

Statement of Common Ground
between Cannock Chase District
Council and Walsall Metropolitan
Borough Council
Cannock Chase Local Plan
(2018-2040)
September 2024

Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between Cannock Chase District Council (CCDC) and Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (Walsall Council)

Introduction

1. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Cannock Chase District Council (CCDC) and Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (Walsall Council), hereafter referred to as “the parties” to inform the submission of the Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018-2040.
2. This SoCG has been prepared in accordance with national guidance and is intended to cover matters of strategic importance relevant to the parties. It documents those matters agreed by the parties with regard to the Cannock Chase Local Plan and any areas which remain subject to further discussion. The parties agree that the strategic matters to be covered by this SoCG should comprise the following:
 - a. Housing (including housing needs across the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA));
 - b. Employment land;
 - c. Transport and infrastructure matters;
 - d. Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople; and
 - e. Natural Environment including designated sites.
3. Walsall Council and CCDC have been maintaining a dialogue throughout the production of the Cannock Chase Local Plan; initially through the Association of Black Country Authorities (ABCA) comprising of the authorities of Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley and Sandwell as part of the preparation of the Black Country Plan (BCP). However, there have been two notable developments which have implications for this statement; the formal end of the BCP and the publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2023. The formal end of the Black Country Plan does not affect the adopted local plan for Walsall Council (Black Country Core Strategy, the tier two plans comprising the Walsall Site Allocation Document and Town Centre Area Action Plan, as well as the remaining saved policies of the Walsall Unitary Development Plan) which remain in place.
4. At a meeting of Cabinet in November 2022 Walsall Council agreed to cease work on the BCP and proceed instead with the preparation of the Walsall Borough Local Plan. The government subsequently announced in July 2023 details of the new system for preparing local plans to be introduced under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, with transitional measures for local plans that are expected to be submitted for examination by June 2025. Walsall has confirmed that it would not be able to meet that deadline so is expecting to prepare its plan under the new system.
5. The revised NPPF published on 19 December 2023 has not affected the content of the Cannock Chase Local Plan. The Cannock Chase Local Plan Publication Reg. 19 was subject to public consultation from 5 February 2024 to 18 March 2024. In line with paragraph 203 of the revised NPPF, the Cannock Chase Local Plan will be examined under the relevant previous version of the Framework (last substantively revised in 2021 with an update relating to renewable energy in September 2023). It is likely that Walsall Council will be developing their new local plan strategy to take account of the revised

NPPF, and any future outcome of the awaited plan-making reforms. However, this is based on the situation prior to the change of government in July 2024.

Geography covered by Statement of Common Ground

6. This SoCG covers the Local Planning Authority areas of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and Cannock Chase District Council.
7. These authorities are both within the Greater Birmingham & Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA). The GBBCHMA is made up of 14 authorities including Birmingham City Council, Bromsgrove District Council, Cannock Chase District Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Lichfield District Council, North Warwickshire District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, South Staffordshire District Council, Stratford upon Avon District Council, Tamworth District Council, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and Wolverhampton City Council.

Key Strategic Matters

8. The local authorities through ABCA have had on-going dialogue on cross-boundary planning issues over the course of many years, discussing a broad range of planning issues including strategic matters. While the end of the BCP means that the Black Country authorities are no longer producing a single plan, joint working continues between them on shared evidence and matters of mutual interest. These include the matters addressed by this SoCG.
9. The following issues outlined below are considered to be the key strategic matters with regards to on-going plan making, although there are other issues which may have cross boundary impacts. Both parties are committed to further dialogue moving forward, not just limited to the periods of plan preparation.

Housing

10. Walsall Council along with CCDC have been active members of the GBBCHMA Technical Officers Group since it was established, and both authorities have contributed to discussions relating to the delivery of unmet housing need within the HMA. The GBBCHMA authorities commissioned the Strategic Growth Study which looked at options to address the housing shortfall within the HMA collectively. This evidence has been used to inform the Cannock Chase Strategy as it developed and led to the proposed contribution of 500 dwellings within Cannock Chase District towards the unmet needs of the HMA through the Cannock Chase Local Plan. Work is ongoing to agree how this contribution should be apportioned to individual authorities within the HMA.
11. The GBBCHMA authorities published a position statement in 2020 and addendum in December 2021 in respect of housing needs. This position statement detailed the unmet need arising from Birmingham relating to the adopted 2017 Birmingham Local Plan and records contributions towards the shortfall from authorities in the HMA. Additionally, further emerging unmet need arising from the Black Country authorities is detailed within the position statement. The emerging unmet need from the Black Country has yet to be tested at Examination. However, no evidence has been advanced to argue that housing need in the GBBCHMA should not be based on that calculated using the standard method set out in national planning policy. Given that emerging plans are likely to cover a longer

period than the adopted Birmingham plan, need is likely to increase from that set out in the position statement.

