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Introduction

The report describes the current situation of the town as we see it today. The development strategy for Spatial Planning Areas in Hastings has been explained in detail.

The report aims to identify and evaluate various issues in the town of Hastings which have been responsible for socio-economic deterioration of the town. The issues such as lack of tourism, loss of jobs, unemployment, underemployment, poor transport, demographic issues, impact on the standard of living in town, single mother problems, teenage pregnancy rise, increase in the number of out-of-work benefit people, homelessness, coastal erosion problems, increase in the number of HMOs leading to decreased owner occupied residences and obstacles in the regeneration process.

The new proposed local plan of Hastings was due to be adopted in December 2013. There have been some recent changes to the planning system in 2012. To simplify the planning system, 25 planning documents were replaced by a single planning document called National Planning Policy Framework, published in March 2012. Their core strategy is called the Hastings Planning Strategy. Various issues have been identified by the planning strategy and a vision statement has been published. Localism Act 2011 had a considerable impact on the planning system (See Appendix 2).

There are various bodies involved in the development of a coastal town. One of the most significant bodies is the Environmental Agency (See Appendix 1). EA plays a role in the management, reviewing and approval of SMPs (Shoreline Management Plan) and work with local authorities to keep a check on work carried on for coastal erosion problems.

The Hastings Borough Council aims at growing the local economy by revitalizing the retail, housing and tourism sectors. A growing and vibrant economy would attract skilled workers, high paying jobs and much needed investment. The Council have produced a vision statement (See Appendix 5) which describes the future goals for the city.

Hastings as we see today

Hastings is a town and borough on the coast of East Sussex with a population of just over 85,000 people (2001 Census). It is located between the sea and the High Weald behind it. It is one of Britain's oldest fishing ports, with boats working from the pebble beach in front of the Old Town for over 1000 years. It was one of the medieval Cinque Ports. The economic value of the fishing industry is significant for the town's economy. 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.

Today as we see it, Hastings has been identified as one of the most deprived boroughs in the country and is the most deprived in the south east (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. Hastings' position has been recognised nationally and has attracted significant resources to support the regeneration process.

Port in Hastings

Hastings was once the head of Cinque Ports. The great storm of 1287 destroyed the harbour. Throughout the history of Hastings, attempts have been made to build a satisfactory harbour. The exposed shores and rough seas have always been responsible for the failure of these harbours. Also, lack of capital has been a major factor in the failure of harbor construction. Today the harbour arm stands as the town's failure over 600 years to provide an artificial anchorage. There are planning proposals to enhance the harbour with an emphasis on improved maritime activities.

Spatial Planning Areas in Hastings

The Planning Strategy of Hastings is interwoven with the planning policies of the neighbouring Rother District Council, reflecting their combined economic and functional linkages.

Hastings has been divided into three parts.

- a. Western Area
- b. Central Area
- c. Eastern Area

A development strategy for all three parts has been developed according to their regions.

A. Western Area

The population of Western Area is 27,700 (Mid 2009 population estimates, ONS). Potential for employment and housing development has been focused in the Western Area strategy. Key seafront development sites have been identified. Location for exploring the opportunities for renewable energy schemes has been identified (e.g. Combe Valley Countryside Park). The **Hastings Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Study (2009)** has shown some potential for wind energy in the area.

East Sussex Open Space Strategy identifies a county-wide open space deficiency within the locality. The Combe Valley Countryside Park will serve an urban population of 130,000 people and is a shared approach towards regeneration for Bexhill and Hastings. A Development Strategy and Implementation Plan 2011 - 2014 for the park has been approved by Hastings, Rother and East Sussex Councils.

In accordance with **Policy FA1: Strategic Policy for Western Area (See Appendix 2)**, between 1100 and 1290 new homes and approximately 36,700 SQ.M. of employment floorspace will be provided in Western Area up to 2028.

Core employment areas such as Queensway has been identified and efforts are being done in order to attract companies from around the UK and Europe. One of their aims is to reduce the carbon emissions and facilitate good environmental management. They are focussing on low carbon renovation projects such as the one on a Council owned site on Castleham estate.

Flooding has been identified as an important issue in the Western Area. Although there are sea defences to protect against tidal flooding. **Policy SC7** is being used as a guidance to monitor the standard of development of the flood risk areas. Detailed flood risk assessments have been undertaken.

