

**Statement of Common Ground  
Portsmouth City Council &  
East Hampshire District Council**

**February 2026**



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# 1. Introduction

## **Context of the Statement of Common Ground**

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SCG) is a jointly agreed statement between Portsmouth City Council (PCC) and East Hampshire District Council (EHDC). 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.
- 1.2 PCC and EHDC 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). For a Local Plan to be found sound under the 2024 NPPF it needs to be 'positively prepared and 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.' PCC are intending to submit their local Plan in March 2026, and EHDC is intending to submit its Local Plan by the end of December 2026. It is noted that the consultation draft NPPF published in December 2025 proposes changes to the tests of soundness. However, the wording of the new test of 'appropriate' has the same general meaning as the 2024 definition of 'justified'.
- 1.3 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 and East Hampshire 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 This SCG has been prepared in reference to both the emerging East Hampshire Local Plan 2025 - 2043 and Portsmouth Pre-Submission Local Plan under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012<sup>1</sup>). PCC and EHDC agree on the importance of continuing to work on strategic cross boundary issues in line with both existing and draft national policy. This SCG replaces that agreed and published in July 2024.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/767/regulation/19/made>

## **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 geography of Portsmouth City and East Hampshire District.
- 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.
- 1.9 This SCG will be referenced in updates to the EHDC Duty to Co-operate Framework<sup>2</sup> and PCC Duty to Cooperate Statement<sup>3</sup>. These documents set out the key cross boundary issues for the two authorities which have informed this SCG.

## **2. Strategic Geography**

- 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 approx. 208,100 people, with a population density higher than some parts of London.
- 2.2 The district of East Hampshire covers approximately 514 square kilometres of the eastern part of the county of Hampshire. There are roughly 120,000 people living in the district, part (57%) of which benefits from being in the South Downs National Park (SDNP). The district is home to more than 6,000 businesses (most of which are small businesses) and is mostly rural with the largest towns being Petersfield (in the SDNP) and Alton. The A3 running through the district provides good access to Guildford and on to London, and to the south to Portsmouth. There are also good connections to Winchester and Farnham via the A31. The South Downs National Park Authority is its own planning authority area, and as such prepares its own Local Plan. EHDC plans for the areas of East Hampshire outside of the (SDNP).
- 2.3 East Hampshire District lies inland and to the north of Portsmouth. The two authorities are not immediate neighbours with parts of Havant Borough lying in between the two; the two authorities are approximately three miles apart at the closest point. The southern parishes of East Hampshire District, south of the SDNP, form part of the wider Portsmouth housing market area.
- 2.4 Portsmouth is significantly constrained in terms of geographical area, with the Solent to the south and the large natural Harbours to the east and west. This limits the space for potential development in the City to largely brownfield land. Most of the brownfield sites

