

A Vision for Hassocks

Village Design Statement

Guidance on development within the Parish of
Hassocks, Keymer and Clayton Hamlet

Part One 2008

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Jack and Jill Windmills –

The historic landmark of the parish

FOREWORD

by D.Edward King RIBA MRTPI.

This village design statement is what its title says, a vision for Hassocks. The group of volunteer villagers responsible have

responded to the initiative and support of the Parish Council by producing a highly professional and informative document which must be an object lesson in co-operation. This demonstrates that by drawing on specialist skills in the community a really worthwhile document is achievable. The historic and environmental appraisals are realistic and honest, and identification of the changes facing Hassocks salutary. The report tackles the matters of guidance for the future with directness, and laudably identifies actions and ideas for improvement in a visionary way which some may find difficult to relate to. I very much like the effort which the report makes to raise design awareness, to open people's eyes to both the past and present, and to outline future possibilities. This is a document which I can commend.

The Village Design Statement Working Group 2008
Jack Windmill

PREFACE

by Mavis Flowers

I am a local resident of 78 years and during my lifetime have seen many many changes to the villages of Keymer and Hassocks. Keymer used to be a busy village with a post office, bakery, dairy, cobbler and general store – these were gradually lost when Hassocks became the main source of supply. Once again, history is repeating itself as out-of-town supermarkets have become the 'in thing'. It would be a great achievement if Hassocks could once again supply all the needs of a modern society. Praise must go to the existing local traders who are so willing to cater for our needs. Many of the big houses in Keymer Road have been demolished to make way for smaller developments – some good and some not so good. It would be a great shame if the few remaining historical buildings were demolished for more modern design. Hassocks has so much in its favour: easy access to the beautiful countryside; direct links to Brighton, Gatwick and London; recreational facilities for young and old; and a very good community spirit, which is obvious from the many local societies and support given to local functions, such as concerts. I do hope the Village Design Statement will go some way in helping to improve and enhance the village while continuing to retain its rural aspect. This will be a benefit to both present and future residents.

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INTRODUCTION

“The only constant is change”

The Hassocks Village Design Statement is a document developed, researched, written and edited by the people of Hassocks Parish and describes the distinctive character of Hassocks, Keymer and Clayton Hamlet, its buildings and the surrounding countryside. It outlines a vision of how the village could evolve.

In May 2000 the Parish Councils of Clayton and Keymer were amalgamated to form Hassocks Parish Council. The newly formed Parish Council then encouraged and supported public consultation which resulted in the Village Action Plan, published in December 2002.

The Village Design Statement stems directly from this Action Plan.

Subsequently, the Parish Council decided to set up a working group of local people to produce a Village Design Statement and, in January 2005, the Parish Council advertised for volunteers prepared to form a working group. It is this group of volunteer villagers who have produced this document with the support of, but separate from, the Parish Council. Public consultation has included public workshops and exhibitions, and the production and distribution of a questionnaire to ascertain parishioners' views on the content of the Village Design Statement. The Village Design Statement builds upon the excellent work being done by local volunteer groups, particularly Hassocks Amenity Association and Hassocks Community Partnership.

It is anticipated that the Village Design Statement will go a long way towards preserving and enhancing the unique character of our village. It will complement the local planning context as set out in the Mid Sussex Local Plan 2004, and help strengthen the role of the Parish Council when consulted over planning applications. The Hassocks Village Design Statement is intended for adoption by Mid Sussex District Council as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This document is one of the material considerations that can be taken into account when determining a planning application for development.

It is intended to provide helpful guidance for developers, applicants and other parties involved in the development process, and is consistent with the policies contained in the Mid Sussex Local Plan 2004.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Local Plan, in particular those policies referred to in Part II (SPD) of this document. It is intended that this Supplementary Planning

Document will form part of the Mid Sussex Local Development Framework. To meet with the requirements of the Town & Country Planning Regulations 2004 and the content of Planning Policy Statement 12 (Local Development Framework), this Village Design Statement (VDS) has been subject to the Sustainability Appraisal process, which includes a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This part of the VDS is intended to form the background to the content of Part Two of the VDS, which is the actual Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD is based on the content of this document's 'Guidance for the Future'.

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VISION & OBJECTIVES

"Shall I at least set my lands in order?"

Through a process of continuous evolution of considered design and recognition of our heritage, our vision for the Parish of Hassocks, Keymer and Clayton Hamlet is for it to continue to thrive as a modern, flourishing village which embraces and benefits all sections of our community while maintaining its rural feel and setting.

Our priority for Clayton Hamlet is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of this unique area. To this end we must:

- Ensure that any new development enhances and protects the heritage and rural character of the Parish of Hassocks, Keymer and Clayton Hamlet, especially its conservation areas.
- Ensure that it is sustainable and does not detrimentally affect the surrounding countryside and its flora and fauna, and will enhance wildlife habitats.
- Ensure that any development respects the physical and visual strategic and local gaps and does not cause the village to become urbanised.
- Assist in the protection of areas where development would have a detrimental effect on the individuality and locally distinctive character of the Parish.
- Give suggestions for the enhancement of the Parish which create a strong sense of place, promote a sense of wellbeing and promote personal security.
- Support sustainable development which promotes the needs of everyone in the community, blends with and respects the existing character and tradition, and maintains the strong spirit of community which exists in the Parish.
- Ensure all new development is of an appropriate scale and is of the highest quality and design, taking into

account the Parish and its setting.

