

GENSING AND CENTRAL ST LEONARDS COMMUNITY FORUM
HASTINGS COMMUNITY NETWORK
SOUTH EAST PLANNING AID

Making Planning Better

DRAFT Conference Report (18 Jan 2011)

Nov 2010

A CONFERENCE TO KICK START IMPROVEMENTS IN LOCAL PLANNING
PROCEDURES

Making Planning Better

Conference report- DRAFT (18th Jan 2011)
20th November 2010

Introduction

The initial idea for the Making Planning Better conference came from a newly developed Planning sub group of the Gensing and Central St Leonards Community Forum. The sub group, brought to the attention of the Hastings Community Network a need for a closer working relationship between the public and the town planning department, in order to better understand the processes and the public's scope of influence in planning decisions. The proposal built upon and recognised the local experiences of a range of people and residents groups, who had become interested in planning through some of the large scale development proposals in recent years e.g. The Jerwood; ASDA; Archery Rd; The Old Convent site in Magdalene Rd. Those were often perceived in a negative light regarding the planning processes and experiences with planning officers. The sub group noted the commonalities in what they were hearing from different groups about different developments and decided to propose way to progress the issue positively and progressively through jointly working with the Borough.

Hastings Community Network (HCN) functions to enable local people to have a voice within the town in order to influence decisions and ultimately improve outcomes for local communities, especially the most vulnerable and under represented. It works within complex and sometimes inconsistent systems and is interested in the fairness, openness and transparency of decision makers. HCN's role was to help create an event that would kick start improvements within planning processes and communication between the public and the borough. Its role will then be to oversee and progress developments to a point in which real improvements are perceived and noted by key parties concerned. HCN recognises that certain planning issues are extremely contentious and are likely to remain so but firmly believes that if real improvements are to be made then *all parties* must be prepared

- to have their minds changed and do things differently;
- to digest the complex nature of planning law, local interpretation and government policy;
- recognise and understand local housing need levels.

In line with this approach the conference itself would need to be different if it were to have any impact at all on the delegates and the planning officers and elected members

The event aims were settled on by GCSLF and HBC in a meeting back in March 10

The aim of the event is to create a starting point for increased dialogue with the planning department that will:

- Identify processes that will improve communication channels between the planning department and residents; perhaps the development of communication protocols; in line with the new Duty to Involve

- Acknowledge good and bad practice in terms of outcomes for both the community and the wider regeneration agenda.
- Help the public understand the constraints and considerations of decision makers within planning committees and officer support.
- Clarify the roles of officers and elected members in planning decision making
- Explain the reach and influence, the public have on planning decisions involving large scale developments in town centre locations.

During initial discussion with the borough, independent planning consultant Nick Wates and John Hughes from South East Planning Aid expressed an interest in being involved in the planning and execution of the event. By September 2010 a working party had been agreed of 3 Planning Officers, 2 elected members, 1 HBC Regeneration manager, an independent consultant, one rep from Planning Aid South East, 2 GCSL reps, 1 HVA rep. Generally only half these made it to the 3 or so planning meetings. Planning Aid South East's input was invaluable, providing the delegates with a plethora of very knowledgeable, voluntary planning experts including the Chair for the day Kelvin MacDonald.

Methodology

Due to time and money constraints the conference took place over a morning at the Azur venue on the St Leonards sea front. In order to meet the aims of the day in such a short space of time, and to give credibility to the notion that such an event could at least stand a chance of 'making planning better', we decided to attempt explaining the planning system through drama and role play. The role play dealt with three scenarios (The Planning Reality Show) that illustrated the planning application process from its initial stages through to a final decision.

The development of the 'plot' and planning scenarios were a joint effort between HBC Officers and SEPA with continued amendments being put forward right up to the morning of the conference itself. Delegates sat at large tables with about 10 people at each, including a facilitator

'The Planning Reality Show' took the form of 3 scenes covering the pre application stage, the statutory consultee stage and finally the decision at mock 'planning committee meeting'. The Chair 'orchestrated' the action, setting the scene and explaining to the audience who was who. The people playing the roles were a mixture of volunteers and actual planning and heritage officers, who were able to improvise through the scenario's whilst staying true to the general plot and emphasis. In between each 'act' table facilitators took notes of the comments and points being made by delegates. It was important that organisers had a record of the conversations and views round the table. (The greater challenge here was deciphering the handwriting for this and capturing points that when looked at later are out of context from discussions at the time).

