

Draft Statement of common ground between London Borough of Bexley, Dartford Borough Council and National Highways

June 2022

1. Parties involved

Dartford Borough Council (DBC)
London Borough of Bexley (LBB)
National Highways (NH)

- 1.1. This DRAFT statement of common ground (DRAFT SoCG) has been prepared by DBC, together with LBB and NH. The purpose of this document is to set out the agreed position between the Parties on strategic transport infrastructure provision and delivery issues identified within the Submission Local Plans of the two planning authorities.

2. Strategic geography

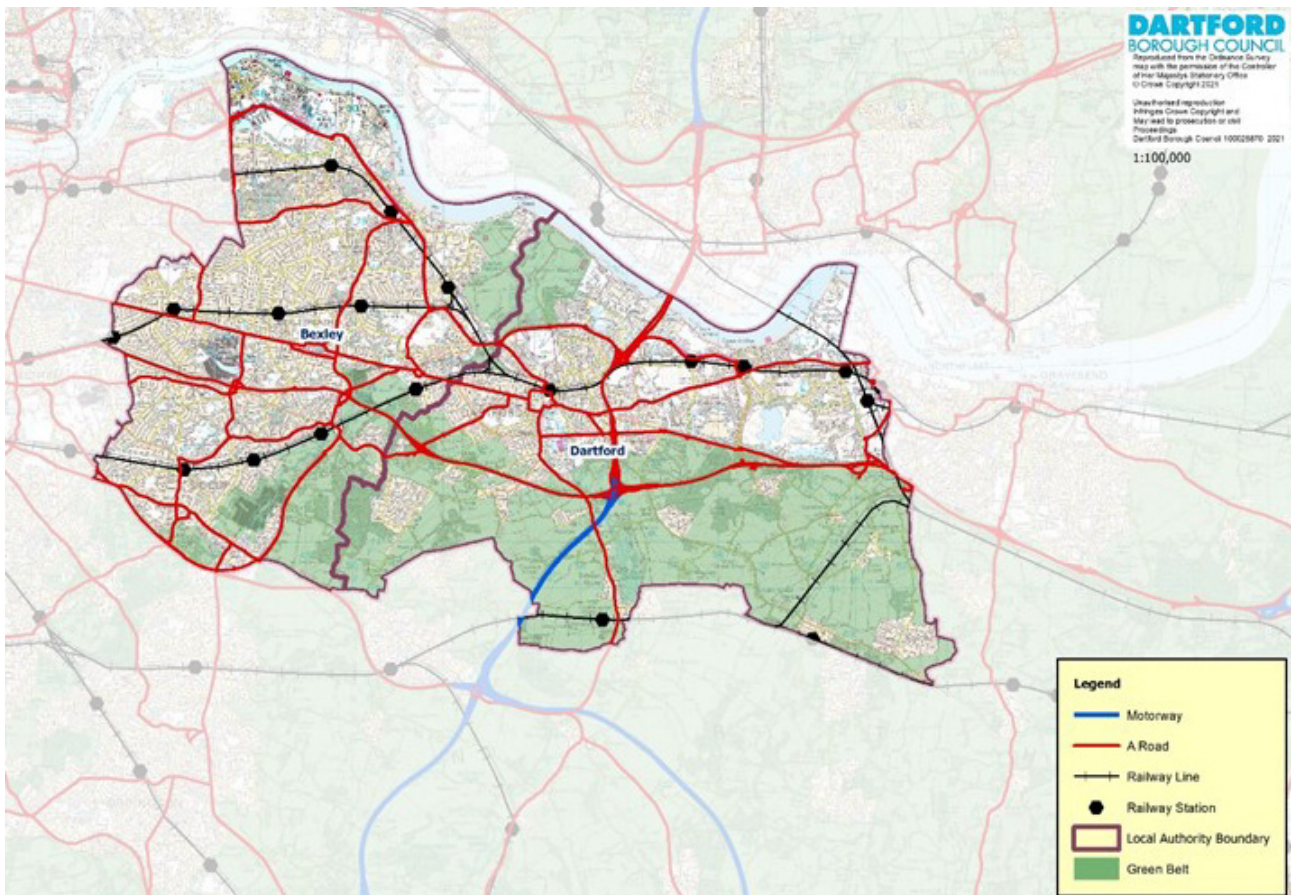


Figure 1: Map of the strategic road and rail network within LBB and DBC

- 2.1 NH is responsible for the Strategic Road Network (SRN) outside London which for DBC and LBB primarily concerns the M25/A282 London Orbital Corridor and the A2 Trunk Road east of Bexley. The London SRN within LBB comprises the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN), which

includes the A2 and A20 Trunk Roads where Transport for London (TfL) is both highway and traffic authority, and other London SRN roads where LBB is highway and traffic authority but TfL has a network management role, such as the A206. The extent of these strategic routes in relation to the local authority boundaries is shown in Figure 1.

