

LEAD MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

21 November 2022

Statements of Common Ground for Local Plan Review

| Timetable | |
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| Meeting | Date |
| Planning and Infrastructure Committee PAC | 3 November 2022 |
| Lead Member on the Executive for Planning and Infrastructure | 21 November 2022 |

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| Will this be a Key Decision? | No |
| Urgency | <p>Urgent</p> <p>Two types of urgency are applicable:</p> <p>The <u>28-day notice requirement</u> relating to exempt information has been waived by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in accordance with Rule 11.6, Part C4 of the Council's Constitution due to the decision's urgency.</p> <p>The <u>5 clear-day notice requirement</u> will not be met for this report due to the decision's urgency and has been agreed by group leaders.</p> |
| Final Decision-Maker | Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure |
| Lead Head of Service | Phil Coyne (Interim Director, Local Plan Review) |
| Lead Officer and Report Author | Helen Garnett (Principal Planner, Strategic Planning) |
| Classification | <p>Public report with exempt appendices</p> <p>The appendices contain exempt information as classified in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 in that they contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining this exemption</p> |

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| | <p>outweighs the public interest in their disclosure. The Statements of Common Ground are draft documents and are currently unsigned and contain sensitive cross boundary matters. The draft documents contain information affecting the business affairs of other authorities and bodies.</p> <p>It is intended to publish each of the Statements of Common Ground, once they have been agreed and signed by all relevant parties, as evidence to support the Local Plan Review examination.</p> |
| Wards affected | All |

Executive Summary

The draft Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) relating to this report summarise the key strategic matters between Maidstone Borough Council and other bodies. All 9 exempt appendices were considered by the Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee on 3 November 2022.

The Heathlands site promoters and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit (Exempt Appendix 1), the SoCG between Maidstone Borough Council and Natural England (Exempt Appendix 2).

Purpose of Report

To provide background to and current versions of the draft Statements of Common Ground between Maidstone Borough Council and other bodies. The views of the Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee on the draft Statements of Common Ground were considered at its 3 November 2022 meeting. As the Statements of Common Ground attached to this report in Exempt Appendices 1 and 2 are now ready to be finalised, the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure is recommended to agree the SoCG.

This report makes the following recommendation to the Lead Member on the Executive for Planning and Infrastructure:

1. That the Draft Statement of Common Ground between Maidstone Borough Council, the Heathlands site promoters and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit, attached as Exempt Appendix1 to this report, be approved; and
2. That the draft Statement of Common Ground between Maidstone Borough Council and Natural England, attached as Exempt Appendix 2 to this report, be approved;

Statements of Common Ground for Local Plan Review

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

| Issue | Implications | Sign-off |
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| Impact on Corporate Priorities | <p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve the corporate priorities.</p> | Phil Coyne (Interim Director – Local Plan Review) |
| Cross Cutting Objectives | <p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendations support the various strands of the Council's ongoing strategic planning work, all of which contribute toward achievement of the cross-cutting objectives by supporting the Local Plan Review.</p> | Phil Coyne (Interim Director – Local Plan Review) |
| Risk Management | <p>The Statements of Common Ground and associated protocol have been produced as part of both our ongoing strategic planning work with adjacent authorities and other bodies in relation to their planning functions, and our own current the Local Plan Review, both of which take into account the key requirements and therefore addresses associated risks.</p> | Phil Coyne (Interim Director – Local Plan Review) |
| Financial | <p>There are no financial implications to note, any costs will be accommodated within existing budgets.</p> | Phil Coyne (Interim Director – |

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| | | Local Plan Review) |
| Staffing | We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing. | Phil Coyne (Interim Director – Local Plan Review) |
| Legal | Accepting the recommendation will fulfil the Council’s duties (particularly evidencing the duty to co-operate) under Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework. | Cheryl Parks; Mid Kent Legal Services (Planning) |
| Information Governance | There are no concerns with regards to the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. | Lauren Connett (Information Governance Officer) |
| Equalities | The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment. | Phil Coyne (Interim Director – Local Plan Review) |
| Public Health | We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals. | Jolanda Gjoni (Senior Public Health Officer) |
| Crime and Disorder | The recommendations will not have a negative impact on crime and disorder. | Phil Coyne (Interim Director – Local Plan Review) |
| Procurement | Not applicable. | Phil Coyne (Interim Director – Local Plan Review) |
| Biodiversity and Climate Change | The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change. | Phil Coyne (Interim Director – Local Plan Review) |

