

**Memorandum of Understanding under the Duty to Co-operate**  
**between**  
**East Hertfordshire District Council and Stevenage Borough Council**  
**on**  
**The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-31**

**Date of agreement: 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2016**

**1. Scope of the statement**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been prepared under the Duty to Co-operate requirements. It provides a position statement on the extent of co-operation and understanding in respect of the preparation of a local plan for Stevenage Borough Council (SBC). The MOU is intended to set out the position of both signing authorities and be kept up-to-date as SBC as a local planning authority reaches key milestones in the preparation of their plan.

This MOU is intended to highlight the extent of agreement, or otherwise on strategic Stevenage and county wide matters. It is a shared objective of both East Herts District Council (EHDC) and SBC to facilitate the timely progression of sound local plans towards adoption in accordance with legalisation.

**2. Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-31**

This MOU has been prepared in the context of the publication version of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2011-31) which was placed on public deposit for a six week period ending 17 February 2016. The MOU was prepared in July 2016 in the period leading up to the planned 22 July 2016 submission of the plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

**4. Matters agreed**

Engagement between the two authorities under the Duty to Co-operate has focussed on the quantum and location of housing and employment, along with the impact of this on local physical and environmental infrastructure. Following a period when there was uncertainty on the most appropriate way in which future growth might be handled, this MOU highlights how there is a shared and common objective to resolve the issues in a manner which encompasses joint technical working, continuing Member involvement and through to the timely adoption of the local plan.

We, the undersigned, set out in this memorandum those matters of joint strategic interest to both groups as they are dealt with in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP), Submission Version, July 2016 (hereinafter 'the plan') in accordance with paragraph 181 of the National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012.

It is important to place on record that discussions between EHDC and SBC have embraced the full range of strategic cross-boundary matters covered by the Duty to Co-operate. Both

EHDC and SBC are content that the Duty to Co-operate has been met thus far and ongoing liaison will ensure that this continuing requirement will be effectively addressed. Both EHDC and SBC agree they will continue to work together to try find solutions to support the delivery of the plan.

More specifically on issues raised by EHDC in the consultation responses:

- (i) EHDC supports the principle of seeking to meet and indeed exceed Stevenage's objectively assessed housing needs within the borough boundary. Furthermore, EHDC supports the positive and pro-active approach towards development and regeneration presented in the Local Plan.
- (ii) Policy H04: South East of Stevenage. EHDC notes the site straddles the A602 and has the potential to impact indirectly on East Herts given the importance of this main artery linking the A10 and the A1(M). The proposal would require a new roundabout on to the A602 and be compatible with the County Council's improvement plans. SBC note that the County currently has an application in to improve the road which SBC supports and Policy H04 a. states the requirement for a satisfactory vehicular access on the A602.
- (iii) EHDC supports the SBLP's commitment to protect and enhance its employment areas, retail and community facilities, and in particular, where proposals seek to secure improvements to public transport and road networks. As The Lister Hospital serves a wide catchment as well as East Herts District, the Council is supportive of plans to ensure the hospital has the flexibility to expand as necessary to accommodate future demands.
- (iv) EHDC believes the SBLP is supported by a wide range of technical evidence that has been prepared using accepted methodologies. EHDC consider that all alternatives within the constraints of the Borough have been explored and the decisions made in the Local Plan are based on proportionate evidence and are therefore justified.
- (v) EHDC believe with SBC embarking on its own house building programme and has a regeneration strategy for the town centre, showing a pro-active approach to development. The detailed policies provide clear guidance as to how the Council will approach development proposals and sets out specific projects for improvements to various types of infrastructure. The policies are considered to be consistent with national policy.
- (vi) EHDC raises a concern about the effectiveness and the delivery of the improvements to infrastructure, that a large number of projects identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan as being critical or



essential to the deliverability of the Plan, do not have sources of funding identified nor secured. Nor is the timing of the delivery of some of these projects known or costed. SBC acknowledges there will be difficulties in securing such information as delivery plans are in their infancy however SBC will establish a clear programme which sets out when this information will be known as an interim measure.

## **5. Outstanding matters**

There are no outstanding matters between the two authorities at the present time (i.e. the date this MOU was signed) other than supporting each other on the on-going Highway modelling and potential mitigation that may be required.

## **6. Commitment to future co-operation**

Both SBC and EHDC remain committed to effective co-operation on all matters relating to the Duty to Co-operate. As such both SBC and EHDC undertake to review and update this agreement as appropriate as key milestones are reached in plan preparation and any review.

## **7. Evidence of co-operation**

- Stages of local plan preparation since April 2012 with dates of consultation responses:

<b>Plan</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Date of response</b>
Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 - 2031	Stevenage Borough Local Plan – early stage consultation	January 2013
Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-31	Stevenage Borough Local Plan - Key Issues and preferred options consultation	July 2013
Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-31	Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Revised housing target consultation	July 2015
Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-31	Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Publication stage consultation	February 2016

- Quarterly meeting of the Hertfordshire Planning Group – Local Plans (HPG Local Plans), Hertfordshire Planning Group (HPG), Hertfordshire Infrastructure & Planning Partnership (HIPP) meetings are all meetings which both SBC and EHDC actively attend and discussions cooperation.
- Positive and engaging responses to the previous consultation about closely working together and sharing information and evidence in the preparation of the strategies and policies.

- Post consultation meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2016 (officers only), previous member / officer Duty to Co-operate meetings over the last 18 months. Executive Member level Duty to Co-operate Meetings on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2014, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015.
- Numerous and ongoing meeting on specific topics as the need arises.

### **Signatories to this Statement of Common Ground**

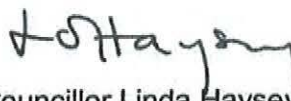
For and on behalf of Stevenage Borough Council:



Councillor John Gardner  
Portfolio Holder for Planning & Environment

Date: July 2016

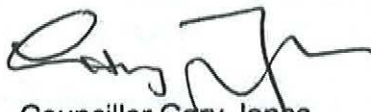
For and on behalf of East Hertfordshire District Council by Members of the District Plan Executive Panel:



Councillor Linda Haysey  
Chairman of the Executive Panel and Leader of the Council



Councillor Eric Buckmaster  
Member of the Executive Panel



Councillor Gary Jones  
Member of the Executive Panel

Date: July 2016