Table Top Discussions- recorded by scribes

Throughout the day table top facilitators took notes and submitted these to us table by table at the end of the conference. The most frequently recurring points shared by each table top discussion are described here:

- Better communication of information: understandable terminology and guidance on the planning process.
- Increasing awareness of planning process.
- Transparency and accessibility of information
- Meaningful and timely consultation and community involvement
- More time allowed for consultation/communication to take place.
- Community Representation integrated into the process
- Training for planners, councillors and members of the community
- Better use of existing buildings
- Disabled access

The notes recorded below are a summary of those taken by each table and include the main points and questions stimulated by the dramatization as well as further discussion points which were generated during this process. Once the discussion points and questions were written up we were able to submit them to the planning department who have, where relevant, provided answers.

TABLE 1

Communication: Better transparency of information needed to Increase awareness of processes involved.

Consultation: More creative ways of involving the community. Refer to community forums

Question	Answer if possible
Should planning forum include residents? (not only councillors)	Local residents will be invited to take part in the pre application consultation forums
How do you progress from being in a residents association to a higher level?	I think this is to do with gaining influence within a local community and being able to represent that community with strength and depth. As a residents association, the larger and more articulate your membership is, the more likely you are to have influence....but with regards to planning, only if legal processes allow

TABLE 2

Consultation: Early meaningful community involvement and discussion. Doing the “homework” – local issues/feeling, local sustainability.

Social/Affordable Housing: Should merge in with the development and meet criteria for housing schemes.

Access: Consideration for disabled – eg an access statement.

Planning Process: Facilitating the developers. Not full account taken of the surrounding areas. Presumption in favour of development.

Question	Answer if possible
Who represents the Community in the planners role?	At pre-application stage, discussions are based on adopted Local Plan policy. When an application has been accepted by the Council, the responses from public consultation will be presented to the developer by planning officers.
What obligation is there on the planners to consider the local community?	The Borough Council is obliged by legislation to consult the local community on planning applications.
How are rules defined to obligate the planners to consider the surroundings?	This is set out in the adopted Hastings Local Plan policies, which in turn reflect national planning policy e.g look at policy DG1 (Development Form) in the 2004 Local Plan.
Rights of current residents and the wider community – What is covered? Are they permanent?	The Borough Council is obliged by legislation to consult the local community on planning applications. In addition, anybody can comment on any planning application
How do they add value?	Don't understand what is being asked here

TABLE 3

Representation& Training: Representative Forums/Groups should be involved. Training of officers/Officials

Transparency & Terminology: Jargon a barrier - Key information and guidance needs to be easily understandable. A “stable” of LDF proposals in clear English

Accessibility: Design & Access especially in social /affordable housing should be taken into account.

Consultation: Process to wider representative groups. Local Development Framework should be accessible to disadvantaged groups.

TABLE 4

Planning Process: The council and planning are reluctant to reject schemes which are unpopular because they are scared of losing on appeal –(from making Planning Better exercise Yellow-1 Green 2)

Social Housing: Tackle landlords rather than building on green field sites

Consultation: Must include the public at the earliest opportunity

TABLE 5

Consultation: Rarely have pre planning consultation – residents have to live with results of development. Planning Forums must be obligatory.

Developers: Good developers will investigate concerns at early stage. All views should be considered.

Planning Officers: Requirement for all Planning Officers to live in the Borough. Experience and qualifications from all planners.

Councillors: Councillors should have the right to seek a Forum if a development is under 50 units.(Need to lower minimum size – not 50)

Councilors should have the right to seek reasons for refusal of a plan from officers in order that these reasons may be put to the committee.

Residents should also have these rights and be able to form groups which could speak to forums eg: Heritage Groups.

Notification Letters to neighbours re proposed plans needs modification (upgrading).

Larger print in local newspaper

TABLE 6

Urban Characterisation Study: Consider local character as a planning issue, sense of place & civic pride – informed by neighbourhood planning. Need for vision.

Time Limits: Tackle “urban blight” – time limits on planning permissions

Question	Answer if possible
Does legislation favour the developer?	Yes, there is a presumption in favour of development
How is success measured?	In the past, national government rewarded the Council for speed of decision making on planning applications. We are now moving away from that culture.
Empty properties: What need for new housing?	Changes in the rules mean we may be able to count the reuse of empty homes as contributing to our overall housing targets for the future, and therefore need to build fewer new homes.

TABLE 7

Pre Planning: Developers should be encouraged to consult with local residents. Perhaps a section in the planning application detailing who has been already spoken to. Residents should be included in pre planning.

