

St Albans

City & District



STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Adopted February 2023

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Equalities

Equalities

The Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity and meeting its duties as a community leader, service provider and local employer. It also has a public sector equality duty under section 110 of the Equality Act 2010. Accordingly, the Council must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Improve equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

These are called protected characteristics.

The Council will discharge its duty to consult communities having regard to its public sector equality duty as well as relevant planning law.

Introduction

2.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlines how St Albans District Council will involve stakeholders in the planning process. Stakeholders includes local residents and businesses; along with those that are required to be consulted with by law. The planning process refers to planning policy documents, called Development Plan Documents (DPD) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), as well as planning applications.

2.2 Preparing the SCI is a requirement of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning Act 2008, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017). It must be completed in line with Section 18 of the 2004 Act. Planning Practice Guidance requires Local Planning Authorities to review their SCI to ensure effective community involvement at all stages of the planning process ⁽¹⁾.

2.3 The updating of this Statement of Community Involvement is also an opportunity to review how the Council consults the community. In particular, to review how the Council can take account of changes in technology, new planning policy documents and other best practice. The Council also need to take into account the Data Protection Act 2018 and the impact this has on how it consults. There is also the need for this update to take account of the challenges of engaging with the public during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Legislation requires that Local Planning Authorities review their Statements of Community Involvement every 5 years from the adoption date.

2.4 This version of the Statement of Community Involvement replaces an earlier version prepared in 2017.

2.5 If further information is required, please contact the Spatial Planning Team:

Phone: 01727 866100

Email: Planning.policy@stalbans.gov.uk

Address:

Spatial Planning Team

St Albans City and District Council

Civic Centre

St Peters Street

St Albans

AL1 3JE

Our commitment to consult local communities

What will we consult on?

3.1 The Council as a whole carries out consultation on a range of issues and policies across all services. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), however, only relates to consultations undertaken as part of the planning process by St Albans City & District Council as the Local Plan Authority (LPA). There is a glossary at the end of this document which explains the terminology used.

3.2 There are three types of planning policy documents, which are set out as a programme within the Local Development Scheme upon which we will consult, including:

- The City and District of St Albans Local Plan 2020-2038;
- The South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan;
- Neighbourhood Plans; and
- Supplementary Planning Documents.

3.3 Hertfordshire County Council is also responsible for preparing documents on Waste and Minerals that affect the District and which form part of the Council's Statutory Development Plan. The county council has its own separate Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which can be viewed at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk.

3.4 This SCI also sets out how we will engage with communities when we receive planning applications.

How will we consult with local communities?

3.5 The Council are committed to involving communities and other stakeholders in the planning process. The Council will:

- Consult in a timely, and appropriate way with stakeholders; ensuring people are invited to participate in the development of planning policy and comment on major planning applications before major decisions have been made;
- Use a variety of methods to inform and engage communities in the planning process (the Council understand that people with different needs and interests require different approaches), these methods involve the following:
 - Ensure representations to the plans will be able to be made online or in writing to the Council's offices;
 - The Council will continue to use new and innovative ways to engage with a wider range of people, especially focusing on electronic communication;
- Avoid using jargon and strive to communicate in the clearest and simplest way possible;

- Ensure public involvement is appropriate to the scale and nature of the planning issue being addressed and at a minimum meeting the statutory requirements;
- Treat participants with respect and ensure the safety and wellbeing is protected by taking account of the safeguarding frameworks, confidentiality and data protection guidelines;
- Continually review the suitability and effectiveness of our methods of engagement, and make changes where necessary.

Enabling people with disabilities to access planning documents

3.6 The council's website is being developed to be compliant with [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1 AA standard](#), with further work in place to reach full compliance in the coming years. Our full accessibility measures are listed on our website at:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/accessibility-statement>

Some of the things the website allows to assist users is: change colours, contrast and text size, navigate using just a keyboard and enable screen readers to be used by most pages on the site.

How will my comments be handled?

3.7 Comments received during public consultation will always be made public. The Council will however, redact certain information such as residents' addresses and signatures consistent with our obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 (and any subsequent amendments).

Consultation on the Local Plan and the South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan

4.1 Over the next three years the Council will be working on two Development Plan Documents (DPDs). These are the City and District of St Albans Local Plan 2020-2038 (the Local Plan) and the South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan (the JSP). They will form part of the Statutory Development Plan for the District and will be the main basis on which planning applications will be determined thereafter.

4.2 DPDs follow a statutory process set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 ('the Local Plan Regulations'). They are also subject to:

- **A Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** - the SA assesses the environmental, economic and social effects of our policies and proposals against set criteria. This will be consulted on at certain key stages of the plan-making process.
- **An independent Examination in Public (EiP)** – this is a meeting which the public are invited to attend. However, only those individuals who have made a representation on the Publication Stage version of the DPD, and who have made a request have the right to appear and be heard by the Inspector.

4.3 As well as consulting with the local community, the Council are also obliged to consult a number of "specific consultation bodies" and "general consultation bodies".