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Location

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Hassocks nestling at the foot of the Downs

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PARISH

"To build, to plant, whatever you intend

In all, let Nature never be forgot

Consult the Genius of the Place in all"

While Roman sites and a Roman road have been discovered in the village, and an Anglo-Saxon site was found during landscaping at a Hassocks golf course, Hassocks only really came to the fore with the advent of the railway in 1841.

It was then the terminus station for the route from London to Brighton and was known as Hassocks Gate (after the old tollgate nearby).

In 1881 the station was renamed Hassocks (the name deriving from *hassuc* having the same Old English root as 'tussock' and hence meaning 'a field with rough tussocks of grass').

Hassocks is situated in the old Parishes of Clayton and Keymer. Clayton comes from the Saxon name *Claitune* meaning 'farmstead on clay land' and Keymer was originally *Cow'smere*, describing the lush meadowland under the South Downs.

With the piercing of the South Downs by a tunnel in 1844 rail access was gained to Brighton. Hassocks station also served villages from Westmeston in the east to Albourne in the west, and the surrounding area.

During the past 160 years Hassocks has become a pleasant, mainly residential community numbering over 3000 households. Clayton Hamlet, further away from the railway station, has remained fundamentally unaltered.

In 1992 Hassocks was twinned with Wald-Michelbach in Germany and Montmirail in France and there is an active twinning association.

Hassocks Parish came into being in 2000.

The Saxon church of St John the Baptist, Clayton Hamlet

A cottage in Keymer

Conservation Area

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HASSOCKS TODAY – A FLOURISHING VILLAGE

"The Country of the Heart is a Place without Maps"

LANDSCAPE SETTING

Hassocks lies about a mile north of the South Downs on the scarp foot slopes on a belt of fertile soil, which was originally heavily wooded. Areas of lighter soil give a suitable habitat for coniferous trees, now sadly not as much in evidence as they ought to be due to losses and lack of replanting.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Hassocks was a popular visitor destination because of the healthy air this coniferous tree coverage helped

create, and some housing development occurred to cater for people keen to live in this beneficial place. As part of the inheritance from tree planting by owners of the late-19th century villa-type houses along the eastern end of Keymer Road, there is still an interesting mix of more exotic trees. A Catalpa and a large Robinia grace the south side of Keymer Road, and there are various good specimens of conifers, magnolias and acers. Around Hassocks there are a number of woods situated on the heavier soil of the Gault Clay strata which gives a suitable habitat for deciduous trees, mainly oak, birch and hazel, while at the foot of the South Downs soil conditions favour beech trees. Butchers Wood, just off the westbound Keymer Road before the railway bridge, was the first wood purchased by The Woodland Trust (now a large national tree planting and wood owning charity) and this wood makes a welcome visual buffer for the area and might even help dampen some of the noise from the nearby London – Brighton railway line. The heavier soils overlying the clay layers lying close to Hassocks are prone to water-logging and so exacerbate the periodic flooding from the many local streams that eventually feed into the river Adur. In Clayton Hamlet two sources for the River Adur can be found, Whitelands Reservoir and Spring Lane, meeting at the end of Parklands Road in Hassocks. The largest stream in the Hassocks area is the Herring Stream, passing under Keymer Road at Spittleford Bridge just east of the Infant School. More could be done to turn the Herring Stream from its present rather ignored and untidy state to become a visual amenity for this part of the village. One of the major visual qualities which is evident when looking down on Hassocks from the South Downs is the wealth of tree cover which, while also covering up some of the least attractive features, gives it a homogeneity and a pleasing rural quality. This tree coverage is a very important and attractive aspect of Hassocks which needs to be acknowledged, nurtured and sustained. This is in accordance with Policies C6 and B7 of the Mid Sussex Local Plan. Currently the South Downs are classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and this has undoubtedly gone some way to protect its unique environment. However, it has not followed that communities and settlements just outside the AONB boundary, of which Hassocks is one, have enjoyed a sensitive and coherent policy of planned development. Instead we have witnessed a piecemeal approach with much permitted development having little architectural merit. With the proposed South Downs National Park

expected to replace the AONB designation, the contradiction between a beautiful, protected landscape being the backdrop to an increasingly insensitively designed built environment is something that needs to be urgently addressed.
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ROADS & TRANSPORT

Hassocks is divided by the north-south A273, a busy road taking traffic to and from Haywards Heath/ Burgess Hill to join the A23 to and from Brighton. Hassocks is divided east-west by the B2116 corridor road that links the linear villages at the northern edge of the South Downs: Westmeston, Ditchling, Hassocks, Hurstpierpoint and further westwards. The B2116 also acts as a corridor route for access to the A23. The roads of Clayton Hamlet are mainly single track with passing places and it is important that this rural characteristic is protected.

Avenues and streets in Hassocks are generally fairly wide and many are tree-lined. To date, yellow lines and parking restrictions are few, and the village centre has parking which is both accessible and free. However, there is a problem with people who use Hassocks Station parking in nearby roads to the inconvenience of residents.

There is also inconsiderate and unnecessary parking on grass verges throughout Hassocks which damages verges and creates eyesores.

