

WARD REPORT OLD HASTINGS - NOVEMBER 2014

COUNCILLOR JOHN HODGES (cllr.john.hodges@hastings.gov.uk or 445540)

General Issues

Hastings Development Management Plan – Examination in Public.

The examination in public (EIP) of the Council's Development Management Plan commenced on Tuesday the 18th November at the Horntye Park Sports complex, Bohemia Road. As part of the examination process the Inspector has requested the Council's formal submissions and responses to a number of key Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs). These are intended to test the justification for the Plan and its effectiveness in delivering the Councils agreed objectives for economic growth, employment, regeneration and housing set down in our adopted Planning Strategy. The Council's formal submissions on the first four of the matters raised by our Inspector – on General Principles, Housing, Employment/Economic Development, and the Historic and natural Environment were required to be with the Inspector by 4.00 on Friday (31st Oct). For early information these submissions were posted on the Council's Local Plan examination webpage from the first week of November . Full details of the Inspectors MIQs and the examination timetable can be found at http://www.hastings.gov.uk/environment_planning/planning/localplan/dm_plan_siteallocations/dmplan_examination/

The Council's Planning Policy Team have prepared submissions to cover all of the other Matters and Issues raised by our Inspector with further deadlines of the 7th and 14th November for their receipt. During this period and of course for the examination itself the team will be wholly focussed upon the EIP and so will not generally be as available to respond to general planning policy queries.

New Speed Campaign for Mobility scooters in Town

A campaign to reduce the speed of mobility scooters in Hastings town centre has been launched by Hastings Borough Council. The Access 4 All group together with Hastings and Rother Disability Forum have been widely

promoting this scheme. Access in the town is constantly improving for mobility scooter users, but safety of all must be considered. This new campaign aims to encourage mobility scooter users to reduce their speed in our busy town centre areas. Stickers have been designed and placed around the town on lamp posts reminding users to slow down to less than 4mph, the legal set limit on footpaths and pedestrianised areas in order to prevent accidents and ensure the safety of all our residents.

Sussex County FA Hastings Youth Forum recognised at National Awards Ceremony

Last week the Sussex County FA Hastings Youth Forum attended the Football Futures National Awards Ceremony, hosted at St Georges Park, to collect The FA's prestigious Football Legacy Award for services to their community. The award is given to a group of young people who have been viewed to have gone above and beyond the call of duty in an attempt to be proactive in creating a positive cultural impact in their own communities.

Having only been formed in January 2014, the Sussex County FA Youth Forum has gone from strength to strength providing many football opportunities for local young people. Councillor Dawn Poole explained that they are managed by Michael Ryan, College and Community Football Coordinator at the Sussex County FA and mentored by the council's Street Games coordinator, Ken Dullaway the Youth Forum has had many successes. The creation of the Hastings Youth Forum has also had great benefits on its members. They have developed both as people and valued members of the community. Some of the successes achieved by members are George Avann who has secured employment with Albion in the Community, Tom Saunters who has qualified as Level 1 football coach and has since been employed by 'Pass + Move Coaching' and Andrew Costello and Joshua Dowling who have both qualified as Level 1 football coaches and continue to sustain FA Programmes in the Hastings area. To win the prestigious Football Legacy Award is excellent news and we are all extremely proud of all the young people involved. We look forward to the coming year and making even more of an impact on young people and football opportunities locally.

Pelham Arcade Former Glory being restored

Grade II* listed Pelham Arcade in Hastings, one of England's oldest shopping arcades, is well on its way towards being removed from the English Heritage 'Heritage at Risk Register'. Once an eyesore, this 19th century arcade of subterranean shops at the foot of Castle Hill cliff is being transformed. Hastings Borough Council has been working with English Heritage over the past four years to repair the large roof light covering the internal walkway to stop major leaks and new timber shop fronts in a traditional style are being fitted, making the shops more in keeping with their original appearance. Pelham Arcade was upgraded from grade II to grade II* in 2011 in recognition of its importance of early town planning as well as being a rare survival of a semi-underground arcade. We are very pleased indeed with the progress that has been made so far with Pelham Arcade. The whole of Pelham Crescent is a real gem, and it is fantastic to see the arcade starting to be brought up to the standard of the crescent above.

We are committed to restoring the rest of the arcade to the same high standard, and will work with English Heritage to encourage, and if necessary persuade, the rest of the property owners to invest in their premises too. Dr Andy Brown, Planning and Conservation Director at English Heritage in the South East commented that restoring the historic character and appearance of this special shopping arcade which was created just after the prestigious Burlington Arcade in London, has been a priority for English Heritage. We look forward to the completion of this project, which will add a new dimension to the experience of visiting Hastings.

