

Recommendations of NPWG

Housing Need

As part of the preparation of the Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan (HNP), the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NPWG) has sought to establish the number of new houses that need to be delivered in the Parish over the Plan period, up to 2031. As part of this, the NPWG published a Parish Housing Need Assessment in late 2014 that was then refreshed in August 2015. This applies different methodologies to calculate housing need, and includes data from a variety of sources including the Office of National Statistics.

The NPWG are mindful of the Pre-Submission District Plan in which the housing need to be met by Neighbourhood Plans in the District up to 2031 is indicated as being 1,515 homes. The NPWG has calculated that, on a proportionate basis, this suggests the need to be met by Hassocks Parish is approximately 110 houses. We are also mindful that the same document states that a large proportion of the District need is to be met in close proximity to the northern boundary of the Parish in the order of magnitude of 40% of the District need.

In the District Council's Housing and Economic Need Assessment Update (June 2015) a Hassock's Parish housing number in the order of 630 houses is suggested. The supporting text to this document, however notes that this is only an indication of the level of need and is not a requirement or a target. Parishes are encouraged to interrogate these numbers and come forward with their own need assessment.

Having regard to this, Hassocks' Parish Council's own needs assessment indicates a requirement of in the order of 200 to 500 houses up to 2031.

Given that the District Spatial Strategy is seeking to direct significant growth towards Burgess Hill, the NPWG has concluded that the methodology, which produced the higher level of need, indicated in the Parish Housing Need Assessment is not appropriate in the circumstances. Consequently it is the view of the NPWG that the Parish need is in the region of 210 - 270 dwellings, as generated by the other methodologies.

The Council is recommended to resolve that Parish need is 210 - 270 dwellings over the Neighbourhood Plan period up to 2031.

Allocation of sites

As part of the preparation of the Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council issued a 'Call for Sites' to identify a range of potential sites that could be considered for allocation for housing development through the Neighbourhood Plan process.

The NPWG has asked their advisers, DOWSETTMAYHEW, to undertake an independent Suitability Assessment of these potential housing sites and also a Sustainability Assessment in conjunction with the Parish Housing Land Availability Assessment.

Cognisant of the findings in this document the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group have also given due regard to the constraints acting upon the Parish, chief amongst these being:

The Air Quality Management Area;
Designated Local Gaps to the east and west;
The South Downs National Park to the east and south;
The designated Strategic Gap to the North.

Consideration has also been given to the preferences of the community, as expressed through previous public consultation exercises, most recently in July 2015.

The findings of the technical assessments are that there are a number of sites, which are considered "unsuitable" for development. These are:

Site reference	Site Name
1b	Land Opposite Stanford Avenue
1c	Land Opposite Stanford Avenue
2	Land at the Ham
5a	Land at Southdowns Farm
6	Land to the West of Lodge Lane
6a	Land to the West of Lodge Lane
7	Pattendens Streamside
8	Land to the east of Ockley Lane
12	Land to the East of Lodge Lane
16	Land North of Friars Oak
17	Russells Nursery
17a	Silver Trees

Having regard to the findings of the technical assessments, the NPWG recommend that the above sites are considered unsuitable for housing development for the reasons set out in the suitability assessments that accompany this report.

A number of other sites were regarded in the technical assessment as having fewer constraints and therefore were considered “potentially” suitable for development to contribute to meeting the identified housing need. These are:

Site reference	Site Name
4	Land to the North of Clayton Mills and Mackie Avenue
9	Land to the north of Shepherds Walk
13	Land to the North of Clayton Mills
15	Hassocks Golf Club
20	Undeveloped Land south of Clayton Mills

The technical assessment considered that one site was considered suitable for development to contribute to meeting the identified Housing Need. This is:

Site reference	Site Name
10	National Tyre Centre

Having regard to the technical assessments and other material considerations, it is the recommendation of the NPWG that the Council include the following housing allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan in order to satisfy the housing need over the plan period:

Site reference	Site Name	Number of units
4	Land to the North of Clayton Mills and Mackie Avenue in conjunction with Site 13	140
13	Land to the North of Clayton Mills in conjunction with Site 4	
15	Hassocks Golf Club	125-130
10	National Tyre Centre	15-20
TOTAL		280 - 290

In reaching this recommendation, the NPWG have noted the merits and demerits of each site that has been identified in the technical assessments as having “potential” to contribute to meeting the identified housing need. This includes the following.

Site 15 Hassocks Golf Course

The proponents of this site have advised the NPWG that they have revised their proposals in light of feedback they have received and through their attendance at NPWG meetings. It is the view of the NPWG that these revisions form an appropriate basis for allocation of the proponent’s development area for 125-130 dwellings. It provides for substantial open space and sympathetic density of development whilst avoiding undue impact on the Local Gap and minimising impact on the Strategic Gap. In addition to the housing, the site would deliver a 9 hole golf course, new clubhouse and a driving range.

Sites 13 & 4 Land to the north of Clayton Mills and Mackie Avenue

The NPWG has received confirmation from the proponents of these sites that they can be regarded as being available as a single allocation. This would facilitate the efficient use of site 13 for housing development with site 4 remaining as open space and provision of a robust, defensible northern boundary to the combined sites. It is our view that the combined sites would provide in the order of 140 dwellings.

Site 10 National Tyre Centre

This central village site is well located for services and facilities within the settlement. Redevelopment provides the opportunity to improve the street scene and is favoured strongly by the community for development, ranked 1 out of 15 in the preference order as expressed in feedback to the July Consultation. It is considered suitable for 15-20 dwelling.

Sites not recommended for allocation

Site 20 Undeveloped land south of Clayton Mills

This site is considered to form part of an important green corridor bordering a stream. A substantial part of the site is prone to flooding (according to Environment Agency Flood Maps) and it is understood that mains sewers and other drainage works cross the site. It is considered that only a modest part of the site is practical for development and it would not deliver a development that would have an appropriate relationship and impact on its surroundings. It is therefore considered unsuitable for allocation.

Site 9 Land to the north of Shepherds Walk

This site is regarded as having strong biodiversity and is bordered by an important and rare chalk bed stream which in turn results in part of the site being at risk of flooding. Development would have a negative impact on the Strategic Gap. There are also concerns relating to the safety of people especially children from any resulting development using the public footpath crossing over the Brighton mainline railway (for example going to and from school). Having regard to these factors site 9 is considered unsuitable for allocation to meet the parish housing need.

Allocation of Local Green Space

The NPWG have received a number of submissions requesting the allocation of areas of Local Green within the HNP. Nine candidate sites were identified and assessed against the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (in particular paragraph 77) and National Planning Policy Guidance. Councillors have been provided with an assessment of each candidate site against these criteria.

Two of the candidate sites have been recommended for housing allocation. Subject to the Council's resolution on this, they cannot be considered further for allocation as a Local Green Space. The recommended allocation of the combined sites 13 & 4 encompasses the Local Green Spaces candidates LGS4 & LGS9. The policy would set out a requirement for open space and a defensible northern boundary centred in site 4. Such a policy is deemed to afford adequate protection to the site, without the need for an additional Local Green Space designation.

The NPWG consider that the remaining sites do comply with the criteria for designation as Local Green Space. On this basis, it is recommended that the following sites are allocated within the Neighbourhood Plan as Local Green Space:

Site reference	Site Name
LGS1	Land to the north of Shepherds Walk
LGS2	Land at the Ham
LGS3	Undeveloped Land south of Clayton Mills
LGS5	Land to the east of Ockley Lane
LGS6	Land at south of Downlands
LGS7	Land to the west of the railway
LGS8	Pheasant field

are allocated as Local Green Space by the Council.