B. Central Area

Central Area is the most densely populated area of the three areas. It has a population of 43,801 residents and has the lowest number of 0-15 year olds in the town, at just 17.6% (ONS Mid 2009 population estimates). Data from the 2011 Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that Central St Leonards and Bohemia and Hastings Town Centre are the most deprived planning focus areas in Central Area, ranking 2nd and 3rd in Hastings as a whole. In Hastings in terms of fuel poverty, with 17.3% of households in the Town Centre and 17.6% in Central St Leonards and Bohemia are in fuel poverty.

Town centre is the focus of development in Central Area. Tourism, flooding, open space and housing have been identified as the key considerations of the development of the area. Focus is being given to growth of educational facilities along with student accommodation is being paid attention to.

In accordance with the **Policy FA2: Strategic Policy for Central Area (See Appendix 2)**, between 1220 and 1500 new homes; 21,700sqm of employment floorspace and approximately 20,500 SQ.M. of comparison goods retail floorspace will be provided in Central Area up to 2028.

The potential for the introduction of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) systems and district heating networks into the existing building stock, particularly alongside any large scale new retail development in the case of Hastings Town Centre has been identified.

The Hastings Cultural Regeneration Strategy, specifically looks to developing cultural quarters in Central St Leonards built around studio and workshop space for the creative industries, and in Hastings Town Centre from the White Rock to Station Plaza.

Central St Leonards has a large proportion of privately rented dwellings and houses in multiple occupations, many of which are well below modern standards. The area was declared a Housing

Renewal Area in 2003 which lead to some significant improvements. In addition Hastings Borough Council has recently commenced a housing-led regeneration programme called the Coastal Space Project St Leonards. This is a £3.5m funded joint initiative between Hastings Borough Council and Local Space, with the support of East Sussex County Council, the Homes and Communities Agency, and AmicusHorizon. It is one of a number of projects which aims to improve housing conditions and associated social and economic problems in the area.

C. Eastern Area

The population of Eastern area is 15,454. Data from the 2011 Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that the Hillcrest and Ore Valley Planning Focus Area is the most deprived in Hastings overall. The Old Town is the 7th most deprived overall, but 11th out of 13 for the education domain.

Ore Valley Development sites are being regenerated. The recreational pressure from new development in the area of Hastings Cliffs Special Area of Conservation will be significant part of this strategy.

In accordance with the **Policy FA5: Strategic Policy for Eastern Area (See Appendix 2)**, between 740-920 new homes and 12,200 SQ.M. of employment floorspace will be provided in Eastern Area upto 2028.

Eastern Areas have significant wildlife areas. Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve is the largest area of publicly accessible natural habitat in the town, and forms the gateway to the High Weald. Efforts are being taken to improve the quality of wildlife sites by better habitat management, increasing the size of existing wildlife habitats; enhancing connections between sites and create new sites where we can use the green infrastructure network.

Issues identified in Hastings

Issue 1: Loss of Tourism

Hastings has been known as “largest beach-launched fishing fleet in Europe” and “historic fishing beach”. This is identified as the town’s unique selling point. The construction of a railway station increased the popularity of Hastings as a holiday destination in 1800s. Hastings is popular for overseas school language trips due to its proximity to the continent, the availability of cheap accommodation and its popularity due to its connection with the Norman conquest of England in 1066. There has been a decline in tourism since the 1960s after international travel became cheaper which severely affected all the coastal towns in England.

Hastings economy has been predominantly based on tourism and leisure, which has declined. The town has not kept pace with economic growth elsewhere in the South East and as a result has faced serious economic decline.

Although tourism does not play a pre-eminent role in driving the economy of Hastings today, it still is an important part of it. Council has been actively involved in the revival of the seaside tourism in Hastings and the UK in general. To reduce the dependency of people on tourism, a significant manufacturing employment was established on new employment estates as part of Town Development Area (TDA). Housing developments were also undertaken to attract new young population to the town.

Issue 2: Transport in Hastings

Hastings economy has suffered in the last two decades due to poor road and rail links to the town from economic centres like London. It has isolated Hastings from the commercial opportunities and markets which would have otherwise helped in the economic recovery.

Council Initiatives

The East Sussex Local Transport Plan (LTP3) 2011-2026 forms the transport policy framework for Hastings and the other districts and boroughs in East Sussex. The new transport links development such as High Speed One (HS1) and other trunk road improvements are being undertaken.

