WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): Post Adoption Statement
Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan

The Hailsham Neighbourhood Development Plan was 'made' at Full Council on 21 July 2021 and forms part of the Development Plan for the determination of planning applications in Hailsham Parish.

This statement has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (16) (3) and (4), which require a statement to be produced on adoption of a plan or programme, to detail:

1. **How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;**
2. **How the environmental report has been taken into account;**
3. **How opinions expressed through the public consultation have been taken into account;**
4. **The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and**
5. **The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.**

This statement addresses each of these points in turn.

1. How environmental (sustainability) considerations have been integrated into the plan

Land Use Consultants prepared a Scoping Report on behalf of Hailsham Town Council to inform and support the development of the emerging Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan. The scoping stage of the SA involves understanding the social, economic and environmental baseline for the plan.

In line with the requirements of the SEA Regulations, baseline information was collected on the following 'SEA topics': biodiversity, flora and fauna; population and human health; water; soil; air; climatic factors; material assets; cultural

heritage and the landscape. Data on social and economic issues were also taken in to consideration. This baseline provided the basis for predicting and monitoring the likely effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and helped to identify alternative ways of dealing with any adverse effects identified.

Drawing on the review of relevant plans, policies and programmes and the baseline information, key sustainability issues were identified (including environmental problems, as required by the SEA Regulations).

A Sustainability Appraisal Framework was then presented, setting out the SA objectives against which options and policies were appraised. The SA framework provides a way in which the sustainability impacts of implementing a particular plan were described, analysed and compared. The SA framework sets out a series of sustainability objectives and associated questions that were used to "interrogate" options and policies drafted during the plan-making process.

2. How has the Environmental Report (SA/SEA Report) been taken into account?

The SA process contributed to the development of the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan by providing an independent assessment of vision (including alternative options), objectives and policies within the plan assessed against the SA Framework developed at the Scoping Stage.

The overall conclusions of the SA/SEA Report was that the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan was expected to have generally positive effects with regards to sustainability, particularly with regards to maintaining and improving the local townscape and the health and wellbeing of local people. The NDP was expected to avoid or mitigate all potentially significant negative effects and no residual negative effects were identified. As such, the report concluded that no additional mitigation measures were necessary.

The SA/SEA Report demonstrates how sustainability considerations have been taken into account and provides an audit trail and formal statement on the consideration and assessment of all policy options.

3. How opinions expressed through the public consultation have been taken into account

<u>Key Environmental Bodies</u>

Regulation 13(2) of the SEA Regulations requires local authorities to consult particular Consultation Bodies defined at Regulation 4 on the draft plan and accompanying SEA Report. These bodies include Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England.

Historic England and Natural England had no comments to make. The Environment Agency supported the inclusion of SA objectives on biodiversity, water quality and flood risk and recommended the SA take account to relevant policies, plans and strategies including any local Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, flood risk strategies and the South East River Basin Management Plan. A full schedule of responses is provided at Appendix 1 of the SEA/SA Report.

Public consultation

The SA/SEA of the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan was consulted upon for six weeks at the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 16 stage. Details of the consultation undertaken at Regulation 14 stage of the Neighbourhood Plan is available in the Hailsham Consultation Statement.

4. The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as 'made', in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes 2004 (12) (2) requires environmental reports to examine reasonable alternatives for the plan or programme whilst taking into account the objectives and scope of the plan or programme. This statement is required to set out the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as 'made' in light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with.

The Sustainability Objectives in the SA Framework were used to assess the overall sustainability performance of the neighbourhood plan vision against an alternative option. The report concluded that either vision was likely to deliver positive outcomes when assessed against the SA Framework with no adverse impact identified.

The production of the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan involved significant consultation with local communities prior to formal consultation stages as detailed in the consultation statement. The Sustainability Scoping Report, final SA/SEA Report and the draft plan have also been subject to formal rounds of consultation. The Neighbourhood Plan and Sustainability Appraisal Report were also published for a further consultation prior to the Independent Examination at Regulation 16 stage. The neighbourhood plan has been changed and modified in response to the representation received at each stage.

The Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan has been ‘made’ on the recommendations of a suitably qualified Independent Examiner. No new evidence has been brought to the attention of Wealden District Council since the Examination took place to bring into question those recommendations.

5. The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme

The SEA/SA Report for Hailsham neighbourhood plan identified that no cumulative uncertain or significant negative effects have been identified. As such, it concluded that ‘no monitoring is required’.

Notwithstanding this conclusion, the District Council will continue to monitor a number of relevant sustainability indicators through the annual Authority Monitoring Reports and this will help to inform any review of the Hailsham Neighbourhood Plan. These indicators includes the conservation management, measuring the quality of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and changes in priority habitats and species.