

Draft Strategic Local Plan Consultation Summary Booklet

October 2014



St Albans
City & District Council

Introduction

The Council is seeking your views on its draft Strategic Local Plan (referred to below as the draft Local Plan).

The draft Local Plan sets out the long-term planning strategy for the District. It provides overarching policies and principles for what can be built and where over the next two decades.

The consultation runs for six weeks between 10 October and 23rd November at 5pm. Details of how to give your feedback can be found at the end of the booklet.

Full information on the Strategic Local Plan process and the current consultation can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1wQsgEw>

Thank you very much for taking the time to respond.

Context

St Albans City & District is required to have a Local Plan.

However the Council does not have free rein to decide its Local Plan. It must comply with the law and Government policy, in particular the related National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

The National Planning Policy Framework can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1rEst8S>

The Planning Practice Guidance can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1I6ixQX>

A Local Plan must also comply with planning case law and be based on proportionate and justifiable evidence.

While still largely effective, the current Local Plan dates from 1994 and is one of the oldest in England. The law and national policy is clear that achieving what people want, and resisting what they do not, requires a new Local Plan.

The 1994 Local Plan can be found at: <http://bit.ly/10dSNko>

It is important to recognise that the planning issues we now face are not new. The last 50 years has seen significant growth in the District, both within and adjoining the main towns and villages.

The Historic Growth Paper can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1rGW7h1>



St Albans City and District Council Process

The Council established its Planning Policy Committee (PPC) to look at the issues in depth and to take the Local Plan forward. The Committee includes elected Members from the three main political parties.

PPC has received evidence and worked on the draft Local Plan since October 2013. Its meetings are open to the public. All evidence documents and the minutes of the meetings are publicly available.

PPC meetings information can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1pILJrG>

This consultation is *your opportunity* to give us your views and present any information for the Council to consider as it prepares the Local Plan.

Key Issues

The NPPF seeks to prioritise economic recovery and boost housing supply to meet the needs of a growing population. However it also looks to maintain the Green Belt as far as possible. This creates real challenges for the Council in finding the right balance between these priorities.

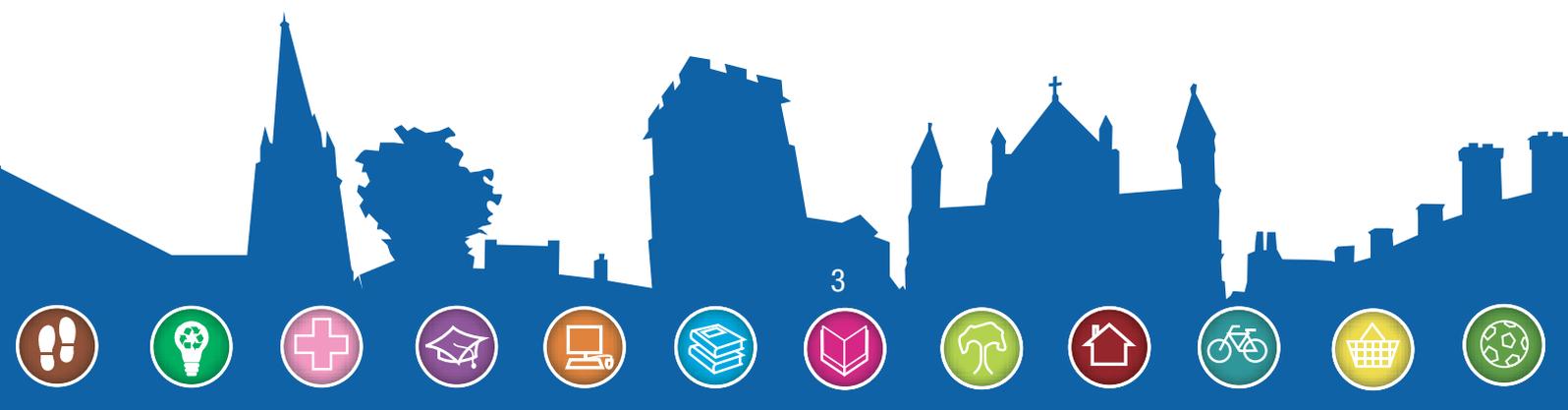
We have tried to address the choices we face by commissioning independent specialist studies of housing need and our Green Belt.

