

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 07 December 2020

Portfolio:	Planning and Development
Subject:	Partnership for South Hampshire Statement of Common Ground
Report of:	Director of Planning and Regeneration
Corporate Priorities:	Providing Housing Choices Protect and Enhance the Environment Strong, Safe, Inclusive and Healthy Communities Maintain and Extend Prosperity

Purpose:

To seek approval of the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) Statement of Common Ground to enable it to be signed as a formal document for use by the Partnership for South Hampshire, to support the development of a Joint Strategy.

Executive summary:

PfSH, as a collective of Local Planning Authorities, are updating the 2016 Spatial Position Statement and will prepare a new Joint Strategy for strategic development in the sub-region to 2036. To help shape the work and to ensure all members of PfSH are clear on the outputs, a Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) has been drafted for the members to sign, which sets out the programme of work that will be undertaken. Such a SOCG was first produced in October 2019 and this version represents an update on progress to date, and importantly includes an updated timeline.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Executive:

- (a) approves the content of the Statement of Common Ground, included as Appendix A to this report; and
- (b) delegates the signing of the document to the Chief Executive Officer.

Reason:

To demonstrate Fareham Borough Council's support for the continued collaboration within PfSH to develop a new Joint Strategy for development across the sub-region.

Cost of proposals:

The costs of the Council's contribution to the PfSH Statement of Common Ground are covered within the existing Local Plan budgets.

Appendices:

A: Partnership for South Hampshire – Statement of Common Ground September 2020

Reference papers:

PfSH Spatial Position Statement
PfSH Statement of Common Ground October 2019

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Executive Briefing Paper

Date:	07 December 2020
Subject:	Partnership for South Hampshire Statement of Common Ground
Briefing by:	Director of Planning and Regeneration
Portfolio:	Planning and Regeneration

INTRODUCTION

1. The Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH), formerly the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), was formed in 2003 as a partnership of district and unitary authorities, together with the County Council and National Park Authority, working to support the sustainable economic growth of the South Hampshire sub-region.
2. PfSH has a strong track record in working together and in the early years and was heavily involved in the production of a sub-regional strategy for development that formed part of the South East Plan. In 2016, the PfSH authorities produced a framework, named the Spatial Position Statement, with the purpose of guiding local plans, housebuilding and development in the sub-region.
3. PfSH has agreed that there is a need to continue to work together and at its meeting on 31 July 2019, approved the commission of a number of evidence workstreams to produce a new Joint Strategy. To assist with this work, PfSH agreed a draft framework for a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) in October 2019, which sets out the programme of work that will be undertaken. The intention was always to update the SoCG as the evidence workstreams progress and this report reflects the first update.
4. Statements of common ground are documents signed by multiple partners that are used to demonstrate that there has been effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters. Local planning authorities are required to resolve such strategic matters through their local plans and SoCGs are effective tools to demonstrate this and compliance with the Duty to Cooperate, which is a legal duty tested during the Local Plan examination.

THE NEED TO UPDATE THE SPATIAL POSITION STATEMENT

5. Since the production of the Spatial Position Statement, standardised assessments of housing need have changed, employment needs should be reviewed with more up-to-date evidence, and there is a need to address cross-boundary environmental issues such as the impact of development on water and air quality on protected sites of international nature conservation importance.

6. Another important role of the Joint Strategy is likely to be securing the agreement on housing distribution across the sub-region, including an agreement on the matter of unmet need. Unmet need is housing need arising from a particular Local Planning Authority which cannot be met within that borough or district. The work to produce a new Joint Strategy provides an opportunity to review these figures firstly on the basis that they cover housing need from 2016 to 2034 and many Local Plans under production are planning for periods from 2020 up to 2037, 2038 or beyond. Secondly, since the Spatial Position Statement was agreed, the standard methodology for calculating housing need has been published and is currently in the process of being reviewed. This review is likely to change the figures presented within the SoCG, but it is unlikely that unmet need will not remain an issue for this plan-making cycle.
7. As the Spatial Position Statement was, the Joint Strategy will again be a non-statutory high-level strategic plan for development which can inform Local Plans and assist the Local Planning Authorities in meeting the Duty to Cooperate.

