

# **Statement of Common Ground**

**between**

**Rother District Council**

**and**

**Hastings Borough Council**

**Duty to Co-operate and Joint working between both  
Councils in respect of Plan-Making**

**16 May 2019**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This Statement of Common Ground has been agreed between Rother District Council (RDC) and Hastings Borough Council (HBC).
- 1.2. It has been prepared to assist the Inspector conducting the Examination in Public of the Rother Development and Site Allocations (DaSA) Local Plan and seeks to clarify cooperation between both Councils in respect of Plan-Making for the Rother DaSA Local Plan regarding cross-boundary matters.
- 1.3. Both Councils wish to highlight those areas which show that engagement has been on a constructive, active and ongoing basis, as required, and that this has yielded positive outcomes.

## **2. Position Statement – matters in agreement**

### Joint working on evidence base

Both RDC and HBC have a long history of working together on cross-boundary matters. This has shaped the development of both Councils respective Core Strategies, HBC's Development Management Plan (DMP) and the Rother Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (DaSA). Areas of engagement have included housing, employment, open space, cultural infrastructure, transport, energy, infrastructure and landscape. A number of evidence based documents have been produced jointly to assist plan-making, particularly supporting the respective Core Strategies adopted by each Council. A list of these is set out in Appendix 1.

### Shared approach to future prosperity

- 2.1. Both Councils in their respective adopted Core Strategies have agreed and set out a joint statement of intent as the basis for joint working to secure a more prosperous future for Hastings and Bexhill in recognition of the close relationship between the two towns<sup>1</sup>. Both Strategies are explicit that joined up working will concentrate on:
  - Increasing economic activity and investment, supported by the development of high quality education opportunities and integrated skills training;
  - Securing investment in and otherwise assisting areas of socio-economic need, with particular regard to increasing employment opportunities;

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<sup>1</sup> Reference SA4, page 31-32 and Reference E3, page 18-19

- Ensuring a range of housing supply across Hastings and Bexhill to support sustainable growth, including for economically active people and families;
- Developing the economy, healthy lifestyles, the role of culture, sports, arts, tourism and leisure;
- Increasing transport infrastructure capacity, through the Local Transport Plan 2011-2026, prepared in association with East Sussex County Council, notably by early construction of the Bexhill - Hastings Link Road, improved access to the A21 at Baldslow, as well as measures to foster more sustainable travel patterns; and
- Implementing the Combe Valley Countryside Park, together with other cross-boundary urban fringe development/management schemes

#### Respective Site Allocations Plans

- 2.2. Close liaison has continued in relation to respective “part 2” Local Plans, leading to HBC submitting very supportive representations on the proposed submission Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (“DaSA”).
- 2.3. In respect of housing the scale of housing has been jointly evidenced. So too, as the approach to potential sites straddling the administrative boundary.
- 2.4. The two Councils have worked together to allocate employment land in line with strategic requirements. The allocation of land for employment purposes at North East Bexhill plays a complementary role to that of Hastings as an employment centre providing opportunities for employment development as part of an urban extension on a scale not possible within the constrained urban area of Hastings. This is one of the most important land releases within the Hastings Travel to Work Area.
- 2.5. There is one joint allocation between the respective site allocations plans in terms of land off Ivyhouse Lane which is a joint employment allocation between both Authorities (Policy HAS3: Land north of A265, Ivyhouse Lane, Hastings in the Rother DaSA and Policy HOV11 - Ivyhouse Lane, Northern Extension in the Hastings Development Management Plan).
- 2.6. The actual deliverability of allocated sites is benefitting from ongoing cooperation, notably through the Hastings and Rother Task Force, ‘Team East Sussex’, and Sea Change Sussex. With the support of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), the area has secured significant Local Growth Fund (LGF) monies for economic growth, as well as gained Assisted Area status.

- 2.7. Transport communications is a key issue for the local area and has resulted in a clear strategic approach involving all relevant authorities.

Combe Valley Countryside Park

- 2.8. The two Councils, together with the East Sussex County Council, have a long established cooperative approach to the development of the Coombe Valley Countryside Park (CVCP).
- 2.9. The CVCP project develops and enhances the green space between Hastings, Bexhill and Crowhurst, an area of approximately 600 hectares. The vision for the park is the creation and management of “a high quality sustainable, attractive and accessible multifunctional countryside area to serve the recreational and economic needs of residents and visitors.”
- 2.10. The CVCP (formerly Pebsham Countryside Park) is a saved policy in the Rother District Local Plan (2006) – Policy BX4.
- 2.11. The respective policies and definition of the Park's boundaries are set out below.
- 2.12. Policy HF1 in the Rother Core Strategy<sup>2</sup> states that:

*The strategy for conservation and development in the Hastings Fringes is to:*

*(i) Continue to develop proposals for the establishment of the Combe Valley Countryside Park between Bexhill and Hastings, including through securing appropriate developer contributions;...*

