

Statement of Common Ground – St Albans District Council with Hertfordshire County 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 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

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 HCC 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 base work on transport matters.

There are also a large number of Hemel Garden Communities related evidence documents and workstreams that have involved both SADC and HCC.



Introduction

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

This SoCG reflects the position of the authorities following the Regulation 19 Consultation. Both HCC and SADC intend to agree modifications to the plan to overcome HCC objections made at Regulation 19 stage prior to the commencement of the examination hearings.

Duty To Cooperate

SADC has continuously engaged with HCC 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.

1. List of parties involved	St Albans City and District Council (SADC) Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)
2. Signatories	HCC –Stephen Boulton – 15 January 2025  SADC – Cllr Paul De Kort – Leader  15 January 2025
3. Strategic geography	<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</p>

	<p>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>4. Strategic matters</p>	<p>Status of Local Plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Albans – Local Plan adopted 1994 • Hertfordshire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Waste Strategic Policies and Development Management Policies adopted 2012 ○ Waste site allocations adopted 2014 ○ Minerals Local Plan adopted 2007 • SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan – Reg 18 consulted on autumn 2022 <p>Relationship between emerging Local Plans and the JSP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SW Herts local authorities ○ Hertfordshire County Council <p><u>Conclusion</u> SADC and HCC both support the emerging SWH JSP.</p> <p>Primary and secondary school provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for primary and secondary school provision arising from new development. • Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SW Herts local authorities ○ Hertfordshire County Council <p><u>Conclusion</u></p>

SADC and HCC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to primary and secondary school provision. This includes provision within and beyond Hemel Garden Communities that is providing land for education within SADC's area that supports DBC's education land needs. Support from HCC is contingent on technical changes to ensure deliverability via agreed modifications to the plan.

There is one non-strategic area of disagreement between SADC and HCC about the detail of the approach to Green Belt boundaries in relation to school allocations on land currently in the Green Belt. HCC has also made representations to the local plan on other technical matters relating to education.

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
- Approach to transport evidence underpinning the local plan, including Transport Impact Assessments, and the approach to delivery of transport infrastructure.
- Strategic matter between:
 - SADC
 - Hertfordshire County Council

Conclusion

SADC and HCC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to planning for transport infrastructure. This includes provision within and beyond Hemel Garden Communities.

This support from HCC is contingent upon SADC continuing with joint transport workstreams up to and beyond adoption of the draft Local Plan, including but not limited to the adoption of the Hemel Garden Communities IDP. It is also contingent on ensuring that policy requires infrastructure and other impacts

of applications within the HGC boundary are fully considered on a cross-boundary basis and changes to the delivery mechanism for transport infrastructure via agreed modifications to the plan.

Strategic Rail Freight Interchange

- The Government-permitted Strategic Rail Freight Interchange at the former Radlett Aerodrome site.
- Strategic matter between:
 - SW Herts local authorities
 - Hertfordshire County Council
 - Network Rail
 - National Highways

Conclusion

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

Hemel Garden Communities

- 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.
- Strategic matter between:
 - SADC
 - Dacorum Borough Council
 - Hertfordshire County Council
 - Homes England
 - Hertfordshire Futures
 - Natural England

Conclusion

SADC and HCC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to Hemel Garden Communities.

SADC and HCC have worked intensively and extensively together on the development of Hemel Garden Communities since it was awarded 'Garden Town' status by the Government in 2019. There is a joint SADC / DBC / HCC 'Hemel Garden Communities' delivery team.

Hemel Garden Communities is an ambitious development programme that will transform Hemel Hempstead and create attractive and sustainable new neighbourhoods and communities to the north and east of Hemel Hempstead,

through the delivery of around 11,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs by 2050.

This support from HCC is contingent upon SADC continuing with joint workstreams up to and beyond adoption of the draft Local Plan, including but not limited to the adoption of the Hemel Garden Communities IDP. It is also contingent on ensuring that policy requires infrastructure and other impacts of applications within the HGC boundary are fully considered on a cross-boundary basis and changes to the delivery mechanism for transport infrastructure via agreed modifications to the plan.

