

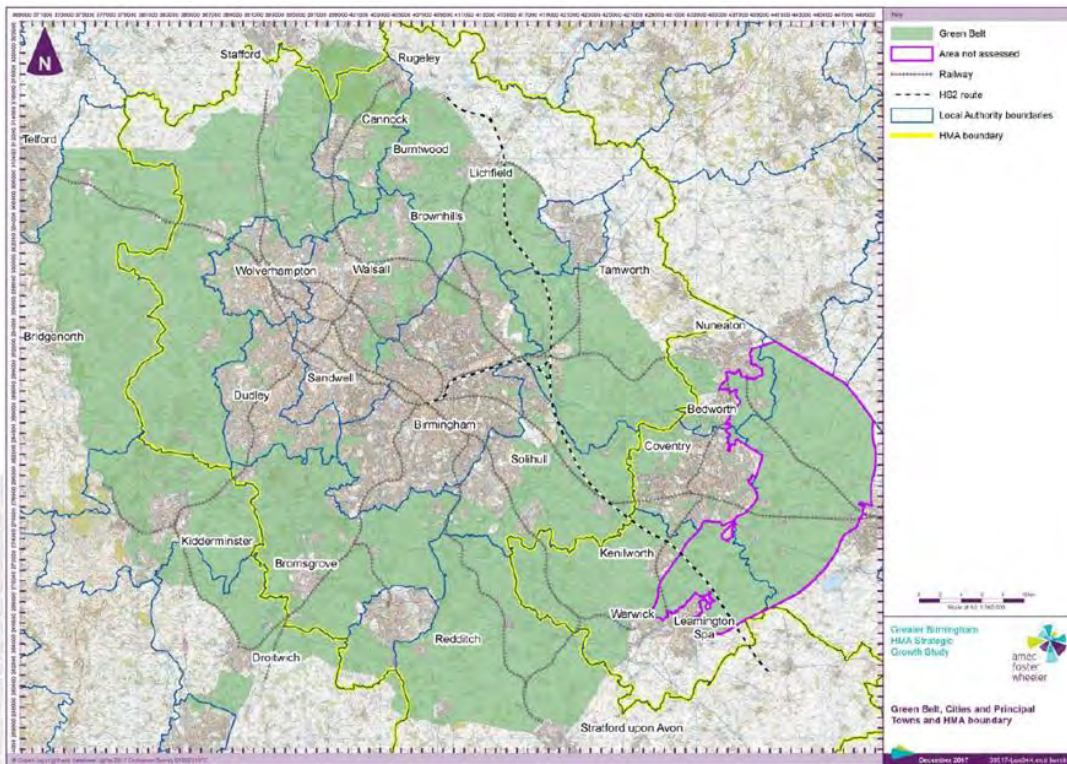
Statement of Common Ground between Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) and North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) as of February 2021 in relation to the emerging SMBC Local Plan

1 Purpose

1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council seeks to set out areas of agreement and disagreement between the two local authorities to inform the submission of the SMBC Local Plan and indicate where additional work may be required. Each signatory authority is committed to ongoing cooperation and engagement by both officers and members and will ensure that the commitments in this SoCG are reflected in policy wording in their respective Local Plans.

2. Context

2.1 In terms of location Solihull Metropolitan Borough lies immediately south and southwest of North Warwickshire Borough. Solihull immediately adjoins an urban continuum with Birmingham to the west, north west and a rural, eastern half of primarily Green Belt that extends into the neighbouring authorities of North Warwickshire, Coventry and Warwick District. See the plan below indicating the extent of Green Belt coverage across the West Midlands Area.



The West Midlands Green Belt and Greater Birmingham HMA (Figure 24 from Strategic Growth Study (GL Hearn Feb 2018))

2.2 Solihull and North Warwickshire Borough Council are one of 14 authorities that make up the Birmingham & Black Country HMA, including the full HMA members being: Birmingham CC, Bromsgrove DC, Cannock Chase DC, Dudley MBC, Lichfield DC, North Warwickshire BC (also located with the Coventry & Warwickshire HMA), Redditch DC, Sandwell MBC, South Staffordshire DC, Stratford upon Avon DC (also

located with the Coventry & Warwickshire HMA), Tamworth DC, Walsall MBC, Wolverhampton CC

- 2.3 Through membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority, the following authorities also have a relationship with Solihull MBC:
Coventry CC, Nuneaton & Bedworth BC, Rugby DC, Shropshire C, Telford & Wrekin C and Warwickshire CC. Warwick DC also have a relationship with Solihull MBC through their observer status to the WMCA.
- 2.4 Both LPA's are active members of the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Association of Planning Officers.

