

# **Memorandum of Understanding under the Duty to Co-operate**

**between**

**The Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and**

**Stevenage Borough Council**

**in respect of**

**the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-31**

**Date of agreement: 23<sup>rd</sup> December 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 signatory organisations and to 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 on strategic matters. It is a shared objective of both the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (HLEP) 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 weeks 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 organisations under the Duty to Co-operate has focused on the support that the plan offers to housing and economic growth and to the regeneration of Stevenage town centre. This MoU highlights how there is a shared and common objective to support the proposals of the plan in a manner which achieves the best overall result for Stevenage Borough and the HLEP, through to the timely adoption of the local plan.

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

It is important to place on record that discussions between HLEP and SBC have embraced the full range of strategic matters in which the HLEP has an interest as covered by the Duty to Co-operate. Both the HLEP and SBC are content that the Duty to Co-operate has been met. Further, ongoing liaison will ensure that this continuing requirement will be effectively addressed. Both the HLEP and SBC agree they will continue to work together to find solutions to support the delivery of the plan.

#### 4. Detailed Memorandum

The detailed memorandum covers those strategic issues raised within the HLEP consultation response to SBC:

##### **SP2 Sustainable development**

The HLEP and SBC **agree** that the designers of the proposed neighbourhoods at Stevenage west, north and south east should be obliged to adopt current best practice sustainable site planning/urban design principles, thus providing an important connection with the original physical and social precepts of neighbourhood planning in Stevenage.

##### **SP3 Strong competitive economy**

The HLEP and SBC **agree** that the HLEP should play an increasingly active role in enabling the development planning process. The HLEP will drive the preparation of a broad-based planning strategy for the creation of the Science & Engineering Campus in Gunnels Wood and SBC agrees to actively participate in the production of a development framework/site briefs in collaboration with site/ building owners.

##### **SP4 Vital town centre**

The HLEP and SBC **agree** that by creating an overarching development framework and vision, investors, elected members, public officials and the general public have a common reference for the future renewal of the town. Both parties agree to work co-operatively on the proactive management of this innovative development planning exercise.

##### **SP5 Infrastructure**

The HLEP and SBC **agree** that this is a policy worthy of support. HLEP considers that the adherence to proposed levels of affordable housing, >30-40%, may limit the scope for developer contributions to fund necessary infrastructure. The HLEP supports a flexible negotiating position. SBC recognises the HLEP's concerns but the whole plan has been viability tested, including the affordable housing requirements. SBC always takes a balanced and flexible position in s.106 negotiations.

##### **SP6 Sustainable transport**

The HLEP and SBC **agree** that an emphasis on 'smart' and light practical solutions over higher cost and lengthy engineering interventions will be appropriate where opportunities are presented.

##### **SP7 High quality homes**

The HLEP and SBC **agree** that the Plan proposes to exceed the OAN housing figure by 300 dwellings over the plan period. The HLEP's Strategic Economic Plan seeks an increase of dwelling provision, where appropriate and feasible. The HLEP recommends a review of proposed densities for key development sites to determine whether there are opportunities to increase densities. SBC holds that it has already driven densities as high as practicable, based on up-to-date SLAA information.

**SP 10 Green Belt**

The HLEP and SBC agree that cross-authority collaboration, through agreements to meet the highest standards of urban design and place-making are appropriate where development adjacent to the Green Belt boundary is planned.

**SP 11 Climate change, flooding and pollution**

The HLEP and SBC agree that this policy [to limit, mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change, flood risk and all forms of pollution] is a positive policy.

**Commitment to future co-operation**

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

**Signatories to this Memorandum of Understanding:**

For, and on behalf of, Stevenage Borough Council:



Date: 17/1/17

For, and on behalf of, the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership:



Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2016