

Statement of Common Ground

Portsmouth City Council & Gosport Borough Council

February 2026



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL



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1. Introduction

What is a Statement of Common Ground?

1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SCG) is a jointly agreed statement between Portsmouth City Council (PCC) and Gosport Borough Council (GBC). It sets out the position and understanding with respect to key cross boundary strategic issues between the two authorities. It is not binding on either party but sets out a clear and positive direction to inform ongoing strategy and plan making. It should be noted that this is a bilateral agreement between these two authorities only.

National Policy Context

1.2 Both PCC and the GBC intend to submit their emerging Local Plans under the transitional arrangements for Local Plans set out in Annex 1 of the 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In order for a Local Plan to be found sound under the 2024 NPPF it needs to be 'justified' and thus 'based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground.' It is noted that the consultation draft NPPF published in December 2025 changes the tests of soundness. However, the wording of the new test of 'realistic' is identical to the 2024 definition of 'justified'.

1.3 The Written Ministerial Statement¹ made in November 2025 notes that the new plan-making system provided by the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 does not include the Duty to Cooperate. Instead, the new system will rely on revised national policy and the new tier of strategic planning to ensure effective co-operation between plan-making authorities. It also notes that the Regulations for the new system will 'save' the current plan-making system for a period to allow emerging plans, such as the Portsmouth and Gosport Local Plans, to progress to examination by 31 December 2026.

1.4 The Statement sets out that the Government has decided not to 'save' the Duty. However, it goes on to say that local planning authorities should continue to collaborate across their boundaries, including on unmet development needs from neighbouring areas and that Planning Inspectors will continue to examine plans in line with the policies in the NPPF on 'maintaining effective co-operation'.

1.5 It has been prepared in parallel with both the Publication Gosport Borough Local Plan 2042 and Portsmouth Pre-Submission Local Plan under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012²). PCC and GBC agree on the importance of continuing to work on strategic cross boundary issues in line with both existing and draft national policy.

What does this document include?

1.6 Section 1 introduces the Duty to Cooperate and sets the context for this SCG.

1.7 Section 2 outlines the strategic geographies of Portsmouth City and Gosport Borough.

¹ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-11-27/hcws1104>

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/767/regulation/19/made>

1.8 Section 3 sets out the key cross boundary strategic issues addressed by this SCG with an agreed position between the two Councils on each issue. Where relevant, areas of disagreement are also set out.

2. Strategic Geography

Portsmouth City and Gosport Borough

2.1 Portsmouth City lies adjacent to the Solent on the southern coast of England. The majority of the City's landmass is on Portsea Island and therefore it has a unique geographic location and relationship to the sea. The authority comprises approx. 40.1 square kilometres and is home to approximately 208,100 people, with a population density higher than some parts of London.