Issue 3: Unemployment

Beatty and Fothergill studied economic changes in coastal towns. One of the reasons presented by them for higher unemployment rate in the seaside towns is because of a higher number of benefit claimants are able to find suitable accommodation to rent. (2004, 478)

One of the major reasons for unemployment is the loss of tourism. Since the 1960s, the number of onshore jobs reduced considerably. Shutting down of hotels and guest houses has had a severe impact. 85% of businesses in Hastings employ less than 10 people. Underemployment has reduced people's aspirations in the town (See Appendix 3).

Council Initiatives

Initiatives are being taken in order 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 jobs. Sea Space and the wider Hastings and Bexhill Task Force have worked together since 2003 and taken a number of steps to overcome economic problems (See Appendix 4).

Issue 4: Demography

The population in Hastings is changing rapidly. Young population is leaving the town for better opportunities. It is estimated that by 2028 the proportion of older people will be higher by 2028 (29.3% in 2028, compared to 21.6% in 2011). This meant that planning proposals will be given in order to accommodate the old people.

Issue 5: Rise in homelessness

Hastings faces an acute housing shortage. The major issues are as follows:

- Poor supply of affordable housing
- Poor condition of private housing sector
- People are finding it difficult to have access to home ownership due to the disparity between house prices and income ratios

Hastings has a high proportion of households who are heavily reliant on welfare benefits and will never be able to purchase their own home.

Hastings has twice the national average level of households living in private rented accommodation (24%) and most of the poorest are concentrated in the town centre. Hastings has a higher percentage than the national average of private sector homes (39%) that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard and a significant proportion (23%) of these are occupied by vulnerable people. 49% of Non-Decent homes in Hastings fail the standard due to inadequate thermal comfort, which equates to 19% of the overall housing stock. There is a shortage of sites for new housing within a tight urban area.

Economic problems have resulted in very low real estate prices. Cheap housing has led to depressed seaside towns becoming ‘dumping grounds for people facing problems such as unemployment, social exclusion and substance abuse’ (See Appendix 4).

The Ministerial Group Report 2012, ‘Making Every Contact Count | A joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness’ is committed to tackle troubled childhoods and adolescence by promoting innovative approaches to youth homelessness, improving health of the homeless and helping them meet with their housing needs, helping in reducing crime by improving offender access to rented private sector, improving skills, employment and giving financial advice.

Associations involved in social housing

AmicusHorizon and Orbit South Housing Association account for 90% of the general needs social housing stock in Hastings. There are various affordable housing schemes to help low income households get a foot on the property ladder. The demand for social housing in Hastings outweighs the supply as the options of owner occupation or securing private rented accommodation are unaffordable and unachievable for many people on low incomes.

Clark in 2010 said that the changes in the housing benefit policy (See Appendix 2) will lead to increased levels of homelessness. The local authorities have been forced to use HMO for private rental accommodation of homeless individuals and families. The strategic regeneration policies that encourage immigration of affluent social groups to coastal towns could be undermined by

this. It could result in the depopulation and outmigration of more affluent groups from some coastal towns.

Council Initiatives

Council has identified that provision of new homes is a must if town revitalization was to be achieved. It is important to have stronger housing markets so that government agencies cannot use them as dumping grounds for the vulnerable (See Appendix 4). Attention is being paid to develop different types of homes. Priority is given to increasing availability, affordability and quality of housing for all sections of the community. The Council aims to enable resident's access to housing that is affordable, accessible and appropriate for their needs.

Issue 6: Real Estate Collapse with little development

There are social and economic consequences of housing in multiple occupation (HMO) in UK coastal towns. Many hotels and guesthouses had shut down due to lack of tourism. Darren P Smith has argued that HMO is a key factor in the concentration of deprived social groups and reproduction of socioeconomic decline in some coastal towns. HMOs cause a spatial concentration of deprived, unrelated, multi-person households; high population density; downgraded residential environments; and fragile community cohesion. HMOs have been identified as posing a major problem in the regeneration of an area. They are not very attractive to the investors. It is also difficult to gain support for local regeneration projects since people in HMOs are not permanent residents. (Communities and Local Government Committee 2007a)

This property market collapse has decreased the number of owner occupied residences while increasing the number of guesthouses, and has resulted in the overall deterioration in the appearance and character of neighbourhoods.

Hubbard in 2009 argued that proliferation of HMO has transformed the British housing markets over the last two decades.

