has proved successful with a significant growth in bus passenger numbers over several years.
- 2.36 Cycling is promoted through the introduction of safe cycle routes. The seafront route between Hastings and Bexhill is now complete and plans to extend it with links inland will be brought forward through the Local Plan.

Making more of our seaside location

- 2.37 The Seafront is a key component of the identity of the town, and the challenge here is to maximise its potential. Major economic activity now and in the future will enhance the quality of life of local residents, improve the attractiveness of the town to tourists and visitors and support new business investment.
- 2.38 The Seafront provides a great opportunity to forge and strengthen the cultural experiences on offer; whether it's through outdoor festivals, cafés and pubs, or galleries and museums. The Jerwood Gallery and its associated facilities are an example of how regeneration can be well combined with new cultural offerings and make the most of a seafront location.
- 2.39 In common with many coastal towns, the decline of the tourism industry resulted in many of the 'grand' Regency and Victorian seaside properties being converted into flats and Houses In Multiple Occupation in the 1960s and 70s. The tourism strategy is now based around attracting more staying visitors back to the town and encouraging the retention and development of good quality tourism accommodation combined with an active programme of arts and cultural events and festivals.

A Shared Approach to Future Prosperity

Why do we have a shared approach?

- 2.40 Hastings Borough Council and Rother District Council recognise the close inter-relationship between Hastings and Bexhill.
- 2.41 This is not only a reflection of their physical proximity (being virtually co-joined with their centres some 5 miles apart), but they are economically inter-dependent. Hastings is the centre of the "travel to work area" for much of Rother District. Some 10,000 people commute across the Hastings/Rother boundary each day, a half of which are between Hastings and Bexhill. Between them, the two towns serve a much wider area and both have important roles as centres for education, employment and housing.
- 2.42 This level of connectivity inevitably means that, to a large extent, the towns face similar (though not identical) issues and that their futures are intertwined. Added to this, there is a shared interest in the urban fringes, particularly in the area between the towns where a countryside park is being promoted by both Councils.
- 2.43 Both towns are reliant on the same road and rail infrastructure, neither of which is currently serving the area well, especially in terms of helping economic investment.
- 2.44 It is therefore important that the strategies for development and change for Hastings and Bexhill need to be consistent, and complimentary, to be fully effective. As such, a common approach has been agreed as the basis for joint working, to secure a more prosperous future for Hastings and Bexhill. This focuses on shared issues of regeneration, accessibility, and use of land on the urban fringes, especially where a countryside park between the two towns is being jointly progressed.

The Bexhill - Hastings Link Road

- 2.45 The Bexhill - Hastings Link Road, as shown on the key diagram, is proposed to enter Hastings north of the Crowhurst Road junction with Queensway. The Link Road is a key priority for both Hastings and Rother Councils, and is central to improving transport conditions in Bexhill/Hastings and supporting the £300m of economic regeneration funding that has already been invested in education, business and residential infrastructure projects in the two towns. Delivery of the scheme will facilitate further economic regeneration as well as enable large scale housing and employment development in the Bexhill/Hastings area. This will help to address the issues of lower than average household income, high levels of unemployment compared to the rest of the region, as well as deprivation issues in Hastings specifically.
- 2.46 The Link Road will contribute to relieving congestion along the A259, allowing businesses to operate more efficiently and improving the health and quality of life of people living in the vicinity of the A259. The complementary works of developing the Combe Valley Countryside Park, implementing cycle routes and a 'greenway', a quality bus corridor along the A259 between Glyne Gap and Filsham Road, and localised improvements to the Harrow Lane and Queensway junctions on The Ridge, will enhance the positive impacts of the scheme and improve access for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.
- 2.47 The A21 Baldslow Improvement scheme, which focused on addressing the issues of access between Queensway and the A21 particularly along The Ridge, was cancelled following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in October 2010. As part of this decision, it was highlighted that the scheme was unlikely to come forward in this CSR period or the next (i.e. not before 2019). Despite the scheme's cancellation, the improvement of Baldslow junctions is still seen as having major potential to continue the delivery of housing and economic regeneration in Hastings and we will continue to work with East Sussex County Council, and through the Local Enterprise Partnership to seek improvements and, if necessary, lobby the Government for support.
- 2.48 These major transport improvements would reduce the peripherality of Hastings, improve journey time reliability for businesses through to Kent, the M25 and beyond, as well as support inward investment and business expansion.
- 2.49 The joint statement of intent is set out below:

Hastings and Rother Councils' shared approach to future prosperity for the Hastings and Bexhill area

Economic regeneration and growth will be generated through joined up working concentrating on:

