

Draft Non-Technical Summary Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan Sustainability Appraisal February 2016

1. Haywards Heath Town Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The whole of the parish area, together with part of Ansty & Staplefield Parish Council area, has been designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area for this purpose by Mid Sussex District Council, the Local Planning Authority covering Haywards Heath.
2. The Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) is a new type of planning document. The Plan provides a vision for the future of the Town, and sets out clear planning policies to realise this vision. These policies accord with higher level planning policy, as required by the Localism Act.
3. The revised Pre Submission Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision for how the Town and the immediately surrounding rural area will evolve and a draft delivery plan has been prepared to show how that will be achieved. The Plan will cover a period from 2014 to 2031 to coincide with the plan period of the proposed Mid Sussex District Plan. It will be in general conformity with the strategic planning policies of the District Council and with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Sustainability appraisal

4. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA), as defined by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, aims to predict and assess the social, environmental and economic effects that are likely to arise from the adoption of plans or programmes, in order to ensure that the strategies, policies and plans within these contribute to and promote sustainable development. Although not a requirement of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, an Appraisal provides a means of demonstrating the Plan will promote sustainable development.
5. A Screening Opinion published by Mid Sussex District Council in May 2013 requires all plans in its area that are intending to allocate land for housing or employment use to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). In the UK, the SEA process has been incorporated into the SA process. Therefore where this report refers to the SA, it can be assumed this also means the SEA. It therefore aims to predict the effects of the policies and proposals of the Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan submission document and has been used to inform its production to ensure that the policies promote sustainable development.

The Sustainability Appraisal Report

- There are two principal outputs of a sustainability appraisal, These are:
- SA scoping report; and
- The SA report.

The SA scoping report

6. The SA scoping report was produced in December 2012 and was used to set the scene for the main SA report. A total of 3 responses were received to the consultation on the SA scoping report. These responses have been collated and those that are of relevance to the SA scoping report have been considered and incorporated within this document. The final version of the SA scoping report can be viewed at, <http://www.haywardsheath.gov.uk/Neighbourhood-Plan-.aspx>

The SA report

7. The SA has followed an iterative process, providing a view of the likely implications on sustainable development of different options for policy areas in the revisions to the draft Plan as well as the overall Plan strategy. There were a number of tasks that were undertaken within the main SA report. In summary these were:
 - Testing the objectives of the Plan.
 - Testing two spatial options and reviewing the previously adopted strategy.
 - Informing the selection of the preferred option.
 - Suggesting specific policy requirements to enhance the sustainability of the new housing option.
8. The findings of this work have been taken into consideration in determining the content of the submission Plan and are documented within this report. The SA process has widened the range of issues, options and planning policies considered in formulating the proposals for the Plan, in particular by focussing attention on the need to deliver an increased number of housing units in the Plan period as well as the consideration of a range of potential environmental, social, and economic effects. In turn, this has enabled that wherever possible the most sustainable policy approaches to be identified for inclusion within the revisions to the Plan.
9. A key part of Sustainability Appraisal is looking at alternative approaches so that the effects of different options can be understood, leading to informed choices about the preferred way forward. For Haywards Heath this involved careful understanding of the community's response to the housing consultations in 2012 and 2015, the response received by Members during their Ward meetings, the responses to the original pre-submission Plan, the consequences of the withdrawal of the District Plan prior to examination and the production of a Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA Feb 2015 updated June and November 2015) for the Plan area by Mid Sussex District Council.

10. As a result of the consideration of all the factors which emerged following the publication of the pre-submission Plan in March 2014, HHTC re-considered its preferred spatial option. The revised option is a combination of making best use of Brownfield sites, supporting windfall sites with a specific policy and a careful assessment of known Greenfield housing sites brought to the attention of the Town Council. The revised option for housing delivery was included in its consultation undertaken in November/December 2015. Strong support is given to supporting a vibrant local economy and encouraging inward investment and renewal of existing employment areas; and to safeguarding the setting and identity of the Town, including policies to ensure the remaining rural areas are safeguarded from unacceptable development.
11. The SA indicates that the aims of the Plan, including the new housing strategy would deliver growth in a sustainable way whilst maintaining the rural setting of the Town.