

Equalities Impact Assessment
Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan

July 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Equality Act (2010) places a duty on all public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between persons who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not.
- 1.2. ‘Protected characteristics’ are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 1.3. This report assesses the Submission Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan (NP) to ensure that Hassocks Parish Council (as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the Hassocks NP) is satisfying its statutory duties in this regard. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic analysis of a policy or policies, in order to explore the potential for an adverse impact on a particular group or community. It is a method of assessing and recording the likely differential and/or adverse impact of a policy on people from different groups. If a policy results in unfairness or discrimination then changes to eliminate or lessen the impact should be considered.
- 1.4. The purpose of the analysis is to increase participation and inclusion, to change the culture of public decision-making and to place a more proactive approach to the promotion of equality and fairness at the heart of public policy. The processes involved in conducting the analysis should not be looked on as an end in themselves. Instead, it should be borne in mind that the aim is the promotion of fairness and equality of opportunity and thus it is the outcomes that are of primary concern. In undertaking the EIA, it is important to keep in mind why the Hassocks NP is needed, what the intended outcomes are, and how it will be ensured that the policies will work as intended.

2. Methodology

- 2.1. An assessment has been made on whether the Hassocks NP has a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics (in so far as data is available). The vision and objectives of the NP have been assessed, and individual policies are highlighted where they are considered likely to have a negative impact.

3. Baseline data

- 3.1. Data for the Parish of Hassocks is available from the 2011 Census for the following protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, marriage and civil partnership, race and religious belief.
- 3.2. No data is available for the following protected characteristics: gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation.

Hassocks neighbourhood area – population characteristics

Total Population: 4,731

Age: 19.9% of the population are children aged 17 or less, 54.3% are in the working age groups (ages 18-64), with 25.7% in the older age groups (over 64). The mean age is 45 years.

Sex: 3,625 males; 4,042 females.

Main language: English is the main language for all residents in 97.4% of households.

Country of birth: 93.1% of residents were born in the UK; 2.4% were born elsewhere in the EU and 4.5% were born in other countries.

Ethnic group: 97.3% of residents are White; 1.4% of residents are Mixed/multiple ethnic groups.

Religion: 59.6% of residents are Christian; 29.9% of residents do not have a religion; 8.7% of residents did not state their religion in the 2011 Census.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: 54.9% of residents are married; 0.3% are in a registered same-sex civil partnership; 8.0% are divorced; 9.8% are widowed.

Health: The local community is generally healthy, with 83.3% reporting 'Very good' or 'Good' health at the time of the 2011 Census. Nevertheless, 94 individuals reported long-term sick or a disability.

Source: ONS - 2011 Census

4. Process of Community Consultation

- 4.1. All written communications were in English and it was not considered necessary to translate them into any other language.
- 4.2. Throughout the plan preparation process, the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group has sought to ensure that local residents, their representatives, local businesses, interest groups and wider interested parties, including statutory and regulatory bodies, have been actively consulted and their views sought.
- 4.3. Agendas, key reports and updates have been regularly provided online on the Hassocks Parish Council website.
- 4.4. The overarching principles of the stakeholder engagement process has been to engage in a manner that is extensive, effective, inclusive, fair, transparent and proportionate.
- 4.5. Widespread consultation was carried out during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Working Group made every effort, using a variety of methods, to reach all of the local community.
- 4.6. A considerable number of community consultation exercises, including questionnaires and public meetings, were carried out between 2012 and 2015, when the first Hassocks NP was progressing.

- 4.7. A public consultation meeting has held on 19 and 20 September 2014 at Adastra Park. The event was widely publicised locally. Flyers and posters in key locations (Pubs, Sport facilities, Shops, Church, Notice Boards, Schools, and Doctors Surgery) promoted the event. The event was also noted in the Mid Sussex Times (Thursday 18 September 2014, edition) and social media (Facebook and Twitter) was also used to highlight the event. Exhibition boards presented the information on the key issues which came out of questionnaires distributed in the preceding summer months. An information booklet was available to help residents understand the neighbourhood planning process and what the Hassocks NP can achieve.
- 4.8. A public consultation meeting has held on 30 and 31 January 2015 at Downlands Community School, receiving similar publicity to the previous event. The events included a presentation on the key aspects of producing a Neighbourhood Plan followed by an interactive workshop where residents had the opportunity to share views on potential development sites in the Parish.
- 4.9. On 10 and 11 July 2015 a further public consultation event took place at Downlands School to enable local stakeholders to “Have Your Say on Selection of Housing Sites” receiving similar publicity to the previous events. Attendees were provided with a ‘Consultation Booklet’; ‘Potential Sites Map’; and ‘Coding Grid’. Attendees were asked to identify their preference for the order of sites for potential allocation for housing development.
- 4.10. The initial Pre-submission HNP (Regulation 14) and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (SA) were formally published for consultation between 05 January 2016 and 16 February 2016. The Submission Documents were subsequently prepared and submitted to MSDC in June 2016. The Submission Plan and associated documents underwent further public consultation in July 2016-September 2016. In light of feedback from the ongoing Examination of the Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP), in particular with respect to the overall level of housing need, the Local Planning Authority advised that the Neighbourhood Plan should not proceed to Examination at that time. Progress of the HNP was paused, pending the final adoption of the MSDP, which occurred in March 2018.
- 4.11. On 27 June 2018 the NPWG agreed it would progress a ‘light touch’ review of the HNP. It was agreed that the revised Hassocks NP would need to be subject of further statutory consultation (Regulation 14 and Regulation 16 consultation). There would also need to be additional evidence gathering and updates to evidence base.
- 4.12. The HNP was prepared mindful of the issues raised as part of public consultation exercises undertaken between 2012-2015 and of the key issues the new plan would need to address including reflecting the District Plan Housing Requirement.
- 4.13. The revised Pre-submission Hassocks NP (Regulation 14) and accompanying SA were formally published for a six week period commencing 07 January 2019 and closing 18 February 2019. The consultation documents were available to view online on the dedicated Hassocks NP webpage. Hard copies of the documents were made available for inspection at the Parish Centre. Comments were invited by email and/or by post. Stakeholders were alerted to the consultation via email alerts. Notices alerting residents and stakeholders to the consultation were placed on Parish notice boards and on the Parish Council website.

