

Statement of Common Ground

as agreed between

Sevenoaks District Council and

Dartford Borough Council

## 1. List of Parties involved:

This Statement of Common Ground (SCG) has been prepared by Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) together with Dartford Borough Council (DBC). It reflects the agreed position between the parties.

The purpose of this SCG is to set out the basis on which SDC and DBC have actively and positively agreed to work together to meet the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate. SDC has prepared their Local Plan for submission in Spring 2019. DBC is preparing their Local Plan for Regulation 18 consultation towards the end of 2019. This statement also describes the established mechanisms for ongoing cooperation on strategic matters.

Under section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (amended by section 110 of the Localism Act 2011) and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 it is a requirement under the Duty to Cooperate for local planning authorities, county councils and other named bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in the preparation of development plan documents and other local development documents. This is a test that local authorities need to satisfy at the Local Plan examination stage and is an additional requirement to the test of soundness.

The Duty to Cooperate applies to strategic planning issues of cross boundary significance. Local authorities all have common strategic issues and as set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) *“local planning authorities should make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters before they submit their plans for examination.”* The statutory requirements of the Duty to Cooperate are not a choice but a legal obligation. Whilst the obligation is not a duty to agree, cooperation should produce effective and deliverable policies on strategic cross boundary matters in accordance with the government policy in the NPPF, and practice guidance in the NPPG.

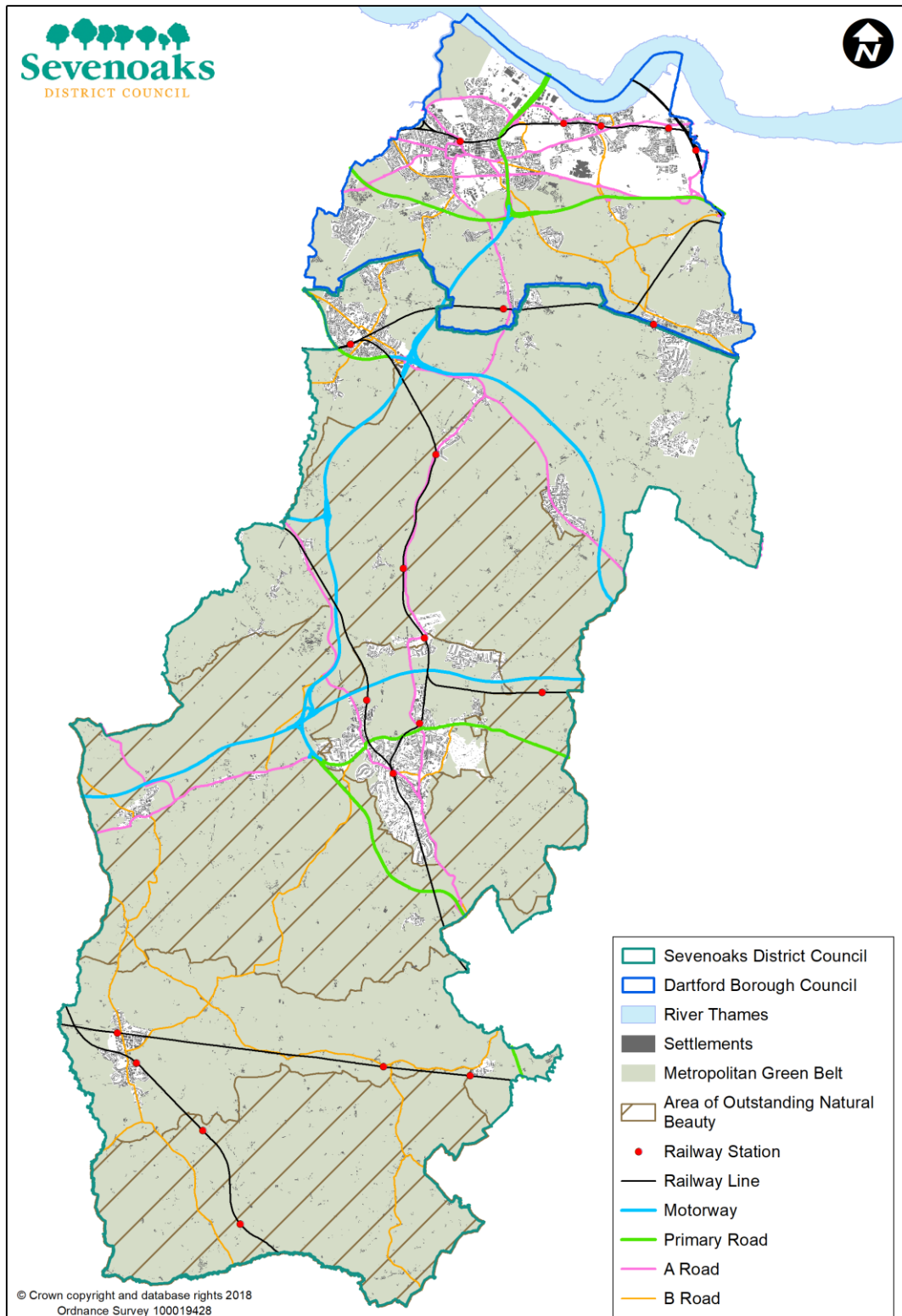
## 2. Signatories:

