

Memorandum of Understanding under the Duty to Co-operate

Between

Central Bedfordshire Council and Stevenage Borough Council

In respect of

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-31

Date of agreement: 16th January 2017

**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 reaches key milestones in the preparation of their plan.

The 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 Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and SBC to facilitate the timely progression of sound local plans towards adoption in accordance with legislation.

**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 (SBLP), which was placed on public deposit for a six week period ending 17 February and submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination on 22 July 2016.

**3. Matters agreed**

Engagement between the two authorities under the Duty to Co-operate has focused 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 CBC and SBC have embraced the full range of strategic cross-boundary matters covered by the Duty to Co-operate. Both

CBC 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 CBC and SBC agree they will continue to work together to try find solutions to support the delivery of the plan.

#### 4. Detailed Memorandum

The detailed memorandum covers those issues raised within the CBC consultation response to SBC.

##### Homes

- 1.1. CBC **agrees** with the extent of the identified Housing Market Area (HMA), the methodology and conclusions of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the principle of seeking to meet Stevenage's objectively assessed housing needs within the borough boundary.
- 1.2. CBC **agrees** with the SBC approach to meeting its housing needs in terms of Green Belt release to the north and south of the town, and the regeneration of Stevenage Central. Furthermore, CBC supports the pro-active approach to boosting the supply of housing presented in the Local Plan.
- 1.3. CBC acknowledges that Stevenage is unlikely to be able to meet its housing and/or employment needs post-2031. Although the emerging Central Bedfordshire Local Plan period covers the very end of this period, running from 2015 – 2035, it is agreed that any unmet needs arising from Stevenage post-2031 may need to be a consideration for the next review of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan.
- 1.4. CBC and SBC agree that the buffer required by the NPPF (20% in the case of Stevenage) should be applied after the shortfall has been dealt with, rather than before, as the Housing Technical Paper currently calculates this. SBC **agree** that this would be an appropriate approach. This method has been implemented in the recent update of the Housing Technical Paper.

##### Green Belt

- 1.5. CBC **supports** SBCs commitment to the release land from the Green Belt to meet its development needs.

##### Employment

- 1.6. Based upon projections and evidence at the time of writing, there is a shortfall of employment land within the SBC administrative area of **11.5 hectares**. CBC accepts that this should be provided within the wider FEMA area, which comprises the CBC and NHDC (North Hertfordshire District Council) administrative areas. Faced with this short-fall, It is **agreed** that land in the A1 corridor in Central Bedfordshire provides an opportunity to address Stevenage's unmet employment requirements, either in whole or in part.

1.7. Based upon projections and evidence at the time of writing, it is **agreed** that CBC could contribute up to 11.5 hectares within the FEMA, if required, and that this would broadly balance Stevenage's currently identified unmet requirements. It is **agreed** that further DtC discussion between SBC, CBC, and NHDC will be required to address this situation. The two authorities agree to monitor their employment requirements on an on-going basis as their respective plans progress.

#### **Retail**

1.8. CBC agree with the SBLP approach to retailing, specifically supporting the regeneration of Stevenage Central and the provision of new convenience floorspace within the Borough boundary.

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

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

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

For and on behalf of Stevenage Borough  
Council:


Cllr John Gardner



Date: 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017

For and on behalf of Central Bedfordshire  
Council:

Councillor Kevin Collins



Date: 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Andrew Davie – Development  
Infrastructure Group Manager



Date: 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017