From the Private Sector House Survey in 2007, it is estimated that there are some 2,800 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) throughout the town. 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. Hastings has been identified as one of the 11 (*Canterbury, Blackpool, Hastings/Rother, Lancaster, Thanet, Shepway, Eastbourne, Weymouth, Bournemouth, Torbay and Scarborough*) coastal authority areas that bear out the links between HMO and the clustering of deprived social groups.

Issue 7: Coastal Erosion and Seafront

The most important part and prime assets of the coastal town is its seafront. The strategy for the seafront is to use Seafront as the area's best asset and build on the existing economy and enhance the Seafront and public realm. Hastings & Bexhill Task Force, Tourism South East, Hastings Borough Council and Rother District Council 2005 prepared the Seafront Strategy.

There has been significant improvements to the physical environment along the Seafront through the Council's Grotbusters scheme. The Marina Pavillion has been restored. A volleyball court and multi-use games area has been installed along the promenade. The Jerwood Gallery and surrounding space and the extension to the National Cycle Network was completed in 2012.

Hastings has been popular for hosting festivals, for example Jack in the Green, Seafood & Wine, Hastings Old Town Carnival Week and Hastings Week throughout the year, attracting visitors from outside of the town.

Environmental issues

Flood defences located along the Bulverhythe area (identified as the flood risk problem area by Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2008) of the coast are the responsibility of the Environment Agency. These were enhanced in 2006, and provide a 1 in 200 year standard of protection.

Coast Protection assets including seawalls, groynes and shingle banks are the responsibility of Hastings Borough Council. The South Foreland to Beachy Head **Shoreline Management Plan (SMP)** states that the long term policy is to "*hold the line*" in providing protection for the frontage, which means that coastal defences in the town are likely to be maintained in good working order for the foreseeable future. SMP is a non-statutory planning document and is used in conjunction with the local plan which is a statutory planning document.

Council Initiatives

The Planning system has taken future climate change into account for allocation of suitable sites. The sites with high risk of river or sea flooding and areas which are drought prone are avoided; managing urban greenspace for managing the high temperatures.

Over the past few years the Council has built a new rock groyne to prevent wave overtopping at Carlisle Parade and is carrying out a programme of groyne refurbishment.

Further investment will be required to maintain the existing standard of defence and to compensate for the effects of climate change (including sea level rise and an increase in intensity, severity and frequency of coastal storms). Planned investment includes the construction of additional rock groynes at Carlisle Parade, enhancement and repair of the Harbour Arm and eventual replacement of the existing timber groynes. In addition the Council will continue to recycle shingles that accumulates at the eastern end of the coastline to areas where it is eroded (See Appendix 2 for Policy FA6: Strategic Policy for the Seafront).

Issue 8: Regeneration

HMOs has been identified as one of the obstacles in the way of regeneration of town (Communities and Local Government Committee 2007a)

Lack of investment in Hastings

One of the factors identified for the lack of investment in HMO is the absence of economic imperatives for landlords to maintain HMO to high standards. The lack of interest shown by private sector landlords and investors has resulted in the deterioration of the residential environment with dilapidated residential facades, unkempt gardens and yards, and crumbling to-let signs.

Reversing the trend of high unemployment, low weekly wages and a low skilled workforce is the focus of considerable regeneration activity by partners.

Poor transport has been one of the major issues in the process of regeneration. There are two things that should be done.

1. Improve internal and external transport links including bus and train
2. Create new employment opportunities within the urban area

Local Enterprise Partnerships

Local Enterprise Growth Initiatives (LEGI) is a ground breaking development, linking enterprise and community. It aims to increase entrepreneurial activity in the local population; support growth and reduce the failure rate of locally owned businesses; attract inward investment and franchising as well as making use of local labour resources.

The Local Strategic Partnership is continuing to work with Hastings and Bexhill Task Force and other partners to make sure local people can share in the opportunities and wealth created.

Council Initiatives

The Local councils have identified the cultural potential of the town that could be exploited for the regeneration activity. People come to Hastings to see the real life activities of the fishermen. This is their way of life. The Council has joined the fishing fleet by the new Jerwood Art Gallery and performance area to raise aspirations of the local people and attract visitors from abroad and the UK (*This proposal was initially rejected by the fishing communities. They believed that this would only destroy the traditional fishing culture of Hastings, but eventually it was built anyway*). Heritage Lottery funding is helping restore the Victorian pier. The development of Combe Valley Countryside Park and the extension of the National Cycleway Network, together with future development at West Marina, will also promote the importance of the Bulverhythe and West St Leonards areas as the western gateway to the town.