THE CONTENT OF THE STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

8. The SoCG sets out strategic matters that will be covered in the Joint Strategy. They are housing need, employment land, infrastructure investment and the need to enhance the environment whilst avoiding and mitigating environmental impacts. In order to evidence a revised strategy, there are four workstreams which PfSH will undertake or commission. The four workstreams are;
 - Strategic Development Opportunity Area (SDOA) assessments (including traffic modelling and transport impact assessments for the SDOAs)
 - Economic, Employment & Commercial Needs (including logistics) study
 - Joint Strategy Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA)
 - Green Infrastructure Needs and Consideration of Mechanisms on How to Achieve Green Belt Designation.
9. The SoCG contains information on the housing need across the PfSH area, and an estimate of the unmet need that might arise if individual authorities cannot meet their own need in their area. The SoCG references the need to use the government's standard methodology and provides an unmet need estimate of 10,750 homes based on the current methodology. Members will be aware that the Government has recently consulted on a revised methodology, but that the implications for housing numbers and any unmet need is as yet unconfirmed.
10. The workstream entitled 'Strategic Development Opportunity Area assessments' is directly linked to the identification of a revised housing distribution across the area to address this level of unmet need. The Spatial Position Statement (2016) includes Strategic Development Locations, including at Welborne and in Fareham town centre. Across the PfSH region, some strategic developments have been identified in Local Plans, or consented and so that intention is that the new Joint Strategy will identify further areas, called Strategic Development Opportunity Areas (SDOAs) to meet unmet need. Consultants have been appointed to identify any further options and potential choices for land to accommodate strategic development. As shown in table 1 of the SoCG, this work has been commissioned with a report due towards the end of 2021.

11. The need for employment land is less well established and to inform the need for employment allocations across the area, PfSH has commissioned a study entitled 'Economic, Employment and Commercial Needs (including logistics). This study will provide evidence of the need for employment land and qualitative evidence on specific sectors and their land and locational requirements. Of particular importance to the consideration alongside the options will be the alignment with the economic strategies of the Solent and Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). As shown in table 1 of the SoCG, this work should be completed in early 2021. Given the timescale of the new Fareham Local Plan, it is probable that this study will be available during the examination of the Local Plan. It is possible that this study will advocate a different level of economic growth than the Council's own evidence but given that the Publication Local Plan proposes a surplus in its supply, this is considered a low risk.
12. PfSH has a good track record in providing strategic environmental mitigation with a good example being the BirdAware project to mitigate recreational disturbance on protected bird reserves. Clearly since the Spatial Position Statement was published in 2016, the nitrates issue has emerged and PfSH has been working together to develop a strategy in response to the challenge of nutrient neutrality. This has involved establishing a Water Quality Working Group, sharing knowledge on mitigation solutions, updating the Integrated Water Management Study, recruiting and appointing a Strategic Environmental Project Officer and working with partners such as DEFRA, the Solent LEP and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.
13. Underpinning the workstreams on housing and employment need is both a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment and a Habitats Regulations Assessment, both of which are legal requirements on plan-making, and is considered to be good practice for non-statutory plans which may influence future Local Plans. This environmental analysis and appraisal will establish the most sustainable development options and the infrastructure investment needed to deliver them.
14. The SoCG references a fourth workstream entitled 'Green Infrastructure Needs and Consideration of Mechanisms on how to achieve Green Belt designation'. This workstream relates to the need to deliver the new development that we need alongside protecting a coherent pattern of town and countryside, ensuring that the settlement identities of towns and villages are protected by appropriate countryside gaps, and that areas of the most productive agricultural land, highest landscape value and greatest recreational or ecological interest are protected and enhanced. This work will be initiated toward the end of 2021.

LINK TO FAREHAM'S NEW LOCAL PLAN

15. Given the timing of these workstreams outlined above, Fareham's new Local Plan is progressing ahead of this work. However, as members of PfSH, Officers are involved in this work and are feeding in evidence gathered as part of Fareham's new Local Plan to avoid duplication. It is likely that the Planning Inspector appointed to examine Fareham's Local Plan will seek an update on the PfSH Joint Strategy work in their deliberations over how the Fareham Local Plan has met the Duty to Co-operate. Therefore, it is crucial to the future success of the Local Plan's examination that we remain active members of this work and understand the outputs of the commissioned evidence in order to advise Members of how the PfSH work may be viewed in relation to Fareham's Local Plan. Efforts have been made however to minimise the risk to Fareham's new Local Plan by proposing a contribution to unmet need within the housing supply, and by including an oversupply of employment floorspace.

THE FUTURE OF THE DUTY TO COOPERATE

16. Members will recall that the Planning for the Future White Paper suggests the abolition of the duty to cooperate which provides the *raison d'être* for this work. The Council's response expressed concern at this proposal particularly because of how effective PfSH has been over the past seventeen years and the usefulness that the PfSH mechanism provides to the Council to evidence that it has addressed the duty to cooperate in preparing its Local Plan. However, there is uncertainty over the future role of PfSH once the White Paper proposals develop. Until there is more clarity on the roll out of the White Paper proposals, the duty to cooperate exists and the work to develop a new Joint Strategy is of value.

NEXT STEPS

17. The SoCG sets out the process and workstreams that will lead to the review of the Spatial Position Statement and the production of a new Joint Strategy. As the evidence base progresses, it will be appropriate to produce further iterations of the SoCG to reflect the progress made and consider the next steps. A timetable for the anticipated progress of the evidence workstreams and the production of the Joint Strategy is included in table 1 in the SoCG.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Gayle Wootton, Head of Planning Strategy and Economic Development (Ext 4328)