5. Likely Impact on Groups with Protected Characteristics

5.1. The Vision of Hassocks NP states that:

5.1.1. *'To ensure Hassocks, Keymer and Clayton continue to develop sustainably as a vibrant Parish within a countryside setting.*

5.1.2. *To provide access for the whole community to local social, cultural, sporting and environmental amenities.*

5.1.3. *To ensure the Parish retains its rural feel and remains a desirable place to live, work and visit. Changes that occur should protect and enhance the existing character of the Parish.*

5.2. The vision of the Hassocks NP is expected to have a **positive likely impact** on groups with protected characteristics. It recognises and supports access for the whole community to local social, cultural, sporting and environmental amenities.

5.3. Hassocks NP contains a series of strategic objectives, these set out how the Parish proposes to deliver its vision for Hassocks up to 2031. Delivery of the objectives will be through both planning policies and community action. Each objective is reviewed to assess whether it is likely to have an impact on groups within the Parish with protected characteristics:

Objective	Likely Impact	Commentary
1. To preserve and enhance the rural character and biodiversity of the Parish and its historic buildings, maintaining gaps to neighbouring towns and villages, and having regard to the relationship of the Parish within, and part of the setting to the South Downs National Park.	Neutral	This objective protects the rural character, biodiversity and historic buildings of Hassocks and its relationship to other settlements and the SDNP, which will be enjoyed by all, but is deemed to have a neutral impact on residents with protected characteristics.
2. To ensure all sections of the community have access to key local services including education, health, community services, sporting, cultural, religious, performing and social clubs, groups and shops.	Positive	This objective promotes key local services to all sections of the community, so is expected to have a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics.
3. To provide the opportunity for appropriately sized, affordable and sustainable housing, developed in sympathy with the village and its surroundings, built to very high standards of design, construction, energy efficiency and water management.	Positive	This objective promotes high quality housing which is affordable and sustainable, so is expected to have a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics.
4. To encourage economic development and job creation within the built-up area of the village.	Positive	This objective promotes economic development, and is deemed to have a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics as it seeks to

		provide job locally without having to travel.
5. To develop the centre of the village to form a distinctive social hub.	Positive	This objective promotes the development of the village centre to form a social hub, and is deemed to have a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics as this will encourage community activities.
6. To promote non-car modes of travel, including through accessibility to public transport and improvements in pedestrian and cycle safety; encouraging people to walk, cycle and ride in and around the Parish; to reduce the impact of traffic in terms of congestion, pollution, parking and vehicle speeds; and to encourage the use and availability of electric vehicles.	Positive	This objective promotes sustainable modes of travel, and it is deemed that it will have a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics as it encourages improvements to public transport.
7. To ensure the whole Parish is safe, accessible and attractive to all, acting as a gateway to the South Downs National Park, encouraging tourism, and supporting healthy lifestyles and wellbeing.	Positive	This objective promotes safety and accessibility in the parish and encourages healthy lifestyles and wellbeing, so is expected to have a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics.

- 5.4. All of the Hassocks NP objectives are considered to have a **positive or neutral likely impact** on those with protected characteristics especially the objectives to support local services. There are no individual policies that are considered likely to have a negative impact. The objective to ensure the Parish is safe and accessible is particularly positive for some groups with protected characteristics, as are the objectives that seek to provide opportunity to affordable and sustainable housing.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The Hassocks NP provides a suite of objectives and policies to respond to the vision for the benefit of the local community as a whole including those with protected characteristics.
- 6.2. In preparing the Hassocks NP, Hassocks Parish Council and the NP Working Group have sought to engage widely with the all of the local community. They have gone beyond minimum consultation requirements to gather the views of the community.
- 6.3. In conclusion, the assessment finds the Hassocks NP to be appropriate and that the duty of care prescribed by the Equalities Act (2010) is met.