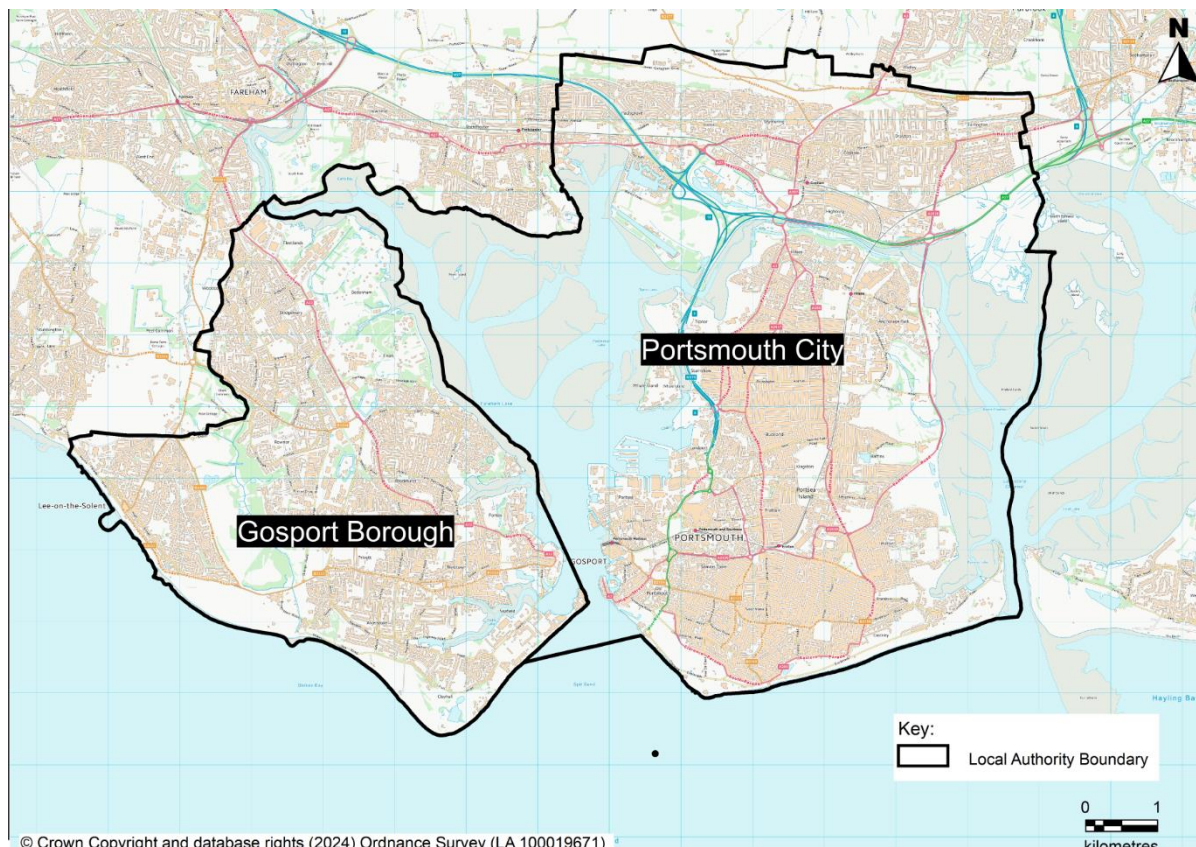


Figure 1: Map of Gosport Borough and Portsmouth City

2.2 Gosport Borough covers just over 27.6 square kilometres (10.6 square miles or 2,761 hectares) and is the twelfth smallest district in England and the smallest in Hampshire. Gosport Borough is located on a peninsula adjacent to Fareham Borough and is surrounded on three sides by the Solent and Portsmouth Harbour. Gosport Borough is predominantly urban in character, with over 80% built on. The population of Gosport in 2021 was 81,900 people and the Borough is densely populated with 3,228 people per square km, seven times the England average at 434. A narrow stretch of water at the mouth of Portsmouth Harbour, separates Gosport from Portsmouth; there is no shared land boundary between the two authorities.

2.3 Both Authorities are significantly constrained in terms of geographical area, with the Solent to the south, the large natural Harbours and the close proximity of the adjoining boroughs and districts to the north. This limits the space for potential development in the

City and Borough to largely brownfield land. Most of the brownfield sites in the City and Borough have significant constraints such as contamination, historic structures and complicated ownership. In addition, both authorities and especially Gosport Borough are impacted by viability constraints to delivery of development.

Partnership for South Hampshire

2.4 Portsmouth City and Gosport Borough are active members of the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH). It is a partnership of district and unitary authorities, together with Hampshire County Council and the New Forest National Park Authority, working together to support the sustainable growth of the South Hampshire sub-region. The area covered by PfSH and the authorities involved is shown in figure 2.