Housing Studies

The full, objective assessment of housing needs is complex, but has two key elements. Firstly it looks at the overall housing numbers needed. Secondly, it looks at the type and mix of housing; for example smaller family housing for young families and older people wanting to downsize.

As required by national policy, the study is based on the Government's definition of 'housing need'. This includes housing for people who need to live in the District or to move (back) to the District because they have always lived here, or because they work or have family here. It also includes housing for people who would be likely to move here from other parts of the country and abroad because they find the District an attractive or convenient place to live. The study must be based on official demographic trends (births, deaths and net migration).

The Housing Need Study can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1uVHTGj>



Green Belt Studies

The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The NPPF sets out five detailed 'purposes' of the Green Belt.

The NPPF Green Belt section can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1uwGACM>

Over 80% of the District lies within the Green Belt. This means that development is restricted. However, when creating a new Local Plan, Government policy is that local consideration should be given to whether or not the current boundaries of the Green Belt should be altered.

Our Green Belt evidence is in two parts.

The Part 1 study identified eight large and eight smaller areas of land that contribute least to the five Green Belt purposes. The independent study took the position that, if development is needed, it should go where it would cause least damage.

The Green Belt Review Part 1 can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1wQsgEw>

The Part 2 study looked in more detail at the eight large areas, as their potential size offered greatest opportunity for significant housing, infrastructure and community benefits. It set out their potential residential capacity and possible new Green Belt boundaries. The eight areas identified as a consequence of the Part 2 study are shown in the diagram; coloured yellow or purple. They are of a strategic scale with the potential for hundreds or thousands of homes and significant public infrastructure.

The sites were also ranked, primarily on degree of Green Belt and landscape impact, recognising that they all meet at least one of the NPPF's 5 purposes.

The Green Belt Review Part 2 - SKM Plans can be found at: <http://bit.ly/116qzfi>

An errata sheet showing errors and corrections can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1q08WC6>

Sustainability Appraisal – Balancing Economic, Social and Environmental Considerations

In line with the NPPF, the Council also looked at the wider range of economic, social and environmental factors that contribute to sustainable communities.

The eight large sites identified were subject to additional detailed evaluation by the Council to rank them overall, taking sustainability factors into account. The wider evaluation resulted in a different ranking to that arising from the Green Belt Review. In particular it gave high priority to a major expansion of eastern Hemel Hempstead because it offers economic and social benefits for the sub region. This is explained in the full evaluation reports.

