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### Our Vision

To preserve and enhance the distinctive character of St Albans City and District, making it an outstanding place in which to live and work and to visit, where everyone enjoys a range of quality and efficient services in a progressive, caring and environmentally concerned community.
1. Introduction

The release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere is now widely acknowledged to be a significant contributor to climate change. Carbon dioxide released by the combustion of fossil fuels for electricity generation, producing heat or as a fuel for transport is the major source of man-made greenhouse gases. There are two main ways of combating this, namely reducing energy demand through efficiency of use and using alternative low carbon or renewable energy supplies.

The UK is committed to meeting a significant proportion of our energy needs from renewable energy sources. Government targets are to generate 10% of the nation’s electricity from renewables by 2010, 15% by 2015 and 20% by 2020. Nationally, in 2003 only 4% of our electricity was obtained from renewable sources.

On a regional level, in 2001 the East of England only produced 0.45% of its demand from renewable sources. All regions were asked by the Government to set targets for themselves up to 2010 and the East of England adopted the figure below, which was detailed in the Draft East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), published in December 2004.

- To produce 14% of the region’s electricity from renewable sources by 2010 (including offshore wind, 10% if offshore wind is excluded)

This regional target was then dissected into county targets, and 153,000 MegaWatt hours per year were proposed for Hertfordshire. This figure equates to only 3% of Hertfordshire’s predicted energy consumption in 2010.

In an effort to find ways of meeting this target, Hertfordshire County Council and all ten District Councils in the county commissioned specialist consultants to produce a report setting out what and where the potential was in Hertfordshire for renewable energy development.

The conclusions of this report were that Hertfordshire did have the potential to meet its target, but only if new and existing development started to implement renewable energy technologies as soon as possible. One key barrier to this happening was identified as the lack of positive planning policies encouraging renewable energy technologies.

Government guidance in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 22 provides local authorities with the backing to encourage and require renewable energy technology in development. The Draft RSS also includes policy ENV8 that reiterates this requirement for certain development to provide a proportion of on-site renewable energy generation.

In November 2005 the Council’s Planning Policy Advisory Panel agreed that an Interim Policy Statement should be produced to ensure that St Albans City & District can contribute to the county target, whilst also protecting our historic built environment. It was also considered necessary to provide planning guidance to homeowners wishing to install small-scale domestic schemes.
St Albans District Council - Interim Policy Statement
Planning and Renewable Energy

2. What is Renewable Energy?

The definition of renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment. These are the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, energy from the sun and also from biomass (the burning of crops to generate various fuel types). Below is a brief guide to the types of renewable energy that may be suitable for St Albans District:

**Wind**
The United Kingdom is the windiest part of Europe and there are currently 1400 operational wind turbines providing electricity for over 700,000 homes, therefore reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 3 million tonnes per year. Whilst there is little potential within St Albans District for large scale wind turbines, there is a significant opportunity for small-scale domestic turbines such as those pictured to be integrated into both existing and new build development.

**Solar photovoltaic (PV)**
Solar PV panels only require daylight, not direct sunlight, to generate electricity. They are a flexible technology that can either be connected to the National Grid or be stand-alone. As such, they can be suitable for both urban and rural locations.

**Solar Water Heating**
Solar hot water systems use heat from the sun to provide homes with hot water. There are two main types of system, either a flat panel collector (pictured) or an evacuated tube where water is heated directly by the sun in a series of tubes attached to a frame.

**Ground source heat pumps (GSHP)**
GSHPs transfer heat from the ground into a building to provide space heating and in some cases to pre-heat domestic hot water. The system is ideal for new build and there are no planning issues given the underground nature of the system.

**Biomass**
Small-scale biomass heat facilities are a relatively straightforward process for domestic and commercial heat only projects. The process involves the burning of a fuel crop to provide heat. Many public buildings have utilised such technology, attracting good levels of grant funding.
3. What St Albans District Council is doing

The Council is committed to playing an active role in helping to reduce carbon emissions and meet renewable energy targets. As a result, the Council is aiming to achieve a significant reduction in domestic carbon dioxide emissions across the District by 2010. A recent energy audit of the Council Offices highlighted the potential for an annual 20% reduction in energy consumption and measures are being put in place for this to be achieved.

