

# West of England Statement of Common Ground

Version 3 - Executive Summary

West of England  
Spatial Development Strategy  
January 2022



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### The purpose of a Statement of Common Ground

A Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) is a document recording the collaboration between adjoining authorities and infrastructure providers in seeking to resolve cross-boundary issues. This statement provides a record of the decisions made in addressing these through various discussions and joint-working where appropriate. The Statement of Common Ground demonstrates fulfilment of the obligation set out in the 2019 National Planning Policy Framework to demonstrate ‘effective and ongoing joint working’ through ‘documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these’.

### An over-arching Statement of Common Ground for the West of England Combined Authority area

The Statement of Common Ground is an over-arching SoCG documenting the strategic matters and issues to be addressed through either the West of England Combined Authority area Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) and/or the constituent authority Local Plans. The document has also been taken through the West of England Strategic Planning Forum to ensure signoff of relevant content from other bodies.

- Version 1 of the West of England Combined Authority Area Statement of Common Ground was published in September 2020 and identified potential matters for cross-boundary consideration, the approach to joint commissioning of evidence base for the SDS, and the approach to joint working for the SDS and constituent Local Plans. Due to strong functional relationships in the West of England area and joint commissioning of evidence base with North Somerset, Version 1 of the Statement of Common Ground included North Somerset as a signatory (as well as the Combined Authority and its three constituent authorities).
- Version 2 of the Statement of Common Ground was published in October 2021<sup>1</sup> and provided an update on joint working relating to the outputs of SDS evidence including employment land, housing need and infrastructure issues and options. The signatories to Version 2 were the Combined Authority and its three constituent authorities.
- Version 3 (this version) provides a further update documenting the outputs of SDS evidence to support and inform the Spatial Development Strategy, including ongoing engagement with infrastructure providers. It also reflects some initial outputs of spatial scenario appraisal and policy scoping and documents cross boundary issues that have been identified through this process.

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<sup>1</sup> Version 1 and Version 2 of the Statement of Common Ground are available from: <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-housing/spatial-development-strategy/>

## Strategic matters requiring cross-boundary collaboration

In the first version of the Combined Authority area SoCG, the following matters were identified as having cross-boundary dimensions to be explored through plan-making, initially through the evidence base which helps to identify issues and opportunities that can be addressed through plans. The issues identified (and that form the structure of the Statement of Common Ground) are:

- Carbon emissions and air quality
- Health inequality
- Housing
- Employment
- Green Belt
- Development Quality
- Transport
- Utilities including Waste; Security and Resilience; and Social Infrastructure
- Green Infrastructure & Natural and Historic Environmental Assets
- Minerals

Appendix 1 of the SOCG V3 summarises the agreement reached on the above topics in Versions 1, 2 and 3 of the Statement of Common Ground.

## Key matters covered in version 3 of the SoCG

- An additional section on spatial scenario appraisal has been added (section 5). This sets out the four spatial scenarios that have been developed for appraisal, and additional components of growth that have been considered. Early indications suggest that a combination of scenarios and additional growth components will best address the SDS strategic objectives whilst meeting national policy objectives.
- Neighbouring authorities have been approached to explore whether any of the Combined Authority's unmet need can be accommodated cross boundary prior to considering the use of Green Belt or flood risk areas (see paragraphs 6.10 – 6.19)
- Ongoing work on the infrastructure evidence base has helped identify cross-boundary transport and connectivity issues that may arise (or be exacerbated) by the spatial scenarios. The key issues arise largely from the scale of growth anticipated (on top of the existing constraints identified) and the challenges this presents to infrastructure capacity and resilience and demand management. Potential cross-boundary issues have also been identified resulting from growth at the boundaries of the West of England Combined Authority (both within WECA and over the border in neighbouring authorities). Ongoing discussions with National Highways in relation to the impact of significant additional growth in the SDS area on the Strategic Road Network are documented in paragraphs 6.49 – 6.53.
- Discussions to date with the Environment Agency, in particular in relation to concerns raised by the Environment Agency regarding the scale of new homes proposed in Flood Zone 3a under scenario 1 (flood risk variant and subsequent scenarios that incorporate this), are also documented in this version of the SoCG (see paragraphs 6.74 – 6.79).