

# Statement of Common Ground – St Albans District Council with Natural England

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 Natural England (NE).

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


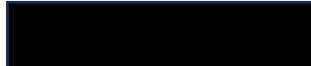
SADC and NE have worked collaboratively on a number of matters that are relevant. Engagement has included discussions relating to Mitigating the impact of development on Chiltern Beechwoods SAC and also the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and Landscape.

## 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 Natural England 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) Natural England (NE)
<b>2. Signatories</b>	NE – Fiona Martin – Senior Officer  12 December 2024 SADC – Chris Briggs – Spatial Planning Manager 

	12 December 2024
<p><b>3. Strategic geography</b></p>	<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 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</p>

	Borough) is the most appropriate strategic geography of the area.
4. <b>Strategic matters</b>	<p><b>Status of Local Plans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Albans – Local Plan adopted 1994</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>Mitigating the impact of development on Chiltern Beechwoods SAC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12.6km Zone of Influence announced by Natural England where mitigation for new residential development will be required with SANGs and SAMMs.</li> <li>• Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SADC</li> <li>○ Dacorum Borough Council</li> <li>○ Central Bedfordshire Council</li> <li>○ Buckinghamshire Council</li> <li>○ Natural England</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Conclusion</u> SADC and NE both support the approach in SADC’s Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to mitigating the impact of development on the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC.</p> <p><b>Luton Airport and other Airport/airspace impacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including cross-boundary impacts from flights – eg noise and air quality – and from access – eg road and rail network impacts.</li> <li>• Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SADC</li> <li>○ Dacorum Borough Council</li> <li>○ North Hertfordshire District Council</li> <li>○ Central Bedfordshire Council</li> <li>○ Luton Borough Council</li> <li>○ Natural England</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Conclusion</u> SADC and NE both support the approach in SADC’s Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to Luton airport and other Airport/airspace impacts.</p>

	<p><b>Hemel Garden Communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint bid for Hemel Garden Communities approved in March 2019 for official garden town status and funding. Aims to deliver up to 11,000 homes and 10,000 jobs, subject to the Local Plan process. Approach to housing, employment and infrastructure delivery.</li> <li>• Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SADC</li> <li>○ Dacorum Borough Council</li> <li>○ Hertfordshire County Council</li> <li>○ Homes England</li> <li>○ Hertfordshire Futures</li> <li>○ Natural England</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Conclusion</u> SADC and NE both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to Hemel Garden Communities.</p> <p><b>Green and blue infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach to the provision of green and blue infrastructure, and consideration of county-wide strategy.</li> <li>• Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SADC</li> <li>○ Dacorum Borough Council</li> <li>○ Hertfordshire County Council</li> <li>○ Environment Agency</li> <li>○ Watford Borough Council</li> <li>○ Natural England</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><u>Conclusion</u> SADC and NE both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to green and blue infrastructure.</p>
<p><b>5. Common ground</b></p>	<p>There is common ground between SADC and NE 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 NE on the strategic geography or what comprises the strategic cross-boundary matters.</p>

<b>7. Ongoing review and co-operation</b>	SADC will continue to work with NE on strategic and cross-boundary matters up to and beyond adoption of the new SADC Local Plan.
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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.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓							✓			✓				✓		



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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																									