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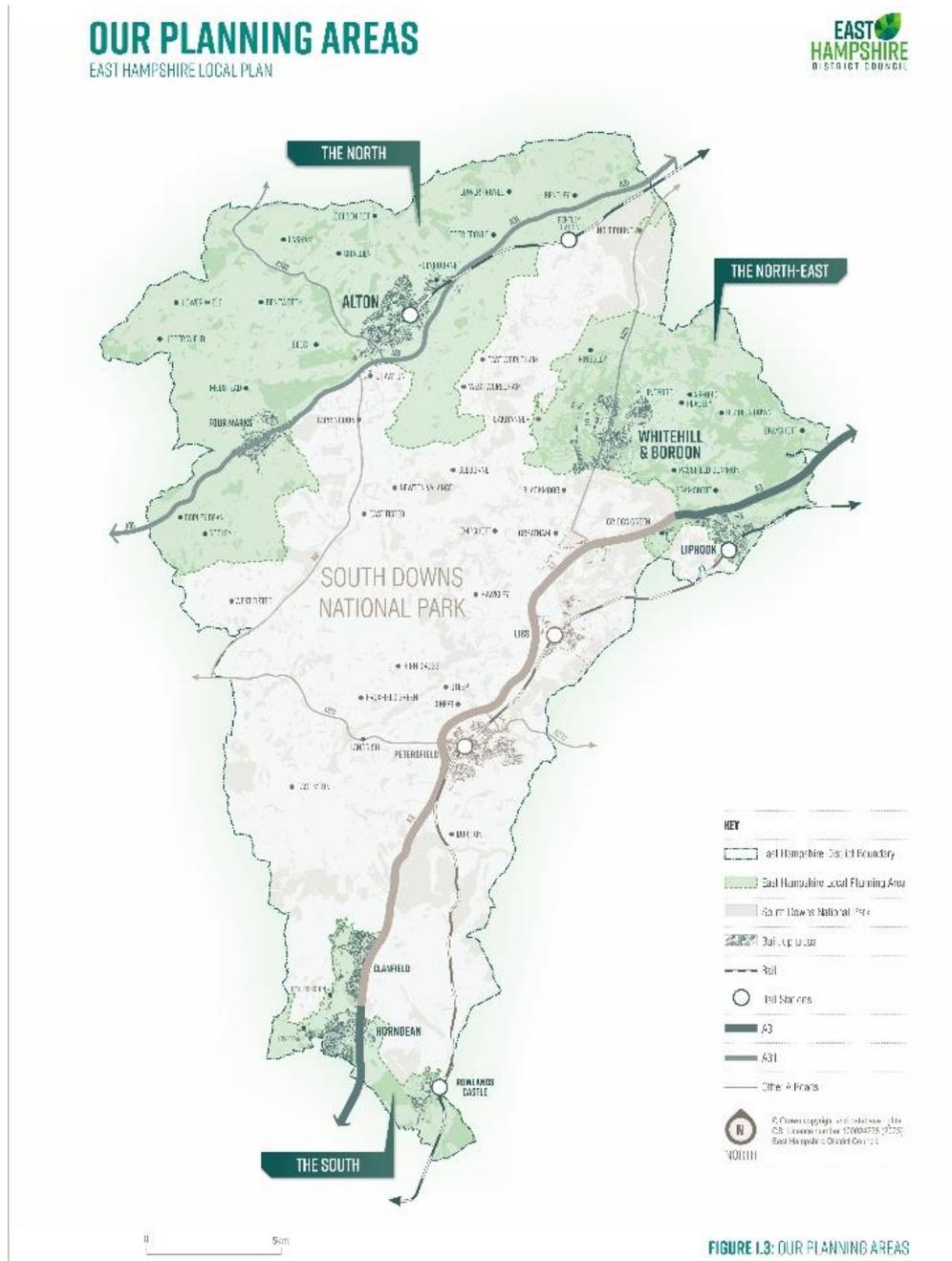
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.easthants.gov.uk/planning-services/planning-policy/local-plan/emerging-local-plan/evidence-base/other-evidence-0>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Duty-to-Cooperate-Statement-November-2025.pdf>

in the City have significant constraints such as contamination, historic structures and complicated ownership.

2.5 The planning area of East Hampshire is split into three distinct areas, separated by the SDNP. In the East Hampshire Draft Local Plan, the distinct areas are referred to as the North, the North-East and the South. The areas are shown in green in figure 1.

