

Rother Local Plan 2039

New Local Plan

Rother District Council

Engagement Strategy

Version published for information on the Progress of the Rother District Local Plan in the lead up formal Public Consultation at the Regulation 18 Stage

April 2021



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Rother District Council (RDC) is currently in the process of developing its new Local Plan in advance of the first formal public consultation stage (known as Regulation 18 consultation). In order to shape this plan, the Council is in the process of developing its evidence base. This is primarily to help inform the Council's spatial development options for the Plan.
- 1.2 The Council has recently (March 2021) published an update to its [Local Development Scheme](#) which outlines the timetable for the production of the Rother Local Plan through to adoption, which is anticipated to be late 2023.
- 1.3 The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of how Rother District Council will engage with various stakeholders as the new Local Plan progresses to the Regulation 19 consultation stage. This will help organisations and the public understand at what points the Council will interact and engage on the Plan and will form its proposed engagement strategy.
- 1.4 The Council has already undertaken informal consultation with various stakeholders through a targeted early engagement stage which sought the views of stakeholders on key issues to be addressed in the Local Plan. The targeted early engagement stage took place from **Friday 21 August – Friday 16 October 2020** through two different methods:
- An Early Engagement Survey Form: with Council Members, Parish and Town Council's and targeted local organisations; and
 - An Early Engagement Document and Duty to Cooperate Action Plan: with neighbouring planning authorities and Duty to Cooperate bodies in relation to strategic planning matters
- 1.5 This document is published alongside an Early Engagement Document which sets out, further to the responses received at the early engagement stage, the approach that RDC will take in developing its Local Plan and provide information on how the Council is progressing. Whilst both documents will not provide the full detail of the responses received during the targeted early engagement, as this was only an informal engagement stage, summaries of issues raised will be provided where relevant.

2. National Planning

- 2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at para. 24 states that *'local planning authorities and county councils are under a duty to cooperate with each other and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries'*. The Council should collaborate to identify the relevant strategic matters which they need to address in their plans, engaging with local communities and relevant bodies including the Local Enterprise Partnership, Local Nature Partnership, the Marine Management Organisation, County Council's, infrastructure providers and neighbouring authorities.
- 2.2. The Council's early engagement stage with key stakeholders, strategic organisations, and neighbouring planning authorities, and its commitment to wider duty to cooperate activities will help shape Rother's Local Plan. This stage has helped to confirm the key cross-boundary strategic issues which the Council should consider at the earliest opportunity in the plan-making stages.
- 2.3. In line with national policy and guidance, the Council will prepare draft Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) as early as possible during the process of Local Plan preparation in order to inform strategic decisions moving forward, and they will be published in advance of each formal public consultation stage. The development of SoCGs will be initiated once the Council has developed its strategy and development options, providing a proposed distribution of growth across the District (as defined in the PPG, para 012).
- 2.4. This document concludes with an action plan detailing how the Council propose to coordinate activities in relation to the Duty to Cooperate. The Council will seek to utilise existing practices and working groups and will suggest further engagement methods that can be undertaken throughout the production of the Local Plan. This will link to both officer and member involvement in the process, as members will form important signatories to the SoCG and will be making key decisions on strategic planning issues across local planning authorities and other organisations.

3. Approach to the Duty to Cooperate

3.1. The following table (Table 1) provides a summary of the key organisations and bodies that require effective cooperation in line with the NPPF/PPG. It outlines the cross-boundary planning areas of strategic importance to each organisation, which have been reviewed and confirmed through the early engagement stage. This list is by no means exhaustive and may include other organisations and planning issues as they become apparent through the development of the evidence base and the proposed development strategy for the Local Plan. The Council therefore intend to monitor and review the delivery of the actions, through progress on the Local Plan.

Table 1. Duty to Cooperate Organisations for Rother District

Organisation	Reason for DtC	Strategic Planning Area	Key Strategic Planning Issues	Actions/ Recommendations
Hastings Borough Council	Neighbouring Planning Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Market Area, Functional Economic Market Area, Hastings & Rother administrative boundaries, Combe Valley Countryside Park, Rock Lane Urban Fringe Management, Combe Valley Catchment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Land supply, including G&T Employment Land supply Strategic Infrastructure Combe Valley Catchment Playing Pitches, Leisure and Community Facilities Combe Valley Countryside Park Rock Lane Urban Fringe Management Area Coastal Management Joint work on SA/SEA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint work on the HEDNA Share outputs of HELAA, where there are cross-boundary links Early engagement in the process of developing spatial development options. Joint policy approach to the designated Combe Valley Countryside Park, and coastal management. Joint SA/SEA Scoping Report Memorandum of Understanding Prepare SoCG Close working on the IDP, liaising and sharing information.
Wealden District Council	Neighbouring Planning Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional Economic Market Area, Pevensey Levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Land Supply, including G&T Employment Land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage early in the process of developing spatial development

