



Report to the Partnership for South Hampshire Joint Committee

Date: **31 July 2019**

Report of: **Claire Upton-Brown, Chairman of PfSH Planning Officers Group**

Subject: **UPDATE ON STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND (SOCG)**

SUMMARY

This report explains the work involved to produce the Statement of Common Ground, which will update the 2016 Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) Spatial Position Statement, and the evidence base that supports it through the production of a PfSH-wide Joint Strategy. The need for this work was agreed by Joint Committee in December 2018.

RECOMMENDATION

The Joint Committee is asked to:

- a) NOTE the procurement of a full-time PfSH Project Manager. The post will be supported by the Chairwoman of PfSH Planning Officers Group (POG) and PfSH Planning Co-ordinator - along by officers attending the PfSH POG.
- b) APPROVE that the PfSH evidence work streams identified in this report are undertaken and commissioned by the PfSH Project Manager, who will report progress regularly at future Joint Committees in order to inform production of a PfSH Joint Strategy.
- c) AGREE that PfSH produces its first SoCG in October of this year for Joint Committee to approval, and update regularly at future Joint Committees as evidence work streams progress and when the PfSH Joint Strategy is finalised.

INTRODUCTION

1. This report explains the implications of key recent changes to national planning policy. In particular the impact of the Government's standard approach to housing need and meeting unmet need that raise the need for cross-boundary working on strategic issues. It also outlines the key PfSH evidence work streams that need to be undertaken to inform a future PfSH Joint Strategy, as well as the need to update on-going PFSH-wide technical work streams. It concludes with an explanation of the need for a PfSH Statement of Common Ground to be produced to help enable PfSH authorities to comply with the statutory duty to co-operate. This would effectively provide a comprehensive and robust public audit trail of agreement throughout the process of producing and agreeing a PfSH Joint Strategy, supported by Habitats Regulations Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.

RECENT CHANGES TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

2. National planning policy provided through the latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in February 2019, makes it clear that Local Plans should contain strategic policies that, as a minimum, meet their own needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas.

CHANGES TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY: NEED FOR STRATEGIC POLICIES

3. *The NPPF states that strategic policies should set out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development. They should also set out sufficient provision for housing, employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development. Strategic policies should also make sufficient provision for infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat) and community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure). They should also make provision for conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.*

CHANGES TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY: NEED FOR A JOINT STRATEGY

4. The NPPF explains that strategic policies can be produced in different ways, depending on the issues and opportunities facing each area. They can be within joint or individual local plans, produced by authorities working together or independently.
5. Updating of the 2016 PfSH Spatial Position Statement (SPS) through producing a new PFSH Joint Strategy (JS) would enable a strategic vision for South Hampshire to be produced relatively quickly. It would also allow the future PfSH JS to be delivered through PfSH authorities individual statutory Local Plans. The merits of a joint statutory plan to cover all authorities that are party to this work has been considered but concluded that it would not be sufficiently flexible to allow individual authorities to progress their individual local plans in line with their existing timetables (i.e. published Local Development Schemes).

6. This is an opportune time to review the 2016 PfSH SPS, including its overarching strategy and key principles (e.g. 'cities/urban areas first') in light of the new 2019 NPPF and the challenges it presents, but also update the strategic evidence base that will support a new PfSH JS.

CHANGES TO NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY: THE GOVERNMENT'S STANDARD APPROACH TO HOUSING NEED AND UNMET NEED

7. Since the 2016 PfSH SPS was produced and agreed, as reported to the October Joint Committee last year, the Government has introduced the standard method of calculating housing need. This presents South Hampshire with the challenge of an increased housing need requirement from the Government, as well as project managing the dynamic of meeting unmet need between neighbouring authorities in light of capacity considerations.
8. In order to inform the production of the future PfSH Joint Strategy, the following paragraphs of this report details the key PfSH evidence work streams that need to be undertaken. On behalf of PfSH, Portsmouth City Council is procuring a full time project manager for a period of 18 months to undertake the work involved to complete these work-streams. This person will commission the associated studies needed and liaise closely with all of the LPAs across the PfSH membership to do this. The cost of the post will be shared across the membership, the amounts for each member having been apportioned fairly according to population size in which the studies will take place.