4.4 Appendices A, B and C within this document can be found on pages 28 - 32. They identify relevant consultation bodies and Duty to Cooperate bodies relevant to the City and District of St Albans. Appendix A sets out "specific consultation bodies", Appendix B sets out "general consultation bodies" and Appendix C sets out the "Duty to Cooperate prescribed bodies".

4.5 There are two key stages of community consultation in the Local Plan Regulations:

- **Plan preparation (Regulation 18 consultation)** – At this stage, the Council will invite representations about what the Local Plan ought to contain for a minimum of six weeks.
- **Plan publication (Regulation 19 consultation)** – This is a statutory stage. At this stage, the Council will publish a full draft Local Plan which it intends to submit to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination in Public. Representations will be open for a minimum of 6 weeks for all stakeholders. At this stage, the consultation will focus on if the proposed local plan is legally compliant, sound in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and complies with the Duty to Cooperate.

4.6 The Council will submit the Development Plan Document (DPD) and a copy of all representations received as required by Regulation 22 to the Secretary of State. The Council are further obliged to prepare a summary of all the key issues raised during the Regulation 19 (Publication stage) consultation. At this stage the Council may also suggest modifications to address issues raised by the public or other stakeholders. When the Inspector has been

appointed by the Planning Inspectorate, the Council will give all parties who have made comments at the Publication Stage six weeks advance notice of any hearing sessions. The appointed Inspector may recommend further modifications to the DPD having held public hearings. The Council will then consult all interested parties on proposed main modifications.

4.7 During the current coronavirus pandemic, the Council has limited chances to contact the public directly. Nonetheless, the Council's approach to consulting with the public on Development Plan Documents (DPDs) will continue to be governed by the following principles:

- **Making documents and staff available to assist** - All documents associated with a DPD will be available for inspection online at: <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning-policy>. Our staff in the Spatial Planning Team responsible for this work can be contacted via email (planning.policy@stalbands.gov.uk) or via telephone (01727 866100). The Council will regularly review and update the Planning Policy pages of our website.
- **Early stakeholder engagement**- The Council may conduct early outreach on topics that will influence a DPD. For example, a review of Green Belt land that will inform the Local Plan and Joint Strategic Plan or exploring cross boundary issues with neighbouring local authorities. It may be necessary to engage with landowners and developers as well as local amenity or specialist interest groups and affected parish councils too.
- **Making documents associated with a DPD available to the public during statutory consultation stages** – The Council will place all documents on the Council's "Objective" web based consultation portal. You can register on the consultation portal here: <https://stalbands-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/> by selecting Login/Register at the top of the page. The portal offers the best opportunity to get the most up to date information and can be accessed from anywhere at any time. The Council will also put consultation documents at the Civic Centre in St Albans and in libraries across the district. This will only happen outside of COVID-19, when it is safe to do so. It may be necessary to book appointments for public viewing of these documents.
- **Publicising DPD consultations** – The Council will go over and above the minimum publicity in the Local Plan 2012 Regulations, which require documents to be made available for public inspection and published on the Councils' website. The Council will consider innovative methods such as making use of online engagement including the use of social media as appropriate such as platforms like Twitter and Facebook. This is to enable a wider demographic to be reached. The Council will also place all documents on the Council's "Objective" web based consultation portal (details set out above). The Council will also issue press releases, as appropriate. These will be aimed at varied sources, for example local newspapers (e.g. the St Albans Review and the Herts Advertiser); local radio (e.g. BBC Three Counties, Heart Radio, Jack FM); TV stations and magazines (e.g. Hertfordshire Life). The Council will also, as appropriate, include publicity about the DPD in our Council newsletter 'Community News' which is delivered to over 58,000 homes in the District.
- **Public exhibitions** – The Council will hold public exhibitions to further allow local people to comment on the DPD. This will only happen outside of COVID-19, when it is safe to do so. The Council will also consider holding virtual consultation events.

- **Reporting feedback received** - The Spatial Planning Team will report the views and comments expressed during consultation to relevant committees, which will include the Council's Local Plan Advisory Group. Its meetings are open to the public. It will also produce consultation reports in line with the Local Plan Regulations 2012 which will be made available on the Council website.

4.8 The Planning Inspectorate has a useful guidance note on how local people can participate in an Examination in Principle (EiP) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans>

4.9 Following the successful completion of these stages, DPDs will be considered for adoption by Full Council. If adopted the DPD will form part of the Statutory Development Plan.

City and District of St Albans Local Plan 2020-2038

4.10 The Council has resolved to prepare a new Local Plan. Once adopted, the District Local Plan Review 1994 will be wholly superseded.

4.11 The Local Plan 2020-2038 will form part of the statutory development plan for St Albans City and District. It will guide the future development and use of land, services and infrastructure in the District for the next fifteen years. The Development Plan Document will contain the Site Allocations (specific designations of land for future development). It will also contain Development Management Policies (the general approach taken to detailed decisions on planning applications) for the District. The Local Plan will also set the parameters for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and future Neighbourhood Plans.

