

# Statement of Common Ground between Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council

**Date: August 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*”<sup>1</sup>.
- 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*”<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been produced to support the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review. It sets out how Shropshire Council has engaged with Telford & Wrekin Council 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 the duty to cooperate. The statement is a means of detailing key information, providing clear signposting or links to available evidence on authorities’ websites*”<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> MHCLG, (2019), NPPF – Paragraph 24

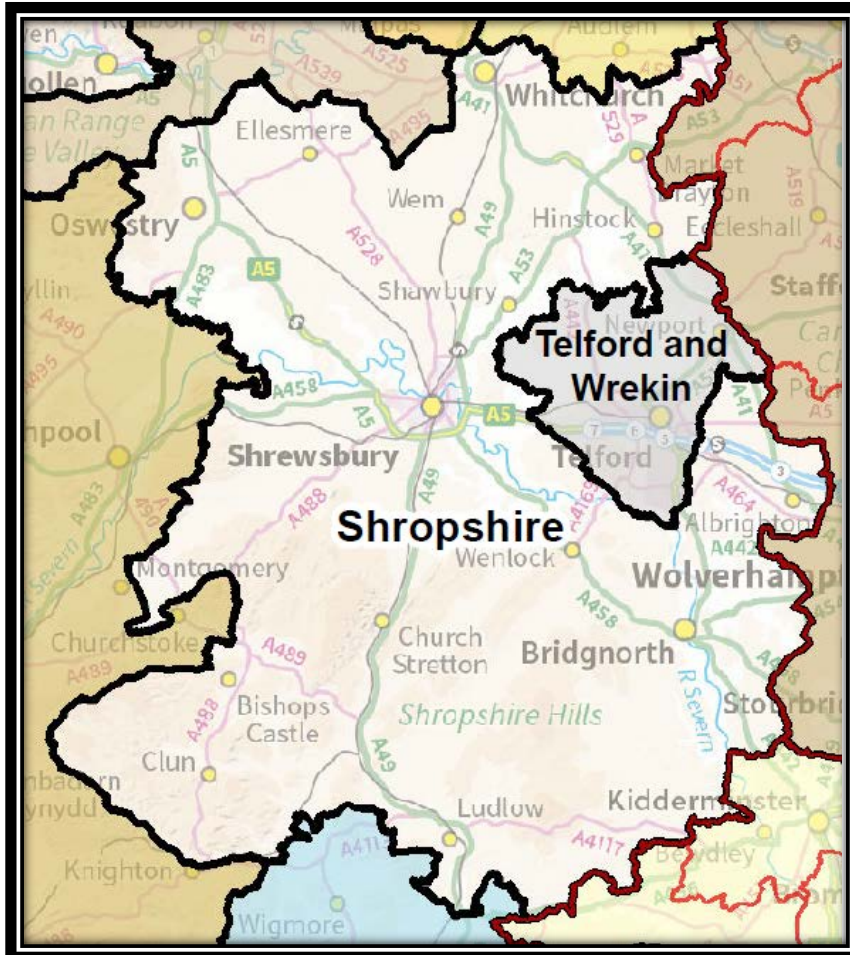
<sup>2</sup> MHCLG, (2019), NPPF – Paragraph 26

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

## 4. Relevant Local Authorities and Geography

- 4.1. This SoCG has been prepared jointly by Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council. The two Local Planning Authorities are located within the County of Shropshire and between them cover the entirety of the County.
- 4.2. Figure 1 illustrates the location of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council:

**Figure 1: Map of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council**



- 4.3. As neighbouring Local Planning Authorities, it is important that effective duty to cooperate discussions are undertaken regarding strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries.
- 4.4. Shropshire Council commenced a review of its Local Plan in 2017. The Council is now at an advanced stage of this review, having undertaken a number of stages of Regulation 18 Consultation and having recently completed its Regulation 19 Consultation.
- 4.5. Telford & Wrekin Council commenced a review of its Local Plan in 2020. However, the Council recently determined to pause this review in order to consider the details of any changes and the impact this may have on the review process, resulting from Government's stated intention to bring forward new legislation that will change the planning system scheduled for the autumn of 2021.
- 4.6. As such, given the respective timescales for the preparation of Local Plan Reviews, this SoCG focuses on those issues relevant to the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review. A separate SoCG will be prepared regarding the issues relevant to the Telford & Wrekin Council Local Plan Review at an appropriate time in its preparation process. However, duty to cooperate discussions will continue as and when both Local Plan Reviews progress.