- Increasing economic activity and investment, supported by the development of high quality education opportunities and integrated skills training;
- Securing investment in and otherwise assisting areas of socio-economic need, with particular regard to increasing employment opportunities;
- Ensuring a range of housing supply across Hastings and Bexhill to support sustainable growth, including for economically active people and families;
- Developing the economy, healthy lifestyles, the role of culture, sports, arts, tourism and leisure;
- Increasing transport infrastructure capacity, through the Hastings and Bexhill Local Transport Strategy, prepared in association with East Sussex County Council, notably by early construction of the Bexhill Hastings Link Road, improved access to the A21 at Baldslow and a new station at Glyne Gap, as well as measures to foster more sustainable travel patterns; and
- Implementing the Combe Valley Countryside Park, together with other cross-boundary urban fringe development/management schemes

The Vision for Hastings

2.50 The overall Planning Strategy vision is:

“By 2028 Hastings, founded upon our unique heritage, natural environment and seaside location, and supported by social, economic, cultural and environmental regeneration will be a safe and thriving place to live, work and visit, that offers a high quality of life, and has a strong economy and sustainable future.”

2.51 We have also written a statement to describe what the different areas of Hastings might be like in 2028, when the vision has been fulfilled. This is based on what people have said in our consultations and on the strategic objectives we’ve drafted to achieve the vision.

2.52 Remember this is a vision. It will evolve as the town changes. We have to be realistic and recognise that it is impossible to precisely predict and shape the future.

Vision Statement: Take a trip to Hastings in 2028:

2.53 As soon as you arrive at Hastings Station you feel a sense of civic pride and welcome unmatched elsewhere in the South East. The streets and squares around you are safe, clean, and attractive and filled with people. Even though the waiting buses and taxis are ready to drive you to your destination, you simply want to walk and experience the vitality and energy of this vibrant town on foot.

2.54 Your first sight is University Centre Hastings and Sussex Coast College buzzing with healthy, bright students, keen to learn and secure future work in a wide range of creative, cultural and environmental industries that have developed in our town over the past decade. Look closer and you’ll find there are students of all ages, not just the young. Adult learning is now an accepted part of the culture of Hastings, and the education sector continues to grow.

2.55 Your next sight is the new town centre drop-in health Clinic, a thriving family health centre focussed on healthy living and well-being. Town centre workers and visitors, as well as residents can access health treatment promptly and easily and most arrive on foot or by bike. With the vast improvements in leisure facilities, cycleways and quality open space, the overall health of Hastings’ citizens has improved.

2.56 Once into the town centre you are surprised by the intensity and diversity of quality housing, shops, offices, cafes, bars and restaurants, and a newly refurbished library. These are set out in a range of distinct commercial quarters that contribute to the evening economy and a thriving nightlife, particularly attractive to the growing student population.

2.57 Walking left takes you into the refurbished and expanded Priory Meadow shopping centre with good links in to surrounding streets and neighbourhoods newly alive with specialist shops and services. Right takes you into vibrant Priory Quarter and Trinity Triangle buzzing with cafes, restaurants and lively new leisure facilities. And straight ahead takes you to one of the best seafronts in Britain, leading you on to the well utilised mixed commercial centres in the Old Town and Central St Leonards. By mixing different commercial uses and providing opportunities for urban living, each of these areas has experienced greater numbers of visitors and improved crime figures.

2.58 The revitalised seafront provides fun, cultural, health and leisure activities for all ages, which contribute to the town’s year round visitor economy: toddlers playing pools, adventure playgrounds, beach volley ball, go karting, multi-use games area, new beach huts, art and maritime museums, a wide variety of beachfront stalls, bars and cafes – and all set in a well lit, beautiful landscape filled with stunning public art and art activities.

2.59 The Seafront has retained its distinctive character, and remains an attractive location for hotels and guesthouses to locate. Significant landmarks are easily accessible along the Seafront, from West Marina to

the east, along to St Mary in the Castle and the Jerwood Gallery in the west. The Pier is now also fully restored and funding for the remaining improvements is secured. Cycle routes between Hastings and Bexhill are also complete, providing easy access between the two towns.