- 2.2 The role of NH is to manage the safe and efficient operation of the SRN under their control and to ensure that it continues to serve its purpose as part of the national network of routes for through traffic in accordance with section 10 of the Highways Act 1980. Part of this role is to help deliver sustainable development in cooperation with Local Planning Authorities.
- 2.3 NH is also responsible for the delivery of the Lower Thames Crossing which, whilst being located outside of DBC and LBB boundaries to the east of Gravesend, would have an impact on the future traffic movements on the SRN through each of the local authorities and into London.
- 2.4 Both DBC and LBB submitted Draft Local Plans to the Secretary of State in December 2021 and November 2021 respectively. Both authorities have carried out a strategic transport assessment of the impacts of the planned development within their respective Local Plans on the transport network. These have each included an assessment of the impact on the SRN in Kent, while LBB has also looked at junctions on the A206/A2016 London SRN.

3. Strategic matters

Engagement with National Highways

- 3.1. Throughout the development of the Local Plans, and more specifically the strategic transport modelling that was carried out by both local authorities to determine the transport impacts of planned development and its mitigation, NH was engaged in the process. The level of engagement with NH is set out in the respective Statements of compliance with the duty to cooperate.
- 3.2. Both planning authorities have responded to requests from NH for additional information and its suggestions regarding the assumptions used for the strategic transport modelling of each authority's local plan. Capacity issues on the SRN have been identified. For LBB, these issues are outside of its administrative area.
- 3.3. The limitations of the strategic transport modelling carried out by both authorities are recognised particularly where junctions on the strategic road network are complex and/or in close proximity to each other; however the evidence is considered proportionate given the nature of the local plans. Both DBC and LBB are committed to working with strategic partners, including National Highways and Kent County Council, to effectively address any outstanding issues relating to the strategic road network. LBB has undertaken more detailed junction assessments at certain locations at the request of NH, and both authorities have carried assessments of the merge/diverge arrangements at junctions on the strategic road network in Kent.

Sustainable development

- 3.4. The spatial strategies of the two local authorities are very similar in that planned growth is concentrated at a number of sustainable development locations which coincide with town centres and public transport hubs. In Dartford's case growth is concentrated in the urban area of the borough north of the A2 predominantly at Dartford Town Centre and Ebbsfleet Garden City. For Bexley, the spatial strategy is slightly more dispersed owing to the more urban character of the borough but the same principle has been employed with much of the growth concentrated in the north of the borough, along the River Thames. The spatial strategies are set out in Policy S1 of the

Dartford Local Plan (submission document CON-3) and Policy SP1 of the LB Bexley Local Plan (submission document MD1). NHs is broadly in agreement with each local authority regarding their spatial strategy although, in the case of LBB, a query was raised as to whether reasonable alternatives have been pursued as part of the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process and rebutted on the basis of the strong strategic direction provided by the London Plan. NH has retained the right to discuss the implications of individual planning applications as these come forward.

- 3.5. Both local authorities are committed to promoting more sustainable forms of transport in response to the transport implications of the growth set out in their respective Local Plans. A range of transport interventions are supported that aim to reduce the reliance on the private car, improve public transport provision and improve the active travel (walking and cycling) network. LB Bexley is governed by the London Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) and Bexley's mode share targets up to 2041 were set by TfL and are contained within the Bexley local implementation Plan, adopted in 2019. The mode share target for non-car use is 63% of personal trips by 2041, compared to an observed mode share of 43% in 2019/20. Dartford BC has tested the impact of a 15% and 30% modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport for local journeys generated by new development and has produced a Sustainable Transport Strategy providing an overview of the existing and future sustainable transport measures being pursued. National Highways is supportive of the efforts of both local authorities regarding sustainable travel particularly where this can be shown to have a positive impact on the strategic road network.
- 3.6. Dartford BC has been promoting a "monitor and manage" approach for larger development sites that could potentially generate significant traffic movements. This involves agreement with the developer to monitor the levels of traffic generated by their development and, where set targets are exceeded, the developer is required to either implement mitigation measures or provide additional contributions for their implementation. This is an approach specifically targeted at individual applications providing an incentive for the developer to encourage more sustainable forms of travel and reduce reliance on the private car. National Highways is broadly supportive of this approach and LB Bexley is applying a similar approach to sites within its area, including the introduction of further wording into the Bexley draft local plan (see Appendix A).

