

Statement of Common Ground

Between

Hertsmere Borough Council (HBC)

and

Watford Borough Council (WBC)

25 August 2021

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1.0 Introduction

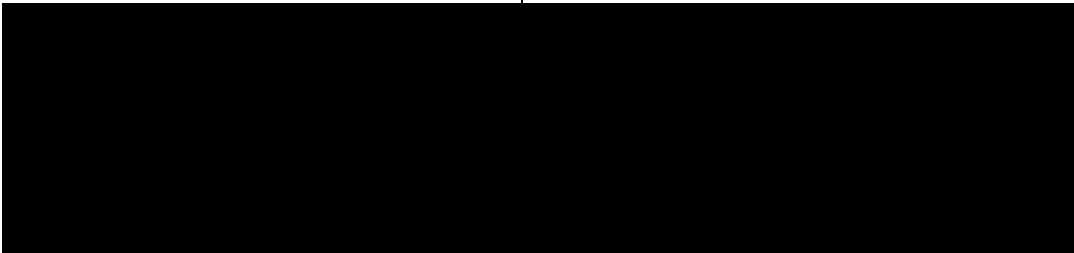
- 1 The duty to cooperate was created in the Localism Act 2011 and it places a legal duty on local planning authorities, county councils in England and public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of cross boundary matters.
- 2 Whilst the duty to cooperate is not a duty to agree, local planning authorities are required to make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters before they submit their Local Plans for examination.
- 3 During the preparation of the respective Local Plans, Hertsmere Borough Council (HBC) and Watford Borough Council (WBC) have been working collaboratively to identify and consider how to appropriately address cross-boundary issues where they exist. These issues relate to where there is proposed to be unmet need and where development may have an impact on developments needs in the other borough. These discussions have been taking place alongside preparation of the Joint Strategic Plan with an understanding of the importance of considering not only meeting development needs within a respective local authority area but also how these needs can be met more strategically to benefit the wider South West Herts area.

2.0 Parties Involved

- 4 This document presents a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between the local authorities of Watford Borough Council and Hertsmere Borough Council. It has been prepared jointly in response to the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) requirement for strategic policy making authorities to document agreement and cooperation on cross boundary strategic planning matters. It also forms part of the evidence required by local planning authorities to demonstrate compliance with the duty to cooperate.
- 5 This SoCG explains how cross boundary issues have, and will be addressed and steps taken to progress the respective growth strategies set out in the Local Plans. This document will be kept up-to-date by both local authorities. Agreeing this SoCG does not reduce either of the authorities' recognition of the need to continue to co-operate and work closely on planning matters. This SoCG documents the cross boundary matters being addressed by both authorities and the progress made in cooperating to address these.
- 6 HBC and WBC have been working collaboratively over a long period of time reflecting the cross boundary issues that exist as well as general good practice to best consider local and strategic issues. Engagement has included a programme of discussions that includes different levels of the organisation seeking to achieve the best outcomes for each authority and wider area.
- 7 The programme of engagement for the Duty to Co-operate has included specific 'Duty-to Co-operate' meetings alongside other meetings to discuss cross-boundary issues that are not necessarily under the title of 'Duty to Cooperate'. These include the setting up of a SW Herts Duty to Cooperate group to discuss cross boundary issues and collaborative working on the

SW Herts Joint Strategic Plan which is progressing work to address long-term strategic issues. These meetings have also been supplemented by more informal and meetings between the two authorities. Additionally, cross boundary issues have regularly been discussed and actioned through jointly commissioned evidence bases that have considered local and strategic issues including housing, employment, retail and leisure and flooding. Other cross boundary issues are under the remit of the County Council including transport and education and both authorities have a good working relationship with them to discuss strategic issues.

