



Centre for Sustainability

**St Albans Local Development Framework
Core Strategy: Spatial Strategy Options**

Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic
Environmental Assessment) Working Note

Appendix B: Assessment of Strategic Sites

September 2010

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Introduction

This appendix contains the assessment of the strategic sites that have been identified for potential housing growth in the District. Each site has been assessed against the objectives included in the Sustainability Framework that has been used for the appraisal of all previous stages during the development of the St Albans Core Strategy. A summary of the findings against the environmental, social and economic objectives is provided for each site.

Sources of evidence to support appraisal:

- Sustainability Appraisals from July 2009
- Sustainability Appraisals for Hemel Hempstead Growth (Nov 2006)
- Sustainability Appraisal for East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan (AAP) (2009)
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment findings
- Proactive Greenbelt Management Study Working Draft
- Other assessments (e.g. consultants reports relating to specific sites)
- SADC officer summaries of community benefits/disbenefits

Most sites don't have temporal constraints relating to deliverability. The main exception is the area to the North-East of Hemel Hempstead, where development out from Hemel Hempstead (Spencers Park) is a prerequisite to development at the site in St Albans.

Strategic sites assessed (Hyperlinked)

HOUSING SITES

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HOUSING SITES

London Road/Alma Road, St Albans

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>Redevelopment for housing provides an opportunity to enhance this part of the Conservation Area. Central location makes the site very accessible for the city centre and transport hubs (railway station and well served bus route), thereby reducing the need to travel. The site makes use of previously developed land.</p> <p>Development of the site as housing, as opposed to previous proposals for a large food store, would restrict traffic increases in the area and therefore have beneficial effects on local air quality compared to the alternative. The site is previously developed land.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>The site is in a sustainable location and will provide easy access to facilities and services. Development of additional housing in this location could help to regenerate London Road and improve the levels of local community identity and participation. Development would probably be able to deliver 40% affordable housing in a relatively central location.</p>
Economic Objectives	<p>Additional housing should help to sustain the local businesses, such as the shops along London Road and provide the potential for other small shops to be developed.</p>

Spencers Park, Hemel Hempstead

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>The greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions. Approximately half of the site lies on Grade 2 agricultural land.</p> <p>There are no other major environmental constraints to developing at this location. The site is excluded from the Green Belt.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>The site is some distance from Hemel Hempstead town centre but development of this site could complement and improve community facilities to deliver a more coherently functioning neighbourhood, forming part of the imminent Spencer's Park residential development in Dacorum, immediately to the west. This would reduce the need to travel to access day to day needs.</p> <p>Opportunity exists for new areas of public open space and woodland planting on the southern part of the potential development. Part of this southern part could also be used for playing fields for a nearby school.</p> <p>Development at this location would probably be able to deliver 40% affordable housing.</p> <p>The public safety exclusion zones for replacement oil tanks at Buncefield may extend to the edge of or even just inside this site.</p>
Economic Objectives	<p>Development would help to support the local shops and services.</p>

Building Research Establishment (BRE), Bricket Wood

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>This is a relatively isolated site which means that increased car usage is likely to be higher than for many other potential sites, thereby resulting in increased greenhouse gas emissions. The site makes use of previously developed land but is located in the Green Belt.</p> <p>The site is in close proximity to Bricket Wood Common (a Site of Special Scientific Interest) and the woodlands to the north, east and south (ancient woodland), which are designated as County Wildlife Sites. These may be adversely affected by leisure activities of new residents. The site also includes tree preservation orders which need to be taken into consideration. Given the nature of the work undertaken by BRE (they are world leaders in low, zero and positive carbon construction) the new housing will be of high environmental standards and could be a flagship development for the District.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>Development would deliver mixed redevelopment, linking local housing and local employment, however the site is not in a sustainable location and other than for on site provisions will not provide easy access to wider jobs, facilities and services. Access to social and community facilities, shops and bus services is poor.</p> <p>The site's proximity to wooded areas and Bricket Wood Common provides opportunities for healthy lifestyles and the wooded and open parts of the site could become public open spaces, linked to the adjoining Common.</p> <p>Development at this location would probably be able to deliver 40% affordable housing.</p>
Economic Objectives	<p>The potential for a mixed use development on the site should help to support the local economy. Development at the site would help to retain and support a key employer in the District and provide more appropriate facilities for a world class Green Technology leader.</p>

Harperbury Hospital

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>This is a relatively isolated site and access to local shops and most other facilities is poor. This would mean that increased car usage is likely to be higher than for many other potential sites, thereby resulting in increased greenhouse gas emissions. Smaller scale development makes use of previously developed land and higher scale of development would also involve undeveloped land in the hospital grounds. The site is located in the Green Belt. Development at the site could deliver landscape enhancements.</p> <p>The part greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>The site is not in a sustainable location and other than for new on site provisions will not provide easy access to jobs, facilities and services. This would disadvantage those without access to a private car. Development of the larger</p>