Organisation	Reason for DtC	Strategic Planning Area	Key Strategic Planning Issues	Actions/ Recommendations
		Catchment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashdown Forest 	Supply <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Quality Mitigation • SAC Mitigation • Pevensey Levels Catchment area • Flood Risk • Strategic Infrastructure, most notably transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> options • HEDNA engagement • Share outputs of HELAA, where there are cross-boundary links • Ashdown Forest Working Group representation • Pevensey and Cuckmere Catchment Partnership representation • Prepare SoCG • Engage/Consult on the IDP • Consult on SA/SEA Scoping Report
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	Neighbouring Planning Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authority boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Land Supply, including G&T • Employment land Supply • Strategic Infrastructure • The Sustainable Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS) • SAC Mitigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options • HEDNA engagement • Share outputs of HELAA, where there are cross-boundary links • SARMS implementation • Engage/Consult on the IDP • Consult on SA/SEA Scoping Report • Prepare SoCG
Ashford Borough Council	Neighbouring Planning Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authority boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Land supply, including G&T • Employment Land supply • Strategic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options • HEDNA

Organisation	Reason for DtC	Strategic Planning Area	Key Strategic Planning Issues	Actions/ Recommendations
			Infrastructure, as noted in current SoCG.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engagement Share outputs of HELAA, where there are cross-boundary links Engage/Consult on the IDP Consult on SA/SEA Scoping Report Prepare SoCG
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Neighbouring Planning Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authority boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Land supply, including G&T Employment Land supply Strategic Infrastructure, including transport impacts along A21 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options HEDNA engagement Share outputs of HELAA, where there are cross-boundary links Engage/Consult on the IDP Consult on SA/SEA Scoping Report Prepare SoCG
Eastbourne Borough Council	Strategic influence on the Functional Economic Market Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional Economic Market Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment Land Supply Potential wider strategic infrastructure impacts, including impacts on the SNR and A259 G&T Provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HEDNA Engagement on wider impacts of the FEMA. Further engagement after completion of the HEDNA Engagement/consultation on the IDP to ensure complementary approach
East Sussex County Council	County Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County delivered strategic infrastructure: transport, education, libraries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific engagement required to develop the infrastructure evidence base, in particular transport

Organisation	Reason for DtC	Strategic Planning Area	Key Strategic Planning Issues	Actions/ Recommendations
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G&T Transit provision • GTAA County-wide provision, Combe Valley Countryside Park • Waste and Minerals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modelling • Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options • Engage/Consult on the IDP
Kent County Council	Neighbouring County Authority	Rother District (Kent boundary edge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic infrastructure links, cross boundary into Kent • Transport – Flimwell Junction (A268) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options • Engage/Consult on the IDP
Highways England	Statutory Body for the Strategic Road Network	Rother District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Road Network (SRN) (A21, A259) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific engagement required to develop transport modelling and evidence base • Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options • Consult on SA/SEA Scoping Report • Engage/Consult on the IDP
Office of Rail and Road	Statutory authority	Rother District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rail network and SRN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options • Engage/Consult on the IDP
Natural England	Statutory authority for the Natural Environment	Rother District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAC/SPA/Ramsar Mitigation • SARMS • High Weald AONB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options • Consult on SA/SEA Scoping Report • Engage/Consult on

Organisation	Reason for DtC	Strategic Planning Area	Key Strategic Planning Issues	Actions/ Recommendations
				<p>the IDP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pevensey and Cuckmere Catchment Partnership representation
South East Local Enterprise Partnership	Engagement regarding key strategic economic priorities and investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Land Supply • Funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options
Sussex Local Nature Partnership/ Sussex Wildlife Trust	Engagement regarding improvements to the local natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental designations • Local Wildlife Site Review • Biodiversity Net Gain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options • Engage on and develop brief for Local Wildlife Site Review
Marine Management Organisation	Statutory authority for marine activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coast and Marine Planning Issues (intertidal area of cross-over) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage after developing draft spatial development options, before Reg 18 consultation • Consult on SA/SEA Scoping Report
Historic England	Statutory authority for historic buildings/structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Economic land supply and impact on built heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options • Potential input into HELAA process • Consult on SA/SEA Scoping Report
Homes England	Statutory authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding opportunities for development, affordable housing delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage after developing draft spatial development options, before