3.0 Signatories

Hertsmere Borough Council	Watford Borough Council
	
Head of Planning and Economic Development	Head of Planning and Development
	
Portfolio Holder for Planning	Portfolio Holder for Commercial Property, Planning and Housing Services

4.0 Strategic Geography

- 8 HBC and WBC are adjoining authorities in Hertfordshire and there are functional and planning linkages between the Councils. They are part of the South West Hertfordshire grouping of local authorities including the districts of Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers and Watford.
- 9 The primary road connection extends from the south of Watford in Oxhey through to Bushey with the M1 through part of the Green Belt. A number of town centres provide access to employment, shopping and leisure activities with Watford being the largest centre for these activities in South Herts. The areas are served by bus and rail transport, however, there are poor rail connections between the two authority areas.
- 10 Both councils fall within the same Housing Market Area (HMA) and within the same Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA). The local authorities within the HMA and FEMA have a history of positively cooperating on spatial planning and related matters and as part of

the South West Hertfordshire Group (SWHG) of local authorities are working together on the production of a Joint Strategic Plan for South West Hertfordshire (JSP).

- 11 In view of the above, HBC and WBC consider that the area covered by this SoCG (being the local authorities' boundaries) is the most appropriate strategic geography of the area (Figure 1).

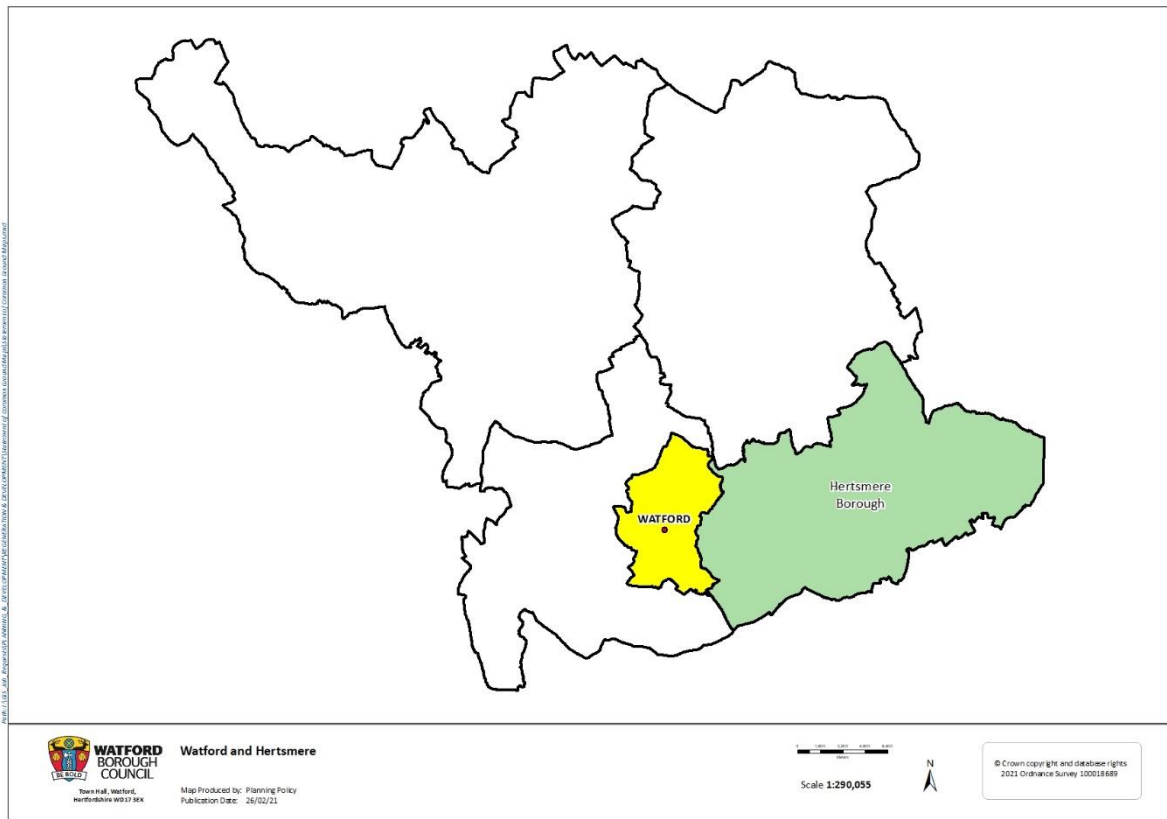


Figure 1: Area covered by Statement of Common Ground

5.0 Local Plan Overview and Strategic matters

5.1 Hertsmere Borough Council Local Plan

- 12 The existing Hertsmere Local Plan consists of suite of documents: the Core Strategy (2013), Elstree Way Corridor Area Action Plan (2015) and Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (2016). The current plan period runs from 2012 to 2027 and includes an annual housing requirement of 266dph. A review of the Local Plan was commenced in late 2016 with a series of Regulation 18 consultations being undertaken in the intervening period. A number of call for sites have been held and the publication of a Potential Sites for Housing and Employment report resulted in several thousand responses being submitted from the local community. Following the publication of an updated Local Development Scheme in April 2021, a draft Regulation 18 Local Plan is scheduled to be published for consultation in October 2021.