## 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 a single Local Plan document (with the exception of any saved policies), supported by any adopted formal Neighbourhood Plans.
- 5.2. The new 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 Telford & Wrekin Council throughout the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review. Specifically:
  - Duty to Cooperate discussions have occurred at appropriate times during the Local Plan Review process.
  - Telford & Wrekin Council have been consulted during the various ‘Regulation 18’ Consultations undertaken to inform the Shropshire Local Plan Review. These are as follows:
    - Issues and Strategic Options Consultation – 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2017 to 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017.
    - Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development Consultation – 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017 to 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2017.
    - Preferred Sites Consultation – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018 to 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019.
    - Strategic Sites Consultation – 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 to 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019.
    - Regulation 18: Pre-Submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan – 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
  - Telford & Wrekin 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.

## 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, Telford & Wrekin Council area is considered to represent a self-contained HMA.
- 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**

- 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.

- 6.5. Shropshire's proposed development strategy seeks to support a sustainable pattern of future growth across Shropshire over the Plan period. Key aspects of its strategy for growth include delivery of around 30,800 new dwellings and around 300ha of employment land over the period from 2016-2036 and achieving a sustainable and appropriate pattern of development which also maximises investment opportunities, new development will be focused in the urban areas including Shrewsbury, the Principal/Key Centres and the new Strategic Settlements. Recognising the rurality of much of Shropshire and the importance of ensuring the long-term sustainability of rural communities, growth in urban areas will be complemented by appropriate new development within Community Hubs, which are considered significant rural service centres; and to a lesser extent Community Clusters, which consist of settlements with aspirations to maintain or enhance their sustainability.
- 6.6. In summary, within the ongoing Local Plan Review, Shropshire Council is proposing to meet the entirety of its LHN.
- 6.7. There is no identified unmet housing need arising within the Telford & Wrekin Council area.

### **Green Belt: Shropshire Council**

- 6.8. 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 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.
- 6.9. 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.
- 6.10. As required by the NPPF, Shropshire Council has explored with Telford & Wrekin 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 27th February 2020 which asked whether Telford & Wrekin Council could assist in meeting the identified development needs for: Bridgnorth; Albrighton; Shifnal; Alveley; and RAF Cosford.
- 6.11. Telford & Wrekin Council have not indicated that they are able to meet these identified Green Belt development requirements.

## 7. Other Strategic Matters

### The M54/A5 Strategic Corridor

- 7.1. Both Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council recognise the strategic significance of the M54/A5 corridor. This corridor:
  - Provides strategic links between the Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council areas.
  - Provides strategic links from Shropshire (Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council areas) into the wider West Midlands region.
  - Offers strategic employment and investment opportunities.
- 7.2. Both Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council support appropriate development of the strategic corridor and acknowledge the need for proportional infrastructure contributions from development sites, recognising the cumulative impact of such development.
- 7.3. Where Shropshire Council is proposing significant development on the M54/A5 Strategic Corridor, proposed site guidelines include the need to undertake appropriate Transport Assessments. Furthermore, for clarity, a minor modification is proposed to draft Policy DP28 to state *"...unless agreed otherwise with Shropshire Council, a Transport Assessment will be undertaken for relevant site allocations in this Local Plan, the scope of which will be agreed through site specific pre-application consultation with Highways England."*
- 7.4. Shropshire Council has proactively engaged with Highways England, including in relation to development proposals and implications for the M54/A5 corridor, as part of the Duty to Cooperate and is in the process of preparing a SoCG.