Organisation	Reason for DtC	Strategic Planning Area	Key Strategic Planning Issues	Actions/ Recommendations
				Reg 18 consultation
Environment Agency	Statutory authority for the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental permits Flood Risk Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options Consult on SA/SEA Scoping Report Engage/Consult on the IDP Pevensey and Cuckmere Catchment Partnership representation Key consultee for the SFRA
Southern Water	Wastewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rother District River Catchment areas for the DWMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wastewater Capacity Strategic Infrastructure Pevensey Levels SAC, Ramsar Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options Engage/Consult on the IDP Pevensey and Cuckmere Catchment Partnership representation Key consultee on the SFRA
South East Water	Water Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Supply Strategic Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options Engage/Consult on the IDP
High Weald AONB Unit	Engagement regarding designated AONB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution and consideration/impact of major development in the AONB Biodiversity Net 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options Potential input into

Organisation	Reason for DtC	Strategic Planning Area	Key Strategic Planning Issues	Actions/ Recommendations
			Gain	<p>HELAA process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage/Consult on the IDP Representation on High Weald AONB Biodiversity Net Gain Working Group(s)
Lead Local Flood Authority	Potential joint engagement with EA over flooding matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood Risk Management, SFRA Pevensey Levels SAC, Ramsar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage early in the process of developing spatial development options Key consultee for the SFRA Pevensey and Cuckmere Catchment Partnership representation
Primary Care Trust/Clinical Commissioning Groups	Strategic Health Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic health infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage after developing draft spatial development options, before Reg 18 consultation Consult on the SA/SEA Scoping Report Engage/Consult on the IDP
Civil Aviation Authority	Strategic Infrastructure Use of Airspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rother District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of Airspace Air quality implications, noise disturbance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage after developing draft spatial development options, before Reg 18 consultation

3.2. Table 1 demonstrates that there are topic areas/strategic planning issues that are common to a number of organisations. It is therefore likely that SoCGs will be prepared by common themes or policy areas rather than by

individual organisation and will therefore be party to several signatory organisations. The Council may also be able to utilise existing working groups in order to facilitate this, for instance the Ashdown Forest Working Group (AFWG) in relation to air quality monitoring and county-wide groups in relation to Gypsy and Traveller Provision.

4. Statement of Common Ground

- 4.1. A number of Statement of Common Grounds (SoCG) will be produced, published and kept up to date, providing an accessible and public record of where agreements have or have not been reached on cross boundary strategic issues. The purpose of SoCGs are to document the cross-boundary matters being addressed and outline the progress in cooperating to address them. It therefore demonstrates that plans are based on effective and ongoing cooperation and that the Council have sought to produce strategies that, as far as possible, are based on effective and on-going engagement with other organisations.
- 4.2. The SoCG will increase certainty and transparency at an early stage in the plan-making process and will detail where effective cooperation is taking place, or where further engagement is required. It will highlight the cross boundary strategic planning matters in the emerging Local Plan and outline the timetable for gaining engagement and agreement on different strategic matters. It will also provide a record of formal commitment through relevant organisations providing signed agreement on strategic planning issues. SoCG will likely be produced on strategic topic matters, where a number of parties may form signatories or may be produced individually with specific organisations or neighbouring planning authorities regarding respective agreements on Local Plan matters.
- 4.3. The Council envisage that early versions of the SoCG will provide a Statement of Intent (SoI), with a commitment to work together with local planning authorities and other organisations on strategic planning matters as a starting point. As the authorities continue to work together through the development of the Local Plan, the SoCG will develop into a more structured final version in advance of the formal Regulation 19 proposed submission stage.

- 4.4. The Council, for its own purposes, intend to use the [PAS template](#) for SoCGs. It will be concise and shall contain:
- A list of the local planning authorities and any additional organisations that are signatories to each of the separate SoCGs;
 - A list of individual signatories (senior officers and/or Members); names and roles of planning authority's relevant signatories and the relevant representatives of other strategic organisations;
 - A list of the key strategic matters being covered;
 - A short description and map showing the geography that the SoCG covers and a brief justification of the area;
 - A description of the governance arrangements for cooperation and how the SoCG will be kept up-to-date;
 - A list of the housing requirements in any adopted and emerging plans, if applicable to the key strategic matter in question;
 - In relation to strategic housing need, if and where applicable, an agreement of how housing need will be distributed across the wider area, including any unmet need, and the process for agreeing the distribution across the area;
 - A list of agreements that have or have not been reached on the key strategic matters in question and the activities undertaken to reach agreement. If no agreement has been reached, the proposed process and date for reaching agreement, or how this has affected the relevant strategic issues and the content of the Local Plan; and
 - Any additional strategic matters that are deemed as required in the SoCG, such as a brief description of how the SoCG relates to any other SoCG covering all or part of the same area.
 - Where an Sol is prepared in advance of a SoCG, it is likely that this document will only provide cover strategic planning areas of intent to work with other organisations, and may not at that point have resolved all issues.
- 4.5. The SoCG will be a means of detailing key information, providing clear signposting or links to available evidence on the Council's, or any other relevant organisation's website.

