

REPORT 2

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CABINET MEETING OF 10th JANUARY 2022

PUBLIC REPORT: Y

EXEMPT REPORT: N

Report Title	South Leicestershire Local Plan Making - Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (November 2021)
KEY DECISION	N
Report Author	Tess Nelson – Strategic and Local Planning Manager
Purposes of Report	<p>a) That Cabinet and Council note the South Leicestershire Local Plan Making Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (November 2021).</p> <p>b) For Cabinet to recommend to Council that the Council becomes a signatory to the South Leicestershire Local Plan Making Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (November 2021).</p>
Reason for Decision	<p>To become a signatory to the South Leicestershire Local Plan Making Statement of Common Ground (SoCG), together with the other local authorities within the south Leicestershire area, namely Blaby District Council and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (“the three authorities”). Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council as neighbouring authority are additional signatories to this Statement of Common Ground. Leicestershire County Council is an additional signatory. The key strategic matters covered in the SoCG under the Duty to Cooperate are: transport connectivity; other infrastructure requirements; and development pressures and opportunities.</p> <p>The SoCG commits the three authorities to joint working to produce the following key pieces of evidence to support each of the three authorities’ local plans: a joint strategic transport assessment; a joint infrastructure delivery plan; a whole plan viability appraisal; and to consider any other opportunities for joint evidence preparation.</p>
Portfolio (holder)	Cllr King (Strategy), Cllr Bateman (Strategic and Local Planning)
Corporate Priorities	PLACE: An enterprising, vibrant place CO 2 Wider Employment Choice
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications associated with this report.

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Risk Management Implications	Not signing the SoCG would place the Council at risk of being unable to fulfil our statutory Duty to Cooperate. Failure of the Duty to Cooperate would result in an inability to adopt a future Local Plan. It could undermine future partnership working on strategic cross boundary planning matters across Leicester and Leicestershire.
Environmental Implications	No environmental implications from this recommendation have been identified.
Legal Implications	Becoming a signatory to the SoCG is not legally binding on the Council but reasserts the existing commitment on behalf of the Council to joint working with neighbouring authorities on strategic cross boundary planning issues under the Duty to Cooperate.
Equality Implications	No equality implications from this recommendation have been identified.
Data Protection Implications	No data protection implications from this recommendation have been identified.
Consultation	No consultation has taken place.
Options	<u>Not signing the South Leicestershire Local Plan Making Statement of Common Ground (SoCG)</u> , – This option is not recommended since it would risk undermining the ability of the Council to successfully demonstrate that the Duty to Cooperate has been met. Failure of the Duty to Cooperate would result in an inability to adopt a future Local Plan. It could undermine future partnership working on strategic cross boundary planning matters across Leicester and Leicestershire.
Background Papers	None
Appendices	Appendix A: South Leicestershire Local Plan Making Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (November 2021).
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) That Cabinet and Council note the South Leicestershire Local Plan Making Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) (November 2021). ii) That Cabinet recommend to Council that the Council becomes a signatory to the Statement of Common Ground (Appendix A).

1. Introduction

1.1 In accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local authorities have a duty to collaborate to address strategic planning matters. The Duty to Cooperate is the mechanism for ensuring that this happens. The Duty requires ongoing constructive engagement on the

preparation of development plan documents and other activities in relation to the sustainable development and use of land.

- 1.2 Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) are a means of demonstrating the Duty to Cooperate is met, as evidence of effective ongoing collaboration and engagement between partner authorities. A SoCG is a written record of the progress made by strategic plan-making authorities during the process of planning for strategic cross-boundary matters.

2. Key Facts

- 2.1 The Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is set out at Appendix A.
- 2.2 The SoCG has been prepared by jointly by Blaby District Council, Harborough District Council and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council working in collaboration. Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, as neighbouring authority, is identified as an additional signatory to this Statement of Common Ground. Leicestershire County Council, as Highway Authority, are also an additional signatory. Its purpose is to set out how the Duty to Cooperate has been met in relation to the following strategic issues: transport connectivity; other infrastructure requirements; and development pressures and opportunities. The SoCG is being considered by each of the partner authorities for signing.

Summary of Statement of Common Ground

- 2.3 The SoCG between the south Leicestershire authorities reflects the shared geography underpinning local planning within each of the relevant local authorities. It explains how the authorities share common boundaries and a shared transport network. This means that development in one of the authorities is likely to impact upon each of the others through the strategic and local road networks and other transport routes.
- 2.4 It notes that further strategic growth within the authorities' areas would have severe additional individual, cumulative and (in many cases) cross-boundary impacts on already congested parts of the highway network and that these impacts would require strategic transport solutions to address. Given the complexity and integrated nature of the transport network within the authorities' areas, a consistent and joint transport evidence base will provide a more robust basis on which to plan.
- 2.5 As such, the SoCG sets out an intention for the three authorities to work together on joint evidence gathering to support each of the individual local plans being prepared by each local authority. The evidence gathering is focused upon transport and other infrastructure requirements, to ensure that a strategic cross boundary holistic approach is considered.
- 2.6 The SoCG commits signatories to joint working to produce the following three key pieces of evidence to support each of the three authorities' local plans:

- a joint strategic transport assessment;
 - a joint infrastructure delivery plan;
 - a whole plan viability appraisal; and also
 - to consider any other opportunities for joint evidence preparation.
- 2.7 The SoCG sets out an approximate timetable for the preparation of this strategic evidence, which aims to suit the varying timetables for the preparation of each authorities' local plans. Other authorities within the partnership with a less up-to-date Local Plan than the Harborough Local Plan are expecting to adopt a new Local Plan more quickly than our own Local Development Scheme (LDS) suggests. The over-riding need to work together with our neighbouring authorities on these key pieces of evidence means some flexibility will be required to ensure this work can be prepared within this timetable. The SoCG acknowledges that the key pieces of evidence are dependent on the completion of strategic evidence collection currently underway across Leicester and Leicestershire.

Conclusion

- 2.8 The Statement of Common Ground identifies key strategic cross boundary issues associated with the common geography of the partner authorities. It identifies the need to work jointly to commission joint evidence on future transport and other infrastructure needs. It identifies the three key pieces of evidence to be prepared jointly and recognises that further opportunities for joint working on evidence preparation may emerge. It explains that once completed, the three pieces of joint evidence will be analysed and further Statements of Common Ground produced as necessary.

3 Next Steps

- 3.1 All partner authorities are considering the SoCG for signing through their governance processes during autumn / winter 2021.
- 3.2 If approved, officers will arrange for the Council to become a signatory to the South Leicestershire Local Plan Making Statement of Comment Ground (November 2021) (see Appendix A).