5.2 Evidence base and HBC growth options explored

- 13 As preparation of the Local Plan moved from initial principles and early stage consultation into taking forward and refining the options considered in the Issues and Options consultation, a range of supporting studies was undertaken. Much of this work not only addressed the borough of Hertsmere, but also involved close working and consultation with neighbouring authorities both informally, and formally under the Duty to Cooperate. In addition to a jointly commissioned SW Herts Local Housing Needs Assessment and Economic Study, other jointly commissioned work has included an Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study, Local Plan viability assessment and the SW Herts Retail and Leisure Study.

Growth in Hertsmere is expected to be delivered in the following types of locations in line with a series of principles which aim to achieve a sustainable pattern of development across the borough;

1. Redevelopment of urban brownfield sites.
2. Growth through new sustainable neighbourhoods
3. Supporting larger rural communities and growth of key villages
4. Meeting the needs of other villages
5. Creating a new settlement

5.3 Watford Borough Council Local Plan

- 14 The existing Watford Local Plan was adopted in 2013. It is made up of several documents that set out the vision for the borough and covers the period 2006-2031. The current plan comprises the Core Strategy 2006-2031, which was adopted in 2013, and the saved policies of the Watford Local Plan 2000 which was adopted in 2003.
- 15 WBC's latest Local Development Scheme 2018-2021 was approved on 13 October 2020 and sets out the programme for preparing development plan documents up to 2021 for the WBC new Local Plan 2018 - 2036. Public consultation was carried out in September and October 2018 on the Issues and Options document. A First Draft Local Plan consultation (Preferred Options) consultation was carried out in September and October 2019.
- 16 The Regulation 19 consultation has taken place from 18 January to 18 March 2021 with submission to the Secretary of State (Regulation 22) in the summer of 2021, with adoption anticipated in 2022.

5.4 Evidence base and WBC growth options explored

- 17 In the early stages of the Local Plan preparations the council, recognising the significant amount of growth to be delivered using the government's standardised methodology, considered several growth options. These included:
- a) Identify growth areas based on sustainability (access to public transport, education, employment, retail) and focussing growth in the most sustainable parts of the borough
 - b) Distributing growth more evenly across the borough (densification across the borough)
 - c) Redevelopment of existing open space and employment land
 - d) Release of land designated as Green Belt

18 The most appropriate strategy was considered to be based on the most sustainable locations. Refinement of this approach was informed by evidence based studies which included:

- a) The SW Herts Local Housing Needs Assessment (2020) found that an alternative method to calculate housing need was not justified, therefore, the council should seek to meet its housing target based on the standardised method.
- b) The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) (2021) whose findings indicated that the most significant opportunities for development were in Central Watford where sustainability was highest. This led to the designation of the Core Development Area and areas outside of this. Development densities are significantly higher than existing development in this area at present and change will be transformative (up to 350dph but indicatively an average about 220dph). Outside of the Core Development Area densities will also be increased (indicative site capacities calculated at 57dph), however, these areas are of a more established character and while development will take place it will not be transformative.
- c) The Watford Green Space Strategy (updated 2018) identifies open space that will become increasingly important to support existing and new development and contribute towards better place-making as set out in national guidance. With Watford's high population density which to increase over the plan period redevelopment of valued public open space was not supported.
- d) The SW Herts Economic Study Update (2019) showed that Watford could meet its office development needs but identified a significant shortfall of industrial employment land available in Watford. This highlighted the need to protect existing employment floorspace and support intensification where possible to make effective use of land. Redevelopment of employment land for industrial uses was not supported to protect Watford's economic prosperity and support a varied local labour market.
- e) Around the periphery of the town, Stage 1 (2018) and Stage 2 (2020) Green Belt Reviews were undertaken. This identified land that was effectively performing the functions identified in the NPPF. Much of the land in the borough identified as Green Belt is also identified as public open space or is important for biodiversity and makes an important contribution towards the green infrastructure network. Green Belt that was performing well was not de-designated. Land that was rated as low and medium performing was considered for release. Several small areas of Green Belt are proposed to be removed from the Green Belt while in the east of the borough the M1 provides a clear barrier to growth and urban sprawl and redevelopment of the Top Golf area would lead to a merger of the built-up area in Hertsmere given their anticipated land allocations.

