

THE GUILDFORD GREEN PAPER – APPENDIX A:

SIX POLICY PRIORITIES FOR THE RURAL ECONOMY - DRAFT ACTION PLAN (2017-2022):

In February 2016 the Council's Executive Advisory Board identified farming diversification, woodland management, enterprise development and improved superfast broadband connectivity as rural economic goals. Hampshire County Council Research and Intelligence was commissioned to conduct a Rural Mapping Exercise. Pending its detailed findings, six interim strategic priorities were identified, each supported by a number of specific objectives (2018 deliverables highlighted):

PRIORITY 1: RURAL ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH COMMUNITIES, ENTERPRISE AND EDUCATION

Although many good links exist already between the Council, Parish Councils and other local organisations there are opportunities to build on these relationships and reach new audiences for an ongoing dialogue about what the rural economy consists of and how it can be developed in a sustainable way for the full benefit of the wider community, e.g. community-run shops/food hubs:

OBJECTIVE 1: Parish Council engagement – Rural Economy Officer to meet all 24 Councils through Clerk/Chair contacts, parish council and public meetings, etc. to shape local policies informed by demographic change, Local Neighbourhood Plans and the Council's Local Plan;

OBJECTIVE 2: Affordable housing (incl. Rural Exception schemes/Community Land Trusts) – informed by local housing needs surveys, local Neighbourhood Plans, the Local Plan consultation and in line with Government planning policy, to promote local community development by identifying possible sites for affordable and/or social housing development, possibly through Community Land Trusts and zero carbon eco housing schemes;

OBJECTIVE 3: (See also Priority 3, Objective11) Infrastructure issues (e.g. roads/broadband) – informed by the Autumn 2016 rural mapping exercise, identify local road congestion points, community bus/rail links and cycleway improvement opportunities; "not-spots" of mobile reception and broadband coverage and their relation to potential employment or housing growth sites with follow-up to BT Openreach and other telecoms providers;

OBJECTIVE 4: Enterprise, creativity and innovation – in conjunction with University of Surrey/SETsquared, Guildford and Merrist Wood Colleges, the new University Technical College, secondary schools and others, to encourage enterprise and support new business start-ups, ideally through local incubation facilities and stronger academic and research links to support technology and knowledge transfer into the countryside and rural economy. This could include a University of Surrey student on a one-year placement;

PRIORITY 2: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

With solid local contacts in place, the opportunity for dialogue on all aspects of landscape management can proceed, with economic priorities being around the following sectors:

OBJECTIVE 5: Sustainable woodland management – with local landowners, the West Surrey Woodlands Project and others, to support, protect and manage woodland; promote market development of the biomass industry and other timber products and encourage investment in skills, training and events (e.g. Wood Fair, National Wood Fuel Conference);

OBJECTIVE 6: Agriculture and horticulture – working with Surrey County Agricultural Society, local farmers, Merrist Wood College, RHS Wisley, skills training providers – and others as appropriate – to generate and safeguard future interest in the sector as an area of economic growth and career opportunity, targeting young people and their parents;

OBJECTIVE 7: Recreation and tourism – informed by the Local Plan (*including SANGs – Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces*), to support rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses, communities and visitors in rural areas while also respecting the size, character and function of their setting and compliance with green belt policy. Complementing other Surrey policies, this support should include generic marketing and participation in national programmes such as the Charter for Trees, Woods and People 2017. This will help to highlight the role of the natural and historic built environment in attracting visitors and the importance of protecting these assets from degradation.

OBJECTIVE 8: Employment land – in line with the targets set out in the Local Plan and subject to improved broadband connectivity, to work with local communities to identify suitable sites capable of supporting new enterprise e.g. farm conversions or small-scale brownfield developments;

OBJECTIVE 9: Intermittent disruption (e.g. flood management, rural crime) – working with various GBC colleagues and outside organisations including Police and Fire and Rescue Service, to identify preventative measures and ensure that these are disseminated to partners, businesses and the wider public through printed and online media;

OBJECTIVE 10: Other public education and landscape information opportunities – creation of a dedicated rural business webpage on the GBC website, supported by locally-organised public meetings and, potentially, social media links for ongoing dialogue;

PRIORITY 3: INFRASTRUCTURE (TRANSPORT AND BROADBAND)

With recent trunk road improvements such as the A3 Hindhead Tunnel, M3 and M25 motorway upgrade projects and new housing developments (current and planned) has come greater car ownership and daily commuting. The pressure on Surrey's roads and villages is already acute and with major future infrastructure plans in the pipeline (including Heathrow's Third Runway) issues around congestion will continue to be addressed through the Local Plan consultation process. As for the Digital Economy, new 5G technologies will have the potential to accelerate demand for rurally-based business locations (including home-working) – so first-class Broadband infrastructure will be as vital to the rural economy as upgraded road and rail connections:

OBJECTIVE 11: Community engagement – with GBC Planning and other colleagues, to gather community views on local commuter links to bus/rail stations, Heathrow and Gatwick Airports and proposed infrastructure projects by Highways England (e.g. M25/A3) and Surrey County Council (all other roads), including working through the Enterprise M3 LEP;

OBJECTIVE 12: Broadband/WiFi – informed by the Autumn 2016 rural mapping exercise and outcomes from the statutory processes underlying the Local Plan consultation, to work with Surrey County Council and BT Openreach to ensure provision of the infrastructure necessary to deliver the Plan by improved connectivity;