- 4.6. The Council will publish any relevant SoCGs on our website. The Council intend to produce draft and evolving SoCGs/Sol during the production of the new Local Plan and in advance of the first formal consultation stage (Regulation 18 consultation). The Council will publish finalised SoCGs by the time the Proposed Submission draft plan is published (Regulation 19 stage), in order to support the Council's Duty to Cooperate requirements. This process will provide assistance to an Inspector when examining the authority's plan. It will highlight the required agreements on cross boundary strategic issues and will sit together with the authority's Duty to Cooperate statement to show how the agreements have influenced the plan.
- 4.7. The Council anticipate that Members and Senior Officers will be signatories to the SoCG and as such an appropriate amount of time to administer signatories to the SoCG will be planned. As such the development of the SoCG and its wording may evolve over time and be matters of discussions and amendment by planning officers between different organisations. The Council will not expect organisations to sign up to SocGs at short notice and without relevant Member involvement.
- 4.8. When agreed, a SoCG could be used by the Council as evidence of effective co-operation between authorities to secure grants for infrastructure and the delivery of funding.

5. Memorandum of Understanding

- 5.1. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is a formal agreement between two or more parties. It is primarily used in the planning field to establish formal partnership and joint working practices in relation to strategic planning matters. The Council produced a draft MoU with Hastings Borough Council in relation to the joint evidence base work that is being undertaken to support our respective Local Plans. There may be further instances in which an MoU will be beneficial to the Council in order to facilitate partnership working moving forward, for instance:
- Strategic Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS) – Working with Folkestone & Hythe District Council;
 - Working with neighbouring authorities on the delivery of strategic infrastructure provision of cross-boundary importance;

- Developing Hastings/Rother's MOU in relation to further joint evidence base documents or developing further MOUs with other neighbouring authorities on joint evidence base.

5.2. The opportunities for the development of MoUs will be explored in the Council's Duty to Cooperate Action Plan.

6. Proposed Engagement Strategy

6.1. In delivering the Local Plan the key message from Government and supporting organisations such as the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) is to ensure effective early and ongoing engagement. Rother District Council consider the Duty to Cooperate (DtC) requirements as a key priority for the Local Plan, and as such sought to engage with our partners on how this can be undertaken, through early engagement on the development of a Duty to Cooperate Action Plan. RDC have been provided support by PAS in the scoping and initial stages of production of the Local Plan.

6.2. The Council previously identified through its targeted engagement the various duty to cooperate opportunities that could take place as the Local Plan is developed. Taking on board feedback received and updating the timeframes for delivery, it has been possible to identified through a Duty to Cooperate Action Plan (Table 3), how the Council can effectively engage with our partners as the new Local Plan progresses. The Action Plan forms the basis for the Council's proposed Engagement Strategy that will be used to support the development of the Local Plan.

6.3. The Council benefits from a series of existing working groups in relation to Local Plan preparation which is the starting point for the development of the Action Plan. The Council has undertaken consultation with its statutory consultees on the SA/SEA Scoping Report, and widened this consultation with other consultees, which forms another important stage of early engagement on the Local Plan to start considering the strategic cross-boundary implications which will need to be addressed in the new Local Plan.

Table 3. Duty to Cooperate Action Plan

DtC Method	DtC Activities	Action(s)	Timeframe ¹
Continue to use existing working groups to further Duty to Cooperate discussions and deal with specific strategic planning policy matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashdown Forest Working Group for Air Quality monitoring and mitigation for the Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend the meetings and contribute to discussions and actions with regards to monitoring and mitigation. Shared and joint approach with regards to the monitoring of air quality impacts in the Forest. 	Ongoing Every 2/3 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuckmere Haven Catchment Partnership Working Group (and Combe Valley Catchment area sub-group) for partnership working on water and ecology issues in relation to the Cuckmere and Pevensey Levels Catchment area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise all existing working groups to cover DtC requirements by discuss the relationship to Plan Making for all relevant Local Plans. If necessary report specific items to the Combe Valley Working Group to discuss issues specifically of importance to Rother and Hastings emerging Local Plans 	Ongoing Every 2/3 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Drainage Board discussions regarding the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Pevensey Levels and the Hydraulic Modelling Project (ii) Romney Marsh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified requirement for further expanded meeting with all related partners to understand the operation and management of the Pevensey Levels and the impact of hydraulic modelling. Set up separate meeting with the Romney Marsh Internal Drainage Board 	Initial conference call regarding Pevensey Levels in March 2020, further conference calls Summer 2020, then ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue discussions with Folkestone and Hythe DC regarding (i) the Green Infrastructure Workshop and (ii) Strategic Access and Recreation Management Strategy (SARMS) and attending meetings of the Dungeness National Nature Reserve (NNR) Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Folkestone and Hythe to reschedule postponed event to discuss the wider green infrastructure links to Rother District (ii) Conference call with the Council, to discuss progression of SARMS and future attendance at 	Summer 2021(tbc) April 2020, and future attendance at meetings

¹ The timeframes align for the delivery of the Local Plan are set out in the Local Development Scheme, but the timescales for these specific activities may be subject to change. Please note that some of the actions may already have been delivered/completed.