Engaging with the public: Need to find new ways for councilors to engage with the public regarding the negotiation process and encourage the public to put forward ideas on improvements to developments.

Decision making: Not always clear to residents – they need to know what factors are taken into account when making decisions. People interpret plans differently to each other.

Question	Answer if possible
Can better use be made of existing buildings?	Property ownership rights mean that to a large extent people can decide what they do with their own property and HBC has limited influence. The Council is active in trying to tackle the problem of empty homes in the Borough and the Cabinet has recently agreed to seek Compulsory Purchase orders in respect of seven long term empty private sector properties..

TABLE 8

Resources: Development Control teams need to be properly resourced.

Consultation: Consultation Period too limited

Terminology: Planning Language and Terminology difficult to understand (eg outline permission, reserved matters etc)

Guidance: Differences between outline and full permission

TABLE 10

Consultation process: Insufficient time allocated. Public not involved early enough in process.

Decisions made too quickly – public can't influence. Consultation – used to soften the public but decisions appear to be made regardless of public response. Any development upsetting for residents who "were there first"

Planners: Lack of accountability for planners. Developer and public treated differently. System too complex. Context not understood.

TABLE 11

Terminology: Jargon/ Legal concepts difficult for ordinary person to understand.

Access: Disabled access/ facilities in housing development/management not adequately taken into account.

Contact with elected members: Many elected members are unwilling to discuss for fear of prejudicing their contribution to planning meeting. The ability to listen but not align with any particular point of view should be a pre-requisite of democratic representation

Litigation Risk: Reluctance to refuse or impose conditions for fear of litigation & costs being awarded against HBC.

Community Representation at Committee: Too late/ limited. No opportunity to respond to developer's statement.

Cost reduction: Changes to approved design to save costs can be done at officer level – without reference back to the community- Not a good situation.

Planning Aid: Put contact details of Planning Aid on the HBC information leaflet which accompanies planning application notification.

Conservation Area Advice: Often Given/Frequently ignored.

Obverse: Officer advice taken verbatim.

Question	Answer if possible
Design Statements: How far can planning guidelines be developed for special sites?	It is possible to develop design briefs for individual sites – but this is constrained by the resources available to the Council.
Procedure: Is there a procedural reason why in Hastings – a new build proposal can be granted permission before the principle of demolition of an existing building is determined?	Nationally, if a building is not Listed or in a Conservation Area, the local planning authority cannot prevent it being demolished. Any planning application for redevelopment has to be considered in that context.
Profit: To what extent does the “profit” element govern planning decisions eg: an approved scheme has high quality detailing removed on a re – submission in order to improve “viability”	Planning decisions are not made on the basis of what profit is made on a scheme. A decision needs to be made on the merits of the proposal, having judged it against planning policy. If we were to refuse permission for a revised scheme, we would have to be convinced we could win any subsequent appeal: that could be very difficult where small, incremental changes are involved – when do you reach the point when the changes make the whole scheme unacceptable?
Qualifications of Planning Committee members: Any formal training? Could this be extended to Community Groups?	Members do have training – it is not qualification based. We could arrange training for the community, but this would be limited by resources available.

Conference Presentations

The Local Development Framework- Jane Jackson- Planning Policy Manager

The Local Development Framework is a set of plans which will shape the long term future of the town. Work is underway on a plan known as 'The Core Strategy' – this sets out overall levels of future development, broadly where this will take place and general planning policies dealing with issues such as climate change, employment, housing provision, shopping etc. The Council will also produce a more detailed plan showing where development sites are to be located and setting out detailed policies for the management of change. Local residents who want to preserve or have a say in designating use of land near them need to be very much involved now, in the early stages of plan making. The process for agreeing final plans involves approval by the Secretary of State. The recent Localism Bill introduces the concept of neighbourhood planning, and these new plans will need to be broadly in line with the policies in the LDF.

If you are interested in getting involved in the LDF - Hastings Borough Council circulates regular LDF updates and it is easy to get on the email list to be included in distribution. See <http://www.hastings.gov.uk/ldf/newsletters.aspx#newsletters>

Presentation from the conference can be found on HVA's website at www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org

Community planning forums- Cllr Jeremy Birch- Leader of the council

Jeremy Birch explained the Boroughs intention to introduce Community Planning Forums to the pre application stage of the planning application process. The following is taken from the cabinet paper that recommended the formal adoption of this process.

