

Statement of Common Ground – St Albans District Council with Central Bedfordshire 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 Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC).

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 CBC 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.



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 CBC 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.

<p>1. List of parties involved</p>	<p>St Albans City and District Council (SADC) Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC)</p>
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<p>2. Signatories</p>	<p>For Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC)</p> <p>Caroline Danby, Head of Strategic Growth.</p> <p></p> <p>24th December 2024</p> <p></p> <p>SADC – Chris Briggs – Spatial Planning Manager</p> <p>24 December 2024</p>
<p>3. Strategic geography</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).</p>

	<p>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 • Central Bedfordshire – Local Plan adopted July 2021. Preparation of the new Local Plan commenced in November 2023. • 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>Mitigating the impact of development on Chiltern Beechwoods SAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12.6km Zone of Influence announced by Natural England where mitigation for new residential development will be required with SANGs and SAMMs. • Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SADC ○ Dacorum Borough Council ○ Central Bedfordshire Council ○ Buckinghamshire Council ○ Natural England <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>SADC and CBC 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>Planning for transport infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SW Herts local authorities

- Central Bedfordshire Council – it is recognised that there could be some cross-boundary impacts within Central Bedfordshire.
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Luton Borough Council
- National Highways
- Homes England
- Hertfordshire Futures

Conclusion

Some cross boundary impacts within Central Bedfordshire have been identified, the extent to which are being considered through the provision of additional information from the COMET model. Once this has been received and reviewed, Central Bedfordshire Council hope to update their position on this matter.

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

As noted above, Cross boundary impacts within Central Bedfordshire have been identified, the extent to which are being considered through the provision of additional information from the COMET model. Once this has been received and reviewed, Central Bedfordshire Council hope to update their position on this matter.

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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SW Herts local authorities ○ Welwyn Hatfield District Council ○ North Hertfordshire District Council ○ Central Bedfordshire Council ○ Luton Borough Council <p><u>Conclusion</u> As noted above, Cross boundary impacts within Central Bedfordshire have been identified, the extent to which are being considered through the provision of additional information from the COMET model. Once this has been received and reviewed, Central Bedfordshire Council hope to update their position on this matter.</p> <p>Other cross-boundary growth locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the approach to the planning and delivery of any other growth (outside of Hemel Garden Communities) located cross-boundary or adjacent to neighbouring local authorities. • Strategic matter between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SADC ○ Hertsmere Borough Council ○ Central Bedfordshire Council <p><u>Conclusion</u> SADC and CBC broadly support the approach in SADC's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan to the two growth locations near to CBC's boundary at B2 North East Harpenden and B7 North West Harpenden. However, as noted above, Cross boundary impacts within Central Bedfordshire have been identified, the extent to which are being considered through the provision of additional information from the COMET model. Once this has been received and reviewed, Central Bedfordshire Council hope to update their position on this matter.</p>
<p>5. Common ground</p>	<p>There is common ground between SADC and CBC 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>6. Matters of disagreement</p>	<p>There are currently no matters of disagreement between SADC and CBC on the strategic geography or what comprises the strategic cross-boundary matters. However, as noted above, Cross boundary impacts within Central Bedfordshire have been identified, the extent to which are being considered through the provision of additional information from the</p>

	<p>COMET model. Once this has been received and reviewed, Central Bedfordshire Council hope to update their position on this matter.</p>
<p>7. Ongoing review and co-operation</p>	<p>SADC will continue to work with CBC on strategic and cross-boundary matters up to and beyond adoption of the new SADC Local Plan. However, as noted above, Cross boundary impacts within Central Bedfordshire have been identified, the extent to which are being considered through the provision of additional information from the COMET model. Once this has been received and reviewed, Central Bedfordshire Council hope to update their position on this matter.</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																									