- 2.13. The boundary of the CVCP within the administrative boundary for Hastings is shown on the Hastings Local Plan Policies Map. Policy FA1: Strategic Policy for Western Area in the Hastings Planning Strategy<sup>3</sup> states that we (Hastings Borough Council) will:

*“...work with Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council to establish and manage Combe Valley Countryside Park as a sustainable multi-functional countryside area with recreation, biodiversity conservation and regeneration opportunities, and support its development in line with the Park Development Strategy and Implementation Plan...” (criterion g).*

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<sup>2</sup> Reference SA4, page 60

<sup>3</sup> Reference E3, page 44-45

2.14. The boundary of the CVCP within Rother District Council's administrative boundary is defined within the Development and Site Allocations (DaSA) Local Plan at Figure 38: Policy HAS1: Detail Map and the Policies Map. The Policy which underpins the Park is set out in Policy HAS1: Combe Valley Countryside Park<sup>4</sup>.

2.15. Hastings Borough Council in their representations made to the Regulation 19 period for representations to the Rother DaSA Local Plan highlight their support for Policy HAS1: Combe Valley Countryside Park and its importance as part of the 'shared approach' for Hastings and Bexhill<sup>5</sup>.

### Strategic Gaps

2.16. The Strategic Gaps are defined through a saved policy in the Rother District Local Plan (2006) – Policy DS5.

2.17. Rother District Council through Policy HF1 in the Core Strategy seeks to maintain strategic countryside gaps between Hastings/St Leonards and Bexhill, Battle, Crowhurst and Fairlight<sup>6</sup>.

2.18. There is no equivalent strategic gap policy set out within the Hastings Planning Strategy or Development Management Plan.

2.19. Hastings Borough Council did not raise an objection to the boundaries of the Strategic Gap during the Regulation 19 stage of the Rother DaSA Local Plan.

### Respective future Local Plan Reviews

2.20. Both RDC and HBC are looking to continue with and build on the success of joint working to-date including the continuation of the development of a joint evidence base to support their respective Local Plan Reviews. This commitment has been ratified by Rother District Council's Cabinet 11 February 2019<sup>7</sup>. The commitment to joint working from Hastings Borough Council was ratified by their Cabinet 4 February 2019<sup>8</sup>.

2.21. Both Councils have now committed to reviewing their Local Plans with a new 15+ year time horizon, in line with the new NPPF 2018.

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<sup>4</sup> Reference SA4, page 177-179 and the Policies Map.

<sup>5</sup> Representation reference: 24379

<sup>6</sup> Reference SA4, page 60

<sup>7</sup> Reference 7.4 Report and LC Minutes.

<sup>8</sup> Reference para 142 HBC Report and Minutes

2.22. A Memorandum of Understanding will be developed setting out the extent and purpose of joint working arrangements. The MoU will also provide a basis for the preparation and maintenance of future Statement of Common Ground, as required under the NPPF 2019, setting out agreed collaborative working arrangements not only between the two Councils, but also with other neighbouring Councils and other agencies on strategic matters where they have a wider relevance.

**3. Duty to co-operate**

3.1. Both RDC and HBC do not consider there to be any failure in regard to the Duty to Cooperate provisions set out in national policy.


3.2. HBC do not raise any objection relating to Duty to Cooperate to the Rother DaSA Local Plan. The Borough Council endorses the Statement of Compliance with the Duty to Cooperate published by RDC in April 2019.

**4. Position Statement – matters in disagreement**

4.1. As of the date of this Statement of Common Ground, there are no matters of disagreement between Rother District Council and Hastings Borough Council.

**5. Summary and next steps**

5.1. RDC and HBC have fully cooperated through the production of their respective Local Plan documents and are committed to continued collaborative working through their forthcoming Local Plan Reviews.

Signed on behalf of Rother District Council	Signed on behalf of Hastings Borough Council
	
Date 16 May 2019	Date: 16 <sup>th</sup> May 2019
Position Executive Director.	Position: Director of Operational Services

## Appendix 1: Jointly produced evidence base documents

- Housing Market Assessment for Hastings and Rother (2006)
- Hastings & Rother Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (2010)
- Hastings & Rother Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (2013)
- Assessment of Housing Need in the Hastings & Rother Housing Market Area (2012)

The two Councils jointly commissioned the above studies jointly prepared a further background papers setting out in more detail the reasoning behind the scale of housing development proposed in their respective Core Strategies, having due regard to the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework. The findings of the above studies have directly informed the Councils' respective Core Strategies and subsequent site allocations plans (DaSA and DMP)

- Hastings and Rother Employment Strategy and Land Review (2008)
- Hastings and Rother Employment Strategy and Land Review Update (2011)

The above studies were produced by a team of officers from both Hastings and Rother councils, with additional help from East Sussex Council's demographers and economic development officers. Both Councils are thus in agreement about the provision of the major employment sites proposed at North-East Bexhill to meet their joint strategic requirements.

- Hastings and Rother Leisure Facilities Strategy (2009)
- Rother and Hastings Playing Pitch Strategy (2016)