

Statement of Common Ground  
between Shropshire Council and  
South Staffordshire District Council  
South Staffordshire Local Plan 2023-  
2041

Position at November 2024

## Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between South Staffordshire District Council (SSDC) & Shropshire Council (SC)

### Introduction

1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by South Staffordshire District Council (SSDC) and Shropshire Council (SC), hereafter referred to as “the parties” to inform the submission of the South Staffordshire Local Plan 2023-2041.
2. This SoCG has been prepared in accordance with national guidance and is intended to cover matters of strategic importance relevant to the parties. It documents those matters agreed by the parties regarding the South Staffordshire Local Plan 2023-2041 and any areas which remain subject to further discussion and therefore will be updated accordingly. This Statement of Common Ground covers the following matters:
  - Housing;
  - Employment land;
  - Transport and infrastructure matters;
  - Gypsy and traveller accommodation; and
  - Natural and historic environment including designated sites.

### Geography covered by Statement of Common Ground

3. This SoCG covers the Local Planning Authority areas of South Staffordshire District and Shropshire Council.

### Key Strategic Matters

4. The local authorities have had positive, constructive and on-going dialogue on cross-boundary planning issues over the course of many years, discussing a broad range of planning issues including strategic matters. The parties have already entered into a Statement of Common Ground to inform the submission of the draft Shropshire Local Plan (2016-2038) which is currently at Examination. The key strategic matters included within this Statement of Common Ground are; housing provision; employment land; transport and wider infrastructure matters; gypsy and traveller accommodation; and matters relating to the natural and historic environment including designated sites.
5. The following issues are considered to be the key strategic matters with regards to on-going plan making, although there are other issues which may have cross boundary impacts. Both authorities are committed to further dialogue moving forward, not just limited to the periods of plan preparation.

## Housing

6. SC and SSDC are within separate housing market areas (HMAs). Although SC are not within the GBBCHMA<sup>1</sup> they are members of the Technical Officers Group as a related planning authority. SSDC is party to the 2022 GBBCHMA Development Needs Group Statement of Common Ground, which seeks to provide a programme of work and governance structure to address emerging housing shortfalls forecast to arise within the GBBCHMA.
7. No other housing related cross-boundary issues have been identified.

## Employment

8. SSDC and SC are within separate functional economic market areas (FEMAs) but continue to work together collaboratively as part of GBBCHMA Technical Officers Group.

## Cross boundary transport impacts

9. SSDC and SC are committed to continue working together in partnership, alongside their respective highways authorities, with the aim of ensuring the necessary transport and highways improvements are implemented to support sustainable growth across both authorities. SSDC is proposing four strategic housing site allocations, however none are within close proximity to the Shropshire administrative area. No other cross-boundary transport issues have been identified.

## Infrastructure

10. SSDC and SC will work together where required, with the aim of ensuring the necessary infrastructure improvements are delivered to support sustainable growth across both administrative areas.
11. Necessary infrastructure (including school places) will be delivered within South Staffordshire. Therefore, no cross-boundary infrastructure issues have been identified.

## Gypsy & Traveller Provision

12. SSDC has identified a 162 pitch need for Gypsy and Traveller households in South Staffordshire over the proposed local plan period, including 92 pitches within the first 5 year period<sup>2</sup>.
13. SSDC considers that latest evidence from Council's Gypsy and Traveller evidence base indicates that all suitable sites (including Green Belt options) which have capacity to reduce this shortfall have been maximised. It also indicates that all public land options in the District (including Green Belt options) have been explored for their potential to provide **new** public

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<sup>1</sup> The GBBCHMA is made up of 14 authorities including Birmingham City Council, Bromsgrove District Council, Cannock Chase District Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Redditch Borough Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, South Staffordshire District Council, Stratford upon Avon District Council, Tamworth Borough Council, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and Wolverhampton City Council

<sup>2</sup> South Staffordshire Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment - Final Report 2024

site options which could address specific families' needs and thereby reduce the shortfall. Despite these efforts, SSDC consider they can only deliver 37 pitches within the plan period on sites which would address its unmet pitch needs. This leaves a very significant shortfall, even against the District's 5 year pitch need, which is a strategic cross-boundary issue to be discussed with adjacent authorities and other authorities within the same HMA.