4.12 A Policies Map (and any inset maps) illustrating the Council's spatial policies and site specific allocations will be prepared on a Ordnance Survey base map. It will be continuously updated as changes are made to each DPD. This includes allocations in Neighbourhood Plans and DPDs prepared by Hertfordshire County Council.

South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan

4.13 In the spring of 2018, Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, and Watford Councils agreed to begin work on a Joint Strategic Plan for South-West Hertfordshire. This work is also supported by Hertfordshire County Council ⁽²⁾.

4.14 The Joint Strategic Plan will contain strategic site allocations and policies, including an overall spatial strategy and amount of housing, employment and supporting infrastructure to be provided. It will cover the period up to 2050.

4.15 Each Council will continue to be responsible for preparing its own Local Plan. The Joint Strategic Plan, however, will also provide the platform to consider how the challenges of growth in the wider South-West Hertfordshire area can be addressed longer term (i.e. to 2050).

4.16 Working together enables South-West Hertfordshire local authorities to be in a stronger position to deliver and fund essential infrastructure and services. Examples of essential services and infrastructure include local transport links, health services and educational facilities that local people want to see alongside new homes and jobs.

4.17 Once adopted the South-West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan will provide the overarching strategic planning framework for the five Local Planning Authority areas, for the period of 2036-2050. It will also form part of the Councils' Statutory Development Plan.

4.18 The Council will consult on the Joint Strategic Plan using generally similar methods as those outlined for the new Local Plan. Consultation on the Joint Strategic Plan will be carried out in accordance with the Joint Strategic Plan Statement of Community Involvement. A copy can be found here: [Insert weblink when live]

Supplementary Planning Documents

4.19 The Council may produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which provide for further detailed guidance on policies contained within a Development Plan Document (DPD). SPDs can be thematic, or site specific. This can take the form of design guides, area development or planning briefs, masterplans or issue based documents. SPDs will not form part of the Statutory Development Plan or be subject to Independent Examination, but they will be subject to community involvement.

4.20 There are two main stages of SPD production where the Local Plan Regulations require the Council to take account of community views. These are:

- **Public participation stage (Regulation 12)** – A copy of the proposed SPD will be made available for inspection on the Council's website for a period of a minimum of four weeks. The Council will consult relevant "general consultation" bodies and other people who have registered on the council's Objective database via letter or email.
- **Adoption (Regulation 14)** – The Council will review and summarise all comments received. Changes will be made to the SPD based on comments received, where appropriate. The final SPD will be taken to Full Council to be considered for adoption, to sign off recommending if the SPD should be adopted. If adopted these will form a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Neighbourhood Planning

5.1 Neighbourhood Planning was introduced as part of the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). It enables local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Development Plans, also known as Neighbourhood Plans and to create Neighbourhood Development Orders. A Neighbourhood Plan (legally referred to as a Neighbourhood Development Plan) enables communities to set general planning policies for development and land use within their defined Neighbourhood Area.

Once adopted it forms part of the Statutory Development Plan. The level of detail in the plan is set by the local community. A Neighbourhood Development Order effectively grants planning permission within a designated Neighbourhood Area.

5.2 The Spatial Planning team continues to work with communities who are interested in designating a Neighbourhood Area or preparing a plan. The team will provide technical advice and support in the drafting of planning policies where required. The most up to date information on Neighbourhood Planning is available on the Council's website:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>

In St Albans City and District, it is mainly Parish Councils or Town Councils who are currently carrying out Neighbourhood Planning functions.

5.3 Neighbourhood Plans are produced by local communities with the support of the Local Planning Authority. Neighbourhood Plans must conform with strategic policies in the District Local Plan Review 1994 and subsequent adopted versions. It must also conform with government's National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Policy Guidance and comply with other "basic conditions".

5.4 There are materials available for groups and parishes interested in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The government's National Planning Practice Guidance is a useful starting point for interested groups:

<https://locality.org.uk/services-tools/neighbourhood-planning/>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

5.5 There are six key stages involved in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan as set out in the table below.

Neighbourhood Area Designation	Parish applies to be designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area the Local Planning Authority will automatically designated the area. If an unparished area comes forward with an area to be designated as Neighbourhood Plan Area then a consultation will take place. The Local Planning Authority must consult for a minimum of 6 weeks in this instance, and either approve or refuse the application.
Preparing the Plan	Groups gather information and then consult on a draft Plan.
Plan submission	Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Planning Authority. The Local Planning Authority publicises the Neighbourhood Plan for a minimum of 6 weeks on its website and within the Plan area.
Examination	An Independent Examiner examines the Neighbourhood Plan. The Independent Examiner may recommend modifications to the Plan. Local Planning Authority receives the report and takes the decision on whether to send the Plan to referendum.
Referendum	The community votes on the Plan in a referendum organised by the Council. Neighbourhood Plan must be approved by over 50% of those who vote.
Adoption	Following a positive result at referendum the Plan is then 'made' by the Council. The Plan then forms part of the Statutory Development Plan.

