

Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan

Responses to Examiner's Questions

1. Is the Parish Council satisfied that the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998)?

Yes. Is there a particular matter you would like further clarification on?

2. Please confirm the dates of the second Regulation 14 consultation.

The consultation period ran for eight weeks from 1st December 2021 – 25th January 2022. Responses from the statutory consultees were not received during this timeframe. They were granted an extension until the 14th April 2022.

3. Policy RED 1, Paragraph 2 – loss of pubs and drinking establishments: From where will losses be resisted (the whole High Street; the Primary Shopping frontage; the Class E shop frontage)?

This should apply to the combined Primary and Class 'E' frontage.

4. Policy RED 1, Paragraph 4 – reference to “these frontages”: Does this mean the Primary Shopping frontage and the Class E shop frontage?

Yes

5. Policy RED 1, Paragraph 4: Would it be appropriate to have a definition of “pop-up shops”?

Yes, we agree this would be helpful and that it could either be included in the supporting text or added by way of a footnote where referenced in the policy. It could also be included within the Glossary towards the front of the Neighbourhood Plan. We are happy to be guided by you but suggest that the definition might be: *'Use of vacant premises on a temporary basis for retail purposes'*.

6. Policy RED 1, Paragraph 5: Where is the Policies Map to be found?

This should be a reference to Figure 16 on the page that follows. We are happy to prepare a combined policies map for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan if the Examiner feels that would be of benefit

7. Policy RED 2, Paragraph 1: What is meant by “small scale”?

This is intended to refer to premises suitable for small businesses, reflecting the high level of business start-up rates across Redbourn and the wider SW Herts area. It is also intended to reflect the character of Redbourn, with infill and redevelopment opportunities responding to the existing urban fabric.

By small scale we mean those size of developments that are not considered 'major', as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010. The definition of major includes those sites where the floor space

created by development is 1,000 sqm or more. In Redbourn, we consider small scale to be less than this.

The SW Herts Economic Study (Hatch Regeneris, February 2019, for the SW Herts Authorities) notes the strength of micro and small businesses in the SW Herts area. It reports on the take-up of office space by local authority. It notes that activity has been higher in St Albans than the other SW Herts authorities, but that almost 90% of all take-up has been for small floorplates under 500sqm. It says that this demonstrates the appeal of this location for small businesses.

For the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan, small scale is intended to refer to those schemes generating up to 500sqm of employment floorspace.

8. Policy Red 2, Paragraph 1: Paragraph 1 a) refers to conversion of existing buildings “across the Neighbourhood Plan area”. Paragraph 1 b) refers to conversions “within the settlement boundary”. Which is correct?

Paragraph 1(a) is intended to capture those buildings that fall outside the built-up area and so distinct from Paragraph 1(b). We recognise there is some overlap between these and propose that the words ‘*or conversion of existing buildings*’ be removed from Paragraph 1(b). We are happy to be guided by you on this.

9. Policy RED 2, Paragraph 2: Is there any definition of “local green ventures”?

A local business, or venture, is typically a small - medium enterprise based in the area and providing a service to the area. ‘Local Green Ventures’ are local businesses that do not make any negative impacts on the environment, economy, or community. They use environmentally sustainable resources and uphold socially responsible policies. They include those companies involved in the circular economy.

10. Policy RED 3: Please identify any sites that are in private ownership, either wholly or in part. Have the owners of any such sites been specifically consulted on the Parish Council’s proposals for Local Green Space designation? Have there been objections to the proposed designation from owners? If so, please provide details and comment thereon.

The submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan proposes that ten sites are designated as Local Green Space. The following is in private ownership:

Ver Meadow’s

The other proposed designations are in public ownership.

The survey prepared at the Regulation 14 consultation stage included a specific question about all of the Local Green Spaces. Notification of the Regulation 14 consultation was sent to the statutory consultees and other interested parties. A copy of the survey is included in the Regulation 14 Consultation summary report.

Alongside this, a Local Green Space letter was sent to landowners to seek their views on the proposed designations. A copy of the letter is included in the Regulation 14 Consultation summary report. The letters were sent to :

Carmargue
D2 Planning on behalf of London & Cambridge Properties Ltd
Kearns Land Limited
Martin Grant Homes

The following presents a summary of responses received to the Regulation 14 consultation and landowner letters. Our comments on these are presented in italicised text.

A response by Terence O'Rourke on behalf of St Luke's SEN School noted that land at Pan Handle and the Redbourn Leisure Centre had initially been considered as part of the long list of sites for designation as Local Green Space, but that the assessment suggested these were unsuitable for designation. The response on behalf of St. Luke's SEN School agreed with this assessment.