14. SC has not assessed SSDC's evidence on Gypsy and Traveller Needs, and reserve the right to comment on this as part of future consultations into the South Staffordshire Local Plan. However, SC would note that the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) includes a particular emphasis on the potential for private provision to meet need, which should be considered in full. This need was formally identified in evidence published after the submission of the Shropshire Local Plan for Examination in September 2021. SC and SSDC have an established agreed position as of August 2021 on this issue as part of the SoCG that has informed the draft Shropshire Local Plan. This acknowledged that whilst no strategic cross-boundary matter had been identified in relation to gypsy and traveller needs arising in the South Staffordshire District Council area, that updated evidence on this issue would be prepared by SSDC to inform their ongoing Local Plan review. This also agreed that in the event that this emerging evidence identified a need which SSDC considered could not be accommodated within the SSDC administrative area, that due to the advanced stage of the Shropshire Local Plan preparation this would form part of duty to cooperate discussions with respect to a future Local Plan review process in Shropshire.
15. Following on from the publication of SSDC's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) in late 2021, SSDC wrote to all HMA and neighbouring authorities in January 2022 setting out the extent of the potential pitch shortfall that they consider is likely to exist, despite the Council's efforts to maximise all suitable and deliverable sites (including within the Green Belt) which would address the unmet need. This letter then requested these authorities to examine their ability to contribute to its unmet pitch needs, specifically in the form of the potential for extra supply on publicly run sites where pitches could be ensured for the families in need within SSDC.
16. SSDC then wrote again to these same authorities in August 2022, providing an update on extra efforts that they had made to identify new public sites within the District upon Staffordshire County Council land. This letter communicated that SSDC consider that a significant shortfall still remained and that SSDC consider they require assistance in addressing its unmet pitch needs through new or expanded publicly run sites. In August 2023 work began on an update to SSDC's GTAA to assess need over the updated plan period to 2041, and neighbouring authorities were advised of this in a further letter in October 2023.
17. SC's most recent response to the August 2022 correspondence confirmed their previous January 2022 position that Shropshire would not be able to accommodate any identified unmet Gypsy and Traveller needs from South Staffordshire, due to a notable mismatch in both timing of our Local Plan preparation cycles, as agreed in the SoCG agreed between the parties to inform the Shropshire Local Plan (referred to in Para 14 above), and having regard to the geography of Shropshire's gypsy and traveller provision and main areas of demand. SC confirmed it is seeking to address the needs identified within its own GTAA, but based upon this evidence are not proposing to allocate specific sites for this purpose in the emerging Shropshire Local Plan. SC has confirmed that given the advanced stage of its own Plan making, that it has not investigated the potential for any new additional public sites to be created as part of wider allocations beyond that already identified within its Plan as part of

its current Plan review cycle. Both parties agree that this is an issue which can be reviewed further as part of future Plan review cycles if required.

## Natural Environment

18. SSSDC and SC are committed to continue working together in respect of matters relating to the natural environment where these are applicable to the authorities.
19. No cross-boundary issues have been identified.

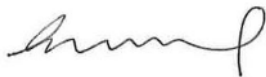
## Signatures

We confirm that the information in this Statement of Common Ground reflects the joint working to address identified strategic matters that has been undertaken between South Staffordshire District Council and Shropshire Council. The authorities will continue to work together to address cross-boundary issues on an ongoing basis.

### South Staffordshire District Council

**Name: Kelly Harris**

**Position: Lead Planning Manager**



**Signature:**

**Date: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

### Shropshire Council

**Name: Eddie West**

**Position: Planning Policy and Strategy Manager**



**Signature:**

**Date: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024**