19 These evidence bases combined, have shown the difficulty of balancing development needs where given the constraints in the local context. The evidence base also demonstrates that the housing requirement can be met over the plan period, however, not all of the development need can be met using site allocations and there is a proportion that will have to come forward as windfall. The approach to development based on the Core Development

Area and intensification is shown to be the most appropriate growth strategy to ensure development that comes forward contributes towards the three pillars of sustainability in a balanced way.

5.5 Housing Delivery

5.6 HBC Housing delivery

- 20 As of the 31st March 2020, a net total of 3,309 dwellings had been completed in Hertsmere since the start of the current plan period, an average of 414 dwellings per annum. This represents a significant 'surplus' of 1,181 units over the baseline requirement of 2128 dwellings for the same period derived from an annualised target of 266 homes.
- 19 Technical work undertaken to support the new Local Plan, including the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) has confirmed that development needs going forward would significantly exceed those identified in the existing local plan and that the availability of previously developed land to accommodate growth was unlikely to be sufficient. Around 79% of the borough is designated as Green Belt.
- 20 An initial SW Herts SHMA in 2016 identified Hertsmere's housing OAN as 599 dwellings per annum; the Economy Study indicated that the new Local Plan should aim to deliver an average of 0.4 ha of land for employment development each year in the period to 2036. These figures would subsequently increase as a result of the LHNA and parallel updated Economy Study undertaken in 2019/2020, as a result in part of the introduction of the Government's standard methodology for identifying housing need.
- 21 These joint technical study conclusions indicated that Hertsmere's future development needs over the new Local Plan period could not be accommodated in full if the currently adopted strategy of protecting existing Green Belt and focussing all development on urban/brownfield land was maintained. This was due to;
- The likely significant increase in the quantum of land required for development to meet objectively assessed needs,
 - The extent of the Green Belt in the borough, with boundaries drawn tightly around existing built up areas
 - Much of the capacity within the urban area on which the meeting of current targets relied having already been built out or committed (the HELAA subsequently identified a 15 year land supply of 4,857 homes, mostly within the urban area, falling far short of the level of need identified by the SHMA).
- 22 A revised spatial strategy will need to form the basis of the new Local Plan if the borough's development needs over the plan period are to be met, including allocating some land within the green belt for new homes, jobs and supporting infrastructure. The establishment subsequently of Hertsmere's local housing need figure in 2020 as 714dpa, through the standard national method, confirmed this to have been correct. Together with a 5% buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market, as required by the NPPF, the annual housing need figure amounts to around 750dpa.

5.7 Request for assistance to meet unmet need

- 23 Neighbouring authorities in Hertfordshire and north London have been asked to accommodate any of the need in Hertsmere which cannot be met within existing urban areas. Similar responses have been received from all authorities, the majority of which are also constrained by Green Belt, confirming that they will be unable to accommodate any of Hertsmere's growth. Only LB Harrow has indicated that it expects to be able to accommodate

its own housing need without requiring the release of Green Belt land; this is subject to the outcomes of the LBH Small Sites Capacity Study (sites less than 0.25 ha) due for completion in 2021, since a large portion of Harrow's London Plan target is expected to come from such sites. Hertsmere has also confirmed, in response to similar requests which it has received (including from Watford), that it will be unable to meet any of those authorities' unmet housing need.

