

Appendix 15: Present Duty to Co-operate Actions with Watford Borough Council



Appendix 14. 2024 – Present Duty to Co-operate Chronology with Watford Borough Council

17/10/2025 - Email from HBC	Initial request for Duty to Co-operate
20/10/2025 - Email from WBC	Response from WBC to initial D2C email
28/10/2025 - Email from HBC	Proposed meeting for duty to co-operate
29/10/2025 - Email from HBC	Confirmation of reschedule of meeting
30/10/2025 - Email from HBC	Reschedule of the meeting
03/11/2025 - Email from WBC	Confirmation of time
03/11/2025 - Email from HBC	Reschedule of meeting
06/11/2025 - Email from HBC	Circulation of meeting link for 21_11_2025
20/11/2025 - Email from HBC	Circulation of Agenda
21/11/2025 - Email from WBC	Previous SOCG signed between WBC and HBC

Hertsmere Initial Duty to Co-operate Meeting with St Albans District Council, Three Rivers District Council, Watford Borough Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

21 November 2025, 12:02pm

Attendees:

- Planning Policy Officer, Hertsmere
- Planning Policy Team Leader, Hertsmere
- Planning Strategy & Implementation Manager, Hertsmere
- Spatial Planning Manager, St Albans
- Head of Planning Policy & Conservation, Three Rivers
- Place Shaping Lead, Watford
- Planning Policy Officer, Welwyn Hatfield
- Senior Planning Policy Officer, Welwyn Hatfield

Purpose of Meeting

- Ensure legal compliance with Duty to Co-operate (DtC) for Hertsmere's emerging Local Plan. The Council are keen to ensure that matters of legal compliance do not derail the future examination.
- Share progress updates in relation to the emerging technical evidence base, and the emerging spatial strategy, planning policies and site allocations.
- Identify strategic cross-boundary issues for Statements of Common Ground (SoCG).
- Build collaborative relationships across Hertfordshire authorities.

Key Updates from Authorities

- **St Albans**
 - At Stage 2 examination hearings; main modifications expected early 2026.
 - Signed SoCG with Hertsmere; cross-boundary issues include Harper Lane and Bowmans Cross.
 - Inspector demanded extensive DtC evidence; clear Green Belt and site selection methodology critical.
- **Three Rivers**
 - Targeting Reg 19 consultation in Feb 2026; timetable very tight.
 - Housing provision at ~75% of standard method; risk of further reduction.

- Will seek legal advice and inspector advisory visit on unmet need.
- **Watford**
 - Adopted Local Plan in Oct 2022; waiting for new NPPF.
 - Preparing for future unitary plan; evidence base outdated.
 - Has SoCG with Hertsmere (Aug 2021).
- **Welwyn Hatfield**
 - Reg 18 consultation planned for Feb 2026; Reg 19 by summer 2026.
 - Tight timetable; Green Belt review and viability work ongoing.
 - Potential cross-boundary site near Little Heath flagged.
- **Hertsmere**
 - Ambitious LDS: submission before end of 2026 under current system.
 - Reg 18 consultation in Q1 2026.
 - Evidence base: AECOM leading 25 studies; AR Urbanism preparing settlement visions.
 - Spatial strategy:
 - Meet housing need in full.
 - Urban intensification, regeneration, taller buildings, windfall sites.
 - Green Belt changes inevitable.
 - Exploring new settlement (long-term, post-year 11 of plan period).

Strategic Issues Identified

- Settlement hierarchy remains broadly unchanged (Borehamwood top tier).
- Green Belt review and site selection methodologies critical for soundness.
- Future boundary changes and approach to plan reviews noted.
- Industrial/employment land diversity: film industry reliance vs. strategic logistics/data centres.
- Water scarcity and flood risk highlighted as emerging issues.

Next Steps

- Share missing SoCGs, historic DtC records, and key evidence documents – Hertsmere is seeking to create a chronology that maps duty to co-operate activities that lead up to and informed current plan-making.
- Where necessary, develop SoCGs with partners covering strategic issues (housing, Green Belt, infrastructure, employment land).
- Monitor Hertfordshire SDS implications and London Plan review.
- Continue bilateral discussions on cross-boundary sites (e.g., Bowmans Cross, Little Heath).

Greenbelt Note for Hertsmere Neighbouring Authorities on settlement classification

Watford

Introduction

On behalf of Hertsmere Borough Council, AECOM is undertaking a Green Belt Assessment (GBA) aimed at identifying grey belt, in line with the Green Belt PPG.

The aim of this note is to explain key aspects of the Hertsmere GBA methodology to allow neighbouring authorities to comment, and if relevant to enable suitable aligned methodologies. The key matter to discuss is the settlement classification.

Settlement classification

With regards to large built up areas (LBUs), we are proposing three of relevance to the study area: Borehamwood, London, Watford. In each case the LBU extends only as far as the Green Belt inset boundary.

