

Hassocks Priorities Statement:

The principal needs and prevailing views of the parish community



Background

The parish of Hassocks comprises the villages of Hassocks, Keymer and Clayton. It is wholly within the administrative area of Mid Sussex but part of the parish, including the whole of Clayton, is within the South Downs National Park, which is a separate local planning authority.

The Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan was agreed by Mid Sussex District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority in 2020. That Neighbourhood Plan was based on consultation carried out with the community between 2014 and 2016 and a lot of things have changed since then.

The Parish Council wants to update its understanding of community priorities, but it is not the right time to review the Neighbourhood Plan itself. That was a very lengthy and costly exercise, and the planning system is in flux both nationally and locally which increases the risk of any Plan we produce becoming out of date before it's even finished.

Instead, we have taken up one of the ideas in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to produce a 'Neighbourhood Priorities Statement'. This is a much simpler document than a Neighbourhood Plan and can be produced more quickly. It can also cover a wider remit than just planning and include everything that makes Hassocks parish the place that it is.

A Priorities Statement sets out what a community thinks are the most important issues for its area and how they should be addressed. This will then inform the Parish Council's work plan and how it spends its resources. It will also guide how it responds to consultations by other bodies such as consultations on Local Plans. We hope that it will also help other organisations understand what Hassocks residents and businesses need and take that into account when providing services and facilities.

Engagement with the community was carried out via a public survey in December 2022. Details of how that work was undertaken is summarised in Appendix I of this document and the Consultation Report and Survey Report [\(insert link\)](#). The objectives of the survey were:

- To get views from residents and businesses on what they want Hassocks to be like in 10 years' time. (The Vision) and
- To gain insight on what the most important issues for Hassocks are and how they can be addressed to achieve the vision. (The Priorities).

The survey was developed and undertaken by Action in rural Sussex (AirS) working in conjunction with Hassocks Parish Council. The results have been independently analysed by AirS.

The vision for the future...

In 2033 Hassocks will be:

- **A place that retains its character as a group of villages with open green spaces within and surrounded by beautiful countryside (75% support).**
- **A resilient place that has adapted to the challenges of climate change by reducing the risk of flooding (64% support).**
- **An inclusive place that meets the needs of all in the community – young, old, families and those with disabilities (64% support).**
- **An economically vibrant place with good shops, strong local businesses and local food production (64% support).**
- **A friendly, welcoming place with many opportunities for people to meet, socialise and celebrate special events (62% support).**
- **A biodiverse place that is rich in wildlife (60% support).**
- **An accessible place where all day-to-day facilities and services can be accessed with less reliance on the private car (58% support).**
- **An innovative place where opportunities have been taken to generate renewable energy to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels and buildings have been built or retrofitted so they are energy efficient and zero carbon (48% support).**

Our Priorities

A/B Development, or the management or use of land, including housing

Subject	Priorities (average scores are out of 10)
Type of homes needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of accommodation that meets the identified needs of older people and those with disabilities to enhance/support independent living (6.9). • Provision of new homes that young people and families can buy/rent (5.6).
Design requirements for new development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New developments designed to meet the highest standards in energy-efficiency, renewable energy and low carbon impacts (7.1). • Location and designing of new developments with easy and safe access to services and facilities without relying on the private car (6.7). • New developments required to create a more biodiverse and edible landscape with native fruit trees and herbs (6.5). • New developments designed to be attractive and sympathetic to landscape and built environment (5.9).

C) The natural environment

Subject	Priorities (average scores are out of 10)
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-using and recycling more of our waste including food waste (8.3). • Implementation of new local renewable energy schemes (such as small-scale solar developments or wind turbines) (7.2). • Provision of electric charging points, including for visitors and dwellings with no off-street parking (6.3).
Nature Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting of new trees where appropriate and protection of existing woodland (8.9 – third highest score). • Creation and enhancement of wildlife corridors connecting existing nature-rich areas (8.5).
Air Pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air pollution levels monitored across identified hot spots and actions taken to reduce pollution (7.7).

D) The economy

Subject	Priorities (average scores are out of 10)
Supporting businesses and village centre vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a village square or similar public realm space in Hassocks Village Centre for the market and community events (7.9). • Provision of more community events like ‘Light Up Hassocks’ and the Remembrance Sunday Parade (7.3).

E) Public spaces

Subject	Priorities (average scores are out of 10)
Public open spaces and allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection and enhancement of our existing green spaces (9.2 – second highest score). • Creation of community garden schemes and provision of more allotments (7.3). • Creation of a new country park (6.6).

F) Infrastructure, facilities and services

(See Hassocks Infrastructure Plan and Flood Mitigation Plan for specific projects and delivery mechanisms insert links)	
Subject	Priorities (average scores are out of 10)
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of adequate health services for the community (9.5 - highest score).
Flood Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures to enable prevention and mitigation of flooding (8.9).
Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of a fully staffed station ticket office and a good level of train service to Hassocks (8.7). • Improvement of the frequency and connectivity of bus services, particularly to nearby towns and across the County border (8.0).
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and development of our schools so they can provide a high-quality education for our children (8.5).
Roads, Walking and Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation and improvement of safe walking and cycling routes to schools, shops and facilities for all ages and abilities (8.2). • Introduction of measures to slow traffic and prioritise pedestrian and cyclist safety (7.6).
Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of more enhanced youth facilities and services (7.6). • Expansion of community building facilities within Hassocks Village Centre (7.0). • Creation or expansion of community building facilities elsewhere in the parish (6.3).

