

Agenda Item No:

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 5th March 2012

Report Title: Hastings Local Plan - Proposed Submission Planning Strategy

Report By: Tim Cookson
Borough Planning Officer

Purpose of Report

To present the Proposed Submission version of the Planning Strategy for consideration by the Cabinet. The Cabinet is asked to recommend to the Council that the Strategy be approved to enable it to be published for formal representations prior to submission to the Secretary of State.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. The Cabinet recommends to Council that the Submission Draft of the Hastings Planning Strategy as appended to this report be approved subject to the following: - The Director of Regeneration, Homes and Communities or his nominee, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, be delegated authority to make final alterations to the Submission Draft.**
- 2. The Cabinet accepts the Sustainability Appraisal as appended and agrees the recommended actions in response to its recommendations as set out in Appendix C.**
- 3. The Submission Draft of the Planning Strategy, together with supporting background documents including the Sustainability Assessment, be published in accordance with Regulation 27 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations, for a period of 12 weeks, to allow individuals to make representations on its content.**

Reasons for Recommendations

To proceed with the formal preparation process of the Planning Strategy in accordance with agreed timescales.

Introduction

1. This report is an important step in the process of preparing the proposed Planning Strategy. The Planning Strategy, formerly called the Core Strategy, is the central document within the Council's emerging Local Plan (previously called the Local Development Framework). The Planning Strategy identifies the overall spatial vision and broad development strategy for the town up to 2028, and contains core policies on strategic issues. It also provides the policy framework for proposals in the Development Management Plan which is currently undergoing its first round of consultation.
2. After consideration by Cabinet, this report will be referred to an extraordinary Full Council on 21st March. It is intended that, following Council elections and the associated "purdah" period, the Planning Strategy will be published for formal representations and submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

The Process

What has happened so far?

3. The Planning Strategy has already been through several stages of public consultation and preparation including:
 - Early Engagement and Issues and Options (October - December 2006)
 - Preferred Approaches (May - July 2008)
 - Informal Consultation on Significant Changes (June - August 2011)
4. The proposed submission version of the Planning Strategy (reproduced at Appendix A) brings the results of these consultations together and takes account of them in one document.
5. The final version will also need to reflect the requirements of national planning policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is currently in draft form, however a final version is likely to be released before the Planning Strategy is published. If this happens, further amendments to it may be required. Recommendation 1 makes provision for this as well as other final minor general adjustments and updating.

What happens next?

6. Following the Cabinet and Full Council's consideration of the Proposed Submission Planning Strategy, it must be published for a minimum 6 week statutory period of public participation, where formal representations relating only to the "tests of soundness" can be made i.e. the Plan must be justified, effective and consistent with national guidance. These arrangements are prescribed by Regulation 27 of the Town and Country (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004 (as amended).

7. To accord with the Compact for East Sussex, this period of consultation will run for an extended period of 12 weeks, with a 6-week lead in consultation period followed by a further 6 weeks when formal representations can be made.
8. After the formal consultation period, the Council is required to submit the Planning Strategy, together with all duly made representations and a summary of the issues raised, along with the Sustainability Appraisal and other supporting documents, including the Consultation Statement, to the Secretary of State for independent examination. This is expected to take place in October of this year. The Examination in Public is likely to commence in February 2013, with adoption of the Planning Strategy around July 2013.

Sustainability Appraisal Report

9. A final Sustainability Appraisal Report, incorporating the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment, is required to be published alongside the Planning Strategy. This is reproduced as Appendix B. The Appraisal makes a number of recommendations and Appendix C sets out actions that the Cabinet is recommended to agree in response to them. Some of the actions involve amendments to the appraised version of the Planning Strategy and, where that is so, they have been incorporated within the draft presented to the Cabinet (at Appendix A).

The Bexhill-Hastings Link Road

10. It is important to note that the Government's decision on the Link Road could make it necessary to amend the Planning Strategy. If this happens, it could affect the current timetable for publication. A delay in the decision could also affect progress with the Planning Strategy.