How will the Council consult communities affected by a Neighbourhood Plan?

5.6 The Council is obliged to consult the community at two stages in the Neighbourhood Plan process. These are: (a) at the Neighbourhood Area designation stage and; (b) at the Plan Submission stage. For each of these stages, the Council will:

- Place documentation submitted by the Neighbourhood Planning Group on the Council's website at <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>

- Make relevant documentation submitted by the group available in a locality close to where the area affected by the Neighbourhood Plan proposal. This is typically the offices of the relevant parish council;
- Make the relevant documentation submitted by the group available at the Council's offices (this will only happen, when it is safe to do so in respect to current Covid restrictions); and
- The Council's Press office will issue press releases and issue an update on the Council's social media channels.

5.7 At the Plan Submission stage, the Council will also organise a consultation similar to the Development Plan Document consultation. The Council will place all relevant documents from the Neighbourhood Planning Group on the Council's "Objective" web based consultation portal: <http://stalbans-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal>

5.8 The Council will invite interested parties to make representations online or in writing to the Council's offices.

5.9 The Council will send all representations received during the Plan Submission stage to the Independent Examiner to allow them to complete their examination. The Council will also publish a summary of all representations received on the Council's website.

Community involvement in planning applications

6.1 This section sets out the consultation requirements for applicants before a planning application is submitted. It details how the rest of the community will be informed about applications and how they can be involved in the decision making process.

Pre-application discussions

6.2 The Council cannot compel developers to discuss their planning proposals before they submit a planning application. However, discussion between planning officers, applicants and expert groups (for example highways officers at Hertfordshire County Council) are welcomed via the formal pre-application service. From experience, such discussions can resolve problems with applications and avoid public objections at a later stage. The Council charges a fee for holding these discussions. Details of our fees can be viewed online:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/pre-application-advice>

6.3 During the coronavirus pandemic, it is currently not possible to hold face to face meetings with applicants or their agents. Council officers will use other forms of communication where possible. These include phone calls, emails and online meetings via “Microsoft Teams”. Face to face meetings will only happen when it is safe to do so.

6.4 The Council encourages all people wishing to apply for planning permission to discuss their proposals ahead of submission. For householder applications, we advise that applicants discuss their proposals with their neighbours. For larger schemes being brought forward in the District, we will advise developers of the largest schemes to consult local communities before submitting certain planning applications. The Council will take account of the responses they have received.

Pre-app stage consultation recommended to be undertaken by applicants

Nature of Application	Recommended pre-application engagement
<p>Householder & Small Business</p> <p>Development within the curtilage of a house (or a single flat) requiring planning permission. E.g. extensions, conservatories, loft conversions, dormer windows or small business premises (main property is up to 300m²)</p>	<p>For all applications - the use of the Council's pre-application advice service is strongly encouraged. Details of this service can be found here: www.stalbans.gov.uk/householder-pre-application-advice</p> <p>Plus early consultation with the local Town or Parish Council.</p> <p>For householder applications - discuss proposal with neighbours and other nearby occupiers / owners of properties.</p> <p>For small businesses - please consider, as well as neighbours, owners of neighbouring land / local interest groups (e.g. residents associations) at earliest possible stage in developing the proposal.</p>
<p>Minor Development</p> <p>This is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 10 homes, including the change of use to flats • Less than 1000sqm of non-residential floorspace 	<p>For all applications - The use of the Council's pre-application advice service is strongly encouraged. Details of this service can be found here: www.stalbans.gov.uk/pre-application-advice</p> <p>Discuss proposal with neighbours and other nearby occupiers / owners of properties / land / local interest groups (e.g. residents associations and Parish Councils) / other relevant statutory consultees as appropriate such as the highway authority (please note some other chargeable services may need to be utilised) at earliest possible stage in developing the proposal.</p>
<p>Major Proposals</p> <p>This is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 10 and 49 dwellings 	<p>For all applications - The use of the Council's pre-application advice service is strongly encouraged. Details of this service can be found here: www.stalbans.gov.uk/pre-application-advice</p> <p>As part of this use of the Council's Design Review Panel is strongly encouraged.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 1,000sqm and 9,999sqm of non-residential floorspace • Development on land less than 5 hectares 	<p>Discuss proposal with statutory bodies, neighbours and other nearby occupiers / owners of properties / land / local interest groups (e.g. residents associations and Town/Parish Councils) at earliest possible stage in developing the proposal.</p> <p>Independent consultation may include public exhibition and drop in session in an accessible local venue, publicised through website or virtual exhibition, local press, social media and flyers.</p>
<p>Significant Major Proposals</p> <p>This is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 dwellings or more • Development on land 5 hectares or more • 10,000 sq.m or more of non-residential floorspace • Any development that requires an Environmental impact Assessment 	<p>Upon contacting the Local Planning Authority, officers will consider the suitability of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) process. In the event of a PPA, discussions on an engagement strategy would form part of the scoping of the PPA.</p> <p>This process is likely to involve other statutory and non-statutory stakeholders and partner authorities as appropriate. Use of the Design Review and will be included in this process.</p> <p>Community Engagement is recommended in line with Major Proposals as set out above. Consideration should be given to the use of Community Charrettes at an early design stage using organisations such as Look! St Albans.</p>

