

Shaping Our Community

The Core Strategy: Consultation on the Strategy for Locating Future Development in the District

Help us to take the right direction.
The Core Strategy will contain the Council's
key planning policies and development
proposals for the period 2011-2028.



Published December 2010

Foreword

Welcome to the second phase of the Shaping Our Community consultation, an important opportunity to express your views to the Council on proposals for accommodating future development in the District.

Your feedback on the earlier consultation has been taken into account in these new proposals. The Council remains resolute in its protection of the Green Belt to preserve the unique character of our District and to prevent coalescence with Greater London. That is why its success in winning both the second Park Street Rail Freight Interchange appeal earlier in 2010, and the legal challenge to the Regional Spatial Strategy, was so important.

Despite the Government's Localism Bill with its proposed neighbourhood plans, there is still the need for an overarching strategic planning document for the whole District to provide a framework into which neighbourhood plans can be fitted at a later date.

The context for the Local Development Framework is the District's Sustainable Community Strategy, produced by the Local Strategic Partnership. This sets out the District's vision for the future - a progressive, unique and vibrant community, which values its environment, heritage and culture, cares for the future, and is an outstanding place to live where everyone can flourish.

To ensure the District does continue to develop and flourish, we must maintain its special mix of city, towns and villages, and its urban and rural environment and heritage. An over-riding priority is still to protect the Green Belt. However, we must also balance this with the need for affordable homes, new job opportunities, transport improvements and infrastructure like schools, shops and leisure facilities.

This consultation differs from Phase 1, conducted in summer 2009, in several ways. The new coalition government announced that it will be scrapping the former Regional Spatial Strategy regime in 2011 with its top down targets. The Council has taken the opportunity to review the housing growth that is really needed locally from the bottom up, and ensure it is environmentally sustainable.

- Our starting point is therefore the provision of 100 affordable homes a year which would necessitate an overall target of 250 homes to fund these.
- We have reduced the 7,200 housing total to be built by 2021 that was previously imposed on us.
- The Areas of Search in the Green Belt, consulted on last time, have not been reinstated.

The information gathered from this consultation will inform the process for the final drafting of the District's Local Development Framework, including this planning Core Strategy, which will describe the management of growth locally up to 2028.

Making decisions about the future shape of the District is not easy. Local people have strong and sometimes conflicting views on the type and location of housing development and infrastructure. We hope that you will play your part in shaping your District through this debate. We welcome your views on the issues and choices set out in this consultation document.

Cllr Robert Donald, Leader, St Albans City & District Council,
Cllr Chris Brazier, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Conservation

About This Consultation

This document sets out the strategy for locating future development in the District. It takes account of feedback received from earlier consultation and that is why Areas of Search for housing in the Green Belt, previously consulted upon, have been removed. The consultation will contribute to the development of the Council's full draft plan, the Core Strategy.

1) The Core Strategy Vision

The Core Strategy will contain the Council's key planning policies and development proposals for the period 2011-2028. The Council has taken the opportunity, following the change in Government, to fundamentally reconsider the most appropriate balance between housing development and Green Belt protection. The previous housing target of 7,200 homes from 2001-2021 is no longer a required local target.

The Core Strategy Vision comes directly from the St Albans City & District Sustainable Community Strategy.

A progressive, unique and vibrant District, which values its environment, heritage and culture and cares for the future: an outstanding place to live where everyone can flourish.

The aim is to ensure that the District continues to flourish and evolve, maintaining its cherished and unique mix of city, towns and villages, its urban and rural Green Belt environment and its diverse heritage, while providing new opportunities to support the local economy and community. Emphasis is given to:

- protecting, proactively managing and enhancing the Green Belt;
- delivering the necessary infrastructure to support any housing growth;
- providing affordable housing and medium-sized family housing;
- improving the District's schools, shops and community facilities;
- reducing our carbon footprint, particularly by tackling traffic congestion

2) What Has Happened Since The 2009 Emerging Core Strategy Document?