A considerable number of school children travel into Hassocks to attend the schools here, and some pupils resident in Hassocks travel to schools out of the immediate area. While a large number of children arrive in Hassocks by train or school buses, many are transported by car resulting in severe traffic congestion during term time.

19% of Hassocks households have no car, while 35.4% have two or more cars. Comparative average figures for Mid Sussex are 14.2% and 43.3% respectively (figures from 2001 Census).

Hassocks Station acts as the main transit point for people commuting north and south from nearby villages and surrounding areas.

The lower High Street

View of the eastern approach to the village

INFRASTRUCTURE

Until recently, the infrastructure – including schools, health centres etc. – has generally kept pace with the increases in development and population growth.

There are three schools in Hassocks; Hassocks Infant School, Windmills Junior School and Downlands Community School.

The schools have little spare capacity.

POPULATION & ECONOMY

Data available in 2005 show that 70.4% of the population of Hassocks are in good health, against a Mid Sussex average of 74.4%, while 7.0% are in poor health compared with a Mid Sussex average of 5.9%. In terms of ethnic composition, the population of Hassocks is predominantly white (98.4%).

One person households make up 32.1% (Mid Sussex average 26.9%), 23.4% of households include dependent children (Mid Sussex average 30.1%) and 85.3% of housing is owner occupied (Mid Sussex average 80.2%).

Employment stands at 61.4% and 1.5% are unemployed (Mid Sussex averages 68.4% and 1.6% respectively).

20.1% of villagers are aged 1-19 and 33.8% are aged over 60 (Mid Sussex averages 24.9% and 21.6% respectively). The average age is 46.3 years compared with a district average of 39.8 years. Clayton Hamlet is largely made up of commuters, families and professional people, with a limited number of farmers and residents in rural employment. There are also a number of retirees.

Hassocks acts as a focus for a substantial area in terms of shopping facilities and businesses.

For its size it has a wide range of shops and businesses. There is a feeling that four charity shops are too many, but that these are better than empty shops. That said, new shops and businesses must be encouraged, patronised and established to maintain the dynamics of a flourishing village.

The village centre

The village centre

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HASSOCKS TODAY –

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

“Culture is the organisation of diversity, not the replication of uniformity.”

BUILDING FORM & ARCHITECTURE

The development of the architectural phases of Hassocks can be noted as follows:

- Isolated Georgian houses as farms or serving farmland.
- The coming of the railway, resulting in Victorian terrace houses, semi-detached houses and larger detached villas. Also, the Orchard Tea Gardens, once one of the most famous pleasure gardens in the South of England, was an important attraction for ‘day-trippers’ arriving by railway from Brighton and London.
- The post WW1 social housing ribbon development in London Road and Lodge Lane.
- The 1930s modern suburb model village with village shops. The Hassocks Homes Estate,

built on an area that included much of the Orchard Tea Gardens. Also individual houses in other areas of Hassocks, some by the important local architect Harold Turner (1885 – 1961), in Clayton Avenue and Keymer Road.

- The late 1950s development of the High Street on the north side, with worthy architectural corner buildings and their adjacent linked shops by Eric Winters of H. Hubbard Ford, but sadly devalued by the 1960s Holmwood Court with poorly detailed shops and flats between. The 1950s East Sussex County Council extensions to Stafford House in a simplified post-Festival of Britain/Scandinavian style are also of note for their understanding of scale, materials and location.
- The Wilmington Close development with its part Radburn layout and Sussex vernacular styled houses and shops by Peter Farley and Beverley Pyke of Overton & Partners, completed in 1963, illustrated and praised in a Government housing document of the time for its design quality and layout.
- The 1960s and 1970s Semley Road developments with the short terrace of three-story H. Hubbard Ford Span-inspired town houses forming the “Willows” is architecturally interesting. Although not originally of the same quality as Wilmington Close, it is possibly now the more impressive of the two developments as it has not suffered from so many insensitive additions and extensions.

Victorian terraces built with the coming of the railway
1930s chalet bungalows

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- The volume housing estates of the 1970s utilised standard house plans and materials with little consideration for, or sympathy with, the location and landscape setting.
 - The 1980s developments inspired by the enlightened patronage of Ayling & Strudwick comprising “The Orchard”, “Hassocks Court” and “The Genistas”. These three developments were designed by the architect Michael Blee, who was nationally known and admired for his church architecture.
- Until very recently, images of Hassocks showed, in the main, houses and bungalows with manicured lawns, clipped hedges, rose beds and annual planting. Such images are now becoming rarer as increasing numbers of house owners choose to concrete, tarmac or pave over their front gardens for car parking. The change from earth to concrete, which can increase excess water run-off by up to 50%, also has serious implications for Hassocks with its history of flooding. There is a further impact in that many owners soften their concrete forecourt with planters and pots which

need more frequent watering than gardens, and are therefore a source of concern in the light of current water supply problems. It is worth noting that property values have fallen in some UK areas where the roads have lost their leafiness and fragrance from gardens. Hassocks can be seen as a village that has developed slowly over the decades, and the scale of development has generally been in step with developments in the sustainable infrastructure of the village. While the various, sometimes conflicting, styles of architecture tend to give Hassocks a less conventional attractiveness than some of the neighbouring, older established villages, they reflect how Hassocks has been changing and adapting to economic and social constraints, to maintain its position as a flourishing village and community. The historic mix of architectural phases and differing styles needs to be seen as a positive starting point and not as a precedent for badly designed and inappropriately scaled developments. The open spaces of Wilmington Close, built in the 1960s
The Willows, built in the 1970s

BUILDINGS OF INTEREST

This includes buildings that are visually/historically important to Hassocks.