Registering planning applications

6.5 All planning applications we receive are entered onto a weekly list. This list, together with all the application documents and related information, is available for public inspection on the council's website:

<http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning/applicationsdecisionsandappeals/>

6.6 The list will also be available for inspection at the council's offices when it is open to the general public.

Consultation on planning applications

6.7 The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 sets out how planning applications should be publicised. Different types of applications will require different forms of consultation. Table 1 sets out how we will consult the community on relevant types of applications.

Type of application	Consultation method
Major development (10 or more dwellings, 1,000 sq m of floorspace or 0.5 hectares site area)	Neighbour notification Site notice Public notice in local newspaper Inviting comments within 25 days
Development affecting the setting of a Listed Building or the character and appearance of a conservation area	Neighbour notification Site notice Public notice in local newspaper Inviting comments within 25 days
Other full, outline and householder development	Neighbour notification and/or Site Notice Inviting comments within 25 days
Applications which are a departure from the development plan (for example, new housing in the Green Belt)	Public notice in local newspaper Site notice Neighbour notification and site notice Inviting comments within 25 days
Certificates of Lawfulness	None
Advertisement consent applications	None
Prior notification applications	Neighbour notification where legally required Inviting comments within 25 days

Hedgerow removal notices	Parish Councils and parties holding ecological or archaeological records
Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) serving & confirmation including works to trees in a Conservation Area or trees protected by TPOs	Tree owner or occupier Neighbour notification where tree canopies overhang boundaries
Discharge of Conditions	None
Minor non-material amendments to approved Schemes	None
Environmental Assessment 'scoping opinion' or 'screening opinion'	None

6.8 All planning applications have to be publicised by either a site notice or neighbour notification letter. For most householder (minor) applications, this will involve writing to individual owners or occupiers of land neighbouring the proposal only. The only exceptions are:

- When neighbouring land is unoccupied or where the occupier of the land cannot be readily identified, for example an open field. We will then display a site notice instead.
- Where the proposal relates to a rear extension only the neighbours to the side and rear will be notified.
- When the neighbour is a significant distance from the proposal and we consider that the neighbour will be unaffected by the proposal, we will not serve a neighbour notification letter but will erect a site notice in the vicinity.

6.9 The neighbourhood notification letter will contain information on how to comment on the planning application being determined. It will include how to view the planning application, how to make comments and timescales for returning any comments. The Council waits 25 days from the date of the letter for comments. The Council's website allows interested parties to comment online on each planning application.

Find out more about planning applications in your neighbourhood

6.10 Residents and people who do business in the District can sign up for a 'MyStAlbans' District Account:

www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbansdistrictaccount

6.11 This gives residents instant access to lots of useful services including the council's Geographic Information System (GIS) that can be used to identify planning applications across the District.

6.12 The Council is considering ways to allow stakeholders to receive notifications about planning applications. Subsequently, the Council may move to advertising the majority of planning applications through a site notice rather than notifying individual neighbours in writing.

Site notice

6.13 For applications where a site notice has to be displayed, 25 calendar days are allowed for comments to be received from the date that notice was put up. The notice will be on or around the application site and contains details of where plans can be viewed, how to make comments and relevant Council contact information. For large sites and major applications, multiple site notices may be put up at various locations on or near the site.

Deadline for making comments

6.14 The Council will take account of any representations received within the time specified in the site notice, letter or advertisement. As these may be issued/published on different dates, the final Consultation End Date is published under the Planning Application Details on our website. Failure to meet the deadline could mean the comments will not be considered.

6.15 The Council will only be able to consider comments received in writing. Any comments made also have to be related to planning issues. The Council cannot give weight to objections raising concerns about the loss of property values or rights to light. More detailed information on how to comment on a planning application is available online at:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/how-comment-planning-application>

The Council do not send acknowledgement letters for third party comments but by law all comments received must be open to public inspection, with personal details being removed (email addresses, telephone numbers and signatures only).

Amendments to applications

6.16 A planning application may be amended before a decision is made. The Council has published an approach to accepting amendments during the course of an application which meets the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework. This is available to view at

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/what-happens-your-application>

The scope to make amendments is at the discretion of the case officer. Each case is dealt with on its own merits when deciding whether or not publicity is necessary about proposed amendments or changes to applications. We will take the following factors into account:

- Will the change proposed affect a neighbour?
- How substantial were objections received at an earlier stage?
- Does the change overcome a problem previously raised?

- How significant is the proposed change?

6.17 In the majority of cases, the amendments are minor and do not need us to re-consult. For example, a limited change in design of a house extension to satisfy a neighbour's concern. For more major amendments, for example highway changes in a residential scheme, the Council will re-consult all those people originally consulted with details of the amendments. Given the time deadlines on deciding applications, the response period for re-consultations will be reduced. It may be that the revisions need a new application and full re-consultation.

Previous objectors

6.18 Previous objectors to a planning application relating to a particular property or site may be notified about a further application but not as a matter of course. This is because they fall within the neighbour notification arrangements described above.

Internal/ external consultation

6.19 In addition to the neighbour notification letters, the Council may also consult a number of internal and external bodies when considering planning applications. The scope of consultation can be extensive. Each body has its own criteria as to when they need to be consulted. Consultees and interest groups include the Environment Agency, Natural England, Parish Councils, Historic England and various internal Council departments including Leisure, Housing and Environmental Compliance. This list is not exhaustive. However, appropriate consultation is undertaken as the nature of the application dictates. These consultations are undertaken because such bodies have a special interest in the application. For example, the Environment Agency would be consulted on applications for development in a high flood risk area. Any comments received from these bodies in response to the consultation will help the case officer in determining the application.

Development briefs

6.20 For certain major sites, the Council may prepare a development brief. A development brief will:

- Outline the issues affecting the site and surrounding area;
- It will include an assessment of national planning policy and relevant policies from the adopted development plan including any neighbourhood plan; and
- Identify what the Council would seek to achieve from any future redevelopment.

6.21 The aim of development briefs is to provide developers and local communities with a clear understanding of what the Council considers is appropriate development for a site. This in turn should ensure any planning application submitted has addressed all of the issues raised in the brief. Development briefs may be informal documents or may be produced as Supplementary Planning Documents with greater weight in decision making. The level and

extent of consultation required in the preparation of these type of documents is generally less than that for a Development Plan Documents. The methods used will vary, according to its content.

Determining planning applications

6.22 The majority of planning applications received by the Council are decided by the Head of Planning & Building Control under delegated authority and not by Councillors at planning committees. The Planning Committees decide planning applications that have district wide significance and applications submitted by the Council, its employees and councillors and their close relatives are normally decided by the Planning Referrals Committee. In some cases a Councillor can ask for a planning application to be considered by Committee which is known as a 'Call-in'. Further details are available on the website:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning-committee-meetings>

Applicants can contact the planning application case officer to enquire how the application will be decided.

6.23 There are three Area Planning (Development Control) Committees (North, South and Central) and the Planning Referrals Committee, and each meet every four weeks ⁽³⁾. The Council does not notify interested parties if or when an application is going to committee. However, when an application is placed on a committee agenda this is published under the Planning Application Details on our website. The committee agenda, containing the relevant report to the committee is also publically available on our website in the following location:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/meetings-agendas-minutes-and-webcasts>

Speaking at Committee Meetings

6.24 Committee meetings are held in public so that interested parties can attend to hear the discussion. It is also possible for interested parties to register a request to speak for three minutes on a particular application. A representative of the local Town or Parish Council or District Councillors can also speak to the Committee. District Councillors (who are not a Member of that Planning Committee) can each speak for up to five minutes. Public speaking at Planning Committees is conducted in accordance with detailed procedures, which are reviewed from time to time. Agents, applicants or members of the public, who have made comments in writing to the planning department (on the website, by email or letter) on the application, can register to speak at the Planning Committee. Only one speaker for and one speaker against each application is allowed. Each speaker will have three minutes only to make their case. You can register to speak between 9 am and 4:30 pm on the Friday before the meeting (meetings are normally held on Monday) by telephoning the Council on 01727 866100. For full details, see <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning-committee-meetings>

3 However, these are under review and may be subject to change. Any changes will be made public on the Councils website

Reporting consultation responses to planning applications

6.25 The case officer will consider and summarise any responses supporting or objecting to the planning application ahead of making a recommendation for approval or refusal. Should the application be decided at the relevant Planning Committee, then objectors / supporters have the opportunity to present their case.

Planning application decisions

6.26 Once a decision has been made on a planning application, we will notify the applicant / agent. We also publish a weekly list of applications and decisions that have been made. Individual decision notices are also available to view on the Council's Planning Portal <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/view-and-track-planning-applications>

Planning Enforcement

6.27 Planning enforcement is the process of investigating and resolving possible breaches of planning law. The Council's Local Enforcement Plan is publicly available and provides this information. This can be found at <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning-enforcement>

Planning Aid

6.28 Case officers handling planning applications regularly give advice to concerned residents on how the planning system works. Local people can also seek independent advice from Planning Aid. Planning Aid is a free, voluntary service aimed at individuals, community groups and other voluntary groups who cannot afford to pay for private consultants.

6.29 For further information and details contact the National Planning Aid Unit using the details below:

The Royal Town Planning Institute

41 Botolph Lane

London

EC3R 8DL

Telephone: 020 7929 9494

Email: info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

Online: <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid/>

Glossary

Adoption The formal approval or acceptance of documents by the Council.