There was support for many aspects of the 2009 document, but also concern at proposed large scale housing development in the Green Belt. Therefore the Council withdrew the Areas of Search for housing. The Coalition Government's intended abolition of the East Of England Plan has allowed the Council to review growth needs locally, from the bottom up, rather than having numbers imposed. The new approach now identifies more locations within existing towns and villages and smaller locations of under 400 homes. New development will need to contribute positively to the wider community through benefits such as enhanced school facilities, transport improvements and green space.

These ideas were tested through workshops with different local groups, including schools, residents and District and Parish Councillors.

The new Government's 'localism' approach now gives the District Council the freedom, but also the significant responsibility, of deciding what level of new housing should be planned for.

A critical part of new development will be the satisfactory provision of new services and facilities, such as new schools and transport improvements.

3) The Strategy For Locating Future Development In The District

This strategy sets out where the majority of future development will be located.

It is proposed that development is concentrated in existing settlements, in the following priority.

Category	Settlements	Broad policy approach
Main urban settlements (excluded from Green Belt)	St Albans Harpenden London Colney	These are the most sustainable locations for development, as the widest range of services and facilities are accessible. To preserve the Green Belt, higher density developments will be encouraged but will need to respect local character
Other settlements excluded from Green Belt	Bricket Wood Chiswell Green How Wood Park Street and Frogmore Redbourn Wheathampstead	The scale and density of development will generally be lower than in the main urban settlements, in order to retain their particular character
Green Belt settlements	Colney Heath Folly Fields Gustard Wood Kinsbourne Green Lea Valley Estate Sandridge Sleapshyde Smallford	Development will be limited to small scale infilling and redevelopment of previously developed land that reflects the character of the settlement
Rest of Green Belt		Standard Green Belt policy will apply

Draft Proposals For The District (Spatial Diagram)

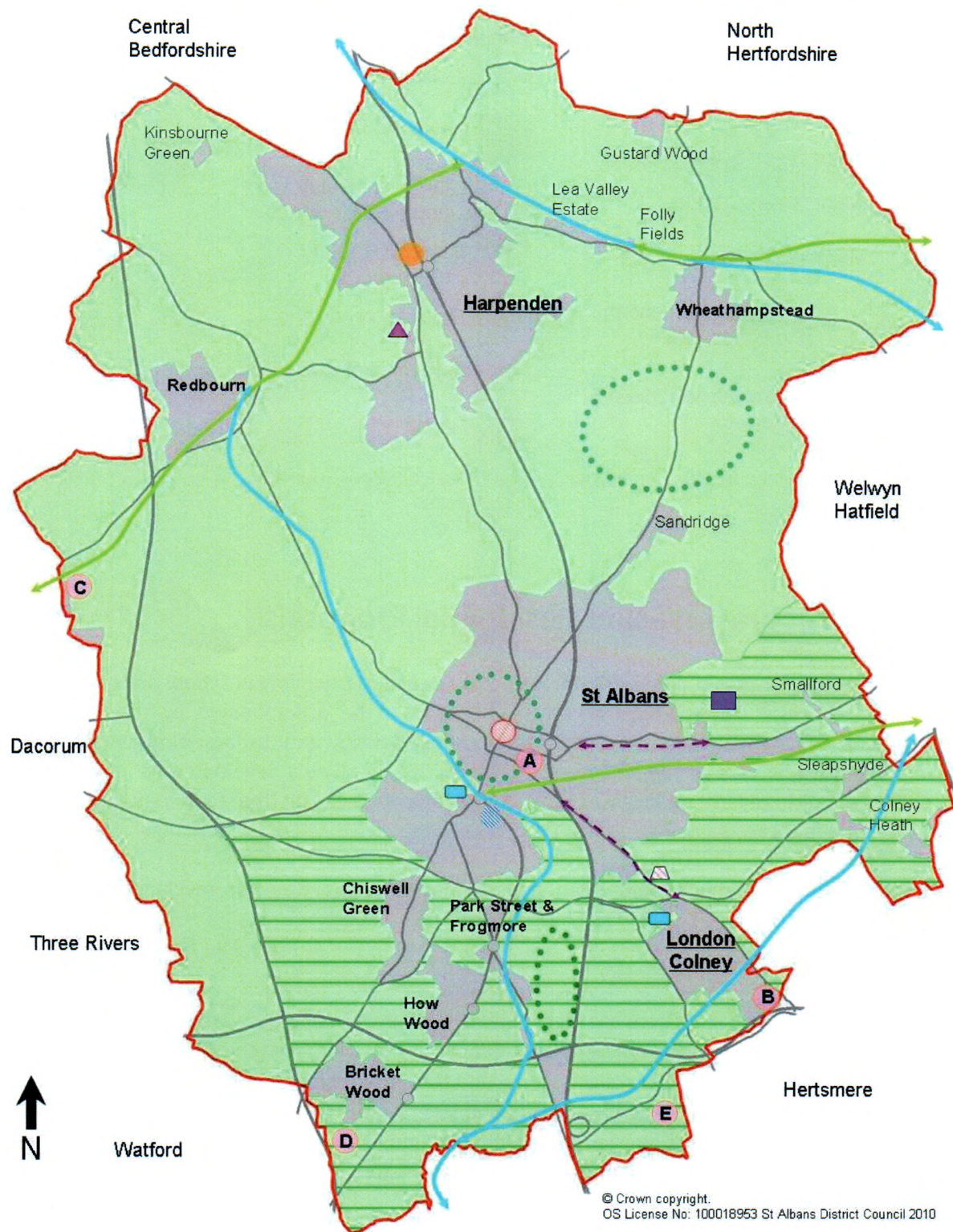


Diagram Key



4) Infrastructure and Non-Residential Proposals

The District currently has a significant infrastructure deficit, particularly in school places, transport and green spaces. Development of any kind needs to be accompanied by the delivery of appropriate infrastructure, both to address existing deficits and to accommodate the new development itself. This will be an essential prerequisite for all new developments in the District, in particular with regard to localised and cumulative impacts on the road network and the provision of healthcare facilities.

The strategy includes much more than housing development. Key non-residential issues and proposals include:

Economic development issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are high levels of both inward and outward commuting with overall significant net out-commuting from the District • There is almost no land for new office or industrial development • Some high quality employers in the District require redevelopment or expansion to retain or expand high value employment opportunities in key business and research sectors
Economic development proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension at Rothamsted Research, Harpenden • New buildings for the Building Research Establishment, Bricket Wood • Retain and enhance existing employment areas

Retail development issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional retail development is needed. St Albans City centre does not provide for people's full shopping needs • Enlarged supermarkets are needed in Harpenden town centre
Retail development proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New retail (food and non-food) and mixed use development in St Albans city centre, east of St Peter's Street (Civic Centre) and/or west of St Peter's Street (Drovers Way) • Bulky goods retail warehousing (e.g. furniture) at Griffiths Way, St Albans • Extensions to supermarkets in Harpenden town centre
Healthcare development issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved healthcare facility provision • The need to increase availability of opportunities for exercise • The need to increase rates of walking and cycling • The need to improve air quality • Insufficient housing and care facilities for the growing elderly population
Healthcare development proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New leisure centres at Westminster Lodge, St Albans and Cotlandswick, London Colney • Increased availability of high quality parks and green spaces • Supporting improvements and expansion of St Albans City Hospital and GP surgeries • Supporting and assisting the re-provision of services at Harpenden Memorial Hospital • The identification of sites for elderly people's housing and flexi-care facilities
Leisure, culture, arts and tourism issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved and additional facilities are needed as a key economic driver and to provide improved quality of life for residents • Providing more accessible facilities and activities for young people
Leisure, culture, arts and tourism proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New leisure centres at Westminster Lodge, St Albans and Cotlandswick, London Colney • Cinema and cultural hub in St Albans city centre • Improved facilities for Verulamium Museum and Museum of St Albans • Completion of Butterfly World, Chiswell Green • More city centre hotel accommodation and 4 star hotel with conference facilities at London Road, near the cemetery • Public realm improvements across the District • Possible new leisure centre in Harpenden • Redevelopment of Harpenden Public Halls as a cultural centre, including a theatre with cinema provision, conference facilities and museum • Support Hertfordshire County Council with the redevelopment of Harpenden Library and a re-provided youth facility • Re-provision of the Pioneer Youth Centre on the existing site in St Albans

Transport issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The District experiences serious traffic congestion and high carbon dioxide emissions • There is a need to support more sustainable modes of travel, particularly walking, cycling and by public transport
Transport proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More sustainable modes of travel, particularly walking, cycling and by public transport, will be encouraged. Possible improvements under investigation include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conversion of Abbey Rail Line to a tramway, with more frequent services ○ To improve conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and buses, traffic restrictions in St Peter's Street, St Albans, ○ Mini Park and Ride schemes in Hatfield Road and London Road, St Albans • Support the emerging Harpenden Urban Transport Plan, including improvements at Harpenden train station • Major development proposals will be required to have a Green Travel Plan to encourage sustainable modes of travel
Green corridors and spaces issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to retain and enhance the existing green network and create new areas on town and village edges
Green corridors and spaces proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed focus to deliver the Watling Chase Community Forest, including an eco park (with public access, community food production, woodland planting and possible biomass or wind facilities) at the former Radlett Aerodrome • Support the establishment of Heartwood Forest between Sandridge and Wheathampstead • St Albans Green Ring: enhanced route for pedestrians and cyclists as a circular route around the city • Enhance major green corridors and waterways
Educational issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional primary and secondary school places needed - priority is for primary school places in St Albans City centre • Need to update and expand Oaklands College's Smallford Campus
Educational proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary and secondary schools: expand some existing schools and possibly build new schools in St Albans, Harpenden and London Colney • Expansion of existing schools may involve both schools in urban areas and also those in the Green Belt • Possible new schools may involve both urban areas and the Green Belt • Improve and expand Oaklands College's Smallford Campus

5) Balancing Housing Growth, Sustainability And The Green Belt

It is important to deliver the right amount of development to meet local needs, including housing, employment, transport and leisure, so that we create the kind of place we want to live and work in, now and in the future. The Council does not consider that it is possible to have no growth.

The Council has sought to find the most appropriate balance between all factors, especially providing 100 affordable homes per year whilst protecting the Green Belt. The fine balance between competing aims has led to a **new local housing target of 250 homes per year**. It should be possible to deliver the Council's affordable homes target of 100 homes per year from the new 250 overall homes target through:

- Increasing the proportion of affordable housing sought on housing developments from 35% to 40%
- Seeking contributions to affordable housing from all new housing (reducing the site size threshold from 15 dwellings to one)
- Increasing building of affordable housing on Council owned land

If these sources are shown to provide more affordable housing than anticipated, the overall housing target may consequently be revised downwards over time. Affordable housing includes social rented, key worker (ie housing for teachers, nurses, care workers etc) and shared ownership homes. Affordable homes are mostly delivered by developers as a percentage of private housing developments.

Many complex factors must be considered in deciding the right amount, including the following:

- The continuing pressure for more affordable housing
- The potential for housing development in existing settlements
- Population data, household growth data and the historic house building rate
- The need for new community facilities and transport improvements
- The Sustainability Appraisal process, which explores the social, environmental and economic impact of development

The views of the local community; in particular the desire to retain the individual character of settlements, are another important factor.

An essential prerequisite for all new housing developments in the District is the delivery of appropriate infrastructure, such as schools, green spaces, transport, shopping and jobs, both to address existing deficits and to accommodate the new development itself.

This new target is considerably lower than the 360 homes a year target created by the last Government in the East of England Plan (which is to be abolished).

Timeframe	Net additional homes
Annual target 2011-2028	250
Total 2011-2028	4,250

6) Distribution Of Strategic Housing Locations

The majority of housing to be provided in the District from 2011-2028 will be built on sites of less than 100 homes. The considerable majority of these homes will also be built on previously developed land within the urban areas. The use of appropriate locations for housing within urban areas is the clear priority. In order to minimise the need for greenfield sites, there may be a need for flexibility with regard to previously developed land/brownfield sites

This consultation only identifies strategic housing locations of between 100 and approximately 250 homes. These locations would provide important local benefits for the wider community. All the locations would be expected to provide a 40% affordable housing contribution and many medium-sized family homes. New housing will be located as much as possible in urban areas.

A key reason for proposing the strategic housing locations below is the provision of infrastructure and community benefits. As well as the benefits described below, it is recognised that there is potential for such developments to have impacts locally, such as traffic congestion. Any developments would have to address such localised issues and provide new/improved infrastructure where necessary.

When the Council has agreed the full draft plan, at the Core Strategy Pre-submission stage, it will decide how to phase residential development, in order to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is developed alongside.

	Estimated homes	Main benefits of housing development
1. Urban		
A) London Road/Alma Road, St Albans	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would enhance a run-down part of the Conservation Area and help sustain local shops along London Road
B) Ridgeview, Barnet Road, London Colney	100	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High potential for new housing to include green and renewable technologies
2. Greenfield, excluded from the Green Belt		
C) Spencer's Park, West of Cherrytree Lane, Hemel Hempstead	150	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would help deliver new community facilities on adjoining residential development in Dacorum

3. Previously developed Green Belt

D) Building Research Establishment, Bricket Wood	150	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing development would fund new buildings on the site for BRE (high skill local employer and world class green technology leader)• Proposed provision of new bus route from Bricket Wood to Garston/Watford• Exemplar building techniques and designs, including zero carbon and carbon positive dwellings• Development on existing built footprint only, with increased public green space
E) Harperbury Hospital	250	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would include affordable/key worker housing next to enlarged healthcare facility• New woodland, landscaping, sports pitches and increased access to the countryside• Redevelopment equivalent to existing building footprint only

As well as the locations described above, in order to deliver the Council's affordable homes target of 100 homes per year and the new 250 overall local housing target, throughout the period 2011-2028, it may be necessary to provide more Strategic Housing Locations. The Council wants to take this opportunity to ask the community and stakeholders directly:

Where educational establishments in the Green Belt can demonstrate a real need to provide improved facilities and to expand, should future housing growth at these locations be considered, as enabling development to provide the educational improvements?

There is a current shortage of housing and care facilities for the growing elderly population. In providing for such needs, if no non-Green Belt locations are available, should Green Belt locations be considered?

7) What do you think?

The Council would very much welcome your views on the proposed strategy for locating future development in the District. The best way to respond is by registering and submitting comments

online via the Council's website (www.stalbans.gov.uk). By visiting the Planning Policy Consultation web pages, you can complete an online questionnaire.

It is also possible to view documents at the Council and Parish/Town Offices and local libraries, and complete a paper questionnaire. Please return questionnaires to: Shaping Our Community Consultation, Planning Policy Team, St Albans Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans, AL1 3JE.

You can visit one of the public surgeries to obtain more information and make comments. See the Council's website (www.stalbans.gov.uk) or contact the Planning Policy Team for dates and venues.

The deadline for filling in the questionnaire is 7th February 2011.

8) Further Information

For further information, please visit <http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/policy/>. Alternatively, you can contact the Planning Policy Team at the Council Offices (Tel: 01727 866100).

9) Next Steps

The Council will consider carefully all responses to this consultation and will then prepare the full wording of the draft plan, the Core Strategy Pre-submission document. This will contain the full wording of the Core Strategy to be submitted for examination in public. The remaining key milestones for the Core Strategy are:

Consultation on Pre-submission Core Strategy	Summer 2011
Submission of Core Strategy to Government for examination	Autumn 2011
Public examination	Spring 2012
Inspector's report and adoption	Autumn 2012

Alternative Formats

If you would like to receive this document in an alternative format, such as Braille, or in another language, you can contact the Planning Policy Team at the Council Offices (Tel: 01727 866100).