We have no specific comment on this. Both sites were considered for designation but neither were considered to fulfil the criteria for designation. Neither feature as proposed Local Green Space designations in the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

A response by the Open Spaces Society noted that Redbourn Common benefits from protection under the Commons Act 2006 and that designation as Local Green Space offers no additional benefits. It also suggest that other sites proposed for designation should be registered as Town or Village Greens.

We note that this is not an objection as such. The Parish is of the view that the Common fulfils the criteria for Local Green Space designation. Consultation responses indicate its value to the local community, being important for recreation, wildlife and tranquillity, as well as for its historic significance. The process for registering sites as Town or Village Greens is not policy related but is rather a potential project and will be kept under review.

Marrons Planning on behalf of Martin Grant Homes and Kearns Land responded to object to the proposed designation of land at Site 7: Ver Meadows (Area in Floodplain). This and the wider site extending to the Nickey Line and A5183 had previously been promoted through the Local Plan and included as a draft allocation in an earlier version of the Neighbourhood Plan (prior to withdrawal of the Local Plan from Examination). The consultation response noted that the respondents remain committed to the promotion of the site. The response noted that it is unclear what specific value the land within the floodplain has, and that making use of the EA floodplain map to define the extent of the LGS is not appropriate. It is also noted that, given the site is within the Green Belt, designation as Local Green Space would not offer any additional protection. It is though noted that the respondents share the Parish Council's desire to protect the floodplain and provide access associated with the Ver. It is noted that, through the review of the Local Plan, should the District Council decide to release the site from the Green Belt for development, then policies could be put in place in the Local Plan in respect of site specific open space requirements.

The proposed designation of the area of floodplain is not intended to preclude the wider site from development. This was also reflected in the earlier draft of the Neighbourhood Plan (prior to withdrawal of the Local Plan) which showed the potential housing development area to be between the floodplain and Nickey Line / A5183. Designation of

the site recognises its environmental value, being a rare chalk stream, as well as helping to manage the risk of flooding from the wider area.

The website of the Ver Valley Society notes that globally, chalk streams are very rare and have habitats supporting a very special ecology. The mineral-rich, pure water in the stream, which has been filtered through the chalk, remains at a constant temperature and is vital to flora and fauna. It notes that because the water and associated wetlands are slow to freeze, it provides a temporary refuge for over wintering birds and supports a variety of plants, animals, invertebrates and birds in the summer. The River is though under threat.

Affinity Water, which supplies water to the area, note on their website that the chalk streams such as the River Ver are less resilient to changes in climate and drought conditions. They are currently working with the Environment Agency to revitalise chalk rivers, minimising risk of low water flows and supporting wildlife habitats, including part of the River Ver south of Redbourn village. The risk to Chalk Streams is made clear by the prolonged period of hot weather earlier this year which saw six miles of the river dry up in the summer.

Whilst we acknowledge the comment about the Green Belt and need for this to be reviewed through the Local Plan process, Green Belt status alone does not recognise the importance of the River Ver, particularly for wildlife. To that end, we feel that designation is appropriate. As noted above, this does not preclude the wider site coming forward for development at a later date.

11. Policy RED 4, Paragraph 1 – off-site measures to be located “as close as possible to the development site”: What is the reasoning behind this provision?

We recognise that it may not be practicable to deliver net gains on site. In such instances, the policy is intended to provide flexibility for off-site measures to be provided. Given the requirement for net-gain is linked to the development it is reasonable to expect this to be provided close to the development. However, should you consider this restrictive, the reference to being ‘as close as possible to the site area’ could be replaced within ‘in the Plan area’ or wording to a similar effect.

12. Should Policy RED 5 (and other policies) apply to land within the proposed Hemel Garden Communities area?

The entirety of the Parish has been designated for Neighbourhood Planning purposes by St Albans City and District Council. The policies in the Neighbourhood Plan should apply to the entire Plan area until such a time as they are superseded by more up-to-date policies, whether that is through revision to the Neighbourhood Plan, adoption of a new St Albans Local Plan, or a Joint Plan for that part of the Parish within the Garden Communities area.

Progress on the Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan is more advanced than other policy documents that relate to the Garden Communities area.

The South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan website notes that although consultation was undertaken earlier this summer, there are two further rounds of consultation planned prior to the Plan being submitted for Examination. No dates are provided for the next steps in the plan-making process.

The most recent St Albans Local Development Scheme was published in January 2021. That suggests that the new Local Plan would be adopted by the end of 2023. However, the Local Development Scheme shows that Regulation 18 consultation on the Local Plan was due to take place at the start of 2022. That did not happen and it is currently unclear when it will. Progress is thus behind schedule.

