

of local historic provision, provision by neighboring authorities and inform policy in the DLP.

Policy SLP12 - Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People

Sites will be identified, allocated and safeguarded by means of allocations in the Detailed Local Plan to meet a locally derived target. In identifying sites and considering proposals for accommodation, the Council will have regard to the following:

1. The provisions of SLP Policies 1-4 and 26-29.
2. The potential and suitability of extending existing sites.
3. The suitability of sites with temporary permissions.
4. The suitability and potential of new sites as part of larger housing sites.
5. That development should be in general accordance with the Spatial Strategy for the district, as set out in Chapter 4 of this SLP and criteria contained in Government guidance on Planning Policy for Traveller Sites.

Further detail on the level of provision and locally specific locational criteria may also be included in the DLP.

Harperbury Hospital/Kingsley Green Mixed Use Broad Location

Background

- 6.62 Harperbury Hospital/Kingsley Green was originally built as one of several Middlesex County Mental Health facilities that were developed in the district from 1870-1930. It is the last of these hospitals locally that retains a role in mental health and learning disability healthcare and is of great value at a district, county and sub-regional level. Having undergone many years of declining use and deteriorating buildings (including large scale redundant buildings in the Green Belt), it has more recently entered an era of resurgence and recent redevelopments have delivered exceptional quality both in the built environment and patient care, winning national and international awards.
- 6.63 The overall aim is to provide a truly mixed and sustainable community at Harperbury, which enables the hospital to deliver its vision of an exemplar offer of mental healthcare and learning disability support, fully integrated into the wider community. Shared use facilities will perform a vital role in providing points of interaction, including a gym, allotments and recreational space. This will complete the transition from a closed Victorian institution to an open and inclusive community, fully integrated into the wider population.

Policy SLP13 - Harperbury Hospital/Kingsley Green Mixed Use Broad Location

Objective

To provide an exemplar mixed use development that integrates the mental health and learning disabled communities with the wider population and at the same time bring into beneficial use large scale redundant buildings in the Green Belt.

Site Constraints

Capacity and design of existing Harper Lane junction with Watling Street.
Retention of important tree belts, including extensive TPO.
Retention of sports pitches and substantial open space.

Proposals

1st phase 60-80 bed healthcare facility.
Further smaller scale healthcare developments and redevelopments.
300-400 new homes..
Joint community facilities, including gym, allotments and recreational space.
Substantial Green Infrastructure provision, including improved public footpaths, bridleways, cycleways, new woodland planting and opportunities for improved biodiversity.

Infrastructure

Provision of a new bus route that enters the Harperbury site and links it to London Colney, Radlett and beyond.
Provision of improvements to the Harper Lane junction with Watling Street.

A Planning Brief/Masterplan will be detailed in the DLP or separately.

Oaklands Mixed Use Broad Location

Background

- 6.64 Oaklands College has long been the main provider of Further Education in the district, with an historic specialism in land based provision, including Horticulture, Greenkeeping, Equine studies, Animal management and Floristry. The College is now one of the country's largest Further Education Colleges, with over 800 staff and 3,000 full time and 8,000 part time learners, the majority of which are based at the Smallford Campus. The curriculum also offers adult and community learning, art, business,

construction, engineering, health and social care, hospitality and catering, public services, IT, media and performing arts, science and maths, sport and specialist programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. The College also has 14-19 and 16-19 year old consortium arrangements with local secondary schools.

- 6.65 The College has a vital role to play in meeting the vocational and academic training and education needs of the district and sub-regional area. The future success of the College and the local economy are closely linked and the education and training provided offers the greatest opportunity to tackle the pockets of deprivation that exist. Provision of low cost startup and incubator units, some linked to vocational courses, will provide a new transitional opportunity for entrepreneurs.
- 6.66 Many of the current facilities are clearly not fit for purpose and there is substantial dilapidation of buildings. The Council gave planning permission for a new bespoke College Hub which was intended to be in place by 2012. The College Hub was unable to be delivered following the loss of substantial grant funding from the Learning and Skills Council in 2009. Housing development on College owned land as enabling development formed a crucial part of the Hub scheme and as the grant funding has been removed the scale of enabling development is now significantly greater.
- 6.67 The overall aim is to provide a genuinely mixed and sustainable community at Oaklands Smallford, which enables the College to deliver a step change in its quality of facilities and an outstanding offer of education and training for all, which will also help to tackle deprivation and provide a significant boost to the local economy. New community use and sports facilities, with significantly improved public access to the countryside, will perform a vital role in further integrating the College with the wider community.

Policy SLP14 - Oaklands Mixed Use Broad Location

Objective

To provide an exemplar mixed use development that enables the College to deliver a step change in its quality of facilities and an outstanding offer of education and training for all; and at the same time provides community use and sports facilities, with significantly improved public access to the countryside, to further integrate the College with the wider community.

Site Constraints

Capacity and design of Hatfield Road and Sandpit Lane.
Retention of important trees, including extensive TPOs and Ancient Woodland.
Retention of sports pitches and open space.

Retention of historic walled garden and Mansion House.

Proposals

Bespoke facilities for construction studies, to replace the leased Alban Park warehouse facilities.

Retain, repair and make fit for purpose the Mansion House building and Stable Block.

Replace or repair and make fit for purpose the current agricultural / animal husbandry / horticultural facilities along the northern edge of the site.

250-350 new homes; including supported disability living and key worker housing for educational staff

Substantial Green Infrastructure provision, including shared use of refurbished historic walled garden, new landscaping and woodland planting, extensively improved and new public footpaths, cycleways and bridleways. Community access to sports facilities and parkland area.