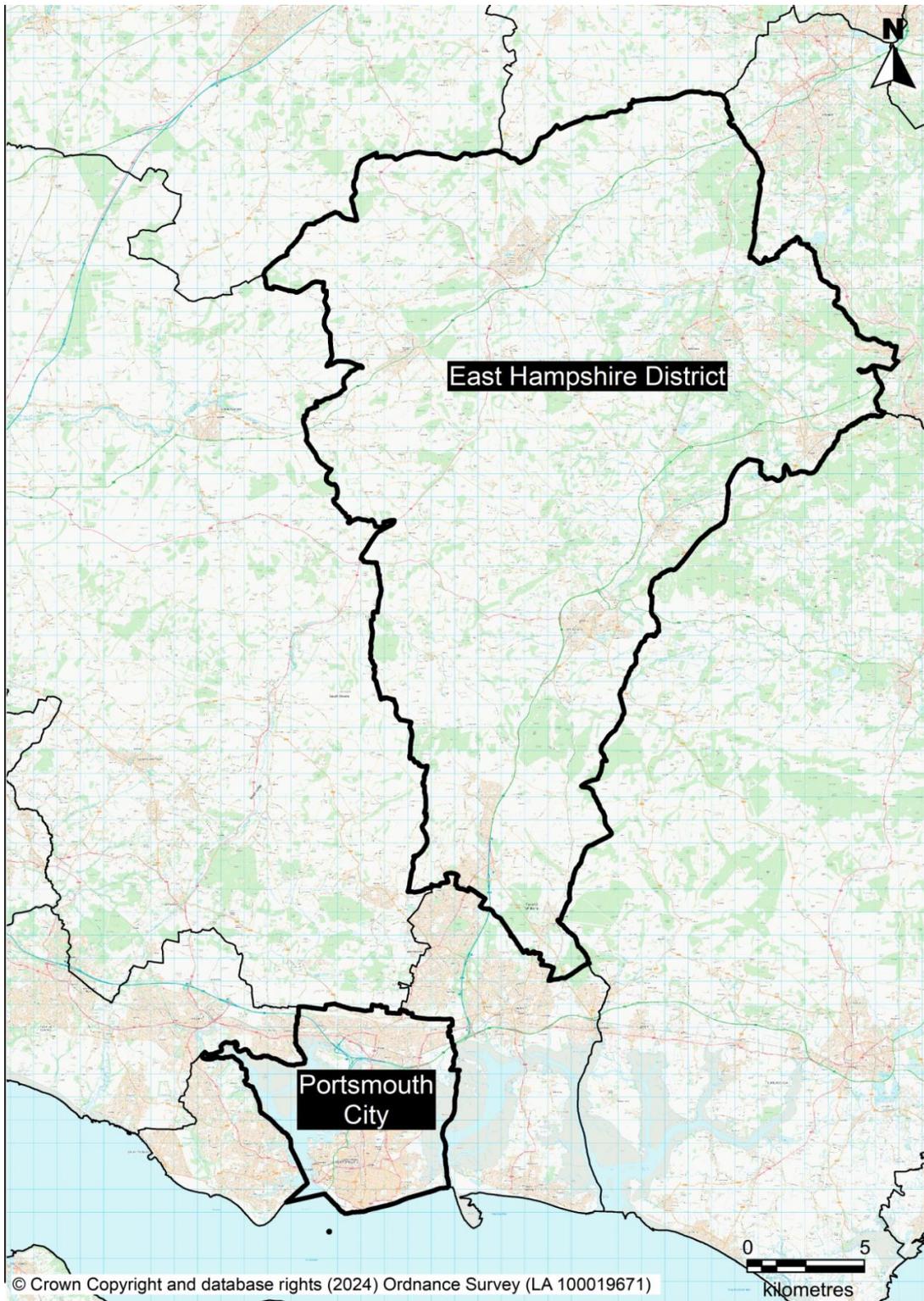
**Figure 1: East Hampshire District Council planning areas**



2.6 East Hampshire is a predominately rural district, consisting of countryside surrounding villages and settlements. Areas are constrained by environmental and heritage considerations such as Special Protections Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites

of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Monuments, Ancient Natural Woodland, Registered Parks and Gardens and areas of medium and high Flood Risk.