Consultation Bodies The consultation bodies are set out in Schedule 1 to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

Consultation on Planning Applications The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 sets out how planning applications should be publicised.

Statutory Development plan Is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and includes adopted local plans, or other adopted development plan documents from the District Council or County Council, neighbourhood plans that have been made and, Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.

Development Plan Document (DPD) A document setting out St Albans District Council's or the County Council's planning policies and Proposals. DPDs are subject to community involvement, consultation and independent examination.

Duty to Co-operate This is a requirement introduced by the Localism Act. It requires local authorities and other public bodies to work together on planning issues.

General Consultation Bodies The consultation bodies are set out in Schedule 1 to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). It includes the following:

- a) voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the local planning authority's area,
- b) bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the local planning authority's area,
- c) bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the local planning authority's area,
- d) bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the local planning authority's area,
- e) bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area;

Also see appendix B of this document for more information.

Independent Examination Development Plan Documents are subject to an examination by a planning inspector to rigorously test legal compliance and overall 'soundness'.

Joint Strategic Plan - The Joint Strategic Plan will contain strategic allocations and policies, including an overall spatial strategy and amount of housing, employment and supporting infrastructure to be provided. It will cover South West Hertfordshire for a period up to 2050. It is being produced jointly by Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, and Watford Councils. This work is also supported by Hertfordshire County Council.

Local Development Scheme (LDS) The LDS sets out the timetable for preparing the Local Plan.

Local Plan. The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the community.

Major Development This is defined as: 10 or more dwellings; 1,000 sq m of floorspace or 0.5 hectares site area.

Major Proposals This is defined as: Between 10 and 49 dwellings; Between 1,000sqm and 9,999sqm of non-residential floorspace; Development on land less than 5 hectares.

Material Consideration A material consideration is any planning matter which is relevant to a particular case.

Minerals and Waste Development Plan Documents DPDs prepared by Hertfordshire County Council with regards to mineral extraction and waste management.

Minor Development This is defined as: Less than 10 homes, including the change of use to flats; Less than 1000sqm of non-residential floorspace.

Neighbourhood Planning A new tier of the planning system, introduced under the Localism Act 2011, to give communities more control over the future of their area.

Neighbourhood Plan A type of Neighbourhood Planning, which can establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a defined neighbourhood area. A Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the Local Plan, undergo Examination and a Referendum. After adoption, they are part of the statutory development plan and are used (alongside other policy documents) to determine planning applications.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It provides guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers, both in drawing up plans and making decisions about planning applications. It must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Additional detail is given to the NPPF through Planning Practice Guidance which is the governments on-line, web based guidance on national planning policies.

Objective is a web based Consultation Portal that St Albans City and District Council use for consulting on the Local Plan.

Planning enforcement is the process of investigating and resolving possible breaches of planning law. The Council's Local Enforcement Plan is publicly available and provides this information. This can be found at <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning-enforcement>.

Planning Inspectorate (PINS) The Planning Inspectorate holds independent examinations to determine whether or not DPDs are 'sound'. The Planning Inspectorate also handles planning and enforcement appeals.

Planning Inspector Planning Inspectors are independent of the Council. They make decisions and provide recommendations and advice on a range of land use planning related issues indicated above.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) The PPG is an online resource, which replaces and streamlines a high volume of previous national guidance. The advice contained within the PPG should be read in conjunction with the policies contained within the NPPF.

Policies Map Ordnance survey base map showing the location of Proposals and policy designations in all current development plan documents.

Pre-Application Discussions Developers can discuss their planning Proposals with the Council to obtain pre-application advice before they submit a planning application.

Prescribed Bodies The bodies subject to the Duty to Cooperate are prescribed in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

Representations General comments or responses to a consultation which may support or object to Proposals.

Right to Light A "right to light" is an easement that gives a landowner the right to receive light through defined apertures in buildings on his or her land.

Significant Major Proposals This is defined as: 50 dwellings or more; Development on land more than 5 hectares; 10,000 sq.m or more of non-residential floorspace; any development that requires an Environmental impact Assessment.

Sound/soundness This describes where a DPD is considered to 'show good judgement' and also to fulfil the expectations of legislation, as well as conforming to national policy.

A sound plan is:

- Positively prepared;
- Justified;
- Effective; and
- Consistent with national policy.

Specific Consultation Bodies The consultation bodies are set out in Schedule 1 to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). These are statutory consultation groups that are often knowledgeable in certain aspects. Also see appendix A of this document for more information.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) The SCI is a document explaining to the community how and when they can be involved in the preparation of the planning policy documents and the determination of planning applications, and the steps that will be taken to encourage this involvement.

Stakeholder Person or organisation with an interest either because they will be affected by a proposal/plan or may have some influence.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) SPDs are not subject to an independent examination and do not have 'development plan' status, but are intended to elaborate upon the policies and Proposals in DPDs. They can be used as a 'material consideration' in the determination of planning applications.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) An SA is an assessment of the social, economic and environmental effects of policies and Proposals within Local Development Documents.