Town vows to remember them

New roads in Hastings may be named after the town's heroes who served in the First World War. A motion to add to the list of possible street names those who served the United Kingdom in the First World War and were awarded a gallantry medal for their actions, and others who made a contribution during those years, has just been passed unanimously by Hastings Borough Council. The motion was proposed and seconded by local councillors who explained that when many of us attended the opening of the "Hastings Remembers" event at the museum back in the summer it struck us how many of today's norms and world views were shaped by the tragic events of 1914 -1918. We have roads named after the big chiefs of the Second World War, Churchill

Avenue in Ore for example, and in Hollington we have a cluster of roads named after former councillors. We also have a considerable smattering of 18th and 19th century generals and admirals, but no road names remember those ordinary people who gave their lives in the service of our nation. Now is not the time or the place to debate the nature and purpose of war, if war is just or unjust and the ability for many to not be able to say no to service in the colours. This motion was about addressing a historical wrong, addressing the fact that Hastings' own are not remembered after their death. Many of you will have a personal interest in this motion, with relatives who have given their lives in the service of our country, and to save the lives of others. The motion also recognises those who did not serve in a combat role. Ambulance drivers, nurses, and chaplains who played a vital role in providing comfort and support to the wounded and injured in their time of need. This list is surely the most inclusive list of names ever in the Borough of Hastings to be considered suitable for street naming. It gives us the chance to remember our former residents in a way which is fitting with the public mood, and will be welcomed by a wide spectrum of society.

"We will remember them."

Hastings Celebrates Another Fish Fair Success

Hastings third Herring Fair, held on the weekend 01- 02 November at the Stade Open Space Hastings, was once again a huge success. The Herring Fair run by Hastings Borough Council on behalf of FLAG ('Fisheries Local Action Group') aims to encourage more people to try herring, a fish that is underused yet plentiful in our sea.

Our fish fairs form part of the annual programme of events in Hastings and the Herring Fair is aimed at specifically promoting the herring and its versatility. This year the free event attracted thousands of visitors over the two days. There were plenty of fishy tasters being given away and a varied selection of herring prepared in different ways, including bloaters, buckling, kippers and soused herring. With many other stalls, cookery classes in the Stade's 'Classroom on the Coast', and musical entertainment this really was another great fish festival in Hastings. A lot of hard work goes into staging the fish

festivals and I'd like to thank everyone involved in the organisation of the Herring Fair, especially members of the FLAG and our local fishermen.

Sonny Elliott, Rock a Nore Fisheries commented:

We like to be involved in this event because it promotes the Hastings Fleet which we support as much as we can. It's nice for people to get something local, we are the only smokers here, we smoke our own fish which is important as we are the last of a dying breed.

Seafront blight lifted once and for all

The proliferation of estate agents' boards that once marred Hastings seafront has been banished once and for all, Hastings Borough Council's Cabinet heard earlier in the month. Not that long ago Hastings seafront was a forest of estate agents' boards, indeed some national newspapers still used library photos taken then of a small number of properties almost hidden by these boards, several to each property. We have a fantastic, historic, seafront, and these boards were just a blot on this. We applied to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for permission which took away 'deemed consent' for these boards, meaning that planning permission had to be applied for. We would not grant this except in the most exceptional circumstances.

The original permission only lasted five years, and expired at the end of 2014, so we asked the Secretary of State to renew it, but this time make it in perpetuity, so that it did not have to be renewed every five years. This request was granted, which means we are now free of the forest of estate agents' boards on our seafront for ever.

Hastings is a great place to live, work, and visit, and we are determined to keep it that way. Our planning enforcement work, which includes this and our 'Grotbusters' initiative on tatty and derelict buildings, and which is being copied by councils elsewhere, shows that we really do mean it.

Tremendous Tec66 event

An event intended to showcase the high-tech industries now based in Hastings & 1066 Country has been hailed as a huge success. 'Tec 66' was held at Sussex Coast College Hastings on Monday 26th October, and organised by Seachange

Sussex, with the support of local business representatives, and Hastings Borough Council.

Cllr John Hodges, who sits on Hastings Borough Council's Cabinet, and came up with the original idea for 'Tec 66', explained that Hastings is of course rightly famous for its history and heritage, but deserves to be equally well known for the incredible concentration of high technology companies that are based in and around the town. We have cutting edge industry right on our very doorstep, and Tec 66 was a chance for local companies to showcase their work to a wider audience. Although only the second Tec 66 event, it shows that we have a developing identity as a centre of excellence.