- Church of St John the Baptist, Clayton. Saxon in origin and mentioned in the Domesday Book. Has famous 12th century wall paintings which inspired the painter Graham Sutherland's 'Christ in Majesty' tapestry in Coventry Cathedral. The three bells are amongst the oldest in Sussex, dating from 1420. It is a Grade I listed building.
- The Old Manor House in the Keymer Conservation Area dates from the 15th century.
- Clayton Castle, a listed 15th-16th century timber house on the corner of Spring Lane/ Underhill Lane. Originally a pair of partly thatched cottages which became the Castle Inn during the 1840s.
- Clayton Manor at the centre of the Hamlet. This property has been altered and now has a Regency façade with an older structure hidden within.
- Keymer Church, one of only five churches in Britain dedicated to St Cosmas & St Damian, patron saints of physicians and surgeons. It is also an architectural rarity with its wood shingled covered double spire, and was extensively remodelled in Victorian times.
- Oldland Mill, built in 1703 and working until 1870 by wind power, then converted to run by steam power until 1912 after which it fell into disrepair. Hassocks Amenity Association has been renovating the mill since 1980

and acquired the freehold to it in 1997. The Oldland Mill Trust was set up to continue the renovation which is now nearing completion.

- Jack and Jill Windmills. Jill is a white painted post mill built in 1821 and brought over the Downs by oxen from Brighton. Last worked in 1907 and now maintained by a preservation society and open to the public. The privately owned Jack windmill is a black tower mill with a top round section constructed of timber and iron,

turning on a flat plate bedded on top of brickwork. The original mill on this site was built in 1765. There is a chapel within.

- Tunnel House, Clayton Hamlet, built over the London to Brighton railway line above the entrance to Clayton Tunnel in 1836. The castellated house has Gothic towers and was originally used as a wages centre for the workmen digging the railway tunnel and cutting. It is a listed structure.

- The Hassocks Primary Health Care Centre, a single storey mono-pitched structure designed around a courtyard by Richard Burfoot in 1983. This is a nicely detailed building which was short-listed for RIBA national and area awards when originally completed.

- Little Court, Belmont Lane, originally noted in Pevsner's 'Buildings of England: Sussex', designed by Neville Conder and illustrated in the architectural press of the time. It has sadly since been extended and altered.

A built-up area boundary has been defined for Keymer and Hassocks in order to conserve the rural setting of the village and to protect the surrounding countryside from unnecessary development.

To help conserve the 'historic core' of the built-up area and to preserve the attractive approach into Keymer from Ditchling and along Lodge Lane, the District Council designated this as a Conservation Area in 1989. At the heart of the Conservation Area are seven listed buildings, and most of the buildings in this area are over 100 years old.

Part of the Conservation Area, Keymer
Stafford House

STREET LIGHTING, FURNITURE & SIGNS

There is no consistent style of street lighting or general street furniture in Hassocks. This lack of consistency gives an unnecessarily cluttered and untidy look to the main streets. Similarly, there is no real thought apparent in the design and placing of many road signs, and a further aspect of this

is that there is a tendency for each sign to have its own unattractive post. This adds to the clutter and tends to make signs harder to notice and read.

OPEN SPACES & RECREATION

For its present size, Hassocks has about the right amount of local recreation grounds and parks/ public gardens. There is a good mix of facilities available: cricket pitch, football grounds, bowling green, skateboard park, tennis courts, golf course, a croquet club and stoolball club. There are five recreation fields, one situated off London Road which also has a children's play activity area. The others are situated in Brighton Road and at Clayton Hamlet, which also has a new sports pavilion, a synthetic cricket pitch and three football pitches. A further recreation space is located adjacent to the Beacon Youth Centre at Keymer.

In addition, the well used Adastra Park, situated between Hassocks and Keymer in a central and pleasant position, provides sporting facilities and play areas for the whole community. The Village Hall, Parish Centre and public toilets are also located here. Downlands Community School has recently developed additional sporting facilities which may be used by the public.

Walking on the Downs above Hassocks

RURAL ENVIRONMENT

The landscape setting is increasingly threatened by inter-visibility between neighbouring settlements, particularly with Burgess Hill to the north, and by encroachment of open spaces both in Hassocks and around its periphery.

The settings of towns and villages are as important as the buildings and spaces within them and add to their overall character. This is confirmed in MSDC Local Plan Policy C4.

A clear visual break between settlements gives them a recognisable structure. Retaining these visual and physical gaps is therefore critical to prevent 'village sprawl'. Hence MSDC Local Plan Policy C2 and C3 deals with the Strategic Gap between Hassocks/ Keymer and Burgess Hill and the Local Gap between Hassocks and Hurstpierpont.

At present, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) policies apply to the south and west of the Parish. However, with a different boundary for the proposed South Downs National Park, Adastra Park

Butchers Wood – the first purchase by the Woodland Trust

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current AONB areas that will not be included in the SDNP, if designated, will be de-designated as AONB. This therefore leaves the future protective status of such areas in some doubt.

The two Tree Wardens in Hassocks keep a

vigilant eye on the condition of trees in the village, and report back to the Parish Council. There are also plans for planting/ replanting of trees in various suitable locations in the village. Existing parks and open spaces within Hassocks allow for a visual continuity with the surrounding countryside and add to the ambience of the village while at the same time helping to break up the built environment. To have the splendid, panoramic view of the South Downs as the southern backdrop to the village must inform the visual quality and impact of any new building.

GUIDANCE FOR THE FUTURE

"Find a way to make beauty necessary and find a way to make the necessary beautiful"

INFRASTRUCTURE

Until quite recently the infrastructure serving Hassocks has more or less kept pace with the expansion of the village. However, it has now reached a stage where certain aspects of the infrastructure, for example the health centre, sewage disposal, drainage and road congestion, could easily and adversely be affected by further illconsidered and badly designed developments.

- Make sure the village infrastructure can cope with any further demands before those demands are made on it.

HOUSING & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Although not a classically picturesque Downland village, Hassocks has a pleasing ambience. Approaching the centre of Hassocks from the west and east, the impression is of coming out of trees into a clearing. The important gabled buildings and the road sloping down to, and bending on, the Herring Stream bridge makes for a dynamic and interesting vista. However, more needs to be done to maintain and enhance this visual characteristic. Special attention needs to be given to public space, with quality relating to design, materials, workmanship, value to the community and sustainability. Housing density is an issue of importance in achieving sustainable development. Every green space in suburbs and villages is regarded by government and developers as a potential high density site, ignoring the fact that high density has historically created social problems. These social problems are clearly seen where higher density housing schemes are tacked on to periphery areas *The Village Design Statement Working Group 2008* with a lower housing density or where the social infrastructure is minimal. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and environmental observers are now calling for a drop in the nationwide minimum density level for new housing, claiming that environments

would benefit from a more sophisticated density system, with local authorities setting their own density levels based on needs and site conditions rather than on arbitrary national targets.

While volume house building is a technologically advanced business, there is a widespread view that the style of such housing is sub-standard. This leads to the question why mass-produced houses still do not approach anywhere near the levels of design integrity, build quality and material efficiency demonstrated by car manufacturers, let alone their innovative and exciting design. The subsequent extensions and extended paved areas in new and existing housing areas in Hassocks give an increasingly urban feel to parts of the village. The removal of trees and shrubs together with increased wall surfaces can lead to the illusion of a higher house density than there actually is. This adverse factor must be taken into account when considering the future of the village. There are certain changes that can be made to houses that do not require planning permission. These 'minor' piecemeal changes can disproportionately harm the character and appearance of a building. UPVC replacement doors and windows in pre-war Hassocks houses are a case in point. While cost obviously dictates initial decisions, it can generally be said that pre-war houses are visually impoverished by UPVC replacement windows and doors. Post-war houses seem better able to deal with replacement plastic windows providing care is taken in choosing a design that equates with the existing width of window frames and cills. Far too many replacements have thin window cills and very wide sections which looks visually unbalanced, as do different widths used for opening and fixed windows, which creates a glass line that jumps in a visually disconcerting way. Similarly, moulding and glazing bars of UPVC windows have a "stuck on" look and lack the important shadow effect that real glazing bars create. These visual problems are amplified when semi-detached houses opt for different designs when replacing windows and doors. UPVC windows and doors are also considered to be hazardous in terms of their disposal as they can give rise to toxins and have low biodegradability. Household holders considering alterations should bear in mind the following:

- Conservatories/ extensions need to be well designed, in scale with surrounding houses, environmentally sound and in materials matching the existing buildings and context. White UPVC would be best avoided.
- Porches need to be in keeping with the existing building, both in design and

materials. White UPVC should be avoided.

- Doors/ windows should be in keeping with the original design of the building, and neighbouring buildings where possible, and white UPVC and inappropriate fake styles should be avoided.

- Decking/ terracing can create a raised area that may well overlook neighbours to their detriment. Such changes in level need to be properly considered.

- Fences/ walls cannot be higher than 2 metres without planning permission being required.

Thought needs to be given to the style and type of fencing, as it can enhance a property if sensitively done. Hedges are preferable in more rural areas, and can also help to keep an area from looking too urbanised.

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- Security Lights should not be able to be triggered from the pavement or other public area, and should be of a wattage that fulfils the private security aspect without unduly impinging on neighbours or causing unnecessary light pollution.

The Government planning document (Planning Policy Statement PPS1) says:

*“....design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted”
This important point needs to be adhered to in subsequent planning applications.*

Actions and ideas that could improve Hassocks include:

- Street trees planted by Budgens Stores to continue the rural feel further into the village centre and visually complement the trees on the opposite side.

- Market/ village square with buildings set back from Keymer Road, possibly including a new library building, with adequate car parking, to visually join up the existing blocks of buildings on this side of Keymer Road/ Dale Avenue. So making a well designed and landscaped addition and focal point to the village centre, which could also incorporate a flagpole for use on special occasions.

- Open up, tidy up and replant the Herring Stream and Spittleford Bridge area to make more of a visual feature and positive attribute to this part of the village.

- Hassocks railway station and immediate surrounding area is the main transport core of the village. It is therefore of utmost importance that the station, whether refurbished or rebuilt, becomes an attractive and active focus, as it should play a key role in making Hassocks a gateway to the proposed South Downs

National Park. It could incorporate a tourist information centre and possibly specialised retail and/ or office space as appropriate.