Infrastructure

Provision of improvements to the accesses to Hatfield Road and Sandpit Lane.

A Planning Brief/Masterplan will be detailed in the DLP or separately.

7. A Thriving Economy

Strategic Objective 3 - A thriving economy

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.

Economic Prosperity and Employment

- 7.1 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. The district has a strong economy, a highly skilled workforce, is in an excellent location for rail, road and airports and is seen by many employers and employees as a desirable place to be. The Council considers a thriving local economy to be essential in supporting all its economic, social and environmental aspirations. Economic development is driven by active engagement with key partners, including the St Albans and District Strategic Partnership (SP), Economic Sustainability Partnership, Hertfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership

(LEP), key local employers, St Albans Chamber of Commerce and small business representatives.

7.2 There are two main economic aims:

- To foster a healthy, diverse and strong local economy, with a focus on knowledge industries, financial and businesses services, the rural economy, the green technology sector, creative industries and visitor economy.
- To offer employers a highly skilled and flexible workforce and individuals the very best opportunities to learn, train, start businesses, develop entrepreneurial opportunities and improve their employability.

7.3 Most local employment is in the financial and business services, research and development, retail and educational sectors. However, St Albans is also a significant regional/sub-regional legal centre, with its Crown and Magistrates Courts. Visitor economy is also an increasingly important job sector. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) and Rothamsted are important employers in the district which are the subject of Broad Location policies. Nearly half of local residents have a degree qualification or above and the majority of residents are employed in professional and managerial occupations, a considerably higher rate than at the county or national level.

7.4 The local economy is driven by a large number of small businesses, including freelance and consultancy and has a vibrant entrepreneurial culture. There are only a small number of employers who employ over 100 staff, but many of these larger employers are well known nationally and globally, especially within the management consultancy, business and financial sectors. The district also benefits from the proximity of the University of Hertfordshire, based at Hatfield, which is one of the country's leading business orientated universities.

7.5 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. In net terms, the district is dependent on other places for its residents' jobs and incomes, especially for the better paid jobs and higher incomes, as people who work in the district earn significantly less on average than people who live here, but work elsewhere.

7.6 As set out by Herts LEP, compared to most areas of the UK, Hertfordshire is more prosperous and our residents have a better quality of life. The LEP believe that the Hertfordshire economy can make a bigger contribution to UK plc. Focused effort is required to ensure we remain an attractive proposition for private sector investment. Herts LEP has produced a plan

for growth titled 'Open for Business' which is seeking to build on our assets within Hertfordshire.

- 7.7 In St Albans 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. Key local employers and entrepreneurs agree that St Albans is a good place to locate business and to do business and 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.
- 7.8 Opportunities exist to encourage the development and growth of new and developing economic clusters e.g. at Rothamsted, at the BRE, and more widely in Green Technologies and in IT.
- 7.9 The district's job growth should therefore be concentrated primarily in offices, professional, managerial occupations and ancillary staff and knowledge based activities, to match this skills base, provide high paying jobs locally and to help mitigate out commuting.
- 7.10 The strategy for the district also seeks to recognise the need for a mix of employment accommodation and the need to safeguard and enhance existing employment sites to provide a variety and range of buildings and uses. The diversity of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities that such small and medium-sized employment sites, including those in rural areas, provide are a crucial element of a genuinely flexible local economy.
- 7.11 Primarily because of very high alternative land values and Green Belt constraints, the district has had for some time little new employment development land. In addition, there is a considerable ongoing pressure for change of use of existing employment land and buildings to, primarily residential use, and also for other non employment generating uses. Considerable losses of employment land and buildings have been ongoing for several years and a critical juncture has been reached whereby substantial further losses may significantly undermine the local economic base and opportunities for entrepreneurs. Existing employment sites should therefore be retained in employment use, unless genuinely unsuitable and unviable for employment use, or if they are directly replaced by new sites. It is also recognised that there are levels of vacancy in some office sites and employment areas in some adjoining authorities. However, these provide a substantially different type of accommodation overall and are also clearly not as local or accessible.
- 7.12 In order to encourage the provision of modern and appropriate employment facilities, suitable for high quality and higher numbers of local jobs, the Council will support and encourage the redevelopment of existing

employment generating sites, including for more intensive employment uses, taking into account the need to be compatible with local context, including design policies and impacts on residential amenity and highways.

- 7.13 Considerable job growth will be supported on sites and in areas not directly classed as traditional employment (B Class) uses. These are likely to provide more than 50% of the new jobs up to 2028. Economic sectors where such growth is expected include education, retailing, healthcare, the leisure/visitor/hospitality industries and working from home. In particular, it is anticipated that many high quality jobs will be provided by the significantly expanded and new educational facilities that will be provided. The additional educational facilities will be provided by HCC, Academies, Free Schools and fee-paying schools.
- 7.14 The already high local levels and increasing use of remote working and home working is an established and ever developing trend, both providing more jobs within the district and reducing the impacts on the local highway and rail network of the high levels of in and out commuting.
- 7.15 In order to support the thriving entrepreneurial, small business, self-employed and consultancy base, high speed broadband and next generation telecommunications will be supported, taking into account the need to be compatible with local context, including design policies.

Policy SLP15 - Economic Prosperity and Employment

Existing employment sites should be retained in employment use, unless genuinely unsuitable and unviable for employment generating use, or if they are directly replaced by new sites. This includes all allocated employment sites and both allocated and unallocated offices, research and development facilities, light industry, general industry, warehousing and other B Class uses. Any exceptions to this rule will be detailed in the DLP.

