

# Statement of Common Ground – St Albans District Council with Watford Borough Council

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that strategic policy-making authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these.

This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) sets out the strategic geography and strategic matters as agreed between St Albans City and District Council (SADC) and Watford Borough Council (WBC).

This SoCG is based on a template produced by the Planning Advisory Service and takes into account relevant sections of the NPPF, NPPG, Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Localism Act 2011.

## Context

SADC and WBC have worked collaboratively over a long period of time reflecting the cross boundary matters that exist as well as general good practice to best consider local and strategic issues. Engagement has included a programme of discussions that includes different levels of the organisation seeking to achieve the best outcomes for each authority and the wider area.

The programme of engagement for the Duty to Co-operate has included specific 'Duty-to Co-operate' meetings alongside other meetings to discuss cross-boundary matters that are not necessarily under the title of 'Duty to Cooperate'. These meetings have also been supplemented by more informal meetings between the two authorities. Additionally, cross boundary matters have regularly been discussed and actioned through jointly commissioned evidence bases that have considered local and strategic issues including housing, employment, retail and leisure and flooding.



Other cross boundary matters include those under the remit of Hertfordshire County Council such as transport and education and both SADC and WBC have a good working relationship with HCC to address these strategic matters.

## Introduction

This statement is provided without prejudice to other matters of detail that parties may wish to raise during the Examination.

Duty To Cooperate

SADC has continuously engaged with WBC through the evolution of the draft Local Plan 2041. The parties agree that SADC has discharged its Duty to Cooperate for the Local Plan 2041.

<b>1. List of parties involved</b>	St Albans City and District Council (SADC) Watford Borough Council (WBC)
<b>2. Signatories</b>	<p>WBC – Cllr Glen Saffery – Portfolio Holder for Planning, 18 November 2024 </p> <p>SADC – Cllr Paul De Kort – Leader  18 November 2024</p>
<b>3. Strategic geography</b>	<p>SADC, along with Watford, Dacorum, Hertsmere and Three Rivers are adjoining authorities in Hertfordshire and together form the group of five South West Hertfordshire local authorities.</p> <p>SADC also borders Welwyn Hatfield and North Hertfordshire local authorities, and Central Bedfordshire. All neighbouring authorities bar Central Bedfordshire lie within Hertfordshire.</p> <p>The five South West Hertfordshire local authorities fall within the same Housing Market Area (HMA) and Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA). The local authorities within the HMA and FEMA have a history of positively cooperating on spatial planning and related matters and as part of the South West Hertfordshire Group (SWHG) of local authorities are working together on the production of a Joint Strategic Plan for South West Hertfordshire (JSP).</p> <p>St Albans District is very well connected by railway and road, and is close to international airports. The Midlands Main Line from London to Nottingham and Sheffield passes through the District, with the fast Thameslink service connecting directly to central London. There is also a low-service local rail route (branch line) known as the Abbey Line that connects St Albans and Watford. The rail options to London underpin the popularity of commuting out of the District. The District is also very well connected by key national road routes, with the M25</p>

	<p>running east west through the south of the District, paralleled by the A414 dual carriageway, while the M1 runs down the west and the A1M is just outside the District to the east. Luton Airport is approximately five miles north of the District. As such the strategic geography for the impacts of planned growth and infrastructure requirements extend to all neighbouring local authorities and Luton Borough.</p> <p>Parts of the District lie within the Zone of Influence for the Chilterns Beechwood Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Chilterns Beechwood SAC zone of influence extends into Dacorum Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.</p> <p>In view of the above, SADC consider that the area covered by this SoCG (principally the South West Hertfordshire local authorities and Hertfordshire; but also extending for some matters to include North Hertfordshire District, Welwyn Hatfield Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Luton Borough) is the most appropriate strategic geography of the area.</p>
<p><b>4. Strategic matters</b></p>	<p><b>Status of Local Plans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Albans – Local Plan adopted 1994</li> <li>• Watford – Local Plan adopted October 2022</li> <li>• Hertfordshire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Waste Strategic Policies and Development Management Policies adopted 2012</li> <li>○ Waste site allocations adopted 2014</li> <li>○ Minerals Local Plan adopted 2007</li> </ul> </li> <li>• SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan – Reg 18 consulted on autumn 2022</li> </ul> <p><b>Relationship between emerging Local Plans and the JSP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring consistency and alignment in the production of emerging Local Plans alongside the production of the JSP - noting that some Local Plans may not be adopted until after the adoption of the JSP and that plan periods may differ.</li> <li>• Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SW Herts local authorities</li> <li>○ Hertfordshire County Council</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Conclusion</u> SADC and WBC both support the emerging SWH JSP.</p> <p><b>Planning for housing needs</b></p>

