

Wealden District Council

Position Paper
Ashdown Forest SAC Statement of Common Ground

October 2018

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1.0 Purpose and Scope of this Paper

1.1 Wealden District Council was involved in the preparation of the Ashdown Forest SAC Statement of Common Ground. However it was not a signatory to the final Statement of Common Ground dated April 2018, which can be found on the South Downs National Park Authority website¹.

1.2 This paper documents the involvement of Wealden District Council and provides the Statement of Common Ground that Wealden District Council was prepared to sign.

2.0 Background

2.1 Wealden District Council is required to undertake work in relation to air quality impacts through policy WCS 12 of the Wealden Core Strategy adopted in February 2013 which states “The Council will also undertake further investigation of the impacts of nitrogen deposition on the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation so that its effects on development in the longer term can be more fully understood and mitigated if appropriate.” Monitoring work to better understand nitrogen deposition commenced in 2014.

2.2 Wealden District Council attended the first meeting of what is now referred to as Ashdown Forest Working Group on 9th May 2017². This group is chaired by the South Downs National Park Authority. A number of meetings took place within 2017 and 2018 which resulted in discussions concerning a statement of common ground. Content was discussed which resulted in a draft Statement of Common Ground which was circulated on 30th January 2018, which is attached at Appendix A.

2.3 Wealden District responded to this draft, which is provided at Appendix B, and was subsequently asked to change some comments. Ultimately an agreement was reached with the South Downs National Park Authority as to what Wealden District Council could include. Emails and the amended comments in this regard are provided at Appendix C.

2.4 The Working Group, without Wealden District Council, subsequently amended the statements in relation to introductory paragraphs, whilst retaining Wealden District Council’s response to the original text. This was produced as the Final Statement of Common Ground circulated on 19th March 2018. This is provided at Appendix D.

2.5 Wealden District Council sent an email on 29th March 2018 explaining that “We have taken advice with regards to the Ashdown Forest Statement of

¹ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/national-park-local-plan/local-plan-examination/core-document-library/> Reference SoCG 01

² Minutes of meetings are available as part of the Statement of Common Ground

Common Ground (SoCG) and unfortunately we are not in a position to meet your timescale. This is because we need more time to raise outstanding issues and take further advice from consultants before we are able to sign the SoCG.” In response South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) advised “It is really unfortunate that WDC are not in a position to sign the document after all the hard work that you and the other authorities have put into the document. The SDNPA will now need to consider its options going forward in regard to the Statement of Common Ground”. The Statement of Common Ground was subsequently published without Wealden District Council input. Appendix E provides the relevant emails.

2.6 The final version of the Statement of Common Ground, without input from Wealden District Council, can be found on the South Downs National Park Authority website³.

3.0 Wealden District Council’s Position

3.1 Wealden District Council’s position as at March 2018 is shown in the document at Appendix D. However, it should be noted that there are some discrepancies between the context and Wealden District Council’s position owing to the fact that the context was changed after Wealden District Council stated its position (the original context is provided in the Draft Statement of Common ground at Appendix B).

4.0 Redacted Information

4.1 Draft information concerning the position of other local authorities has been redacted from the appendices, in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

4.2 The names of participants of meetings/ emails, contained within the appendices of this document, have been redacted for the purposes of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

5.0 Situation Post March 2018

5.1 Wealden District Council has updated its methodology for both transport modelling and air quality modelling taking into account the discussions concerning the statement of common ground, Natural England DAS advice, and emerging good practice within relevant industries. This information and updated modelling methodologies can be found on the Council’s website. Having said this, the principles of the statement concerning interpretation of information remain relevant.

³ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/national-park-local-plan/local-plan-examination/core-document-library/> Reference SoCG 01