- The current footpath to Clayton and the South Downs needs to be made more attractive and accessible for all users, including disabled, cyclists etc., as it is the main pedestrian access to the South Downs National Park from the village and railway station. A similar footpath from the west side of the railway station, meeting the existing footpath over the railway tunnel, should be considered as an integral part of any redevelopment of the old station goods yard site.
- For the public space, planting and landscaping should be ongoing with a properly considered planting and maintenance strategy to ensure that any loss of mature trees is quickly and adequately rectified.
- Careful consideration should be given to the requirements of PPS9: 'Biodiversity within Developments' regarding networks of natural habitats and biodiversity within developments.
- Consider setting up a public fund to help purchase and plant trees for the village. See whether this could be done in part through the Local Community Infrastructure Contribution.
- Identify locations and plant/ replant trees with properly considered species throughout the village. Important trees, hedgerows and other landscape features need to be retained and properly nurtured.
- Great care should be taken not to destroy the habitats of local wildlife and to enhance such habitats as much as possible. There should be a [*The Village Design Statement Working Group 2008*](#) bias towards planting native species of benefit to wildlife, and PPS9 should always be taken into consideration regarding networks of natural space.
- The Herring stream and other Hassocks watercourses constitute a vital linear ribbon for biological diversity. This linear continuity needs to be protected, enhanced and sustained. It also creates a visually interesting quality to the benefit of the village.
- Keep 'green fingers' of land and trees to break up the boundaries of Hassocks.
- It is essential to keep visual and actual gaps between nearby towns and villages, particularly to the north and west. Also to maintain the vista from Ockley Lane/ Grand Avenue across to Ditchling Church and Oldland Mill, and the general vistas to the South Downs.
- Explore further the idea of setting up an on-going fund to purchase strategic areas for the common good of the community.

- Car parking, while essential, is visually detrimental and needs careful consideration with regards to its placing and use of different ground levels and screening. Adequate parking spaces should be incorporated into all new building designs.
- Porous hardstanding, car parking and new driveways need to be consistently used as an alternative to increasing the area of water run-off.
- A re-evaluation of street signs as to which are actually required and as to whether they could be better sited is needed. Also, a uniform signage system with a good, legible typeface would be a useful local, if not national, project. (West Sussex County Council has signed up for a ‘clutter challenge’, set up by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, which should see unnecessary signs removed.)
- Further building, both residential and commercial, to be of good quality and sustainable design, in keeping with both infrastructure and local need. Some emphasis on smaller units for first time buyers and the elderly downsizing. Design and materials to be in keeping with the surrounding buildings.
- New buildings should respect and enhance their surroundings in terms of their height, mass, scale and density of development.
- The impact of satellite dishes should be minimised, with their siting as inconspicuous as possible.
- All subsequent development should embrace sustainable construction principles, including rainwater recycling and energy efficiency, and have regard to Mid Sussex District Council’s Sustainable Construction Supplementary Planning Document.
- New buildings should use locally sourced materials, products and services, where applicable.
- Good contemporary street lighting designs are preferable to Victoriana style lamps and bollards. However, street lighting and signage needs to be in balance with the rural quality of what is still essentially a Downland village.
- The siting and intensity of street lighting needs to be well considered to avoid over-illumination which will give an urbanised feel to the village. Intensity of lighting, both public and private, is now being addressed by Government legislation.
- Well designed, simple seating needs to be sited by bus stops, particularly as many elderly people use the bus as their main form of transport. It is important to have seating in conjunction with bus stops, rather than merely scattered around the village with little real logic as to placing.

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Security and a feeling of being safe is an important consideration for people in the

village, with Neighbourhood Watch schemes and policing needing to be evaluated to see if and where improvements can be made. Additionally there is a need for:

- All future buildings to comply with a secured-by-design code of practice. This can also help eradicate badly designed spaces where criminal activity goes unnoticed.
- Disabled access needs to be appropriately applied in all new buildings and considered in existing premises where it would make it easier for disabled and elderly people to shop etc.. Grab rails, easily openable doors, non-slip surfaces etc. are relatively easy to install and could make a substantial difference for people using the premises.

Due to the size and character of Clayton Hamlet, the District Council in its Local Plan Policy has no wish to encourage any further development in or around Clayton Hamlet. A positive decision has been made not to define a built-up area boundary around the settlement. This means that the countryside area of development restraint policies will be applied within as well as around Clayton Hamlet.

While the use of land designated as 'brownfield' is preferable to using 'greenfield' sites, it remains essential that the loss of space by infill and the higher density of new developments does not lead to the inappropriate urbanisation of the village.

Also, the requirement of good design in any development is essential to ensure that the quality of the built environment is not compromised.

Both the County and District Councils have long recognised pressures for development on the open land between Hassocks and Burgess Hill, between Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint, and between Keymer and Ditchling, and have designated land as strategic and local gaps.

It is essential that these gaps are kept.

The underlying aim must always be to safeguard the countryside for its own sake and secure its protection and enhancement.

TRANSPORT & PARKING

With the east-west B 2116, the north-south A 273 and the mainline north-south railway, Hassocks is an important hub used daily by many people with varied transport requirements.

This volume of usage – steadily increasing year by year – brings with it problems in terms of the physical limitations of a heavy traffic flow passing through a fairly narrow high street which is also the main village shopping area.