**Figure 2: East Hampshire District Council and Portsmouth City Council administrative boundaries**



## South East Hampshire

- 2.7 Prior to April 2025, Portsmouth City and East Hampshire District were active members of the Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) and worked together as part of PfSH on joint working including a number of Statements of Common Ground<sup>4</sup> and the Spatial Position Statement published in December 2023. EHDC left PfSH in April 2025.
- 2.8 More recently, PCC has been taking part in collective discussions as part of a grouping of South East Hampshire (SEH) authorities including Gosport Borough Council and Havant Borough Council (and more recently Fareham Borough Council). This collaborative working allowed for the development of an up-to-date picture of the unmet development need situation in SEH. The combined unmet housing need for the SEH area as of October 2025 was 18,347 homes. An unmet need of 19,973sqm of employment floorspace was also identified.
- 2.9 The SEH Authorities met in October 2025 with EHDC, Fareham Borough Council and Winchester District Council to discuss the joint unmet development need position.
- 2.10 On 13 October 2025, Portsmouth, Havant and Gosport Councils wrote to EHDC seeking assistance with this unmet need. On 11 November 2025, EHDC responded, acknowledging the identified unmet needs, and indicating that it was required to meet a 95% increase in its standard method housing need based on the 2024 standard method. EHDC said that it would consider the unmet needs of SEH through the East Hampshire District Council local plan process, concluding, *“At this time, it is currently unknown whether EHDC will be able to meet its own disaggregated housing needs and therefore through due assessment will need to consider to what extent we can meet unmet needs from elsewhere in our Local Plan. Should a surplus of housing capacity be identified as part of a suitable development strategy, it is envisaged that unmet needs from the SDNP in East Hampshire would be prioritised.”*
- 2.11 Since the exchange of letters, EHDC has been informed by Havant Borough Council (13 February 2026), that group discussions have taken place, during which Fareham Borough Council has highlighted that they are in a position whereby they can meet the identified unmet employment needs that exist (19,973sqm of employment floorspace). A SCG to formalise this position is currently being prepared, and EHDC expects to be informed when that is finalised. Havant Borough Council has confirmed that it therefore no longer needs to discuss with EHDC whether unmet employment needs can be accommodated by EHDC. However, this does not affect the overall unmet housing needs (albeit Fareham has also agreed to provide 100 homes to Gosport, potentially reducing the unmet housing need for the SEH authorities by 100 to 18,247 dwellings).
- 2.12 The most recent position in respect of unmet housing need is set out in section 3 of this SoCG. The request letter<sup>5</sup> to and response<sup>6</sup> from EHDC form part of the Portsmouth Local Plan examination library.