With regards to distinguishing between towns and villages, we recognise that there is no accepted definition, and so there is a need to account for locally defined factors. The factors taken into account in our definition included:

- Population (based on Census data available at OA level)
- Settlement hierarchy
- Transport accessibility (including presence of a rail station and its level of connectivity, relationship to strategic and major road networks)
- Education facilities (including presence of primary and secondary schools)
- Wider facilities (including shops, healthcare, leisure, services, etc.)

As rules of thumb, we have been using approximately 5,000 as the population cut-off between a village and a town, and 75,000 as the population cut-off between a town and a LBU. However, some judgement is required depending on the accessibility and services available in the settlement as per the points above.

With regards to historic towns, the previous study identified Watford, Bushey and Radlett. For the purposes of this study, it was found that the historic nature of these settlements was not significant due to lack of adjacency to the Green Belt, and the historic areas not being strongly associated with a landscape setting.

With regards to **Watford**, we are currently intending to categorise Watford as a LBU.

The settlement classification including settlements close to the Hertsmere border is as follows:

Settlement type	Settlement	Relationship to LPA
LBUA	Borehamwood	Wholly within
	Watford	Neighbouring authority (Watford)
	Greater London (including South Oxhey)	Neighbouring authorities (Barnet, Enfield, Harrow, Three Rivers)
Town	Potters Bar	Partly within
	Bushey	Wholly within
	Radlett	Wholly within
	London Colney	Neighbouring authority (St Albans)
Village	Shenley	Wholly within
	Elstree	Wholly within
	South Mimms	Wholly within
	Aldenham (including Wall Hall)	Wholly within
	Letchmore Heath	Wholly within
	Patchetts Green	Wholly within
	Ridge	Wholly within
	Brookmans Park	Neighbouring authority (Welwyn)
	Bricket Wood	Neighbouring authority (St Albans)

Questions for Watford Borough Council

- Do you agree with the classification of the settlements within Watford?

08/12/2025 - Email from WBC	Response to Greenbelt Notes
19/01/2026 - Email from HBC	Proposal of further D2C meeting
20/01/2026 - email from WBC	Confirmation of availability
23/01/2026 - Email from HBC	Request for availability
26/01/2026 - Email from HBC	Further information regarding proposed meeting
26/01/2026 - Email from WBC	Unable to make proposed meeting date
27/01/2026 - Email from HBC	Proposal for new meeting date on 09_02_2026
27/01/2026 - Email from WBC	Confirmation of availability
28/01/2026 - Email from HBC	Circulation of meeting link for 09_02_2026

09_02_2026 Hertsmere Duty to Co-operate meeting with St Albans, Watford, Three Rivers and Welwyn Hatfield

Executive Summary

The Duty to Co-operate meeting (9 February 2026) between Hertsmere, St Albans, Watford, Three Rivers, and Welwyn Hatfield focused on Local Plan updates, early findings from Hertsmere's evidence-base studies, cross-boundary issues, and emerging strategic considerations — including Green Belt, housing delivery, viability, and potential new settlement proposals.

Authorities provided updates on their Local Plan positions, with several facing tight government deadlines, holding directions, or complex adoption/transition processes. Hertsmere presented initial findings from key studies: Settlement Hierarchy, Retail, Viability, and Green Belt (Purposes A & B, and Footnote 7 constraints). These indicate Borehamwood as the main settlement focus; significant leisure and retail constraints; strong viability but delivery challenges; and early identification of areas with potential for release or provisional "grey belt."

The group also discussed housing delivery pressures, market capacity concerns, the impact of the Building Safety Levy, and differing approaches to density and viability expectations. Initial conversations began regarding a potential new settlement (Bowman's Cross), with Hertsmere committing to follow up individually with neighbouring councils.

The meeting closed with agreement to continue sharing evidence as it becomes publishable, maintain collaboration regardless of national changes to the Duty to Co-operate, and hold further targeted discussions on new settlements, HMOs, and Article 4 Directions.

Attendees

(from introductions and interventions in the transcript)

Hertsmere Borough Council

- Planning Policy Officer (Duty to Co-operate lead)
- Planning Policy Team Leader

Three Rivers District Council

- Head of Planning Policy & Conservation

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

- Planning Policy Manager

Watford Borough Council

- Place Shaping Lead

St Albans City & District Council

- Spatial Planning Manager

Actions

For Hertsmere

- Circulate edited PowerPoint slides (excluding sensitive content) and share further technical study outputs as they become publishable.
- Send housing allocation letters to neighbouring authorities.
- Arrange separate discussions with St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield regarding the potential new settlement (Bowman's Cross).
- Email authorities requesting insight on HMOs and Article 4 Directions.
- Continue progressing Regulation 18 consultation for late April, with subsequent quick transition to Regulation 19.