M25 (A282) corridor

- 3.7. The M25 (A282) Junction 1a with the A206 is the first interchange to the south of the Dartford River Crossings that has seen a series of capacity enhancements over the years supporting development growth in the area. Junction 1a is an important connection onto the strategic road network for many residents and businesses within each Borough. Despite these improvements the growth in traffic using the crossings has resulted in the A282 exceeding capacity limits causing particular issues for the northbound (tunnel) traffic. National Highways, as the strategic highway authority, and Kent County Council, as the local highway authority, both recognise that further interventions will be necessary to support further development growth in the area.
- 3.8. Further work has been commissioned to look at the feasibility of improvements to Junction 1a in the medium-to-long term. The scope of this work includes the interaction with adjacent junctions on the A282 (M25) approach to the Dartford River Crossings. LB Bexley will engage with the A282 (M25) Junction 1a Improvement Steering Group to provide a better understanding of the cumulative impacts of relevant development within Bexley's Local Plan with other proposed growth in an area of influence (to be agreed between the Parties). Both authorities agree to help identify, develop, fund and deliver any proportional mitigation measures required, including the securing of

appropriate contributions from relevant development schemes. National Highways supports the work of the Junction 1a Improvement Steering Group.

- 3.9. Notwithstanding this, Bexley was asked to produce a detailed model for Junction 1a to understand, at a high level, the impact Local Plan traffic could have and the nature of any required mitigation. This modelling showed that there are options available to effectively ameliorate the issues arising. This will be taken forward in the context of the Steering Group referenced above.

A2 corridor

- 3.10. Both local authorities acknowledge the work National Highways has undertaken to upgrade and improve the capacity of the A2 Bean and A2 Ebbsfleet junctions. This work is nearing completion with both junctions expected to be fully open by the end of May. The improvements will support economic development, including jobs and housing growth, as well as increase road capacity to support future growth. Journey times at both junctions will improve with increased capacity for all road users as well as better safety.
- 3.11. Whilst the strategic transport assessment carried out by Dartford BC covered all of the A2 junctions present within the borough of Dartford, LB Bexley was required to assess two junctions on the A2 by National Highways; the Old Bexley Lane junction just to the east of the Bexley boundary and the Bean interchange some 10km from Bexley and on the other side of the M25. Future capacity issues were highlighted that will need to be further explored as development impacting on these junctions comes forward.

Other locations on the Kent strategic road network

- 3.12. LB Bexley has also undertaken more detailed junction assessments at the request of National Highways for M25 Junction 1b and 2 and strategic modelling for M25 junction 3/M20 Junction 1. Again, future capacity issues were highlighted that will also need to be further explored as relevant development comes forward.

4. Areas for further discussion

- 4.1 Continued engagement and cooperation between the Parties is expected on issues related to the strategic road network identified through the strategic transport assessments carried by both local authorities. This will be particularly relevant in dealing with individual applications as they come forward in order to better understand the impact of development proposals and reach a consensus on the potential solutions to mitigate any detrimental impacts.
- 4.2 The Parties recognise that the funding of improvements to the strategic road network is complex. Both local authorities operate a CIL Charging Scheme that secures developer contributions for infrastructure but in itself these may not provide sufficient funds to cover the costs of improvements to the strategic road network. Regulations allow both local authorities and NH to secure contributions from development for specific highway infrastructure improvements. For local authorities this can be achieved through section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990. For NH this can be achieved through section 278 of the Highways Act 1980. Funding for infrastructure that supports growth can also be obtained through securing grants from regional and structural funds providing clear evidence can be provided of the need for and benefits resulting from the proposed infrastructure improvement.
- 4.3 DBC and LBB agree to work with NH to identify and develop solutions to any future issues related to the strategic road network and find the most appropriate means of securing funding, from all

available resources, to implement those solutions. This is reflected in the boroughs' infrastructure delivery plans, which will be updated periodically as and when proposals are developed.

