

Statement of Common Ground between Shropshire Council and Stafford Borough Council

Date: May 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (NPPF), specifies that Local Planning Authorities are “*under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries*”¹.
- 1.2. The NPPF also specifies that “*in order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, 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. These should be produced using the approach set out in national planning guidance, and be made publicly available throughout the plan-making process to provide transparency*”².

2. Purpose

- 2.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been produced to support both the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review (2016-2038) and the Stafford Borough New Local Plan 2020-2040 in the context of the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031. It sets out how Shropshire Council and Stafford Borough have positively engaged in order to fulfil its Duty to Cooperate requirements.

3. Scope

- 3.1. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides details on the scope of a SoCG, which can be summarised as follows:
 - The plan-making authorities responsible for joint working detailed in the statement;
 - A description and map of the administrative areas covered by the statement, and a brief justification for these area(s);
 - The key strategic matters being addressed by the statement;
 - Governance arrangements for the cooperation process;
 - If applicable, the housing requirements (if known) within the area covered by the statement;
 - Distribution of needs or the process for agreeing distribution of needs (including whether there is and the distribution of unmet needs);
 - A record of where agreements have (or have not) been reached on key strategic matters, including the process for reaching agreements on these; and
 - Any additional strategic matters to be addressed by the statement which have not already been addressed.
- 3.2. The NPPG also recognises that “*The level of cooperation detailed in the statement is expected to be proportionate to the matters being addressed. The statement is expected to be concise and is not intended to document every occasion that strategic policy-making authorities meet, consult with each other, or for example, contact prescribed bodies under*