	<p>number of houses on this site under Option 3 (600 houses compared to 250 under Options 1 & 2) would improve the viability of a public transport service to serve Harperbury. There are no topographical issues which would make walking or cycling problematic. The site is too small to secure major infrastructure benefits for the locality. There is potential to provide playing pitches on the site and for new woodland planting and increased landscaping and public access, to help meet the objectives for the Watling Chase Community Forest. Development at this site would deliver affordable/key worker housing close to employment.</p> <p>Development at this location would probably be able to deliver 40% affordable housing.</p>
Economic Objectives	The additional housing at the site would help to complement the proposed additional jobs at the health care site.

Ridgeview, London Colney

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>The site makes use of previously developed land. Development of the site as housing, as opposed to previous proposals for extending the neighbouring superstore would limit potential increases in traffic.</p> <p>Redevelopment of the Ridgeview site would not impact on areas of historic or landscape importance, but the presence of tree preservation orders could have implications for biodiversity.</p> <p>The site is close to bus routes which may partly help to minimise increases in greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>Redevelopment of this site could provide opportunities for green and renewable technologies, especially given its large uninterrupted south facing aspect.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>The site is close to bus routes and some local services.</p> <p>The site is in close proximity to the M25 which would result in noise issues for new residents. However due to modern building designs the levels of noise could be reduced when compared to that experienced by those currently living at Ridgeview.</p> <p>Development at this location would probably be able to deliver 40% affordable housing.</p>
Economic Objectives	The site is currently used for student accommodation. It is uncertain whether development of housing on the site would alter the level of support for the local economy. Development of the site as houses would prevent the expansion of the neighbouring retail park but this could be to the benefit of the local economy in the City Centre.

Mayne Avenue / Bedmond Lane, St Albans

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental	The site is in the Greenbelt with some rural character. It has a strong boundary provided by Bedmond Lane and has a good relationship with existing development,

Objectives	<p>being well related to St Albans.</p> <p>Some issues were raised regarding the visual impact of development on the view of St Albans when the site was considered as part of the 2003 GB study. It is therefore important that vegetation to the western and northern boundaries is retained and enhanced.</p> <p>The site is subject to an Archaeological Recording Condition AS.R.23.</p> <p>There is an extensive TPO Area along the west boundary of site and through the centre of the site, west to east. The trees, in particular along the western boundary, could potentially form a strong long-term Green Belt boundary.</p> <p>The greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions</p>
Social Objectives	<p>The site is located within close proximity of existing local services and facilities.</p> <p>Development of this site would result in the loss of much of an area currently used for informal recreation.</p> <p>There are no topographical issues that would make walking or cycling problematic.</p>
Economic Objectives	<p>No predicted effects.</p>

Beaumont School Playing Fields and Winches Farm Drive, St Albans

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>The site is in the Greenbelt but is urban/urban fringe and contributes relatively little to the Greenbelt. Development of this site would create a shorter and more defensible Greenbelt boundary in this location and would not impact on the setting of St Albans.</p> <p>The greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions. The development may have adverse effects on biodiversity. The site is relatively accessible to services, facilities and open space which should help reduce the need to travel and minimise increases in greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>Development of this site would probably be able to deliver 40% affordable housing.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>This is an accessible, sustainable location for housing served well by existing public transport and close to existing urban area and nearby local facilities. Location within St Albans means that there will be easy access to jobs, services and facilities. The area has very good access to the existing road network and regular bus services into St Albans and Hatfield currently operate in this area. Redevelopment of the former playing fields will result in the loss of local amenity, although the development would provide new, improved school playing fields north of the new housing, with a net gain in provision. Benefits relating to developing this site would be the new and improved educational facilities at Beaumont School.</p> <p>There are no local topographical issues related to the site but there may be an issue walking/cycling to City centre.</p>

Economic Objectives	Additional housing should help to sustain the local businesses.
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South of Sandpit Lane, St Albans

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>The site is within the Greenbelt but in this general location the Greenbelt is not especially strong and is not formed by any particularly distinguishable features. The land parcel is well related to St Albans and urban fringe in character. Removal of the land parcel from the Greenbelt would not impact upon the setting of St Albans.</p> <p>The greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions.</p> <p>The area contains ancient woodland and development may have adverse effects on biodiversity. The site is relatively accessible to services, facilities and open space which should help reduce the need to travel and minimise increases in greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>The landscape quality of the land is not particularly high, but benefits from established trees and hedgerows, with ancient woodland nearby. The site has been identified as having a high potential for delivering significant green infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>At the lower level of housing mineral sterilisation is not an issue. However, at the higher level of housing development at this site which is within a known area of sand and gravel deposits would limit their extraction potential in the future, although given the very extensive reserves of known sand and gravel deposits in the County and the very wide minerals belt within which further such reserves exist, this potential sterilisation issue is not considered to be significant.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>This is a relatively accessible, sustainable location for housing, although access to local shops is not very good. There is however the possibility that the scale of new development would require new facilities to be built as part of the development. The new development could include new public open space which would provide opportunities for leisure and recreation for the wider community.</p> <p>Development of new homes would be able to fund the expansion and improvement of Oaklands Smallford Campus as an educational hub.</p> <p>The development could also provide local shopping facilities if development was at the higher scale indicated in scenario 3, an expanded Oakwood Primary School, together with significant countryside enhancement and increased public access in adjoining land owned by the College.</p> <p>Development of this site would probably be able to deliver 40% affordable housing.</p> <p>There are no local topographical issues related to the site but there may be an issue walking/cycling to City centre.</p>
Economic Objectives	The large number of new houses associated with this development is likely to help support the local economy.

South of Napsbury, London Colney

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>The area is Greenbelt and development south of Napsbury would weaken the Greenbelt boundary currently formed by Shenley Lane. The Greenbelt at this location maintains some rural/open countryside character. Removal of the land parcel to the north of Napsbury from the Green Belt (Under Option 3) would reduce the already narrow gap between St Albans and London Colney/Napsbury at this point.</p> <p>The part greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions. The extensive views southwards from Napsbury Park and views into the area from Shenley Ridge may be harmed by housing development. However, the level of impact would be reduced by containing development adjacent to Shenley Lane. As the site is located in a Conservation Area and contains a historic park and garden there are also likely to be adverse effects on the historic environment.</p> <p>The site has been identified as having a high potential for delivering significant green infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>The distance of the site from the town centres and the relatively easy access to the M25 may encourage car use, rather than sustainable modes of transport, affecting air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>Whilst access to existing facilities is relatively limited, development at this location could result in the provision of improved local facilities (e.g. school and local shops) particularly if the 600 dwellings proposed under Option 3 are taken forward. Development could also result in substantial woodland planting, public open space and improved access to the countryside. This would benefit both the new and existing residents in the local area. In addition development could result in the provision of improved bus services to St Albans which would be particularly beneficial to those in the area without access to a private car.</p> <p>Development at this location could assist in physical and social integration of Napsbury with London Colney, where there is currently minimal integration.</p> <p>Development at this location would probably be able to deliver 40% affordable housing.</p> <p>This site is a flat level walk or cycle from the local centre which would encourage walking and cycling to access facilities.</p>
Economic Objectives	<p>Provision of a substantial number of new homes in this location would also help to support the wider economy of the District.</p>

East of Harpenden Road, St Albans

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental	<p>Development would be in the Green Belt and would involve the loss of attractive unspoilt countryside, with some long distance views if the higher levels of</p>

Objectives	<p>development under Option 3 (600-900 new homes) were to go ahead.</p> <p>The lower levels of development in this area (125 dwellings) would have less of an impact on the open countryside and would have no impact on the setting and special character of St Albans due to the screened nature of this area of land. Nevertheless, despite its close proximity to residential development the smaller land parcel maintains some rural/countryside character.</p> <p>The greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions. The development may have adverse effects on biodiversity, with ancient woodland being located partly on the southern boundary of the larger site. The distance of the site from the city centre could encourage increased car use.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>The area is not in a very sustainable location, being some distance from the city centre and local facilities, although it has good access to the existing road network and is served by a regular bus service to St Albans and Harpenden. Development could meet the identified need for a new secondary school to serve the north of St Albans. Development proposed for the area may also provide local shopping facilities at the higher level of development proposed in option 3, a possible new school and a possible extension to the Porters Wood employment area which would help alleviate the issues relating to fairer access to services.</p> <p>The lowest new housing level option (125 homes) could deliver additional sports facilities for the nearby Secondary school.</p> <p>Development at this location would probably be able to deliver 40% affordable housing.</p> <p>There are no local topographical issues that would discourage walking or cycling. However there may be an issue walking/cycling to City centre.</p>
Economic Objectives	<p>If the development is accompanied by an extension to the Porters Wood employment area there could be benefits for the local economy. Provision of a substantial number of new homes in this location would also help to support the wider economy of the District.</p>

South of Ambrose Lane and Cooters End Lane, Harpenden

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>The site is in the Greenbelt and maintains some rural/open countryside character. Development could enable a new more defensible long term Greenbelt boundary to be created with enhanced landscaping. Development at this location may have some impact on the setting of Harpenden when approached from the north and any development would need to reflect the site topography which rises to the north-east.</p> <p>The greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions. The site is in close proximity to Listed Buildings and their settings would need to be protected.</p>
Social	<p>The site is in a relatively sustainable location with good access to services and facilities and close to bus routes. There are however issues relating to the lack of</p>