Appendix A - Specific Consultation Bodies

The Local Plan Regulations state that the following “specific consultation bodies” must be consulted if the local planning authority thinks that the proposed subject matter of the Development Plan Document (DPD) in question affects the body.

Specific consultation bodies set out in the Regulations

- The Coal Authority
- The Environment Agency
- The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (now known as Historic England)
- The Marine Management Organisation
- Natural England
- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited
- Highways England (was the Highways Agency)
- The Canal and River Trust (was British Waterways Board)
- Relevant Water Undertakers
- Relevant Electricity Undertakers
- Relevant Sewerage Undertakers
- Relevant Gas Companies
- Relevant Telecommunications Companies
- National Health Service Integrated Care Board
- Homes England (was the Homes and Communities Agency)
- Police Commissioner

Other local authorities

- Hertfordshire County Council
- Adjoining / neighbouring local planning authorities (Three Rivers District Council, Dacorum Borough Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Welwyn Hatfield Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, Watford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire District Council, Luton Borough Council)
- All town and parish councils in St Albans City and District
- Parish Councils in other Districts, where the Parish Council boundary adjoins St. Albans City and District

All of the organisations and companies above are held on the Council’s consultee database. Any additions / deletions to the list above provided by Central Government in amended regulations will be implemented immediately. Official confirmation of any changes will form part of the review of the Statement of Community Involvement.

Appendix B - General Consultation Bodies

The Local Plan Regulations state that certain “general consultation bodies” must also be consulted where the local planning authority considers it appropriate. Any type of group or organisation not listed which wishes to be consulted on any part of the planning process should respond to the council’s Spatial Planning Team. The list will be updated as the SCI is reviewed.

We will consult all the following types of general consultees on the DPDs that we produce. Relevant general consultees will also be consulted on SPDs.

- National & Regional Conservation / Preservation Groups
- Local Conservation, Preservation, Sustainability and Amenity Groups
- Ethnic Minority Groups
- Housing / Design Interest Groups
- Housebuilders / Developers
- Local Residents Associations
- Planning Agents
- Youth groups, schools, colleges
- Disability Groups
- Local Businesses / Business Groups
- Older Persons Groups
- Other National / Regional Organisations
- Other Local Organisations
- Public transport operators
- Public transport Users Groups
- Recreational User Groups

All of the types of organisations, associations, businesses and individuals above are held on the Council’s consultee database. Requests for any amendments to contact details or additions / deletions can be sent to the Spatial Planning team at any time.

Note: The General Consultation Bodies listed must fall within the following categories:

- (a) voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the local planning authority's area
- (b) bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the local planning authority's area
- (c) bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the local planning authority's area
- (d) bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the local planning authority's area

(e) bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area.

Appendix C - Duty to Cooperate Prescribed Bodies

- The Environment Agency
- The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (Historic England – was English Heritage)
- Natural England
- The Mayor of London
- The Civil Aviation Authority
- Homes England (was the Homes and Communities Agency)
- Each local clinical commissioning groups, and NHS England (was the National Health Service Commissioning Board)
- The Office of Rail and Road (was the Office of Rail and Regulation)
- Transport for London
- Each Integrated Transport Authority
- The Highways Authority (Hertfordshire Highways)
- The Marine Management Organisation
- Neighbouring and nearby local planning authorities
- Historic England
- Highways England

The following partnerships are treated in a similar way for Local Planning Authority (LPA) consultation and Plan making purposes, although they are not legally required to cooperate with the LPA:

- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Local Nature Partnership

Appendix D - Definition of major, minor and other planning applications

Planning applications received by the council are split into 3 main categories, major, minor and other. The definitions of each are set out below:

Major (where floorspace created is 1,000 square metres or more; including any change of use)

- Dwellings - 10 or more, or more than 0.5 ha. This includes gypsy and travellers pitches
- Offices/ research and development/light industry
- Heavy industry/storage/warehousing
- Retail, distribution and servicing
- Agricultural, leisure, clinics, parking, education

Minor (where floorspace created is less than 1,000 square metres)

- Dwellings – fewer than 10
- Offices/ research and development/light industry
- Heavy industry/storage/warehousing
- Retail, distribution and servicing
- Agricultural, leisure, clinics, parking, education, telecoms

Other

- Change of use (no operational development)
- Householder developments
- Advertisements
- Listed building extensions / alterations
- Listed building demolition
- Application for relevant demolition of an unlisted building within a Conservation Area
- Certificates of Lawfulness (Section 191 and 192)

Hertfordshire County Council handles waste and minerals planning applications but they will consult us on proposals affecting the City and District of St Albans.

Hertfordshire County Council Planning Portal can be viewed online at:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/planning-in-hertfordshire

If you require this information in another format e.g. in large print, Braille, audio or in another language other than English, please contact the Equalities Officer on 01727 866100 or email equalities@stalbans.gov.uk