### Water

- 7.5. The River Severn runs through both the Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council areas, in addition to numerous other Local Authorities. Both Local Authorities support the concept of taking a strategic view of flood and water resource management along the River Severn.
- 7.6. As such, both Local Authorities are part of the newly formed River Severn Partnership (RSP). The RSP aims to make the Severn, Wye, Warwickshire Avon and Teme the most vibrant and resilient river network, where an exceptional quality of life, prosperous local economies and an outstanding natural environment is driven by a programme of innovation to reduce flood risk, secure future water resources and improve and deliver shared natural assets.
- 7.7. To achieve this aim, the partnership will look to help people, businesses and the environment along the River Severn to be prepared for and resilient to the impacts of climate change, across an area which covers the Rivers Severn, Teme, Warwickshire Avon and Wye. Proposals to achieve this include options for flood risk management, improving water quality, environmental enhancement and developing an integrated approach to water resource storage and management.
- 7.8. A Water Cycle Study has been undertaken to inform the Shropshire Local Plan Review. With regard to water supply infrastructure, it explains that Severn Trent have stated that *"as long as a site is within a water resource zone with sufficient water resources, they do not envisage a problem with supply to that site. An exception to this are the sites around Albrighton, Shifnal and the strategic site at RAF Cosford. In these locations water may need to be transferred into the catchment to serve these sites without increasing local*

*abstraction.*” Shropshire Council has proposed a policy on water efficiency (DP20) within the draft Shropshire Local Plan, this states that:

*“All new development will be expected to minimise the use of water to reduce environmental degradation, increase sustainability and mitigate the effects of climate change in line with Policy SP3. To achieve this:*

- 1. New housing will be expected to meet the Building Regulations’ 110 litres per person per day standard for water, as recommended by the Shropshire Water Cycle Study. Proposals not meeting this standard must demonstrate how and why it cannot be attained.*
- 2. Non-domestic buildings will be expected to reach ‘Good’ BREEAM status or equivalent status within an alternative assessment endorsed by Shropshire Council, for water efficiency as a minimum, unless it can be demonstrated that this would make the development unviable.*
- 3. Major development schemes will be expected to provide a programme of water efficiency promotion and consumer education, as part of the new development with the aim of bringing about behavioural change with regards to water use.”*

- 7.9. Furthermore, Shropshire Council has proactively engaged with and now completed a SoCG with Severn Trent Water (STW). With regard to water supply infrastructure this concludes that STW agrees to *“Undertake network modelling where appropriate as part of the planning application process to ensure adequate provision of water supply is feasible”*. Shropshire Council and developers will *“engage early with STW in the development management process to ensure infrastructure is in place prior to occupation”*.

### **The Former Ironbridge Power Station**

- 7.10. The majority of the preferred Former Ironbridge Power Station Strategic Settlement is located within the Shropshire Council area, however a small portion of the site including the access onto Buildwas Road is located within the Telford & Wrekin Council area.
- 7.11. It is acknowledged that this development site has cross-boundary implications, however this site is currently the subject of a Planning Application and these will be addressed through the ongoing Planning Application process.

### **Development Proposals and Cross-Boundary Infrastructure**

- 7.12. Draft Policy DP25 of the draft Shropshire Local Plan addresses infrastructure provision and applies to all development proposals, including those on proposed site allocations. This draft Policy includes *“New development should only take place where there is sufficient existing infrastructure capacity available. Where a new development would lead to a shortfall in infrastructure provision, the development will be required to fund necessary improvements through a suitable developer contribution, unless the identified shortfall is being addressed by other means.”*
- 7.13. For clarity a minor modification is proposed to the explanation of draft Policy DP25 regarding cross-boundary CIL spend, stating *“It should be noted that consistent with the national CIL Regulations (as amended), CIL funds may be passed to bodies outside the area to deliver infrastructure that will benefit the development of the area.”*