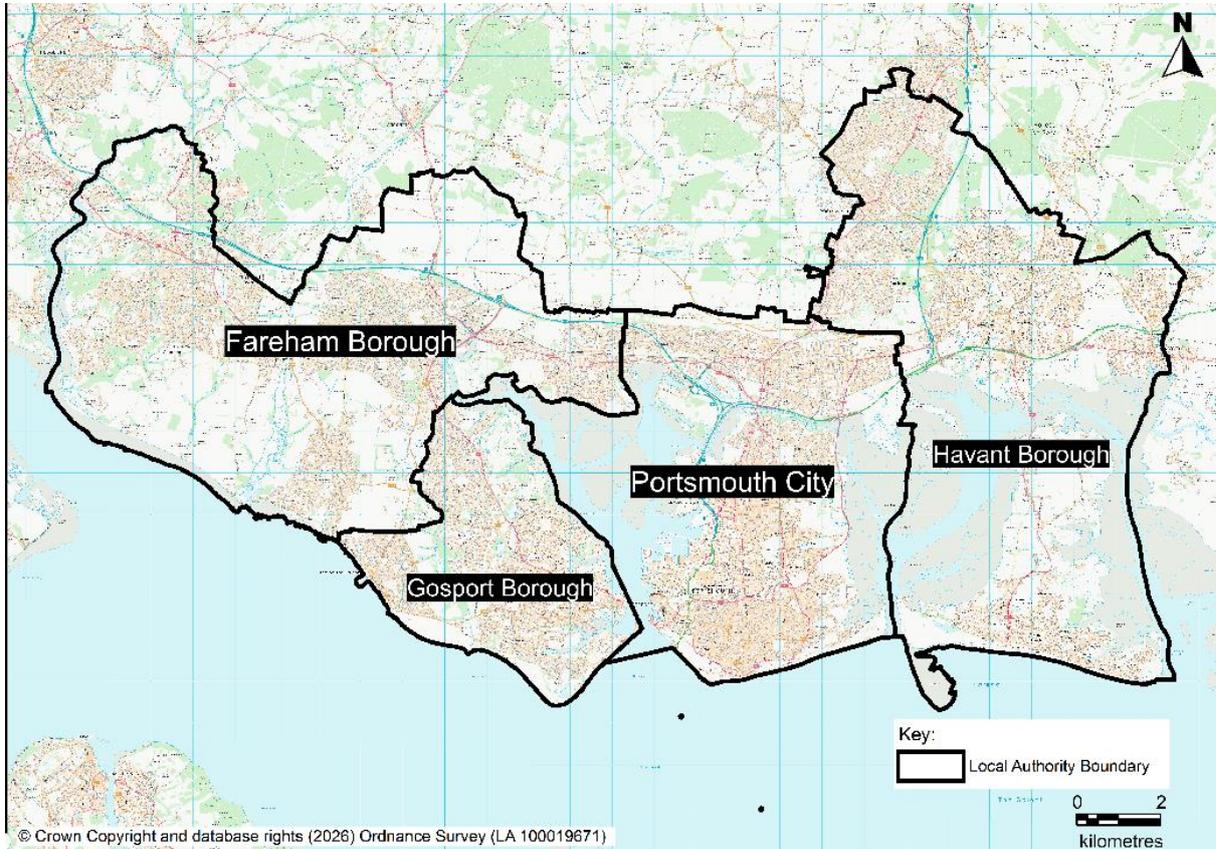
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<sup>4</sup> The Joint Committee agreed a formal SoCG in September 2020 and updated versions in October 2021, December 2022 and September 2023.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/FINAL\\_Letter\\_EHDC\\_13-10-25.pdf](https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/FINAL_Letter_EHDC_13-10-25.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/EHDC\\_Response-to-PCC-HBC-GBC-Nov-2025.pdf](https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/EHDC_Response-to-PCC-HBC-GBC-Nov-2025.pdf)

**Figure 3: Map of South East Hampshire Authorities**



### **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 the East Hampshire District Local Plan of 2025 to 2043.

## Housing

3.2 The table below sets out the respective housing land supply positions of the two authorities as of February 2026.

LPA	Plan period		Housing need according to the standard method	Housing supply	Surplus/ Unmet need <sup>7</sup>
East Hampshire District Council	2025-2043 (18 years)	Total	14,904	3,815*	Not known
		<i>Dwellings per annum</i>	828	212*	Not known
Portsmouth City Council	2025-2040 (15 years)	Total	15,285	11,369	-3,916
		<i>Dwellings per annum</i>	1,019	758	-261

\*Housing supply for EHDC made up of permissions only as of 01-04-25

**Table 1: Housing need and supply in Portsmouth and East Hampshire**

### East Hampshire District Council's Position

3.3 As set out in paragraph 2.2 of this SCG, East Hampshire District is partially within the South Downs National Park (SDNP), which is a separate local planning authority. Therefore, the figures for East Hampshire in table 1 take a disaggregated approach to housing need and do not consider unmet need from the SDNP. The current disaggregated housing need using the standard method for East Hampshire (outside the SDNP) is 828 dwellings per annum, totalling 14,904 over the Plan period (2025-2043) as evidenced in the 'Applying the Standard Method to the South Downs National Park Area and overlapping Local Authorities Study'<sup>8</sup> (October 2025). As context, the district-wide housing need from the standard method is 1,124 homes per year.