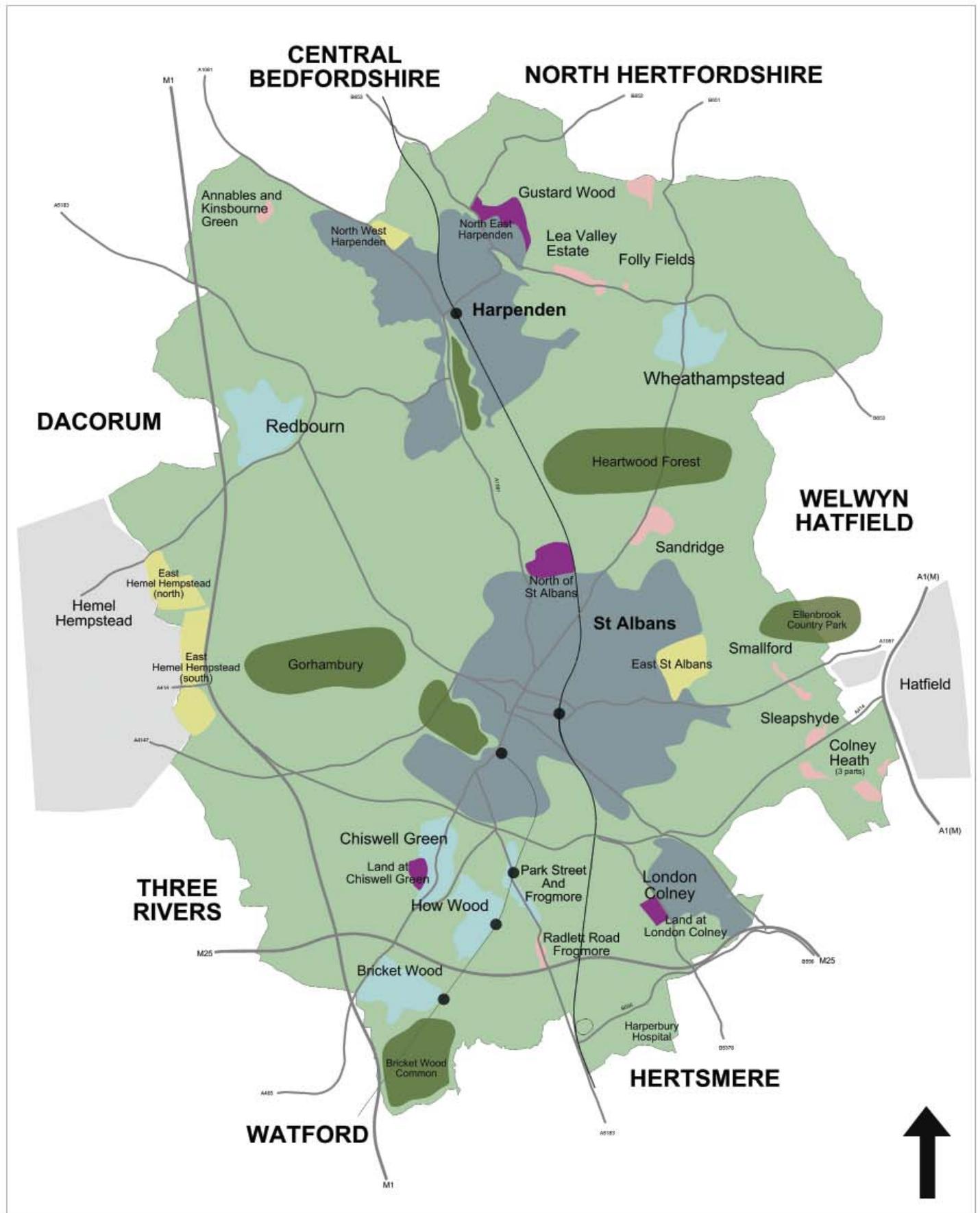
In order to further assess the options for levels of development and choices of development sites, a statutory Sustainability Appraisal has been prepared by independent consultants.

The Evaluation Report / SA can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1pDDAxL>



Draft Strategic Local Plan Consultation – Key Diagram

This diagram shows all the main areas identified as having potential for large scale development and those selected for inclusion in the draft Local Plan. At this stage the detailed boundaries are not identified.



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- Towns
- Large Villages
- Green Belt Settlements
- Metropolitan Green Belt
- Locations (for mixed use or principally housing as identified in policies)
- Other locations not identified in policies; given their ranking in the evaluation process



Consultation Issues and Questions

You are strongly encouraged to use the consultation web portal: <http://bit.ly/1qVuow7>

Alternatively, you can fill in the questionnaire below. Please note responses received will be uploaded to the web portal and will be visible to everyone.

We believe that the main issues and questions for this consultation are set out below. There are of course many other aspects of the draft Local Plan that you may wish to comment on. Space for longer or additional comments is set out on page 13.

All comments are welcome.

We have set out the issues in brief, but you may wish to refer to the more detailed documents available.

Links to the draft Local Plan text and relevant evidence studies are provided with each question.

1. Economic Development

We need to consider Government and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) aspirations for growth. The draft Local Plan gives the economy high priority and says:

There are two main economic aims:

- *To foster a healthy, diverse and strong local economy, with a focus on knowledge industries, financial and business services, the rural economy, the green technology sector, creative industries and visitor economy*
- *To offer employers a highly skilled and flexible workforce and individuals the very best opportunities to*

learn, train, start businesses, develop entrepreneurial opportunities and improve their employability

The draft Local Plan suggests that economic development needs will be met locally and in the wider area, with many people working in London and nearby towns. The draft Local Plan supports key innovation centres in the District (Rothamsted Research for agriculture - and the Building Research Establishment for the built environment). New employment land will be available at east Hemel Hempstead to meet the priority of the LEP for development in the M1/M25 corridor and regeneration of Hemel Hempstead. New housing in the district supports economic growth.

SLP Chapter 6 Mixed and Balanced Communities can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1qVuow7>

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
 Don't Know

Do you have any alternative approach to suggest? Comments?

2. Housing Need

An important part of planning for the future of the District is identifying the number of homes that will



be required to house a growing population. St Albans District is different to many areas in that, as well as 'natural' growth through family formation and people wanting to live close to where they work, it is seen as a highly desirable area to move to from elsewhere.