The Council will support and encourage the redevelopment of existing employment generating sites for evolving employment uses, including for more intensive employment uses or for the provision of flexible business space and incubator units, taking into account the need to be compatible with local context, including design policies and impacts on residential amenity and highways.

Overall, in all settlements across the district, the Council will seek provision of sufficient land and floorspace to cater for full employment and to provide for different kinds of employment use. The scale and nature of provision will be appropriate to the size, character and function of the settlement.

The district's strong rural economy will be supported including in relation to agricultural diversification and visitor economy, where consistent with NPPF

and other Local Plan policies, including Metropolitan Green Belt (SLP2 and DLP policies). Local commercial uses, such as local shops and public houses will be protected in villages, due to their community value.

High speed broadband and next generation telecommunications will be supported, taking into account the need to be compatible with local context, including design policies and impacts on residential amenity and highways.

Strategic Employment Locations

- 7.16 The district benefits substantially from two major world class centres of excellence specialising in research and development in the Green Technology sector.
- 7.17 The Building Research Establishment (BRE) in Bricket Wood is world-renowned for its expertise in sustainable construction, the built environment and associated industries and is pioneering some of the latest developments in areas such as energy efficiency.
- 7.18 As well as the BRE itself, the site hosts other sector-related companies and an Innovation Park, which acts as a demonstrator for green building technologies. Currently around thirty other companies are located at the site. These firms have a relationship with the built environment and benefit from being part of a green technologies cluster.
- 7.19 Rothamsted Research in Harpenden is the largest agricultural research centre in the UK and the oldest in the world. Over its 160 year history, it has built an enviable international reputation as a centre of excellence for science in support of sustainable crop management and its environmental impact. Its scientific research ranges from studies of genetics, biochemistry, cell biology and soil processes to investigations at the ecosystem and landscape scale.
- 7.20 Both institutions have significant links to the Centre for Sustainable Communities at the University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield. Together they make a Green Technology Triangle, which this district sees as a key driver of its economic development strategy and therefore will encourage and capitalise on opportunities to encourage the clustering and multiplier effect that these centres could create.

BRE, Bricket Wood Mixed Use Broad Location

Background

- 7.21 The BRE at Bricket Wood has been a focus for building technology and related research and development since 1925. The BRE and associated

companies employ about 800 staff at Bricket Wood, which is substantially less than at its peak of employment use in the 1970s. The BRE has a vital role to play in meeting the need for high quality and high skill employment in the district and represents one of very few opportunities to encourage green businesses supporting sustainable technologies in the district. Many of the buildings on site have not received significant investment since their construction, are substantially dilapidated and are not fit for purpose.

- 7.22 The BRE wishes to consolidate its expertise into fewer but more modern buildings whilst providing better facilities for associated industries within the Innovation Park. The overall aim would be to provide a mixed and sustainable community, planned through an inclusive “Enquiry By Design” process, at which the BRE have particular expertise. This is a unique opportunity for the BRE to capitalise on its world leading status and demonstrate, both in built form and process, an exemplar sustainable neighbourhood, which would have national and international significance and consist of exemplar types of sustainable residential and employment buildings.

Policy SLP16 - BRE, Bricket Wood Mixed Use Broad Location

Objective

To provide an exemplar mixed use development that enables the BRE to provide high quality, high skill local employment for world leading sustainability and green technology companies at the BRE, as well as exemplar housing development, showcasing the latest building technologies and design, planned through an inclusive “Inquiry By Design” process. The final overall built development will be equivalent to the existing built footprint only, with an increase in public open space and the strategic Green Belt gap between Bricket Wood and Watford/Garston being retained and strengthened.

Site Constraints

Extensive TPO.
Close to ancient woodlands and SSSI.
Capacity and design of existing accesses via Bucknalls Lane and Bucknalls Drive.
Scheduled Ancient Monument - scale model of the Mohne Dam.
Strategic Green Belt gap between Bricket Wood and Watford/Garston.

Proposals

Refurbish or replace unfit for purpose office, laboratory and associated buildings.
100-150 new homes of exemplar sustainability and design quality.

Substantial Green Infrastructure provision, including landscaping, woodland planting, improved public footpaths, bridleways and cycleways.

Expanded community facilities including improving existing nursery facilities.

Isolated area with existing built form in south east of site to have all built form removed to enhance ancient woodland and support SSSI close by.

Infrastructure

Provision of a new bus route through the BRE from Bricket Wood to Watford and beyond.

Provision of new footpath and cycle routes across and through the site.

Provision of improvements to the accesses via Bucknalls Lane and Bucknalls Drive.

A Planning Brief/Masterplan will be detailed in the DLP DPD or separately.

Rothamsted Research Redevelopment

- 7.23 Rothamsted was founded in 1843 by John Bennet Lawes who set up fields to study the chemical composition and manurial treatment of soils. Today, nearly 500 staff are based at Rothamsted, with the institution operating as a centre of excellence for science in support of sustainable crop management and its environmental impact. Rothamsted hosts major on-going projects right across the 'Green Agenda' including in bio-fuels and bio-energy. The Rothamsted campus already hosts co-located small companies developing related scientific products and services and is keen to develop its role much further as an effective environment to encourage effective synergies, stimulate further innovations and provide a platform for entrepreneurial science.

Policy SLP17 – Rothamsted Research Redevelopment

Redevelopment and possible extension of the Rothamsted Research site to meet Rothamsted's long term needs and to accommodate firms carrying out complementary knowledge based research and development activities is supported in principle. The Green Belt boundary may be adjusted to reflect the current development on the ground and to facilitate appropriate redevelopment and expansion, according to guidelines to be provided in the DLP or separately.