3.4 As EHDC continues to work on the Local Plan, the housing supply at the current time (February 2026) only includes outstanding commitments as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, totalling 3,815 dwellings\*. This does not include draft allocations in the emerging Local Plan. The emerging Local Plan will determine whether suitable sites could be allocated to meet the disaggregated housing need from the standard method. As such, EHDC is not in a position at present to complete the column 'surplus/unmet need' in the table and has therefore left it blank, to be determined. EHDC cannot state at present whether it can meet its disaggregated housing need, and as such whether there is a surplus or unmet need of housing.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.easthants.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-10/South%20Downs%20National%20Park%20standard%20method%20apportionment.pdf>

## **Portsmouth City Council's Position**

- 3.5 PCC has recently consulted on its Pre-Submission Local Plan Addendum (November 2025 to January 2026) and anticipates that its Local Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in March 2026. The emerging Local Plan covers the period from 2025 to 2040.
- 3.6 Based upon the assessment carried out through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) the emerging 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.
- 3.7 The City Council has an unmet housing need of 3,916 dwellings against its total housing need as defined by the standard method. The City Council has corresponded with its immediate neighbours and those in the South East Hampshire (Portsmouth) Housing Market Area (Chichester District Council, Gosport Borough Council, Havant Borough Council, Fareham Borough Council, East Hampshire District Council, South Downs National Park Authority and Winchester City Council) to ascertain if they are able to accommodate its 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). Fareham Borough Council confirmed through its adopted Local Plan that it would accommodate 800 dwellings of the City's unmet need. The City Council is also working proactively with Gosport, Fareham and Havant Borough Councils as part of the SEH group.

## **Agreed Position**

- 3.8 The issue of calculating housing need in areas including national parks was recently discussed by the PfSH Planning Officers Group (POG). PCC as part of PfSH POG consider that the South Downs approach, as set out by EHDC above, should be tested at examination, recognising the knock-on implications for neighbouring authorities. PfSH including PCC will remain neutral on the matter.
- 3.9 PCC acknowledge that EHDC are at an earlier stage of plan making and have not yet identified a housing target in its emerging Local Plan.
- 3.10 EHDC recognises the unmet housing needs arising from Portsmouth, Gosport and Havant of 18,347 homes). At this time, it is currently unknown whether EHDC will be able to meet its own disaggregated housing needs and therefore through due assessment will need to consider to what extent it can meet unmet needs from elsewhere in the East Hampshire District Local Plan. Should a surplus of housing capacity be identified as part of a suitable development strategy, it is envisaged that unmet needs from the SDNP in East Hampshire would be prioritised.

3.11 EHDC will give due consideration to the identified unmet needs of SEH as it continues preparation of its Local Plan. This will be done through evidence base work and the Integrated Impact Assessment.

3.12 To appropriately meet unmet needs in another area, there must be a functional relationship with that area. The areas in East Hampshire identified as the North and the North East do not have a functional relationship with Portsmouth City and are not suitable to meet unmet needs of Portsmouth City. If unmet needs of Portsmouth City were to be accommodated by East Hampshire, this could only potentially be possible in the East Hampshire Southern Parishes (“the South” – see Fig.1).

## Employment

3.13 The table below sets out the employment land supply position for Portsmouth. An explanation of the employment land supply for East Hampshire is set out in the text below.

LPA	Plan period		Employment need	Employment supply	Surplus/unmet need
East Hampshire District Council <sup>9</sup>	2025-2043 (18 years)	Total	n/k	n/k	n/k
		<i>ha per annum</i>	<i>n/k</i>	<i>n/k</i>	<i>n/k</i>
Portsmouth City Council	2025-2040 (15 years)	Total	107,485 m <sup>2</sup>	138,746 m <sup>2</sup>	+31,261 m <sup>2</sup>
		<i>m<sup>2</sup> per annum</i>	<i>7,166 m<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>9,250 m<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>2,084 m<sup>2</sup></i>

**Table 2: Employment need and supply in Portsmouth and East Hampshire**

### PCC position

3.14 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 Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) (October 2025). 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 (107,485m<sup>2</sup>) and supply (138,746m<sup>2</sup>) positions from the HEDNA and HELAA together there is a surplus of 31,261 m<sup>2</sup> of employment floorspace, which is entirely office floorspace. The City Council has formally offered this surplus to Havant Borough Council to help meet Havant Borough's unmet need under the Duty to Cooperate.

