

27th July 2020

STATEMENTS OF COMMON GROUND

Purpose

To endorse both Doncaster's Statement of Common Ground and a separate but complementary Statement of Common Ground prepared by all Local Planning Authorities in the City Region.

Thematic Priority

This report relates to the following Strategic Economic Plan priorities:

- Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth.
- Facilitate and proactively support growth amongst existing firms.

Freedom of Information and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

This paper would be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- i) Endorse both the Doncaster Statement of Common Ground and the Local Planning Authorities' Joint Statement of Common Ground, and agree for the MCA to be a signatory to both Statements.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Councils preparing local plans are under a statutory "Duty to Cooperate" with other relevant bodies in order to encourage and enable strategic planning across local boundaries. Statements of Common Ground play an important role in fulfilling this Duty - they are technical planning documents required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and scrutinised by the Planning Inspectorate at the examination stage of Local Plans. Statements need to be produced, published and kept up-to-date by signatory authorities on at least an annual basis as a means of highlighting agreement on cross boundary planning issues.
- 1.2** As noted by members at the January MCA meeting, strategic bodies like Local Enterprise Partnerships and Combined Authorities are also expected to be engaged in the development of Statements of Common Ground where they relate to relevant strategic matters such as the economy and growth. Combined Authorities are among several additional bodies that Inspectors at Local Plan Inquiries would expect to see

being signatories to joint Statements, helping to demonstrate cooperation on relevant strategic cross-boundary planning matters.

1.3 Specifically, Planning Practice Guidance states that:

“Additional signatories will be those bodies who have a role in the matters covered in a statement of common ground, and with whom an authority needs to cooperate in order to plan for these matters. These may include: other relevant public bodies (such as: Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, and the Marine Management Organisation in coastal areas); other authorities (such as county councils, combined authorities without plan-making powers, and strategic policy-making authorities outside of the area covered by the statement); infrastructure providers; or any other non-government organisations (such as advisory bodies) the authority cooperates with to address strategic matters through the plan-making process. This is not an exhaustive list.”

2. Proposal and justification

Doncaster Statement of Common Ground

- 2.1** As part of its Local Plan preparation, Doncaster Council has worked with neighbouring local authorities and other bodies like the MCA to develop a detailed Statement of Common Ground covering a range of strategic planning matters. The Statement has been subject to consultation, with a draft produced in June 2019 for comments followed by a revised Statement amended in light of the comments received and made available alongside the Publication version of the Doncaster Local Plan.
- 2.2** MCA officers responded to these consultation invitations, providing comments and suggested amendments which sought to clarify the role and constitutional basis of the LEP and the MCA; emphasise the strategic geography of the city region; and underline the important role of Major Growth Areas in Doncaster in the growth and prosperity of the wider city region such as the Airport and Unity. The suggested amendments have been reflected in the revised Doncaster Statement.
- 2.3** Doncaster Council have since submitted their Local Plan to the Secretary of State and are seeking signatures from the MCA and other bodies involved in preparing their Statement of Common Ground so that this can be used as evidence during the Examination of their Plan.
- 2.4** The Doncaster Statement is attached in full at Appendix 1 and the MCA is requested to agree to be a co-signatory to the Statement, which include seven particularly relevant agreements:
- Agreement 1 which refers to Doncaster’s overall housing needs and the relationship of this to housing need in neighbouring areas;
 - Agreement 3 which ensures information on infrastructure is shared amongst signatories and that adequate infrastructure is provided for new housing;
 - Agreements 5 which refers to Doncaster’s employment land requirements and ambitions on employment;
 - Agreement 6 on the need to share evidence amongst signatories so that appropriate infrastructure is provided to meet Doncaster’s employment needs;
 - Agreement 7 on the Strategic Highway Network and its capacity;
 - Agreement 8 on local highways, specifically the need to address pressures and provide better road links between Barnsley and Doncaster; and

- Agreement 9 which refers to the need for Doncaster's Plan to take into account safeguarded land for HS2.

Joint Authorities' Statement of Common Ground

- 2.5** Alongside statements of common ground prepared for individual Local Plans such as the one above for Doncaster's Local Plan, the local planning authorities across the former (pre-April 2020) SCR wide area also developed a Joint Statement covering several specific strategic matters of relevant to all the Local Planning Authority areas. An earlier draft of this Statement was discussed and noted by Members at the MCA meeting in January 2020. Since then, the Statement has been agreed and signed by all nine Local Planning Authorities of Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Sheffield, Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Dales, and NE Derbyshire, as well as also being signed by the Peak Park Authority, Derbyshire County Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. Each has taken it through their formal governance processes to agree to be a signatory to the Joint Statement.
- 2.6** The Statement reflects the joint agreed position of these Authorities on housing need, housing market areas, employment land need and travel to work areas as well as similar associated matters. It is factual and reflects each Authorities' public position on these matters, and does not contain any new policies. It brings together existing policy and refers to published evidence so that this is readily available when required by a planning Inspector. As such, the Statement will play an important role in supporting each Local Planning Authority to demonstrate the 'test of soundness' for their new Local Plans (as well as Local Plan reviews) by demonstrating how all the Authorities are collaborating on a wider level to meet their Duty to Cooperate.
- 2.7** A full draft of the Joint Authorities' Statement of Common Ground is attached at Appendix 2 and the MCA is being invited to also agree to be a signatory to the Statement in support of the Local Planning Authorities.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

- 3.1** Each individual Local Planning Authority could prepare its own Statement of Common Ground as it produces a new Local Plan, without reference to the MCA or LEP and shared planning positions. This though risks a lack of integration with wider SCR activities and a disconnect between the SEP and new or emerging Local Plans, which could result in a more fragmented approach that negatively impacts on Local Plans being able to demonstrate conformity of planning policy with adjacent areas.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

The SCR Executive has provided officer support to the Local Planning Authorities to prepare both the Joint Authorities' Statement and in commenting on individual Authorities' Statements, but the majority of resources and time in preparing the Statements are provided by the Authorities themselves.

4.2 Legal

Statements of Common Ground are prepared by Local Planning Authorities in line with National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

4.3 Risk Management.

Risks are managed jointly by the SCR Heads of Planning Group, reporting to the SCR Infrastructure Board on a regular basis. Statements of Common Ground are intended

to be updated at least annually to ensure they are up-to-date and relevant, so any changes in evidence and circumstances can inform Statement revisions.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

Local Planning Authorities are required to meet the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty. Statements are prepared in accordance with these requirements.

5. Communications

5.1 Statements of Common Ground will be referred to in Local Plan documents and will be made publicly available on the MCA / Local Planning Authority websites alongside other forms of Local Plan evidence.

6. Appendices/Annexes

6.1 Appendix 1 – Doncaster Statement of Common Ground
Appendix 2 – Joint Authorities’ Statement of Common Ground

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: N/A