We were pleased to attract delegates and speakers from around the world to the event, including Dr Moritz Riede of the University of Oxford, formerly of the University of Dresden, and Professor Michel de Jong from Twente University in the Netherlands a leading world authority on the wonder material graphene, showing that Tec 66 has real credibility within the European scientific community. It was great to see Sussex Coast College host the day, it made the perfect modern setting for the show.

We were especially pleased to welcome Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock MBE, who now presents The Sky At Night, and who gave the opening talk. Not only is Maggie a world leader in her field, and an increasingly well-known name in the media, but she actually grew up here in Hastings. It was very apt indeed that she was able to show that, literally, the sky is the limit to our ambition here.

Us Girls Rock - A Festival of Sport

Hastings Borough Council's Street Games project held a festival of sport for girls aged between 12 and 18 during the half term break. The Us Girls Rocks event took place at Freedom Leisure Helenswood Sports Centre on Wednesday 29 October. The aim of this event was to get females into sport and physical activity to create a sporting habit for life. Girls had the opportunity to try sports from clubs across the town including Hastings Predators Floorball and Fighting Tigers Gym. Fifty eight girls participated in over fifteen different physical activities and sports on the day which also included a chill out zone with nail care and beauty.

It was very encouraging to see so many young girls take part in this event and our thanks must go to the young volunteers who ran the event mentored by senior staff and the support given by Active Sussex, Brighton University and Freedom Leisure Helenswood Sports Centre. People interested in volunteering on the StreetGames Project should contact Ken Dullaway, the council's StreetGames co-ordinator kdullaway@hastings.gov.uk

Pavement Parking:

A number of residents have raised with me the problem of pavement parking. It has now been decided to introduce experimental traffic orders banning footway and verge parking in a number of locations around the county. In my borough ward the bans will be introduced on Mount Road and Ashburnham Road. If it proves to be successful then these experimental orders will be made permanent, and allow for further discussion if it could be extended into other parts of the Borough.

New Visitor Centre at Combe Valley Countryside Park

Our new visitor centre project for the Hastings Country Park is not the only show in Town. A new visitor centre, located off Freshfields Road at Combe Valley Countryside Park is a partnership project between Hastings Borough Council, Rother District Council, East Sussex County Council and Groundwork South. Its aim is to improve access, participation and the natural environment at the park. People are invited to come and see the plans for the visitor centre and comment on the design and use prior to submission for planning at West St Leonards Children's Centre, 464 Bexhill Road St Leonards TN38 8AU on Saturday 15 November 11:00 – 15:00 and Tuesday 18 November 10:00 – 13:00. If you are unable to attend these dates you can also view the plans and leave comments online at www.combevalleycountrysidepark.com

The provision of a new visitor hub at Combe Valley is a really exciting project for the Countryside Park. We are proposing to use recycled shipping containers to be as sustainable as possible for our building. Everyone is welcome to come along and participate in the consultation and we really welcome your feedback before a planning application is submitted to Rother District Council in December. Once again what other resort can boast a country park at either end !

Council Calls to Keep Passengers on Track

Hastings Borough Council is calling on the rail industry to do more as passengers are faced with three years of disruption. This call was made after councillors received a briefing on the implications of the closure of London Bridge station, which will lead to major changes to the timetable as the London terminal is rebuilt to accommodate the new Thames Link services. Our position is that we absolutely support the need for investment in new rail infrastructure, and have no doubt that, when completed, London Bridge station will have first-rate facilities and a better train service than now. What concerns us is what happens during the three years that the south eastern side of the station is being rebuilt.

At our briefing by local train operating company South Eastern, we were told that trains from Hastings to Waterloo East and Charing Cross cannot call at the station for some 18 months, starting in January 2015. Huge numbers of passengers travel between Hastings and London Bridge, and they will face having to go through the station to Waterloo East, then retrace their journey on the Jubilee Line, or by bus. Although this will not cost any more, it will be massively inconvenient, adding to already long journey times. Passengers wanting to travel onwards via Thames Link services will be even more seriously affected, as Thames Link trains won't be calling at London Bridge for three years.

We have asked South Eastern if Hastings passengers could travel via the high speed line via Ashford and St Pancras International at no additional cost, which will make it much easier for those travelling to/from the Kings Cross area, who currently change at London Bridge, and for those with onwards Thames Link journeys, but that hasn't been agreed, which means even more passengers having to travel via Waterloo East. We also asked for more to be done for passengers travelling to places like Guy's Hospital; this journey is very easy at the moment, but will become much more difficult, particularly for those with mobility problems, when London Bridge closes to Hastings line trains. We are also concerned that the rush-hour trains might become even slower, which again, is not acceptable.

