

**Protection of Greensand Ridge Update**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Deanne Cunningham, Team Leader (Heritage, Landscape and Design)
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All  This report affects Marden and Yalding, Coxheath and Hunton, Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton, Sutton Valence and Langley, Harrietsham and Lenham and Headcorn more than others.

**Executive Summary**

This report considers the progress of the Government's Review of Designated Landscapes and confirms the actions taken to date to seek protection of the Greensand Ridge as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In doing this it also outlines the responses to a request to neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders to assess whether there is collective support to create a new, or extended, AONB.

**Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress in relation to securing AONB protection for the Greensand Ridge.

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

That the report be noted.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee	5 November 2019

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## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure</li> <li>• Safe, Clean and Green</li> <li>• Homes and Communities</li> <li>• A Thriving Place</li> </ul> <p>We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council's overall achievement of its aims of 'safe, clean and green'.</p>	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Cross Cutting Objectives</b>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is Respected</li> <li>• Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced</li> <li>• Deprivation is Reduced and Social Mobility is Improved</li> <li>• Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected</li> </ul> <p>The report recommendation supports the achievement of the 'Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected' cross cutting objective by considering additional protection for the Greensand Ridge.</p>	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	No direct risk implications arise from this report.	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Financial</b>	No direct financial implications arise from this report.	Senior Finance Manager
<b>Staffing</b>	No direct staffing implications arise from this report.	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Legal</b>	No direct legal implications arise from this report.	Lawyer (Planning)

<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	No implications have been identified.	Policy and Information Team
<b>Equalities</b>	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Public Health</b>	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Senior Public Health Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	No crime and disorder implications arise from this report.	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Procurement</b>	No procurement implications arise from this report.	Section 151 Officer

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 A report considering the scope for increasing the level of protection of the Greensand Ridge to that of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was considered by Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation (SPST) Committee at its meeting on 6 November 2018. The Committee resolved that:

- A representation be made to the Review of National Parks and AONBs to seek to secure AONB protection for the Greensand Ridge and an additional tier of protection for the borough's Landscapes of Local Value.
- Officers liaise with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders to assess the collective interest in making a joint application on a larger basis.

2.2 A further report was considered by SPST Committee on 4 December 2018 which outlined the matters for inclusion in the Council's corporate response to the Designated Landscapes Review and sought endorsement of the Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee's approach to its Review response. The recommendations of this report were agreed.

2.3 A corporate response to the Review was made on this basis on 14 December 2018. Additionally, the Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) included the following comments in its shared response:

- Several members of the JAC could identify areas where it would be beneficial to extend the boundary of the Kent Downs AONB and Maidstone Borough Council has formally resolved to seek either a new AONB or extension to the Kent Downs AONB along the Greensand Ridge.

- The JAC also considered that there could be merits in taking forward other levels of formal protection of Landscapes of Local Value.
- 2.4 In parallel with this, an approach was made to neighbouring authorities and stakeholders assessing their interest in making a wider Greensand Ridge AONB. The outcomes are detailed in section 6 of this report.
- 2.5 In September this year the Landscapes Review was published. This is included as a background document to this report. In essence the final review report sets out the panel's view on its ambition to strengthen the natural beauty of England's landscapes in order to serve the country better by improving their biodiversity, and the lives of people who work in them, live in them and enjoy them. The findings now need to be fully considered in the context of the Council's aspiration to create a Greensand Ridge AONB and a report will be brought back to this committee in the spring of 2020 outlining the implications and options.
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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 As this report is for information only there are no other options to consider at this stage.
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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 This report is to update Committee on the actions taken to date in respect of seeking to secure protection for the Greensand Ridge and an additional tier of protection for LLVs so that these areas of landscape achieve the highest appropriate level of protection in planning policy terms.
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### **5. RISK**

- 5.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.

### **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 A consultation exercise was undertaken as a result of the request from SPST Committee, at its meeting on 6 November 2019, to liaise with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders to assess the interest in making a joint application on a larger basis. A letter was sent to Kent County Council (KCC), Surrey County Council, Ashford, Folkestone and Hythe, Medway, Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks and Dover councils, and copied to the Kent Downs AONB, asking whether they wished to support our ambition to create a Greensand Ridge AONB in principle and whether they had their own plans in this regard.
- 6.2 The response from KCC (Heritage Conservation team) supports the application for AONB status for the Greensand Ridge and this was copied to Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Ashford and Folkestone and Hythe Councils, as well as the Environment Agency. Whilst Surrey County Council

also indicated support of this proposal, it commented that most of the Greensand Ridge in Surrey is already designated AONB and the eastern area is subject to a boundary review, which Natural England has committed to undertaking but has not yet commenced. Additionally, Dover District Council commented that it wishes to remain 'neutral'. There were no other responses and no indications of a contrary view.

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## **7. REPORT APPENDICES**

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## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Landscapes Review Final Report

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833726/landscapes-review-final-report.pdf)