"The Forum will be a meeting held in public, where a developer is able to explain proposals directly to councillors, the public and key stakeholders at an early stage before an application is submitted. The process is designed to assist the developer to deal properly with important issues and to reduce delay and frustration on everyone's part in the formal planning process.

The aims of the Forum are to:

- i) Enable the developer to explain development proposals directly to councillors, the public and key stakeholders at an early stage.*
- ii) Identify any issues that may be considered in any formal application.*
- iii) Inform councillors and the public of a development proposal at an early stage in the pre-application process.*
- iv) Inform officer pre-application discussions with the developer.*

v) Enable the developer to shape an application to address community issues.

Individuals will not have an automatic right to speak at the Forum unless invited to do so. However, all will be welcome to attend the meeting, listen to the presentations from the developer and views of others made at the Forum.

People will then be able to make written comments to officers who will forward any comments received to developers, and take account of any points made in any subsequent discussions about the proposal”

At the conference much support was given from delegates to this suggestion as it is hoped that this will help makes the whole [process more publically transparent.

Hastings Community Planning Resource Project- Nick Wates.

Nick came to promote and inform the community of a small project he and partners are working on to enable anyone to access specific documents and records about the development of any street, building or postcode. This will be done by developing a web based tool for which all known documentations and graphics can be stored. In addition University College Hastings will act as a depositary and physical place for records to be stored. The idea is that records of anything from previous planning applications to oral history projects be available for future planners, residents, students and developers. This project is seeking any materials people may have which would contribute to the project. It is currently operating as part of the Brighton University CUPP project. (to be ratified)

Making Planning Better- ideas from the floor

The final section of the morning was to canvass ideas from delegates which would then inform the future of Making Planning Better, after the conference. It was agreed at an early stage in the planning of the day that the conference, however well received, would not in itself be enough to satisfy local critics of the planning system: it would need to offer real opportunities for ideas to come forward for consideration and that an agreed process would need to be developed so that all those interested could see what had happened to those ideas. So the final section, invited tables to come forward with agreed ideas of how planning could be made better, given the legal constraints, the shifting policy background and local protocols and new Localism Bill.

Forthcoming ideas were stuck on a wall and everyone was asked to individually prioritise 3 from all the tables, with colour coded stickers. Top priority- Yellow; 2nd priority- Green; 3rd priority- Blue. some of the suggestions put forward was more of a statement than an idea, so I have recorded it as part of the general thoughts and points being raised earlier in the day. There were more ideas put forward than expected which reduced the potency of colour coded prioritising – the idea was to find a mechanism which identified some clear priorities for what types of improvements to explore. As there were so many ideas, a lot of which repeat general themes and motifs, it is not clear that any one or two suggestions are obvious favourites for taking forward. The repetition of themes and motifs however heavily suggests specific areas to be explored:

The ideas are listed in Table 1 in no particular order, with the scoring they attracted from delegates. Many of the suggestions reflect table top discussions during the conference.

Table 1

Suggestion	Yellow	Green	Blue
<p>Involve public in pre-application stage in a similar manner to how you engage with developers ie time and date; public meeting</p> <p>HBC Response- The pre-application consultation forum will address this. The majority of pre-application discussions are about talking to developers about what they need to do to ensure enough information and adequate plans are submitted to make the application fit for validation by the local authority.</p>	8	4	6
<p>Planning protocol should allow councillors to take representation from residents on any proposed development without restricting the councillor's right to debate and vote in committee. Indeed it should be encouraged.</p> <p>HBC Response- Central Government is reviewing this and a revised system is now proposed in the Localism Bill. The existing HBC protocol is subject to review in the light of the Localism Bill and Local Government Association guidance.</p>	6		
<p>Transparency and better access to information (to the public at the start of the process).</p> <p>HBC Response The pre-application consultation forum will address this. If the community can say which bits of the process are not transparent, HBC will be happy to explain/ provide more info.</p>	1	11	3
<p>Squatters rights for empty homes</p> <p>HBC Response This is a housing policy issue. We are not aware that squatting is a significant problem in Hastings. The responsibility for dealing with squatters is with the owner of the property. We are no longer a significant landlord having transferred our own housing stock to 1066 Housing Association (now part of Amicus Horizon) It is for property owners to seek to recover their property and there is legislation covering this.</p> <p>The Council has a very good record in encouraging owners of empty homes to return them to use. For several years the council has been offering grants to owners who are prepared to bring homes up to a reasonable condition (reasonable condition means that it meets the Decent Homes Standard - this is a government defined standard) and let them to people on the Councils Housing Register. We also take a range enforcement action where owners refuse to do anything about the problem and allow their properties to become the focus of nuisance or anti social behaviour. The Cabinet has recently agreed to seek Compulsory Purchase Orders in respect of seven long term empty private sector properties. If these are approved by the secretary of state we will ensure that the homes are returned to full use.</p>	3		