We commissioned an independent study to help us decide the future level of housing that should be considered in the Plan. The consultants gave a range of options from 436 to 747 dwellings each year. We felt that 436 was an appropriate projection on which to base the draft Local Plan. This uses data from a ten year period to estimate the number of people who might move into and out of the area. We believe it gives a better base to estimate future local net migration than the five year period used by the Office of National Statistics in their national projections. Over the twenty year period for which we are planning (2011 – 2031) this comes to 8,720 dwellings. The draft Local Plan says:

Housing needs research suggests that, using a demographic projection of future household growth and taking account of longer term estimates of migration (ten year projection period), an annual average provision of 436 new dwellings would meet full need.

PPC meetings information can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1pILJrG>

The Housing Need Study can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1uVHTGj>

The Housing Need consultant's presentation to PPC can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1tbp8iB>

SLP Chapter 6 Mixed and Balanced Communities can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1qVuow7>

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you have any alternative approach to suggest?

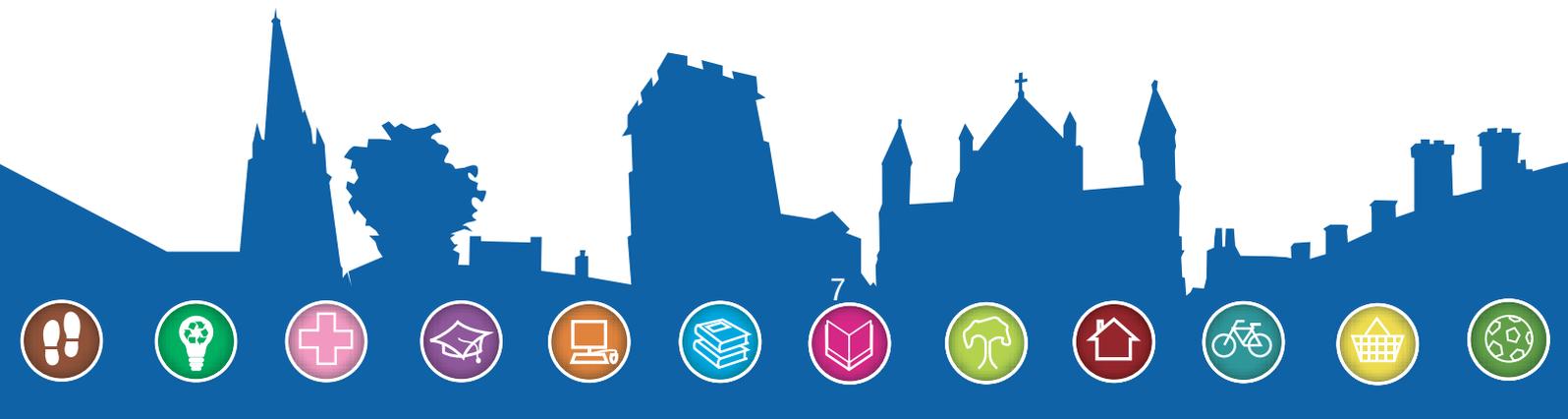
3. Affordable Housing and Housing Mix/ Type

The demographic trends reported in our housing study indicate a particular need for smaller housing for young families. Our study also highlighted the continuing importance of making affordable housing available, particularly to cater for new family formation and people wanting to live close to where they work. Some of this needs to be socially rented and some needs to be purchasable through schemes such as shared ownership.

Experience elsewhere in the country suggests that developments with very high levels of affordable housing do not help to create rounded, cohesive communities. Bearing this and funding issues in mind, we think 40% affordable housing is a realistic target. The draft Local Plan says:

The Council will seek affordable housing contributions from all new residential development... 40% affordable homes as a proportion of the overall development unless it is clearly demonstrated that this is not economically viable...

All new housing development will contribute to a mix of different housing types in residential areas, taking into account the existing pattern of housing in the area, evidence of local need and site specific factors. It will in particular require the inclusion of more small and small to medium-sized housing, including one and two



bedroom flats and two and three bedroom houses, in new development schemes in suitable locations, to increase the proportion of such sized units in the district housing stock, to widen choice and to provide more relatively low cost market housing available to buy.