- 4.4 Where schemes are identified to improve the strategic road network the local authorities will work with NH, and in collaboration with other interested parties, to prioritise such interventions and inform/influence decision making on funding opportunities

5. Lower Thames Crossing

- 5.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) announced on 20 October 2010 that additional capacity was needed to alleviate the congestion issues at the Dartford-Thurrock River Crossing. Following extensive consultation the Secretary of State for Transport announced the Preferred Route for the Lower Thames Crossing east of Gravesend and Tilbury on 12 April 2017. The Lower Thames Crossing has been designated a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and NH is tasked with delivering this scheme.
- 5.2 The Lower Thames Crossing is currently in the pre-application stage of the NSIP process. The submission of an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) on 20 November 2020 was withdrawn following early feedback from the Planning Inspectorate. NH is currently collating further information required for specific points raised and plans to submit a new DCO application later in 2022.
- 5.3 NH acknowledges that the strategic transport assessments carried out by DBC and LBB have considered scenarios both with and without the Lower Thames Crossing and that these assessments have also been based on discrete cordons of NH's Lower Thames Area Model. Both DBC and LBB advocate the implementation of the Lower Thames Crossing in a timely manner and will work with NH to this end.

6. Governance arrangements

- 6.1 This DRAFT SoCG is a live document that will be reviewed on a regular basis and informed by regular communication between the parties either through email or meetings and statutory consultation at key plan making stages.
- 6.2 Key stages of the DBC local plan timetable and the LBB local plan timetable will trigger a review of this document; however strategic matters will continue to be discussed, where necessary, through the ongoing duty to cooperate process.

7. Timetable for review and ongoing cooperation

- 7.1 The timeline for the preparation of this DRAFT SoCG is set out below:

First draft prepared by DBC and LBB in

Frist draft shared with NH in

Final draft agreed by all parties in

Final signed by all parties

Local Authority	date of current adopted local plan	Local plan review start date	Regulation 18 date	Regulation 19 date	Submission date
LB Bexley	February 2012 Core Strategy and saved UDP policies	February 2017	February 2019	May 2021	November 2021

Local Authority	date of current adopted local plan	Local plan review start date	Regulation 18 date	Regulation 19 date	Submission date
Dartford BC	2011 Core Strategy 2017 Development Policies	2016	Strategic Issues June 2018 Preferred Options January 2020	First Publication February 2021 Second Publication October 2021	December 2021

8. Signatories

- 8.1. We agree that this statement is an accurate representation of matters discussed and issues agreed upon.
- 8.2. It is agreed that these discussions will inform the Bexley Local Plan and the Dartford Local Plan. LBB, DBC and NH will continue to work together collaboratively in the spirit of partnership working and to meet the requirements of duty to cooperate legislation.

Signed on behalf of London Borough of Bexley	Signed on behalf of Dartford Borough Council	Signed on behalf of National Highways
Name:	Name:	Name:
Position:	Position:	Position:
Date:	Date:	Date:

--END--

Appendix A: Proposed further amendments to London Borough of Bexley Local Plan

Chapter	Page(s)	Current Policy, Paragraph, Figure or Table No.	Change	Reason for Change
6	91, 92 and 101	<p>New paragraph after new paragraph 6.25 (as set out at FM023 in the Council's Schedule of further post-submission changes to the plan) in implementation text to policy SP10</p> <p>Reference to this new paragraph will also be included in paragraph 6.29 (implementation text to policy SP11) and 6.60 (implementation text to policy DP24)</p>	<p>The Council will take a 'monitor and manage' approach to assessing and dealing with the implications of development on the road network. Modelling, initially submitted as part of any developments Transport Assessment, will be used to predict and then monitor the cumulative impacts of relevant proposals, inform the nature of any necessary mitigation measures and determine appropriate developer contributions, as well as identifying apposite trigger points for interventions and when they have been reached. These matters will then be reflected in updates to the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) as appropriate.</p>	<p>Add clarification following discussion with National Highways</p>