- Approach to accommodating unmet housing needs that may exist within the wider Housing Market Area.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SW Herts local authorities
  - Luton Borough Council

#### Conclusion

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to meeting SADC's housing needs as set out in the Government's 'Standard Method' in full.

#### **Planning for employment needs**

- Joint work has been undertaken on employment needs across South West Hertfordshire.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SW Herts local authorities
  - Luton Borough Council
  - Hertfordshire Futures

#### Conclusion

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to meeting SADC's employment needs in full and providing significant employment land within SADC's area within Hemel Garden Communities that supports Dacorum Borough Council's (DBC)'s and potentially wider SW Herts employment land needs.

#### **Approach to retail provision**

- Approach to meeting retail related needs in the area and considering any impacts of proposals on retail provision in other areas.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SW Herts local authorities

#### Conclusion

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to retail provision.

#### **Planning for gypsy & traveller needs**

- Approach to accommodating unmet traveller needs.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SW Herts local authorities
  - Hertfordshire County Council
  - National Highways

**Conclusion**

SADC and WBC both support the strategic approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to Gypsy and Traveller provision to meeting needs within SADC's area.

**Approach to Green Belt**

- Approach to exceptional circumstances.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SW Herts local authorities
  - Welwyn Hatfield District Council
  - North Hertfordshire District Council
  - Historic England

**Conclusion**

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to amending Green Belt boundaries as necessary to accommodate development needs, demonstrating 'Exceptional Circumstances'.

**Primary and secondary school provision.**

- Need for secondary school provision arising from new development.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SW Herts local authorities
  - Hertfordshire County Council

**Conclusion**

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to primary and secondary school provision.

**Planning for transport infrastructure**

- Plans for a Hertfordshire Essex Rapid Transit (HERT) which will run along the A414 corridor. It will also be necessary to consider the potential impacts of growth on traffic congestion on the highway network, including the M1 and M25.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SW Herts local authorities
  - Central Bedfordshire Council
  - Hertfordshire County Council
  - Luton Borough Council
  - National Highways
  - Homes England

- Hertfordshire Futures

#### Conclusion

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to planning for transport infrastructure.

#### **Strategic Rail Freight Interchange**

- The Government-permitted Strategic Rail Freight Interchange at the former Radlett Aerodrome site on Green Belt land and any potential alternative locations.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SW Herts local authorities
  - Hertfordshire County Council
  - Network Rail
  - National Highways

#### Conclusion

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to the allocation of the Government-permitted Strategic Rail Freight Interchange.

#### **Strategic impacts of planned growth**

- The Local Plan growth strategy primarily impacts Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) through the joint SADC DBC approach to Hemel Garden Communities, but there are also more limited cross-boundary strategic matters with other authorities, as set out in more detail elsewhere in this SoCG.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SW Herts local authorities
  - Welwyn Hatfield District Council
  - North Hertfordshire District Council
  - Central Bedfordshire Council
  - Luton Borough Council

#### Conclusion

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to strategic impacts of planned growth.

#### **Strategic infrastructure requirements of planned growth**

- The Local Plan infrastructure requirements of planned growth primarily impacts DBC through the joint SADC DBC approach to Hemel Garden Communities, but there are also more limited cross-boundary strategic

matters with other authorities, as set out in more detail elsewhere in this SoCG.

- Strategic matter between:
  - SW Herts local authorities
  - Welwyn Hatfield District Council
  - North Hertfordshire District Council
  - Central Bedfordshire Council
  - Luton Borough Council

#### Conclusion

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to strategic infrastructure requirements of planned growth, most notably in relation to Hemel Garden Communities.

#### **Water and wastewater capacity**

- Consideration of the supply of water and the wastewater capacity to accommodate the future needs of development.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SADC
  - Dacorum Borough Council
  - Watford Borough Council
  - Environment Agency

#### Conclusion

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to water and wastewater capacity.