3 Items agreed

1. A significant shortfall in housing need was confirmed to be required to be met within the wider HMA on the adoption of the BCC Local Plan.
2. As shown in the GBBCHMA Housing Need and Housing Land Supply Position Statement 2020 it is agreed that the shortfall up to 2031 has been reduced from 37,572¹ dwellings in 2015 to 2,597² as at 2019.
3. The 2,000 contribution from SMBC up to 2031 has been taken into account in arriving at the 2,597 shortfall (as at April 2019) noted above.
4. The 2,597-shortfall noted above represents the position using land supply as at 1st April 2019, and as such does not yet include contributions towards the shortfall from authorities that have published plans or emerging plans since then.
5. North Warwickshire notes that the contribution in the Solihull Plan to the HMA up to 2031 is 2,105, being the difference between the Total Estimated Capacity 15,017 and the Minimum LHN of 12,912.
6. It is acknowledged that in December 2019 BCC have concluded that an early review [of the 2017 BDP] was not required. Further work will be required to address need beyond 2031. It is acknowledged that the Association of Black Country Authorities have indicated through the Black Country Joint Plan review that within the Black Country area, there remains a significant level of unmet need in the order of at least 29,260 (with 7,485 shortfall up to 2031 and 21,775 between 2031 and 38).
7. North Warwickshire Borough notes/acknowledges that SMBC commits to continuing to work alongside the Black Country Authorities and other members of the wider HMA to review the evidence which supports the unmet need and, that as any outstanding need retains significant uncertainty and is also likely to be relevant towards the latter half of the Plan Period (post 2031 for example) , that SMBC is of the view this issue can be more constructively and effectively managed as part of its next Local Plan review.
8. NWBC has not approached SMBC to ask for assistance in accommodating housing or employment land that cannot be accommodated within NWBC.
9. SMBC note and acknowledge the potential to improve and create local transport connectivity for adjoining Authorities to access employment and economic opportunities and will work with the relevant National, County Highway Authorities, agencies and adjoining Local Authorities to help realise these opportunities and improvements.
10. NWBC believe that SMBC have met the legal duty to cooperate test.

¹ ,Strategic Housing Needs Study Stage 3 (PBA August 2015)

² HMA Position Statement No. 3 September 2020 – Table 5 to reflect the position as of the Apr 2019 base date.

4 Outstanding Issues, Disagreement and Areas for Further Work

4.1 The areas of disagreement or areas and issues requiring further work are noted as follows:

1. Whilst both parties agree that work through the Duty to Cooperate has been ongoing and constructive in so far as the level of unmet need has reduced, it is acknowledged that some HMA authorities believe that SMBC could do more to deliver additional homes. Both parties agree that this does not amount to a legal deficiency in relation to the Duty to Cooperate, but could be perceived as a matter of soundness. NWBC acknowledges SMBC has made a contribution towards the unmet needs of the wider HMA. However NWBC still consider the level of additional housing proposed to address Birmingham shortfall to the end of the Plan period to 2036, does not adequately reflect Solihull's close physical, social, economic and population links and relationships' with Birmingham
2. There will be significant levels of unmet need in the order of at least 29,000 arising from within the Black Country area and a further projected shortfall from Birmingham HMA post 2031. The emerging Solihull Plan only addresses the expected shortfall up to 2031 and does not address the gap in the Plan coverage up to 2036. Notwithstanding the SMBC view that this issue can be more constructively and effectively managed as part of its next Local Plan review NWBC maintain this issue should be addressed in this Plan, which covers the period to 2036 rather than deferring addressing the shortfall at a later review. NWBC considers that the emerging LP should build in flexibility to address this issue.
3. Both parties note the potential for improvement to public transport links and services, sustainable transport opportunities and that improved transport links and opportunities needs greater emphasis but are not considered a matter of soundness to the Plan. Further work is sought with the relevant National, County Highway Authorities, agencies and adjoining Local Authorities to help realise Public and Sustainable Transport opportunities and improvements into the UKC Hub area to facilitate future and long term economic growth and links for the area and settlements in the adjoining NWBC Borough

5 Previous work

5.1 It is acknowledged that NWBC have been consulted on the SMBC Local Plan review process at the following dates and stages:

1. Scope, Issues and Options – November 2015
2. Draft Local Plan – November 2016
3. Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation – January 2019

5.2 NWBC have engaged as they felt appropriate at the time. Where representations have been submitted these have referred to the need to address the shortfall arising from Birmingham and the HMA.

6 Review

6.1 The SoCG will be reviewed as and when when new evidence emerges that renders this SoCG out of date e.g. further progress on HMA Local Authorities addressing the projected and identified shortfalls, significant changes to Government household projections or a signatory authority or associated authority changes its position in relation to housing and employment figures.

7 Limitations

7.1 For the avoidance of doubt, this Statement shall not fetter the discretion of any of the Councils in the determination of any planning application, or in the exercise of any of their statutory powers and duties, or in their response to consultations, and is not intended to be legally binding but shows clear commitment to collaborate and intent to meet the housing needs of the HMA under the Duty to Co-operate.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Maxey', written on a white background.

For North Warwickshire Borough Council

Name: Steve Maxey

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 4 March 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Andrews', written on a light blue background.

Signed:

Mark Andrews

Head of Planning, Design & Engagement Services, Solihull MBC

Dated: April 2021