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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>21 FEBRUARY 2018</b>
<b>REPORT OF THE:</b>	<b>SPECIALIST SERVICES LEAD GARY HOUSDEN</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>HOWARDIAN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY: ADOPTION OF MANAGEMENT PLAN 2019-2024</b>
<b>WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>AMOTHERBY, AMPLEFORTH, DERWENT, HELMSLEY, HOVINGHAM, RYEDALE SOUTH WEST, SHERIFF HUTTON AND SINNINGTON</b>

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) has prepared a revised Management Plan, incorporating an associated Landscape Management & Priority Sites document, to cover the period 2019-2024.
- 1.2 This report is for Members to consider the formal adoption of the new Management Plan.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That Council agrees to adopt the Howardian Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-2024.

### **3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 An open consultation process was undertaken on the draft Management Plan 2019 – 2024 during 2018. The details of this process were reported to Planning Committee on 23 October 2018, which also approved this Council's response to the consultation process. The Management Plan has since been amended to reflect the results of the consultation process and a final Management Plan produced. The changes requested by this Council have been incorporated into the final Management Plan.
- 3.2 There is a statutory duty on Local Authorities to prepare and have in place an up-to-date Management Plan for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within their areas. The current Management Plan runs to March 2019 and therefore it is important that a revised Management Plan is agreed and in place.

## 4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS

- 4.1 There are no significant risks associated with this report. The revised Management Plan has been prepared in accordance with an established timetable. Agreement to adopt the new plan in accordance with the agreed timetable will ensure that funding conditions imposed by Defra are satisfied. Failure to meet the agreed timetable by not having the up-to-date and adopted Management Plan in place by the end of March 2019 would result in the Council not meeting its statutory duties and this could risk a loss of funding for the AONB.

## 5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION

### Background

- 5.1 In 1992 the Howardian Hills Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was established to oversee the management of the Howardian Hills AONB. Members will be aware that Ryedale District Council, together with Hambleton District Council, North Yorkshire County Council, Local Parish Councils and other key stakeholders such as the National Farmers Union, the Forestry Commission, Natural England, the Country Land and Business Association, and the Ramblers, are members of the JAC. Day to day work is undertaken by the small team of staff in the AONB Unit.
- 5.2 The constituent Local Authorities have agreed that the JAC should co-ordinate the production and implementation of the Management Plan for the Howardian Hills AONB on their behalf. It is a statutory requirement to have an up to date Management Plan in place and to review the Plan every five years. Since the JAC was established, several successive plans have been prepared. The new Management Plan is a review of the current Plan which was adopted in 2014.
- 5.3 For the purposes of this report, the term Howardian Hills AONB Management Plan or Management Plan should be considered also to include the associated Landscape Management & Priority Sites document (attached at Annex 2).
- 5.4 Following consultation on a Draft Management Plan 2019-2024, which was undertaken over the course of 2018, the JAC has now published a revised version, taking into account the representations received. They have requested that this is adopted by the constituent Local Authorities to complete the statutory requirements for its production.
- 5.5 Details of the consultation used to inform the new Management Plan, together with a draft version of the Plan were reported to members of the Planning Committee on the 23 October 2018. At that meeting members of the committee also agreed this Council's response to the draft version of the Management Plan. The majority of the comments that this Council made as part of the consultation were supportive and/or points of detail. The most significant comment proposed a change of wording to provide a more positive and supportive stance towards potential enhancements to the A64 (Objective RTT5), whilst still having regard to the special qualities of the AONB and minimising environmental impact, as follows:

*"Ensure that any Support proposals for improvement of the A64 Trunk Road through the AONB subject to these being are fully justified and sensitive to local characteristics. Proposals should aim to minimise environmental impact, make maximum use of the existing road alignment and utilise new*

techniques such as 'green bridges' where possible”

5.6 This amendment has been taken into account in the final Management Plan.

## 6.0 REPORT

6.1 Final ‘adoption’ versions of the Howardian Hills AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 and Landscape Management & Priority Sites document are attached at Annex 1 and 2 of this report respectively. At this stage, the documents are ‘text only’ - the final versions will include images and photographs and will be published following confirmation of their adoption. The JAC has considered all comments made on the draft Management Plan and has made amendments as appropriate. A schedule of all comments received following consultation on the draft version of the Plan is attached at Annex 3. The schedule includes a summary of the comments that this Council submitted during the consultation on the draft Management Plan (see Annex 3, comments 5.3.1 to 5.3.8).

6.2 The draft Management Plan follows a very similar format to the current adopted plan. This format was considered to afford a much easier and more focussed document than earlier versions.

6.3 There has been some minor re-articulation of the Vision and Aims of the current Management Plan, although these are relatively minor, providing clarification and updates to make the aims more succinct or relevant rather than to substantially alter them (e.g. referencing the spread of tree diseases and uncertainties regarding the policy context given the UK's withdrawal from the EU).

6.4 One of the key principles of DEFRA's major policy document 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (2018) is to adopt a Natural Capital approach in decision making. Natural Capital is defined as

*“the sum of our ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, soils, minerals, our air and our seas. These are all elements of nature that either directly or indirectly bring value to people and the country at large. They do this in many ways but chiefly by providing us with food, clean air and water, wildlife, energy, wood, recreation and protection from hazards.”*

6.5 The Natural Capital approach requires understanding of the:

- range of economic and social benefits provided by natural assets and their associated ecosystem services;
- way in which these benefits depend upon the various assets and services;
- state / condition and location of natural assets in relation to the benefits derived from them.

6.6 Whilst further information and guidance on the Natural Capital approach is expected to emerge in the coming years, the draft Management Plan sets out that this approach will be used to refine its approach to management in the future and identifies objectives relating to improving knowledge of the AONB's Natural Capital. This new concept of the Natural Capital approach and preparing for its use recurs throughout the Draft Management Plan.

6.7 On the whole, the Plan remains very similar to the draft document which was reported to Planning Committee on 23 October 2018.

- 6.8 It should be noted that the comments made by this Council have been addressed in the final document. Specifically, the comment outlined above relating to a more positive and supportive stance towards potential improvements to the A64 has been addressed.
- 6.9 On the basis of the above, it is considered appropriate that the District Council adopt the Howardian Hills AONB Management Plan (2019-2024).

## 7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The following implications have been identified:

a) Financial

There are no new financial implications associated with the recommendation of this report. The revised management plan does not commit the Council to providing additional financial support to the AONB unit which is over and above the core funding that the Council currently contributes.

b) Legal

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that a Management Plan for the AONB is in place – in effect this means that the Council needs to adopt the Final Management Plan prior to the end of March 2019, when the previous plan expires. Failure to do so may:

- i) put at risk funding for the AONB from DEFRA; and
- ii) mean that decisions made by the Council (as in its role as Local Planning Authority) in relation to the AONB may not be safe from challenge during the period until the Management Plan was adopted.

c) Other (Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental, Crime & Disorder)

There are no other implications associated with this report.

## 8.0 NEXT STEPS

8.1 Following adoption of the Management Plan, the AONB Unit intends to finalise the design layout (including insertion of images and photographs) and publish the adopted documents. This is expected to be produced in summer 2019.

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### Background Papers:

- [“A Green Future: Our 25 Year plan to Improve the Environment”, \(2018\) DEFRA](#)