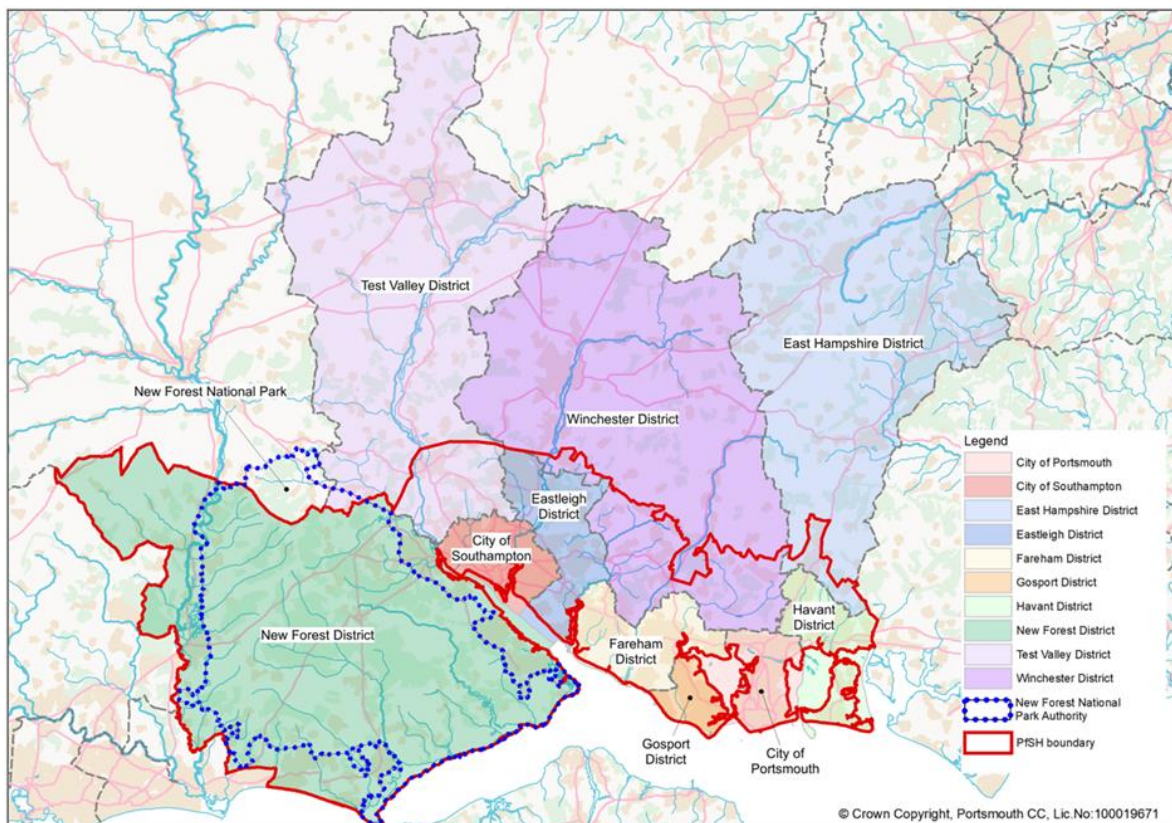


Figure 2: Map of the Partnership for South Hampshire sub-region

2.5 The Partnership has a strong track record in collaborative working to achieve common goals in South Hampshire. PfSH has successfully developed a number of innovative solutions to challenging issues and thus unlocked development in the sub-region whilst recognising its constraints. The PfSH Spatial Position Statement (SPS) was approved by the Partnership's decision-making body, the Joint Committee, in December 2023. It aims to provide guiding principles for local plans to help deliver sustainable development within South Hampshire.

2.6 Following on from an advisory meeting with the Planning Inspectorate, PCC tabled an item for PfSH Planning Officers Group in September 2025 to ascertain the appropriate approach to monitoring / reviewing the SPS. The matter was discussed at PfSH Joint Committee³ who approved the following statement in December 2025:

³ <https://www.push.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Full-Agenda-Pack-09-December-2025.pdf>

PfSH approved a Spatial Position Statement in December 2023. It sets out strategic principles to guide development. It also sets out the balance between the need and supply of new dwellings across the sub region, identifying a shortfall in supply still to be planned for of 11,771 dwellings to 2036. It recognises that some authorities are at an early stage in plan preparation, and that as part of this plan making work additional sites will be identified to meet unmet needs. The Statement sets out a two-stage process to addressing needs, first identifying the authorities which should be able to meet or exceed their needs, and second by identifying broad areas of search for growth to be considered further through local plans.

Since this Statement was approved, the Government's standard method for calculating housing need has changed from a population based to a housing stock based algorithm, and the affordability ratio has also changed. As a result, the housing need figures for the PfSH area as a whole have increased.

The national proposals to reintroduce statutory strategic planning will require the preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy by the proposed Mayoral Combined Authority for Hampshire and the Solent. A key output of this work will be meeting housing need. In light of this, PfSH do not intend to update the Spatial Position Statement. However, in the meantime PfSH continue to discuss the latest position to inform the preparation of each authority's local plan in accordance with the 'duty to co-operate'. This is supplemented by the preparation of Statements of Common Ground between individual authorities and groups of authorities as relevant.

