

STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND (SOCG) BETWEEN: SOLIHULL MBC (SMBC) and WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (WCC)

1. Introduction

1. The content of this SOCG is to inform the submission of the SMBC local plan and ongoing works associated with the delivery of The UKC Hub development proposals in particular.
2. This SOCG has been prepared in accordance with national guidance and is intended to cover matters of strategic importance relevant to the signatories to this SOCG. It covers both areas of agreement and areas that remain subject to further discussion.

Period Covered by SOCG

3. From July 2015 when SMBC commenced work on updating the current adopted development plan (the Solihull Local Plan Dec 2013) and it remains a live document to be updated as necessary.

2. Geography Covered

Housing Market Area (HMA)

4. Solihull is one of 14 authorities that make up the Birmingham & Black Country HMA, the others being:
 - Birmingham CC
 - Bromsgrove DC
 - Cannock Chase DC
 - Dudley MBC
 - Lichfield DC
 - North Warwickshire DC (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
5. Through membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority, the following authorities also have a relationship with Solihull MBC:
 - Coventry CC
 - Nuneaton & Bedworth DC
 - Rugby DC
 - Shropshire C
 - Telford & Wrekin C

- Warwick DC
- Warwickshire CC

3. Areas Solihull MBC & WCC are in Agreement

Solihull's Local Plan Review

6. It is acknowledged that SMBC have published consultation material relating to its Local Plan review process at the following dates and stages:
 - Scope, Issues and Options – November 2015
 - Draft Local Plan – November 2016
 - Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation – January 2019
 - Draft Submission Plan – October 2020
7. In each case WCC have been consulted on these documents and have engaged as they felt appropriate at the time.

Housing Need

8. SMBC and WCC agree that matters relating to establishing the level of housing need that it is appropriate for Solihull to accommodate are matters for the authorities in the Housing Market Area as noted above.

UK Central

9. The UKC Hub area is recognised as being of strategic importance to the local, regional and national economy. It will provide for an effective and efficient use of land associated with the development of HS2 and facilitate future and long term economic growth for the area. This will also include significant connectivity improvements with other areas both to the north and south east. The development proposal is supported by the WMCA and Mayor for the West Midlands.
10. As part of the next iteration of the plan, WCC notes SMBC published updated evidence regarding housing and economic development needs in the form of a Housing & Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA). The HEDNA includes analysis of employment forecasts including a scenario relating to potential above trend growth at the UK Central Hub. In doing so it uses commuter patterns from the 2011 census that indicate 25.3% of the workforce are Solihull residents.

Minerals

11. SMBC has been an active member of the West Midlands Aggregates Working Party, which provides a forum for discussion of strategic matters relating to minerals, and for agreeing Local Aggregate Assessments.
12. SMBC was actively involved in the preparation of the West Midlands Metropolitan Area Local Aggregates Assessment 2015, which sets out the annual apportionment for sand and gravel for the sub-region. An update to the LAA 2015 is being prepared. The LAA makes clear that Solihull is the principal contributor to the sub-regional apportionment figure for sand and gravel aggregates of just under 0.5 million tonnes per annum (which amounts to over 90% of the supply from the sub-region).
13. Discussions have taken place with Warwickshire CC in May 2019 and with Walsall MBC in February 2020. Walsall is the only other source of primary sand and gravel aggregates in the

Metropolitan Area. These discussions have resulted in a draft SOCG prepared by Warwickshire CC for its EIP. The draft SOCG acknowledges that there will be some sterilisation of mineral resources in Solihull due to HS2, but indicates that SMBC is not currently seeking compensation from WCC for the potential loss through any Plan requirement.

14. WCC support the plan's intention to aim for equivalent self-sufficiency for waste management development and to aim for the maintenance of a 7-year landbank for sand and gravel from identified areas.

Education Facilities

15. WCC note the proposed allocation of sites in the Blythe area close to the boundary with Worcestershire and the consequent potential for changes in migration of pupils between Worcestershire and Solihull.

Transport

16. WCC note the proposed allocation of sites in the Blythe area close to the boundary with Worcestershire and the potential cumulative transport impacts of the growth set out in the plan on the network within Bromsgrove District, in particular around Wythall and Hollywood.
17. WCC also note the transport related evidence SMBC has prepared to support the plan, in particular the "Solihull Local Plan - Forecasting Report", dated October 2020.

Duty to Cooperate

18. SMBC and WWC agree that SMBC has complied with its legal duty to cooperate obligations. Should there be any difference between the authorities, it is agreed that this relates to matters of soundness.

4. Areas Subject to Ongoing Discussion

Education Facilities

19. As proposals are worked up in more detail on the allocated sites, both Councils will continue to engage to understand the detailed implications of potential changes in migration of pupils between Worcestershire and Solihull.

Transport

20. Both SMBC and BDC will continue to engage through the examination process with a view to supporting the Inspector in identifying appropriate and justified amendments to Policy BL1 (and any associated supporting text/documents) to ensure that (a) safe accessibility for pedestrians using Whitlocks End station is achieved and (b) that the policy highlighted the potential for appropriate highway improvements along Tilehouse Lane.
21. This continued engagement will be undertaken alongside Bromsgrove Council.
22. As proposals are worked up in more detail on the allocated sites, both Councils will continue to engage to understand the detailed transport implications of the proposed allocations and how these should be taken into account.

5. Areas Subject to Disagreement

23. There are no areas of disagreement outstanding at this stage.

APPENDICES

A. Relevant Notable Events/Timeline

2014

24. November – Publication of the Strategic Housing Needs Study Stage 2 (Peter Brett & Associates (PBA)). This study considered both geographies and needs/supply across the study area and was commissioned by the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP¹ and the 4 Black Country authorities.

2015

25. January – Inspectors interim report into the Birmingham Development Plan confirming the appropriateness of the HMA geography.
26. August - Publication of the Strategic Housing Needs Study Stage 3 (PBA). This provided an update to the stage 2 study and noted the BDP Inspectors comments on the HMA geography. The housing need/supply balance across the HMA was noted to result in a shortfall of 37,572 dwellings².
27. September – HMA Housing Conference (hosted by SMBC at the NEC). The conference was attended by representatives of all 14 HMA authorities and typically included a relevant Cabinet Member, Director/Head of Service and Heads of Policy. It was agreed:
- That the housing shortfall (37,500) is a shared problem for the HMA authorities;
 - To collaborate as part of our duty to co-operate to find a solution;
 - To share resources, expertise and provide mutual support towards a solution;
 - To establish HMA Technical officer group.

28. November – SMBC publishes Scope, Issues and Options consultation.

2016

29. January - HMA Housing Conference (hosted by SMBC at Solihull College).
30. March – Inspectors final report into the Birmingham Development Plan issued. The Inspector took into account the Strategic Housing Needs Study (both stage 2 and 3). He concluded that the city had a need for 89,000 dwellings and a supply of 51,100, leaving a shortfall of 37,900 dwellings.
31. November SMBC publishes Draft Local Plan consultation.

2017

32. January – Birmingham Development Plan adopted, thus quantifying (at 37,900 dwellings³), through an adopted plan, the extent of the Birmingham shortfall which is the principal cause of the HMA shortfall. The plan recognises that the “Council will also play an active role in promoting, and monitor progress in, the provision and delivery of the 37,900 homes

¹ Although it was noted that some authorities in the LEP are not part of the HMA, and some authorities not part of the LEP are part of the HMA.

² Table 2.2

³ To 2031

required elsewhere in the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area to meet the shortfall in the city.” Furthermore policy TP48 goes onto state that if other local authorities do not submit plans that provide an appropriate contribution to the shortfall, then the Council needs to consider the reasons for this and determine whether it is necessary to reassess Birmingham’s capacity by means of a full or partial BDP review after three years.

33. March – GL Hearn commissioned by the 14 HMA authorities to produce the Strategic Growth Study

2018

34. February – Publication of the Strategic Growth Study (GL Hearn).
35. February – HMA Position Statement No. 1 – Issued alongside the publication of the Strategic Growth Study. The statement noted:

- That the Strategic Growth Study *“is an independently prepared, objective study and not a policy statement. It does not in any way commit the participating authorities to development of any of the geographic areas referred to (nor does it exclude the testing of alternatives), but it is a thorough evidence base to take matters forward through the local plan review process.”*
- That there is a minimum shortfall of 28,150 to 2031, but that higher densities might increase supply on identified sites by up to 13,000.

36. September - HMA Position Statement No. 2

2019

37. January – SMBC publishes Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation.

2020

38. September - HMA Position Statement No. 3
39. October - SMBC published Draft Submission Plan

B. Relevant Organisations and or Groups SMBC is a Member of or Participates in.

40. HMA Technical Officers Group
41. CSWPO – Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Planning Officers group. The group was initially established to support work on the West Midlands Regional Plans but following their abolition evolved to support the Duty to cooperate process for the area. As a neighbouring authority to Coventry, North Warks and Warwick, Solihull attend monthly meetings to gain a full understanding of emerging development pressures and policy developments across the area. The introduction of HS2 and UKC Hub has also given a strategic significance to ongoing meetings of this group given the existing and planned connectivity and growth opportunities. SMBC is also able to provide a useful link (alongside SADC and NWBC) between the Coventry and Birmingham HMA’s.
42. GBSLEP
43. WMCA

C. Published Documents Referred To

44. HMA Position Statement No. 1 (February 2018) -
<https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/Greater-Birmingham-HMA-Position-Statement-February-2018.pdf>
45. HMA Position Statement No. 2 (September 2018) – [web link to be provided]
46. Strategic Growth Study (GL Hearn February 2018) -
<https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/Greater-Birmingham-HMA-Strategic-Growth-Study-Standard.pdf>
47. HMA Position Statement No. 3 (published September 2020 – [web link to be inserted here])