Signed on behalf of Sevenoaks District Council (Officer)	Signed on behalf of Sevenoaks District Council (Councillor)
Position: Chief Executive	Position: Leader
Date: 20.05.19	Date: 20.05.19

Signed on behalf of Dartford Borough Council (Officer)
Position: Head of Regeneration
Date: 16/05/2019

### 3. Strategic Geography

The administrative areas set out in the map below show that SDC and DBC share a common boundary and hence are required to work cooperatively in an effective way to address key strategic matters pertaining to these areas.



## 4. Strategic Matters

The NPPF defines the topics considered to be strategic matters (para 20). Those strategic matters relevant to SDC and DBC are explored below.

### Housing

Government policy places much emphasis on housing delivery as a means for ensuring economic growth and addressing the current national shortage of housing. The NPPF is very clear that *“strategic policy-making authorities should establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area, which shows the extent to which their identified housing need (and any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas) can be met over the plan period.”*

The Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) published in 2015 identified that Sevenoaks falls within a West Kent housing market area which includes Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. It goes on to state that *“there is a close set of interactions between the towns of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells which reflect their geographical proximity.”*

There is a clear migration trend common across the region radiating out from London (rather than orbital patterns). Typically younger people in London form households moving out to suburbs in London or the inner parts of surrounding counties, and in later life move further out towards more coastal areas.

Moreover the main towns / growth areas in both areas are distant from each other, separated by strong Green Belt.

It is also clear that overall housing values and social economic profiles contrast significantly between authorities on the Thames Estuary and the more affluent locations in western Kent.

Given the evidence, it is clear that SDC and DBC do not share the same housing market area and there is not a functional cross-boundary housing linkage. As such, housing is not considered to be a strategic matter that needs to be addressed, as per the Planning Practice Guidance which states that the area for the strategic matter being planned for will depend on *“...the most appropriate functional geographical area... based on demonstrable cross-boundary relationships.”*

### Gypsies & Travellers

There are established links between SDC and DBC in relation to Gypsy & Traveller flows which are rooted in historic patterns of movement of the Gypsy & Traveller community linked to seasonal work such as fruit picking in remote areas such as the North Downs.

SDC has allocated sufficient pitches / sites for Gypsies & Travellers to meet its needs for permanent pitch provision. SDC's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2017 indicates that some transit provision may be required within SDC and that these could be developed on existing local authority sites.

DBC has recently commissioned a new Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation needs study to understand the likely permanent, transit and bricks and mortar accommodation needs within the Borough over the new Local Plan period. DBC will use the results of this to put forward options for meeting future needs in a Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation later in 2019.

Both local authorities will continue to operate existing joint working arrangements through regular Duty to Cooperate meetings to ensure that suitable permanent and transit pitch provision can be made as appropriate.

