

Mid Sussex District Council: Site Allocations Development Plan Document **July 2020**

Statement of Common Ground – Update to Memorandum of Understanding January 2016 and Statement of Common Ground February 2018

Parties to the Agreement

The Agreement involves the following local planning authorities:

- Mid Sussex District Council
- South Downs National Park Authority

Introduction

This Statement of Common Ground is an update to the Memorandum of Understanding signed in January 2016 and the Statement of Common Ground signed in February 2018 between the Parties to the Agreement. More specifically its overall aim is to demonstrate that ongoing and appropriate engagement and co-ordination is taking place between the Parties that includes planning for the identified cross-boundary strategic planning issues that exist and/or are likely to arise resulting from the Mid Sussex District Council emerging Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) that was published for 'Preferred Options' Consultation 9th October to 20th November 2019.

Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995 requires all relevant authorities, including local authorities, to have regard to the purposes of national parks. These are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area; and
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

Current Position

Mid Sussex District Council adopted the District Plan (2014 – 2031) in March 2018. The District Plan identified a housing requirement for the district of 16,390 dwellings up to 2031. This meets the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for the district of 14,892 dwellings in full and makes provision for the agreed quantum of unmet housing need for the Northern West Sussex Housing Market Area, to be addressed within Mid Sussex, of 1,498 dwellings.

The emerging Mid Sussex Site Allocations DPD has four main aims, which are:

- To allocate sufficient housing sites to address the residual necessary to meet the identified housing requirement for the district up to 2031 in accordance with the Spatial Strategy set out in the District Plan;
- To allocate sufficient employment land to meet the residual need and in line with policy requirements set out in District Plan Policy DP1: Sustainable Economic Development;
- To allocate a site for a Science and Technology Park west of Burgess Hill in line with policy requirements set out in District Plan Policy DP1: Sustainable Economic Development, and
- To set out additional Strategic Policies necessary to deliver sustainable development.

The Site Allocations DPD policies are strategic and, once adopted, will form part of the Development Plan for the district.

The Site Allocations DPD proposes 22 housing site allocations and 7 employment site allocations to ensure that the housing and employment requirements as identified by the District Plan are met in full.

The Site Allocations DPD has been informed by a comprehensive suite of technical evidence, including Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment.

Strategic Planning Issues

The following strategic/ cross-boundary planning issues have been identified that relate to the Mid Sussex Site Allocations DPD and the Parties:

1. Housing Provision

Mid Sussex District Council adopted the District Plan (2014 – 2031) in March 2018. The District Plan identified a housing requirement for the district of 16,390 dwellings up to 2031. This meets the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for the district of 14,892 dwellings in full and makes provision for the agreed quantum of unmet housing need for the Northern West Sussex Housing Market Area, to be addressed within Mid Sussex, of 1,498 dwellings.

One of the aims of the Site Allocations DPD is to allocate sufficient housing sites to address the residual necessary to meet the identified housing requirement for the district up to 2031 in accordance with the Spatial Strategy set out in the District Plan. District Plan Policy DP4: Housing indicates that, as at 1st April 2017, there was a residual amount of 2,439 dwellings to be allocated through future Neighbourhood Plans and the Site Allocations DPD. This residual amount has been updated as at 1st April 2020, and is now 1,272 dwellings.

Policy SA11: Additional Housing Allocations of the Site Allocations DPD proposes to allocate 22 housing sites, that will deliver around 1,929 dwellings. This amount ensures the residual is fully met and provides a reasonable over-allocation to provide flexibility.

The Parties agree that the Site Allocations DPD is seeking to allocate sufficient sites to ensure the housing requirement for Mid Sussex is met in full. The Parties agree the majority of these allocations do not raise any cross-boundary issues and offer an opportunity to make a positive contribution to delivering sustainable residential development. In response to the Regulation 18 consultation of the Site Allocations DPD, the South Downs National Park Authority raised some specific matters regarding potential cross-boundary impacts of proposed allocations SA12 and SA13, these are discussed further below.

2. Proposed Site Allocations

The emerging Sites DPD proposes 22 housing allocations, 7 employment allocations and one Science and Technology Park to the west of Burgess Hill.

Detailed policy requirements have been developed for the proposed allocations that are published for consultation.

The policy requirements for the proposed housing allocations includes the following standard requirements (Policy SA GEN of the Site Allocations DPD):

Landscape considerations

- Undertake Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment or Appraisal (LVIA) on any rural and edge of settlement sites. The LVIA will need to inform the site design, layout, capacity and any mitigation requirements.
- Development within the setting of the South Downs National Park will need to be consistent with National Park purposes and special qualities, as set out in the South

Downs Local Plan and South Downs Partnership Management Plan and with District Plan Policy DP18: Setting of the South Downs National Park.