12. In 2021, CCDC wrote to neighbouring authorities, including Walsall as part of ABCA requesting whether there was capacity to accommodate any of Cannock's need for sites for housing, employment and Gypsy and Travellers within neighbouring authority boundaries. Walsall Council confirmed that they were not able to accommodate any of the CCDC local housing need shortfall.
13. The most recent published statement of housing need in Walsall is that in the draft BCP. CCDC will continue to engage through the duty to co-operate process (or alignment test) regarding the potential of contributing towards meeting the wider needs of the HMA as informed by the relevant evidence.
14. There are no residential allocations proposed in the Cannock Chase Local Plan within close proximity of the boundary with Walsall, and it is not considered that the proposed strategic residential developments in Heath Hayes will have wider cross boundary impacts with neighbouring authority areas.

Employment

15. There is not a universal methodology for calculating the need for employment land or defining a Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA). FEMAs are commonly identified in Economic Development Needs Assessments (EDNAs). Evidence produced for local authorities which neighbour Cannock Chase boundary may vary in the identified boundary for FEMAs.
16. The Cannock Chase 2019 EDNA identifies the FEMA for Cannock Chase as Cannock Chase, Stafford, Lichfield, Walsall and South Staffordshire. The Black Country 2022 EDNA identifies that the FEMA for the Black Country primarily comprises the four Black Country Authorities: Walsall, Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell, but also with strong economic links to the Birmingham and South Staffs areas.
17. CCDC commissioned the EDNA in 2019 which has been subject to updates in 2020 and 2024. The EDNA identifies employment land need in terms of a range based on different modelling scenarios using Experian forecasts. From this range Cannock Chase initially identified a target of 50ha at Preferred Options stage of the Local Plan based on the 2020 EDNA and subsequently 74ha in the Pre-Submission Local Plan. CCDC's letter to neighbouring authorities in December 2021 also requested assistance in meeting some of the employment land need using land, which is not in the Green Belt, to which Walsall (as part of ABCA) responded 'No. We have a shortfall in land supply to meet our own needs'.
18. In support of the Black Country Plan, work was undertaken to consider the regionally significant new employment base at the Strategic Freight Rail Interchange (SFRI) in South Staffordshire, and how it would meet wider employment needs beyond the authority boundary of South Staffordshire District Council. The 2021 West Midlands SFRI Employment Issues Response Paper¹ commissioned by the Black Country Authorities suggests that some 10ha of B8 land provided at the consented West Midlands Interchange could be apportioned to Cannock Chase. Cannock Chase District Council have sought to

¹ West Midlands Strategic Rail Freight Interchange: Employment Issues Response Paper - Whose need will the SFRI serve? (Stantec, Feb 2021)

formalise this contribution with South Staffordshire District Council through a separate Statement of Common Ground and have included this towards the employment target in the emerging Local Plan. A separate SoCG is being prepared between the authorities affected to address specifically the apportionment of employment generated by the SFRI.

19. The Pre-submission Cannock Chase Local Plan identifies the need for release of the Green Belt to extend existing business parks at Watling Street, A5 and Kingswood Lakeside, Cannock to meet this need in addition to new employment land delivered as part of the redevelopment of the former Power Station Site at Rugeley. Only the Watling Street, A5 site is located close to the boundary with Walsall where there is the potential for traffic movements between the two authority areas, however there are not known to be any cross-boundary issues arising from the site and the site is an extension of an existing employment area.
20. As Walsall Council are at the beginning of the formal plan-making process, the existing evidence on employment land, particularly, that produced to inform the Black Country Plan, especially the Black Country EDNA, will need to be reviewed and updated as necessary, before the borough's employment requirements can be confirmed. CDDC will continue to engage through the duty to co-operate process (or alignment test) on this matter. There are no cross-boundary issues relating to employment land within the areas of the two parties.