South East Hampshire

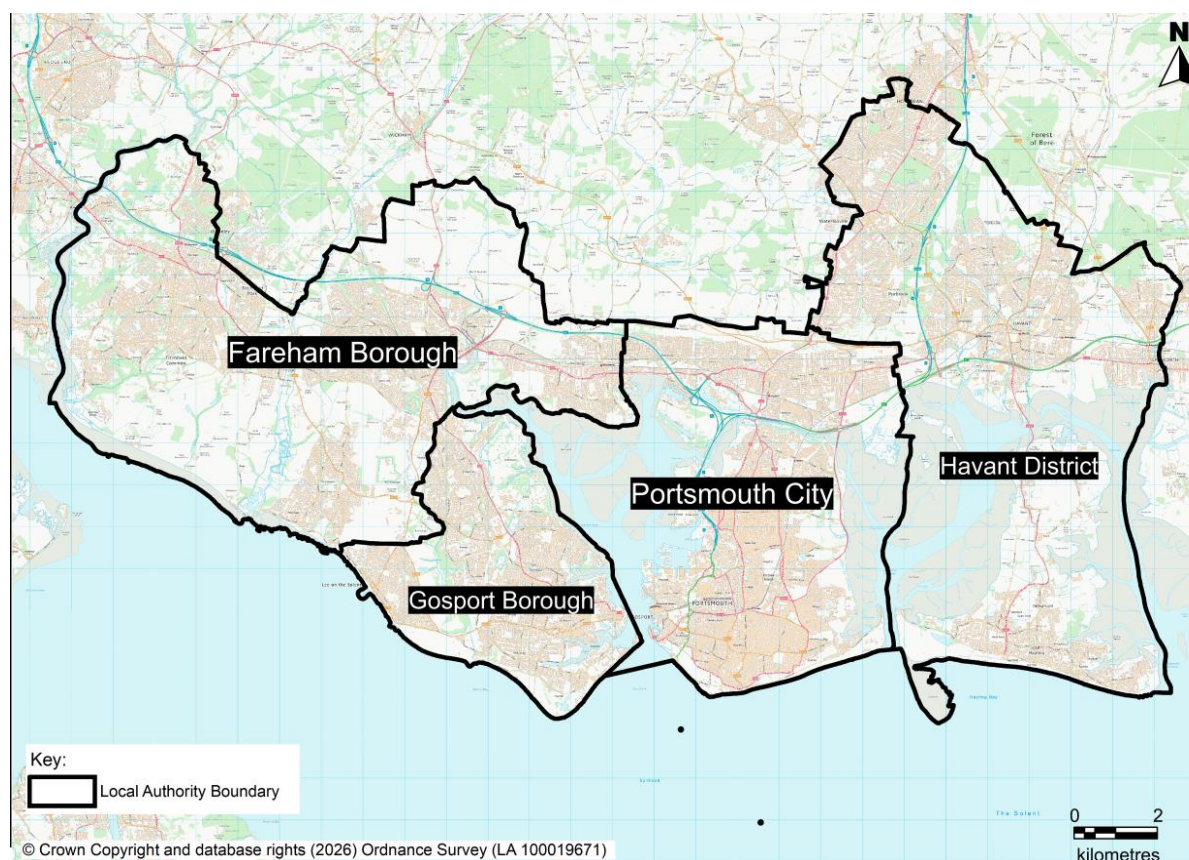


Figure 3: Map of South East Hampshire

2.7 More recently, PCC and GBC have taken part in collective discussions as part of a grouping of South East Hampshire authorities including Havant and Fareham Borough Councils. This collaborative working between the Borough and City Councils has allowed for the development of an up-to-date picture of the unmet development need situation in South East Hampshire. It has resulted in agreement between the Authorities to help accommodate each other's housing and employment land needs. This is to be addressed fully through a South East Hampshire Statement of Common Ground (expected March 2026). In addition, the South East Hampshire Authorities have agreed to further meetings and collaboration on key environmental issues including green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain.

3. Key Cross Boundary Strategic Matters

3.1 This section sets out where agreement has been reached on cross-border strategic matters, or where further work to reach common ground is required. It should be noted that all the figures relate to the plan period for the Portsmouth Local Plan of 2025-2040 and for the Gosport Borough Local Plan period of 2025-2042.