The Council has also been involved in a number of renewable energy projects across the District. A solar hot water system has been installed at ‘Inn on the Park’ in Verulamium Park that provides hot water for washing and cleaning, whilst a 5 kilowatt solar photovoltaic system has been installed at Jersey Farm Community Centre to generate electricity and reduce the centre’s overall demand for energy. A wide variety of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies are showcased at the Council’s ‘Eco-house’ in Sleapshyde, and financial assistance is also available to District homeowners wishing to install their own solar hot water systems. Please see Section 6 for further details.

The publication of this Interim Planning Policy Statement is intended to assist the Council in tackling climate change by integrating energy efficiency into all new development across the District, renewable energy generation into all ‘major’ new development, whilst also encouraging small-scale domestic installations where appropriate.
4. Energy Efficiency

In order to help the Council implement national objectives at a local level, this document provides three separate interim policies covering energy efficiency, renewable energy and domestic installations. Where appropriate, each of these will be a material consideration to all planning applications received after Cabinet has approved the final document.

Energy efficiency

The easiest way to conserve the diminishing fossil fuels is to use less energy in the first place, and that which we do use to be done so more efficiently. The Council attaches great importance to future development becoming more energy efficient, as this is central to the principles of sustainable development.

The recently amended Part L of the Building Regulations that will come into force in April 2006 covers some aspects of energy efficiency through design and layout. The regulations will set maximum ‘U-values’ for various types of property that measure the rate of heat loss. They will also set minimum standards in relation to the carbon output of new dwellings.

When submitting planning applications, developers should demonstrate how the scheme has been designed to help conserve energy. Interim Policy PRE1 (Planning & Renewable Energy) below is applicable to all new development and also conversion schemes.

### PRE1 Energy efficiency

The Council will encourage all developments to:

- Achieve a high standard of energy efficiency through the use of appropriate siting, design, orientation and layout;
- Maximise the benefits of passive solar heating, cooling, lighting and natural ventilation;
- Use materials from local sustainable sources, including the re-use of materials;
- Achieve U-values that are lower than the maximum specified in the Building Regulations for the type of property in question.
5. Renewable energy

As highlighted in Sections 1 and 2 of this document, the Government is committed to achieving a target of 10% renewable energy generation by 2010. The Council’s Development Plan Documents (DPDs), which will replace the existing Local Plan, will not be adopted until 2009, therefore it is considered necessary to provide an interim policy on this subject.

PPS22 confirms the Government’s commitment to embracing renewable energy by providing guidance on how local planning authorities (LPAs) should incorporate relevant policies in their DPDs. The document states that LPAs should consider the opportunity for incorporating renewable energy projects in all new developments and encouragement should be given in positively expressed policies. Policy ENV8 in the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) also contains wording to this effect. The threshold in the Draft RSS policy above which development will be required to provide a proportion of renewable energy generation is stated at 1,000 square metres or 50 dwellings. However having assessed a number of similar adopted policies currently in operation by other local authorities, it was considered a threshold that means all ‘major’ developments (10 dwellings or 1,000 square metres) would be more appropriate at this stage.

In line with the PPS22 and Draft RSS advice, Interim Policy PRE2 (Planning & Renewable Energy) below introduces a requirement for all major planning applications to provide on-site renewable energy technology to meet a proportion of predicted energy generation. So as not to place an undue burden on applicants, a degree of flexibility can be applied where considerable energy efficiency and conservation measures have been incorporated into developments.

**PRE2 Renewable Energy**

The Council will require all new developments, either new build or conversion, above a threshold of 1,000 square metres or 10 dwellings to:

- **Incorporate equipment for on-site renewable energy generation that will meet at least 10% of the development’s predicted energy requirements**

This proportion of energy production could include energy from wind, biomass, photovoltaic equipment, solar hot water heating or ground source heat pumps. The Council will seek to ensure that technologies are appropriate to their location in terms of any visual impact. Discussion on such schemes is therefore encouraged at the earliest opportunity.

If a developer can demonstrate that they have made exceptional efforts to maximise energy efficiency in line with Interim Policy PRE1, then the requirement to satisfy the total 10% may be relaxed. Such efforts would need to demonstrate compliance with all the criteria in Policy PRE1.
6. Domestic Installations

The consultants' report that looked into the renewable energy potential in Hertfordshire identified 'embedded technologies' as one of the main ways of helping to meet the county target. Embedded technologies are those domestic type schemes outlined in Section 2 of this document. Interim Policy PRE3 below offers clear guidance on how such technologies can best be implemented on domestic properties.

Another important factor is that St Albans City & District is characterised by its historic built environment, with a large number of listed buildings and conservation areas in existence. These designations serve to preserve and enhance the character of the buildings and surrounding area. Certain renewable energy schemes, for example solar panels, can have a significant visual impact on a building; therefore a more careful approach is necessary and indeed in some cases such installations will not be permitted. Interim Policy PRE3 (Planning & Renewable Energy) below also includes clear guidance on what the Council will allow in these locations. It should be noted that as detailed in Section 7, not all installations require planning consent. PRE3 below applies to those that do need consent however all renewable energy installations are encouraged to follow these guidelines.

### PRE3 Domestic installations

The Council encourages the installation of residential renewable energy projects, and will grant planning permission in appropriate locations. When determining planning applications for domestic renewable energy developments, the Council will apply the following criteria:

- **Solar panels** - Panels located on rear roof slopes or out of public view will be favoured. Those having a detrimental impact on the visual appearance of a property will be refused. Panels installed flush within the roof plane will also be favoured.

- **Micro Wind turbines** - As with satellite dishes, micro wind turbines should be positioned in such a way to minimise the visual impact on the external appearance of the building. Locations behind a parapet or shielded by a chimney stack are likely to be less conspicuous than a position somewhere on the front of the building. Potential noise disruption to adjoining occupiers will also be a consideration.

- **Within Conservation Areas** - Panels and turbines should not be erected on the front roof slope or façade of a property. Unsympathetic alterations considered to damage the historic street scene will be resisted. Inconspicuous positions for installations are encouraged.

- **Within Article 4 areas & on Listed Buildings** - Installations anywhere on the roofslope or the building itself will normally be resisted. Preference will be given to panels or turbines sited elsewhere in the grounds, subject to there being no adverse visual or physical intrusion into the character of the area or building.
7. Do I need planning permission?

Interim Policy PRE3 offers guidance to householders wishing to install renewable energy technologies on their property. The majority of houses in the District benefit from ‘Permitted Development’ rights. These give householders the opportunity to extend and alter their house to a certain extent without the need for planning permission. Whilst it is not possible to answer the question above for every potential renewable energy scheme, below is a general guide as to what kind of domestic renewable energy developments would require planning permission. Even those installations not requiring planning permission should take account of the guidance within Interim Policy PRE3.

Planning consent not required

- Any solar panels on the roof slope of domestic properties that do not project more than 100mm above the roof plane (unless entire roof slope is covered)
- Micro wind turbines under 90cm in diameter and below the ridge of the roof on domestic properties

Planning consent required

- Any solar panels protruding more than 100mm above the existing roof plane
- Micro wind turbines protruding above the highest point of the existing roof or over 90cm in diameter
- Any solar panels or micro wind turbines on properties within an Article 4 area or where Permitted Development rights have been removed
- Any solar panels or micro wind turbines on or adjacent to a Listed Building

As a general rule, any scheme that is considered to significantly change the appearance of a building will require planning consent. An example would be the installation of solar panels across an entire roof slope, even if they did not protrude more than 100mm.

Classes B and C of the General Permitted Development Order 1995 cover the majority of domestic renewable energy developments. For further advice as to whether a specific proposal would require consent, please contact our Planning Development Control Team on 01727 819344 or 819345. It is always advisable to check with the Council before proceeding with any development.

For queries regarding Conservation Areas, Article 4 Areas or Listed Buildings, please contact the Conservation & Design Team on 01727 866100 x 2616.
8. Next steps

The Council will monitor the performance of this interim policy statement in relation to planning applications received and determined, building regulation approvals and energy consumption levels. Any feedback is welcome and will help inform the renewable energy policies within the forthcoming Local Development Framework, which will replace the existing Local Plan.

9. Grants

The Council is currently running the ‘Life in the Green Lane’ scheme, which will provide the opportunity for up to 100 private households to install a domestic solar hot water system at a substantially reduced cost. Grant funding has been obtained from the Energy Saving Trust and more details are available either on the Council website at www.stalbans.gov.uk or from the Energy Officer Kirsten Elder, contact details below.

10. Useful contacts

Kirsten Elder, Energy Officer, St Albans District Council
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