Cross Boundary Transport Impacts

21. CCDC identified that the Five Ways Junction improvements and associated relief road and the growth of the junction form a key aspect of the plan strategy, therefore most of the evidence regarding transport has been commissioned to support the allocations in Heath Hayes/ Wimblebury Road.
22. Walsall Council identified that the Black Country Transport Work was being refreshed as that study is now required to support plans currently in development, principally Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton.
23. The A5 strategic road crosses boundaries of a number of authorities including Walsall at Brownhills West and Cannock. Proposals such as the additional employment allocation at Watling Street in the Cannock Chase Local Plan will need to be supported by a transport assessment and monitored to ensure the impact of additional traffic on the network does not result in adverse impacts on the wider highways network.
24. Walsall Council and CCDC are committed to continue working together in partnership, with the aim of ensuring the necessary transport and highways improvements to support sustainable growth across the housing market areas. Both parties will keep each other fully informed of any changes to highways improvements and will continue to liaise on this matter where appropriate.

Infrastructure

25. Walsall Council and CCDC will work together, where required, with the aim of ensuring the necessary infrastructure improvements are delivered to support sustainable growth across both administrative areas.

26. Necessary infrastructure (including school places) will be delivered within the respective parties' own authority boundaries. Therefore, no cross-boundary infrastructure issues have been identified.

Gypsy & Traveller Provision

27. CCDC published the Cannock Chase Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment in 2019 which set out a need for 25 pitches across the original plan period (2038) as well as 0-4 to meet undetermined households and 10 plots to meet the needs of Travelling Showpeople. It did not identify any need for transit sites and considered the issue of need to be self-contained within Cannock District, however noted the general desire for Gypsy and Travellers to locate close to the A5 strategic road network which runs through the authority areas of South Staffordshire, Cannock and Lichfield.
28. CCDC has not been able to identify sites to meet the need in full and wrote to neighbouring authority areas. All responses received indicated there was no spare capacity for plots or pitches in adjoining authority areas, including in Walsall and therefore CCDC undertook further work to identify additional capacity within the authority area in preparation for the final Pre-submission stage. As part of this process a further site has been identified within the Pre-Submission Local Plan for a small extension of 2 pitches to an existing site on Lime Lane, in proximity to Walsall Council's boundary. It is not considered that this small increase of use of the existing site would result in any significant cross boundary issues.
29. Following the formal end of the Black Country Plan, Walsall Council will be reviewing evidence in relation to Gypsy and Travellers for the Walsall Borough Local Plan, and at this stage the need and supply are not known.
30. Walsall Council and CCDC commit to continuing to cooperate with neighbouring authorities within the HMA area in relation to housing matters, including gypsy and traveller accommodation provision.

Natural Environment

31. Walsall Council and CCDC are committed to continue working together as part of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Partnership to produce evidence on the impact of development on air quality around the SACs and Ramsar Sites, with South Staffordshire District Council. SWECO are undertaking transport and air quality modelling of A roads, with the impact predominantly within 200m of respective SACs. While the current focus of joint work is on air quality issues, it was noted that NOx could potentially water plantain (*Luronium Natans*). CCDC have required sites which may drain into the impact water quality in Cannock Extension Canal SAC with unknown effects on floating advice of Natural England. All parties will continue to work collaboratively to address any Cannock Extension Canal SAC to undertake HRAs in the site allocation policies on the issues with regard to designated sites.
32. Both CCDC and Walsall Council acknowledge the regulatory requirement in relation to mitigating visitor impacts from the residents of new development within 15km of Cannock Chase SAC and subsequent merit in continuing to work collaboratively with Natural England. This also applies to air quality impacts from new development and associated commuting on Cannock Chase SAC and the other protected sites relevant to the Cannock Chase SAC partnership authorities, including consideration of cumulative and in-combination effects.

33. Walsall Council and CCDC are committed to continue working together in respect of matters relating to the natural environment where these are applicable to the authorities.

34. No cross-boundary issues were identified, however the scope for the continuation of cross-boundary wildlife corridors should continue to be explored and allocated for within the authorities' respective local plans.

Signatures

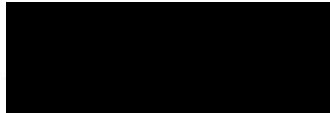
35. We confirm that the information in this Statement of Common Ground reflects the joint working to address identified strategic matters that has been undertaken between Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and Cannock Chase District Council. The parties will continue to work together to address cross-boundary issues.

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Name: Dave Brown

Position: Executive Director: Economy, Environment and Communities

Signature:



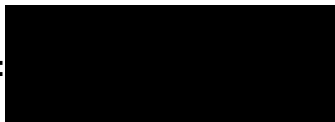
Date: 6 November 2024

Cannock Chase District Council

Name: Dean Piper

Position: Head of Economic Development and Planning

Signature:



Date: 7 November 2024