The Garden Communities area is primarily located within neighbouring Dacorum Borough. The Dacorum Borough Council Local Development Scheme indicates that the new Dacorum Local Plan will not be adopted until late 2025.

With examination and adoption of the various Plans still some way off, and thus no certainty as to what might come out of that process, the Neighbourhood Plan represents the most up-to-date statement of policy for the Redbourn area. There is a commitment to review built into the Neighbourhood Plan. As and when further progress is made on higher level Plans, so the Neighbourhood Plan will be reviewed and updated accordingly. It may be at this time that further progress has been made on the Garden Communities and that a different approach is required in this part of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

13. Policy RED 6, Paragraph 1.a): Is the built-up area defined anywhere?

This is defined on the adopted St Albans Local Plan policies map. To help provide clarity, we would be happy to include an image in the Neighbourhood Plan that clearly shows the extent of the built-up area. Equally, and as per the answer to question 6 above, we could include this on a combined 'policies map' for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan if you consider that would be of benefit.

14. Policy RED 6, Paragraph 1.b): How realistic is the 800m walking distance as applied to "all major development proposals"?

At the end of Paragraph 1 the word 'should' is included in the policy. This recognises that whilst the 800m distance is desirable, it might not be achievable in every situation. However, Redbourn (the village) is relatively compact and the majority of all homes are already within 800m walking distance of the High Street, social and community infrastructure.

The purpose for including the 800m walking distance is to make effective use of land and support development in the most sustainable locations. This reflects the growing recognition of the 'twenty-minute neighbourhood' and other similarly named concepts, supporting inclusive and cohesive places that provide the full range of uses to support day-to-day life in close proximity of the home.

The TCPA guide to 'Twenty-Minute Neighbourhoods' is based upon a twenty minute round journey, i.e.: ten minutes from home to the destination, and ten minutes back. Ten minutes equates to an 800m walking distance. The guide was developed as a response to the Covid pandemic and other issues being faced, such as the climate emergency and health issues, that require new ways of thinking about the way our towns and cities are planned.

As far as possible, new development in Redbourn should help reinforce the central area and support access to services and facilities for all ages.

15. Policy RED 6, Paragraph 1.c): Are low noise zones defined anywhere?

Open source data published by Defra (see link below) shows road noise across England. This indicates five noise bands. The data shown on the map is a product of the strategic noise mapping analysis undertaken in 2017 to meet the requirements of the Environmental Noise Directive (Directive 2002/49/EC) and the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

The World Health Organisation (WHO)¹ recommends that average exposure to road traffic noise should be no more than 53 decibels during the day and 45 decibels during the night, above which there are adverse effects on health and sleep respectively.

The Defra Noise mapping indicates average noise levels in excess of 55 decibels during the day alongside the M1 and A5183.

For the purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan, and given the availability of mapping, 'low noise' is road noise averaging below 55 decibels during the day.

Defra data:

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/DefraDataDownload/?Mode=OGCPreview&mapService=https%3A%2F%2Fenvironment.data.gov.uk%2Fspatialdata%2Froad-noise-1den-england-round-3%2Fwms>

16. Policy RED 7, Paragraph 3.c): Is the settlement boundary defined anywhere?

This is the same as the extent of the built-up area referred to in question 13 above. Subject to your advice, we are happy to clarify as per our response to that question.

17. Policy RED 8, Paragraph 2: In what sense are proposals to be "accessible to the community" – in a physical sense or in the sense of being "open to the public". If the latter, how is this going to be secured?

The intention is that they are accessible in both the physical sense and being open and available to the public for use, although we note that would only be possible outside of school hours and subject to agreement with the school, perhaps through a condition attached to any planning permission.

18. Policy RED 8, Paragraph 3.c): In what sense are proposals to be "easily accessible to all" – in a physical sense or in the sense of being "open to the public". If the latter, how is this going to be secured?

This is meant in a physical sense.

19. Is Policy RED 9, Paragraph 7 intended to apply to all residential developments?

The intention is that this applies to any development leading to the creation of new homes, including the conversion and subdivision of existing homes. It is not meant to apply to existing homes which might be subject to proposals for extension (i.e.: householder extensions).

¹ WHO, 2018, Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region

20. Policy RED 10, Paragraph 2: Are “positive features” identified anywhere?

The Redbourn Design Code, at Section 3.1.8 (pages 32 – 45) identifies five character areas. The characteristics of the built environment that help define these areas are summarised in table format in that section. The Design Code doesn't use the term '*positive features*'. We suggest that the word '*positive*' could be removed from Paragraph 2 of Policy RED 10 and instead, potentially replaced with the word '*defining*'.