DtC Method	DtC Activities	Action(s)	Timeframe ¹
		the NNR Group	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue planned meetings/conference calls with Tunbridge Wells DC regarding Local Plan matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conference calls held in April and May 2020, and ongoing every 2/3 months to discuss emerging Plans. 	Ongoing every 2/3 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop events held during the production of the HEDNA, and further economic focussed events in relation to the Hastings/Rother economic context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder events were held for the HEDNA, and a further event was held in March 2020 to discuss the issues in relation to the Rother/Hastings Economic Market. Attendee contacts can be utilised. 	Initial HEDNA report signed off in December 2020.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaison and joint working with Hastings Borough Council with regards to the new Local Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work together after completion of the SA/SEA Scoping consultation and address cross-boundary issues together, to be reflected in respective Local Plans 	Ongoing. Regular conference calls are held.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the Local Plan Managers Group at a strategic level to discuss any duty to cooperate protocols or emerging issues in the development of the Local Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the existing working group to discuss strategic issues, update progress and timescales of the Local Plan and the likely level of input from partners. Where appropriate, sign off appropriate stages in the development of the Local Plan through respective SoCG. 	Held every 2 months
Widening engagement and consultation of the SA/SEA Scoping Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with the three statutory consultees (Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England) on the SA/SEA Scoping Report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake consultation on the framework for the SA, and ask for specific comments on the strategic issues that the Local Plan will need to address 	16 April - 29 May 2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with additional specific consultation bodies on the SA/SEA Scoping Report as specific cross-boundary strategic issues have been raised at the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the SA/SEA Scoping as an opportunity to start informal engagement on the Local Plan process and identify cross boundary strategic issues that the Local Plan will 	16 April - 29 May 2020

DtC Method	DtC Activities	Action(s)	Timeframe ¹
	Scoping Stage e.g. neighbouring planning authorities, Sport England and Highways England	need to address	
Engagement and consultation on the Duty to Cooperate Action Plan and Early Engagement on the Key Issues for the Local Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request comments on the proposed DtC Action Plan and Early Engagement Document by email and discuss relevant issues through telephone conference calls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the PID and DtC Action Plan as the basis/ opportunity for further early engagement with key/statutory consultees, and circulate Action Plan for comments at part of the wider engagement process 	Early targeted engagement undertaken 21 August –16 October 2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare an early engagement Local Plan questionnaire which would be dual purpose, in allowing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) internal engagement with Members and Town and Parish Councils, (ii) Potential to expand the questionnaire for early engagement purposes with targeted consultees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the Local Plan Questionnaire to start the conversation with local members and Town and Parish Councillors about the key issues to be addressed in the Local Plan Use the Local Plan Questionnaires a form of early engagement with targeted local organisations 	Early targeted engagement undertaken 21 August –16 October 2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an opportunity for stakeholders to see how comments have influenced the development of the Local Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of feedback from the early engagement stage (This report) 	Spring 2021
Production of HELAA and assessment of availability of sites to meet overall need, balanced against environmental constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with Hastings BC regarding sites located in the Hastings Fringes area for the Councils respective HELAA's. Consideration of the opportunity for any joint site allocations and strategic infrastructure requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with Hastings BC after the completion of Hastings BC's call for sites, liaising with Hastings BC at the most appropriate stage when assessing sites on or near to Hastings' boundary. Sites may need to be assessed together if they form larger comprehensive strategic sites that could be joint allocations. Engagement with Hastings BC on the completion of the initial site assessments in 	<p>Spring 2021 – Detailed action Plan to be developed (further to completion of Hastings' Regulation 18 consultation in March 2021)</p> <p>Summer 2021 – anticipated completion of Rother's draft</p>