Make the planning process more transparent to the community and in simple English HBC Response- We acknowledge the planning system does have a lot of jargon associated with it. We do try to use Plain English and offer a free walk in service to answer queries at planning reception or via email/phone. The pre-application consultation forum will also address this. If the community can say which bits of the process are not transparent, HBC will be happy to explain/ provide more info.	3	3	2
Clear local visions and neighbourhood plans to be developed with community and stakeholders' participation. HBC Response- The Localism Bill has introduced neighbourhood plans and HBC will work with local communities to develop such plans where applicable.	4	2	3
Urban characterisation Study identifying local distinctiveness and civic pride and informed by neighbourhood planning HBC Response- This would be very useful and HBC is investigating the resources needed to achieve this – anything the community can identify would be very welcome.	4		1
Adequate resourcing for planning Development Control: Qualified staff in sufficient numbers Proper funding for forums and pre application consultations HBC Response- This is a decision for elected members at Cabinet. It must be recognised that the Council is undergoing budget setting now, in the light of the requirement to make significant cuts in spending.		6	
Community to identify local heritage assets HBC Response- We will aim to work with the community to take this forward and more details will be provided as part of the new neighbourhood planning process. Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment is a national planning statement providing more guidance on heritage assets .You can find it at http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps5		3	
Need to operate within LA Need to explain 'limitations' HBC Response- Sorry, we don't understand this point		2	
Include future planning information in the community resource centre at the UCH library. HBC Response- Yes, HBC will contribute planning information and signpost links to this resource and are now represented on the project steering group.	1	1	2
A regular meeting on planning issues in Hastings and St Leonards that a rep from any local group can attend- info circulated in advance HBC Response- The pre-application consultation forum will address this to some extent. The planning policy team operate a Local Development Framework contacts database with contact details for any groups/individuals who want to receive newsletters/ updates/ invitations to events connected with the LDF	1		1
More creative methods to involve the community HBC Response- We are open to ideas/suggestions and are working with HVA and Gensing and CSL Community Forum to find better ways of involving the community in planning issues. The	1	2	1

Localism Bill and neighbourhood planning could provide some new opportunities.			
Hastings Community Planning Resource project HBC Response- HBC is participating in this project	1		
Community Planning Forums must be obligatory- need lower minimum size- (below 50) HBC Response- At the moment there would need to be a change in planning law to make a community planning forum obligatory. HBC is considering a threshold of 30 units for residential schemes and 5000 sq metres for employment/industrial schemes, 2500 sq metres for retail schemes and 1000 sq metres for leisure schemes. This is likely to be recommended at the January 2011 Cabinet meeting for adoption after 1 st April 2011. If these thresholds prove to be too high, we will review them. The pre-application consultation forum may also be held for other applications which do not fall within these thresholds if the application is particularly sensitive or will have a significant impact on the local community.	1	1	1
Campaign for a third party public appeal in planning law HBC Response- Although there was early discussion, this does not appear in recent announcements on national reform of the planning system. It is for a community group to take a view on whether they wish to campaign on this by raising the matter with the Government.	2		3
Community Planning Forums- the trigger of 30 units is too high for Hastings- they should also be site specific, e.g. Jerwood/Asda- these should trigger forums too. HBC Response- Rather than adopting a similar approach to Havant Council, which is based on 50 units, HBC is considering a threshold of 30 units for residential schemes and 5000 sq metres for employment/industrial schemes, 2500 sq metres for retail schemes and 1000 sq metres for leisure schemes. This is likely to be recommended at the January 2011 Cabinet meeting for adoption after 1 st April 2011. If these thresholds prove to be too high, we will review them. The pre-application consultation forum may also be held for other applications which do not fall within these thresholds if the application is particularly sensitive or will have a significant impact on the local community.	3	2	4
Local Councillors or petitioners should have a right to ask for a Planning Forum HBC Response- The pre-application consultation forum will cover applications of significance. This is a chicken and egg situation as often the need for a forum will be triggered first by a developer making initial enquiries.	2		
Residents to be encouraged to form/join groups (heritage etc) which could be encouraged to speak at forums.	2		
A time limit for completion- stopping urban blight by uncompleted sites HBC Response- This would require a change to national legislation. Funding problems is often why half-built sites appear. We are not aware of many uncompleted sites in Hastings – is this a big problem locally? If the local planning authority considers that permitted development will not be completed within a reasonable period it can serve a notice under Sections 94-96 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. If the development is not completed within the time specified in the notice	2		1