PPC meetings information can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/1pILJrG>

The Housing Need Study can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/1uVHtGj>

The affordable housing evidence base can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/1vM4uui>

SLP Chapter 6 Mixed and Balanced Communities can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1qVuW7>

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
 Don't Know

Do you have any alternative approach to suggest? Comments?

4. Housing Development Options

We have prepared the draft Local Plan on the basis that sites within the existing urban areas of St Albans and the other towns and villages in the District should be developed – or redeveloped - in preference to anywhere else.

Around 1,075 homes have already been built since the

start of the planning period on 1 April 2011. We already know of sites that would take about 1,750 homes and, if past patterns continue, we would expect to see about 1,800 homes built on 'windfall' sites that we don't know about yet. We also expect about 500 homes being built as a result of neighbourhood plans and communities supporting some minor changes to Green Belt through the Detailed Local Plan process. Together these would see about 5,000 new homes being built in the area by 2031.

If we are planning to meet the level of housing growth projected in our independent study, we will have to find somewhere for an additional 4,000 new homes.

Options include:

1. Keep our Green Belt boundaries where they are, but this would mean that we cannot house everybody who needs or wishes to live in the District.
2. Prepare a Local Plan that removes some land from the Green Belt, but does not provide for the full level of housing growth that our independent study identified. We could, instead, attempt to focus housing provision on those elements that we believe are most pressing.
3. Prepare a Local Plan on the basis of removing land from the Green Belt to accommodate the projected need for additional homes in full (4,000 homes). We have prepared the draft Local Plan on this basis to illustrate what the effect of doing this would be.

If we do not provide for all 4,000 new homes, we will need to explore opportunities to divert development to other areas. Whilst there is a legal requirement, known as the 'duty to cooperate', for other councils to discuss this with us, neighbouring areas face much the same pressures as we do and may well ask us to accommodate some of their needs.

PPC meetings information can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/1pILJrG>

The Housing Need Study can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/1uVHtGj>

SLP Chapter 6 Mixed and Balanced Communities can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1qVuW7>



Which option do you believe we should choose and why?

- Option 1
- Option 2
- Option 3

Do you believe there are other options that we should explore and why? Comments?

5. “Exceptional Circumstances” for Change to Green Belt Boundaries

One issue of particular significance for the District is national policy on Green Belt. The Metropolitan Green Belt around London sets out to limit urban sprawl. There is clearly a high demand for housing in our area. The Green Belt that surrounds St Albans is however highly prized by many of its residents and is one of the factors that contributes to the high demand for housing.

We have to decide if factors such as growing housing and the economic regeneration of Hemel Hempstead now justify change to the Green Belt boundaries.

Green Belt should only be changed in ‘exceptional circumstances’. This is a controversial issue currently subject to national political debate and legal dispute. The Council has taken specific legal advice about the question of ‘exceptional circumstances’.

Some people in the District think that the need for housing is so important that ‘exceptional circumstances’

exist justifying a change to Green Belt boundaries. Other people think that it is not surprising or unusual for our District that we cannot house everybody who needs or wants to live here and so the circumstances are not exceptional.

The Council has not yet made up its mind whether or not ‘exceptional circumstances’ exist and will do so only after it has considered the responses to this consultation. However it has taken the view that the draft Local Plan should be prepared on the basis that there may be ‘exceptional circumstances’ that justify Green Belt release. The draft plan therefore shows the effect of accepting that they do exist.

The advice note can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1nPNceS>
PPC meetings information can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1mT0t3J>

We need to know your views. As explained above, our choices range from removing no land from Green Belt and meeting only part of the projected housing need, through to removing sufficient land from the Green Belt to meet the need in full.

What do you believe we should do and why? Comments?

6. Green Belt Review and Development Strategy

We need to know, if we are to remove land from the Green Belt, which land should be removed. Green Belt



land makes varied levels of contribution to the NPPF's five Green Belt purposes. The five purposes are:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Because of the importance of Green Belt, the Council asked consultants to conduct a comprehensive review with the aim of finding the areas where development could take place with least damage to the purposes of the Green Belt. The consultants identified eight areas that they felt contributed less than others. These are shown on the diagram in this booklet. However the consultants advised that all of those areas contributed to at least one of the Green Belt purposes.

PPC meetings information can be found at: <http://bit.ly/YUj2Ls>
SLP Chapter 6 Mixed and Balanced Communities can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1qVuW7>

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- Strongly Agree**
- Agree**
- Disagree**
- Strongly Disagree**
- Don't Know**

**Do you have any alternative approach to suggest?
Comments?**

7. **Development Sites**

The Council then reviewed each of these areas against economic, social and environmental factors to see if, in addition to their Green Belt status, there were any other factors that ruled out development there. This also enabled us to assess and rank their suitability for potential release.

As a result of evaluation, some sites are included and some have been excluded from the draft Local Plan. The draft Local Plan says:

The Strategy will meet development needs with minimum impact on the Green Belt and best prospects for delivery of appropriate social, economic and environmental objectives and specific community benefits.

The areas in the draft Local Plan, shown in yellow in the diagram (with estimated capacity for homes), are:

- East of Hemel Hempstead, North (around 1,500 homes) <http://bit.ly/1CRD9ZQ>
- East of Hemel Hempstead, South (around 1,000 homes) <http://bit.ly/ZPU4hE>
- East of St Albans (around 1,000 homes) <http://bit.ly/1q9U0hI>
- North West of Harpenden (around 500 homes) <http://bit.ly/1uwlmE3>

The Green Belt Review Plans can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1l6qzfi>

The areas not in the draft Local Plan shown in purple in the diagram (with estimated capacity for homes) are:

- North of St Albans (around 900 homes) <http://bit.ly/ZbwIBN>
- North East of Harpenden (around 750 homes) <http://bit.ly/1rU5r1b>
- Land at London Colney (around 300 homes) <http://bit.ly/1s5GWPY>
- Land at Chiswell Green (around 400 homes) <http://bit.ly/1uVKKW7>

The Green Belt Review Plans can be found at:



<http://bit.ly/1l6qzfi>

PPC meetings information can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/1mT0t3J>

SLP Chapter 6 Mixed and Balanced Communities can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1qVuW7>

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you have any alternative approach to suggest? Comments?

8. *Housing Density*

To decide the amount of land needed for housing development it is necessary to make assumptions about the density of development. This is a simple measure of how many houses are, or will be, built on each hectare of land. The draft Local Plan assumes 40 homes (dwellings) per hectare (dph) within the specific housing areas, but with a general assumption of 40% of the overall site area set aside for infrastructure and open space.

We have based this approach on the Homes & Communities Agency Research which suggests a net density range of 30-50 dph in suburban locations.

If lower levels of density are adopted, more land will be

needed. At 30dph, the North of St Albans and North East of Harpenden areas would also be required. At 25 dph all of the eight large areas identified in the Green Belt review would be required.

PPC meetings information can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/1CH2A0I>

SLP Chapter 6 Mixed and Balanced Communities can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1qVuW7>

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Don't Know

Do you have any alternative approach to suggest? Comments?

9. *Infrastructure*

The level of new development needed requires appropriate infrastructure including benefits for the wider community.

The NPPF says that Councils should work with other bodies to assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure for transport, water supply, waste water and its treatment, energy (including heat), telecommunications, utilities, waste, health, social care, education and flood risk. Consideration should be given to meeting forecast demands. It also says that the Local



Plan must set out the strategic priorities of the Council for delivering this infrastructure.

The draft Local Plan says that development will only take place on the basis of:

- *Carefully master planned development led by the Council in collaboration with communities, landowners and other stakeholders;*
- *Affordable housing and self build opportunities, integral with private schemes*
- *Housing densities and size mixes that make best use of the land available and fulfil the evidence of need for smaller dwellings*
- *Social and community facilities, particularly to deal with pressures on local schools, including the need to make land available for new school sites*
- *Excellence in design, energy efficiency and water management.*

The Council's evaluation work identified that larger sites can deliver better infrastructure improvements and community benefits.

PPC meetings information can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/1pILJrG>

SLP Chapter 6 Mixed and Balanced Communities can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1qVuoW7>

Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- Strongly Agree**
- Agree**
- Disagree**
- Strongly Disagree**
- Don't Know**

Do you have any alternative approach to suggest? Comments?

What infrastructure do you think the District will need over the next 20 years? Comments?

10. Other Policies

The draft Local Plan should be considered as a whole. The policies in the draft Local Plan cover a wide range of important topics such as design and built environment, conservation, green spaces, retail development and transport.

While we have picked out some key issues from the draft Local Plan for specific comment, we would welcome your views and evidence on any aspect of the draft Local Plan.

Let us know what you think of the other parts of the draft Plan. Have we missed anything? Comments?



You are strongly encouraged to use the consultation web portal: <http://bit.ly/1qVu0W7>

Responses received will be uploaded to our web portal for all to see (your contact details will not be visible).

Please add your contact details below:

Full Name:

Email Address:

Postal address including post code:

Additional Comments:

Anonymous responses will still be recorded, but not uploaded to the consultation web portal.



How to Respond?

We have prepared some consultation questions to encourage responses that can be analysed and compared. We are strongly encouraging responses that address these questions directly, but any form of response is welcome and will be fully considered.

It is important that you try to give reasons and evidence for the points you make.

Such evidence should always be considered in the context of the law and national policy.

Please try to respond through our on-line consultation portal as this will open your views to the widest possible audience (see below for details).

What Happens Next?

You will be able to see the range of comments made, and who has made them*, in the consultation portal and in papers published on our web site.

The results of consultation will be fully reported and carefully considered by PPC in early 2015. A summary of comments and responses will be published. The Council will then decide on any changes to the draft Local Plan it thinks are necessary. It is possible that proposed

changes are so significant that there will be a further round of public consultation. All meetings on this will be open to the public and webcast.

If you submit comments via our consultation portal, or register there, we can keep you up to date on progress.

PPC meetings information can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1pLJrG>

If there is no follow up public consultation, the next stage will be for the revised Local Plan (known as the 'submission draft') to be formally published and submitted to a Government Planning Inspector for Public Examination.

At this stage further representations can be made by any interested party.

The Inspector considers the Plan as a whole and assesses representations made. The Inspector has to judge if the plan is 'sound' in respect of Government policy and other planning principles. Modifications may be recommended.

Once the Local Plan is recommended by the Inspector as 'sound' it can be finalised by the Council (known as 'adoption'). It then has statutory force in all planning decision making.

*Name and, if relevant, organisation, will appear, not personal or contact details of respondents.

Timetable for the Plan

Consultation	Pre Submission publication	Submission	Examination	Adoption
October / November 2014	May 2015	August / September 2015	March 2016	November 2016



Exhibition / Surgery Programme

The Council is holding a number of exhibitions across the District where you can get more information and speak directly with officers. A list of exhibition venues and dates are given below:

London Colney

- Saturday 25 October, 10am-1pm – London Colney Community Centre
- Monday 27 October, 2pm-8pm – Morris Way Pavilion
- Tuesday 28 October, 2pm-8pm – Morris Way Pavilion

Harpenden

- Thursday 6 November, 2pm-8pm – Harpenden Town Hall
- Friday 7 November, 2pm-8pm – Harpenden Town Hall
- Saturday 8 November, 10am-1pm – Harpenden Public Hall

St Albans

- Wednesday 12 November, 2pm-8pm – Committee Room 1, District Council Offices
- Thursday 13 November, 2pm-8pm – Committee Room 1, District Council Offices
- Saturday 15 November, 10am-3pm – Market Stall in St Peters Street

Wheathampstead Parish Council

- Monday 20 October, 2pm-8pm - Wheathampstead Parish Council, Hewitt Room

Redbourn Parish Council

- Wednesday 22 October, 2pm-8pm - Redbourn Parish Council

St Stephen Parish Council

- Thursday 23 October, 2pm-8pm - Parish Council Offices, Station Road, Bricket Wood

Sandridge Parish Council

- Wednesday 29 October, 2pm-8pm - Sandridge Parish Council Offices

Colney Heath Parish Council

- Monday 10 November, 2pm-8pm - Community Room next to Parish Offices



You are strongly encouraged to comment online

Making comments online has the following key benefits:

- **Easy** – online consultation is straight forward and easy to use
- **Save time** – view and download documents / comment online anytime, anywhere
- **Informed** – keep track of how your comments are processed
- **Environmental** – electronic systems saves paper
- **Live feedback** – view and search comments made by other consultees once they have been processed



Click: www.stalbans.gov.uk/slp



Phone: 01727 819396



Write: St Albans Council Offices

St Peters Street, St Albans, AL1 3JE



Email: planningpolicy@stalbans.gov.uk



Visit: St Albans Council Offices

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