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How to use this document

The Strategic Local Plan (SLP) is intended for a wide ranging audience. We aim to make it as accessible as we can. We use plain English as far as possible. However, the SLP deals with some complex issues and appropriate terminology is used where necessary. A Glossary of terms is included in Appendix 3 to clearly explain any words/phrases which may not be familiar to everyone.

Plans and diagrams are included as these can often more easily explain proposals and complex ideas and processes. Photography are also used to help the reader to relate to the district as a place.

The SLP is to be read as a whole to fully understand the Vision for the district and how we aim to achieve it. However, we are aware that people will often wish to quickly find a specific topic or policy to read in more detail. Therefore, the SLP is designed to have an easily navigable structure. The SLP is divided into four main sections which are colour coded and briefly explained below.

The first two chapters set the scene for the SLP.

Chapter 1, the Introduction, explains what the SLP is and its place within the wider planning policy framework for the district (the Local Plan).

Chapter 2 introduces the reader to St Albans City and District as a place, setting out facts and figures and issues and challenges which the SLP will set out to address.

The next two chapters set out the vision and objectives which shape the policies in the SLP and how these will be achieved on the ground.

Chapter 3 sets out a vision for the district in 2028 explaining how the policies in the SLP shape places in the district. It also includes a list of objectives which will help to deliver this vision.

Chapter 4 is the Spatial Strategy which sets out an overarching framework including the distribution of key proposals throughout the district.

The policies which will help to achieve the SLP objectives and deliver the Spatial Strategy are set out in Chapters 5 to 10. The policies contained in these chapters will help to shape the district over the plan period.

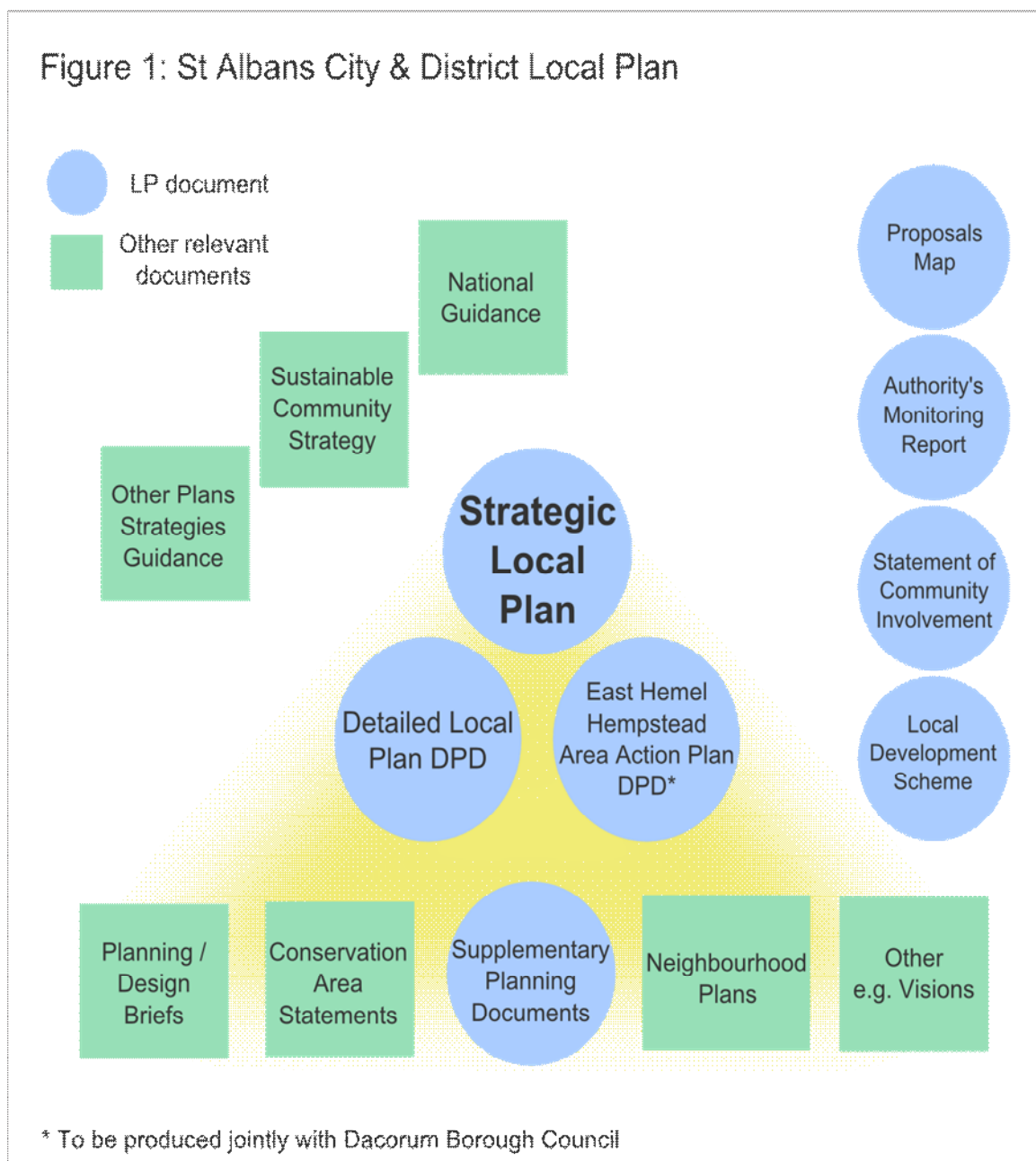
Chapter 11 sets out how we are going to ensure that appropriate levels of infrastructure are delivered through the plan period and Chapter 12 sets out how the SLP itself will be delivered and monitored.

The Appendices contain useful background information which supports the SLP.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Plan (LP) will consist of a suite of local development documents. These documents will set out the planning policies and proposals for the future development of the City and District of St Albans. The Strategic Local Plan (SLP) is the principal Development Plan Document (DPD) and establishes the Council's long term spatial planning strategy for delivering development and infrastructure from 2011 to 2028.
- 1.2 The LP is based on its community's vision contained in the Sustainable Community Strategies for St Albans and Hertfordshire. It must also comply with other legal requirements, including the need to have regard to the Government's national planning policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework and to be based on proportionate and justifiable evidence.
- 1.3 Within the LP, the most important documents are called Development Plan Documents (DPDs). Together with the Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste Framework, the DPDs will form the new statutory planning documents for the district.
- 1.4 A timetable for the LP is contained in the Local Development Scheme (LDS). Currently it is proposed to produce the following DPDs:
 - Strategic Local Plan DPD (SLP)
 - Detailed Local Plan DPD (DLP)
 - East Hemel Hempstead Area action Plan DPD (jointly with Dacorum Borough Council)
- 1.5 The Council has made significant progress on the Strategic Local Plan (formerly known as the Core Strategy) and is seeking to adopt it at the earliest opportunity. Work on the Detailed Local Plan (formerly know as Site Allocations and Development Management Policies) is at a relatively early stage, but will also be taken forward as soon as possible. This approach will make sure that new policies are in place as soon as reasonably possible, which is important given the current Plan dates from 1994. This approach accords with the NPPF which highlights that "It is highly desirable that local planning authorities should have an up-to-date plan in place"
- 1.6 The various components of the LP are highlighted by the yellow triangle shown in Figure 1.
- 1.7 The SLP has been prepared following consultations on Issues and Options documents in 2006 and 2007, the Emerging Plan in 2009 and on the Strategy for Locating Future Development in the District in 2010/2011.

1.8 The SLP must be considered in planning terms to have been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, legal and procedural requirements and to be 'sound'. In essence, to be found 'sound' it must be considered during an Examination In Public by an independent planning inspector to have been; positively prepared; justified; effective and consistent with national policy.



1.9 Once the SLP is adopted, it will supersede some of the policies in the

saved St Albans Local Plan Review 1994, as shown in Appendix 1. Once the subsequent DLP is adopted, the St Albans Local Plan Review 1994 will be wholly superseded.

Evidence Base

- 1.10 The Council has built a wide-ranging evidence base for the SLP. This is listed on the Council website and is updated on an ongoing basis.

Key Influences on the Strategic Local Plan

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 1.11 The NPPF specifies that Local Plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities. All plans should be based upon and reflect the “presumption in favour of sustainable development”, with clear policies that will guide how the presumption should be applied locally.
- 1.12 The NPPF (<http://www.communities.gov.uk>) has been considered as a whole and the SLP is consistent with it. Of particular significance is paragraph 14:

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For plan-making this means that:

- *Local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;*
- *Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:*
 - *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or*
 - *specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted⁹.*

⁹ *...does not apply in the Green Belt,”*

- 1.13 The NPPF advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The policies in paragraphs 18 to 219 of the NPPF, taken as a whole, constitute the Government’s view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.
- 1.14 The NPPF follows the longstanding approach to planning in setting out that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social

and environmental. These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

1.15 The NPPF at Paragraph 17 identifies 12 core planning principles which should underpin plan-making. These have been considered throughout the SLP. The plan positively seeks to meet the development needs of the area, within the context of the District and the interaction between the economic, social and environmental roles. This is set out in this SLP and forthcoming DLP as a whole, with key strategic choices set out in chapter 4.

The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

1.16 When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Strategic Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted¹.

Sustainable Community Strategy for St Albans City and District

1.17 All local authorities have to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) with local partners as required by Section 4 Local Government Act 2000. The SCS sets the overall strategic direction and long term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of a local area, in a way

¹ For example, those policies relating to sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space or within a designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding.

that contributes to sustainable development. It seeks to improve the quality of life and services in the local area. Its vision and objectives need to be backed by clear evidence and analysis and supported by targeted and co-ordinated action. The SCS can be modified and updated by the LPA as it chooses.

1.18 A refresh of the SCS for the district was approved in June 2009 and covers the period to 2021. The SCS contains the following vision for the district:

“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.”

1.19 The SCS identifies four key priorities for the district:

- Ensuring the district is a great place to be.
- Creating a diverse and sustainable economy for the 21st Century.
- Keeping the district healthy.
- Supporting an active community that has pride in itself and cares for its future.

1.20 The SCS also highlights specific areas of work that need to be addressed to achieve the key priorities. The LP is the spatial expression of the SCS (see paragraph 2.18).

Hertfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy

1.21 Hertfordshire 2021: A Brighter Future is the County-wide SCS, prepared jointly by Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Forward, a partnership which brings together all the key agencies in the county. The Hertfordshire SCS has identified 9 key areas of concern and sets out long term objectives and short term improvements to address them:

- Jobs, prosperity and skills.
- Safer and stronger communities.
- Children and young people.
- An ageing population.
- Health and wellbeing.
- Housing, affordable housing and quality neighbourhoods.
- Transport and access.
- Sustaining Hertfordshire’s unique character and quality of life.
- Promoting sustainable development.

Responses to Previous Community and Stakeholder Consultations

- 1.22 Views expressed by the community and stakeholders in response to the SLP (then termed Core Strategy) consultation documents in 2006, 2007, 2009, and 2010/2011 form part of the evidence base for the LP. Representations made during these public consultations from residents, businesses, organisations, elected representatives and other stakeholders have been key in shaping this document.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.23 The SLP must be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal/ Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Council's Sustainability Appraisal consultants have assessed this document against the Sustainability Appraisal framework for the district and have produced a Sustainability Appraisal Report. This assessment and previous Sustainability Appraisal working notes have been important influences on the SLP policies and proposals.

Collaborative Planning

- 1.24 The Government expects joint working on areas of common interest to be diligently undertaken for the mutual benefit of neighbouring authorities. Public bodies have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to the strategic priorities. Local planning authorities will be expected to demonstrate evidence of having effectively cooperated to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts when their Local Plans are submitted for examination. The Council has longstanding bilateral and multilateral working arrangements with Hertfordshire authorities and others in the sub regional area.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 1.25 Neighbourhood plans have been introduced by The Localism Act 2011 and enable local communities to shape and direct sustainable development in their area. These are plans produced by a parish council or a neighbourhood forum. Neighbourhood plans need to be considered at examination before a referendum can take place. Where there is a conflict between the non-strategic policies in the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan, the policies the Neighbourhood Plan contains will take precedence for that neighbourhood.
- 1.26 The Council is committed to neighbourhood planning as a process, in order to deliver the neighbourhood level aspirations of communities. There are a number of mechanisms to deliver these aspirations, including ongoing engagement with Parish and Town councils, planning applications and the forthcoming DLP, as well as Neighbourhood Plans. As community-led

initiatives, the role of the Council is not to create Neighbourhood Plans, but to assist communities in developing them themselves.

Regional Strategy (RS)

- 1.27 On 6 July 2010 the Communities Minister announced the revocation of regional strategies (RS). However, revocation of the East of England Plan has not yet occurred and the timescale is uncertain. Until revocation takes place, the 2004 Act shall apply which means that policies or proposals should be in general conformity with the RSS unless there is local justification.

2. The St Albans City and District Context

Introduction

- 2.1 The City and District of St Albans has a very special character, with a blend of City, towns, villages and Green Belt countryside. It has a population of about 140,000 (the second highest in Hertfordshire) and covers an area of 63 square miles (161 sq km). The district is located in central Hertfordshire, within the Metropolitan Green Belt, 20 miles (30 km) north of London. Hertfordshire's towns are strongly influenced by London. These towns are close to each other with complex spatial relationships between them for shopping, leisure, employment, education and other purposes.
- 2.2 The historic cathedral City of St Albans (69,000 population) is the largest settlement in the district. It is Hertfordshire's oldest town. In Roman times, when it was called Verulamium, it was the third largest town in Roman Britain, after London and Colchester. A strong medieval heritage is still evident within the City core and with each successive historic period further architectural richness and variety has been added to create a City of superb townscape quality and character.
- 2.3 The residential commuter town of Harpenden is the second largest settlement in the district with a population of almost 30,000. Harpenden grew slowly as a settlement from the early 13th century, only experiencing major growth from 1860 with the arrival of the railway. Harpenden is located in the north of the district on a dip-slope of the Chiltern Hills. The town has an impressive range of historic buildings and open spaces, including the Green Flag award winning Harpenden Common. It is home to the world renowned agricultural research centre of Rothamsted Research.
- 2.4 St Albans and Harpenden are prosperous and popular towns, primarily due to their high quality environment, excellent schools and transport links to London and the rest of the Country. They are the main focus for

commercial and leisure activity. Each has a thriving centre providing a variety of retail, leisure, community and cultural facilities and also employment opportunities.

- 2.5 London Colney is the next largest settlement in the district and has the most urban character. It contains employment areas and the large Colney Fields retail park, but lacks some of the facilities of a traditional town centre. The River Colne flows through the south of the town providing an attractive setting rich in biodiversity.
- 2.6 Other settlements in the district excluded from the Green Belt are Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green, How Wood, Park Street/Frogmore, Redbourn and Wheathampstead. All provide some job opportunities, together with essential health, education and community facilities. Redbourn and Wheathampstead have village centres and each settlement has its own local identity.
- 2.7 There are a number of smaller settlements within the Green Belt, including Kinsbourne Green, Colney Heath, Folly Fields, Gustard Wood, Sandridge, Sleafshyde and Smallford.
- 2.8 Throughout the district, development pressure is intense, house prices have greatly increased in recent times but are now flattening out and the need for affordable housing is high. There is a strong trend towards urban intensification, loss of employment use to residential and a high level of house extensions. The Green Belt is under particular pressure from major development proposals attracted by the strong transport links, especially in the south of the district.

The Sub Regional Context

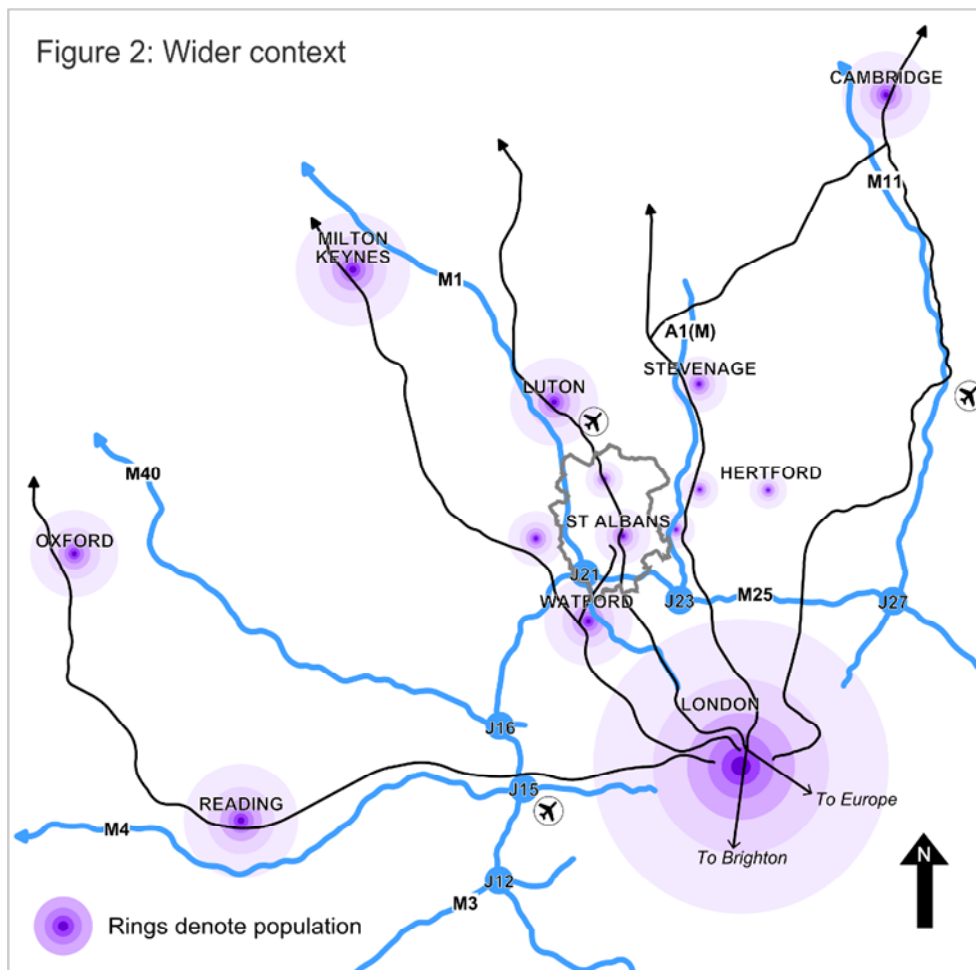
- 2.9 The district has a primary spatial relationship with London, a City which strongly influences local patterns of employment, travel, retail and leisure. It also has strong spatial relationships with neighbouring towns, particularly Hemel Hempstead, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Watford and Luton. These towns offer alternative and sometimes competing employment, retail and leisure opportunities. The district benefits from close links with the University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield. Oaklands Community College in St Albans is the district's sole further and higher education provider and plays a key role in skills development, training and lifetime learning opportunities at a sub-regional level. Key sub-regional employers include the world renowned institutes of the Building Research Establishment (BRE) at Bricket Wood and Rothamsted Research in Harpenden.
- 2.10 Nationally and regionally important transport routes pass through or close to the district, which is exceptionally well located in regard to strategic transport networks. These include the M1, A1 (M) and M25 motorways, the

A414, the Midlands Mainline railway to the East Midlands, the Thameslink railway into St Pancras International and through Eurostar to Europe. The East Coast mainline through Hatfield and the West Coast mainline through Hemel Hempstead reinforce the strong London focus in public transport. The rail links provides direct and easy access to Gatwick and Luton Airports. East-west travel is catered for by the M25 and the A414, although at the district and county level, traffic movement east-west is poor and congestion is a major problem, with high levels of car ownership, limited bus routes and frequencies and a large rural hinterland. International links are provided for through London Luton Airport which lies 6 miles north of Harpenden. Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted are also readily accessible via the M25.

- 2.11 The district has two distinct countryside character areas - the Northern Thames Basin and the Chilterns. Generally, the natural environment is of good quality and includes some very attractive countryside. There are two designated Sites of Special Scientific (SSSIs) and many other sites of nature conservation importance. However, there are areas which need enhancement, including some areas to the south of the district in the Watling Chase Community Forest.

Local Population

- 2.12 The district has a slightly younger population than the national average and residents generally have high educational attainment. St Albans City and District is one of the least deprived parts of the country, with very high average income levels and relatively low unemployment. There is good quality housing and very high house prices. However, there are pockets of relative deprivation, for example in Batchwood, Sopwell, Cunningham and Park Street wards, where the level of deprivation is above the national average.
- 2.13 The ethnic diversity of the district is about the same as the UK average and around 10% of the local population come from minority ethnic communities.



Employment Characteristics

- 2.14 The local economy is largely made up of employment in financial and business services, research and development, retail and educational sectors. The visitor economy is an increasingly important local economic driver.
- 2.15 Nearly half of local residents have a degree qualification or above and within the working population the majority of residents are employed in professional and managerial occupations, a considerably higher rate than at the county or national level. The local economy is driven by a large number of small businesses, including freelance and consultancy and has a vibrant entrepreneurial culture.
- 2.16 The district experiences considerable flows of both in and out commuting. Overall there is significant net out commuting to high paying jobs outside the district, primarily in London but also in other nearby towns. Overall the district's young and mature students achieve very high educational

attainment, but not all. Key areas for intervention include training for young people, developing social enterprise and self reliance, working with local employers on skills development and the development of new economic clusters.

Key Issues and Challenges Facing the District

2.17 Over 90% of residents are very or fairly satisfied with the district as a place to live and only 4% are dissatisfied, but the district still faces some considerable key issues and challenges, as well as wishing to meet the highest of aspirations.

2.18 The SCS has identified the key issues and challenges for the district as:

- Affordable housing.
- Providing accessible facilities and activities for young people.
- Encouraging a diverse and sustainable economy and increasing participation in education and skills development at all ages.
- Tackling traffic congestion.
- Reducing health inequalities.
- Supporting older people.
- Reducing pockets of social and economic inequality within the district where individuals and groups are not enjoying the same high quality of life.
- Protecting the environment for the future.
- Encouraging community engagement and participation - especially groups who have been less involved in the past.

2.19 Related key issues have also been identified through the Hertfordshire Compact. This is an
and the Voluntary & Community Sector in Hertfordshire

2.20 In preparing the following Vision and Strategic Objectives, a thorough analysis of the district's context, assets, resources, aspirations, issues and challenges has been undertaken. This has created a unique strategy which responds to a unique place with the key aim of ensuring it remains special now and in the future, whilst addressing issues of concern.

2.21 The Council has objectively assessed and reviewed development need and demand; and balanced these against other factors and material considerations as set out in the NPPF. The district's communities and the NPPF greatly value the fundamental aim of the retention and openness of the Green Belt. This openness plays many important roles; including preserving the setting, special character and historic nature of the district's settlements as well as providing accessible high quality open areas for London. This overriding value of openness is clearly recognised by the

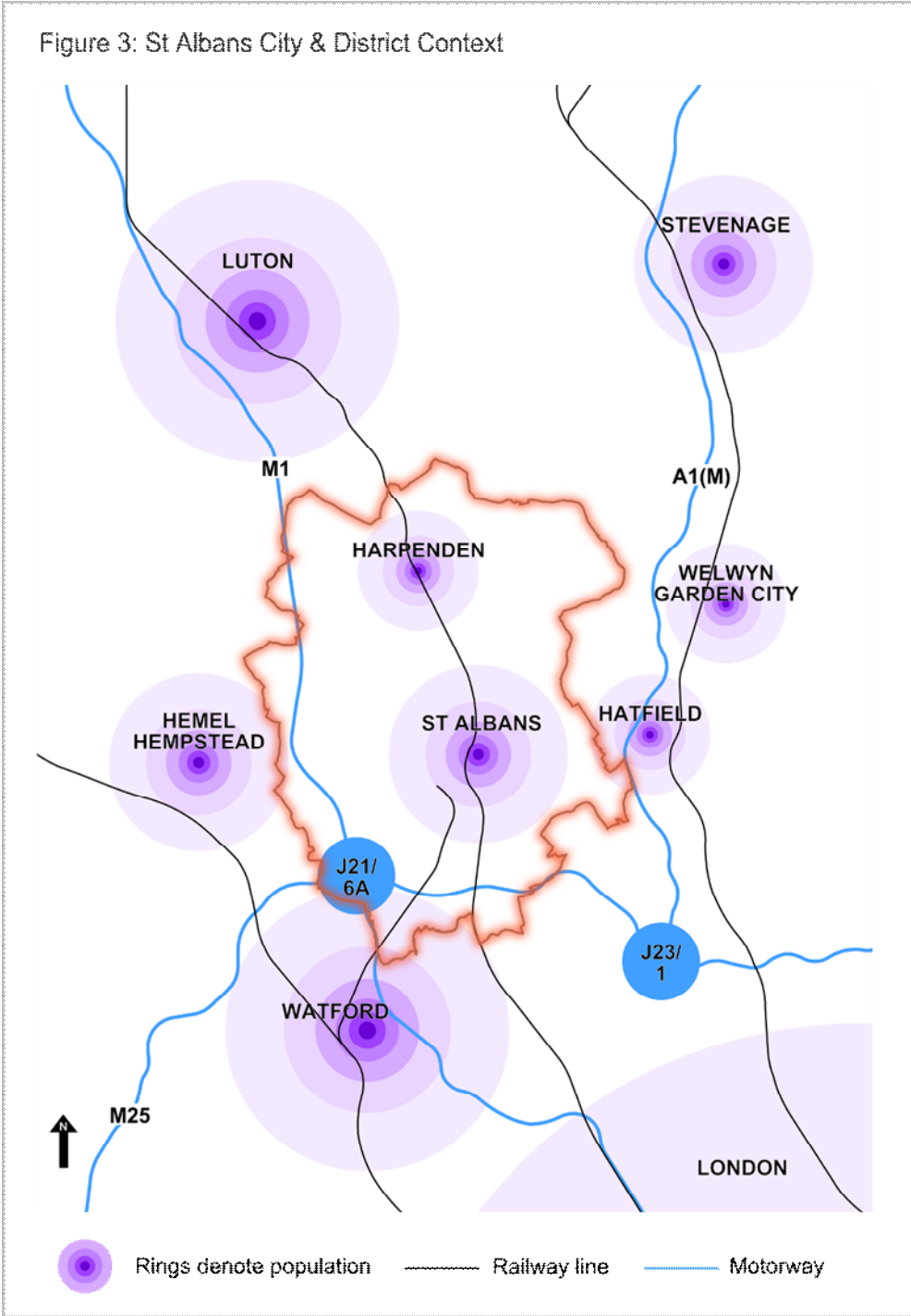
NPPF as development in Green Belt is specifically excluded from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

2.22 In order to develop an appropriate evidence base and inform decision making SADC commissioned some innovative work looking at the Environmental Capacity of the district. This work was commissioned and started before the final NPPF, but finalised immediately post the NPPF publication. This district is believed to be the first in the UK to have commissioned such work, including utilising 'Ecosystems Services' information and approaches. This approach has now been supported by the NPPF (at paragraph 109). Key highlights include:

- The ecological footprint of the district reveals an unsustainable pattern of consumption: An area of biologically productive land fifty times the size of the district is required to sustain its current population (approximately equivalent to Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Essex combined).
- An area of land eleven times the size of the district is required to sustain the district's current food consumption and to produce sufficient domestic energy to support the local population would require an area of short-rotation coppice 1.7 times the area of the district.
- The district's non-urban areas will become even more important in terms of the district's ability to respond to energy and resource scarcity and climate change. Water resources are under immense pressure and over abstraction has resulted in biodiversity damage, including to local chalk streams.
- The retention and enhancement of the district's non-urban areas should be a key part of the local economic development strategy, due to its array of economic benefits (see Policy SLP15).
- The Green Belt has worked successfully for more than 60 years in controlling the growth of Greater London. This has proven to be valuable for all Londoners in the sense that they all continue to live within a relatively short distance of the countryside. In St Albans City and District the Green Belt has also served local people well, ensuring that the majority of residents live and work within close proximity to accessible and attractive countryside. The Green Belt has also helped the District's settlements to maintain their own individual special character.

2.23 In view of these factors and trends, the observations made regarding the various global and local ecosystems and the services they provide and the fact that we are already exceeding the capacity of the environment to support us, the study concludes that it would be unwise to permit further

urban development in the District on undeveloped land. Where development is permitted a Compact City² approach is recommended.



² Compact City is urban development which involves mixed-use settlements within urban areas, which make effective use of public transport and encourage walking and cycling.

3. Vision and Objectives

The Local Plan Vision for 2028

- 3.1 This chapter sets out a vision for how the district will be in 2028, explaining how the policies in the Local Plan have shaped places in the district. It also includes a list of objectives which will help to achieve this vision. Through the Local Plan we will have successfully shaped delivery so that in 2028:
- 3.2 St Albans City and District's outstanding built and natural environment has been retained and enhanced. This includes the historic Cathedral City of St Albans; the vibrant and charming town of Harpenden; London Colney with its diverse and exciting character; and the range of villages and hamlets, all with their individual character. The natural and man-made landscapes and woodlands within the extensive Green Belt have been proactively managed, to conserve the district's heritage, maintain its existing high quality of life and retain the sense of rurality.
- 3.3 In maintaining this high quality of life, truly sustainable development and the diminution of the district's environmental footprint have been the principles underpinning all growth and development proposals. The aim is to ensure a better balance is achieved between built form and the natural environment, with natural processes and assets properly valued and preserved. This will ensure that the district has halted further increases in its environmental footprint and is reducing its impact within the wider sub region.
- 3.4 The district's prosperous economy, based primarily on high levels of knowledge and skills has provided a robust and flexible base from which to respond to future challenges. Existing key employers, Rothamsted Research and the BRE have redeveloped and expanded, creating new highly skilled jobs and fulfilled their potential as Green Technology business incubators. New business start ups and entrepreneurial activity have increased throughout the district, supported by the provision of affordable and flexible business space, high speed broadband and next generation telecommunications. The visitor economy is an increasingly important economic driver. The unique and exceptional quality of the built and natural environment continues to be very important in supporting the prosperous local economy and providing a range of jobs for all.
- 3.5 St Albans City centre has retained and expanded its diverse range of independent shops and services and these have been complemented by a broad mix of High Street multiples which satisfy the majority of residents' weekly shopping needs. Redevelopment of City centre sites has helped to attract visitors from surrounding areas seeking both a comprehensive shopping offer as well as a unique and attractive environment. St Albans street market has continued to add considerable value through its diverse

mix of stalls with a strong emphasis on quality goods and local produce. Harpenden has remained a diverse and appealing place to shop with a thriving mix of independent retailers, as local shopping expenditure is anchored by expanded central supermarkets. London Colney's retail offer has improved through public realm enhancements in its High Street and development at Colney Fields. In villages, the great value that local shops, services and open spaces add to the community and quality of life has been recognised with support and protection given.

- 3.6 A mixture of quality new homes including affordable houses and housing for families, the elderly, disabled, key workers and young people have been delivered. A Compact City approach combined with Green Belt green field preservation has enabled the delivery of an appropriate level of housing whilst respecting the ability of the District's environment to enable future generations to meet their own needs. Development exceptions at Oaklands College and Kingsley Green support the overall approach. Residential and other new buildings are flexible and adaptable, with many being designed to 'Building for Life' standards/Lifetime Homes. This has helped to build more mixed and balanced communities, increased the vitality of urban and village living and helped with the retention and viability of local services. The gaps between settlements have been preserved in order to ensure that their individual character is maintained, including in the congested south of the district.
- 3.7 New schools, health facilities and other community infrastructure have been provided alongside development. Oaklands College has modern, fit-for-purpose buildings that enable high quality further and higher education; excellence in work with the learning disabled and support extensive community use of shared facilities and open space. A partnership approach between education providers, local businesses and organisations has helped to deliver a highly skilled and flexible workforce. This has helped tackle small pockets of skill deficit, low employment and through the University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield has enabled lifetime learning.
- 3.8 The delivery of the highest quality of architectural and urban design has seen a step change in the built form of the district; St Albans is now known as an exemplar of contemporary design in a historic setting. All settlements have also benefited from a comprehensive range of streetscape and public realm improvements, with St Albans specifically improved by the creation of new and improved public spaces, a variety of City centre interlinked pedestrian friendly routes, public art and a vibrant mix of cafes, restaurants and street entertainment. Harpenden's unique and tranquil atmosphere has been retained and its excellent array of green spaces and character buildings conserved. The public realm in London Colney, particularly along the High Street, has been significantly improved.
- 3.9 A network of green and blue corridors has been created which link key

open spaces and wildlife habitats. The improved Verulamium Park and new 'green rings' around the periphery of St Albans city centre and other settlements have been integrated into the broader surrounding footpaths, and routes linking out to the countryside. The district has seen a substantial increase in woodland with the establishment of Heartwood Forest and a renewed emphasis upon the delivery of Watling Chase Community Forest. The district's superb commons and open spaces have continued to be valued and the important role that agriculture plays in shaping the character of the district has been recognised and the production of local food and products is encouraged.

- 3.10 The challenge of balancing the conservation of its historic environment with the integration of green and renewable technologies has been embraced, including responding to the challenges of climate change. Many homes and buildings are highly energy efficient and use low levels of water, including in challenging places such as conservation areas and listed buildings.
- 3.11 The district's Green Belt and non-urban areas have been protected and proactively managed helping to ensure the long-term sustainability of the district and allow future generations to meet their own needs. In general, the location of new development helps to reduce the needs to travel. The district's carbon footprint and congestion levels have been managed by creating new and improving existing cycling and walking routes and via traffic management improvements, including pedestrian enhancements in St Peter's Street, St Albans and increased use of low emission buses. Accessibility in rural areas has been improved through a significant increase in bus and cycle travel. The Thameslink Programme has increased the frequency and length of trains to London, easing overcrowding, whilst access and facilities at Harpenden train station have been considerably improved. The Abbey Flyer has created a frequent and reliable link to Watford, which coupled with the public realm improvements to St Albans City centre, has greatly increased sustainable transport options.
- 3.12 St Albans role as an important cultural hub has been underpinned by improved theatre accommodation, a range of internal and external flexible performance spaces and improved museum and more use of the Cathedral's facilities. These new facilities have greatly helped in the communication, publicity and interpretation of the City's previously underexploited but exceptional roman and medieval heritage, as well as meeting broader educational, training and leisure needs. The City's important ecclesiastical past, present and future has been highlighted in the new Cathedral Quarter. (See policy SLP 22)
- 3.13 Harpenden's exceptionally vibrant cultural and community life has benefited from improved cultural and leisure provision such as enhanced museum facilities; leisure centre improvements and other initiatives developed in

liaison with the Town Council and other community stakeholders. London Colney and the villages and hamlets in the District have been supported in their ambitions for improved cultural and community facilities.

Core Strategic Objectives

- 3.14 The Core Strategic Objectives distil the Vision into the key structuring elements of the SLP.

Strategic Objective 1: Our Special Character

- 3.15 Safeguarding and enhancing the district's special character arising from its rural heritage and its resulting legacy of extensive Green Belt, with the network of Cathedral City, towns and villages. The district's striking and attractive historic built environment will be conserved and enhanced with new high quality development, designed to the highest standards, which positively contributes to existing identity and character and incorporates opportunities for contemporary design.

Strategic Objective 2: Mixed and balanced / sustainable communities

- 3.16 Promoting balanced, mixed and sustainable communities through the provision of new housing and in particular addressing the need for affordable housing, all with appropriate community infrastructure. New development must seek to ensure a safe, secure and inclusive environment which addresses the needs of all, particularly the young, people with special needs and the ageing population.

Strategic Objective 3: A thriving economy

- 3.17 Ensuring that the district becomes even more economically vibrant, reinforcing existing economic strengths in the higher order knowledge and skills sectors. The district will offer employers a highly skilled and flexible workforce and individuals the very best opportunities to learn, train, start businesses and improve their employability.

Strategic Objective 4: Celebration of our Culture

- 3.18 Visitor economy, culture and leisure will be recognised and promoted as an economic driver throughout the district. The key cultural assets of museums, Cathedral and theatres will be managed and promoted as a coherent visitor offer and for the benefits they bring to the quality of life, supplemented by new diverse proposals which add value to the district's existing character and identity.

Strategic Objective 5: A connected district with ease of movement

- 3.19 The provision of a sustainable movement network which encourages the use of public transport, walking and cycling and which improves access to services, jobs and facilities, particularly for rural settlements and those without the use of private vehicles. Traffic congestion will be managed to an acceptable level while parking will be appropriately priced and located.

Improvements will be made to air quality and reductions made in carbon emissions.

Strategic Objective 6: A healthy and strong environment for a healthy and strong population

- 3.20 An integrated and cohesive network of green and blue open spaces and routes will be identified, protected and managed to increase biodiversity, help mitigate and adapt to climate change and encourage active and healthy lifestyles. The district's non-urban areas will be protected and enhanced in order to help bring built development and natural land into greater environmental balance.

Strategic Objective 7: Delivering Infrastructure

- 3.21 The Council will take appropriate measures throughout the Plan period to ensure that an historic infrastructure deficit is redressed and that new development fully addresses current and future physical, social and green infrastructure needs.

4. The Spatial Strategy

Introduction

- 4.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy vision is for the district to be progressive, unique and vibrant, valuing its environment, heritage and culture. The Local Plan Vision and Strategic Objectives take forward this vision spatially i.e. geographically on the ground. The Spatial Strategy defines what role the City, towns, villages and small settlements will play in maintaining and improving quality of life and building a more sustainable district for all residents, businesses and stakeholders, now and in the future.
- 4.2 The general distribution of new development and the provision of major green infrastructure are outlined here.

The General Distribution of Development

- 4.3 Clear evidence including the NPPF, the Sustainability Appraisal, the Environmental Capacity investigations of the district and public consultation responses supports the twin thrusts of the general distribution of development within this strategy. These are;
- Maintaining the fundamental aim of the Green Belt in keeping land permanently open, by not developing on green field Green Belt land.
 - Prioritising opportunities to maximise the economic, environmental and social benefits of sustainable development.

- 4.4 The urban areas of St Albans, Harpenden and London Colney are the main focus for new development, as they provide access to the widest range of services, facilities, employment opportunities and transport options and are therefore the most sustainable locations for development. This will be supported by lower levels of development in the villages excluded from the Green Belt and lower still in the Green Belt settlements, as they provide sequentially lower levels of services, facilities, employment opportunities and transport options.
- 4.5 The implementation of the spatial strategy will assist the district to positively evolve over time. Each settlement will retain its essential identity and character and benefit from some growth to deliver wider community benefits. High quality design will play a key role in ensuring that the highly valued individual character of all settlements is preserved and enhanced.
- 4.6 All proposals for development will be considered in the context of the district wide Spatial Strategy, including as shown on the Key Diagram (see fold out page at end of document). The Key Diagram sets out the Council's vision for sustainable development in the district in the period up to 2028 and integrates the necessary infrastructure for delivering development, whilst safeguarding and enhancing key existing environmental, social and economic assets and resources.
- 4.7 Housing, employment, retail, leisure and all other built development will be prioritised within urban areas, particularly on Previously Developed Land (PDL) in urban areas, to make efficient use of land and to minimise development in the Green Belt. All types of development will make the best use of previously developed land (PDL) and buildings. New housing will be built in sustainable locations and aid in securing appropriate infrastructure provision and overall community benefits for the district as a whole.
- 4.8 This SLP is specifically limited to the fundamental principles or key proposals that are necessary to deliver the overall Vision. The subsequent DLP will provide guidance on policy detail and proposals at a more local scale. Where communities wish to have them, Neighbourhood Plans will be supported by the Council, which may also provide further fine grained detailed planning guidance at a more localised level.

St Albans City

- 4.9 The historic City of St Albans functions very well in general as a major town. However, whilst the City centre is healthy and vibrant it does not cater for everyone's full shopping needs and its retail market share in the County has been declining over recent years. Often residents commute out of the district for their shopping needs, particularly for bulky goods. The St Albans urban area has the district's widest range of services, facilities and

employment opportunities available, with a good range of transport options to access them, making it the most sustainable location for development.

- 4.10 The surrounding Green Belt maintains the separation of St Albans from nearby settlements, including Chiswell Green, How Wood and Park Street & Frogmore, retaining the separate identity of individual communities.

Harpenden

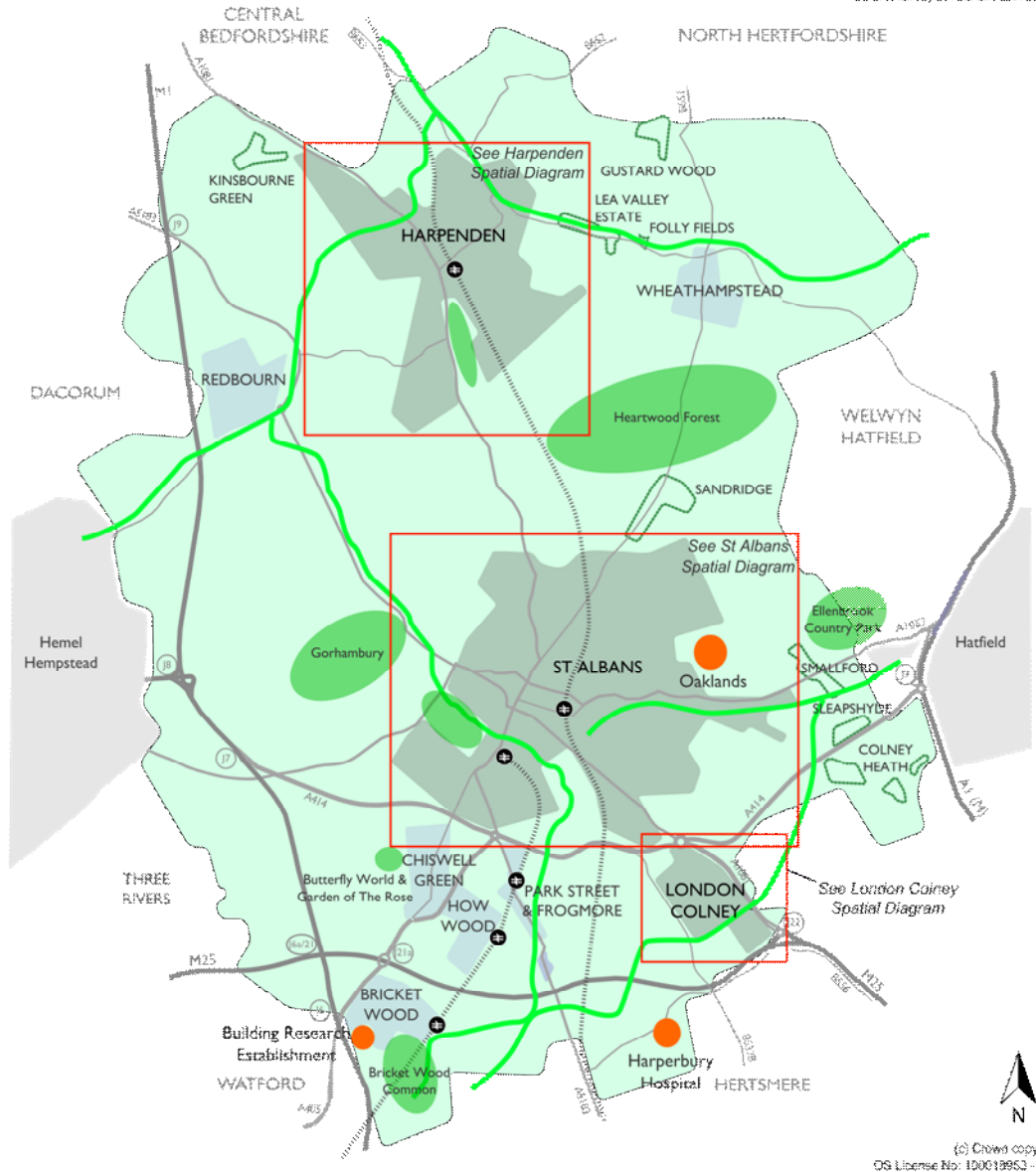
- 4.11 Harpenden functions very well as a small town and has a thriving vibrant high street for a town of its size. However there is need for some small scale employment, cultural, retail related development and redevelopment and improvements to the railway station to ensure that the settlement continues to prosper. It has a good range of services, facilities and employment opportunities available, with a good range of transport options to access them, making it the second most sustainable location for development.

London Colney

- 4.12 London Colney is the third largest settlement in the district and has grown substantially in recent years. The former hospital site at Napsbury has been redeveloped into a substantial new residential community, although there is a poor interface between this development and the rest of London Colney. There has been redevelopment of several employment sites for housing and the London Colney Retail Park has grown significantly. Parts of London Colney suffer from relatively high levels of deprivation and some areas of poor environment. It does not have as wide a range of services, facilities, employment opportunities or as good a range of transport options as Harpenden or St Albans. It is the third most sustainable location for development and in order to provide the best opportunity to generate the new services and opportunities that the settlement needs, London Colney is re-classified as a town.

KEY DIAGRAM

NOTE: THE FEATURES SHOWN ON THE KEY DIAGRAM AND INSETS ARE FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY AND DO NOT REPRESENT PRECISE LOCATIONS, SITES OR EXTENTS.



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LEGEND








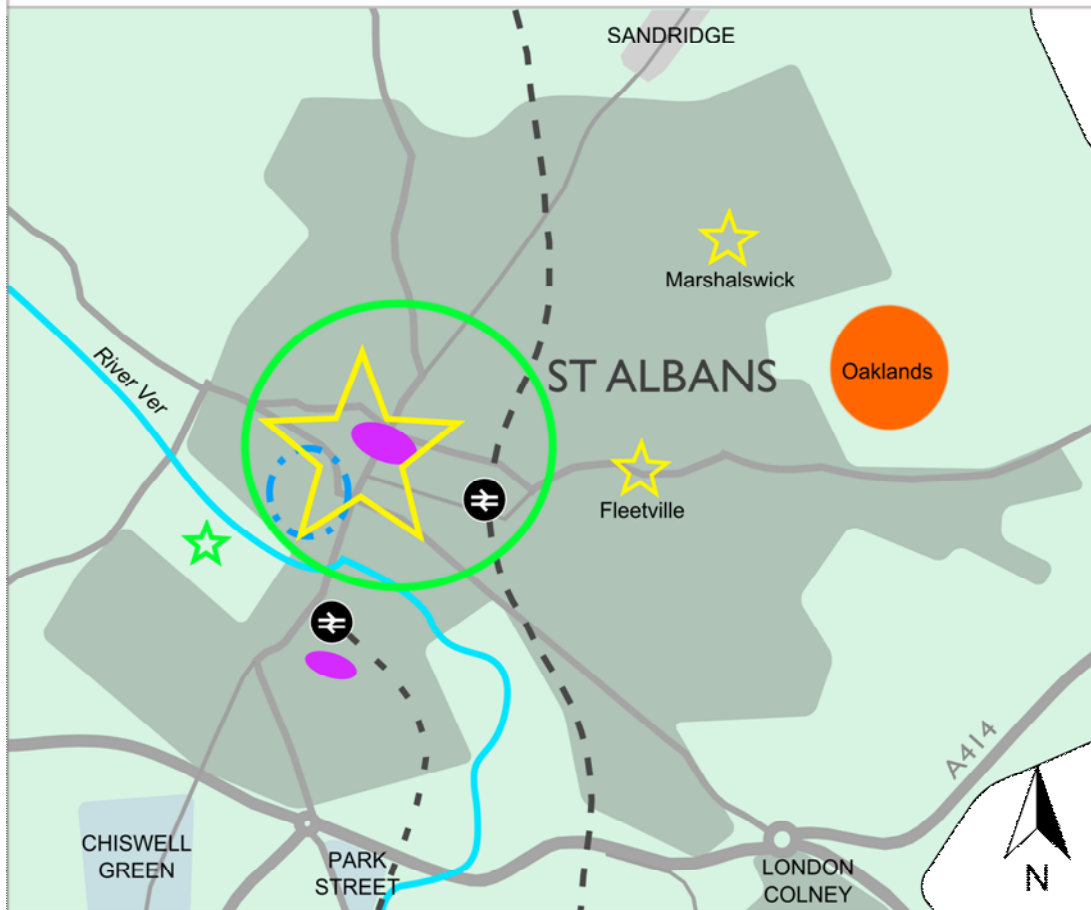
- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|
|  | Metropolitan Green Belt |  | Mixed Use Broad Location |
|  | Towns - main urban settlements excluded from the Green Belt |  | Strategic Green Infrastructure assets |
|  | Villages - other settlements excluded from the Green Belt |  | Strategic Green Infrastructure link |
|  | Green Belt settlements | | |

Figure 4: St Albans Spatial Diagram



Legend








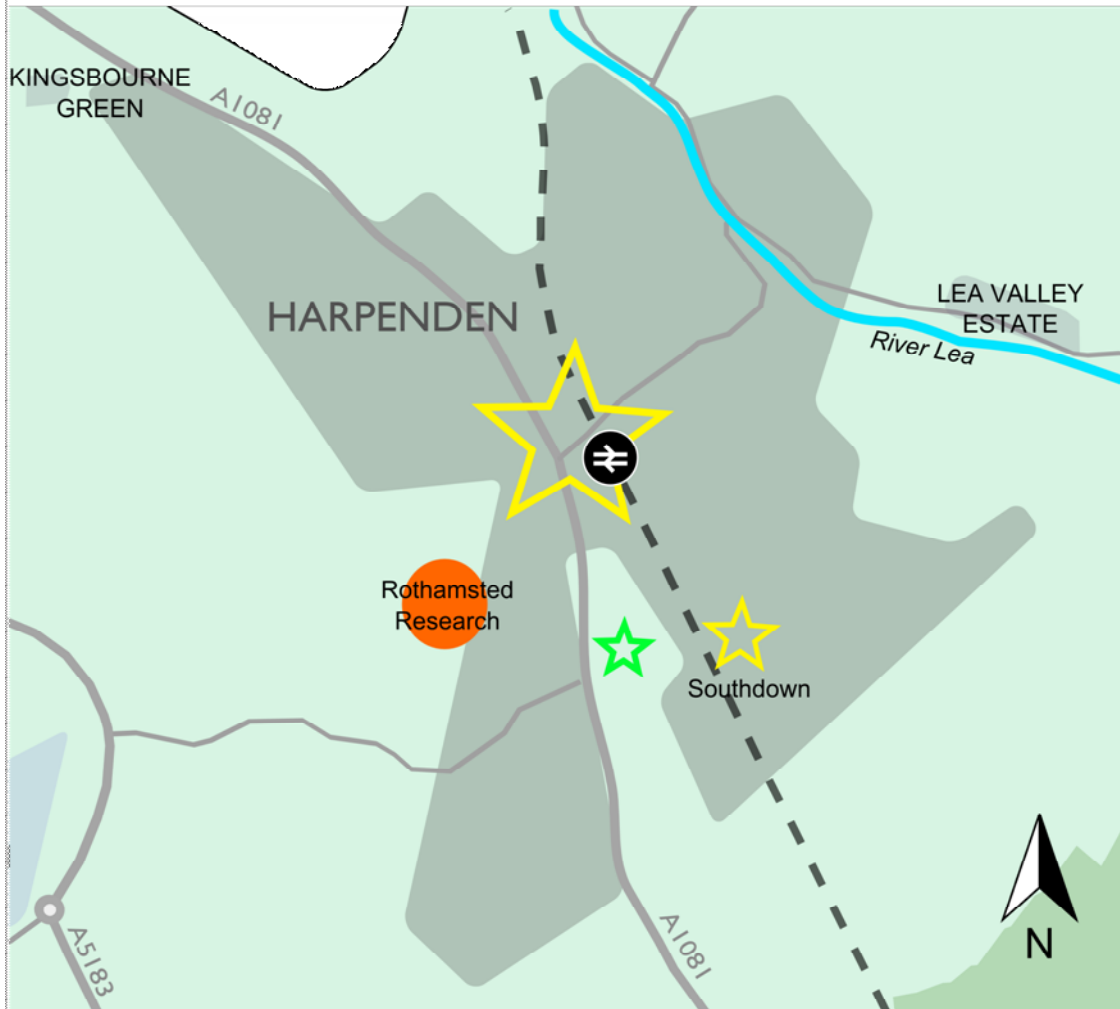
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|---|--|---|---|
|  | Major Town Centre
(Policy SLP18) |  | City Green Ring
(Policy SLP27) |
|  | District Centres
(Policy SLP18) |  | Verulamium Park
Enhancements
(Policy SLP27 and SLP25) |
|  | Oaklands Mixed Use
Broad Location
(Policy SLP14) |  | Cathedral Quarter
(Policy SLP22) |
|  | Major retail development
(Policy SLP19) | | |

Figure 5: Harpenden Spatial Diagram



Legend



Town Centre
(Policy SLP18)



Rothamsted Research
Redevelopment
(Policy SLP17)

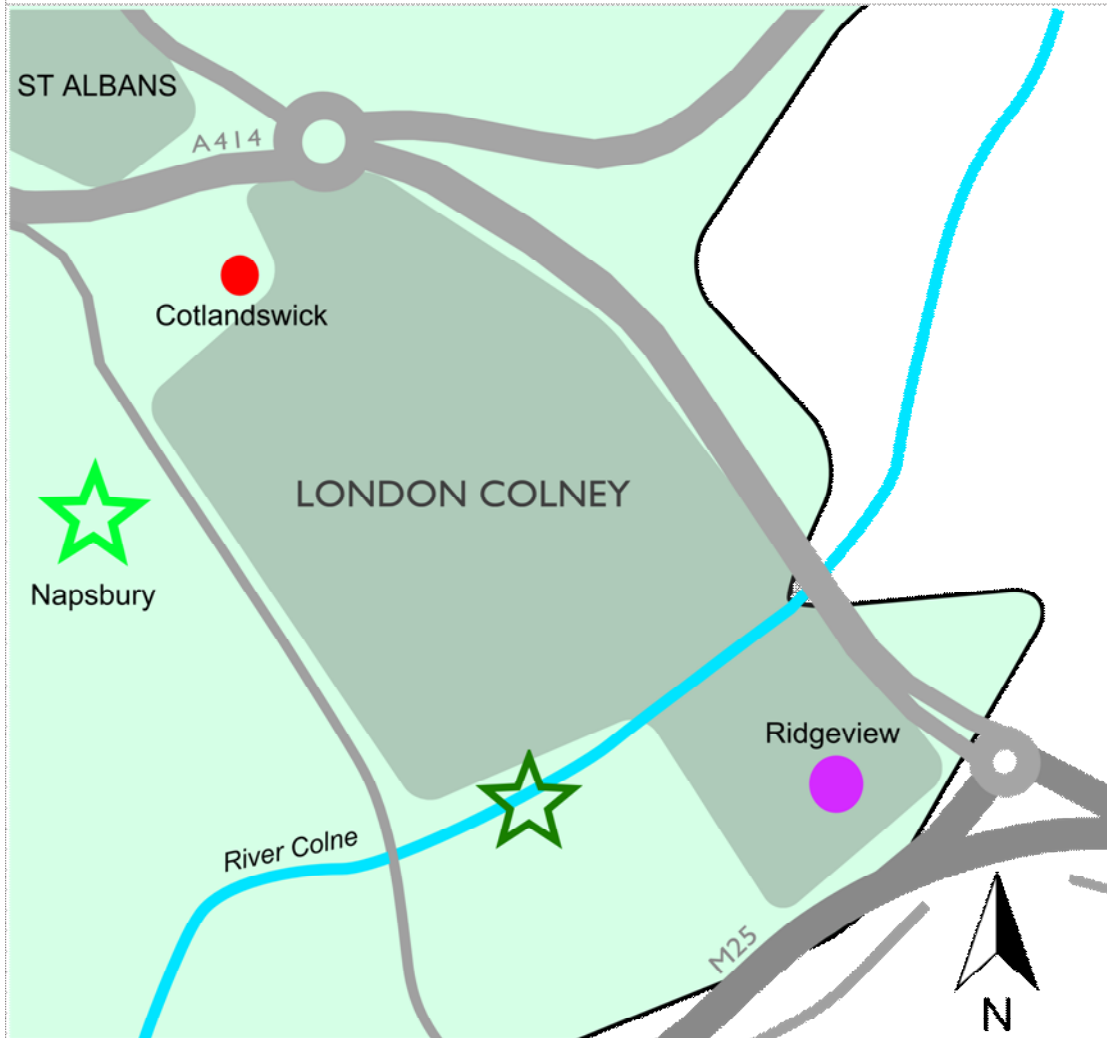


District Centre
(Policy SLP18)



Harpenden Common
(Policy SLP27)

Figure 6: London Colney Spatial Diagram



Legend

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cotlandswick Leisure Development (Policy SLP7) ● Major Retail Development (Policy SLP19) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ Napsbury Historic Park and Garden (Policy SLP26 and SLP27) ☆ London Colney Nature Reserve (Policy SLP26 and SLP27) |
|--|---|

Other settlements excluded from the Green Belt - Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green, How Wood, Park Street and Frogmore, Redbourn,

Wheathampstead

- 4.13 The district contains a diverse range of villages and settlements excluded from the Green Belt that have a more limited range of services than the towns, but still offer a range of facilities to meet the day-to-day needs of their communities. The overall amount of development that will be acceptable in these settlements will generally be less than in the towns, due to their more limited range of services and reduced accessibility, which renders them less sustainable locations for meeting the development needs of the district as a whole. In addition, the smaller size of the settlements means that the physical scope for larger scale development consistent with maintaining their character and identity is less.
- 4.14 The continued sustainability of these settlements as places to live and work is dependent on the retention and expansion of local services that meet community needs, coupled with improved transport services enabling access to larger centres for those services that are not available locally. The Council will work with service providers to support the retention and where possible improvement of transport services that provide an essential link between smaller settlements and the towns, both in the district and in adjoining districts.

Green Belt Settlements - Colney Heath, Folly Fields, Gustard Wood, Kinsbourne Green, Lea Valley Estate, Sandridge, Sleafshyde, Smallford

- 4.15 There are a range of smaller settlements in the district that have a more limited range of services than the villages excluded from the Green Belt. The overall amount of development that will be acceptable in these settlements will generally be less than in the villages excluded from the Green Belt, due to their more limited range of services and reduced accessibility, which renders them less sustainable locations for meeting the development needs of the district as a whole. The small size of the settlements means that the physical scope for larger scale development consistent with maintaining their character and identity is very limited.
- 4.16 In a similar way to the settlements excluded from the Green Belt, the continued sustainability of these places to live and work is dependent on the retention and expansion of local services that meet community needs, coupled with adequate transport services enabling access to larger centres, which will be supported by the Council.

Wider Spatial Planning

- 4.17 The Council continues to fully engage and co-operate with all adjoining and nearby Local Authorities; particularly Dacorum, Welwyn and Hatfield, Luton, Central Bedfordshire, Watford, Hertsmere, Three Rivers and Hertfordshire County Council, in order to appropriately address sub-regional and regional

strategic spatial planning issues. The Council is also very aware of the strategic importance of its Green Belt to the wider social and environmental sustainability of London. It is because of the good transport connections between St Albans and London that many of the district's residents commute to London for employment and this is particularly true for higher paid jobs.

- 4.18 Joint working with Dacorum Borough Council on the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan (AAP) has been initiated and is fully supported by this Council. Both Councils will continue to discuss the most appropriate AAP boundary and the range and scale of uses to be provided within the AAP.

Policy SLP1 – The Spatial Strategy		
All development will make efficient use of land and take a sequential approach that gives priority to urban locations. Development will be concentrated in existing settlements, in the following priority:		
Category	Settlements	Broad policy approach
City, Towns - Main urban settlements excluded from the Green Belt	<i>St Albans Harpenden London Colney</i>	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.
Villages - Other settlements excluded from the Green Belt	<i>Bricket Wood Chiswell Green How Wood Park Street and Frogmore Redbourn Wheathampstead</i>	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	<i>Annables, Kinsbourne Green Colney Heath Folly Fields Gustard Wood Kinsbourne Green Lea Valley Estate Radlett Road, Frogmore Sandridge Sleapshyde Smallford</i>	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 (NPPF, SLP2 and policies to be set out in DLP).
Further detail will be provided in the DLP, including defining the approach to “small scale infilling and redevelopment of previously developed land that reflects the character of the settlement” in Green Belt settlements. Any proposals in advance of the definition will not be acceptable.		

5. Our Special Character

Strategic Objective 1 - Our Special Character

Safeguarding and enhancing the district’s special character arising from its rich heritage and its legacy of extensive Green Belt, with its network of Cathedral City, towns and villages dating back to Roman and pre-Roman times. The district’s striking and attractive historic built environment will be conserved and enhanced with new high quality development which complements local character and distinctiveness.

Introduction

- 5.1 The City and District of St Albans has a unique character. It is close to and has significant interactions with London, but is also very clearly separate from and different to London. This character has been shaped by a long and eventful history with many of the settlements having been of importance since Roman, Saxon and Mediaeval times. Today, the district’s rich heritage is preserved by 18 Conservation Areas; nearly 900 statutorily listed buildings; 3 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens; and 18 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, including St Albans Abbey and Verulamium Roman Town.
- 5.2 St Albans City functions as a thriving market town and retail centre with a magnificent history. Harpenden is a charming town with a thriving town centre and range of historic buildings and high quality open spaces, with the extensive Common a particular feature and the River Lea flowing to the east. London Colney has a varied character with historic elements at Napsbury and adjacent to the River Colne, intertwined with more modern elements including the Colney Fields retail centre. The villages in the district all have a rich history and a unique character including both the larger villages excluded from the Green Belt and the smaller ones washed over by it.
- 5.3 The character of the district has also been shaped by the Green Belt, which

is particularly valued locally. Historically the Green Belt has helped preserve the individual identity of the district's settlements and has provided residents with important access to the countryside and high quality agricultural land. These functions are still of vital importance, however the future role of land within the Green Belt needs to be recognised as being far more complex and multi faceted. It is an environmental asset which is integral to the delivery of a wide range of natural ecosystem services.

- 5.4 The Council is keen to ensure that new development acknowledges the rich cultural and natural heritage present in the district, whilst delivering high quality contemporary architecture, where appropriate, which contributes to local distinctiveness and maximises sustainable development principles and technology. The unique and exceptional quality of the built and natural environment is very important in supporting the prosperous local economy and providing a range of jobs for all. Key local employers and entrepreneurs agree that St Albans is a good place to locate business and to do business and have expressed the vital role that quality of life factors play in supporting the local intellectual capital economy. The district is economically thriving precisely because of these factors, an absolutely key element of which is the retention of the Green Belt.

Proactive Management of the Green Belt

- 5.5 The Green Belt covers over 81% of the district and is of critical importance in preventing urban sprawl and the coalescence of settlements. The Green Belt also plays an important role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; preserving the setting and special character of the district's historic settlements; and assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. Inappropriate development in the Green Belt would harm the district's high quality environment and further erode areas within the south of the district already fragmented by infrastructure and development.
- 5.6 Ecosystem services are particularly important in the district's Green Belt. This includes provisioning services (crops, livestock, fish, trees, standing vegetation, and water supply), cultural services (local, landscapes) and regulating services (climate, hazard, disease and pests, pollination, noise, water quality, soil quality and air quality). When combined with the significant social and economic benefits the Green Belt provides it is vital that its long term protection is ensured.
- 5.7 The limited gaps between settlements both within the district and with those outside of it highlight the vital role that the Green Belt plays in preserving character and individual identity. The gaps between settlements in the south of the district are particularly small and development pressure is particularly high here for a number of reasons, including the close proximity

to the M25. Therefore, it is of even greater strategic significance that the openness of the Green Belt in these areas is maintained.

- 5.8 The Council does not view the Green Belt as simply a constraint or defensive barrier, but rather as an asset that should be protected and proactively managed. This management should seek to optimize the Green Belt's potential to contribute to creating a sustainable district for existing and future generations. The district's Green Belt is more formally referred to as Metropolitan Green Belt, due to its role in containing the urban sprawl of London and protecting the merging together of smaller satellite settlements. This well founded and long established strategic planning policy has helped to preserve the individual character and identity of settlements and drive urban regeneration, whilst providing an extremely valuable environmental and recreational resource of regional, sub-regional, district and local importance.

Policy SLP2 - Metropolitan Green Belt

The Council attaches great importance to the Metropolitan Green Belt, which will be protected from inappropriate development. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of the Green Belt are its openness and permanence.

Green Belt land will be proactively managed to create attractive landscapes and countryside; promote healthy ecosystem services; support productive and sustainable farming and forestry; provide space for local and wider recreational needs; and meet important challenges including mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

The Green Belt boundary is defined on the Proposals Map. Some minor amendments to the Green Belt boundary will be made through the DLP and updated Proposals Map.

A Rich Historic Environment

- 5.9 The intrinsic value of the district's unique, high quality historic environment is one of its greatest assets. To continue to successfully attract people and investment, this environment must be respected and, where appropriate, developed sensitively. Any change should not detract from the existing qualities of the environment, which makes the district such an attractive and valued location for residents, businesses and visitors.
- 5.10 The historic environment comprises designated and undesignated historic assets and their settings. It includes both known and potential historic assets, below and above ground archaeology and historic landscapes.

- 5.11 Conservation Area Character Statements provide further detail, describing what is important in terms of the character and appearance of each conservation area, and identifying assets which contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the area. These will be kept under regular review. Further detail may be provided through Neighbourhood Plans.
- 5.12 The district has an excellent array of historic landmark buildings. It is important that new development integrates well and enhances the existing high-quality townscapes present in the district. Landmark buildings of particular note include St Albans Cathedral, St Albans Clock Tower and St Peter's Church. In a number of locations important views create distinctive approaches to settlements.

Policy SLP3 - Historic Environment and Townscape Character

The unique character of the district's historic environment, which greatly contributes to a distinctive local 'sense of place' and a high quality of life for residents, businesses and stakeholders, will be conserved, enhanced and enjoyed. This includes both designated and undesignated heritage assets which all contribute to this unique character.

Heritage assets will be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Great weight will be given to the conservation of the district's designated heritage assets, which include Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens and Conservation Areas. Heritage assets also include the district's exceptional above and below ground archaeology; buildings which are deemed to contribute to the special character or interest of Conservation Areas (locally listed buildings); and locally listed historic parks and gardens.

Intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term. Wherever possible, heritage assets will be put to an appropriate and viable use that is consistent with their conservation as long as this would not be in direct conflict with other policies in the LP and/or national guidance/legislation.

New development must respect important views of the district's built heritage and landscapes and enhance townscape character.

Design for the 21st Century

- 5.13 Historic buildings are central to defining a sense of place, establishing local distinctiveness and playing a positive role in place shaping. New development needs to preserve or enhance this historic character. However, where appropriate, innovation and artistic expression will be

encouraged. Modern architecture can help to provide new interest and character in the townscape.

- 5.14 The quality of the built environment in the district is generally high. The Council wants to secure high quality contemporary architecture and urban design to further enhance the attractiveness of the district and respond to modern day commercial and consumer needs. St Albans City and District requires a special approach to architecture and urban design in order to deliver the Council's spatial vision which seeks to value the past and embrace the future.
- 5.15 New development can help enhance the built environment by redeveloping unattractive buildings, introducing appropriate sustainable design elements and supporting improvements to the local public realm, including the provision of public art.
- 5.16 Thoughtful and flexible design can help to increase the lifetime of buildings by enabling future adaptation and reuse, thereby reducing the need for redevelopment. Buildings should seek to be adaptable as the wants and needs of residents, businesses and stakeholders change.
- 5.17 New development must take opportunities for improving the character, distinctiveness and quality of an area to create areas that are safe, well connected and legible and that are coherent with the surrounding built form.
- 5.18 The quality and success of new places are ultimately judged by how enjoyable they are to use or visit, how safe and secure they feel, how the buildings and adjacent spaces relate to each other and how attractive they look as a whole.
- 5.19 Development proposals should be informed by 'Hertfordshire Guide to Growth—2021', CABE's 'Building for Life' scheme and "By Design" principles and the sustainability requirements referred to in the Governments 'Code for Sustainable Homes' and Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) ratings.
- 5.20 To assist developers on how to make new development more sustainable and of a higher quality in design terms, Hertfordshire local authorities have produced Building Futures. This is an evolving web-based guide covering topics such as waste, water, energy, air, noise and design and the efficient use of land, building and materials.
- 5.21 Where appropriate, proposals will be sent to the local design review panel for the provision of assessment and support to ensure high standards. Early engagement is encouraged to help ensure high quality design and successful outcomes.

- 5.22 The Building Research Establishment (BRE) is one of the district's key employers. The BRE are the leading organisation on innovation in sustainable building design. The Council will seek to work more closely with the BRE in order to share knowledge and experience and use the district as a showcase for innovative design.
- 5.23 Preserving and enhancing the historic environment whilst encouraging and guiding modern sustainable and expressive urban design and architecture will ensure that the district retains its unique sense of place in the years to come.

Policy SLP4 - Urban Design

All new development must be based on a thorough site appraisal of opportunities and constraints, respond positively to its context, and be efficient in its use of land.

The Council will require the layout and design of all new development to create attractive and successful places, where people enjoy living and working. Particular consideration will be given to:

- Creating a clear distinction between private and public realm and the creation of active frontages and safe, vibrant environments.
- Ensuring new development integrates with existing development, including by responding to the existing urban grain and linking with existing routes and creating legible / easily navigated layouts.
- Creating safe and accessible environments which address community safety and crime prevention issues.
- Ensuring that where possible new development is adaptable to changes in use and occupier need.
- Ensuring that new development maximises opportunities for sustainability, in terms of layout, orientation and the application of technologies (also see Policy SLP28 and SLP29).
- The delivery of high quality architecture and landscaping. Innovative and outstanding design will be encouraged, including contemporary architecture.

Public realm enhancements will be encouraged, including the creation of public art in appropriate locations.

Detailed design policies will be set out in the DLP.

6. Mixed and Balanced Communities

Strategic Objective 2 - Mixed and sustainable communities

Promoting balanced, mixed and sustainable communities through the provision of new housing and in particular addressing the need for affordable housing, all with appropriate community infrastructure. New development must seek to ensure a safe, secure and inclusive environment which addresses the needs of all, particularly the young, people with special needs and the ageing population.

Balanced Communities

- 6.1 The district is a relatively affluent area; however, the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) has identified neighbourhoods where deprivation is above the national average. The IMD includes information on deprivation in terms of income, employment, health and disability, education, skills and training, barriers to housing services and crime.
- 6.2 The neighbourhoods where deprivation is above the national average are in the wards of Batchwood, Sopwell, Cunningham and Park Street. Parts of other wards in the district including parts of London Colney, Park Street, St Peter's and Harpenden East wards are also close to this level. This pattern of deprivation, within a larger prosperous whole, means the district is usually excluded from central regeneration funding.
- 6.3 The Inclusion and Inequalities Partnership, which is a sub group of the St Albans Strategic Partnership, works to address deprivation, inequalities, diversity and social inclusion across the district. This work involves public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations working together to ensure that all neighbourhoods have access to the same high quality services and facilities.

Mixed Communities

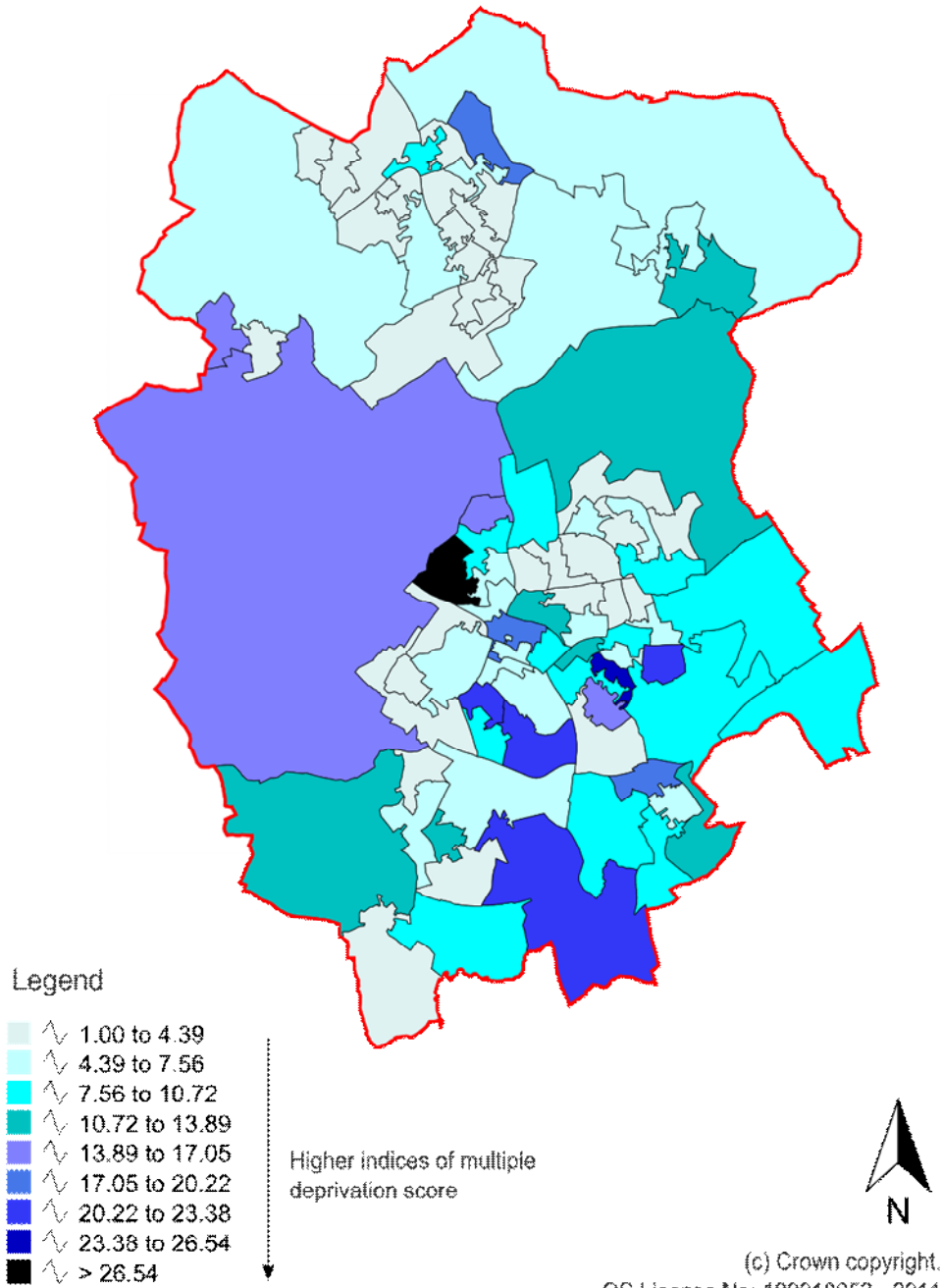
- 6.4 The district's proportion of ethnic minority residents is similar to the national average of 10% and is slowly growing. This adds to the diversity of the area and highlights the need to maintain and build community cohesion.

Cohesive Communities

- 6.5 Safe, inclusive and cohesive communities, with a tolerance and understanding for different cultures and lifestyles are important in maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for all. The provision of community facilities and places for communities to meet, interact and identify with, can encourage the development of such communities. Key to this is the continued establishment of a vibrant voluntary and community sector, which promotes a sense of belonging and pride in our places, underpinned by diverse cultural activity. The vital role of carers in

supporting individuals and groups and facilitating their full engagement in communities is acknowledged.

Figure 7: Indices of Multiple Deprivation Score 2010
Lower Super Output Areas



Policy SLP5 - Mixed and Sustainable Communities

The Council is seeking to promote communities which are inclusive, healthy, safe and crime free, whilst respecting the diverse needs of communities and the special needs of particular sectors of the community and their carers.

Proposals which improve equality of opportunity and equality of access for all to homes, jobs, key services and community facilities such as education and healthcare, recreation and green spaces, and cultural facilities, will be supported, subject to meeting the criteria set out in other relevant policies.

Measures which help create a socially inclusive and adaptable environment will be supported. Particular account will be taken to address the requirements of:

- Young people.
- An ageing population.
- People with special needs.

The Council, in partnership with other stakeholders, will seek to reduce levels of social and economic deprivation and inequalities within the district by coordinating planning and other strategies to ensure that improved services, community facilities and infrastructure are provided, particularly in those areas where indices of deprivation require targeted improvements.

Educational Facilities

- 6.6 Education is generally of a very high standard within the district, but there are some pockets of deprivation and other areas where educational attainment is lower than average. The provision of high quality educational facilities can help reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion.
- 6.7 The most pressing educational planning issue in the district is the need for additional school places. The attraction of high quality schooling in the district to parents of school aged children, the high birth rate and changes in living patterns have led to a shortage of school places. HCC, as the Local Education Authority with a duty to plan for school places, have identified the key requirements for education. These are set out below:
- Provisional requirements for new or expanded primary schools: 16 Forms of Education (FE) plus additional reserve site capacity in the district to 2026.
 - Requirements for new or expanded secondary schools: 12-14 FE in the district to 2021. Secondary school place planning beyond 2021 has not

yet been undertaken since forecasts beyond this period are based on births which have not yet taken place.

- 6.8 The Council supports the expansion of existing schools in principle due to the following benefits:
- They can be provided relatively quickly.
 - It is cost effective.
 - They can serve existing communities.
 - They can reduce need for new schools in Green Belt locations.
- 6.9 It also supports the provision of new buildings at existing schools in Green Belt locations and the provision of detached playing fields, where appropriate.
- 6.10 Given the potential planning and highway constraints and the requirement for agreement with schools, delivery of expansion cannot be guaranteed on existing sites. Therefore the provision of reserve education locations for new HCC schools will also be needed and such sites are likely to be located on Green Belt sites. Such locations are likely to be supported by this Council if all other expansion possibilities have been exhausted.
- 6.11 Oaklands College at Smallford is the main provider of Further Education and lifelong learning in the district and at a sub regional level. The need to modernise and expand the facilities of the College has been identified. Phase 1 proposals have permission and works are underway. The key requirement is now for Oaklands College proposals to deliver further high quality flexible learning facilities and recreational facilities, accessible to the community as well as to learners.

Policy SLP6 - Educational Facilities

The Council will support the provision of new or expanded educational facilities in appropriate and sustainable locations, including in the Green Belt if all other expansion possibilities have been exhausted, to meet the needs of residents of the district, subject to meeting other planning policies.

Primary Schools

To meet the forecast requirements for primary schools places of 16 FE in the district to 2026 and to provide a framework beyond that time, the following shall apply:

The expansion of existing primary schools shall be supported to provide additional school places subject to meeting planning, infrastructure and sustainability policies and requirements. Expansion of some existing schools is likely to be required in:

- St Albans City.

- Chiswell Green or Park Street.
- Bricket Wood.
- Wheathampstead.
- Harpenden.
- Redbourn.

A more detailed policy approach shall be adopted in the DLP to provide an element of flexibility to assist expansion of existing primary schools located in the Green Belt.

Reserve sites for possible new primary schools are required in the settlements listed below and sites shall be identified in the DLP:

- St Albans City (two schools, one east of the City and one west).
- Harpenden.
- London Colney.
- East Hemel Hempstead: new school associated with the Spencer's Park development. This will most likely be in Dacorum Borough, but possibly in St Albans District.

Secondary Schools

To meet the additional requirements for secondary schools places of 12 - 14 FE in the district to 2021 and to provide a framework beyond that time the following shall apply:

The expansion of existing secondary schools shall be supported in principle, subject to meeting planning, infrastructure and sustainability policies and requirements.

A suitable more detailed policy approach shall be adopted in the DLP to provide an element of flexibility to assist the expansion of existing secondary schools located in the Green Belt.

Reserve education locations to provide detached playing fields will be identified in the DLP if required to enable expansion of existing schools.

Reserve education locations, including in the Green Belt, will be identified in the DLP to provide new secondary schools if required in the following settlements:

- St Albans.
- Harpenden.

Oaklands College

Redevelopment at Oaklands College, Smallford Campus to provide new or expanded facilities is supported in principle.

Community, Sport and Recreational Facilities

- 6.12 It is important to retain sites currently or last used for community uses. Local community facilities can make a significant contribution to:
- Improving quality of life and social cohesion.
 - Tackling deprivation.
 - Reducing the need to travel.
- 6.13 Many voluntary sector organisations rely on community accommodation to provide their services in local areas. A range of uses provide community functions and the importance of a specific facility depends partly on the availability of alternative choices for a particular community. The preferred format for provision is multi functional community spaces that can be used by a wide cross section of the community. For the purposes of this policy the most common examples of community uses include:
- Dental practices / doctors' surgeries / medical centres.
 - Public halls (including community / youth centres, village halls, church halls).
 - Places of worship.
 - Libraries.
 - Day nurseries/crèches.
 - Indoor and outdoor sports and recreation facilities (including children's play areas).
 - Public Houses.
 - Town halls, parish offices and parish centres.
 - Children's centres and family centres.
 - Public Open Spaces.
 - Post Offices
 - Hospitals
- 6.14 The policy also relates to the need for new cemeteries if evidence suggests there is inadequate provision to meet the need of the community.
- 6.15 Health provision is an important contributory element of social sustainability, ensuring that a district can meet the needs of residents throughout their lifetimes. The Council has a key role in delivering and facilitating the infrastructure which allows residents to live healthy lifestyles, such as programmes to get children engaged in sports activities and provision of high quality places for people of all ages to take exercise, and or experience the natural environment, tied in with strategies to encourage sustainable transport.
- 6.16 Well utilised youth groups and youth organisations are one of the districts' strengths, but there is a significant need to improve the buildings that they use. Excellent youth spaces and facilities, including re-provision of the Pioneer Youth Centre and Indoor Skate Board facility in St Albans and the

Harpenden Youth Centre, are a priority. The Council supports community/parish initiatives for the provision of youth cafes and clubs within villages to improve community cohesion.

- 6.17 The Council's Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy reflects significant deficiencies in existing provision and in particular the need to replace London Colney Recreation Centre. New modern sport and recreational facilities, catering for a wide range of activities and users, will therefore be supported in principle by this Council, together with improvements to existing indoor leisure centres. More details may be given in the DLP.
- 6.18 Batchwood Hall was opened in 1988 and offered a range of indoor and outdoor activities in St Albans. The sports buildings were destroyed by fire in August 2011 and the council is looking to redevelop it under 2 projects: Project 1 – Redevelopment of the bowls and golf clubhouses and; Project 2 – Redevelopment of the Tennis Centre.

Policy SLP7 - Community, Sport and Recreational Facilities

The provision of new community facilities will be concentrated mainly in the following locations:

- Major developments.
- Sites allocated for such purposes, or as part of a mixed use allocation.
- In town centres, district centres or local centres, subject to the detailed policies in other development plan documents.
- In identified areas of deprivation where the facility would contribute towards addressing that deprivation.

Provision shall include:

- Improved healthcare facilities at St Albans City Hospital, Harperbury Hospital, Harpenden Memorial Hospital and GP surgeries.
- Replacement of the existing police station in St Albans by new facilities in a central location.
- Harpenden Library relocation and the replacement of Redbourn Library on the existing site.
- Re-provision of the Pioneer Youth Centre and Indoor Skate Board facility in St Albans; and the re-provision of Harpenden Youth Centre.
- Local Services Hub in central St Albans

The Council will support new and enhanced sport and recreational facilities in appropriate and sustainable locations. The main priority is to secure a new leisure development for London Colney and redevelopment at Batchwood.

The Council will support the retention of community facilities and

development will not be permitted which would lead to the loss of premises used, or last used, for community purposes, unless suitably re-provided elsewhere or unless it can be clearly demonstrated that it is no longer required.

Housing

- 6.19 New housing should be built in sustainable locations and aid in securing appropriate infrastructure provision and overall community benefits for the district as a whole. There is a need to increase the supply of affordable homes and to support a diverse housing market, which provides access to high quality housing for the district's residents, now and in the future.
- 6.20 In accordance with the spatial strategy, the majority of housing will be located on previously developed land (PDL) within urban areas, in order to provide most housing in locations readily accessible to a wide range of services, to protect the countryside, the Green Belt and to stimulate regeneration.
- 6.21 The publication of the NPPF and the Government's intended abolition of the East of England Plan has allowed the Council to review housing growth needs locally, from the bottom up, rather than having housing targets imposed. The Government's 'localism' approach not only gives the Council the freedom, but also the significant responsibility, of deciding what level of new housing should be planned for.
- 6.22 In brief, the following key factors have therefore been taken into account in determining the most appropriate level of housing growth in the district:
- A. Our strategic objectives for the authority, as expressed in the Sustainable Community Strategy;
 - B. The Sustainability Appraisal process;
 - C. The authority's contribution to the overall vision for the East of England as a sub-region;
 - D. The views of our communities determined through extensive public consultation;
 - E. Local Economy
 - F. Infrastructure Deficit
 - G. Evidence of Past Competitions
 - H. Detailed technical evidence about how much growth the area could accommodate;
 - I. Technical assessment of population growth and housing need;
 - J. Evaluations of the impacts of alternative future housing targets, tenures and sizes;
 - K. Recent changes in national policy – the localism agenda.

6.23 The approach taken also acknowledges and balances the benefits and costs of relatively higher or lower housing targets. In relation to higher theoretical alternative housing targets, relative benefits could briefly include:

Costs	Benefits
Relatively Higher Housing Targets	
More development on green field Green Belt land and subsequent permanent loss of openness	More homes for existing residents, workers and incomers
Urban sprawl and possibly coalescence of settlements	More affordable homes provided
Greater impact on existing infrastructure, including transport, healthcare and education	More New Homes Bonus
Potentially worsen quality of life and therefore affect local intellectual capital economy	More Community Infrastructure Levy receipts
Misalignment against majority of local public opinion	Possibly more economic growth
Worsen in-commuting/out-commuting number balance	Possibly higher local retail expenditure growth
Loss of biodiversity and natural environment	
Higher increase in greenhouse gas emissions	
Worsen reliance on external food and energy resources	
Relatively Lower Housing Targets	
Fewer homes for existing residents, workers and incomers	Minimal development of green field Green Belt land preserving its openness for future generations
Fewer affordable homes provided	Protection against urban sprawl and enabling individual settlements to retain their own unique character and identity
Less New Homes Bonus	Lesser impact on existing infrastructure, including transport, healthcare and education
Less Community Infrastructure Levy Receipts	Supporting the local intellectual capital economy, linked to quality of life factors
Possibly less economic growth	Localism in action – a clear alignment with locally expressed objectives
Possibly lower local retail expenditure growth	Improved in-commuting/out-commuting number balance
	Preserving the built and natural environment for current and future generations
	Lower increase in greenhouse gas emissions
	More land available for local food and energy production

6.25 It is considered that the most appropriate way to determine the starting point for calculating the sustainable level of housing provision for the plan

period is the level of housing need; balanced against the space for appropriate and truly sustainable development.

- 6.26 As supported by the NPPF overall, especially at Para 14 and in Greg Clarke's speech introducing the NPPF to Parliament, the Sustainability Appraisal, the community and the factors briefly outlined above, the twin thrusts of the general distribution of development within this development strategy are;
- Maintaining the fundamental aim of the Green Belt in keeping land permanently open, by not developing on green field Green Belt land.
 - Prioritising opportunities to maximise the economic, environmental and social benefits of sustainable development.
- 6.27 The development strategy for the district is based on a compact city approach through meeting future requirements by developing within existing settlements, particularly the City and towns, rather than extending into the Green Belt. This approach depends on using available sites within urban areas to their full potential, consistent with high quality design and balancing economic, social and environmental factors. Using land efficiently means that for each site development is optimised and less land in total is needed as a consequence to meet the district's development requirements, with beneficial effects for protection of the countryside.
- 6.28 It is clear that housing should not be considered in isolation. It should take into account other land uses needed to achieve sustainable communities, such as employment, retail, transport & community uses. The SLP therefore considers sustainable development in the round. It ensures that the approach to maximizing opportunities for residential development on urban land or previously developed land in the Green Belt does not compromise the spatial strategy as a whole, including alternative desirable land uses in these areas. For example, the retention of appropriate existing employment sites to provide local jobs and opportunities for businesses to deliver growth is also of great importance and has been appropriately considered. Another example is the BRE Broad Location. Here the SLP policy takes a holistic approach to the redevelopment of some redundant PDL for residential use, to support and retain a key employer in a key sector and provide significant community benefits.
- 6.29 Whilst the overall approach is set out above, there are some specific exceptions where building on green field Green Belt land is considered appropriate as part of the comprehensive spatial approach. These exceptions have been made in order to deliver truly exceptional levels of community benefits and at the same time to go some way to meeting the

higher range of housing needs figures and gaining overall benefits from more housing developments.

6.20 They are of two main types.

1. Large Community Infrastructure sites comprising large scale previously developed land in the Green Belt with unique community facilities. The SLP sets out some Green Belt green field housing development to support delivery of new and improved community facilities at:

Oaklands College
Harperbury Hospital/Kingsley Green

2. Some limited small scale Green Belt green field residential developments where directly supported by local communities to deliver significant community benefits; delivered through the DLP. Also, where there is an established local need, some land adjoining or within villages may be developed to provide affordable housing where it is supported by the local community. Such small-scale 'rural exception' sites will help address the needs of lower-income households with a close family or employment connection to that settlement. These sites will be identified through the Neighbourhood Planning process.

Local Housing Target/Requirement

6.30 Taking the approach set out above, the most up to date and historical information has been analysed to give confidence of delivery in the following categories. The table below indicates sources & approximate proportion of supply from different land types for housing development.

Urban/Non-Green Belt Capacity	45 – 50%
Green Belt PDL	5 – 10%
Broad Locations, Including Oaklands, Harperbury and BRE	15 – 20%
Windfall	20 – 30%
Small scale Green Belt greenfield supported by local communities through DLP or Neighbourhood Plan process	5%

6.31 Taking account of all relevant aspects, including market factors and allowing for flexibility and contingency, the approach supports:

Local Housing Target/Requirement = 250 dwellings per annum

This target/requirement is an average figure and amounts to 4,250 dwellings across the plan period.

6.32 National planning policy requires the SLP and DLP to ensure that the housing target can be delivered with confidence and to provide for contingency. An up-to-date Housing Trajectory outlining the provision for the locally derived housing target is set out annually in the Authority's Monitoring Reports³.

6.33 Housing delivery is expected to be relatively higher in the earlier parts of the plan period and to be lower towards the end of the plan period, largely due to the expected build schedules for sites with existing planning permissions.

6.34 Taking account of all relevant aspects, including market factors and allowing for contingency, the approach supports:

Policy SLP8 – Local Housing Target/Requirement and Provision

Additional Homes 2011 - 2028 = 250 per annum

The target/requirement is an average figure and amounts to 4,250 homes across the plan

This Strategic Local Plan and the Detailed Local Plan, together with the SHLAA, SHLAA Updates and Housing Trajectory identify sufficient sites, broad locations and policies to continuously deliver the Local Housing Target, in general accordance with the Spatial Strategy as set out in policy SLP1.

Further policies and allocations to deliver the Locally Derived Housing Target will be set out in the DLP.

6.35 Based upon the spatial strategy as set out at SLP1 and including data such as the location of existing permissions, sites likely to come forward during the plan period and windfall calculations, the proposed range of housing distribution is broadly:

³ Authority Monitoring Reports published annually in December.

Settlement	% Range
St Albans	55-65
Harpenden	10-20
London Colney	5
Specified Settlements	5-10
Green Belt Settlements	5
Rest of Green Belt*	10-20

*Rest of Green Belt includes Kingsley Green Mixed Use Broad Location and some other large sites comprising previously developed land.

Affordable housing

- 6.36 The district's house prices are amongst the highest in Hertfordshire and the whole country and as a result local people on lower level incomes, especially younger people and key workers, often find themselves priced out of the market. This is also reflected by the number of people on the Council Housing register which suggests that there is a high need for affordable housing in the district.
- 6.37 The Council has long had a Corporate Priority to provide an appropriate amount of affordable homes. This priority has been considered as one of many factors in deciding the right amount of overall housing in the district.
- 6.38 The planning system has an important part to play in providing affordable housing for those unable to access the housing market. The need to provide affordable housing is important for two main reasons; firstly to enable people who cannot afford to rent or buy on the open market to live in a home that is suitable for their needs and that they can afford, and secondly to provide housing for people working in different aspects of the local economy, thus underpinning economic activity.
- 6.39 Viability work has been undertaken to establish the realistic level at which affordable housing can be delivered as a percentage of private housing in the district and provides strong evidence to increase the affordable housing target and reduce the threshold. In view of these studies, including the SHMA 2010 and the Development Economics Study 2010, the Council will be seeking 40% affordable housing on all housing development sites to assist in addressing the shortfall in affordable housing.
- 6.40 Affordable housing includes social rented, key worker (i.e. housing for teachers, nurses, care workers etc) and shared ownership homes. The balance between affordable and market housing and the size mix of

affordable units is a key component of achieving a well balanced community.

- 6.41 The district requires more smaller market units and a range of small to medium sized affordable units. The Locally Derived Housing Target (Policy SLP 8) achieves a balance between providing market and affordable housing and provides enough cross subsidy to fund new affordable housing.
- 6.42 Affordable homes are mostly delivered by developers as a percentage of private housing developments. It is important to make clear that Affordable Housing relates to specific definitions (please see Glossary) primarily relating to tenure and ownership, which is distinct from common understanding of what may constitute relatively affordably priced market housing.
- 6.43 The tenure mix of affordable housing should reflect what people in housing need require in the district. Based on the council housing register and other housing evidence, affordable housing provision with a tenure mix different from 60% social rented (or affordable rent) and 40% intermediate will only be acceptable where robust justification is provided. This must demonstrate that provision at the standard requirement would make the development economically unviable; or that the resultant tenure mix would be detrimental to delivering sustainable mixed communities; or due to specific circumstances, the explicit agreement of the Council's Housing Department.
- 6.44 The St Albans Affordable Housing Viability Study 2010 considered that in relation to the size of sites coming forward based on planning application and SHLAA data, that there is a strong case to reduce the site size threshold to allow affordable housing to be sought from all new residential development.
- 6.45 Past and predicted future patterns of house building show that the district as a whole is reliant on smaller sites, below the national and regional threshold of 15. The high level of housing need and reliance on smaller sites justifies lowering the threshold for securing affordable provision, without inhibiting development or prejudicing the overall supply of new housing.
- 6.46 Because of these circumstances, the Council's view is that it is appropriate and necessary for smaller housing schemes to make a reasonable contribution towards the provision of affordable housing and play their role in delivering sustainable mixed communities.
- 6.47 The Council will seek on-site provision for schemes of 5 or more dwellings. On smaller sites there may be occasions where on-site delivery is

impractical. Therefore on small sites providing 4 or fewer dwellings the Council may accept commuted sums or off-site provision elsewhere in the district (providing that the provision elsewhere contributes to creating mixed and sustainable communities) in lieu of on-site provision.

6.48 There will on occasion be circumstances where financial contributions from small sites may affect viability. In these cases the applicant will be required to provide the Council with an open book assessment of viability to justify a lower commuted payment. Further guidance on affordable housing and commuted sums will be included in the DLP.

6.49 As a strict exception to normal Green Belt policy, and where there is an established local need, some land adjoining or within villages may be developed to provide affordable housing for the community. These small-scale 'rural exception' sites will help address the needs of lower-income households with a close family or employment connection to that settlement. Such sites will remain in the Green Belt and the housing must remain affordable in perpetuity. The Council has an active programme of developing redundant garage land to assist delivery of affordable housing, including some schemes of this type in Green Belt settlements.

Policy SLP9 – Affordable Housing	
The Council will seek affordable housing contributions from new residential development.	
District-wide target	At least 100 affordable homes per annum.
Percentage target	40% affordable homes as a proportion of the overall development unless it is clearly demonstrated that this is not economically viable. In these circumstances affordable housing provision at a level which allows the scheme to be viable may be negotiated by the Council.
Targets for social rented/affordable rent and intermediate housing	Of the affordable housing percentage target approximately 60% should be social rented/affordable rent and 40% intermediate housing to meet needs of residents in the district and the most vulnerable.
Threshold for provision of affordable housing	The Council will seek affordable housing provision from schemes for 1 (gross) or more dwellings.
Developer contributions on small sites	Affordable housing should be provided on-site. However, for schemes of 4 homes or fewer where there is sound planning or other reasons, and the developer and Council agree, a financial contribution (or off-site provision) in lieu of on-site provision may be acceptable.

	The affordable housing contribution will be calculated using the Council's affordable housing toolkit and will be based on the equivalent of delivering affordable housing on-site. The sum may vary depending on site circumstances and viability.
Affordable housing in Green Belt Settlements (Rural Exception sites)	<p>Small scale 100% affordable housing schemes within rural parishes will be supported in principle for people with strong local connections, where there is demonstrable local need for such dwellings and local community support.</p> <p>Such sites will remain in the Green Belt and the housing must remain affordable in perpetuity. Detailed criteria for rural exception sites will be included in the DLP.</p>
<p>The exact amount of affordable housing, or financial contribution, to be delivered from any specific scheme will be determined by economic viability, having regard to individual site circumstances and market conditions. Further guidance will be provided in the DLP and/or within Supplementary Planning Documents or guidance.</p>	

Housing Type/ Mix

- 6.50 There is a need to provide for the full range of housing types for a diverse population, including all demographic groups.
- 6.51 The proportion of older people in the population is forecast to continue to rise. While health improvements mean that older people are remaining active for longer, an increase in the number of frail elderly is expected. This means providing new homes that enable people to continue to live independently even though their mobility may be reduced.
- 6.52 While most older people prefer to remain in their own homes, some increased provision will be needed of housing specifically designed for older people, including those with special needs.
- 6.53 People with learning and physical disabilities form a proportion of the population and also need homes that can be adapted to meet their needs. The Council will seek the provision of an increased proportion of housing designed to the lifetime homes standard that can be readily adapted to meet the needs of older people and people with disabilities.

Housing Size

- 6.54 The SHMA and other evidence show that the district has a high proportion of large dwellings in its housing stock. Longstanding trends and population forecasts show smaller average household size, including an increasing proportion of single person households. While the size profile of new dwellings will only lead to gradual change in the make up of the overall housing stock, increasing the proportion of small and small-medium sized units in new development will over time lead to a better balance between the housing stock and the size of dwellings needed.
- 6.55 The low proportion of smaller units in the housing stock also contributes to the very high average price of housing in the district. More small and small-medium sized units would lead to an increase in the proportion of relatively low cost market housing available to buy, assisting those who are just able to afford to buy on the open market. As well as single person households, this is particularly the case for small-medium sized family housing, including one and two bedroom flats and 2-2.5 bedroom houses.
- 6.56 For individual development schemes, the Council will take into account the range of dwelling sizes of market and social housing in the local area and of site specific factors, in considering the appropriate mix of dwelling sizes.

Policy SLP10 - Housing Size, Type and Mix

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 seek the inclusion of more small and small to medium-sized housing, including one and two bedroom flats and 2-2.5 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. Floorspace, as well as room numbers and bedroom numbers, will be considered in judgments of relatively low cost market housing.

The Council seeks the provision of a reasonable proportion of housing designed to the lifetime homes standard that can be readily adapted to meet the needs of older people and people with disabilities.

Sheltered housing and extra care housing for older people and those with special needs will be encouraged on suitable sites in areas close to a range of services.

Further detail on requirements for appropriate housing size, type, mix and proportion of lifetime homes will be given in the DLP.

Housing Density

- 6.57 The proposed development strategy for the district is based on a compact city approach through meeting future requirements by developing within existing settlements, particularly the City and towns, rather than extending into the Green Belt. This approach depends on using available sites within urban areas to their full potential, consistent with high quality design and environmental factors. Using land efficiently means that for each site development is optimised and less land in total is needed as a consequence to meet the district's development requirements, with beneficial effects for protection of the countryside.
- 6.58 Higher density development will only be appropriate in relatively accessible locations where residents will have good access to services.
- 6.59 In all cases, development will only be acceptable where schemes are well-designed and do not compromise the overall character of the area. The appropriate density for individual schemes will also be informed by taking account of the strengths, opportunities and constraints of the development site, including the characteristics of the surrounding area.

Policy SLP11 - Density of Housing Development

All new housing will be developed at a density that is consistent with achieving high quality, sustainable design and which does not compromise the distinctive character of the area in which it is situated. Higher density development in accessible urban locations with good access to services will be supported.

Development proposals that fail to make efficient use of land for housing, having appropriate regard to local character and site specific factors, will be refused permission.

Gypsies and Travellers

- 6.60 Policy SLP12 seeks to establish a positive framework for how provision for Gypsies and Travellers will be made in the district. This will help to prevent unauthorised sites, help guide development to more sustainable parts of the district, provide enhanced quality of life benefits for the Gypsy and Traveller community and ensure that environmental concerns, impact on the Green Belt and community cohesion are proactively addressed.
- 6.61 A local evidence base will be produced using the principles of new Government guidance on Planning Policy for Traveller Sites. This will establish the local level of need for traveller accommodation, in the context