DtC Method	DtC Activities	Action(s)	Timeframe ¹
		Rother DC's HELAA	HELAA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with all other neighbouring authorities, East Sussex County Council and other infrastructure providers, regarding the identification of any sites near or on boundaries, with cross boundary infrastructure implications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further to the HELAA initial conversation may need to be had with neighbouring authorities ESCC, and other infrastructure providers regarding the impacts of potential sites on wider infrastructure requirements, and to inform the Council's emerging IDP. 	Spring/Summer 2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further engagement with housebuilders and the development industry regarding viability Further engagement with consultees/organisations regarding issues such as landscape character, transport implications and flood risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the relevant stages in the development of the Council's HELAA engage with housebuilders and environmental groups as laid out in the HELAA methodology. 	Spring/Summer 2021
Commissioning Reports and undertaking Evidence Base for the Local Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working together with partners on shared briefs/commissioning of reports on county-wide (or further) strategic planning issues (e.g. Gypsy and Traveller Provision and County-wide Transport Study) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail all interested parties when scoping and writing project briefs, engage with stakeholders at earliest opportunity. 	May 2020 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working together with the Lead Local Flood Authority and Environment Agency on the development of the Council's SFRA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing liaison and other authorities as they progress their plans stating latest Rother position. 	March 2020 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeding back to partners and stakeholders on the strategic implications of any emerging pieces of evidence base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with partners in emerging findings and outcomes, with consequential development of SoCG or MoUs (As indicated below) 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership with 	Early 2021

DtC Method	DtC Activities	Action(s)	Timeframe ¹
	together with neighbouring planning authorities on a County-wide approach to a Transport Assessment/Study to support the development for our respective Local Plans	all East Sussex local authorities, ESCC and the Highways England to agree the scope and approach of the transport study	onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop appropriate external working groups on topic based themes to manage cooperation on key issues related to the Local Plan, where relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further to existing working groups, create additional groups if necessary to work together in progressing discreet policy for the Local Plan. Areas to consider include: climate change, infrastructure, water management. 	Summer 2021 onwards
Development of an amended Action Plan further to the emerging evidence base and development of strategic issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An opportunity to revise the action plan and take account of any further strategic issues that arise from the evidence base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend and further develop the Action plan, specifically for engagement and DtC for all partners at the development of strategic options stage Monitor the implementation of action points from the initial Action Plan and report internally on any issues 	Autumn-Winter 2021
Development of strategic development options for growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with neighbouring authorities and all relevant partners on emerging options and the likely implications on the delivery of supporting infrastructure (All organisations as identified in Table 1 of this report) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information and an informal targeted consultation opportunity to provide direct feedback on the development of spatial options before more formal wider public consultation 	Autumn-Winter 2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Engagement with ESCC and other infrastructure providers on impacts of emerging options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through ongoing engagement with East Sussex discuss the potential impacts of emerging evidence, eg. Transport Assessment/Study 	Autumn-Winter 2021

DtC Method	DtC Activities	Action(s)	Timeframe ¹
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early engagement and working together with Hastings BC, East Sussex County Council, relevant neighbouring authorities and other partners on the production of the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan • Early engagement with all relevant partners on the implications of development options on infrastructure 	(i) Early engagement with partners through a questionnaire on the principles of infrastructure delivery and confirming key contacts	Summer-Autumn 2021
		(ii) Targeted engagement with infrastructure providers and neighbouring authorities regarding the delivery any cross-boundary strategic infrastructure. Provision of draft development options and growth figures (housing and employment) which would inform supporting infrastructure needs and address any capacity issues.	Autumn-Winter 2021
Involvement of Members in the production of spatial development options and policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rother Local Plan Steering Group • If, and where relevant, utilise other Local Planning authority member steering groups for Local Plan purposes • Internal member engagement through early engagement survey/questionnaire on the Local Plan • Members updates and further engagement on specific outputs of the Local Plan evidence base • Parish and Town Council engagement in the Local Plan and selected evidence base • Signing off SoCG/Sol and MoUs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance arrangements for Local Plan – Member representation on the Local Plan Steering Group • Governance arrangements involving members to be determined by each Local Planning authority • Undertake Local Plan early engagement questionnaire with Members and Town/Parish Councils and summarise feedback to help shape the development of the Local Plan • Plan further engagement with Members on specific outputs as the evidence base is developed • RDC Governance arrangements – Lead Member and Chief Executive to be signatories to SoCG and MoUs 	<p>Early engagement undertaken Summer 2020</p> <p>Further engagement - Summer 2021 onwards</p>