<p>then planning permission is terminated. This would not result in the building being completed. Another simpler approach may be to take action under S215 (which is used a lot in the Grotbuster scheme to get property owners to clean up/ maintain land and property)</p> <p>Council insists on using empty properties before giving permission for new builds</p> <p>HBC Response- Changes in the rules mean we may be able to count the reuse of empty homes as contributing to our overall housing targets in the future and therefore could need to build fewer new homes. From a development control perspective, we can't force people with empty properties to take tenants. Each planning application must be considered on its own merits and is not about what is happening on land/ properties elsewhere.</p>	7	2	2
<p>The council and planning are reluctant to reject schemes which are unpopular because they are scared of losing on appeal</p> <p>HBC Response Council officers have delegated authority to refuse planning permission for proposals that are contrary to planning policy, regardless of the number of objections that are received, so most refusals do not therefore appear on a planning committee agenda. The only applications that go to committee are those where officers consider that the proposals are in accordance with planning policy but where there are a lot of objections from local residents. It can therefore appear that officers recommend approval for a higher proportion of schemes where there are objections than is actually the case.</p> <p>The fact that a scheme is 'unpopular' is not always a good enough reason for refusal. Schemes are sometimes unpopular for reasons not related to planning. In refusing an application, HBC needs to be convinced they can defend the decision at appeal and avoid the award of costs against them. HBC loses between 25 and 35% of planning appeals. Between December 2009 and Dec 2010, approx. 20% of planning applications were refused.</p>	1	2	
<p>Advice residents on grounds for objections and planning process!</p> <p>HBC Response- The reverse side of the neighbourhood consultation letter for planning applications has always included a section clearly setting out what is acceptable as grounds for objection. Following the event at the Azur the text of the letter has been amended to draw attention to information leaflets which are available at HBC Planning offices/ the HIC/ online at HBC website. For people objecting online there was already a link to these pages. HBC will provide HVA with a stack of leaflets for distribution to community groups. Leaflets are now also available at the HIC.</p>	2		4

Event Evaluation by Participants

There were a total of 41 evaluation returned out of around 100 delegates

Was the event useful?

Yes 37

No 1

Not answered 1

To an extent. Time will tell

'Yes' Comments made about this question

Learned about various interests at stake; More insight into planning; Hearing there are many with questions relating to problems between planning and other Council matters.; Good to be asked ideas – we will see if these are taken up or not; Yes, I'd never heard of Planning Aid before; To confirm opinions and needs in public; Very useful – helped people understand the process; Very much, good info for a planning procedure virgin; The best event for sustainable development that I have attended here for the past 20 years; Yes, useful as a planner to really understand how the public feel; Yes, many points of view were heard; Humanises the planning process; Useful in highlighting some New Year changes; It was well organised and I am glad I attended; Yes, it's good to discuss these issues with others; Yes, and I learnt of some aspects of the procedure; As a Student of Brighton University's Town Planning MSc degree course, it was useful as an example of ways to inform and obtain suggestions for the public regarding the planning process; Yes, helpful to enable people to network in particular those not belonging to a particular group; Networking, access to out of town professionals, particularly Planning Aid; Meeting people and discussing issues; Very useful, I learnt a lot about process; Very informative; Fantastic, informative and entertaining! Well done to all involved; Long overdue discussion of how 'Planning' works (?) in Hastings and how the process could be improved; Yes, better idea of the planning approval process; Got people together and talking; Opening up the whole procedure; Yes, some explanation of restraints placed on decision makers; Interesting Glossary, opportunity to consider and discuss; Yes it was useful but often raised more questions than answers; Helpful to understand the concerns of local people and the constraints; Opportunity to raise and discuss issues; Understood more; Very informative and involving; Not Strong enough – Future of our Town at stake, to an extent useful; Not for me; Time will tell

Has this event met the objectives?