The Proposed Submission Planning Strategy - The Details

11. The Planning Strategy is set out in 4 parts. The key elements of each part are described in the following paragraphs. It is important to note however, that the focus of the Examination in Public is likely to centre on the following:
 - That the Planning Strategy has been written on the basis that the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road will be implemented within the Planning Strategy period.
 - Our ability to meet the broad scale of housing, employment and retail development.
 - Whether the document has been prepared in accordance with the legislative requirements but also whether it is 'sound'. Guidance states that for a Strategy to be found sound it must be justified, effective and consistent with national guidance.

Part 1 - Introductory chapters

12. The Vision, Vision Statement and Strategic Objectives have been developed since the start of the plan making process, and have been refined after each stage of consultation. The Vision is aligned with that of the Hastings and St Leonards Sustainable Community Strategy. The Vision Statement has been developed in

consultation with community groups and was commended by the Design Council in a training day during the autumn.

13. This section also sets out a Shared Approach between Hastings and Rother Councils, agreed with officers at Rother.
14. We have worked closely with other Council departments to develop the Strategic Objectives and ensure the commentary about the future of Hastings fully reflects the Council's position and aims for the future.

Part 2 - The Development Strategy

15. The Development Strategy sets out how much development is going to take place in Hastings up to 2028. This is based on our own research and evidence gathering which has been undertaken in accordance with Government guidance. It looks specifically at housing, employment and retail development, and specifies the following:
 - 3,400 new homes up to 2028
 - 70,000sqm of employment floorspace up to 2028
 - 20,500sqm of retail floorspace between 2014 and 2028
16. The level of new housing development is based on a local target, developed in response to the revocation of the South East Plan (SEP). Public consultation on a locally determined figure, took place in summer 2011.
17. The requirements for both employment and retail floorspace have also been reduced in light of the most recent evidence, since the publication of Preferred Approaches in 2008. It should be noted that these respective targets for housing, employment and retail, are ambitious, and necessarily appear challenging in the current national and even global economic downturn. They have however, been set at a level which reflect the town's regeneration agenda and the desire to build on the economic regeneration that has already taken place.

Part 3 - Spatial Strategy

18. The most recent Informal Consultation in the summer of 2011 introduced 13 Planning Focus Areas, in response to the provisions set out in the Localism Act that related to the production of Neighbourhood Plans. To accord with these new focus area boundaries, it has been necessary to move away from the 4 Area-Coordination Areas previously set out in the Preferred Approaches, and instead, distribute development over 3 new Spatial Areas (each comprising several Planning Focus Areas), and identify the Seafront as an area of change.
19. A strategic policy is proposed for each of these areas, which brings together both the policy requirements and consultation responses so far to give a spatial dimension to the Planning Strategy. Additional policies are also provided for both Hastings Town Centre and Central St Leonards, as these are identified priority areas that are essential in delivering the overall regeneration strategy for the town.
20. In summary, indicative levels of development for the 3 spatial areas are:

- Western Area - between 1080 and 1270 new homes and 36,700sqm of employment floorspace up to 2028.
- Central Area - between 1240 and 1500 homes and 21,700sqm of employment floorspace up to 2028. 20,500sqm of comparison goods floorspace should also be provided in Hastings Town Centre
- Eastern Area - between 730 - 910 new homes and 11,400sqm of employment floorspace up to 2028.

21. The strategic area policies also refer to town-wide proposals and issues that are appropriate for that area. These include criteria relating to flood risk, renewable energy opportunities, the green infrastructure network including cycle routes, retention of shopping areas, and other issues relevant to each part of the town.

Part 4 - Theme based policies

22. This section sets out theme based, strategic policies that are relevant across the whole town.

23. Part 4 is split into the following subject areas:

- Sustainable Communities
- Protecting the Environment
- Housing
- The Local Economy
- Community Infrastructure

24. Sustainable Communities - This chapter includes policies on managing change, promoting sustainable design and low carbon development, renewable energy and flood risk. It sets out the preferred approach for developers in considering zero carbon and 'green' design in their developments, in accordance with our own evidence base and the most recent government guidance.

25. Protecting the Environment - This chapter includes policies on the built and historic environment, and the natural environment. It introduces a Green Infrastructure Network for the town to ensure connectivity and provision of spaces are considered across the town as a whole, and also provides for the most appropriate levels of protection for the town's protected green spaces.

26. Housing - The housing policies will ensure that we avoid over concentration of particular tenures in development, and sets minimum density targets for the most accessible parts of the town. In terms of requirements for affordable housing (AH) provision, the proposed policy operates on a sliding scale approach, requiring increasing amounts of AH provision according to the scale of development. It is based on research and viability testing. The policy distinguishes between brownfield and greenfield developments, and requires on-site provision or a financial contribution of equivalent value in very small scale schemes. A policy to avoid over-concentration of Houses in Multiple Occupation has also been developed, and a criterion based policy to be used in the assessment of applications for gypsies and travellers' accommodation.

27. The Local Economy - This chapter sets out how we will ensure the most effective use of employment land and premises, based largely on policies developed and agreed at earlier stages of the process. It seeks to build on the need to improve skills and educational attainment locally, by providing further support for education premises and the encouragement of large employment generating development to promote access to jobs.
28. This chapter also confirms our approach to the management of retail centres, and our approach to tourism up to 2028, in recognition of its role in the local economy. It includes a policy on visitor attractions and accommodation.
29. Community Infrastructure - provides a framework for infrastructure planning in the future, through both Section 106 contributions and the potential Community Infrastructure Levy. It also includes policies on sports and leisure and children's play, which proposes a move away from providing formal areas for play and instead, providing informal open spaces as part of new development.
30. Transport - sets out the Council's commitment to strategic road and rail schemes, including the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road and other local road improvements. A policy on sustainable transport is also introduced, based on the provisions in the County's Local Transport Plan 3 for Hastings, as well as a commitment to a strategic cycle network linking key areas of the town.

Parts 5, 6 & 7

31. The key diagram (part 5), the monitoring and implementation chapter (part 6) and appendices which will include the housing trajectory (part 7) are included in the document.

Supporting documents

32. There are several documents supporting the Planning Strategy that will be published alongside the document. This includes all the evidence base studies undertaken, a consultation statement prepared in accordance with the regulations, and supporting background papers where appropriate.

Implications

33. The broad nature of the Planning Strategy means that its contents encompass policies and text which have a bearing on Council policies in relation to the following: Equalities and Community Cohesiveness; Crime and Fear of Crime; Environmental Issues; and Local People's Views. In all cases, the Strategy is considered to be consistent with those corporate policies.

Conclusion

34. It is recommended that the Council approve the Submission Version of the draft Planning Strategy; that the Sustainability Appraisal be accepted; and, that the recommended actions in response to the recommendations set out in the appraisal report be agreed. And, thereafter, that the Planning Strategy and supporting documents be placed on deposit for representations to be made prior to submission to the Secretary of State.

Wards Affected

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

Area(s) Affected

Central Hastings, East Hastings, North St. Leonards, South St. Leonards

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Yes
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Yes
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	Yes
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	Yes

Background Information

- (A) Proposed Submission Version - Planning Strategy
- (B) Sustainability Appraisal Report on Hastings Proposed Submission Planning Strategy February 2012
- (C) Proposed actions in response to Sustainability Report recommendations

Officer to Contact

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Appendices A, B and C could not be published in this area of the Council's website because of the complex images that they contain. They are available in another area of the site and may be accessed via the following link;

http://www.hastings.gov.uk/decisions_democracy/how_we_make_decisions/constitution_committees/cabinet/