#### **Green and blue infrastructure**

- Approach to the provision of green and blue infrastructure, and consideration of county-wide strategy.
- Strategic matter between:
  - SADC
  - Dacorum Borough Council
  - Hertfordshire County Council
  - Environment Agency
  - Watford Borough Council
  - Natural England

#### Conclusion

SADC and WBC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to green and blue infrastructure.

<p><b>5. Common ground</b></p>	<p>There is common ground between SADC and WBC on the strategic geography and what comprises the strategic cross-boundary matters.</p> <p>Further details of Common Ground are set out under section 4 above.</p>
<p><b>6. Matters of disagreement</b></p>	<p>There are currently no matters of disagreement between SADC and WBC on the strategic geography or what comprises the strategic cross-boundary matters.</p>
<p><b>7. Ongoing review and co-operation</b></p>	<p>SADC will continue to work with WBC on strategic and cross-boundary matters up to and beyond adoption of the new SADC Local Plan.</p>



Duty to Cooperate potential strategic cross boundary issues matrix

Potential strategic cross-boundary issues	Description / summary of issues	Duty to Cooperate bodies																								
		Dacorum BC	Hertsmere BC	Three Rivers DC	Watford BC	Welwyn Hatfield BC	North Hertfordshire DC	Central Bedfordshire Council	Hertfordshire County Council	Luton BC	Buckinghamshire Council	Mayor of London	Civil Aviation Authority	Natural England	Environment Agency	Historic England	Network Rail	National Highways	Transport for London	Homes England	NHS England	Herts Valleys CCG	Office of Rail Regulation	Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership	Hertfordshire Local Nature Partnership	
<b>Relationship between emerging Local Plans and the JSP</b>	Ensuring consistency and alignment in the production of emerging Local Plans alongside the production of the JSP - noting that some Local Plans may not be adopted until after the adoption of the JSP and that plan periods may differ	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓																	
<b>Planning for housing needs</b>	Approach to accommodating unmet housing needs that may exist within the wider Housing Market Area.	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓																
<b>Planning for employment needs</b>	Joint work has been undertaken on employment needs across South West Hertfordshire.	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓														✓		
<b>Approach to retail provision</b>	Approach to meeting retail related needs in the area, and considering any impacts of proposals on retail provision in other areas.	✓	✓	✓	✓																					
<b>Planning for gypsy &amp; traveller needs</b>	Approach to accommodating unmet traveller needs	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓									✓								
<b>Approach to Green Belt</b>	Approach to exceptional circumstances.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									✓										
<b>Mitigating the impact of development on Chiltern Beechwoods SAC</b>	12.6km zone of influence announced by Natural England where mitigation for new residential development will be required with SANGs and SAMMs.	✓						✓			✓		✓													
<b>Primary and secondary school provision</b>	Need for secondary school provision arising from new development. The 2018/2019 IDP identified a need for new secondary and primary school(s).	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓																	
<b>Planning for transport infrastructure</b>	Plans for a Hertfordshire Essex Rapid Transit (HERT) which will run between Hemel Hempstead and West Watford along the A414 corridor. It will also be necessary to consider the potential impacts of growth on traffic congestion on the highway network, including the M1 and M25.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓							✓		✓					✓		



Potential strategic cross-boundary issues	Description / summary of issues	Duty to Cooperate bodies																							
		Dacorum BC	Hertsmere BC	Three Rivers DC	Watford BC	Welwyn Hatfield BC	North Hertfordshire DC	Central Bedfordshire Council	Hertfordshire County Council	Luton BC	Buckinghamshire Council	Mayor of London	Civil Aviation Authority	Natural England	Environment Agency	Historic England	Network Rail	National Highways	Transport for London	Homes England	NHS England	Herts Valleys CCG	Office of Rail Regulation	Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership	Hertfordshire Local Nature Partnership
Minerals	Existing and potential future mineral extraction – primarily sand and gravel	✓				✓			✓																
Chilterns National Landscape	Consideration of the Chilterns National Landscape in its current boundary and from its potential extension, including into St Albans City & District.	✓											✓												
Climate change	Potential issues to be identified through the production of the draft Local Plan	Potential associated DtC bodies to be determined through the production of the draft Local Plan																							
Infrastructure provision																									
Affordable housing																									