Yes 27

No 1

Partially 13

'Yes' Comments made about this question

Making people think and talk on all Council matters; Raided the key issues; A rare opportunity to meet like minds; Valuable information; Shows an openness towards transparency of process; Willingness to broaden scope; Looking for creative solutions is good; The mock committee explored these items in a realistic way; Through discussion; Through the role-play; I now understand the importance of early involvement ; I now know about leaflets etc and Hastings Planning Resource; Understand better the constraints of officials and Cllrs.; Gave a better understanding of the planning process from a developers prospective; Opportunity to consider and present views; Useful information about current changes taking place; Interesting incite into all procedures and various organisations/departments that are involved with planning decisions; With the internet these things can be set in motion with transparency; Open up the whole procedure; Explained the planning process for local people to better understand the system; Improved the knowledge of the planning process; Now know who is involved; Made connections with people; Learnt the process planning applications follow; Need to get more planning knowledge; Effective 'Play' device; Planners input valuable; Consulted community

'Partially' Comments made about this question

There must be National Level averages, e.g. Letters to MP/JR; Relevant case studies; Commitment from you to learn; Good publicity for providers – literature etc; Wait and see; You only understand by speaking to the officers themselves; Feel not enough was done to explain public scope and influence – needs to be ongoing process; More explanations on objectors' rights to further objection through the courts etc; Issues involved in planning are still difficult to understand; Not sure there is a concrete proposal for a way forward; Same old info; Problem of Hastings planning not properly discussed; Way forward on Hastings Assets, locations not developed; Difficulty on planning members involved will remain; It would be good if this was the start of an on-going process; Showed ability of developer to push through 2nd rate project



Brought forward helpful ideas but concern that 'good' suggestions will not result in 'essential' improvements to the planning process

Was the Planning Reality Show informative?

Yes 28

No 1

Partially 12

'Yes' Comments made about this question

The method; It was as I expected; For those you may not have attended them before; It's better to see how meetings are held; It was a good summary of the actual

process; A very good way to learn/get messages across; Very good – well planned and written, close to reality; A lot of information and ideas

Very realistically portrayed; Showed importance of getting involved at early stage; Showed how things are done; Impressed by the role play; Brought reality to the subject; Learned about conservation advisory group and Urban Regeneration Stud

'Partially' Comments made about this question

Did not seem very 'real' to me; The scenario was necessarily simplified and comparatively uncontentious; There was no mention of density; Jeremy Birch's heartfelt performance was excellent; Could have done with a summary of the key points of the show at the end; Very interesting – but misleading at times

Missed out the pre-application stage between developers and planning staff in (secret); Only limited time, however of interest ; Good but omitted some important procedures (questions to petitioner/developer) It left out too much.

'No' comments made about this question

No because I am well versed in planning

Did you find the table top discussions useful?

Yes 33

Partially 8

'Yes' Comments made about this question

Good to see realism and knowledgeable planners; Encouraging; Good discussion and considered viewpoints; Different views expressed; Expert's viewpoints are worth hearing – even in a context of subsidiary; There were a

good range of interests represented and a well organised (by facilitator); discussion.; If you need tables coming up with one idea, yes; Useful discussion; Very educational to hear views I hadn't thought of; Got us communicating our ideas; Informative information; Yes, I learnt a lot; How outline planning can be given without any detailed drawings being available; A bit noisy – good to meet people

Into the Future- making planning better in Hastings and St Leonards

Below we have put together a timeline for actions that will involve local residents and representatives of residents in a Planning Stakeholders Group. The time line only deals with a proposed mechanism that would help carry this initiative forward. The group itself will need to determine how and when it will meet and what its main purpose will be. It will also need to agree what constitutes making planning better from how it works now and how this will be measured. This will mean getting to grips with the new Localism Bill for which Planning Aid will no doubt be at the forefront of in terms of a comprehensive briefing for communities. But here it is also worth noting the impact of local government spending cuts and the availability of officer time to dedicate to such a Stakeholders Group and that the Planning Aid contract from central government is not being renewed. This may be mitigated with a new role for Planning Aid that addresses the issues within the Localism Bill, - the point is that scarce resources are set to get scarcer.

Having said that, it is with some encouragement this week we saw the announcement in the local paper, that HBC will be instigating the Havant model of Community Planning Forums. This is where the Borough mediates a meeting between planners and the local residents at the pre application stage so that all parties can better understand proposed developments and the likely impact and concerns in local communities.

