

Neighbourhood Planning Focus Group - Housing and Planning

Summary of meetings 4th August 2014, 8th Sept 2014 and 22nd Sept.

Subsequent additions by e mail

Focus Group Attendees: Frances Gaudencio, Virginia Pullan, Janet Slaughter, Paul Liddell, Juliet Merrifield

We would like the following to be made clear in the NP

- The demographics of the population of Hassocks (e.g. age, gender, employment status, incomes) as of the latest data and projections for 20 years time*
- The basis on which extra housing need has been calculated and from what date*
- We would also like the Parish Council to state in the Neighbourhood Plan what the Parish Council considers to be affordable housing in the context of Hassocks. For one example see Cornwall County Council's definition*

General Principles

1. The Village Design Statement should be a good starting point for the Neighbourhood Plan and we would hope that the NP would incorporate many of its principles (Hassocks Village Design Statement Part I - 2008)
2. We would like a defined landscaped boundary edge between the built up areas of the village and the countryside. This should provide multifunctional green infrastructure to include accessible open space and woodland, allotments, temporary flood relief areas and a range of wildlife habitats.
3. We would like a strategic green gap between Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint, between Hassocks and Burgess Hill and between Hassocks and Ditchling and for these gaps to be clearly designated and safeguarded.
4. Brownfield sites for development should be prioritised over greenfield sites as far as possible, and in particular aim to redevelop the village centre with high quality design to enhance the village core.
5. Traffic congestion will continue to grow and this one thing alone if not addressed will change the face of Hassocks very rapidly. Increased traffic will have a negative impact on the environment and on safety. Traffic management should be included as a priority within any development applications. They should encourage increase in walking and cycling within the village and reduce the need for cars. Housing development should provide safe routes for residents to walk and cycle to station/school/shops

6. **Climate Change and Flooding:** Hassocks is built predominantly on clay and at least 4 streams run through the village. Many green spaces become waterlogged in heavy rain. The herring stream, central Hassocks, the railway station, Church Meads, North of Shepherd's Walk, and Lodge Lane have all been subject to floods in the last 10 years. Concreting over with new building will only exacerbate this problem and already has with the flash flood in February 2014 which affected Lodge Lane, Ockley Lane and properties on Parklands Road. The weather is changing irrespective of the causes. It is accepted by Government that flooding in particular is likely to increase. We note that the WSCC Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2013) has identified a total of 685 homes in Hassocks already at risk of flooding. It is vital that mitigation of flooding in any new development should not contribute to flooding or run off of water in another area of the village. This has to be taken into account, by having practical measures in place to reduce surface water flood risk and even to combat it. All new developments should be planned to minimise run off with integrated sustainable urban drainage schemes (SuDs) and should not be seen in isolation from the bigger picture.

Housing

We need to look at the kind of village the community wishes Hassocks to be bearing in mind not just the current but also the changing demographics of its residents, workers and visitors.

This is a semi rural village with a substantial elder population. There has been an increase in incomers including young couples with children.

Older people dread the idea of going into care homes but would prefer to stay in their own homes with their choice of care provided there. We might see a situation develop where elder residents move out of bungalows and houses and downsize to accessible flats or apartments within the village. This frees up larger properties for occupation by growing families. We note a potential mismatch between the number of over 75s in the village and the availability of accessible and appropriately sized homes (e.g. ground floor flats or low rise flats with lifts).

Young people who grew up in the village may well not be able to afford to live here, unless more affordable homes are available.

Housing needs should take these social developments into account and we should be looking at future trends.

Housing Design

“Further building, both residential and commercial, to be of good quality and sustainable design, in keeping with both infrastructure and local need. Some emphasis on smaller units for first time buyers and the elderly downsizing. Design and materials to be in keeping with the surrounding buildings.

- New buildings should respect and enhance their surroundings in terms of their height, mass, scale and density of development.
- All subsequent development should embrace sustainable construction principles, including rainwater recycling and energy efficiency, and have regard to Mid Sussex District Council’s Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document.”

(Above from Village Design Statement 2008)

Businesses

Old businesses have disappeared from the high street to be replaced by coffee shops, specialist retail shops and an additional mini supermarket. Many more people in the village work from home and more goods are bought over the internet.

With the designation of National Park on and within its doorstep and with roots in rural life Hassocks could encourage tourism, leisure and crafts. We recognise the tension between the need for building more houses and the importance of maintaining businesses and employment in the village

Other services

The Health Centre is undersized. We need an appropriately sized Health Centre which serves the residents of Hassocks within Hassocks.

Most parents desire school placements for their children in the village. This will be unachievable as all 3 schools (two of which are currently in the process of expansion) will be full to capacity.

At least two of the schools are either full to capacity or will be within 2 years. Secondary school aged children from Albourne, Ditchling and Hurstpierpoint also go to Downlands School.

There is no more space on existing school sites for school expansion. Therefore thought needs to be given to how additional school places are to be provided.

Any proposed housing development in adjacent settlements such as Hurstpierpoint and Ditchling is very relevant to Hassocks and puts pressure on other infrastructure such as health, traffic and parking for the station.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hassocks Parish Council NPWG should work in partnership with adjacent parishes to ensure ‘joined up’ neighbourhood plans. This is especially important to safeguard strategic green gaps, manage traffic and flooding, and ensure adequate provision of services.
2. Clayton is part of Hassocks and should be in the vision for the NP.
3. Hassocks Parish Council should consider listing certain assets as being of value to the community. If an asset is listed and then comes up for sale, the community right to bid will give communities that want it 6 months to put together a bid to buy it. We think the potential central village housing or mixed use sites such as National Tyre, the Telephone

Exchange, and the Post Office sorting office should be considered for listing.

On Infrastructure:

4. That there is a requirement for flood risk (including exacerbating flood risk further downstream) to be assessed within planning applications for new development.
5. That infrastructure improvements to prevent flooding are undertaken by developer
6. That traffic management, is given a priority within any development Applications, including providing safe walking and cycling routes from the development to the shops, schools and station.

On housing developments:

7. Ensure a proportion of affordable for housing for local people who live and work in the village already.
8. Ensure that all new housing is made as energy efficient as possible - for older people especially reducing fuel costs, staying warm in winter (and cool in summer) is crucial.
9. Ensure that a percentage of suitable housing development is provided for the elder independent population.
10. That a predetermined percentage of total new housing development is fully compliant with the Disability Equality Duty and that developers are required as a condition for development to produce an Accessibility and Design and Inclusive Design Statement within their planning applications.
11. That new development needs to include well-designed green spaces for recreation, food growing and wildlife needs.

On economic development:

12. That development is considered that will encourage tourism, leisure and craft businesses as well as self employment hubs.
13. That jobs are created for local people within the local area to minimise use of cars.
14. That the NPWG also seeks the opinions of the agricultural workers of Hassocks.
15. That consideration be given to the non-agricultural rural economy.
16. We favour mixed use development in the centre of the village.

On services

17. There should be provision for youth centre space of which there is none.
18. We need more community space as current space is oversubscribed.
19. We favour a community centre which would include a library.
20. The existing library could be relocated to a more central location, and the current site re-purposed for housing.