Housing

LPA	Plan period		Housing needs according to the standard method	Housing supply	Surplus/unmet need
Gosport Borough Council	2025 to 2042 (17 years)	Total	7,378	2,592	-4,786
		Dwellings per annum	434	152	-282
Portsmouth City Council	2025-2040 (15 years)	Total	15,285	11,369	-3,916
		Dwellings per annum	1,019	758	-261

Table 1: Housing Land Position - January 2026

Portsmouth City Council position

3.2 Portsmouth City Council has recently consulted on its Pre-Submission Local Plan Addendum (November 2025 to January 2026) and intends to submit its Local Plan to the Secretary of State for examination in March 2026. The emerging Local Plan covers the period from 2025 to 2040.

3.3 Based upon the assessment carried out through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) the Portsmouth Local Plan has set a housing target for Portsmouth of 11,369 new homes from 2025 to 2040 or approximately 758 new homes per year. This figure is a 'capacity-based' target based on the level of housing that can be realistically achieved within the plan period having regard to Portsmouth's constraints, land availability and development capacity. Nevertheless, the Council has sought to leave 'no stone unturned' in robustly and positively identifying all sources of potential housing supply, whilst being pragmatic in its assessment of delivery from permitted sites and HELAA sites.

3.4 The City Council has an unmet housing need of 3,916 dwellings against its housing need. The City Council has corresponded with its neighbours namely: Chichester District Council, Gosport Borough Council, Havant Borough Council, Fareham Borough Council, East Hampshire District Council, the South Downs National Park Authority and Winchester

City Council to ascertain if they are able to accommodate its unmet need. Fareham Borough Council confirmed through its adopted Local Plan that it would accommodate 800 dwellings of the City's unmet need. Winchester City Council has agreed to provide 30% of its unmet housing need allowance to Portsmouth through a joint agreement with Havant, Portsmouth and Winchester Councils (the exact number this equates to is being confirmed through the Winchester City Council examination). The City Council is also working proactively with Gosport and Havant Borough Councils as part of the South East Hampshire group.

Gosport Borough Council position

3.5 The emerging Gosport Borough Local Plan 2042 (GBLP2042) uses the Government's Standard Method to determine local housing need.

3.6 It is currently envisaged that the emerging Regulation 19 Local Plan will propose a housing supply of 2,592 dwellings over the period 2025 to 2042. This represents 152 dwellings per annum. The majority of proposed development will take place on the Government's preferred option of developing previously developed land. These sites have a number of challenges including the need to provide enhanced flood defences, restore historic buildings, address contaminated land issues and ensure that adjacent internationally important habitats are not harmed.

3.7 GBC considers it clear that given the sites available, the Borough's already built-up nature and other constraints it will not be possible to provide a sufficient amount of land to accommodate 7,378 homes in the Borough. When compared to the Government's Standard Method, GBC has identified an unmet need of approximately 4,786 dwellings (282 dpa). GBC has highlighted these figures to PfSH as part of work on the Spatial Position Statement. GBC recognise that the distribution of housing need is broader than the GBC and PCC authority areas and will require ongoing consideration and co-operation at the sub regional scale. It has formally requested neighbouring authorities in the SE Hampshire Market Area if they can contribute towards Gosport's unmet housing need.

Agreed Position

3.8 The City of Portsmouth and the Borough of Gosport are both located in the same Housing Market Area (HMA). It is agreed that neither authority is in a position to assist the other with accommodating unmet need arising out of each Local Plan as they cannot meet their own need. PCC has formally written to GBC regarding the unmet need identified in the Portsmouth Local Plan, and GBC formally confirmed⁴ on 9th February 2024 that it is unable to meet any of this unmet need within Gosport Borough. This SoCG reiterates that this remains the case and that the two authorities remain unable to accommodate each other's unmet housing needs.

3.9 GBC and PCC will continue to work collaboratively to address strategic cross boundary matters, both through PfSH and the South East Hampshire group of authorities, and, as necessary, on a bilateral basis. Detail on how the housing needs of the wider South East Hampshire housing market area are being addressed will be set out in full in the South East Hampshire Statement of Common Ground (expected March 26).

Differences in position

None

⁴ <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Letter-GBC-to-PCC-re-unmet-housing-need-09-02-24-accessible.pdf>

Employment

LPA	Plan period		Employment need	Employment supply	Surplus/unmet need
Gosport Borough Council	2025 to 2042 (17 years)	Total	83,930	90,508	6,578
		m ² per annum	4,937	5,324	387
Portsmouth City Council	2025-2040 (15 years)	Total	107,485	138,746	31,261
		m ² per annum	7,166	9,250	2,084

Table 2: Employment Land Position - January 2026

Portsmouth City Council's position

3.10 Much of the evidence on economic development that supports the Local Plan both in regard to the need and the supply of employment land is provided by the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA). This analysed the outlook for employment growth up to 2040 in Portsmouth and the results of the analysis were used to inform the employment floorspace and land needs forecasts. Drawing the need (107,485 m²) and supply (138,746 m²) positions from the HEDNA and HELAA together there is a surplus of 31,261 m² of employment floorspace, which is entirely office floorspace. The City Council has formally offered this surplus to Havant Borough Council to help meet its unmet need under the Duty to Cooperate.

GBC position

3.11 The adopted Gosport Borough Local Plan 2011-2029 focuses regeneration on a number of brownfield sites, which comprise a mix of uses including employment opportunities. Marine employment is also a particular focus, maximising opportunities to utilise deep water access. This approach will continue in the forthcoming Local Plan and this is evidenced by the Gosport Economic Development Needs Assessment and Employment Land Availability Assessment (EDNA/ELLA) which was refreshed in February 2026.

3.12 The emerging Local Plan includes a specific policy focussing on protecting marine employment. GBC will continue to work across the Harbour with PCC on opportunities to protect waterfront sites and promote marine businesses, as this has the potential to contribute to one of the key sectors of the sub-regional economy of which Gosport and Portsmouth's marine sites form part of this cluster.

3.13 Based on the Council's evidence and consideration of various employment floorspace scenarios in the Employment Background Paper it is considered that a minimum of 90,000 sqm of employment floorspace in office and light industry (Use class E(g)), general industry (B2), and/or storage and warehousing (B8) is an appropriate level of floorspace for the Borough over the Plan Period taking into account the capacity on sites that can deliver new employment floorspace. This is considered a target to meet the ambitions to deliver economic growth in the Borough.

3.14 The Council has currently identified 90,508 sqm of net additional employment floorspace from a variety of sources including existing permissions, unused land within existing employment sites and proposed allocations.

Agreed Position

3.15 The two LPA's support each other's Local Plan's employment strategy and agree that there is currently no identified unmet cross boundary employment need to be planned for. Both Councils will continue to work with the South East Hampshire group of authorities to meet the employment needs of the wider Portsmouth Functional Economic Market Area. Detail on how the employment needs of the wider market areas are being addressed will be set out in full in the South East Hampshire Statement of Common Ground (expected March 26).

Differences in position

None

Transport

PCC position

3.16 The majority of Portsmouth is located on Portsea Island, which has three road and one rail link to the mainland. Portsmouth is home to an international ferry port with connections to the Continent and Channel Islands, as well as links to the Isle of Wight by ferry and hovercraft. As a unitary authority Portsmouth is also the Transport Authority and adopted its Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) in October 2021 which details the Council's vision for travel in Portsmouth until 2038. In December 2025, Portsmouth City Council received their Interim Strategic Transport Assessment. The study identified a number of junctions where congestion issues were expected. Eight road junctions in the City were identified for mitigation. Junction improvements schemes were identified to were sufficient to mitigate the impacts of the local plan growth.

GBC position

3.17 Despite significant road and transport improvements there are still congestion issues exacerbated by Gosport's peninsula constraints and high rates of out-commuting. The Borough has one of the lowest job densities in England following the contraction of the MoD and defence-related employment over recent decades. Recent investment on strategic transport routes onto the peninsula such as Newgate Lane and the Stubbington Bypass has assisted in improving road congestion issues. Due to the physical separation of Portsmouth and Gosport, GBC do not foresee any significant transport issues arising from each Council's planned growth.

3.18 GBC with Hampshire County Council as the local transport authority for Gosport will continue to work with PCC on any cross-harbour transport opportunities as they arise.

Agreed Position

3.19 The Gosport Ferry links Gosport with Portsmouth and provides access for Gosport residents to mainline train services and ferries to the Isle of Wight. The ferry is an important transport choice for residents and visitors to both local authority areas. The Gosport Ferry has a strong positive impact in encouraging trips between the City and Borough by sustainable transport means including walking, cycling and public transport being well served by onward public transport connections. The ferry connection plays an important role in encouraging modal shift away from private car use. GBC and PCC will work together on

ensuring cross-harbour travel is maintained and where opportunities arise will support improvements to cross-harbour travel which could for example include linking development sites in Gosport such as Blockhouse, Royal Clarence Yard, and Priddy's Hard with sites in Portsmouth such as the City Centre and Tipner West.

Differences in position

None

Environment

Agreed Position

3.20 Both parties agree to work collaboratively on biodiversity matters as part of the South East Hampshire group of authorities going forward including specifically in relation to:

- Green Infrastructure
- Mitigation measures
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Nutrient Neutrality
- Bird Aware

3.21 This joint working will take the form of an initial scoping meeting involving planning officers and ecologists representing the SE Hampshire authorities, with a follow-on work stream as required. The two Authorities will also continue to work closely together on environmental issues through PfSH and the Solent Mitigation Partnership.

Historic Environment

PCC Position

3.22 Portsmouth has an incredibly significant history largely shaped by the presence of the Royal Navy. The City also has an extensive legacy of non-military assets and archaeology, the latter dating back to the Bronze Age. The presence and expansion of the Naval Dockyard in the City led to its emergence as one of the single largest industrial sites in the world. From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century over 60,000 terraced houses were built. The best examples of these are protected within a number of the City's 25 conservation areas.

GBC position

3.23 Gosport has an impressive heritage legacy which is displayed through its built environment and contributes significantly to its unique sense of place. This includes the first purpose-built naval hospital in England on the Haslar Peninsula, a monumental series of nineteenth century Palmerston Forts, and the Haslar Gunboat Sheds. These heritage assets, when considered in relation to others in the Borough, those in Portsmouth and further afield, form a very distinct collection of national and internationally important assets in relation to that period when Britain's global maritime power was at its apex. The Borough has 18 conservation areas.

3.24 In 2019 Gosport was granted Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) status by Historic England. This recognised the Borough's rich heritage strengths and challenges and provided opportunities for additional conservation advice and funding. The Borough-wide HAZ programme consists of 21 varied projects funded by GBC, with supporting grants from Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Alongside this, a 'High Street HAZ' scheme has provided £1.8m of funding from Historic England and the Government. The programme has delivered built environment and cultural enhancements to Gosport's historic High Street and Stoke Road.

Agreed Position

3.25 GBC and PCC consider the historic environment to be an important area of cross border importance, with both Portsmouth and Gosport intrinsically linked through their shared naval history. Gosport has a legacy as a support base for the Royal Navy and military activity in Portsmouth Harbour. The two authority areas share one of the country's premier heritage tourist destinations in the form of the Historic Dockyard, which has attractions on both sides of the Harbour. The decline of the military presence around Portsmouth Harbour has led to a significant supply of brownfield land which provides significant opportunities for heritage-led development and cultural and educational opportunities which can conserve heritage, promote tourism and the local economy.

3.26 Both Councils will continue to engage and work proactively on heritage matters to promote Portsmouth Harbour's historic military legacy. Where possible, both Councils will maximise opportunities for heritage-led tourism across the harbour through South East Hampshire group of authorities, and, as necessary, on a bilateral basis.

Differences in position

None

4. Signatories

4.1 Both parties agree that this statement is an accurate representation of matters discussed and issues agreed upon.

4.2 Both parties agree that they have engaged positively on an ongoing basis both bilaterally and multilaterally through the Partnership for South Hampshire and group of South East Hampshire Authorities and that on this basis the Duty to Cooperate has been met.

4.3 Both parties agree that there are no substantial areas of disagreement between the parties relating to the emerging Portsmouth Local Plan and will both continue to work proactively on the key strategic cross boundary issues identified in this SCG.

	Signed:	Signed:
		
	Name: Lucy Howard	Name: Jayson Grygiel
	Position: Head of Planning Policy	Position: Head of Planning Policy

	Portsmouth City Council	Gosport Borough Council
	Date: 09.02.26	Date: 09.02.26