<sup>9</sup> See para 3.13 for the EHDC employment land position.

## **EHDC position**

3.15 As EHDC continues to work on the Local Plan, an updated position of the employment need, supply and surplus/unmet need cannot yet be determined. The emerging Local Plan will look to allocate sites to meet the EHDC employment need, as determined from a forthcoming and updated publication of the HEDNA, due to be published in 2026 shortly. In the absence of the updated HEDNA 2026, EHDC's position on employment remains unchanged from that published in the HEDNA 2022<sup>10</sup>, of 21.51 ha of committed employment land in the plan area and a need of 28.2 ha.

## **Agreed Position**

3.16 The two authorities agree that the Portsmouth Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) includes the Southern parishes of East Hampshire District. The ongoing cross boundary work of the SEH Authorities indicates that currently the authorities in the FEMA will be able to accommodate the employment needs of the FEMA within its boundaries and not require further assistance from authorities across wider Hampshire including EHDC.

## **Transport**

### **PCC position**

3.17 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 that were sufficient to mitigate the impacts of the local plan growth.

### **EHDC position**

3.18 To support the Draft Local Plan consultation 2024, East Hampshire District Council prepared a Transport Background Paper, which details the current provision of road, rail, bus, walking and cycling infrastructure in East Hampshire. The Background Paper also provides evidence regarding existing transport related carbon emissions, travel patterns, air quality, accessibility, road safety and parking standards. Current transport issues are identified as well as how these could be addressed by the East Hampshire Local Plan. This document sets out East Hampshire District's current travel patterns and provision of transport networks.

3.19 The transport assessment for the East Hampshire Local Plan is split into two stages. The first stage relating to the production of an accessibility study for the planning area is complete. This study identifies the relative accessibility of facilities and services across the planning area by walking and cycling modes, indicating the strengths and weakness of different locations for 'living locally' and supporting modal shift towards more

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.easthants.gov.uk/media/7496/download?inline>

sustainable forms of transport. The outputs of the East Hampshire Accessibility Study aids understanding of where future growth could and should be focused. The Accessibility Study informs the second stage of the East Hampshire transport assessment, which is an emerging strategic cumulative transport assessment of the district, as well as other non-transport related evidence base studies.

3.20 The strategic cumulative transport assessment of the district is emerging and commenced. This second part of the transport assessment aims to provide evidence of the forecast cumulative highway impacts, in the district, from proposed Local Plan development. Any required mitigation, in the form of highway and/or sustainable transport interventions, will also be incorporated.

**Agreed Position**

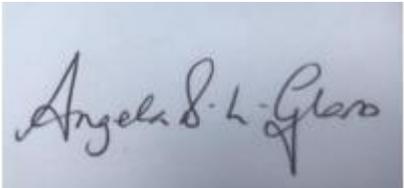
3.21 The two authorities are separated by Havant Borough, however there are good road and rail links from Portsmouth to the southern and eastern parts of East Hampshire District. The two authorities will work together and with Hampshire County Council to promote improved sustainable transport connections.

**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 the South East Hampshire Group of 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.

<p>Signed: </p>	<p>Signed: </p>
<p>Name: Lucy Howard</p>	<p>Name: Cllr Angela Glass</p>

Position: Head of Planning Policy	Position: Portfolio Holder, Regulation and Enforcement
Portsmouth City Council	East Hampshire District Council
Date: 23.02.26	Date: 24.02.26