Retail

- 7.24 The key retail factors relating to the district can be summarised as follows:

- While St Albans has a healthy retail economy with a distinctive offer of shops and street market and services, the City's position within the regional retail hierarchy is challenged by competing centres. Market share has been declining in the City centre and there are significant net levels of leakage of expenditure to surrounding centres for shopping and leisure activities. The centre lacks a department store and a major foodstore and has a limited supply of larger shop units.
- Harpenden has a vital and viable town centre and foodstore provision is strong, but non-food shopping is limited.
- District centres generally have a good mix of shops and other facilities; local parades have an important retail and service role.
- London Colney's retail vitality and viability has the potential to improve with significant enhancements to the public realm along the High Street. This will be complemented by the very different retail offer at Colney Fields, which will be enhanced by expansion at Ridgeway.
- There is need for Village high streets to have and maintain a good mix of shops for local needs
- There is good provision of out-of-centre foodstores and retail warehouses, particularly in the south of the district and in neighbouring districts.
- There is a need for additional food and non-food retailing in the district.
- There is a need for additional retail warehouse provision for bulky goods.

7.25 The City Vision developed a Master Plan which covers retail and all other land use needs in St Albans City centre, to be implemented during the plan period. The Rural Vision shows the need to protect community and village amenities such as small shops, services and facilities.

Retail Hierarchy of Centres

7.26 The Council has defined a retail hierarchy as follows:

- Major town centre (St Albans)
- Town centre (Harpenden)
- District centres (Fleetville, Marshalswick, Southdown)
- Local centres (to be defined in the DLP)

7.27 Policy SLP18 sets out the hierarchy of centres in the district and identifies the role of each centre and what level of development is appropriate. Unless they are identified as centres in DPDs, planning authorities should not regard existing out-of-centre development as centres, as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework. There are three retail warehouse parks in the district which are not identified as centres:

- Alban Park, Hatfield Road, St Albans – primarily bulky household goods and car showrooms.
- Colney Fields, London Colney – mixed convenience and comparison retail.
- Griffiths Way, St Albans – mixed convenience, comparison retail and bulky goods.

Policy SLP18 – Retail Hierarchy of Centres

The hierarchy of centres is set out below. The vitality and viability of town, district and local centres will be enhanced and protected. Proposals for town centre uses will be directed to the appropriate level in the hierarchy according to the scale and function of the use:

1) Major Town Centre – St Albans City centre should:

Serve the district as a whole, being the main comparison shopping destination, and the main focus for leisure, cultural and civic activities. The main location for major retail developments, large scale leisure, cultural and civic uses, and other uses that attract large numbers of people.

2) Town Centre – Harpenden Town Centre should be:

An important centre serving the northern part of the district. It provides food and grocery shopping and a diverse mix of independent retailers, supported by good provision of cafes and restaurants, leisure, cultural and other uses. These serve the town and more widely people from the northern part of the district.

3) District Centres – Fleetville, Marshalswick and Southdown centres should:

Provide food and grocery shopping facilities, supported by a limited range of other shops and non-retail services situated within and serving their local communities.

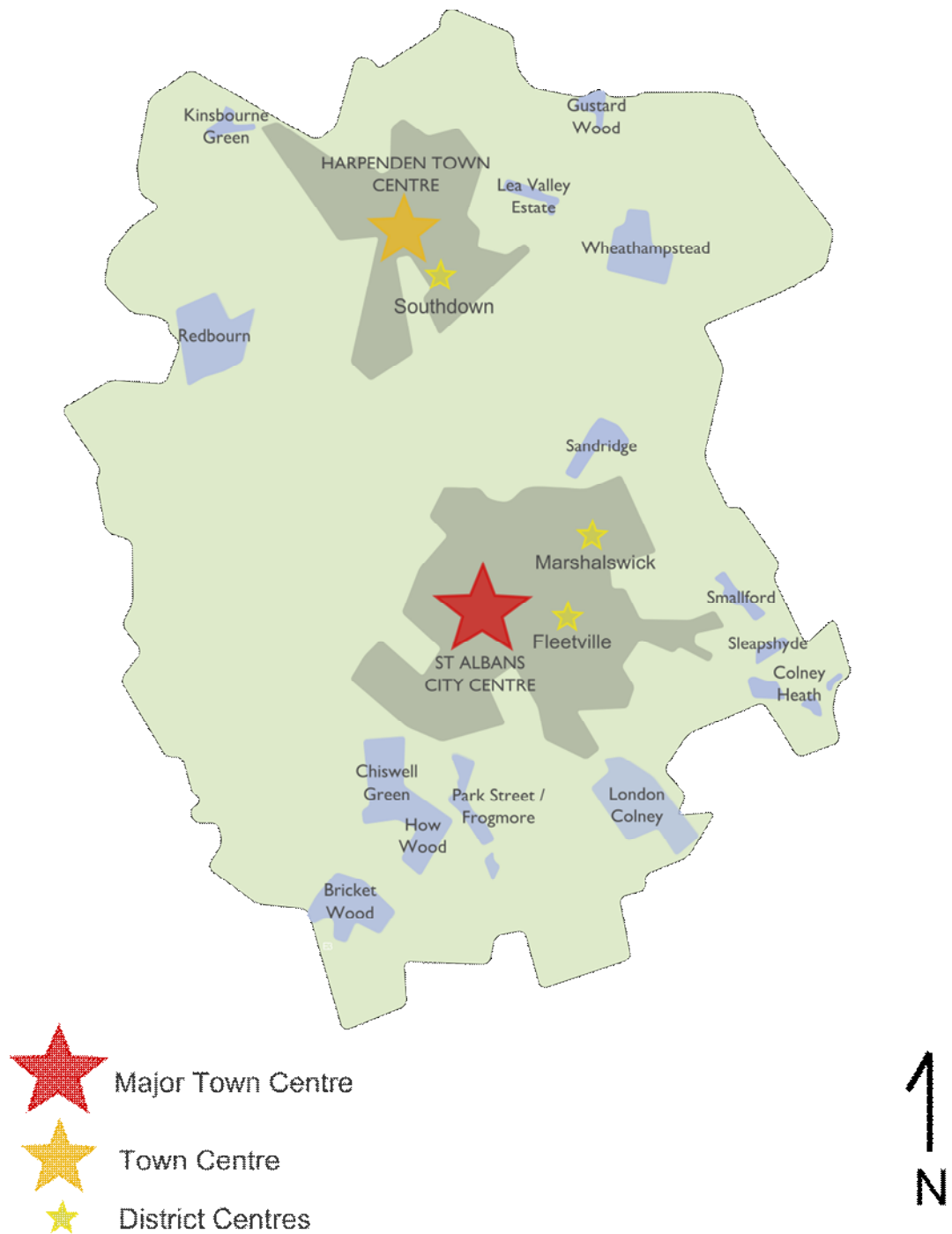
4) Local Centres – Local centres should:

Provide a basic range of small shops and services of a local nature and serve their predominantly local catchment within walking distance of the centre. (Local centres to be defined in the DLP)

Planning applications involving the loss of retail units that perform an important community role will be permitted only if they do not conflict with other policies in the DPDs and it can be clearly demonstrated that they are no longer required.

Primary and secondary frontages shall be identified in the DLP.

Figure 8: Retail Hierarchy of Centres



N.B. Local Centres to be defined in the DMSA DPD

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Major Retail and Town Centre Development

- 7.28 Evidence including the City Vision has highlighted that St Albans has great potential for a stronger City centre environment to draw greater numbers of visitors and shoppers, given its excellent historic setting, and variety of independent retailers. The market is an important asset within this draw, which animates the centre and strengthens its appeal. Supported by public realm improvements and selective redevelopment, it could offer an exceptional City centre shopping and cultural experience.
- 7.29 In recent years the retail market share has been declining in St Albans City centre. However, proven demand for greater retail provision along with the emergence of centrally located opportunity sites in the City provides an opportunity to turn this situation around. With a strengthened and expanded cluster of independent and specialist shops, alongside a greater number of national retailers, including a possible department store, St Albans is a major town centre within the region and should stabilise and strengthen its place within the retail hierarchy. However, in the immediate term there is limited City centre capacity for major new retail development, although in the longer term, there are opportunities to make St Albans City centre significantly more economically self-contained for retailing.
- 730 Through providing a greater range and quality of town centre uses in the centre of the City, including at the Civic Centre and Drovers Way sites, St Albans could become a more vibrant place with a greatly enhanced townscape which better meets the needs and aspirations of St Albans' residents and visitors from the surrounding area.
- 7.31 The Civic Centre location is anticipated to come forward in the short term and may accommodate mixed uses including a small supermarket and A1/A3 uses, but a major retail scheme is unlikely to be viable in this location. The Council have produced a Development Brief for the Civic Centre Area of the City. The Development Brief was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in July 2012.
- 7.32 The Drovers Way location is considered to have potential for a major retail scheme but it is not available in the short/medium term.
- 7.33 There is a leakage from the district of shoppers and expenditure on specific types of bulky goods. This demonstrates a qualitative gap in the district's bulky goods offer in particular categories. By increasing retention of certain shopping trips and clawing back a proportion of shoppers who currently

travel out of the district for their bulky goods purchases, the provision of additional bulky goods retailing will have a positive impact on shopping patterns and expenditure flows across the district.

- 7.34 Sequentially, any new retail floorspace should be directed to the City/town centre first. However, St Albans does not have any substantial appropriate sites in central or edge of centre locations for bulky goods retail warehouses (BGRW). The next sequentially preferable location for BGRW would be in Griffiths Way South, an existing retail destination south of the City centre. It is considered that BGRW at this location could complement the City Centre offer. Some BGRW floorspace may be accommodated in Griffiths Way on the existing Abbey View retail park. BGRW could also be accommodated on the gas holders site, in Griffiths Way, as part of a mixed use scheme. In any scheme at these sites, significant public realm and sustainable transport improvements would be required to increase linked trips to the City centre.

S1 St Peter's Street west (Drovers Way) and east (Civic Centre), St Albans City Centre

Figure 11: City centre redevelopment opportunities



S2 Griffiths Way South

Figure 12: Griffiths Way



S3 Colney Fields/ Ridgeview

7.35 As indicated above, there is a lack of city centre or edge of centre sites in St Albans which are suitable, viable and available for major retail development to meet retail need in the early part of the plan period. Therefore there is likely to be a shortfall in supply of new retail floorspace over this period. In this context, a retail study has been carried out to appraise the potential impact of retail development at Ridgeview, which is located next to an existing retail park at Colney Fields. It was concluded that a relatively small quantum of additional retail floorspace at Ridgeview would be acceptable, forming a logical extension to Colney Fields. It could help to meet, in part, some of the 'need'/demand in accordance with the development plan and the NPPF. A summary of key points is set out below.

