

Hastings Draft Local Plan Preferred Options (Regulation 18) Consultation 2026 – Response form

Part B: Complete this part for each comment you make (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Which part of the Plan or evidence base are you commenting on (enter policy number, paragraph or section)?

Strategic Policies (SP1 - 11):

Do you support or object to the policy, paragraph or section?

XSupport XObject XComment

If your response is over 100 words, please enter an optional summary here (up to 100 words)

An introduction to the responses of West St Leonards Neighbourhood Forum and a critique of the assumption of a hierarchy of areas in the borough

Enter your comments here (provide evidence/ references where possible, and tell us what changes you suggest that would address your concerns)

Introduction

West St Leonards Neighbourhood Forum has been working towards a neighbourhood plan since the Neighbourhood Area and Forum were designated (for the second time) in February 2024. The initial work was carried out with a grant from Central Government, provided through Locality. That initial work resulted in an initial draft plan which is available on the forum website https://www.weststleonards.org.uk/images/pdfs/planning%20documents/West%20St%20Leonards%20Neighbourhood%20Plan%20Draft%20v3.3_pdf.pdf

The next stage has been delayed since the expected grant to complete the work was withdrawn by the Government, but in preparing a response to the Local Plan a public exhibition was held on March 28 2026 and this comment and the further 9 comments are the result of the preparations for that exhibition and the comments and suggestions received.

The response is divided into the following 9 areas

1. Green Spaces - valued and used by the community (Including cliffs between Seafront and West Hill Road – stabilisation)
2. Heritage - buildings valued by the community
3. Housing needs - in two files, the second dealing with proposed and possible additional sites + additional

amenities (including . Breadsell Lane - proposed housing with big transport implications for WSL)

4. Design Code - for new developments including better connectivity
5. Connectivity – roads, cycle routes, footpaths, road crossings, public transport etc.
6. Youth provision - public space, play equipment, clubs and events
7. Old Bathing Pool site - as an attraction and amenity for the community
8. Economy/jobs – developing local businesses including tourism
9. Community Energy – with new Community Energy Investment Funding
10. Climate Change

The strategic policies are covered by the following areas

Strategic Policy 1 (SP1): Directing Growth

1. to 3. Relate to subject 1 Green Spaces and 3 Housing Needs
4. Relates to subject 8 – Economic / jobs
6. Relates to our subject 8 – Economic / jobs & subject 7 Old Bathing Pool Site
7. Relates to our subject 1 Green Spaces
8. Relates to our subject 2 Heritage, 4 design code and 8 Economy and Jobs
9. Relates to our subject 1 Green Spaces
10. Relates to our subject 2 Heritage, 4 Design Code, 7 Old Bathing Pool Site and 8 Economy and Jobs

Strategic Policy 2 (SP2): New and Affordable Housing

Relates to our subject 3 Housing needs

Strategic Policy 3 (SP3): Business Development – Office and Industrial

In particular SIEA4 Bulverhythe Estate

Relates to our subject 8 – Economic / jobs & subject

Strategic Policy 4 (SP4): Business Development – Town Centres

Local Centres - Bexhill Road

Relates to our subject 8 – Economic / jobs & subject and 6 Youth provision

Strategic Policy 5 (SP5): Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change

Relates to our subject 8 – Economic / jobs & subject 9 Community Energy

Strategic Policy 6 (SP6): Renewable and Low Carbon Technologies

Relates to our subject 8 – Economic / jobs & subject 9 Community Energy

Strategic Policy 7 (SP7): Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Relates to our subject 2 Heritage

Strategic Policy 8 (SP8): Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Relates to our subject 1 Green Spaces

Strategic Policy 9 (SP9): Managing Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk

Relates to our subject 1 Green Spaces

Strategic Policy 10 (SP10): Transport Infrastructure

Relates to our subject 5 Connectivity

Strategic Policy 11 (SP11): Healthy and Safe Communities

Relates across the responses

West St Leonards Neighbourhood Area

Over at least the last 50 years and possibly longer the West St Leonards Neighbourhood Area has felt neglected by the local administration of Hastings and St Leonards with the wishes of the local community being discounted or ignored. This has created a strong sense of distrust about anything which is being proposed.

This is most apparent in the long and lamentable history of the bathing pool: it was perhaps not the wisest investment and it was blighted by the second world war immediately following its completion and then after a brief revival following the war it fell into disrepair and neglect in the 60s. This led to the demolition of the pool in the early 90s and shortly after that the demolition of concrete holiday chalets against the wishes of the local community and on the promise of an exciting redevelopment being started almost immediately, over 40 years on from that there is no advance and the Council is now tied into an arrangement with a developer who in April 2025 produced plans for intensive housing on the site, which failed to take account of the presence of the tanks owned by Southern Water and pleased nobody. Since then there has been no movement.

The issues referred to here are dealt with in more detail and with a view to suggesting ways forward in response 7 which is explicitly on the issues and problems of the Bathing Pool Site: but the feeling of neglect is reinforced by the Strategic Policy SP4 which sets out a hierarchy of town centres:

Town Centre: Hastings Town Centre

District Centres: St Leonards; The Old Town and Silverhill

Local Centres: Bohemia and Tower; Ore Village; Battle Road; Marine Court and Bexhill Road

The assumption is that the centre of Hastings is clearly defined, whereas there are at least two town centres:

- Old Town with the High St and George Street
- New Town round Station Road, Havelock Road, Queens Road

In addition the latest town hall is now in Muriel Matters House and there are significant activities across the borough with Hastings Contemporary in Rock-a-Nore, The Stables Theatre at the northern end of the Old High Street, many museums and cinemas, concert venues and theatres across the borough in addition to the Pier and White Rock Theatre followed by Warrior Square and Burton St Leonards along the front as well as up Bohemia Road with the museum and the Conquest Hospital on the Ridge..

So the whole borough of Hastings and St Leonards is not so large and it can all be treated as the town centre.

Accordingly any investment and planning for Hastings should be considered for sites across the borough and that needs to include improving public transport so that the different parts are accessible.

This is developed further in the responses 5 on Connectivity and 8 on the Economy.

The hope is that the Local Plan will be directed to support development across the borough and that there will not be a presumption that the “centre” is the only appropriate place for large investment.

It is also hoped that the Council will avoid relying solely on large consultants and developers from out of town but will work constructively with the local communities of the borough and the many organisations wanting to co-operate in developing the town, including for the Forum West St Leonards.

All comments will be taken into account ahead of the next stage, the Proposed Submission (Regulation 19) version of the Plan, due to be published later in 2026.