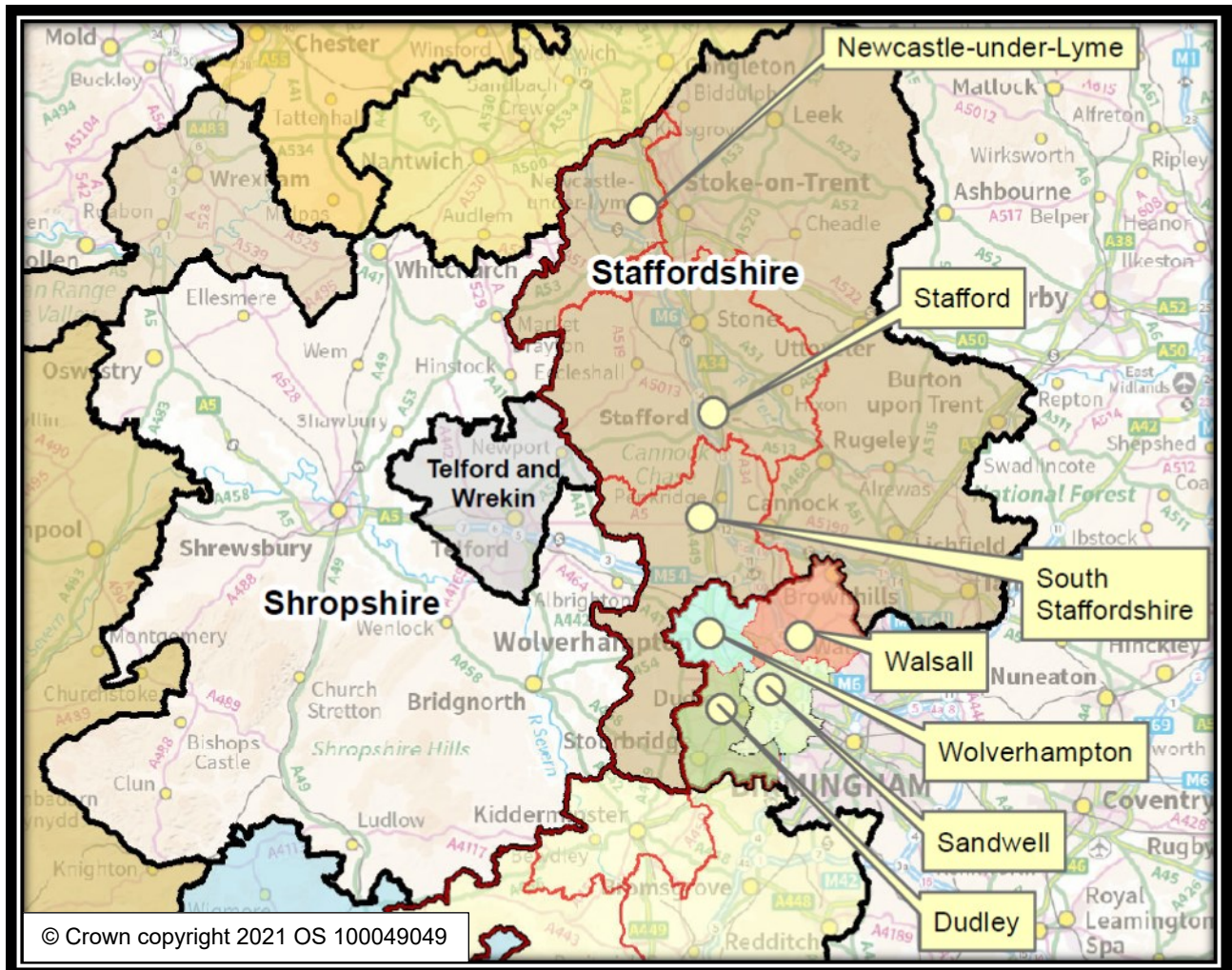
¹ MHCLG, (2019), NPPF – Paragraph 24

² MHCLG, (2019), NPPF – Paragraph 26

the duty to cooperate. The statement is a means of detailing key information, providing clear signposting or links to available evidence on authorities' websites"³.

4. Relevant Local Authorities and Geography

- 4.1. This SoCG has been prepared jointly by Shropshire Council and Stafford Borough Council. As neighbouring Local Planning Authorities, it is important that effective duty to cooperate discussions are undertaken regarding strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries.
- 4.2. The below map illustrates the location of Shropshire Council and Stafford Borough Council:



5. Duty to Cooperate

Shropshire Council Local Plan Review

- 5.1. The Shropshire Local Plan currently comprises the Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and the Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (adopted 2015), together with adopted formal Neighbourhood Plans. On completion of the review process, the Core Strategy and SAMDev Plan documents will be replaced by the 'Shropshire Local

³ MHCLG, (2019), NPPG – Plan Making, Paragraph: 011 Reference ID: 61-011-20190315

Plan' (2016-2038) document (with the exception of any saved policies), supported by any adopted formal Neighbourhood Plans.

- 5.2. The Shropshire Local Plan will include strategic and detailed policies, together with site allocations for a Plan period 2016 to 2038.
- 5.3. There has been ongoing and active engagement between Shropshire Council and Stafford Borough Council throughout the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review. Specifically:
 - Duty to Cooperate discussions have occurred at appropriate times during the Local Plan Review process.
 - Stafford Borough Council have been consulted during the various 'Regulation 18' Consultations undertaken to inform the Shropshire Local Plan Review. The Local Plan Review consultation periods thus far are as follows:
 - Issues and Strategic Options Consultation – 23rd January 2017 to 20th March 2017.
 - Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development Consultation – 27th October 2017 to 22nd December 2017.
 - Preferred Sites Consultation – 29th November 2018 to 8th February 2019.
 - Strategic Sites Consultation – 1st July 2019 to 9th September 2019.
 - Regulation 18: Pre-Submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan – 3rd August 2020 – 30th September 2020.
 - Stafford Borough Council were also consulted as part of the 'Regulation 19' Consultation undertaken to inform the Shropshire Local Plan Review.
 - Duty to Cooperate discussions will continue at appropriate times as the Local Plan Review progresses.