- Although the City Centre has experienced a fall in its market share of comparison goods shopping since 2005, it is apparent from the regular health checks carried out in the centre over a number of years that it remains vital and viable, with limited vacancies and a good choice of multiple and independent shops. The evidence also shows that Colney Fields Shopping Park provides a different and complementary retail offer to the City Centre, serving a much wider catchment and shoppers who do not visit the City Centre.
- A significant proportion of the identified market demand for St Albans City Centre is from specialist and niche operators. The scale and type of retail floorspace identified for the Ridgeview site would not match their requirements.
- The impact from the limited amount of additional floorspace on the City Centre's turnover and that of other centres both within and outside of the district would only be modest. However, this modest impact is outweighed by the need to meet retail need in the early part of the plan period. The relatively modest retail floorspace proposed would not jeopardise the emerging development/investment proposals identified for the City Centre.
- The provision of limited new retail floorspace at Ridgeview to help meet the identified need for new comparison goods retailing in the district over the short term will have a more limited impact on the City Centre than if it was allocated on other out-of-centre sites. This is because Ridgeview would form a natural extension to Colney Fields Shopping Park and the evidence shows that this existing retail facility has very different trading characteristics to the City Centre (and other shopping parks in the district) due to its close proximity and easy access to the M25 (Junction 22), as well as its good links with the M1.
- As a result of the above matters, the limited extension of Colney Fields is part of the Council's strategy to meet retail demand in the early part of the plan period. In line with local and national retail policy, these special and site specific circumstances would not justify other out of centre proposals.

Figure 10: Ridgeview



Policy SLP19 – Major Retail Development and Retail Development Considerations

Major retail development is proposed at the following locations:

- S1 St Peter's Street west (Drovers Way) and east (Civic Centre) - Additional retail floorspace within St Albans City centre to be focused mainly at site S1 and should include a supermarket, space for larger chain stores, smaller specialist retailers and possibly a department store.
- S2 Griffiths Way South (St Albans) – retail warehouses for bulky goods.
- S3 Colney Fields (London Colney) – extension onto the Ridgeview site to provide retail floorspace.

The Council will enable the enhancement of consumer choice and strengthening of the vitality, viability and accessibility of the City, town, district and local centres by supporting new retail development which:

- Supports the delivery of the spatial planning vision and strategy as set out in this Strategic Local Plan.
- Is appropriate in scale and function to its location.
- Is fully integrated with the existing shopping area.
- Complies with the sequential approach to site selection, which prioritises development in existing centres, then edge-of-centre sites, and only then out-of-centre sites which are accessible by a choice of means of transport.
- Meets a proven need in relation to development at edge of district centres or local centres, or out-of-centre locations..
- Will not have an unacceptable adverse impact, including cumulative impact, on the vitality and viability of the City Centre and surrounding town, district and local centres.
- Will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on existing, committed or planned public and private investment in a centre in the catchment area.
- Helps maintain and develop the range of shops to meet the needs of the local community within the centre.
- Retains and enhances existing street markets.

8. Celebration of Our Culture

Strategic Objective 4 - Celebration of our culture

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.

Creating Attractive and Vibrant Centres

- 8.1 The Council recognises and promotes the visitor economy and culture as increasingly important economic drivers throughout the district. The community's active cultural life will be enhanced and diversified to help meet the needs of residents and visitors as lifestyles shift and priorities change, establishing St Albans City and District as a cultural hub within the region.
- 8.2 The district has a strong base from which to provide an engaging and inclusive cultural and leisure offer for residents and visitors alike. The Council wishes to promote cultural activity in the district's centres by supporting their attractiveness and vibrancy. This will encourage cultural activities which are a focus of community activity and pride, and will in turn strengthen the district's role as a cultural hub.
- 8.3 The district's centres and their role in the retail hierarchy are identified in policy SLP18, except for local centres which shall be identified in the DLP.
- 8.4 The district has a recognised a need for some new and improved facilities, including:
 - A cultural hub providing a focused centre for the arts.
 - A new cinema to replace the one that closed in 1995.
 - Improvements to the museums and some other venues.
 - Improved tourist facilities.
 - Increased hotel and other overnight accommodation provision.

Policy SLP20 - Creating Attractive and Vibrant Centres

City, town and village centre's within the district will be enhanced and managed to create attractive and vibrant centres to encourage cultural activities which are a focus of community activity and pride. The Council will seek to encourage activities which celebrate the district's culture, community and history.

Enhancements may involve:

- Public realm improvements.
- Public art.
- Landscaping.
- Mixed use development.
- Lighting.

Provision and Retention of Cultural Facilities

- 8.5 There is great potential for the district to thrive as a regional cultural centre which can provide an engaging cultural life for residents and attract visitors from the local area, London and further afield. By providing focused investment in key areas, with ambitious physical proposals, and coordinated partnership working, this potential can be brought to fruition.
- 8.6 The district's rich heritage as a centre for governance, theatre and worship throughout history gives the district a unique identity and high profile within the region. The cultural services offered in the district includes theatres, museums, live music performance, strong Roman and Medieval heritage, and libraries and arts organisations. The district's existing cultural offer will need to be retained, improved and promoted while the addition of new facilities will add diversity.
- 8.7 St Albans City is the main focus for enhancing the district's visitor economy and cultural role in the future. The City's key character areas which give the City its unique identity were identified in the City Vision 2009. It is expected that these character areas be respected and enhanced to improve the legibility of the City at a City-wide scale and to improve its cultural role.
- 8.8 There are opportunities for visitor economy and cultural enhancement in other towns, villages and rural locations where proposals meet criteria including sustainability and accessibility. Examples include the Heartwood Forest project, although the Council largely views this project as providing for low key, quiet, countryside recreation. 'Future Gardens', the Gardens of the Rose and 'Butterfly World' are key attractions which also raise the district's profile.