5.8 Watford Housing Delivery

- 24 Watford is one of the most densely populated District's in England and the most densely populated area in Hertfordshire. It is also one of the smallest local authority administrative areas aside from several London Boroughs. The town is significantly constrained within its boundary, and all easily available land has been built on. 94% of all housing in the last ten years has been on brownfield land, and WBC has always been dependant on recycling land to meet its housing targets.
- 25 Meeting new housing targets determined using the government's standardised methodology has been a key challenge during the preparation of the draft Plan. The number of homes identified in the draft Plan has been derived from the methodology set out in the [HELAA](#) which was undertaken in two stages.
- 26 The first involved the scoping of land potentially suitable for development in the borough following on from a limited number of sites put forward as part of a 'Call for Sites' consultation previously. The availability and deliverability of sites was determined based on information provided by landowners and agents resulting in 7,416 units included in the first draft Local Plan (this figure excluded existing commitments).
- 27 The second phase involved revisiting the sites that had initially been rejected and undertaking further work contacting landowners and reviewing background information such as pre-applications to determine if further sites may be suitable for redevelopment and deliverable. This increased the number of units on site allocations to 8,748.
- 28 The final draft Local Plan sets out a housing target of 14,988 units. This is based on 14,274 units calculated using the government's standard methodology, and a 5% buffer of 714 units. The total housing figure consists of:
- 4,145 units from existing planning permissions and completions
 - 8,748 units on sites allocated for development, and
 - 2,095 units through windfall development.
- 29 Historically, Watford has delivered approximately 70 dwellings per year on sites of less than 5 units. Sites of this nature are projected to contribute 1,260 units over the plan period. The remaining 835 units are projected to come forward on sites not allocated for development, or potentially on allocated housing sites but at a density that is higher than used to calculate the housing capacity of the borough as part of the HELAA. This is also considered to be windfall development. The inclusion of a buffer is to address the possibility that some allocated sites may not come forward as anticipated. However, windfall development inherently has an element of uncertainty.
- 30 The housing figures set out in the draft Plan based on site capacities have been tested as part of the [Watford Tall Buildings Study](#) (2021). It was found that the capacities identified in the

draft Plan were achievable and windfall could achieve the identified windfall component of the housing figure. However, it is to be noted this study assessed sites based on policies such as optimising land and housing mix, and sensitivities to building height but has not considered site specific issues for each allocation.

- 31 Watford Borough Council propose to meet its housing need in full, with 15% of the housing to come forward through the windfall allowance. This reflects the constraints associated with land available for redevelopment in the borough.

5.9 Request for assistance to meet unmet need

- 32 Watford: The shortfall of housing units in the first draft Local Plan instigated a letter to HBC dated 12 July 2019 to ask if HBC would be able to accommodate any of Watford's unmet housing need. At this stage, further work was required after it seemed unlikely that HBC would be able to provide any significant assistance towards meeting WBC's housing requirement.

- 33 Following Watford's further work to address housing need, while proposing to meet the housing target determined using the government's standard methodology with the inclusion of a 5% buffer (714 homes) the windfall allowance was increased by 835 units to accommodate the windfall development that exceeds Watford's historical 70dpa delivery. A letter was issued to HBC, dated 11 January 2021, that asked if they could take on any of Watford's housing need, reflecting the high windfall allowance in the draft Plan, to reduce the inherent uncertainty associated with windfall development as part of the housing trajectory. Hertsmere have confirmed they are not able to do so.

- 34 HBC issued a letter to WBC requesting assistance to meet unmet need on 31 January 2020. WBC responded on the 19 May 2020 saying that they will be unable to help support Hertsmere Borough Council's request related to unmet need based on land availability and site capacities identified.

5.10 Agreed issues

- 35 Watford seeks to deliver the full housing target set out in the draft Local Plan as calculated using the Government's standard methodology for calculating local housing need. However, it is recognised the windfall allowance, set at 15% is challenging but Hertsmere is unable to take any additional housing need.

- 36 HBC also seeks to deliver the full housing requirement as calculated using the government OAN methodology.

5.11 Conclusions

- 37 Both authorities seek to provide for their full housing requirement and assistance to meet unmet housing need is not required. Dialogue will continue as part of the duty to co-operate and JSP to inform further work to support sub-regional housing need and future Local Plan reviews.

6.1 Employment Provision

- 38 The South West Hertfordshire Economic Study Update was produced in 2019. It quantified the need for new office and industrial floorspace across South West Herts between 2018 and 2036 and identified an indicative distribution to each Council. However, the Economic Study

stressed that the indicative distribution figures should be treated as a guide and do not represent the requirements for individual districts, which will need to be determined through Duty to Co-operate discussions.