DtC Method	DtC Activities	Action(s)	Timeframe ¹
Production of HRA, Screening and Update of SA Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alert neighbouring authorities of Screening Process being initiated on the HRA Engagement at relevant stages with Natural England on the HRA Consider strategic impacts of growth options for Rother and surrounding neighbouring authorities when preparing the SA draft report in support of the Reg 18 consultation stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early engagement and information sent to Natural England. Potential to provide neighbouring authorities with scope/screening assessments of the HRA. Work collaboratively with neighbouring planning authorities when developing the SA draft Report, if necessary. 	Autumn-Winter 2021
Production of draft Statements of Common Ground (or Statements of Intent) with local authorities and in relation to creation of topic based working groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of SoCG/Sol with neighbouring local authorities with regards to housing and employment provision (reference to unmet housing need, if applicable, below) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead on the development of SoCG related to Rother's housing provision, detailing how Councils can or not help meet any unmet need Plan for relevant involvement by Senior Officers and the Lead Member in signing the SOCGs 	Ongoing and if possible in advance of the first formal consultation Stage (Regulation 18) Finalise late 2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of SoCG/Sols for specific topic areas such as, but not limited to: Housing provision, Ashdown Forest, Pevensey Levels, and Gypsy and Traveller Provision for example. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be involved and provide supporting text for other SoCG that may be led by our local authorities and partners on other strategic matters. Plan for relevant involvement of Senior Officers, Chief Executive and the Lead Member in signing the SOCGs/SOI 	Ongoing and if possible in advance of the first formal consultation Stage (Regulation 18) Finalise late 2021
Duty to Cooperate ongoing engagement to consider whether neighbouring local planning authorities can help meet any unmet housing or employment need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After the development of: draft spatial development options, proposed housing and employment delivery numbers, and informal early engagement with all partners, if necessary confirm with neighbouring authorities whether they can assist with meeting any unmet housing and employment need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If necessary, require written confirmation from neighbouring planning authorities whether they can at this stage assist in helping Rother District meet its identified housing and employment needs, which would need to be documented in a draft Statement of Common Ground. 	During the final stages of the production of a draft Statement of Common Ground for housing and employment development matters, if possible in advance of the Reg. 18 consultation.

DtC Method	DtC Activities	Action(s)	Timeframe ¹
			Finalise late 2021
<i>Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Formal Consultation – Not a Duty to Cooperate Stage</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Undertake consultation in line with Regulations and the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement</i> 	Late 2021/Early 2022
Engagement and response to issues raised at Reg. 18 formal consultation stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further engagement and liaison might be necessary following receipt of formal consultation responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the implications of the proposed strategy and whether any further engagement is necessary. 	Early 2022
Production of a revised Duty to Cooperate Action Plan (if necessary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address any strategic issues that have been highlighted through responses to the formal consultation stage. That may require further or more considered engagement or cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise the Action Plan to take account of the need for further specific engagement and how this can be delivered in the timeframe of the Local Plan delivery. 	2022
Finalising evidence base and production of DtC statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication and sharing the results of any finalised evidence base and engagement with interested parties any resulting consequences/outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Publish study outcomes and actions (ii) Identify any unresolved issues and how these are to be dealt with moving forward (iii) Identify any further work and any ongoing engagement required moving forward 	2022
Finalisation of SoCGs for individual organisations in support of Rother District Local Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalise and document stages in the production of the SoCG (different versions may be published at different times and made available on the Council’s website) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish Final Statement of Common Ground on the Council’s website 	After finalisation of the evidence and conclusion of engagement.
<i>Monitoring and Review of the Implementation of the Action Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Not a DtC Stage, for internal purposes only</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Undertake an ongoing review and monitoring process and update log to ensure the actions are delivered/implemented</i> <i>Further opportunities and stages of engagement will be developed later on after wider public consultation, as this document currently focuses on the key stages</i> 	On completion of the Reg 18 consultation

DtC Method	DtC Activities	Action(s)	Timeframe ¹
		<i>up to the Regulation 18 consultation stage</i>	

7. Duty to Cooperate Statement

7.1. As part of the Examination process Rother District Council will be required to demonstrate how strategic planning matters have been managed in the Local Plan in a concise and focused statement. It will be useful to document all stages of the duty to cooperate rather than produce this retrospectively at the end of the process in advance of submission.

7.2. Effective cooperation will be critical for the Council in relation to:

- Defining the appropriate strategic planning area;
- Agreeing the plan period;
- Quantifying development needs;
- Agreeing on the distribution of development;
- Establishing what strategic infrastructure is essential to deliver the required development;
- Agreeing how and when essential infrastructure will be provided.

7.3. The most important aspect of demonstrating the Duty to Cooperate is the outcomes and what the result of the strategic cooperation was and how this has influenced the plan. In this regard it is important to provide a clear audit trail and reference for all duty to cooperate meetings, events and correspondence and summarise how this has influenced strategic decisions in the Local Plan.