Objectives	<p>available places in local schools.</p> <p>Development could provide substantial new open space in the north of Harpenden.</p> <p>Development at this location would probably be able to deliver 40% affordable housing and help address previous low levels of affordable housing delivery in Harpenden. Development would also help to provide new smaller family houses for which there has also been a lack of provision for many years.</p> <p>There are some minor topographical issues across site but the site is a flat level walk or cycle from the town centre.</p>
Economic Objectives	<p>Providing a significant number of new homes in this location would help to support the local economy of Harpenden, in particular the local shops on Luton Road.</p>

West of Chiswell Green

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>The greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions.</p> <p>The site is in the Greenbelt, although the Butterfly World access road would potentially create a new stronger long-term Green Belt boundary. The land parcel is well related to Chiswell Green and has more of an urban fringe character than an open countryside one, although much of the area lies on a prominent ridge, with long views to the south west.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>The site is within walking distance of bus stops in Watford Road and the northern part of the area is close to the local shopping centre.</p> <p>Chiswell Green does not have a wide range of social and community facilities, or many jobs. The scale of potential development west of Chiswell Green would be too small to justify the provision of many new facilities. Chiswell Green's primary school (Killigrew) is full and development west of Chiswell Green would be too small to justify building a new school.</p> <p>Approximately 200 of the homes would be a retirement village which would have its own modest local facilities. With a generally ageing population this may be an important social benefit.</p> <p>Likely to deliver lower than normal level of affordable housing on the retirement village area.</p> <p>Major uncertainty concerning levels of traffic usage of adjoining Butterfly World access road.</p> <p>There are no topographical issues that would make walking or cycling problematic.</p>
Economic Objectives	<p>Development in this location would help to support the local shops in Chiswell Green.</p>

Nicholas Breakspear School, Colney Heath Lane, St Albans

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>The site is within, but on the edge of, the Green Belt and is well related to existing built up area, between housing on Colney Heath Lane and the Highfield development. The character is more urban than rural/countryside. Development here would not impact on the historic setting of St Albans.</p> <p>The greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions. The greenfield nature of the site also means that development may have some minor adverse effects on biodiversity. The site is relatively accessible to services, facilities and open space which should help reduce the need to travel and minimise increases in greenhouse gas emissions.</p>
Social Objectives	<p>This is a relatively accessible and sustainable location for housing, although it is some distance from the city centre. Location within St Albans means that there will be easy access to jobs, services and facilities. The area has good public transport links with regular bus services into St Albans and Hatfield currently operating in this area. Housing development might enable the provision of new buildings and facilities for the school.</p> <p>There are no topographical issues that would make walking or cycling problematic.</p>
Economic Objectives	No predicted effects.

North East Hemel Hempstead

Appraisal against SA Objectives	
Environmental Objectives	<p>The greenfield nature of this site means some soil sealing will occur which may have impacts on future drainage and flooding as well as a loss of other soil functions. Approximately half of the site (southern half) lies on Grade 2 agricultural land.</p> <p>Removal of the land parcel from the Green Belt would reduce the gap between Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn, but the impact upon the degree of openness would be limited due to the M1 and an existing tree belt. The land parcel is reasonably well related to Hemel Hempstead. However, it is in agricultural use and retains some countryside character despite the close proximity of residential, employment, and the M1.</p> <p>The site contains two Grade II listed buildings at Wood End Farm.</p> <p>The Nickey Line linear wildlife site crosses the northern edge of the site. The size of the development would provide opportunities for biodiversity gains on what is currently agricultural land.</p> <p>The site contains some sensitive landscape areas (Upper Ver Valley) but these are planned to remain as green buffers with development being drawn back from the valley and focusing on the plateau. The site has been identified as having a high potential for delivering significant green infrastructure improvements.</p>

	The proximity of employment opportunities and the local centre to residential development will reduce the need to travel thereby limiting growth in greenhouse gas emissions.
Social Objectives	<p>Development at this site would provide new local centres (small or large depending on scale of growth). The proximity of employment opportunities and the local centre to residential development will reduce the need to travel by car and encourage healthy forms of travel.</p> <p>A fuel pipeline runs through site which will need to be taken into consideration when planning the layout of development.</p> <p>The Nickey Line linear footpath/cycle route crosses the northern edge of the site which could help to encourage healthy lifestyles. Some topographical issues for land at the north of the site may discourage walking and cycling, although the majority of housing will be on the plateau area. The site is close to the M1 motorway and there could therefore be noise disturbance for the new residents in the eastern part of the site.</p> <p>An electricity transmission line crosses the site which could cause concerns for new residents.</p>
Economic Objectives	Large scale housing development would help support the local economy, in particular the regeneration of the Maylands area.