- 39 Key information from the Economic Study Update on the indicative floorspace figures and land supply (taking account of existing and proposed sites) is shown in the table below:

Table 3: Market balance – office and industrial uses 2020-2036 (sq m gross internal)

	Hertsmere		Watford		South West Herts	
	Offices	Industrial	Offices	Industrial	Offices	Industrial
Indicative floorspace change sq m	35,700	81,900	37,600	98,400	188,000	481,500
Supply ¹	42,550	107,750	117,462	-12,588	263,877	270,163
Balance	6,850	25,850	79,862	-110,988	75,877	-211,337

Source: SW Herts Economic Study Update (2019) and Local Plan work (2021)

- 40 The SW Herts Economic Study Update (2019) identified a need 188,000sqm of office floorspace and 481,500sqm of industrial floorspace across SW Herts. From the above table, Watford has a significant shortfall of industrial floorspace while Hertsmere has good supply of both. Across South West Hertfordshire, there is a surplus of office floorspace, but a large shortfall of industrial floorspace.

6.2 Hertsmere Employment Delivery

- 41 Approximately 110ha of land is currently designated for office, industrial, warehousing and a limited range of other activities. This includes locations across Borehamwood, Elstree, Potters Bar and North Bushey. Long standing control over the types of uses allowed in these seven Local Significant Employment Sites, five Employment Areas and one Key Employment Site have helped to retain many local jobs.
- 42 The SW Herts Economic Study provides a comprehensive economic baseline and growth scenarios for South West Hertfordshire and the FEMA. It should be noted that the economic study does not set targets for job growth or floorspace increase; instead it provides important inputs into the setting of these targets. A full assessment of the existing employment sites within the Borough was conducted as part of the 2016 SW Herts Study, with an update provided as part of the 2019 study. All sites are well performing, have high occupancy rates and are therefore recommended for retention.
- 43 The 2019 study concludes that approximately one fifth of office space and 10% of industrial space in South West Herts has been lost since 2008. However, forecasting the level of replacement demand in future is subject to significant uncertainty, though it is unlikely that the rate of loss will continue as:
- A high proportion of the floorspace which has been lost to date was poor quality vacant premises, remaining employment land is of a good quality
 - Previous losses of office accommodation were encouraged along through the Elstree Way Corridor Action Plan (e.g. Affinity Sutton, Isopad House), much of which has now been redeveloped or converted).

¹ Supply = Commitments + Allocated Sites

- Residential conversions are likely to be less attractive for landlords as less financial incentive
- Article 4 directions have now been put in place
- Increased demand for employment space

44 For the reasons stated above, and based on the best information available at this time, the Council considers that there is unlikely to be further significant losses of employment space within the Borough, and that future employment land requirements will not need to include an allowance for future losses arising from permitted development. However, land which is currently safeguarded for employment purposes, having been released from the green belt in the current Local Plan, will need to come forward for economic development in order to meet future needs. Development on one of these sites has now commenced following the granting of planning permission in 2020 for the new Sky Studios Elstree. Although not classified as Class B or E development, the new studios comprises a total of 54,000 sq m of floorspace including significant amounts of office and production support accommodation.

45 A further call for employment sites was undertaken by the Council in 2021 following interest in a number of significant new sites, including additional film and television production. A further 21 sites were submitted. Although additional green belt releases will be required, in order to meet the growth levels set out in the 2019 study, the Council expects to be able to meet these requirements.

6.3 Watford Employment Provision

46 The final draft Watford Local Plan has sought to find a balance between office and employment land uses that will maximise opportunities for economic investment based on the character of the area, access to services and facilities, including transport infrastructure, and more strategically will help deliver the objectives of the Local Plan and support sustainable growth in the wider SW Herts area.

6.4 Office floorspace

47 Office provision available exceeds the requirement identified in the SW Herts Economic Study Update for the borough. However, while this is Watford's economic base, the quality of office floorspace needs to be improved and this is an integral part of the strategy to regenerate Watford and bring about sustainable development whilst reflecting local and sub-regional development opportunities. New investment provides an opportunity to support Watford and the wider economy of SW Herts.

48 There is an estimated over-supply of office floorspace in Watford of approximately 74,000sqm over the plan period. Making a significant contribution towards this is office floorspace that has already been granted planning permission. As part of the wider growth strategy for the area, additional office investment to what has already been granted is supported in principle. In this manner, Watford has agreed to support Dacorum Borough Council with its unmet need for office floorspace in the wider SW Herts context which will support the local economy and wider catchment area.

6.5 Industrial floorspace

49 For industrial land uses, given the constraints of the borough as set out in the growth options section, the final draft Local Plan has focused on intensification of existing employment areas. Several allocations have been included in the draft Plan that seek to deliver 40,759 sqm of

industrial floorspace. This figure falls short of the need identified in the SW Herts Economic Study Update for industrial uses (net 98,400sqm). This leaves a shortfall of approximately 59,000 sqm of industrial floor space.

6.6 Request for assistance to meet unmet need

50 In letters issued to HBC from WBC dated 12 July 2019 and 11 January 2021, reflecting different stages of the Local Plan preparations and the supporting evidence base, HBC were asked if they would be able to support Watford with its unmet need for industrial floorspace. Hertsmere responded that exceptional circumstances would need to be demonstrated to justify green belt release for economic development, and that exceptional circumstances won't exist to meet others' needs until the Joint Strategic Plan is finalised. The land that came forward as part of the Call for Sites' consultation in 2021 are unlikely to be the type of industrial land that will support Watford's unmet need.

6.7 Agreed issues

51 Both authorities will seek to meet their need for office floorspace. For industrial floorspace, Hertsmere will be able to meet its need but unlikely to be able to support, however, this will be kept under review as work is further progressed and considered more strategically across SW Herts.

6.8 Conclusions

52 Employment issues across the wider area will be progressed collaboratively with other authorities to economically support the sub-region. At this point in time, Hertsmere are not in a position to say they can support Watford's unmet need for industrial floorspace.

7.0 Education Provision

7.1 Hertsmere Education Provision

53 The scale of growth proposed in Hertsmere will require additional primary and secondary school provision in the borough. Land for new primary schools will need to be set aside on all strategic allocations of 500 dwellings or more and a need for two new secondary schools has been identified by Hertfordshire County Council – in Borehamwood and (to serve Watford and Bushey) in Bushey. The need for a new secondary school in Bushey has arisen due to the lack of available sites in Watford, the levels of growth planned across both authorities and the shared catchments across Watford and Bushey. Technical work has been commissioned by HCC to identify the most suitable sites for a secondary school in both Bushey and Borehamwood. The Council expects that development on allocated sites in Watford will need to contribute towards the cost of delivering secondary education in Bushey.

7.2 Watford Education Provision

54 The scale of growth proposed within the Watford Local Plan will need to be supported with new school provision. Primary school need will be met within the borough through available capacity, intensification of existing sites and new facilities. Secondary schools, with their larger land requirements and wider catchment area will not be able to be met within the borough.

55 The County Council, as education authority, are aware of the demands new development will place on education facilities and have been considering the issue more strategically. They are

working with the local authorities in SW Herts to identify where school provision can be located and how this will meet needs in an area.

- 56 Where need is generated by new development in Watford and facilities are to be provided within a neighbouring district, proportionate funds raised through developer contributions will be made available to meet this need. WBC is a CIL charging authority and collects funds for such purposes and is prepared to also use this. The amount of funding and when this is released will be decided in discussions between WBC and HCC at the appropriate time in the future.

7.3 Request for assistance to meet unmet need

- 57 In letters issued to HBC from WBC dated 12 July 2019 and 11 January 2021, reflecting different stages of the Local Plan preparations and the supporting evidence base, the anticipated unmet need for secondary school provision was raised. The issue is coordinated at the strategic level by the Education Authority, however, this needs to be in conjunction with local authorities are part of their respective Local Plan. HBC responded that how education needs will be met will be progressed through discussions with the education authority (HCC) and HBC is not in a position to identify sites specifically to support Watford without further understanding the strategic context.

7.4 Conclusions

- 58 There is a need for secondary school provision within Watford that cannot be met within its administrative boundary. Hertsmere have agreed to consider the request in conjunction with work alongside HCC as education provider. To support development Hertsmere and the south of Watford, more specifically the Bushey and Oxhey area, land availability and suitability will be explored to determine if a school can be located where it legitimately serves the local area. The two Councils continue to work with the education authority and support an approach agreed with Hertfordshire County Council.