What	December 10	January 11	February 11	March 11	Lead
Establish Community Stakeholders Group	Put suggestion of stakeholders group to HBC	Call for interested Community Stakeholders and relevant council officers	Circulate final report and develop proposed TOR & membership	First stakeholders meeting to consider report and make recommendations. Agree membership and TOR	HVA
Write up Conference Report	In development	Circulate draft to delegates	Get & insert comments from conference delegates	Arrange to go to Cabinet with recommendations	All organisers
Continued engagement with Planning Department	Conference planners meet to consider initial findings from draft conference report and answer key questions that	Organisers plan first meeting		Officers Liaison group to carry forward actions from Stakeholders group	HBC. Community representatives

	have arisen for insertion before circulation				
Implementing recommend- dations		BEGIN TO ESTABLISH Community Stakeholders as mechanism to monitor implementation (see above)		AFTER MARCH 2011	HVA & HBC

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Feedback on this draft report- Deadline 31st Jan 2011

We would like comments back from people about the report to ensure we have captured the main issues at the conference accurately. You will note on this draft some questions and comments which we couldn't understand properly and would be very happy to have these clarified. The deadline for this will be January 31st. with the aim of having a final version of the report by Mid Feb.

Involvement in the Stakeholders Group- deadline 31st Jan 2011

We would also like to know who would be interested in joining a Stakeholders Group and ask that people tell us how they would like to be involved?

- As a full participant in the group
- As part of a wider email group that will be kept up to date with developments

Your details to help with communication and to aim for a good geographical spread of Stakeholders

The Membership and Terms of Reference will need to be developed but at this initial stage we are interested to see just how many people are interested in becoming participatory members and whether interested parties cover the breadth of Hastings and St Leonards. If you want to fully involved, we will need to know if you are

- Interested as part of a residents association or community group
- interested as an individual resident

and finally we need your post code or the area of benefit your group reaches- a ward, post codes. We have attached a simple form for you to complete and return as an additional attachment

(All contact details will be shared with the Boroughs Planning department, unless you tell us otherwise)

Further Comments captured from evaluation sheets

One message, Big Society and all that. **Could have done with a biro on arrival** Even if the policies are laudable and intricate, there is still the problem of implementation. For instance there is a rich apparatus to protect open spaces – except when it isn't deployed. **Were local businesses and traders invited?** We didn't hear any comments on the planning process from them although have heard complaints. **Started good debate, which I hope is an ongoing discussion and points are considered. This event has been a creative solution to engage the interest of laymen like me.** ENJOYABLE WAY TO SPEND A SATURDAY MORNING. **It was useful to exchange ideas.** *All is rather pointless if the planners do not take on board more community involvement* Rules of planning should be more easily available. *This should be extended to other areas of Hastings.* Useful to have meeting of this kind, maybe another later on to see if there is any outcome to comments. **Need a series of follow-up seminars say twice a year?** *A really useful event – all the better for being organised by a community forum.* **Chance to express my views and ideas.** Need document the results and outcomes to support ideas. **Would like to feel that local planers do feel that they have the authority to;- Say no to the building of the wrong thing (described in the local development framework).** *Even if the planning process has been done 'by the book' land in isolation could be viewed as legitimate.* Repeat event 12 month after creation of Planning Forum to see how well it is working. **Very educational to hear views I hadn't thought of.** *Important to speak to friends who were not present at this event.* Tables should be spaced out more – noise level awful – unable to hear each others points. **Well organised. The role play was a very good idea. Spacing tables out more would have made communication better.** Secrecy is the cause of suspicion Corruption would be prevented if secrecy was removed. Lapel radio mikes might allow speakers greater movement whilst retaining adequate sound. The venue should supply this facility. Generally very poor sound quality at this venue. **A very useful forum, and enables a lot of constructive discussion to take place. Hopefully the views put forward can be put into practice.** I found it very useful and helpful event which I hope those present from the local community found of benefit. Congratulations to Sylvia Bennett and colleagues in putting this event on. **NOT ENOUGH TIME TO EXPAND DISCUSSION – A FULL DAY MIGHT HAVE HELPED.** *Let us have more of these events.* Objectives did not meet the problems which some though the event was supposed to deal with – to find ways so show the public that our planning officers really Have the Boroughs Future well being at heart as an Historic Town. **Paper exercise – did not address the planning departments attitudes and lack of credibility and poor standards, density problems not addressed – neither Flats Development, minimum standards for floor area – old Parker ?????? standards (not sure about this- please whoever wrote this can they clarify please).** Quality materials and design standards in Hastings very poor. **It was all a bit too noisy for effective discussion.** Good to meet people **Thank you! It was valuable.**