### **Minerals**

- 7.14. Increasing rates of housing and employment development have strengthened the demand for construction aggregates within Shropshire and in the adjacent areas which it supplies.
- 7.15. Despite increased demand, sufficient crushed rock aggregate resources are already available from permitted sites in the Shropshire Council area. Furthermore, the availability

of sand and gravel resources remains well above the minimum guideline and the adopted Local Plan (SAMDev Plan) included allocations which provide for additional capacity. No additional site allocations for either crushed rock or sand and gravel provision are therefore proposed as part of the ongoing Shropshire Local Plan Review. However, Development Management policies will continue to provide for the consideration of 'windfall' sites or site extensions.

- 7.16. There are no strategic cross-boundary considerations for the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review.

## **Waste**

- 7.17. A waste transfer and energy recovery facility is located in Shrewsbury. Shropshire Council supports the development of a circular economy where the active recovery of material resources and energy from waste helps reduce environmental and financial costs and fosters business growth opportunities. The County performs well against national waste management targets and has sufficient existing capacity, including the land resources, to meet its future needs. No further specific provision is therefore planned for waste management infrastructure as part of the Shropshire Local Plan Review. To accommodate any future demand arising in the Shropshire Council area, suitable land will continue to be provided for these purposes as part of the employment land supply.
- 7.18. There are no strategic cross-boundary considerations for the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review.

## **Gypsies and Travellers**

- 7.19. Shropshire Council 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.
- 7.20. 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 Council thus intends on addressing its own needs for gypsy and traveller provision.
- 7.21. There are no strategic cross-boundary considerations for the Shropshire Council Local Plan Review.

## **Cross Boundary Infrastructure**

- 7.22. Shropshire Council has proactively engaged with Highways England, including in relation to development proposals and implications for the M54/A5 corridor, as part of the Duty to Cooperate and through consultation on the various iterations of the Local Plan Review process. Shropshire Council supports a proportionate approach to evidence collection, in line with the NPPF and the general view on evidence collection promoted by Highways England in discussions to date. Telford and Wrekin Council would like to highlight the apparent inconsistency in the approach of Highways England in their discussions with Shropshire Council regarding the need for additional evidence base to support proposed development in the vicinity of Junction 4 on the M54, with particular regard to the potential

cumulative impact of development in Shifnal. Shropshire Council maintains that the level of net growth proposed in Shifnal to 2038 is moderate over the course of the remainder of the Plan period, equating to on average 17 dwellings per year 2020-2038 and net 15.6 hectares of employment land, and that further highway modelling at the Plan making stage would be disproportionate

- 7.23. Telford & Wrekin Council would like to highlight that the growth of Telford, in Shropshire to the east of Telford along the M54 corridor and to the east of Shropshire as a whole, may have an impact on hospital services in particular the need for A&E provision at Princess Royal Hospital. The Council would like to ensure that planned levels of growth in the emerging Shropshire Local Plan and Telford & Wrekin Local Plan have been considered as part of the hospital reconfiguration plans. Shropshire Council have consulted with both the NHS/Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group on a number of occasions and share planned levels of growth.

### **Accepted Unmet Need from Other Local Planning Authorities**

- 7.24. 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 Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (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.

## **8. Matters of Agreement**

- 8.1. All above matters are agreed between Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council.

## **9. Matters of Disagreement**

- 9.1. There are no matters of disagreement between Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council.

## **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 Shropshire Local Plan Review process.

## **11. Conclusions**

- 11.1. The parties agree that:
- i) Shropshire Council has fulfilled its Duty to Cooperate with Telford & Wrekin 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:

**Figure 2: Signatories**

<b>Shropshire Council</b>	<b>Telford &amp; Wrekin Council</b>
Name: Edward West  Position: Planning Policy and Strategy Manager  Date agreed: 31 August 2021    Signature: _____	Name: Gavin Ashford  Position: Strategic Planning Team Leader  Date agreed: 27 August 2021    Signature: _____