Stafford Borough Council Local Plan

- 5.4 Stafford Borough Council adopted the Plan for Stafford Borough (Part 1) in June 2014, with Part 2 adopted in January 2017, covering the period 2011 to 2031. In July 2017 the Council commenced the New Local Plan process to cover the period 2020 to 2040, with a Scoping the Issues stage taking place in June & July 2018 followed by the Issues & Options consultation stage in February to April 2020. The most recent Stafford Borough Local Development Scheme was published in September 2019.

6. Key Strategic Matters

Housing Market Areas

- 6.1. The Shropshire Council area is considered to represent a self-contained housing market area (HMA).
- 6.2. Similarly the Stafford Borough Council area comprises its own Housing Market Area although there are overlapping HMAs and strong migration links to the north and south.
- 6.3. However, it is acknowledged that the duty to cooperate is not restricted to just Local Planning Authorities within the same HMA. As such both Local Authorities continue to liaise closely in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate.

Housing Need and Requirement: Shropshire Council

- 6.4. Using Government's standard methodology, in 2020, Shropshire Council calculated a Local Housing Need (LHN) which applies to both the Local Planning Authority area and

the Shropshire Council housing market area of some 1,177 dwellings per annum (equating to 25,894 dwellings over the 22 year plan period from 2016-2038). The assessment of need will be kept under review. Shropshire Council is proposing to meet the entirety of its LHN.

- 6.5. Shropshire Council currently understands that evidence prepared to inform the Local Plan Review being undertaken for the Association of Black Country Authorities (ABCA) indicates a significant unmet housing and employment land need within the Black Country, which forms part of the GBBCHMA, although the exact extent of these unmet has not yet been fully quantified through the Black Country's plan review. However, the NPPF is clear that strategic cross-boundary matters should be "dealt with rather than deferred", so as a result of Duty to Cooperate discussions with ABCA, Shropshire Council is proposing to contribute towards meeting unmet housing and employment land needs understood to be arising in the Black Country. Specifically, Shropshire Council is proposing to contribute around 1,500 dwellings and around 30ha of employment land towards unmet needs arising in the Black Country. Rather than identifying specific sites to achieve these contributions, they will form part of the wider housing and employment land requirements for Shropshire.

Housing Need and Requirement: Stafford Borough Council

- 6.6 The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough makes provision for an average annual development of 500 dwellings up to the year 2031 in accordance with the objectively assessed need for housing identified for the Borough in the 2012 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Housing growth is focussed at Stafford and Stone on large-scale Strategic Development Locations as well as being delivered across a number of Key Service Villages. Since 2011 a total of 5,651 new homes have been completed with 2,683 having planning consent. Stafford Borough currently has more than a 5 year supply of housing land.
- 6.7 Based on the Government's standard methodology, in December 2020, Stafford Borough Council has a Local Housing Need (LHN) of 400 dwellings per annum, with the assessment of need being kept under review. Stafford Borough Council is anticipating to meet the entirety of its LHN through the Stafford Borough New Local Plan 2020-2040.

Green Belt: Shropshire Council

- 6.6. In order to achieve a sustainable pattern of development, Shropshire Council is proposing to accommodate development in such a way that helps make more sustainable, balanced, vibrant, resilient and self-reliant places in which to live and work. Specifically, the Local Plan Review intends to direct the majority of new development towards the larger settlements with the most extensive range of services, facilities and infrastructure to support it. However, it also allows for appropriate levels of development within rural areas, to support the longer-term sustainability of rural communities.
- 6.7. The eastern part of Shropshire is located within the West Midlands Green Belt. To inform the ongoing Local Plan Review, Shropshire Council has undertaken a Green Belt review. Whilst most additional development is proposed in locations outside the Green Belt, the strategic economic importance of the eastern part of the County, particularly the M54/A5 corridor, is a significant consideration. Impacts on longer term sustainability of Green Belt settlements due to constraints on their ability to meet their local development requirements have also been identified. There is also a need to facilitate the long-term sustainability of the occupiers of the RAF Cosford site, including the Midlands Air

Ambulance Charity. As such a level of Green Belt release is proposed within the ongoing Local Plan Review.