For Partner Authorities (St Albans, Watford, Three Rivers, Welwyn Hatfield)

- Review forthcoming evidence from Hertsmere once provided, including Green Belt, viability, retail and settlement hierarchy studies.
- Engage early with Hertsmere regarding discussions on the potential new settlement, especially impacts on strategic infrastructure and cross-boundary considerations.
- Share any relevant insights on housing delivery challenges, developer behaviour, viability pressures, or approaches to Article 4 for HMOs.

Joint / Ongoing

- Continue Duty to Co-operate engagement regardless of future national policy changes.
- Maintain cross-boundary dialogue on market capacity, delivery constraints, and emerging spatial strategy implications.
- Consider future joint evidence opportunities where appropriate (e.g., Watford's potential joint studies funded by grant review).

10/02/2026 - Email from HBC

Circulation of PowerPoint used in 09_02_2026
D2C meeting

10_02_2026 Letter sent from Hertsmere Borough Council to Watford Borough Council regarding Hertsmere's Unmet Housing need.

I am contacting you in relation to the on-going discharge of the Duty to Co-operate that forms part of Hertsmere's Local Plan-making process. Hertsmere Borough Council (the Council) is already engaging with your organisations, in discharging the requirements of the Duty, in respect of relevant strategic cross boundary matters. It is envisaged that process will continue through the remaining stages of the regulatory process.

This communication is specific to Hertsmere's housing requirement. For the purposes of discharging the requirements of the Duty, this communication identifies the anticipated housing requirement. It confirms that the Council intend to meet the supply and delivery of the housing requirement in full during the forthcoming plan period. Regardless of this objective, Hertsmere's neighbours are invited to state whether they have the capacity to supply and deliver any unmet housing need that may arise during the forthcoming plan period. Responses will be recorded as part of the Duty and reported as necessary. It is anticipated that this will form a necessary part of the future examination in public.

The adopted Hertsmere Local Plan sets out the requirement for housing provision for the Borough between 2012 and 2027. This equates to 266 homes per annum. However, as the adopted plan is now more than five years old, this figure is now out-of-date and no longer applies for plan-making or decision-taking. The figure that must now be used to calculate the Borough's housing requirement is the latest standard method set out in the national planning guidance. Using the standard method leads to a housing requirement of 1,010 additional homes per annum without any buffer applied.

The Housing Delivery Test measurement has shown that the development industry has performed poorly in building-out their consents in the anticipated timely manner – falling below 85% delivery over the three year reporting period. As a consequence, the Borough is subject to the application of the 20% buffer on the five year housing supply. Annualised, this equates to 1,212 additional homes per annum, which will apply for as long as delivery performance remains below 85% over a three year period. Once delivery exceeds 85% the buffer will fall away and Hertsmere's housing target will return to 1,010 additional homes per annum.

Hertsmere Borough Council is currently reviewing its local planning policy. This work is supported by a comprehensive technical evidence base, including the Local Housing Need Assessment, Green Belt Study, and Local Plan Viability Assessment. A full assessment of sites identified through the HELAA and the Call for Sites process

is also underway. Collectively, this evidence will inform the preparation of the new Local Plan, which will be published for consultation under Regulations 18 and 19.

To be found sound at examination, the Council is seeking to meet all of its housing needs. However, in order to discharge the Duty to Cooperate, we are asking neighbouring authorities to confirm their housing capacity and whether they have the ability to accommodate the supply and delivery of any unmet housing need that may arise during the plan period.

The Council is already engaging with relevant national bodies and neighbouring authorities through the Duty to Cooperate. We expect this engagement to continue through the forthcoming regulatory stages, and we anticipate agreeing Statements of Common Ground that set out actions on strategic spatial planning issues.

If you have any queries regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact me.

13_10_2026 Letter from Watford Borough Council to Watford Borough Council regarding Hertsmere's unmet Need.

RE: Meeting housing need in Hertsmere – Duty to Cooperate

Thank you for your letter of 10 February 2026 regarding Hertsmere Borough Council's ongoing Duty to Cooperate work for the emerging Local Plan. Watford Borough Council (WBC) welcomes the continued engagement on strategic cross-boundary matters.

WBC recognises the scale of the housing need identified in Hertsmere and supports your approach to plan positively, with the intention of meeting this requirement in full within the Plan.

In response to your request for confirmation of whether Watford can accommodate any unmet housing need arising from Hertsmere, I can confirm that we are unable to do so. Watford's Local Plan process involved a robust assessment of all land within the borough and demonstrated that there is no suitable or available capacity within the borough to accommodate additional need.

We remain committed to continued constructive engagement and will continue to participate in Duty to Cooperate discussions and the preparation of Statements of Common Ground as your Local Plan progresses.