FIRST PfSH EVIDENCE WORKSTREAM: PfSH ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY AREAS (INCLUDING TRANSPORT MODELLING AND TRANSPORT IMPACT ASSESSMENTS)

9. The first significant task is to agree a PfSH-wide working (interim) housing need figure, based on the Government's standard approach to housing need. This working figure will need to be future-proofed to ensure sufficient flex in order to adapt to any changes in household projections and affordability.
10. PfSH authorities will need to identify and assess existing supply commitments, some of which will be planned beyond 2036, the time horizon (at least 15 years) most individual local plans are looking to cover. This will be followed by the identification of areas of search for strategic development opportunity areas. Once these opportunity areas have been identified, an assessment will be undertaken to establish if the area has the potential to accommodate further strategic mixed-use development sites beyond its existing commitments (e.g. Welborne). When this assessment is complete, transport modelling and transport impact assessment will be undertaken to test whether the transport network could support these potential strategic development sites.

SECOND PfSH EVIDENCE WORKSTREAM: PfSH HOUSING MARKET AREAS HOUSING PRODUCT DELIVERY REPORT

11. South Hampshire has two Housing Market Areas, Portsmouth and Southampton, and individual authorities by their inherent nature and market forces, provide different types of housing products. For example, put simply, the cities can provide flatted and student accommodation more readily than the more rural areas of PfSH. A report is needed to establish how different housing products could be delivered across PfSH.

12. This second workstream will run alongside the first (PfSH Assessment of Strategic Development Opportunity Areas) and existing supply commitments.

**THIRD PfSH EVIDENCE WORKSTREAM:
PfSH ECONOMIC, EMPLOYMENT & COMMERCIAL NEEDS STUDY (INCLUDING LOGISTICS)**

13. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are currently developing Local Industrial Strategies. A Local Industrial Strategy should set out clearly defined priorities for how cities, towns and rural areas will maximise their contribution to UK productivity. Local Industrial Strategies should allow places to make the most of their distinctive strengths and better coordinate economic policy at the local level and ensure greater collaboration across boundaries. The Solent LEP, for instance, anticipate a draft of the Local Industrial Strategy being produced in November this year following consultation with all interested parties, including local authorities.
14. It is vital that PfSH authorities work with the LEPs to ensure the productivity can be delivered through a future PfSH Joint Strategy and individual PfSH local authorities Local Plans. Therefore, the strategic economic, employment and commercial needs evidence base will require an update.
15. The Solent ports, for example, are key economic assets - that have a significant benefit to the wider Solent economy and UK economy. Their future needs to be considered and supported by a future PfSH Joint Strategy. The future demand for office, manufacturing and warehousing and distribution, as well as retail and commercial uses also needs to be considered at a strategic level through updating the PfSH evidence base, particularly where logistic provision operates principally through ports, rail, freight and motorway networks that span the sub-region and beyond. It is vital that there is a coherent economic strategy embedded within the future PfSH Joint Strategy to ensure it builds a strong, competitive economy, meeting the aspirations of the LEPs and Government.
16. This third workstream will also run alongside the PfSH Assessment of Strategic Development Opportunity Areas and existing supply commitments.

**FOURTH PfSH EVIDENCE WORKSTREAM:
PfSH URBAN CAPACITY ASSESSMENT (FOCUSED ON CITIES AND TOWN CENTRES)**

17. South Hampshire is likely to experience significant change in future years. For example, there will be changes in retail and leisure provision, particularly within the cities and major towns, where there could be potential to revitalise experience retail and new commercial investment, but also deliver significant levels of new housing.
18. This fourth workstream will be undertaken whilst existing supply commitments are being considered, reporting at the end of the year.

FIFTH PfSH EVIDENCE WORKSTREAM:

PfSH JOINT STRATEGY HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT AND APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

19. Finally, there is the need for the future PfSH Joint Strategy to be supported by Habitats Regulations Assessment and Appropriate Assessment to ensure it can support individual Local Plans and take its key principles forward.
20. This fifth workstream will run throughout the process of producing a PfSH Joint Strategy.

ON-GOING PfSH-WIDE TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS

21. Key strategic PfSH evidence bases will need to be updated on an on-going basis, especially given the lapse of time since some of the shared PfSH evidence was produced. For example, Officers have identified the need to update the PfSH Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

EXPLORING THE NEED FOR A PfSH INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN

22. The PfSH October Joint Committee last year tasked Officers with exploring undertaking an Infrastructure Investment Plan.
23. PfSH authorities, including Solent Transport, are in an excellent position to update evidence on infrastructure, working closely with Hampshire County Council and as part of the wider HIPOG work. South Hampshire is in the main, highly congested, and it is apparent that PfSH local planning authorities need to work closely with the highway authorities to assess capacity for strategic development opportunity sites as they transpire under the first workstream. *Please note this work will build on or complement Transport Impact Assessments (TIAs) undertaken by local planning authorities for emerging Local Plans.*
24. It is important that PfSH authorities through a future Joint Strategy set out a transport strategy, as well as strategic priorities in relation to education, health, public safety, telecommunication (including broadband) and utilities (including renewable energy). It will be necessary, particularly under the first and fourth work streams, to identify infrastructure necessary to deliver these opportunities - not just through transport improvements and provision of schools, but also environmental and social infrastructure.
25. PfSH have long considered that the protection of its natural and historic environment is a crucial component of any strategy and in October last year Joint Committee received a specific item on Green Belts. It was agreed that part of this work would include consideration of further green belt designation or similar environmental protections within South Hampshire
26. Since then, the NPPF's has placed emphasis on minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, and the importance of retaining valued landscapes and blue/green infrastructure provision for the benefit of the environment and human health and welfare. It is vital when producing a PfSH Joint Strategy and the strategic development opportunities that all aspects of infrastructure provision are assessed.

THE DUTY TO CO-OPERATE (STATUTORY REQUIREMENT)

27. As the 2019 NPPF states, local planning authorities and County Councils are under a duty to co-operate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross-administrative boundaries.
28. The Joint Committee in October last year made the decision that the PFSH authorities should work together, under the Duty to Co-operate, to seek to produce a Statement of Common Ground (SOCG). It is clear that an update of the PFSH evidence base, and its maintenance, is essential to the progression of the future PFSH Joint Strategy from the 2016 PFSH SPS.

WHAT IS A STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND (SoCG)?

29. The key purpose of a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is to identify and document cross-boundary matters that are being addressed jointly by PFSH authorities (i.e. strategic policies on unmet need issues), as well as chart the progress made in cooperating to address these. SOCGs should be made publicly available throughout the process to provide transparency. A PFSH SoCG would act to support local planning authorities, demonstrating they have complied with the 'duty to cooperate'.
30. This report recommends PFSH produce its first SoCG this October. It will be a live document that will be updated through approval at PFSH Joint Committee when the PFSH Joint Strategy is produced, and when key elements of the joint evidence base reach critical decision-making stages. However, if strategic issues require clarity from local planning authorities at examination, PFSH can provide representations on progress to date on the SoCG. Every version of the SoCG will be made available on the PFSH website.

WHAT WOULD A PFSH STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND CONTAIN?

31. In line with national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), the SoCG will describe the South Hampshire location and administrative areas it covers, listing the local plan making authorities and the parties involved (additional signatories e.g. LEPs). It will explain the governance arrangements and timetable for the cooperation process. The Joint Committee will make the decision whether to approve the PFSH SoCG, which will act to support the local plan making authorities individual Local Plans. It will identify the strategic matters PFSH intends to address, such as unmet housing need for the PFSH area.
32. In relation to housing need, it will set out the standard housing requirements for all PFSH authorities, charting commitments through emerging Local Plans, as well as PFSH's joint work on potential strategic development opportunities. This SoCG and subsequent SoCGs will ensure that progress on agreeing the distribution of strategic development needs is explained and progress charted, acting as a record of where agreements have or have not been reached on key strategic matters throughout the process. Any additional strategic matters that need to be addressed, but have not yet been addressed, will be described by each version of the SoCG, up until agreement is reached.
33. The development capacity of each plan-making authorities within PFSH needs to be establish, as well as to what extent unmet need can be redistributed within the wider

PfSH area covered by the SoCG. At this point in time, PfSH authorities are unclear as to what total strategic development capacity the PfSH authorities have, especially in light of environmental issues and other economic and social considerations.

THE BENEFITS OF A PfSH STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

34. It is for the above reasons that a robust strategic evidence base is needed to support a PfSH SoCG and Joint Strategy. Without an overarching PfSH SoCG, PfSH Joint Strategy and supporting PfSH Evidence Base, there is a real risk that PfSH local authorities will fail to meet their duty to co-operate. Furthermore, with a SoCG supported by a sufficiently comprehensive shared evidence base to support individual PfSH authorities not meeting their needs and evidence that neighbouring authorities (within those housing market areas or functional economic areas they fall) have fully explored their capacity to meet the shortfall, will ensure the duty to cooperate has been complied with.

PfSH WORK PROGRAMME (TIMETABLE)

35. Appendix 1 presents the proposed work programme, timetabling the key evidence work streams required to inform a PfSH Joint Strategy, as well as an indicative programme of progressive Statements of Common Ground to be produced during the process.

An important initial workstream will be a series of workshops with PfSH POG, then Chief Executives and Leaders to agree the principles of the PfSH JS

RECOMMENDATION

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Appendices: - Appendix 1 – SOCG Timetable

Background Papers:

Reference Papers:

Enquiries:

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