

DATED _____ **14 August 2025**

Memorandum of Understanding under the Duty to Co-operate
between
Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) and Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC)
on

The Review and Partial Update of Stevenage Borough Local Plan

Date of agreement: 14 August 2025

1.0 Scope of the Statement

- 1.1 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 review of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Review and Partial Update. 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.
- 1.2 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 CBC and SBC to facilitate the timely progression of a sound local plan review in accordance with legislation.
- 1.3 On 12 December 2024, Government released the updated NPPF. For Local Plan making, there is a minimal transition period of three months from 12 December 2024 to 12 March 2025 whereby plans can proceed under the former NPPF (December 2023). However, the Local Plan must be at Regulation 19 pre-submission publication stage before 12 March 2025 and its draft housing requirement meets at least 80% of local housing need.
- 1.4 Given that the Stevenage Local Plan Review is at Regulation 19 stage and the draft housing requirement meets in excess of 80% of local housing need, under the transitional arrangements outlined above, this means that the Local Plan Review and Partial Update will be submitted and examined under the previous NPPF 2023 and not the current NPPF 2024.

2.0 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031

- 2.1 This MOU has been prepared in the context of the publication version of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2011-31) Review and Partial Update which was first placed on public deposit for a six week period ending 15 August 2024. The MOU was prepared in December 2024 in the period leading up to the second public deposit ending 14 February 2025. Submission of the plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination is expected in Spring 2025.

3.0 Matters agreed and outstanding and programme of actions

- 3.1 Engagement between the two under the Duty to Co-operate has focussed primarily on:
- Scope / coverage of Local Plan Review
- 3.2 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 Review and Partial Update. Set out in this memorandum are those matters of joint strategic interest to both groups as they are dealt with in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update, Submission Version, August 2025 (hereinafter 'the plan') in accordance with paragraph 24 – 27 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023.

Discussions between CBC and SBC

Discussions between CBC and SBC have embraced strategic boundary matters that relate only to the elements of the Local Plan Review and Partial Update that SBC are proposing to update. Both CBC and SBC are content that collaboration has been met thus far and ongoing liaison will ensure that both CBC and SBC will continue to maintain effective cooperation. It is the opinion of CBC that SBC's Local Plan 2011-2031 Review and Partial Update is sound and has been correctly prepared in so far as they relate to the responsibilities and interests of Central Bedfordshire Council. Both CBC and SBC agree they will continue to work together to try find solutions to support the delivery of the plan.



Councillor Adam Zerny

Executive Member for Strategic Growth
Place and Communities

Signed on behalf of

Central Bedfordshire Council



Alex Robinson

Assistant Director for Planning and
Regulation

Signed on behalf of

Stevenage Borough Council

Issue	CBC comment	SBC comment	Outcome
Coverage of partial Review	<p>Coverage of the Partial Plan Review</p> <p>Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) recognises that Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) declared a climate emergency in June 2019 and reconfirmed a commitment to tackling climate change and its impacts by setting a target to ensure that Stevenage has net zero carbon emissions by 2030.</p> <p>The inclusion of a strong focus on climate change as part of the plan review is therefore understandable and the intention to require development to contribute to both mitigating and adapting to climate change is supported.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, since the adoption of the Stevenage Local Plan in May 2019, much has changed at a national level, including the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023), Environment Act (2021) and updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2021, September 2023 and December 2023.</p> <p>As such, it is surprising that a full plan update (following the review of the plan) is not deemed to be required to reflect these changes. The justification says ‘the spatial strategy remains fit for purpose’, but there is no further explanation as to how this conclusion has been reached.</p>	<p>Comments acknowledged and noted.</p> <p>Our advice is that since this is a partial review and limited only to strictly necessary changes to ensure that the plan remains up to date. However, the Council intends to initiate work on the New Local Plan immediately after the adoption of the Review and Partial Update.</p>	<p>Evidential studies and technical papers published during Regulation 19 stage.</p>

	<p>Alongside this, given the current government NPPF consultation and the proposals to deliver 1.5 million new homes, CBC would be interested to understand if the Council will now be considering undertaking a full update instead, particularly as the proposed transitional arrangements outlined within the consultation state that 'all plans at earlier stages of preparation (i.e. plans that have not yet reached Regulation 19 stage one month after the revised NPPF is published) - should be prepared against the revised version of the NPPF and progressed as quickly as possible'.</p>		
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