OBJECTIVE 13: Education and Health provision (schools, GP surgeries/health centres, care homes) – informed by the Local Plan, to work with communities and strategic partners (e.g. Surrey County Council, Local Enterprise Partnership) to ensure that education, health and related public services are as accessible to rural residents as to those in (sub)urban areas;

PRIORITY 4: ENERGY POLICY, GENERATION AND SUPPLY

Surrey's status as the UK's most wooded county provides opportunities for sustainable energy generation through biomass production:

OBJECTIVE 14: Shaping the Future of Heat and Power – building on the 2013 Government report “The Future of Heating” and subsequent progress towards finding alternatives to fossil fuel for the supply of heat, to support wood fuel suppliers and energy producers in the development of local sustainable heat and power plants, including solar farms;

OBJECTIVE 15: Climate Change and Government Policy – to monitor evolving Government policy around Climate Change (including carbon capture and similar initiatives) and Energy power generation, with particular reference to identifying grant funding or stewardship incentives (e.g. for micro water turbine energy generation, energy barn schemes, etc.);

PRIORITY 5: PROMOTING NATURAL CAPITAL FOR GREEN SPACE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Vision of the Surrey Nature Partnership is “**a thriving, resilient and attractive county providing natural benefits to all who live and work here.**” The opportunity to attract investment in Natural Capital will assist understanding and appreciation of the value of natural ecosystem services in order to find ways to support and enhance them:

OBJECTIVE 16: Supporting river catchment management – informed by UK studies of severe rainfall events and related flood prevention proposals, to work with local partners on innovative solutions that address water capture, storage, drainage and flood prevention;

OBJECTIVE 17: Public landscape education – building on the work of GBC Parks and Leisure colleagues, Surrey County Council and Surrey Wildlife Trust, to promote the Countryside Code and tell the story of the local landscape using printed and online media for young and old alike, with explanations of the Local Plan's Special Protection Areas and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs). Also, to enhance the public's experience of the countryside through environmental protection of the land and ecosystems that offer such high natural capital value and quality;

OBJECTIVE 18: Surrey Countryside and Rural Enterprise Forum (SCREF) – as with general education about the countryside, to raise public awareness of the Forum's Rural Statement for Surrey and its importance in supporting collaboration for Rural Communities, the Economy and Environment. As the SCREF Chairman, Simon Whalley, requests in his Foreword to the Rural Statement for Surrey, this Objective builds into Guildford's Rural Economic Strategy both the involvement and commitment to help deliver future action;

OBJECTIVE 19: Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – supporting delivery of the AONB's Management Plan 2014-19 and working to promote and publicise its collaboration with other councils and partner organisations (incl. Surrey Hills Enterprises,

Surrey Hills Society, CLA, CPRE, NFU) to create new employment, enterprise, skills and tourism opportunities including apprenticeships and volunteering;

OBJECTIVE 20: Surrey Nature Partnership – using the Natural Capital Investment Strategy to develop public landscape education (Objectives 10 and 17), to collaborate with Partnership Board Members and other organisations to promote and interpret the concept of Natural Capital for discrete audiences, in order to engage and involve people in the delivery of the Partnership’s strategic priorities. This will include the new Thriveable Surrey Partnership;

OBJECTIVE 21: Natural England – to review the key findings of the 2015/16 Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment and work with local partners to raise awareness of the issues in Guildford’s rural wards;

OBJECTIVE 22: Public Health England – to review key public health policies and ensure these are reflected in future rural economic strategy; also, to participate in Guildford First, the new local health and wellbeing partnership co-ordinated by GBC Public Health colleagues;

OBJECTIVE 23: Mental Health – because poor mental health can affect one in four people at some point in life and with most adult mental illness originating in childhood or adolescence, to raise awareness through rural partners of programmes designed to support mental health prevention and recovery ;

PRIORITY 6: BREXIT STRATEGY AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The impact on the economy of the UK Referendum vote to leave the EU could be felt for decades, with the exit process alone possibly taking 20-30 years, according to Prof. Tony Travers of the London School of Economics. Apart from well-publicised concerns around the loss of EU subsidies there are related national issues which the Government will need to address as an independent nation outside the EU – for which a strong rural voice will be essential:

OBJECTIVE 24: Britain’s Brexit Business Strategy – to monitor Government policy announcements, press releases, related news coverage and all publications relevant to the rural economic agenda (*e.g. Economist, Farmers Weekly*) in order to identify and address issues of particular importance to Guildford and/or Surrey countryside communities;

OBJECTIVE 25: Rural Services Network Conference 2016 – to address key community issues (*e.g. ageing population, broadband connectivity, devolution*) through partner organisations and contacts, including local media opportunities to raise public rural awareness;

OBJECTIVE 26: The Future – to work closely with the Enterprise M3 LEP Rural Action Group to shape post-Brexit rural economic strategy, especially around future EU/UK grant funding /subsidy opportunities and the impact of the Government’s decision to build a third runway at Heathrow Airport. Also, through the 3 Southern Counties (3SC) partnership with East- and West Sussex, to participate in Devolution or Localism strategies that may benefit the rural economy (*e.g. Business Rate Retention, Parish Council Precept changes, Skills*).

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