8.0 Infrastructure

- 59 Both WBC and HBC have been working collaboratively on strategic issues such as infrastructure in conjunction with infrastructure providers. Needs have been identified through jointly commissioned evidence bases such as the SW Herts Water Study (2017), and cross-boundary issues related to transport, education as well as developer contributions to support infrastructure delivery have been progressed in conjunction with the County Council who have a strategic role in coordinating much of this infrastructure delivery.

9.0 Transport Provision

- 60 The HCC Local Transport Plan sets out the County's strategic objectives, as Highways Authority, to support growth in Hertfordshire. Watford and Hertsmere do not share any significant transport infrastructure that is identified in the Local Transport Plan that requires addressing in the Local Plans at this stage. However, cross-boundary issues will continue to be discussed collaboratively between the relevant parties and co-ordinated by the Highways Authority to ensure delivery is effective, timely and contributes towards sustainable travel patterns at the local and strategic level.

9.1 Conclusions

61 The authorities will continue to work collaboratively where transport infrastructure provision demands it. This work will be co-ordinated through the Highways Authority.

11.0 Other issues: Waste & Minerals Plans, Relationship between SoCGs & facilitators

62 There are no Minerals and Waste issues related to WBC and WBC. These are coordinated through the County Council and the Waste and Minerals Local Plans. There are no other cross boundary issues aside from those discussed above.

12.0 The South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan (JSP)

63 HBC and WBC are part of the group working on the JSP which also includes the local authorities of Dacorum Borough Council, St Alban's City and Three Rivers District Council. Hertfordshire County Council is also engaged with this group.

64 A key aim of the Joint Strategic Plan will be to ensure that strategic infrastructure, such as transport, schools, health, and utilities are properly co-ordinated and delivered alongside the need for new homes and jobs. By working together, the councils are confident they will be in a stronger position to deliver and better fund the essential local transport links, health services and educational facilities that local people want to see.

65 The Joint Strategic Plan currently proposes a timeframe of 2036 – 2050. The timeframe may be subject to review. Each council will still be responsible for preparing its own Local Plan, but the JSP will be a critical stage in local planning work across South West Hertfordshire, setting the strategic framework and shared priorities within which individual Local Plans can be prepared. Adoption is anticipated at the end of 2023.

66 All five authorities of the Joint Strategic Plan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2018 to take the work forward. All authorities have agreed a Statement of Community Involvement and a Statement of Common Ground setting out strategic issues and these are expected to be ratified by all authorities during the autumn 2021. Multi-Modal transport and Strategic Growth Locations studies are underway, together with visioning work with officers, members and key stakeholders. An Issues and Options documents is due to be issued for consultation in Spring 2022.

67 Any long term cross boundary issues as a result of strategic decisions on behalf of the South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan (or Government) will be dealt with in future meetings. It is not anticipated that this will be agreed until the JSP is adopted, although discussions will evolve as does the JSP.

12.1 Implications for Local Plans

68 While timeframes for the Local Plans has progressed, the JSP will have a more significant role to direct growth as part of future Local Plan reviews. The authorities have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding demonstrating corporate and political support for the approach. This collaborative work will continue as the Local Plans are progressed.

69 The SW Herts Authorities agreed to refer to the JSP in their respective Local Plans, and should the JSP be sufficiently progressed, consider how this may relate to the JSP timetable and when a Local Plan review may be required.

13.0 General and Administration

70 This SoCG will be made publicly available on WBC's and HBC's websites.

14.0 Timetable for Review and Ongoing Cooperation

71 It is important that this SOCG is kept under review and updated to reflect any key milestones achieved in relation to the key stages in the preparation and adoption of the Local Plans of HBC or WBC as shown in Table 4 below or any changes in circumstances which HBC or WBC consider relevant.

72 Potential triggers for review include:–

- Any potential future consultation on HBC or WBC Local Plan Proposed Main Modifications
- The coming forward of a development proposals or site options in HBC's area or in the proposed Joint Strategic Plan
- The progress made at key stages by HBC in the preparation of its Local Plan and the proposed South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan