

Statement of Common Ground

Portsmouth City Council & National Highways

March 2026



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL



national
highways

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SCG) is a jointly agreed statement between Portsmouth City Council (PCC) and National Highways (NH). It sets out the position and understanding with respect to key strategic issues between the PCC and NH. 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 organisations only.
- 1.2 This SCG has been prepared in accordance with paragraphs 24 to 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF December 2024) and the section of the Planning Practice Guidance on Maintaining Effective Cooperation. It has been prepared in parallel with the emerging Local Plan (Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012). 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.
- 1.3 The Portsmouth Local Plan will be submitted in accordance with paragraph 237 of the NPPF (2024) on the 19 March 2026. The Portsmouth Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with the version of the NPPF published in December 2024.
- 1.4 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'.
- 1.5 The Written Ministerial Statement 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 Local Plan, to progress to examination by 31 December 2026.
- 1.6 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'.

Relation between Portsmouth City Council and National Highways

- 1.7 NH has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the strategic road network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such NH works to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity.

Planning Policy and national legislation (Transport)

- 1.8 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF states "Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for [...] infrastructure for transport".

1.9 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states: " Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places. This should involve:

- a) making transport considerations an important part of early engagement with local communities;
- b) ensuring patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places;
- c) understanding and addressing the potential impacts of development on transport networks;
- d) realising opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;
- e) identifying and pursuing opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use;
- and f) identifying, assessing and taking into account the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains.

1.10 Paragraph 110 of the NPPF states " The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. [.....]However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making."

1.11 Paragraph 111 states that "Planning policies should [...]

- b) be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned;
- c) identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development;"

Portsmouth Context

1.12 Within Portsmouth, the SRN consists of the M27, part of the M275, and the A27. It should be noted that the M275 is a short spur into Portsmouth, serving the City Centre and Portsmouth International Port, that marks the end of its parent motorway, the M27. The section of the M275 north of Junction 1 (Tipner/ Park & Ride) is considered part of the SRN and is managed by NH, but the M275 south of Junction 1 is managed by PCC.

2. Key strategic matters

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

Local Plan Agreed Position:

- 2.2 NH have assessed the content of the Submission Portsmouth Local Plan. NH support the content of the Local Plan and its allocations. NH are of the view that the Portsmouth Local Plan is sound and legally compliant. NH have no objections to the Portsmouth Local Plan and the levels of growth set out within it as allocated in the Local Plan Strategic Sites and Allocations.
- 2.3 This reiterates the position in the January 2025 SoCG where NH stated that 'based on the evidence supplied to support the Local Plan, NH consider the Portsmouth Local Plan to be sound and have no objections in principle to the potential mitigation schemes being included within the Strategic Transport Assessment.'
- 2.4 This was reiterated in the NH response to the Local Plan Addendum consultation (January 2026) which stated that: 'We [NH] have reviewed the Local Plan Addendum and accompanying documents. The changes follow the Secretary of State's opinions on Tipner West and update several strategic site policies and development targets. Having considered the submitted information, we note that the Addendum does not introduce any changes that affect the evidence previously agreed and documented in the existing Statement of Common Ground (2025 SoCG) between Portsmouth City Council and National Highways. Our position on the soundness of the plan therefore remains unchanged.' This SoCG confirms that this is still the case.

Strategic Transport Assessment

- 2.5 The Strategic Transport Assessment (STA) (comprising the Interim Strategic Transport Assessment¹ (December 2025) and Interim Strategic Transport Assessment Addendum² (February 2026) supports the position set out in the Portsmouth Local Plan. NH agree that the STA provides a robust evidence base to prove that the Local Plan is sound as detailed in paragraph 2.2 above. NH note that the revised STA (taking account of the Strategic Site and Allocations as set out in the Pre Submission Local Plan Addendum) shows an overall reduction in impact on the SRN.
- 2.6 PCC commissioned SYSTRA in March 2023 to assist in delivering a Strategic Transport Assessment (STA) in support of its emerging Local Plan to 2040. Throughout the STA process, SYSTRA and PCC have liaised with NH on an on-going basis as detailed in Appendix 1 of this SoCG.

¹ <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Portsmouth-Local-Plan-Interim-Strategic-Transport-Assessment-Addendum-041225.pdf>

² <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Portsmouth-Local-Plan-Strategic-Transport-Assessment-Addendum-200226.pdf>

2.7 NH commented on the different stages of the modelling which helping to establish the methodology for conducting both the strategic and local junction modelling. Appendix 1 to the SoCG sets out the stages of ongoing consultation which have taken place between PCC and NH. The result of this close engagement between the two organisations is that the two parties have been able to work together to reach the position where NH support the soundness and legal compliance of the Portsmouth Local Plan and STA work.

2.8 Points of specific note / importance as agreed by PCC and NH in the STA are as follows:

- The methodology for the modelling was agreed to include four modelling scenarios, a 2019 Base, 2041 Baseline (no Local Plan development except for committed sites and infrastructure), 2041 Do Minimum (with full Local Plan development, without mitigation measures) and a 2041 Do Something (with full Local Plan development and with mitigation measures).
- It was agreed that the STA would use the Solent Sub-Regional Transport Model (SRTM) model in conjunction with local junction modelling (LinSig and Junctions 10).
- The two parties agreed that TEMPRo V7.2 would be used in the modelling as opposed to TEMPRo V8 as it would yield a more robust case.
- Any mitigation measures considered in the Do Something scenario would consider a range of sustainable and active travel modes including walking, cycling, public transport and shared travel. This is in accordance with Department for Transport Circular 01/2022.
- NH stated that they were content with the approach taken at the SRN junctions.
- In principle agreement has been reached on the requirement for an increase in capacity at Portsbridge Roundabout forming the potential Local Plan mitigation alongside a wider package of measures on the Local Road Network (LRN) to be assessed.

Portsbridge Roundabout

2.9 There has been a considerable amount of work and discussion between PCC and NH around the Portsbridge roundabout. NH previously raised concerns around the impacts of the proposed changes to the Portsbridge Roundabout included in the STA.

2.10 NH recognises that the LRN improvements proposed in the STA in respect of Portsbridge Roundabout are not needed to mitigate the impacts of the Local Plan growth on the SRN but have been proposed by PCC as the Local Highways Authority to ensure the effective operation of the LRN. Trigger Point Testing carried out as part of the STA indicates that improvements at Portsbridge will unlikely be required until post 2035 based on the expected phasing of Local Plan development. The scheme in the STA provides an indicative test of what an intervention scheme at the roundabout could do and shows that there is a mitigation which can be brought forward in the future.

2.11 NH do not object in principle to potential mitigation at the Portsbridge Roundabout junction. They do, however, consider it necessary to undertake microsimulation modelling of the Portsbridge Roundabout as part of the project level design process in order to identify the layout of any potential scheme. As NH are not reliant on a potential improvement, they are content that this is not carried out at the plan making stage. This modelling is proposed to be undertaken at the project stage post Local Plan adoption. The modelling will ensure that optimal mitigation can be delivered to cope with anticipated development traffic demand and not have any detrimental impact on the SRN. The exact parameters of the mitigation at this junction will be determined following microsimulation and more detailed modelling at the project level.

2.12 NH indicated that they had no objection in principle to the Portsbridge scheme subject to further work at the project level to demonstrate that there will not be an adverse impact to the safe and efficient operation of the SRN.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan

2.13 PCC will continue to work collaboratively with NH to support and deliver key strategic infrastructure including those detailed within the PCC Strategic Transport Assessment (2024) and Interim Strategic Transport Assessment Addendum (ITSA)(2025). PCC have worked closely with NH in the production of their Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

3. Signatories

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

3.2 Both parties agree that they have engaged positively on an ongoing basis and that on this basis the Duty to Cooperate has been met.

3.3 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: Patrick Blake
Position: Head of Planning Policy	Position: Spatial Planner

Portsmouth City Council	National Highways
Date: 06.03.26	Date: 06.03.26

Appendix 1: Table detailing the partnership working between PCC and National Highways

Action	Partnership working with National Highways	Date of resolution
28/03/2023 Meeting between NH/PCC/Systra to discuss and agree the initial modelling approach	The meeting allowed Systra to explain the modelling approach proposed for the STA and offered an opportunity for NH to raise any concerns.	All parties agreed with the approach proposed during the meeting and Systra commenced with the STA modelling following this.
07/06/2023 PCC shared with NH the Local Plan Strategic Modelling Assumptions Technical Note which summarised the Strategic Modelling Assumptions that were going to be applied in the model runs	NH responded with queries and points of clarification on the 21/06/2023. PCC and Systra responded to these queries on the 24/07/2023. National Highways were content with the responses provided. There were no outstanding concerns prior to modelling being undertaken.	Final version of the technical note was shared with National highways on the 24/07/2023
20/11/2023 Meeting held between NH/PCC/Systra to provide an overview of results and difference between 2041 baseline and 2041 do min at SRN junctions (with full Local Plan development). Also discussed approach for assessing individual junctions through local junction models	This meeting provided an opportunity for PCC/Systra to present the findings with regards to the SRN junctions and present approach for developing mitigation. This meeting predominantly focussed on Portsbridge Roundabout. Further discussions were had regarding A27 Havant Bypass / A2030 Eastern Road roundabout and Rudmore Roundabout.	During the meeting National Highways stated that they were content with the approach taken at the SRN junctions and the approach for mitigation.
13/06/2024 Following completion of the modelling, PCC shared with	Prior to the publication of the Local Plan and Strategic Transport Assessment for Regulation 19, PCC shared a technical note	05/11/2024

National Highways a technical note focussed on the mitigation results at the SRN	with National Highways that focussed on the results of the SRN following mitigation. A meeting was held on the 31/07/2024 to discuss the results. NH raised several queries in an email (05/08/2024) which Systra provided a full response to (23/08/2024) including modelling data. PCC and Systra continued partnership working with NH who raised further queries on the 13/09/2024 and 22/10/2024, which responses were provided to on the 15/10/2024 and 05/11/2024 respectively.	
09/07/2024 PCC Local Plan published for the Regulation 19 Consultation including the Local Plan Strategic Transport Assessment	Following publications of the Local Plan, National Highways requested additional modelling clarifications on the 10/07/2024 and 15/07/2024 (see cell above for actions following this). National Highways provided a Regulation 19 response to the Local Plan on 02/09/2024	10/12/2024
20/11/2024 Meeting between PCC/NH/Systra to discuss additional information that NH would need in order to fully understand the modelling and mitigation proposed	NH wanted to further discuss their review of the STA, including the modelling and mitigation. NH requested a copy of the modelling be issued for review as is typically the case for this type of work, however, SYSTRA/PCC declined to do so. Systra provided explanations re. the modelling during the meeting, however, NH requested additional GIS files which were shared on the 11/12/2024. NH confirmed this data would limit the confidence that could be placed in the Local Plan transport modelling but would allow some level of review to take place..	17/02/2025
17/02/2025 Meeting between PCC/NH/Systra to discuss finalising the SoCG and any further works to finalise the STA	It was agreed during the meeting that NH required no further modelling prior to submission of the Local Plan. NH considered the plan to be sound and raised no objections to the principle of the mitigation schemes proposed within the STA.	18/02/2025
23/09/2025 Meeting between PCC/NH/Systra to discuss the methodology for the trigger point testing of the Portsbridge Roundabout scheme.	National Highways outlined that the mitigation scheme at Portsbridge is not required to mitigate SRN impacts and therefore it is for PCC to evidence if any mitigation is required at Portsbridge roundabout to mitigate LRN related impacts, including the timing requirements for that mitigation. NH confirmed this via email on 22/10/2025.	22/10/2025

07/01/2026 NH response on the Pre-Submission Portsmouth Local Plan Addendum	National Highways responded to the Pre-Submission Portsmouth Local Plan Addendum indicating that the Addendum does not introduce any changes that affect the evidence previously agreed and documented in the existing Statement of Common Ground (2025 SoCG) between PCC and NH and that their position on the soundness of the Plan therefore remains unchanged [that it is sound].	07/01/2026
19/01/26 Meeting between PCC/NH/Systra to discuss finalising the SoCG	It was agreed that the Portsmouth Local Plan was sound. It was agreed that any further modelling for the Portsbridge Roundabout could be undertaken at the project stage and that further modelling is not required for the Local Plan.	19/01/2026