- 2.60 Which way to walk along the seafront? East to take in the jewel of Hastings' maritime heritage in Hastings Old Town, and indulge in world class gallery visits at The Jerwood and delicious fish dishes, or west to the classic architecture of Burton St Leonards and the wild beauty of Bulverhythe beach and West St Leonards beyond. Traffic along the A259 is well managed and is safe for pedestrians and cyclists enjoying the national cycleway route. Seafront properties are also well maintained by owners who are keen to contribute to the overall quality of the town's built environment.
- 2.61 At each end of the Seafront, the stunning Country parks are even more attractive and accessible to visitors and residents than ever before. The town has a unique setting on the edge of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and our policies for greenspace enhancement and protection have ensured that Hastings as a whole has avoided urban sprawl and, despite growth, still remains a compact, sustainable community that has impacted lightly on its surroundings. The character of the gill valleys that extend into the town provide green lungs for wildlife and recreation, extending links into the surrounding countryside, contributing to an extensive and functional Green Infrastructure Network. Most new development has been on brownfield and urban infill sites and all new schemes are sustainably designed to be zero carbon, energy and water efficient and enhance biodiversity.
- 2.62 Transport improvements have meant that wherever people live, they have easy access to a wide range of employment opportunities – from large scale employers on new sites and business parks off Queensway, to micro businesses in supported town centre and neighbourhood business communities throughout Hastings. Business diversity is paramount, so as well as large scale offices, we have ensured an increase in small scale incubation space and revitalisation of run down industrial estates. Peak hour traffic congestion is minimal now that businesses, schools and public sector agencies have adopted green travel plans. We have the smallest ecological footprint of all towns on the south coast and the town centre area now benefits from a state of the art district heating system catering for the needs of businesses, residents and the college and university.
- 2.63 Over 3,000 homes have been built in the town since 2011, empty homes have been bought back into use and existing buildings have been improved inside and out. This has provided a mix of styles, design, sizes and affordability to meet the differing needs of residents. Many more people are now in quality housing that they could not access before. New homes are built to high sustainability standards that are fully adaptive to the effects of climate change and are closely linked in with the green infrastructure network. This network enables wildlife migration, cools the urban environment and provides accessible opportunities for walking, cycling and recreation for local communities. Green roofs, grey water recycling and sustainable urban drainage systems are now standard features of all new developments.
- 2.64 Hastings is a well known focal point of the South Coast, recognised by most in the South East, and further out. People are proud to live in the town and identify with their own local communities. The town's population has increased with many skilled professionals and their families coming in the past 10 years, attracted by quality housing, a wide range of career choices and the promise of a high quality of life by the sea. Many people work from home taking advantage of modern flexible fibre optic and other information and communications technology; others use improved links to London, Ashford and Brighton to reach their workplaces.
- 2.65 Hastings remains a popular tourist and cultural destination, and hosts many festivals that bring the whole town together, as well as attracting visitors from all over the South East. Hastings has always been famous for its culture and history and is now planning for the major celebrations in 2066, which will attract international interest.

Chapter 3: Strategic Objectives

Objective 1:

Achieve and sustain a thriving economy

This will be achieved through:

- 1a) working with Rother District Council to ensure regeneration in the Hastings/Bexhill area is beneficial to the economy, environment and communities of both towns.
- 1b) providing for 20,500m² of retail floorspace in the town centre by 2028
- 1c) continuing to support and develop the education sector in the town
- 1d) increasing the supply and range of job opportunities in accessible locations across the town, as part of achieving a more sustainable pattern of development and activity
- 1e) promoting state of the art telecommunications infrastructure to enable flexible working and to attract investors
- 1f) reducing the levels of out-commuting by providing more jobs in the town
- 1g) in collaboration with the business community, retaining employment land and premises throughout the town, together with new educational, research and higher educational facilities, which contribute to the functioning and growth of the local economy
- 1h) supporting economic development and regeneration with particular emphasis on developing the key economic growth sectors which include hi-tech, knowledge-based and creative industries, manufacturing and the growing finance/insurance sector
- 1i) allocating and protecting appropriate land for business uses in locations such as the employment areas at Castleham, Churchfields, West Ridge, Ivyhouse Lane, Ponswood and the Queensway Employment Corridor at Queensway
- 1j) encouraging the redevelopment of older employment areas to meet modern requirements in terms of space, size and service provision and to provide for physical investment and improvement.
- 1k) ensuring that the jobs created are accessible to the maximum number of the town's residents through transport, education and skills training, particularly within the most deprived areas such as Central St Leonards, Hollington and the Ore Valley
- 1l) developing Hastings & St Leonards town centres as the focus for employment in the office, retail, leisure, cultural and service sectors, with Hastings town centre being the primary focus
- 1m) recognising the importance of a healthy, properly functioning natural environment as a foundation for sustained economic growth, as well as prospering communities and personal wellbeing. A good quality natural environment creates opportunities for recreation and leisure and is attractive to people and business investment alike.

Objective 2:

Ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community in which they want to live

This will be achieved through:

- 2a) providing for at least 3,400 net new dwellings between 2011 – 2028
- 2b) prioritising new housing on previously developed land to assist regeneration where possible
- 2c) ensuring an appropriate mix of housing is provided in terms of tenure, price, type, size and location, having regard to the accommodation needs of the town
- 2d) making decent housing accessible to more people by increasing the provision of affordable housing, having regard to issues such as fuel poverty and improving/regulating the quality of existing accommodation in the town and bringing vacant dwellings back into use
- 2e) providing more opportunities for people to live in Hastings town centre through identifying opportunities for mixed use schemes and making best use of space above shops, and widening the range of housing available in Central St Leonards, particularly through the provision of good quality affordable housing.