So, whilst we accept and understand that the work has to be carried out, we do think South Eastern, in conjunction with other train operators, Transport for London, and the Department for Transport, could do much more for passengers who are being inconvenienced. We will be writing to David Statham, South Eastern's new managing director, to ask that our concerns are taken seriously, and more is done to help those travelling to and from Hastings whilst London Bridge station is rebuilt.

Footpath to reopen at Ecclesbourne Glen

Work has started to open up a major footpath at Hastings Country Park. Last winter a major landslip affected a number of footpaths in Ecclesbourne Glen at the Country Park. Hastings Borough Council has been working with East Sussex County Council and Natural England to agree what footpaths can be reinstated and what ones will remain closed. Hastings Country Park Conservation Volunteers, working with the Rangers, have reinstated some of the steps on the main footpath that joins the East Hill with the rest of Hastings Country Park. Further work will take place before the end of the month to install signs and wooden fencing on other footpaths that will remain closed until further notice.

The volunteers are very proud to have undertaken an important first stage in reopening our main coastal footpath, which can now be used with care due to the uneven surface. Their hard work will allow people to resume walking from the East Hill to the rest of the Country Path along the coastal path. Everyone is welcome to join the Conservation Volunteers. They meet on the first Sunday of every month to help maintain the borough's premier nature reserve. If you are interested in joining any tasks please contact Julie Apps, Country Park Ranger at japps@hastings.gov.uk

Local Fishing Industry Struggles over Fishing Quotas

Hastings fishermen are currently having a difficult time. They would normally be catching plaice and skate, but they have no quota for these fish. They are able to catch sole but this requires the use of the same nets to catch plaice which are in abundance; they cannot therefore catch sole without catching plaice. As a result of this the local fishery has shut down until cod arrive.

The currently unfair fishing quota distribution favours large, factory fishing ships over local, low impact fishermen. We need fishing that protects our marine environment, contributes to the local economy, and supports coastal communities. The local fishing industry supports hundreds of jobs and has a massive impact on the tourism industry. Local fishermen have been up to Westminster to bring this to the attention of the fisheries minister. They asked for an immediate, emergency reallocation of unused quota from the big producer organisations and have requested that when quotas for 2015 are allocated local, low-impact fishermen are first in the queue. We need government to permanently re-allocate quota from the 96% that's given to the big producer organisations which account for less than 10% of the fleet, to the under ten metre boat fishing fleet accounting for 92% of fishing fleet who fish sustainably in the South East."

People can help to support the local fishing industry in their request for permanent quota reallocation by emailing George Eustice, UK Fisheries Minister <http://bit.ly/1ub3QXj>

Hastings Country Park Heath Land Restoration

Work is now well underway on a three year programme to clear scrub and gorse across a large area of Hastings Country Park. The Country Park includes the Hastings Cliffs Site of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSI'), and the European-designated Special Area of Conservation. These recognise the national and international importance of the vegetated cliff, cliff top grassland and coastal heath land which characterises the Country Park and, indeed, makes it so special.

It is owned by Hastings Borough Council, and we have a legal duty to conserve the area, and a duty to conserve and enhance the SSSIs which we own and manage. The council has been working with Natural England on management and protection of the Country Park since 2000, and, following the completion of a successful ten year Countryside Stewardship Agreement started in 2004 we worked with Natural England to move on to a ten year Higher Level Stewardship Agreement (HLS).

This started in October 2013, and is a legal agreement between Hastings Borough Council and Natural England and covers the entire nature reserve, including the

Firehills. The agreement highlights the fact that gorse and bracken are a severe threat to maritime heath and cliff-top habitats and their control has to be high priority, and sets very clear targets for their management. The work we have started is part of a three year programme to help us meet our objectives, and ensure that the unique nature of the Country Park is maintained :- reducing the dominant gorse and scrub will increase the land available for less dominant plants, benefit wildlife and ensure that the landscape continues to look attractive, with its distinctive mosaic feature, and enhance the coastal view. We do have to use heavy machinery for this work, and signs have been put up throughout the Country Park telling visitors what is happening, and reminding them to be aware of the machinery, and keep dogs under control. Our Country Park is rightly, the green jewel in our crown, and this work will help to keep it shining brightly for many years to come.

Please do not hesitate to contact myself with any concerns that you might have with regards to the ward, and are within my gift to resolve. I would also like to take this opportunity of wishing you all the compliments of the season, and hopefully an even better year in 2015.

Kind Regards John Hodges

