

Statement of Common Ground
between Telford and Wrekin
Council and South Staffordshire
District Council

South Staffordshire Local Plan 2023-
2041

Position at October 2024

Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between South Staffordshire District Council (SSDC) & Telford and Wrekin Council (T&WC)

Introduction

1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by South Staffordshire District Council (SSDC) and Telford and Wrekin Council (T&WC), 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 environment.

Geography covered by Statement of Common Ground

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

Key Strategic Matters

4. The local authorities have had 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 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. These discussions have informed the development of adopted plans and other related documents.
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. SSDC and T&WC are within separate housing market areas (HMAs). Although T&WC are not within the GBBCHMA¹ they attend the Technical Officers Group in an observation capacity as a neighbouring planning authority. SSDC is party to the emerging 2022 GBBCHMA Development Needs Group Statement of Common Ground, which seeks to provide a programme of work and governance structure to address the housing shortfalls arising from the HMA.
7. No other housing related cross-boundary issues have been identified.

Employment

8. SSDC and T&WC are within separate functional economic market areas but continue to work together collaboratively to monitor any cross boundary employment issues.

Cross boundary transport impacts

9. SSDC and T&WC 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. This includes the shared ambition for the electrification of the Shrewsbury – Telford – Wolverhampton Rail Line. SSDC's are proposing two strategic housing site allocations, however none are within close proximity to the Telford and Wrekin administrative area. Both SSDC & T&WC support the proposals for the new M6 north junction connection as which will improve connectivity with the M54 and connections to the North West in general. No other cross-boundary transport issues have been identified.

Infrastructure

10. SSDC and T&WC 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 by the parties. Therefore, no cross-boundary infrastructure issues have been identified.

¹ 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
South Staffordshire EDNA 2020-2040 defines the South Staffordshire FEMA as Wolverhampton City Council, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Cannock Chase District Council, Stafford Borough Council

Gypsy & Traveller Provision

12. SSDC has an identified a 162 pitch need for Gypsy and Traveller households in South Staffordshire over the local plan period, including 92 pitches within the first 5 year period². 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 site options which could address specific families' needs and thereby reduce the shortfall. Despite these efforts, SSDC 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 housing market area.
13. SSDC has written to all adjacent and housing market area authorities on multiple occasions during the plan preparation regarding the potential shortfall in Gypsy and Traveller pitch needs within the District. 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 pitch shortfall, 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 authorities examine their ability to contribute to its unmet pitch needs, specifically in the form of extra supply on publicly run sites where pitches could be ensured for the families in need within SSDC. It then wrote again to these same authorities in August 2022, providing an update on extra efforts that SSDC had made to identify new public sites within the District upon Staffordshire County Council land. Despite these efforts, the letter communicated that a significant shortfall still remained and that SSDC required assistance in addressing its unmet pitch needs through new or expanded publicly run sites. In August 2023 work began on an update to SSDCs 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.
14. SSDC wrote to T&WC in January 2022 and then in August 2022 asking for assistance in meeting the unmet need for pitches within South Staffordshire. T&WC have subsequently confirmed that their emerging Gypsy and Traveller evidence base indicates that they will have a need for pitch provision that will need to be addressed over the period of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan Review. In T&WC's view, as the Council have their own existing shortfall in pitches to prioritise, the position with the emerging Telford & Wrekin Local Plan means it is not possible for T&WC to accommodate any unmet need. SSDC will review T&WC's approach to meeting the needs of gypsy's and travellers when further details are published as part of T&WC's emerging Local Plan

Natural Environment

15. SSDC and T&WC are committed to continue working together in respect of matters relating to the natural environment where these are applicable to the authorities.
16. No cross-boundary issues have been identified.

² South Staffordshire Council Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment - Final Report 2024

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 Telford and Wrekin 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: 07/11/2024

Telford and Wrekin Council

Name: Gavin Ashford

Position: Group Manager – Strategic Planning, Inward Investment & Business Support

Signature:



Date: 07/11/24