- Provide a Landscape Strategy to identify how natural features on site have been retained and incorporated into the landscape structure and design of the site and informed the landscaping proposals for the site.
- Where development is required to adopt a landscape led approach; this includes respecting the local character of the area in built form by utilising appropriate architectural design, site layout and density which complements and contributes to the overall character and appearance of the area.

The Site Allocations DPD also sets out site specific policy requirements (included in policies SA12 to SA33 relating to housing allocations and SA2 to SA9 for employment).

Additional landscape work has also been received from the promoters of proposed sites SA12 and SA13.

In response to the Regulation 18 consultation on the emerging Site Allocations DPD, the South Downs National Park Authority raised some concerns. In summary, concern was raised that the proposed allocations would erode the rural buffer between Burgess Hill and the South Downs National Park, potentially harming the special qualities and landscape character of the setting of the South Downs National Park. With regard to SA13 in particular, this site is part of a larger landscape whose character experienced today survives from the medieval period. This historic character is shared with parts of the South Downs National Park and this coherence in historic character suggests the site contributes positively to the setting of the South Downs National Park.

There has been dialogue between the two Parties to clarify these concerns. The Parties agree that the sites are able to accommodate some development, however based on the evidence currently available, the South Downs National Park Authority, with regard to SA13, has some remaining concern about whether the figure proposed (300 dwellings) can be accommodated in a way which is sensitive to the role of this area as part of the rural transition from Burgess Hill to the South Downs National Park which includes many characteristic elements of the Wealden landscape.

3. Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation

The Site Allocations DPD is informed by a suite of technical evidence including the Habitats Regulations Assessment and air quality modelling work that comprehensively tests the emerging Site Allocations DPD options to ensure there is no adverse effect on the integrity of the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The Regulation 19 Habitats Regulations Assessment concludes that at this point in time, the Site Allocations DPD does not present any potential risks to European sites that it is considered are not capable of being mitigated. New SANG options are proposed and are considered to present a viable option for additional SANG capacity to meet the growth provided for by the site allocations. The preferred growth scenario as presented in the Site Allocations DPD does not present air quality impacts that are significantly higher than other growth scenarios and includes additional measures in terms of highways improvements that will serve to improve the functioning of the road network and reduce congestion. The modelling results for the growth scenarios are such that the breaches of 1% of the critical loads are so low that, having regard for the wider context, are considered to be a minor retardation low enough to be ruled out from adverse effects. The Habitats Regulations Assessment will be updated and expanded accordingly to inform the next stage of the Site Allocations DPD.

Both Parties are active members and attend regular meetings of the Ashdown Forest SAC Working Group, which is chaired by the South Downs National Park Authority. A separate Statement of Common Ground was prepared by the group and both Parties are signatories of

the Ashdown Forest Statement of Common Ground that was published in April 2018. The Ashdown Forest SAC Working Group is ongoing and both Parties continue to work together alongside the other partners of the group.

4. Transport

The Site Allocations DPD work is informed by a suite of technical evidence including the Mid Sussex Transport Study that comprehensively tests the emerging Site Allocations DPD options to ensure there is an appropriate understanding of the impact of the proposals on the capacity of the highway network. This work has been undertaken in partnership with West Sussex County Council and is iterative with a recognition that further work is needed up to submission of the Publication version of the plan.

The Parties agree that the evidence is fit-for-purpose in the understanding of the impact on the capacity of the highway network arising by the proposals of a Site Allocations DPD, and along with future iterations of work up to completion of the Publication version of the plan, for submission to the Secretary of State.

In response to the Regulation 18 consultation of the Site Allocations DPD, the South Downs National Park Authority raised some concerns about increased traffic in and through the village of Ditchling, and other parts of the South Downs National Park, and its impact on tranquillity. The Parties will continue dialogue to address this matter during continued preparation of the Site Allocations DPD ahead of its submission.

Liaison

The Parties have engaged on an ongoing basis throughout the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD. Specific engagement has taken place at key stages during plan preparation including during the site selection process, the preparation of the Draft Plan at ‘Preferred Options’ (Regulation 18) stage, and during the preparation of the Draft Submission Plan at the Regulation 19 stage.

Conclusion

The South Downs National Park Authority and Mid Sussex District Council agree that they have engaged on an ongoing basis throughout preparation of the Site Allocations DPD and on this basis that the Duty-to-Cooperate has been met.

The South Downs National Park Authority and Mid Sussex District Council agree that there are no substantial areas of disagreement between the Parties relating to the emerging Site Allocations DPD and to continue to work together proactively on the areas of ongoing work discussed in this Statement of Common Ground.

<p>Signed:</p>  <p>Date: 17-07-20</p>	<p>Signed:</p>  <p>Date: 07-08-20</p>
<p>Lucy Howard Planning Policy Manager South Downs National Park Authority</p>	<p>Cllr. Andrew MacNaughton Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning Mid Sussex District Council</p>