- 8.9 Museum proposals include expansion of Verulamium Museum, linked to developing the heritage of Verulamium Park as set out in the park's Masterplan. Within St Albans City Centre this would be supported by the creation of the cultural cluster, which may include improved facilities for cinema, museum and theatre. The existing Museum of St Albans building may be improved on its present site or its functions may be relocated. The Council is undertaking a project which is considering relocating MOSTA to the old Town Hall. This may involve the creation of a new basement area and galleries so that the City's post Roman history can be fully displayed. The development of smaller scale museums and development of individual heritage projects, such as the Wheathampstead railway station platform and the St Albans signal box shall be supported. Improved facilities for theatre and cinema are encouraged, including delivery of a new cinema at the Former Odeon building in London Road.
- 8.10 The importance of the street markets is recognised in enhancing the attractiveness and unique character of the district as a retail and cultural destination. The district has a rich market heritage with regular Wednesday and Saturday street markets in St Albans and the farmers' markets in St Albans, Harpenden and Wheathampstead, together with the occasional French, Italian and German markets. St Albans street market is one of the most visited and valued attractions in the district and the Council wishes to retain and support it.

Policy SLP21 - Provision and Retention of Cultural Facilities

The Council will support the creation and improvement of a diverse range of cultural and entertainment facilities in accessible and sustainable locations within the district. Existing cultural and entertainment facilities will be retained unless alternative provision of an equivalent or greater community value and accessibility is provided and it can be clearly demonstrated that they are no longer required.

In particular the Council will support the delivery of:

- A Cultural cluster in St Albans City centre, which may include improved facilities for cinema, museum and theatre.
- St Albans street market improvements.
- Redevelopment of Harpenden Public Halls and/or other appropriate sites for improved cultural facilities, including a museum, as well as improved leisure provision and other initiatives developed by the Town Council in partnership with community stakeholders.
- Butterfly World, Chiswell Green.

Cathedral Quarter

- 8.11 St Albans Abbey Cathedral is integral to the identity of the City, placing it in a select number of 'cathedral cities' in the country which enjoy a strong

national profile. The Abbey is a popular pilgrimage destination, attracting more than 200,000 visitors and pilgrims a year and remains a proud reminder of St Albans' rich religious and community heritage, having been a site of Christian worship for over 1,700 years.

8.12 The national profile of the Cathedral is matched by active engagement with the local community, with the largest active congregation of any cathedral in Britain and an award winning heritage education programme, which benefits over 16,000 school children a year.

8.13 The Abbey and its grounds provide a unique environment which is considered to be one of St Albans' key assets. Attractive, both open and secluded public green spaces are provided through the Orchard and Vintry Gardens, which are extremely popular in the summer, and courtyard areas provide further potential as key public spaces for events.

8.14 However, despite the Abbey's national and local profile and physical size, it remains relatively hidden within the City, due to topography and nearby buildings. Opportunity exists, therefore to integrate the cathedral with the City centre more effectively – both physically and psychologically. The Council has been working closely with the Dean and Chapter and a number of suggested proposals were identified in the City Vision 2009 which would enhance the Abbey's national and local profile, expand and improve its education and outreach work, and enhance its facilities to fulfil its role as a centre of community activity. These include:

- Support for the delivery of an enhanced education programme at the Abbey, including in principle the re-establishment of a cloisters space and the development of a second chapter house to accommodate a new educational facility.
- More effective integration of the Cathedral with the City centre, including using signage to the Cathedral Quarter as an important wayfinding tool from other parts of the city.

