

TELFORD & WREKIN LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Hearing Statement

Representor ref number/ Representor	E145 - Dudley MBC
Matter	1 – Compliance with statutory procedures and legal matters
Relevant issue	Issue 1 - Has the Council met the statutory duty to co-operate ('DtC') as set out under sections 20(5)(c) and 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended? (We shall examine this issue having regard to the letter from Matthew Pennycook MP to the Planning Inspectorate dated 27 November 2025).
Q1. Has the Council submitted robust evidence to demonstrate that the duty to co-operate has been met?	<p>In accordance with the Matthew Pennycook letter, dated 27 November 2025, it is understood that for all Local Plans at examination, the Duty to Co-operate is now a matter of soundness rather than legal compliance.</p> <p>From Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council's (DMBC) perspective, we consider that all the strategic matters requiring cross-boundary cooperation have been identified as relevant to Telford & Wrekin Council's and DMBC's Local Plans.</p> <p>Telford & Wrekin Council's Duty to Co-operate engagement and correspondence as evidenced in the Council's Duty to Co-operate Statement and related appendices document [SC01 and SC01a] are consistent with national policy requirements. Appendix 7 of the Duty to Co-operate Statement appendices [SC01a] includes the Greater Birmingham Black Country HMA SoCG, which sets out an agreed method for apportioning contributions from surrounding Local Planning Authorities, including Telford & Wrekin, towards the Black Country Authorities (inc Dudley MBC) and Birmingham's unmet housing needs. In an addendum to this SoCG, Telford & Wrekin Council has confirmed that it is willing to sign an updated version of this SoCG that reflects their submission position. This is set out in Appendix 8 [SC01a]. An updated version of the HMA SoCG has been produced and has officer approval.</p>

Q2. Has the Council carried out effective engagement with neighbouring local authorities and other prescribed bodies on all relevant strategic matters? In particular has effective engagement taken place in respect of housing and employment needs and provision in a cross-border context?

It is DMBC's view that Telford & Wrekin Council has undertaken ongoing engagement via written correspondence and participation in meetings. The Council has engaged in a positive, cooperative and active manner with the Black Country Council's (both jointly and individually) throughout the preparation of the Local Plan, as evidenced in the Duty to Co-operate Statement [SC01 and SC01a], to address the housing shortfall across the Black Country local authorities' area, including an increase contribution to the Black Country Authorities' needs.

Q3. Are there any remaining areas of dispute between relevant authorities and bodies relating to the duty to co-operate and its fulfilment by the Council? If so, please give details? Are they resolvable in terms of soundness?

DMBC has previously indicated in its representation to the Regulation 19 [CD11] that should the housing contribution from the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan to the Black Country Authorities is found to be sound, it is important that the Council should commit to an early review, including consideration of the need to accommodate housing shortfalls arising in neighbouring authorities. A logical trigger for this early review would be that all four Black Country Authorities have reached Draft Plan consultation stage (including proposed housing allocations) for Local Plans prepared under the 2024 NPPF, and that a cumulative evidenced housing shortfall remains.

Furthermore, this requirement is further set out in correspondence between DMBC to Telford & Wrekin Council, dated 11th September 2025, Appendix 6 of Duty to Co-operate Statement appendices [SC01a].

It is noted that a requirement for an early review would be under the new Development Plan system, of which the details of the new Co-operate test, timescales and spatial geography are not yet known for any Local and Strategic Development Plans that would cover the Telford & Wrekin area. However, as set out above, a logical trigger for this early review would be that all four Black Country Authorities have reached Draft Plan consultation stage (including proposed housing allocations) for Local Plans prepared under the 2024 NPPF or subsequent versions of the NPPF, and that a cumulative housing shortfall remains.

Whilst Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton Local Plans are currently at examination under the transitional arrangements set out in NPPF 2024, all three authorities are required to prepare new local plans from June 2026. Walsall Council's Local Plan is being prepared under NPPF 2024 and will be submitted for examination by December 2026.

Based on the evidence work carried out to date, that a significant housing shortfall following these Local Plan reviews will continue to remain. Furthermore, following approval by the West Midlands Combined Authority Board in 2025, work has commenced on the West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy whose geographical area covers the four Black Country Authorities, Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry. Telford & Wrekin has strong migration links with the Black Country Authorities as evidenced in the Greater Birmingham Black Country HMA SoCG [SC01a] and as such any new plans should consider the potential to address outstanding housing shortfalls.