Objective 3:

Safeguard and improve the town's environment

This will be achieved by

- 3a) protecting, enhancing and improving the quality of the town's biodiversity, and in particular, its sites of international, national, regional and local nature conservation importance through better habitat management
- 3b) conserving and managing the historic environment for future generations
- 3c) identifying, protecting and improving a strategic green infrastructure network of green spaces, cycle and pedestrian routes, water and other environmental features, recognising the unique character of its functions
- 3d) providing open spaces, recreation facilities and streets that are well designed, safe and accessible that satisfy the recreational, health and amenity requirements of the population and visitors
- 3e) recognising the unique place that the historic environment holds in the town's cultural and maritime heritage and the multiple ways in which it supports and contributes to the economy, society and daily life
- 3f) minimising and reducing the environmental impacts of development, including water, noise, light and air pollution
- 3g) ensuring that all development is designed to a high quality, creating buildings and a sense of identity, place and neighbourhood that enhances local character and distinctiveness
- 3h) ensuring new development only occurs where there is adequate capacity in existing services, facilities and infrastructure or where this capacity can be reasonably provided.
- 3i) ensuring developments contribute to the national objective of no net loss of biodiversity by requiring developers to show how their proposals will contribute positively to the natural environment and avoid harm to biodiversity, adequately mitigate for unavoidable damage, or as a last resort compensate for unavoidable damage.

Chapter 3: Strategic Objectives

Objective 4:

Addressing the impacts of climate change

This will be achieved by:

- 4a) ensuring that development is located and designed so as to minimise susceptibility to the impacts of climate change, resource demand and the risk of flooding
- 4b) identifying opportunities for renewable energy and combined heat and power schemes
- 4c) recognising the potential of green infrastructure to help combat the harmful effects of climate change
- 4d) requiring all development to be designed to include appropriate climate change mitigation and adaptation measures such as green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems, multi-functional green space, biodiversity enhancement and protection, waste reduction and recycling facilities and flood risk management
- 4e) requiring developers to demonstrate how energy efficiency and carbon dioxide reduction is being achieved through their development proposals

Objective 5:

Supporting sustainable communities

This will be achieved by:

- 5a) working with partners to improve the quality of life in the town - particularly in most deprived neighbourhoods
- 5b) supporting the hierarchy, vitality and viability of the Town, District and Local centres, with an emphasis on maintaining access to local shops and services
- 5c) providing an adequate and accessible network of health facilities to improve health, emotional wellbeing and life expectancy
- 5d) co-locating services and community facilities to maximise access and efficiencies
- 5e) enabling an increased take-up of sports, leisure and cultural activities by residents and visitors through the provision of accessible and affordable facilities and programmes
- 5f) ensuring developers provide or contribute to the infrastructure needs arising from new development e.g. access, education, open space, play areas
- 5g) reducing crime and the fear of crime through a design led approach
- 5h) promoting access to a healthy natural environment that contributes positively to our physical and mental health and education

Objective 6: Provision of an efficient and effective transport system

This will be achieved by:

- 6a) working at a local, county and national level to secure improvements in strategic transport infrastructure such as the Bexhill Hastings Link Road and improvements to the A21 and A259 roads
- 6b) working at a local, county and national level to secure improvements to rail and regional services to the town.
- 6c) working with East Sussex County Council and Rother District Council to deliver the Local Transport Plan 3 and measures for the Hastings and Bexhill priority area
- 6d) working with transport providers and the Quality Bus Partnership to improve local bus services, including through the creation of bus priority lanes
- 6e) supporting development which reduces the need to travel, especially by car
- 6f) providing and improving a network of safe, good quality walking and cycling routes and ensuring provision of appropriate facilities for sustainable transport users.

Objective 7: Making best use of the Seafront and promoting tourism

This will be achieved by:

- 7a) ensuring the seafront has a range of day long and year round activities and facilities that attract residents, workers and visitors
- 7b) supporting the growth and development of the tourism industry in Hastings by retaining and encouraging day visitors and attracting high spending staying visitors, maximising the value of visitor spend, and spreading tourist activity throughout the year.
- 7c) resisting the loss of seafront visitor accommodation to other uses, and encouraging the provision of new visitor accommodation
- 7d) working with local communities to secure a sustainable future for Hastings Pier, the redundant White Rock Baths, and other key landmark sites along the Seafront such as St Mary in the Castle and West Marina
- 7e) encouraging artists and related tourists and visitors through increasing opportunities for vibrant art and craft studios, markets, chalets and retail
- 7f) helping to promote water based leisure, including the coastal based sports clubs