### **Economic development**

There is some commuting between Dartford and Sevenoaks and vice versa but this is relatively limited. In relation to SDC, greater numbers commute into and out of the Borough from Tonbridge and Malling, Bromley, Tunbridge Wells and Central London. In relation to DBC, greater numbers commute into and out of the Borough from Gravesham, Bexley, Medway and Central London.

The Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells Economic Needs Study (ENS) published in 2016 identifies Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells as a functional economic market area.

Given the evidence, it is clear that SDC and DBC do not share the same functional economic market area. As such, economic development is not considered to be a strategic matter that needs to be addressed.

### **Infrastructure**

There are a number of cross boundary infrastructure issues that have an impact on both authorities including transport, health and schools. Any relevant issues are discussed and explored at the regular Duty to Cooperate meetings between SDC and DBC as well as with other agencies / stakeholders such as Highways England, Network Rail, Kent County Council (KCC) Highways and Education and the Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Clinical Commissioning Group (DGS CCG).

In relation to transport infrastructure, and in particular the M25, SDC and DBC are committed to continue working together in partnership with the relevant stakeholders, including Highways England, with the aim of ensuring the necessary improvements to support sustainable growth are delivered in a timely manner over the period of the SDC and DBC Local Plans. SDC and DBC both recognise that securing sufficient funding to deliver transport improvement schemes is essential. The two authorities are committed to working together to secure the necessary funding and will positively consider all available mechanisms.

In relation to health and education infrastructure, many patients and pupils travel across the border to access important services. SDC and DBC are committed to continued partnership working with the relevant stakeholders, including Kent County Council and the Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Clinical Commissioning Group, with the aim of ensuring the necessary improvements to support sustainable growth are delivered in a timely manner over the period of the SDC and DBC Local Plans. This includes exploring opportunities for joint bids to unlock funding.

SDC and DBC will continue to liaise and work together with the infrastructure providers on all cross boundary infrastructure matters, including through infrastructure delivery plans and planning applications.

### **Green Belt**

The Green Belt is a significant constraint that impacts both authorities and plays a key role in the separation of settlements. 93% of SDC is constrained by the Green Belt and the Reg 19 Sevenoaks Local Plan includes the release of two strategic sites in the Green Belt and one

broad location for growth in the Green Belt. However, the Plan also outlines a degree of unmet housing need. 54% of DBC is constrained by the Green Belt.

### River Darent

The River Darent runs through both SDC and DBC and the Darent Valley Path runs along its banks. Land within the vicinity of the river is subject to risk from flooding. SDC and DBC are committed to ensuring that any development does not increase flood risk or lead to a reduction in water quality of the River Darent. The Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme is a partnership that works to conserve and enhance the distinctive landscape and reconnect people to it. Both Councils are represented on the steering group of the Landscape Partnership. There is a commitment to working on projects to improve the landscape and access along the river so as to enhance the recreational potential of the river.

## 5. Governance Arrangements

Officers of SDC and DBC meet quarterly to discuss cross boundary strategic matters under the Duty to Cooperate. The narrative and outcome of these discussions is demonstrated in this Statement of Common Ground.

It is intended that the Statement of Common Ground will be updated going forward, particularly as DBC progresses its Local Plan and as SDC goes through its Local Plan examination.

## 6. Timetable for review and ongoing cooperation

The expected timetable for Plan review, update and submission for SDC and DBC is as follows:

	<b>Present Plan Adoption</b>	<b>Proposed Plan Review Date</b>	<b>Target Reg 18 Date</b>	<b>Target Reg 19 Date</b>	<b>Target Submission Date</b>
<b>SDC</b>	Core Strategy 2011 ADMP 2015	In review since 2015	Issues & Options 2017 Draft Local Plan 2018	Proposed Submission Version Local Plan Dec 2018	April 2019
<b>DBC</b>	Core Strategy 2011 Development Policies Plan 2017	In review since 2018	Strategic Issues July 2018 Further Reg 18 version late 2019	Early 2020	Summer 2020