

27<sup>th</sup> January 2020

## SCR STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

### **Purpose**

This report presents a Statement of Common Ground for endorsement by the MCA, following agreement of the Statement by local districts. It is part of a wider work programme being pursued collaboratively by local planning authorities in the City Region.

### **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 approve the attached Statement of Common Ground so that it may be signed on behalf of the MCA.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Local Planning Authorities across SCR work closely together as part of the Duty to Cooperate. The role of planning in facilitating economic growth, housing development and environmental quality is well understood. Spatial planning can also support more inclusive growth by shaping the pace and spatial pattern of development; helping to create a more inclusive economy that maximises social and environmental benefits.
- 1.2 This report presents an SCR Statement of Common Ground for endorsement by the MCA, following its development and agreement by the nine districts in the SCR. Statements of Common Ground provide a record of agreement on cross boundary, strategic planning matters and demonstrate how Local Plans are prepared on the basis of an agreed understanding of key strategic issues.

## **2. Proposal and justification**

- 2.1 Statements of Common Ground play an important role in fulfilling the duty to cooperate, which is the key means of addressing cross boundary strategic planning issues. 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 as a means of highlighting agreement on cross boundary issues.
- 2.2 The geography for a Statement of Common Ground is not specified and local authorities may work in different groupings to address different strategic matters. In order to minimise the potential for duplication across SCR, Heads of Planning have been working together on an SCR Statement in order to set out an agreed position on

cross boundary planning matters which can be usefully considered at this scale – i.e. housing, employment, transport and digital connectivity. The Statement is designed to demonstrate how Local Plans are prepared based on an agreed understanding of each of these issues. It has been based on existing evidence and reflects priorities in the SEP as well as in existing and emerging Local Plans.

**2.3** Although the MCA does not have planning powers or responsibilities, strategic bodies like Local Enterprise Partnerships and Combined Authorities are expected to be engaged in the development of Statements of Common Ground where they relate to relevant matters like the economy and growth. Combined Authorities and LEPs are also among several additional signatories that would be expected to sign a Statement of Common Ground in order to demonstrate that they have had a role in cooperating with local planning authorities.

**2.4** Published alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 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.”*

*Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 61-023-20190315  
Revision date: 15 03 2019*

**2.5** Officers in the SCR Executive have supported the Heads of Planning Group in the development of the SCR Statement, ensuring it reflects the priorities of the SEP and SCR Transport Strategy as well as emerging priorities on issues like digital connectivity. Earlier drafts of the Statement were discussed and endorsed by the SCR Infrastructure Board (9 July 2019) and the Housing Board (17 July 2019).

**2.6** A full draft of the Statement is attached at Appendix 1 and has now been signed by all the South Yorkshire authorities, and signed or agreed to be signed, by the majority of local signatories (Barnsley, Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Dales, Derbyshire County Council, Doncaster, Nottinghamshire County Council, Peak District National Park, Rotherham and Sheffield).

**2.7** Earlier drafts of the SCR Statement have already been used in local planning processes. For example, Chesterfield referred to the SCR Statement during the examination of its Local Plan in October/November 2019, helping to evidence agreement on key matters like housing and employment. Doncaster Council are producing their own Statement of Common Ground alongside a new Local Plan. This references the SCR Statement and the strategic matters on which agreement has already been identified.

**2.8** Authorities responsible for the Statement will need to ensure that it reflects the most up to date position in terms of joint working across the area and updates will be required when new agreements are reached, or a decision is taken to update strategic policies

in the area covered by the statement. The aim is to update the SCR Statement on an annual basis in order to reflect changing priorities. Officers from the SCR Executive will continue to work with Heads of Planning so that these updates can be made.

**2.9** Members of the MCA are therefore asked to approve the draft Statement in Appendix 1 so that it can be made available for Local Plan processes and evidence.

### **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 wider SCR activity and shared planning positions. This 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**

All activities set out in this report will be delivered from within existing resources. This includes officer capacity and time in participating local authorities as well as programme management support from the SCR Executive Team; supported by a limited amount of revenue funding secured through the Planning Delivery Fund (provided by MHCLG).

#### **4.2 Legal**

The work programme includes several activities that will need to be undertaken within the usual planning regulations and legislation. The draft Statement of Common Ground has been prepared in line with NPPF 2018 and Planning Practice Guidance.

#### **4.3 Risk Management**

Key risks:

Individual authorities dropping out of the work or unable to support elements.  
Statement of Common Ground contravening or conflicting with Planning Practice Guidance or current and emerging Local Plans.  
Disagreements between individual planning authorities on contentious planning issues.

The shared work programme and Statement of Common Ground will only be successful with receive continued support from the Heads of Planning and participating Local Planning Authorities. All risks will therefore be managed in liaison with the Heads of Planning Group, reporting to the SCR Infrastructure Board on a regular basis.

#### **4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion**

Planning authorities are required to meet the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty. The work programme set out above is designed to enhance and support this work at the local level by adding value and creating some economies of scale.

### **5. Communications**

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

## 6. Appendices/Annexes

### Appendix 1 – Draft SCR 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: