

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Central Bedfordshire Council and North Hertfordshire District Council in respect of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035

1. Purpose of the MoU

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to identify the strategic cross-boundary issues which may exist between the two named local authorities and set out how these issues can be taken forward and managed through plan making.
- 1.2 This MoU has been prepared by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) to demonstrate how the two authorities have worked together to agree and, as far as possible, resolve any identified cross-boundary issues, and how CBC has satisfied the Duty to Cooperate in local plan-making.

2. Strategic cross-boundary issues and areas of joint working

- 2.1 The following strategic cross-boundary issues have been identified between CBC and NHDC:
 - Housing Market Areas (HMAs) & Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (OAHN).
 - Green Belt & Green Infrastructure.
 - Employment
 - Transport

3. The way forward

Housing

- 3.1 The extent of the Housing Market Areas (HMAs) covering CBC and NHDC have been identified in the Housing Market Areas in Bedfordshire and Surrounding Areas study (ORS, December 2015) and have been agreed by the seven commissioning local authorities which include Central Bedfordshire and North Hertfordshire District Council. Parts of both authorities lie within the Stevenage and Luton Housing Market Areas.
- 3.2 The Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (OAHN) for CBC and NHDC are agreed and have been determined through the preparation of respective Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs). Both OAHNs have been determined to a common methodology produced by the same consultant and CBC and NHDC have actively participated in the preparation of each other's evidence bases.

- 3.3 CBC has identified a housing need of 32,000 new homes to meet the identified needs within Central Bedfordshire. CBC is currently planning to meet its housing needs in full within the plan period and have confirmed that at the current time, assistance is not required from any other local authority, including NHDC, to help meet its OAHN.
- 3.4 Luton Borough Council cannot accommodate all of their OAHN within their authority area, and as such there is a significant level of unmet housing need arising in the Luton Housing Market Area of around 9,300 dwellings, following an update of the Luton SHLAA in 2016.
- 3.5 The Luton Housing Market Area Growth Options Study was jointly commissioned by CBC, NHDC, Luton Borough Council and Aylesbury Vale District Councils (Land Use Consultants, November 2016) and is a high-level assessment which identifies possible locations for housing growth within the boundary of the Luton HMA. The study showed there is potential capacity within the HMA to deliver its overall housing need requirement. North Hertfordshire's submitted Local Plan proposes that 1,950 of this unmet need will be accommodated to the east of Luton within their District. CBC has committed to delivering the remaining 7,350 within Central Bedfordshire as close to the urban area of Luton as possible although the distribution of growth within Central Bedfordshire will be determined through the plan-making process and tested through Examination. This results in a plan target of 39,350 homes to 2035.
- 3.6 NHDC have previously sought clarification that the unmet need arising from Luton Borough would be met within the Luton local plan timeframe to 2031. Whilst CBC has not specifically identified sites to meet the unmet need arising from Luton Borough, CBC has committed to delivering this unmet housing need in Central Bedfordshire within the Luton HMA. The most recent information, which includes current commitments and new Local Plan allocations, identifies that approximately 10,000 dwellings will be delivered in Central Bedfordshire within the Luton HMA to 2031. These dwellings will therefore be to meet unmet housing needs arising from Luton as close to the urban conurbation as possible, as well as contributing to the housing need arising from Central Bedfordshire.
- 3.7 In response to representations made to pre-submission consultation on the local plan, the appointed Inspector has requested a map of proposed housing allocations in relation to HMA boundaries ahead of the Examination Hearing Sessions.
- 3.8 CBC and NHDC will continue to work together to ensure future development can be delivered in a timely manner, through ongoing monitoring of housing requirements through the local planning process.

- 3.9 CBC and NHDC will engage with each other with regard to any Development Briefs, masterplans and / or planning applications for those allocations that are within close proximity to, or would otherwise significantly impact upon, the other authority to ensure any outstanding impacts upon neighbouring areas are mitigated to the fullest reasonable extent and to ensure the delivery of joined up green infrastructure and sustainable transport routes.

Green Belt & Important Countryside Gaps

- 3.10 The settlements of Arlesey and Stotfold at the south-east of Central Bedfordshire are located in close proximity to Letchworth Garden City. It is agreed that it is important to maintain an appropriate physical and visual gap between these settlements, prevent their coalescence as a result of development pressures, maintain their character and prevent the loss of individual identities.
- 3.11 However, the two authorities do not presently agree on the most appropriate policy tool to achieve this. The Central Bedfordshire Plan identifies Important Countryside Gaps. NHDC have asked the Inspector to consider designation of the land between Stotfold Road, the A507 and the administrative boundary as Green Belt to secure an outer edge to the Metropolitan Green Belt which is clearly defined using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.
- 3.12 Notwithstanding this difference, both authorities agree that both designations seek to achieve similar outcomes and that this is not a disagreement of substance in relation to the Duty to Co-operate.

Employment provision

- 3.13 CBC has a current target for a minimum of 23,900 new jobs as identified within the Central Bedfordshire FEMA and Employment Land Review (2016). This study identified that Central Bedfordshire is well placed to meet 'footloose' demand for large-scale strategic employment due to being ideally located along two key strategic transportation corridors, namely the M1 and A1. The CBC local plan therefore identifies strategic and mixed-use allocations to meet identified needs and to maximise their strategic location.
- 3.14 CBC has committed to contribute to meeting unmet employment land needs arising from Stevenage pending the outcome of the North Hertfordshire local plan Examination. The examination of Stevenage Borough Council's (SBC's) Local Plan identified an unmet need for employment land. SBC, NHDC and the east of CBC share a functional economic area (FEMA). North Hertfordshire's submitted Local Plan proposes an employment allocation at Baldock that would meet these needs in full. Only in the event that this strategy is not supported would further DtC discussions be required between

NHDC, CBC and SBC to address the Stevenage unmet need. NHDC and CBC agree to monitor their employment requirements on an on-going basis as their respective plans progress.

Transport

- 3.15 The transport modelling undertaken for the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and the mitigation schemes proposed are high level. The Central Bedfordshire and Luton Transport Model (CBLTM) is of a strategic nature and the mitigation schemes represent a strategic solution to transport issues in Central Bedfordshire.
- 3.16 Potential future growth in the vicinity of the A1 and along the A507, coupled with the continued build out of existing commitments in Central Bedfordshire and North Hertfordshire, may have cross-boundary cumulative impacts on services and infrastructure, including the highway network, within both administrative areas.
- 3.17 North Hertfordshire District Council have expressed concerns over the adequacy of the transport evidence base and the policy requirements in the Plan in relation to these issues. In order to address identified concerns to the relevant policies and supporting text requiring consideration of cumulative impacts and the provision of sustainable transport, focussed improvements have been agreed between CBC and NHDC as set out in Appendix 1 to this MoU.
- 3.18 Detailed site by site consideration will have to be made at Development Brief or planning application stage, both for the strategic allocation sites and the small to medium sites, to consider if the solutions proposed will need to be supported by localised mitigation and other complementary schemes, such as site specific sustainable transport infrastructure.
- 3.19 CBC and NHDC will continue to work together, and with other relevant organisations, including Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), to identify and resolve outstanding transport issues, and CBC will engage with NHDC and HCC regarding the provision of Development Briefs for those allocations that are within close proximity to the North Hertfordshire border as well as future planning applications to ensure highways implications are adequately assessed and appropriate mitigation is identified.
- 3.20 As relevant sites are brought forward, CBC will share the transport mitigation schemes, and any submitted associated transport modelling, for NHDC's consideration.
- 3.21 CBC are currently undertaking a wider A507 corridor study with the purpose of identifying future detailed highway mitigation schemes to deal with growth

within the corridor. CBC will share the relevant findings of this study with NHDC and HCC when available.

- 3.22 The modelling to support the M1-A6 link road scheme will investigate the impact on Hexton and Lilley as part of the detailed business case. Once CBC know the results of this work, and if an impact is identified in North Herts, we will share this information with NHDC for consideration.
- 3.23 HCC are leading on the A505 corridor study with CBC, LBC and NHDC. The specification for this study is currently being considered by the partner authorities.
- 3.24 The studies above may lead to the creation of a bespoke new transport model to better capture the cumulative and cross-boundary implications of future growth in northern Hertfordshire and southern Bedfordshire. Any such models will, once available, be used to inform the detailed assessment of any relevant future planning applications. Alternatively, the feasibility of making upgrades or other improvements to CBLTM or COMET (HCC's countywide transport model) will be investigated.

4. Agreement

- 4.1 This MoU is endorsed by both Central Bedfordshire Council and North Hertfordshire District Council and demonstrates an ongoing commitment to cooperate in the preparation of the respective Local Plans.
- 4.2 It is agreed by both parties that the content of this MoU is correct at the date of endorsement. Subsequent revisions may be made in consideration of changes to the identified issues or others that emerge as each authority's Local Plan progresses.



Local Authority Member signature	Date
 Cllr Sue Clark Central Bedfordshire Council	2 nd October 2018
 Councillor David Levett North Hertfordshire District Council	28 th September 2018

Appendix 1: Proposed Main Modifications on transport matters

Page	Policy / reference	Additional (bold) or amended text
70	Policy SA3 / bullet point 13	The development will provide other supporting transport infrastructure, including proposals to mitigate the impact of traffic associated with the development, including providing for efficient public transport routes through the development that link with key destinations including Arlesey, Letchworth and Hitchin train stations. The Transport Assessment will additionally need to consider the cumulative impacts of planned development in northern Hertfordshire and identify any required mitigation measures. Appropriate contributions will be secured through legal agreements in accordance with Policy HQ2.
74 76 78	Policy SA4 / bullet point 12 Policy SE3 / final bullet Policy SE4 / final bullet	The Transport Assessment will additionally need to consider the cumulative impacts of planned development in northern Hertfordshire and identify any required mitigation measures. Appropriate contributions will be secured through legal agreements in accordance with Policy HQ2.
172	After 14.3.2 (final bullet)	High proportion of cross boundary movements (partly due to high commuting levels) including within the Luton-Dunstable conurbation and between Central Bedfordshire and northern Hertfordshire over which the authority only has partial influence
173	14.5.2	Further bespoke capacity assessments may also be required to test specific local impacts of development. Such assessments are particularly likely to be required for those developments where substantial cross-boundary movements, which the CBLTM currently has limited capacity to assess, are anticipated.
174	Policy T1	Evidence must be provided in Transport Assessments to demonstrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust consideration of the cumulative impacts of planned growth, including cross-boundary implications where appropriate
242	Policy HQ2	The Council will work in partnership with infrastructure providers, neighbouring authorities and other delivery agencies in seeking the provision of securing and delivering the necessary infrastructure to support new development