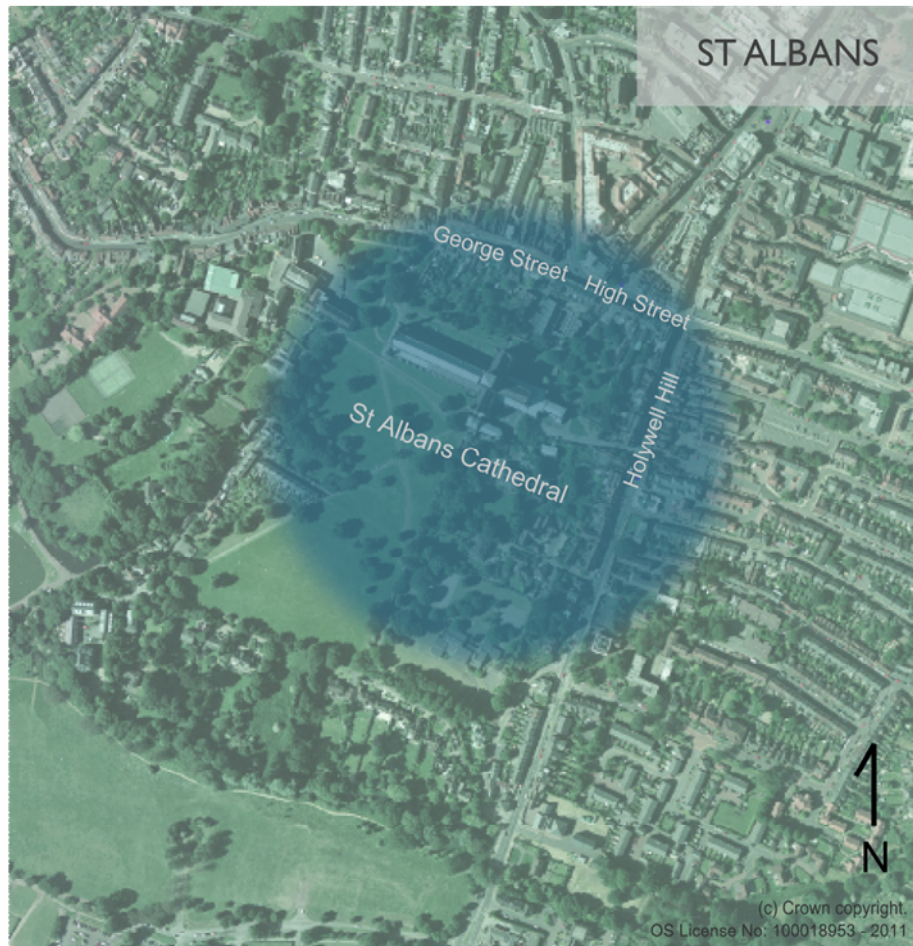
Policy SLP22 - Cathedral Quarter

St Albans Cathedral is a key asset in the district and integral to the identity of the district. The Cathedral Quarter has been identified to emphasise the unique character of the Abbey and its setting. Within the Cathedral Quarter the Council will support proposals which:

- Raise the profile of the Cathedral both locally and nationally
- Integrate the Cathedral with the City centre more effectively
- Enhance the visitor interpretation experience of the Cathedral Quarter and develop heritage trails

- Develop and improve the educational facilities
- Enhance facilities for community activity
- Enhance the public realm, green spaces and Abbey setting

Figure 12: Cathedral Quarter



The Visitor Economy

8.15 The Visitor economy will be a significant economic driver for the district, with the exceptional Roman remains, medieval Cathedral and historic built environment of St Albans as key components of the offer. This historic environment provides a unique setting for a lively mix of markets, independent and specialist retailers and diverse cafe and restaurant offer. The district's attractive countryside and rural settlements also offer opportunities to greatly expand and diversify the experience, bringing employment, health and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Key aims are:

- To enhance the current reasons for visiting St Albans district, improve the quality of the visit for the tourist and increase the number of attractions for potential visitors to the district.
- Growing visitor economy businesses – through various measures such as developing and improving visitor attractions, and developing high quality accommodation and value for money facilities of all types.
- Maximising the visitor economy market – partly by developing proactive and effective marketing of the district as a premier tourist destination including the development of the recently launched dedicated visitor website.
- Improving the visit – by improving transport infrastructure to allow visitors better access throughout the district, including developing coach management initiatives.

The Council has set up a Project Team to achieve a 5 year strategy (2013 – 2018) to improve the management and promotion of the visitor offer by the council and key partners. Work will include consideration of initiatives to link St Albans with visitor locations outside the district, such as the Harry Potter Studio Tour at Leavesden.

- 8.16 The Council fully supports and is actively engaged in developing and managing a vibrant tourist economy and enticing visitor offer throughout the district. The term ‘visitor economy’ covers a range of activities including day trips, weekend visits and longer stays for business and domestic purposes as well as for holidays and leisure pursuits. Overnight hotel/bed and breakfast accommodation in the district provides over 900 bedrooms but there are still deficiencies in certain sectors and locations to address. Visitor economy has the potential to be an even stronger economic driver for the district but needs to balance the sometimes competing needs, demands and aspirations of visitors and local residents.
- 8.17 Within a sensitive historic location such as St Albans, visitor management and the provision of tourist facilities and services is important; an over stimulation of demand can, if not carefully controlled, lead to adverse impacts on local communities and the natural and historic environment leading to a negative effect on the very attractions that visitors come to see. Nevertheless, there is scope to boost the local visitor economy by the provision of high quality overnight accommodation in accessible locations.

Policy SLP23 – Visitor Economy

The Council will support initiatives which:

- balance the needs of the visitor economy, the community and visitors;
- increase the visitor economy;
- promote St Albans City and District as a quality visitor destination;

The Council supports the retention and enhancement of existing visitor economy facilities and encourage the growth of a sustainable local visitor economy sector. The Council will ensure that for any proposal there is no significant adverse impact on local communities, heritage assets or the natural or built environment.

Hotels and Overnight Accommodation

- 8.18 There has been little recent investment in hotel development throughout the district, but current and short term future requirements are supported by existing venues around the district. The number of hotel rooms in St Albans City centre is relatively low. St Albans has no modern budget hotel; there is insufficient provision of budget/hostel accommodation and no modern boutique hotel. Over the medium to long term there is a need for more four star hotel bed provision, especially one with conference facilities, as the economy improves and vacancy levels fall. Existing and potential B&B/budget accommodation and modern boutique hotels in existing built up areas in village locations are particularly supported, as they add to village vibrancy and their important localised tourist economies.
- 8.19 Hotel occupancy rates in the district have fallen in the recent recession, but over the medium and long term have been above the regional average. St Albans has long been one of the most sought after locations in the East of England region for hotel development.
- 8.20 The preferred location for budget and boutique hotels is within existing built up areas, with priority being in or near the City centre. The preferred location for a four star hotel with conference facilities is also within existing built up areas, with priority being in or near the City centre, but such a development requires a substantial area of land and it may not be possible for a suitable urban site to be found. As there is no short term need, the DLP process will examine need, suitability and deliverability, with the key locational consideration being proximity to and positive interaction with the City centre of St Albans.