In 2004, local councils and MPs persuaded government to invest substantially in the regeneration of Hastings and Bexhill and help in creation of a Hastings by-pass. Around £200m were invested to help in creating new University Centre, College and employment space through Hastings and Bexhill Task Force.

The Council is promoting Employment-led-growth, providing the right type of housing, maximising the provision for affordable housing, meeting the current housing needs of the residents.

Issue 9: Environmental effects

Smith, 2005 and Hubbard, 2008 studied the environmental effects that are characteristic of higher population densities in studentified neighbourhoods. St Leonards in Hastings suffered from the problems such as spilling out of refuse and litter onto the streets and roads. The increase in the number of private vehicles resulted in lack of parking spaces. Noise nuisance was seen on the rise. The need for well maintained open spaces has been identified.

Hastings Biodiversity Action Plan

Hastings Borough Council has developed a number of initiatives in recent years that have focused attention on the wonderful variety of natural green spaces around Town. We have sought to integrate biodiversity into our policies and plans and within our key strategic documents. These include the Local Plan, the Community Strategy, the Cultural Strategy, the Sustainable Development Strategy and most recently, the emerging Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. The **2006 Parks and Open Spaces Strategy** specifies that the focus for the future will be to improve the quality and value of existing open spaces, rather than establish new ones.

Conclusion

Hastings depended on tourism to support the local economy for a long time. In 1960s, there was tragic decline in traditional British seaside holidays due to international travel becoming cheaper. This not only affected Hastings but a lot of coastal towns. This resulted in shutdown of a lot of hotels and a decline of jobs dependent on tourism. In spite of all the efforts by the council, underemployment is a major problem. Unemployment resulted in the rise in the number of people living on out-of-work benefits and an increase in poverty. There is a severe rise in health problems (See Appendix 4). The price of the real estate has also collapsed.

Bad transportation network further deteriorated the local economy. Slow journey times have caused a concern among the residents and tourists alike. Attracting investors to a town with bad transport network is tough and has posed a problem for Hastings. The number of jobs in Hastings is less and people have to apply for jobs to London, Crawley, Gatwick and Brighton. The slow journey times have caused a concern among the residents of Hastings. This has resulted in Hastings being one of the most disadvantaged communities in the UK.

The problem of homelessness needs to be tackled. It not only affects the individual households but the wider community on the whole. Homelessness is linked to various problems such as crime, health and developmental problems, substance misuse issues, poor education and unemployment. After a number of years of historically high levels of homelessness in Hastings, it dropped significantly in 2009/10 and an increase in 20% was seen in 2010/11. Homelessness is the result of economic failures of the town. The key reasons for homelessness in Hastings continue to relate to friend or family evictions, the end of Assured Shorthold Tenancy, violent relationship breakdown and people being required to leave National Asylum Support Service accommodation. HMOs are important since they are a source of affordable accommodation for many different social groups (See Appendix 3).

Though new housing may form an important part of regeneration efforts, we have to reconcile this with the fact that Hastings is a tightly constrained urban area, surrounded by areas of high environmental and landscape importance. 7840 new homes are to be constructed by 2028. The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) makes it clear that it would not be sensible to use trend-based demographic projections since it would require substantial

release of greenfield land. For this reason, the potential for higher density residential development is being explored and is expected to solve a number of problems such as affordability and housing variety. The proposed local plan also considers mixed land use development and utilising empty homes. Emphasis will be given to the brownfield sites for development (See Appendix 2 for Policy DS1: New Housing Development).

Providing sufficient business accommodation has been identified as an important economic regeneration objective by The Employment Strategy and Land Review (ESLR). The National Planning Policy also emphasises on the importance of meeting the needs of retail sector in full without compromising due to limited site availability.

Emphasis is being given to the identification of green infrastructure network. It has been identified to provide multiple social, economic and environmental benefits (See Appendix for Policy EN2: Green Infrastructure Network).

Although a number of initiatives are being taken for the regeneration of the town, it does not mean that all the problems will totally vanish. With passing time, different problems rise and fall which means regeneration of Hastings will continue and economic growth and prosperity will form the heart of the plan.

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