7.4. With this in mind, it is important to document and record duty to cooperate events and issues, providing summaries of clear outcomes. It will be important to record this by strategic issue and organisation. Full meeting notes from regular working groups or correspondence may not be relevant to include. This will provide the opportunity for the Council to provide a chronology of events in developing policies and outcomes. It is proposed that the following information (in Table 3) is recorded for the purpose of Duty

to Cooperate, with examples of the types/forms of DtC events below. This will be translated into more detailed information in the Council’s actual DtC spreadsheet. This will then provide a searchable record by organisation and strategic issue to assist in the production of the statement when it is required to be formulated and published.

Table 3. Example Record of Duty to Cooperate

Strategic Issue	Organisation	Form of DtC	Date/Time	Summary of Purpose	Actions/ Outcomes
Housing Distribution	Hastings BC	SHELAA Engagement event	XXX 10:00	Discuss housing distribution	Agree x, y, z
SAC Mitigation	Wealden DC	Meeting with Neighbouring authority	XXX 14:00	Discuss potential mitigation measures	Agree a, b, c
Wastewater Capacity	Southern Water	Email correspondence	XXX 13:15	Calculate capacity, discuss mitigation	Recommend further work X
Employment Distribution	SELEP	Pre-Issues and Options engagement	XXX 10:30	Funding streams and strategic policies	Focus on options 1, 2 and 3

7.5. When the Statement is produced by the Council, the following items will be published in support:

- A map of the strategic planning area: Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA), Housing Market Area (HMA) local authority boundaries, catchment areas etc.
- References to key documentation (with appropriate weblinks); and
- An audit trail or flow diagram of the process of engagement and the delivery of outcomes.

7.6. The following template (Table 4) has been adapted from the Planning Advisory Service guidance (DtC Statement Template August 2015) and is a useful tool to bring together all of the evidence of cooperation under each strategic issue heading for the Council’s Final Duty to Cooperate Statement.

Table 4. Strategic Planning Issues Template

<p>1. Strategic Planning Area What strategic planning area does this relate to (defined area on a map, and general area eg. Housing Distribution)</p>
<p>2. Strategic Planning Issue</p>

Define the issue specifically, this needs to be a meaningful description and not vague

3. Evidence Base

What is the evidence used to develop the Local Plan's strategic priorities?

4. Strategic Partners

List of bodies engaged with, details of each body, make up and constitution

5. Actions

How have Rother worked collaboratively with partners? What actions were taken to manage strategic issues? Was there any joint evidence developed? Who was involved? Include timescales in the evidence to demonstrate when key decisions were made.

Action:

Partners

Outcome

Date:

6. Outcomes from Strategic Working

What was the result of strategic cooperation? How has this influenced the plan? Governance and working arrangements? Refer to specific policies if appropriate. Include any issues that remain unresolved and how the Council intends to manage these. Outline the implications of the unresolved matters.

7. Ongoing Cooperation

How will the strategic issues be managed on an ongoing basis? What are the mechanisms/structures being used to do this? How will this be monitored?

8. Next Steps

- 8.1. RDC has confirmed its proposed Engagement Strategy internally with its senior officers and Members so they are aware of the extent of cooperation and engagement that is planned with external organisations as part of the ongoing development of the new Local Plan. Through the publication of this document, the Council have now confirmed the appropriate stages and timescales for meaningful engagement with stakeholders throughout the development of the Local Plan.
- 8.2. The Council has considered the wider implications of the Coronavirus pandemic on the overall timetable for producing the District's Local Plan as part of the development of its Local Development Scheme. Whilst it is inevitable that the Council will not be able to hold face to face meetings with stakeholders and consultees at this moment in time, there are still opportunities for wider engagement with our partners on the evidence base and initial considerations in developing the Council's development strategy.

- 8.3. The Council will develop its internal Record or Log of its Duty to Cooperate activities by recording all events and meetings that have already taken place, along with planned and future engagement activities. It will be important to start producing in draft any relevant Statements of Common Ground and Statements of Intent as these can be expanded on and finalised over time. This was also assist in reducing the workload towards the end of the Local Plan process nearing submission. It is important to note that the Council will be undertaking the Duty to Cooperate process throughout all stages of preparing the Local Plan up to date of the formal submission to the Planning Inspectorate for Public Examination. This will provide an appropriate audit trail to be summarised within the Council's Duty to Cooperate Statement.

Glossary of Terms

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
DtC	Duty to Cooperate
DWMP	Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan
FEMA	Functional Economic Market Assessment
G&T	Gypsy and Traveller
GTAA	Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment
HEDNA	Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment
HELAA	Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment
HMA	Housing Market Area
IDP	Infrastructure Delivery Plan
LDS	Local Development Scheme
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PID	Project Initiation Document
SA/SEA	Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SARMS	Strategic Access and Recreational Management Strategy
SoCG	Statement of Common Ground
SoI	Statement of Intent
SPA	Special Protection Area
SRN	Strategic Road Network