There are, therefore, conflicting requirements of road usage which need to be properly understood and sensitively addressed.

Hassocks railway station is a well used and essential part of the transport network. Some timetable changes need to be made to make rail travel more efficient for weekday commuters and more attractive to weekend travellers, particularly the present, inadequate, Sunday service.

It is imperative for the continuing economic wellbeing of Hassocks that car parking is relatively easy and abundant. It needs to be available for people driving in to the village to shop, work, visit and commute from the station. At the same time, it is not desirable that more acres of land are given over to surface car parks, nor that residents' street parking is unduly restricted or inconvenienced by people parking all day in order to commute from the station without paying parking fees. New developments have not been made to properly address the problem of the increased parking caused by them. It is not an adequate solution to presume that there will be enough street parking nearby. Nor is it acceptable that grass verges are deemed, by some inconsiderate people, to be their parking spaces. Undercroft, or split-level parking could be considered where appropriate.

The following recommendations are made:
Railway timetabling, particularly at the weekend, needs to take into account passengers using Hassocks as a gateway to the South Downs National Park. Also some train/ local bus-link up is desirable.

- Some late night trains from Brighton are needed, particularly at the weekend. Hassocks Amenity Association have worked very hard, and continues to do so, to get timetable changes to suit local needs. They are also pursuing ideas for a station rebuild.
- A redesign of the railway station eastside car park is needed as car parking blocks direct pedestrian access to the station. Certainly a more imaginative solution should be found.
- Bus services need to be adequate and sensibly timetabled, with some services coinciding with train times to make it convenient to use buses rather than driving to the station.
- All buses serving Hassocks should stop in the village centre in order to maximise transport integration. Bus services via Hassocks going north and south should be further encouraged, and there is a clear need for a bus service to Brighton which picks up in the village centre.
- Clayton Hamlet has specific problems due to its narrow roads and damage caused by traffic to verges and banking. There are also intermittent parking problems at the weekend. These might increase with the

South Downs National Park, and so need to be identified and a solution found.

- The traffic congestion caused by children being transported to and from school by car needs a sensible solution. Possibilities for such a solution could include Park & Ride, Walking Bus and car sharing schemes.
- There should be proper enforcement of current parking restrictions.
- A redesign of some road junctions to make them safer and easier for pedestrians, cyclists and school children.
- Traffic calming measures where they would help pedestrians in the village centre, and possibly to help stop speeding on certain other roads.
- Consideration should be given to locating pedestrianised areas in the village centre.

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BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT

The need for well considered and designed buildings applies equally to workplaces as well as residential development. Workplaces need to be fit for their purpose and sensitively altered in cases of buildings not initially designed for commercial use. Recommendations include:

- Locations that maximise public travel links and a reduction in car use for employees as well as customers/ clients, wherever possible, needs to be a major consideration.
- Mixing of activities within a building should be considered.
- Development of business premises in scale with the village.
- Encourage shared use of facilities/ areas. For example car parking for offices during daytime to be used by restaurants etc. during the evening.
- Planning of economic development in line with building development. It is crucial to ensure that redundant commercial property does not set a precedent for inappropriate development.
- Office space should be located away from retail space to support the feel of a busy village centre.
- Planning restrictions on prime retail areas should be considered, as should the development of office and other commercial premises within the context of overall development of the village centre.
- Planning for economic development needs to identify the likely growth and/ or decline of existing and new businesses in order that any commercial development is realistic and happens on a planned basis.
- Options for future economic development include tourism based on the South Downs National Park, niche businesses attracting custom from a wide area, businesses to serve residential demand as well as to

supply the existing commercial base.

AMENITIES

There is a thriving network of local volunteer-led activities within the community. It needs to be considered, particularly if tourism is going to be an important aspect for Hassocks, whether there should be a further appropriate public building for such activities, offering a range of venues and perhaps an Arts Centre. Sports provision – golf clubs, riding, tennis, squash, football, skatepark, cricket etc. – is generally fairly well covered in the area. Where appropriate, the Mid Sussex District Council ‘Art in Public Places’ plan should be implemented in the village.

Thought should be given to:

- A sensitively sited Youth Shelter in Adastra Park.
- Relocating the library to a more central position in the village and increasing opening hours and internet capability.
- Protection of available premises, prioritising locally based initiatives which clearly meet local needs.
- Rail access to London and Brighton means that a wide range of entertainments are available to the local population.

TOURISM & South Downs Landscape

“Nature is never spent”

The South Downs have long been regarded as a very special part of the English countryside. In 1947 a committee chaired by Sir Arthur Hobhouse proposed special legal status for the finest landscapes in England and Wales to preserve them for the nation’s benefit. The South Downs were included amongst those areas which the Hobhouse committee recommended should be designated as National Parks. A decision against such a designation was taken in the 1950s, based on the assessment that ploughing of the Downland due to agricultural intensification of the time had removed much of the recreational potential from the South Downs. Instead they were given Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) status in recognition of their natural beauty. The Sussex Downs AONB and the East Hampshire AONB presently cover most of the area proposed for a South Downs National Park. The 1995 Environment Act defines National Park purposes as follows:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks, and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks by the public.