G Other features / prevailing views

The above priorities were identified in the survey form and the respondents indicated a significant level of support for them scoring between 5.6 and 9.5 out of 10 in terms of importance. But the survey also allowed respondents to make free text suggestions. The table below summarises the prevailing views.

Subject	Prevailing views
Housing development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hassocks has taken too much new housing in recent years and there should be no further growth without necessary infrastructure. • No new developments should be built on green field sites only brownfield • Need more social housing for young families and older people. • Any further development must prioritise the needs of younger people and families before 4/5-bedroom luxury houses.
Access, travel and parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need an additional east-west route avoiding the railway bridge on Keymer Road • Need a footway along the south side of Keymer Road west of the railway bridge. • Widen pavements and extend to campsite on Lodge Lane. • Make the route from the station to the village centre more accessible. • Have a bus route from Hassocks/Keymer village centre to Brighton. • Improve connectivity to neighbouring villages by better and more accessible footpaths. • and cycle lanes • Need more parking and parking enforcement. • Need enforcement of speed restrictions • Improve road maintenance.

Next Steps

This Priorities Statement will be considered by the new Parish Council in summer 2023 and published for consultation with residents, businesses and relevant organisations including the Local Planning Authorities.

It will also inform the new Parish Council's business plan to be developed in 2023 and its responses to Local Plans and other consultation documents.

Once the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill has passed into law the Parish Council will consider what further steps need to be taken to comply with the legislation so that the Priorities Statement carries full weight in the Local Plan-making process.

Appendix I: Summary of Consultation Statement

Hassocks Parish Council allocated funding for the preparation of a Priorities Statement in the 2022/23 budget and Action in rural Sussex was commissioned in September 2022 to provide support with the community engagement.

Consultation on the Hassocks Priorities Statement started in November 2022 with an article in 'Hassocks Life', a monthly magazine delivered to approximately 4,500 households and businesses in the parish. The magazine also included an advert for two virtual workshops setting out initial thoughts and asking people to co-design the survey. In the same week a workshop was held with the Parish Councillors to similarly gain their input into the wording of the survey.

The final survey was published in the December edition of Hassocks Life. A QR code was provided so that people could complete the survey online or they could simply detach the pages from the magazine and fill it in by hand and post into the Parish Council's letter box. The survey was also promoted through social media including 'Hassocks Uncovered', a Facebook page with approximately 9,000 members. Parish Councillors also ran a stall at the Christmas farmers' market in December to promote the survey and engage with market stall holders.

A total of 212 responses were received to the survey. Responses were analysed and published in a Survey Report and the results reported back to the community at a drop in session at Adastra hall on 13th February 2023 which was attended by approximately 50 people. A Consultation Statement was also produced to show how the community had been engaged in the process.

The Hassocks Priorities Statement was then drafted using feedback from the survey and agreed by the Neighbourhood Plan Committee in April 2023.

Summary of further steps post May 2023 elections and submission to Local Planning Authorities.

Further details of the process and a copy of the Survey Report and Consultation Statement can be found on the Parish Council webpage at <https://www.hassocks-pc.gov.uk/priorities-statement/>

Appendix 2: Legal Context

Parish Councils have been producing community-led plans for many years – for instance 20 years ago the newly formed parish of Hassocks produced the Hassocks Village Action Plan which helped to bring forward projects like the new station building and the skate park and other facilities in Adastra Park.

This document is a new type of community-led plan called a ‘Neighbourhood Priorities Statement’ which is proposed in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) due to gain Royal Assent in Autumn 2023. As far as possible this document has been produced in accordance with the details in the Bill.

Relevant Draft Legislation

Schedule 7, section 15K of the LURB states:

“(1) Any qualifying body may make a statement, to be known as a “neighbourhood priorities statement”, which summarises what the body considers to be the principal needs and prevailing views, of the community in the neighbourhood area in relation to which the body is authorised, in respect of local matters.

(2) “Local matters” are such matters as the Secretary of State may prescribe, relating to—

- (a) development, or the management or use of land, in or affecting the neighbourhood area,
- (b) housing in the neighbourhood area,
- (c) the natural environment in the neighbourhood area,
- (d) the economy in the neighbourhood area,
- (e) public spaces in the neighbourhood area,
- (f) the infrastructure, facilities or services available in the neighbourhood area, or
- (g) other features of the neighbourhood area”.

Further clauses make provision for the Secretary of State to regulate on how neighbourhood priorities statements should be produced, consulted upon and published by the local planning authority, but importantly Clause (7) states that these requirements can be met by work carried out by a parish council before these regulations are in place and it is confirmed as a ‘qualifying body’.

Once the Bill has Royal Assent and the regulations come into effect then section 15CA says that local planning authorities in preparing their local plan must ‘have regard’ to any neighbourhood priorities statement.

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