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Pursuant to s.33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) when preparing development plan documents local planning authorities and county councils (in two-tier areas) are subject to a legal duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies (as set out in regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)), on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. In order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires strategic policy making authorities to prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground (SoCG), documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and to describe progress in cooperating to address these.
- 2.2 SoCG are written records of the progress made by strategic policy-making authorities during the process of planning for strategic cross-boundary matters. It documents where effective cooperation is and is not happening throughout the plan-making process and is a way of demonstrating at examination that plans are deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working across local authority boundaries even if there are still matters to be resolved. In the case of local planning authorities, it also forms a key part of the evidence required to demonstrate that they have complied with the duty to cooperate.
- 2.3 A SoCG may also be used as an effective tool for demonstrating cooperation between the Local Planning Authority and those who play a part in helping deliver their Plan. This is pertinent to the Maidstone Local Plan Review, which was submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination in Public on 31 March 2022. The examination hearings are currently in process. SoCG are being used by the Council to demonstrate legal compliance in terms of the plan-making process, as well as to demonstrate progress in resolving issues of plan soundness that the Planning Inspector is considering following representations made during the Regulation 19 consultation and the examination.
- 2.4 This report brings to the Lead Member of the Planning and Infrastructure two of the draft Statements of Common Ground considered by the PI PAC on the 3 November 2022. The main topic areas or matters addressed by each of the SoCG presented in this report is summarised below, with a focus on key updates to existing SoCG where relevant. It is also important to point out that the SoCG process is iterative and has continued throughout the Local Plan Review examination process.
- 2.5 The SoCG in Exempt Appendix 2 has been produced by Maidstone Borough Council and Natural England. It provides an update to the current SoCG on several matters including air quality, nutrient neutrality and the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The SoCG reflects updated work undertaken by the Heathlands site promoters (in addressing issues in relation to Natural England guidance on nutrient neutrality) and the Lidsing site promoters (in mitigating potential quality issues on the Kent Downs AONB) in response to findings of the Habitats Regulations Assessment and comments from the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit.

- 2.6 The SoCG in Exempt Appendix 1 has been produced by the Heathlands site promoters and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit, with the Local Planning Authority as a co-signatory.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1: That the draft Statements of Common Ground (Exempt Appendices 1 & 2) are approved by the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure. This would allow these documents to be finalised and signed, in accordance with the agreed protocol, in order that they may be published as part of the Council's evidence base for the Local Plan Review examination.
- 3.2 Option 2: That the draft Statements of Common Ground (Exempt Appendices 1 and 2) are not approved by the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure. However, this would mean the documents could not be finalised and signed, thus potentially prejudicing national requirements associated with the production of the Local Plan Review and discharge of the Council's duty to cooperate with other authorities.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 1. That the draft Statements of Common Ground (Exempt Appendices 1 and 2) are approved by the Lead Member for Planning and Infrastructure. This would allow these documents to be finalised and signed, in accordance with the agreed protocol, in order that they may be published as part of the Council's evidence base for the Local Plan Review examination.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 The risk associated with the recommendation, including the risks should the Council not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk management Framework.
- 5.2 If agreement is secured, per the recommendations, then we are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The Statements of Common Ground provided alongside this report have been considered by the Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee on the 3 November 2022.
- 6.2 If approved by the lead member the Statements of Common Ground will be submitted to the Inspector undertaking examination of the Local Plan Review as part of the Council's evidence base.
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7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Exempt Appendix 1: Draft Statement of Common Ground between the Heathlands site promoters and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit, with the Local Planning Authority as a co-signatory.
 - Exempt Appendix 2: Draft Statement of Common Ground between Maidstone Borough Council and Natural England
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