- 6.8. As required by the NPPF, Shropshire Council has explored with Stafford Borough Council their ability to accommodate Green Belt development requirements, particularly those relating to the sustainable growth requirements of specific settlements. This has been formalised in a written communication sent on the 27th February 2020 which asked whether with Stafford Borough Council could assist in meeting the identified development needs for: Bridgnorth; Albrighton; Shifnal; Alveley; and RAF Cosford.
- 6.9. In a response dated 16th March 2020, Stafford Borough Council have indicated that given the limited functional linkages between the areas, reflected by the low levels of inter-commuting, they are not in a position to accept any of Shropshire's housing need from the eastern side of Shropshire and are therefore not able to meet these identified Green Belt development requirements.

Green Belt: Stafford Borough Council

- 6.10. The adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 (June 2014) identifies the Green Belt boundaries for the Borough, located to the north of Stone forming part of the North Staffordshire Green Belt area and south east of Stafford as part of the West Midlands Green Belt area. As there is sufficient land to serve the development needs of Stafford Borough outside of these Green Belt areas no safeguarded land or boundary changes have been identified. However Policy E5 does identify Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt at Hadleigh Park, Moorfields Industrial Estate and the former Meaford Power Station site where employment uses are supported on previously developed areas

7. Other Strategic Matters

Gypsies and Travellers: Shropshire Council

- 7.1. Shropshire Council has finalised an updated Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessment (GTAA 2019). The updated GTAA refines the previously published GTAA (2017) by updating site information and considering public site management data to better understand and evidence site capacity and pitch turnover. Unauthorised encampment activity is also considered.
- 7.2. The evidence concludes that there is no current strategic requirement for allocation. However, the need to provide a permanent plot for Travelling Showpeople resident on a temporary site in Shropshire and potentially for public transit capacity to support private provision are identified. These requirements are proposed to be directly addressed by the Council, with a planning application for a travelling show persons site currently under consideration. In addition to the intended direct provision, policies within the ongoing Local Plan Review will facilitate the ongoing delivery of sites to meet arising needs. Shropshire thus intends on addressing its own needs for gypsy and traveller provision. There are no significant cross boundary strategic issues identified.

Minerals and Waste

- 7.3. Shropshire Council is engaging separately with Staffordshire County Council as the Mineral and Waste Authority for Staffordshire.

Neighbourhood Planning

7.4. No significant cross boundary issues identified.

8. Matters of Agreement

8.1. Shropshire Council and Stafford Borough council intend to meet their identified LHN within their Local Authority area.

8.2. Shropshire Council has explored with Stafford Borough Council their ability to sustainably accommodate the development requirements associated with specific settlements/sites within the Green Belt in Shropshire. Following these discussions which were formalised in a written communication sent 27th February 2020, Stafford Borough Council have confirmed they are not in a position to be able to meet these identified Green Belt development requirements.

9. Matters of Disagreement

9.1. There are no matters that Shropshire Council and Stafford Borough Council disagree on.

10. Governance Arrangements

10.1. Governance arrangements are key to ensure that effective duty to cooperate discussions are undertaken and an appropriate SoCG prepared.

10.2. Updating of this SoCG will be linked to key milestones within the Local Plan process for the Local Planning Authorities involved.

11. Conclusions

11.1. The parties agree that:

- i) Shropshire Council has fulfilled its Duty to Cooperate with Stafford Borough Council.
- ii) The parties will continue to work positively together and where relevant with other prescribed bodies on strategic cross boundary issues.

12. Signatories

12.1. This SoCG has been agreed and signed by the following:

Shropshire Council	Stafford Borough Council
Name: Edward West	Name: Karen Tierney
Position: Planning Policy and Strategy Manager	Position: Head of Development
Date agreed: 25/05/2021	Date agreed: 28/05/2021
Signature:	Signature: