

**Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan**

**Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic  
Environmental Assessment)**

**DRAFT Non-Technical Summary**



**May 2019**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) has been prepared by Hassocks Parish Council in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
- 1.2. It sets out the Vision and Strategic Objectives of the Parish up to 2031 along with the policies and aims to deliver its Vision.
- 1.3. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a systematic process to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which a Plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives.
- 1.4. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) involves the evaluation of the environmental impact of a Plan or programme. It is a requirement, as set out in the European Directive 2001/42/EC.
- 1.5. Government guidance (in a Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (ODPM 2005)) suggests incorporating the SEA process into the SA and consider economic and social effects alongside the environmental effects considered through the SEA. This approach has been followed. For simplification, this report is referred to as a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) although it incorporates the SEA.

## 2. SCOPING REPORT

- 2.1. The Scoping Report of the SA collated baseline data on broad areas of economic, social and environmental issues. It considered the implications of other plans and documents and set out a series of Sustainability Objectives. The Scoping Report also set out the proposed methodology for undertaking the SA.
- 2.2. The Scoping Report and baseline data was subject to public consultation with statutory bodies (English Heritage, Natural England, the Environment Agency) in August 2016 for a five week period.
- 2.3. In response to the consultation, the Environment Agency were supportive of the inclusion of Objective 2:Ecology, Objective 4:Water and flooding, Objective 5:Climate Change and associated indicators.
- 2.4. In response to the Scoping Report, Natural England recommended:
  - HPC assess local biodiversity data to establish trends in biodiversity across the Parish. In addition, Natural England recommend in order to highlight the importance of biodiversity, the opportunity to protect biodiversity is included as part of the opportunity to enhance biodiversity.
  - HPC evaluate the likely impacts of development on biodiversity and update the threats list accordingly.

- Further exploration of the landscape challenges imposed by development could be referenced.
- Opportunities listed include opportunities to educate residents of the importance of the designated and non-designated landscape features to be included.
- Opportunities to conserve Best and Most Versatile agricultural land are identified.
- Challenges associated with connecting people to nature should also be explored. Access and green infrastructure should be included as a key issue and can be linked to recreation, health and quality of life.
- Challenges associated with supporting wildlife and residents in the face of climate change be explored. Opportunities to create high quality green infrastructure within the Parish should be explored to contribute to tackling the impacts of climate change on residents and biodiversity.

2.5. No feedback was received from Historic England.

### **3. PRE SUBMISSION SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL**

3.1. The Pre Submission SA was consulted on alongside the Pre Submission SNP for a 6 week period from 07 January 2019 - 18 February 2019.

3.2. The purpose of this consultation was to assess whether the HNP may have effects on a range of sustainability topics and consider alternatives and mitigation to reduce any negative impact.

3.3. The Pre Submission SA set out:

- An appraisal of the SA(inc SEA) methodology;
- A summary of the baseline information, identification of the plans, policies and programmes that have an impact on the HNP (with updates) and a summary of the challenges for the future of the Parish;
- The Sustainability Framework; objectives and indicators;
- An appraisal of policy options; and
- Next steps.

3.4. The SA included an update on baseline data relating to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Policy Guidance, which was published in February 2019.

- 3.5. Having reviewed feedback from the Environment Agency; Natural England and Historic England, no amendments to the baseline data and/or Objectives and Indicators were considered necessary.
- 3.6. The Strategic Objectives of the SNP were assessed against the Sustainability Objectives. This demonstrated that most of the Strategic Objectives of the SNP and the Sustainability Objectives are compatible or have a neutral impact which indicated that the HNP was being prepared positively.
- 3.7. The Sustainability Objectives were also assessed against themselves to test their mutual compatibility. This demonstrated that most Sustainability Objectives are either compatible or have a neutral impact.
- 3.8. The Pre-submission SA appraised the draft policies of the HNP to assess the impact on the Sustainability Objectives. This appraisal was undertaken to ensure that the policies selected and taken forward in the Pre-submission HNP are the most sustainable, given reasonable alternatives.

#### **4. SUBMISSION SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL**

- 4.1. In response to consultation on the Pre-submission SNP and accompanying SA, circa 63 responses were received.
- 4.2. Of those consulted, Natural England, Historic England and 2 landowner/agents provided comments on the SA. These comments were considered and minor amendments were deemed necessary to the SA.
- 4.3. In response to the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission consultation on the Sustainability Appraisal, Natural England advised previous comments provided on the Scoping Report have been acknowledged. In addition, Natural England advised they were satisfied the majority of comments have been incorporated into the Objectives.
- 4.4. In response to the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission consultation on the Sustainability Appraisal, Historic England advised of content that the plan has few potential impacts for the historic environment.
- 4.5. With respect to comments received from landowner/agent representations advised it is considered the SA fails to consider reasonable alternatives to the allocated sites; the alternatives comprise three broad options, one of which would be a strategy to allocate additional sites.
- 4.6. In addition representations advised it is considered the SA 'vaguely' refers to consideration of sites within the Mid Sussex Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, but contains no assessment.

- 4.7. In response to representations received from landowner/agents, the SA details the Government Best practice guidance on identifying and assessing reasonable alternatives to the strategy in the HNP; and how this has been followed in the undertaking of the Submission SA. This includes an appraisal of the overarching spatial strategy against reasonable alternatives. This identified the most appropriate strategy is to have a strategy that supports small-scale growth/windfall within and adjoining the built up area boundary subject to HNP criteria and in line with Mid Sussex District Plan Policy DP6: Settlement.
- 4.8. As a result of the overall feedback received, a number of minor amendments were made to the HNP to strengthen and clarify policies and to ensure alignment with adopted District Plan policies although no substantive changes have been made to the Policies or Aims.
- 4.9. The Submission HNP and accompanying documents including the SA were finalised during May - June 2019.