These purposes are of equal standing in the legislation. The Sandford principle – also enshrined in the legislation – states that where there is irreconcilable conflict between recreation and conservation, then conservation should take precedence. However, Government circulars have emphasised that this is likely to be in exceptional circumstances rather than the norm.

The surrounding woodland area

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The proposed new South Downs National Park offers a unique chance for Hassocks to become the gateway to a large part of this area, with many potential economic, social and environmental benefits, by encouraging appropriate tourism. Recreational opportunities could include jogging, cycling, riding, photography, model aircraft & kite flying, metal detecting, bird watching, painting, hang gliding etc., thus providing employment opportunities for the local population and generating income to support local businesses. It can also aid the process of rural diversification and thus contribute to farm income. To manage this for the benefit of all the community, it is therefore vital that plans are put in place for linking businesses with sustainable tourism and green travel choices. There has been a significant increase during the last decade in participation in sport and recreation. It is anticipated that this trend will continue to create associated opportunities and problems. Tourism encompasses a wide range of activities, including travel and visits for professional purposes as well as for holidays and recreation. Tourism activity is growing in importance in West Sussex and it is expected that this trend will continue, reflecting increases in leisure time, mobility and personal disposable income. It is anticipated that the trend towards more short break holidays, especially out of season, and day trips will continue. Activity holidays are also increasing in popularity, particularly exploring the countryside.

Tourism generally has the potential to enhance the conservation of both the countryside and the built environment. However, tourism also creates demands and pressures on the very places and areas people wish to visit. Tourist traffic can cause congestion and environmental damage at popular locations if not properly managed. Pressure for inappropriate and

A view of historical Clayton Hamlet

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over-intensive development can also arise to accommodate the needs of visitors. A fine balance must be found between encouraging tourism for the benefit of Hassocks generally

while at the same time conserving the intrinsic qualities of the environment.

Therefore the aims must be:

- To encourage growth in tourism, subject to environmental considerations.
- To seek a balance between the needs of the host community, the local environment and the needs of visitors.
- To ensure that tourist activities and development respect the scale, nature and character of their surroundings.
- Some action needs to be taken to curtail the noise pollution caused by helicopters and low flying light aircraft which blight the tranquillity of the area.

It is necessary to put into place actions and facilities that would make it easier for tourists to make trips without cars:

- Encouraging and improving bus services
- A leisure ticket for all rail and bus services in the area
- Left luggage and cycle storage facilities
- Waiting rooms, shelters and seating at train station and bus stops
- A taxi bus service
- Widely disseminated timetable information, including local bus times
- Safe crossing points between bridleways or footpaths and major roads
- A bike-bus service able to transport people with their bikes

Other suggestions to lessen the impact on road traffic from increased visitors are:

- Signs and surfacing of minor roads to discourage speeding
- Links to the national cycle network
- Provision for long-stay car parks at specific points, from which all-day visitors can use the bus network, walk or cycle

To support the interests of local businesses there will need to be:

- A readily available local food and produce guide
- Readily available village maps
- A green travel guide
- A coach drivers' guide to routes suitable for their vehicles
- Training courses for tourism providers to welcome walkers and cyclists
- Talks by local experts to local people and tourists on the natural history of the South Downs

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REFERENCES

The area covered by this Design Statement is the Parish of Hassocks, Keymer & Clayton Hamlet. The Parish lies within the administrative areas of

West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council.

A southern part of the Parish presently lies within the South Downs AONB.

A southern part of the Parish lies within the boundary of the proposed South Downs National Park.

Documents consulted during the writing of this Design Statement

South Downs National Park Proposal Document 2002

Hassocks Village Action Plan 2002

Mid Sussex Local Plan 2004

Hassocks Economic Action Plan 2004

Mid Sussex District Landscape Character Assessment Draft 2005

West Sussex Minerals Development Plan Document 2005

Statistics from: neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk 2005

Mackie Avenue Development Brief Draft Sustainability Appraisal 2005

West Sussex Design Commission Design Principles 2006

West Sussex Traffic in Residential Development – Working Note 2006

Provisional West Sussex Transport Plan 2006-2016

Mid Sussex District Council Sustainable Construction – Supplementary Planning Document 2006

Mid Sussex District Council ‘Art in Public Places’ Draft Document 2007

NOTES

1/ A Sustainability Appraisal has been produced for the document and the contents of the Village Design Statement comply with the requirements of the Sustainability Appraisal.

2/ Part Two of the Village Design Statement abstracts the section ‘Guidance for the Future’ of this document for the Supplementary Planning Document.

All of these documents can be viewed on the following websites:

Hassocks Parish Council: www.hassockspc.net

Mid Sussex District Council:
www.midsussex.gov.uk

3/ The Tree Wardens for Hassocks are:
Mrs K Purvis and Mr D Brown

4/ Section Quotations:

Page 3 anon, Page 4 T.S. Eliot, Page 7 Alexander Pope, Page 8 anon, Page 12 G.H. Wallace, Page 18 anon, Page 25 Gerard Manley Hopkins.

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THE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT
WORKING GROUP

Chris Baker

Peter Bareham
Kristian Berggreen
Judith Foot
Sandra Kirk
Philip Mead
Michael Pryke
Steve Richards
Jack Slaughter
Noel Thomas
Penny Wadsworth

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Tel: 01273 842244 Web: www.rogerbooth.com

“Find a way to make beauty necessary and find a way to make the necessary beautiful”