Green and blue infrastructure

- Approach to the provision of green and blue infrastructure, and consideration of county-wide strategy including support for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and HIPP Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- Strategic matter between:
 - SADC
 - Dacorum Borough Council
 - Hertfordshire County Council
 - Environment Agency
 - Watford Borough Council
 - Natural England

Conclusion

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

Recycling Centre

- Arrangements for future facilities linked to growth across the county and potentially to service future growth of Hemel Hempstead.
- Strategic matter between:
 - SADC
 - Dacorum Borough Council
 - Hertsmere Borough Council
 - Hertfordshire County Council

Conclusion

SADC and HCC both recognise that there is a need for a new Recycling Centre. Both SADC and HCC support the principle of the delivery of a recycling centre within the boundary of Hemel Garden Communities. The area of land required for a new recycling centre is up to 1ha in size and that this may

need to be delivered within the boundary of St Albans if this is identified through the master planning process.

Minerals and Waste

- Existing and potential future mineral extraction – primarily sand and gravel.
- A network of waste management facilities to deal with waste arisings
- Strategic matter between:
 - SADC
 - Dacorum Borough Council
 - Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
 - Hertfordshire County Council

Conclusion

SADC and HCC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to minerals. Support from HCC is contingent upon the safeguarding of minerals and waste sites, including the sewage treatment facility adjacent to UC47 - Crabtree Fields / Land at Waldegrave Park and the rail terminal adjacent to B8 - Harper Lane, north of Radlett via agreed modifications to the plan.

Children's Services

- Provision of early years facilities for 0-2, 3-4, and 5-11 year olds
- Provision of children's homes for looked after children and the appropriate evidence in the Local Housing Needs Assessment
- Strategic matter between:
 - SADC
 - Hertfordshire County Council

SADC and HCC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to provision of early years facilities. Support from HCC is contingent on technical changes to ensue deliverability via agreed modifications to the plan..

HCC have also made representations at Regulation 19 stage on the need for the plan to provide for children's homes for looked after children. Support from HCC is therefore also contingent on this via agreed modifications to the plan.

Adult Care Services

- Approach to delivery of specialist accommodation for older people
- Strategic matter between:
 - SADC

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Hertfordshire County Council</u> <p>SADC and HCC both support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to provision of specialist accommodation for older people. Support from HCC is contingent on technical changes to ensue deliverability via agreed modifications to the plan.</p>
<p>5. Common ground</p>	<p>There is common ground between SADC and HCC on the strategic geography and what comprises the strategic cross-boundary matters.</p> <p>This includes in particular ongoing joint work on the delivery of Hemel Garden Communities.</p> <p>Further details of Common Ground are set out under section 4 above.</p>
<p>6. Matters of disagreement</p>	<p>There are currently no matters of disagreement between SADC and HCC on the strategic geography or what comprises the strategic cross-boundary matters.</p> <p>There is one non-strategic area of disagreement between SADC and HCC about the detail of the approach to Green Belt boundaries in relation to school allocations on land currently in the Green Belt.</p> <p>Support from HCC on a number of matters is contingent on changes to the plan via modifications and/or further information or work being undertaken on the evidence base. This is as outlined in section 4 above and in representations made to the Regulation 19 consultation.</p>
<p>7. Ongoing review and co-operation</p>	<p>SADC will continue to work with HCC on strategic and cross-boundary matters up to and beyond adoption of the new SADC Local Plan.</p> <p>This includes in particular ongoing joint work on the delivery of Hemel Garden Communities.</p> <p>SADC and HCC both intend to agree modifications to the plan to overcome HCC objections made at Regulation 19 stage prior to the commencement of the examination hearings.</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	
Relationship between emerging Local Plans and the JSP	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	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓																	
Planning for housing needs	Approach to accommodating unmet housing needs that may exist within the wider Housing Market Area.	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓																
Planning for employment needs	Joint work has been undertaken on employment needs across South West Hertfordshire.	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓														✓		
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.	✓	✓	✓	✓																					
Planning for gypsy & traveller needs	Approach to accommodating unmet traveller needs	✓	✓	✓	✓													✓								
Approach to Green Belt	Approach to exceptional circumstances.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									✓										
Mitigating the impact of development on Chiltern Beechwoods SAC	12.6km zone of influence announced by Natural England where mitigation for new residential development will be required with SANGs and SAMMs.	✓						✓			✓			✓												
Primary and secondary school provision	Need for secondary school provision arising from new development. The 2018/2019 IDP identified a need for new secondary and primary school(s).	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓																	
Planning for transport infrastructure	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	Hertsmeere 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																									