

1. What is a Local Plan and Why do we Need One?

- All Councils must, by law, have a Local Plan.
- The Local Plan is like a blueprint for future development in the District up to 2041.
- It will allow us to control where houses and businesses are built and very importantly, where they are not built.
- The Local Plan is also about parks and access to nature, schools, healthcare jobs and supporting sustainable transport such as cycle paths.
- It will help the District to tackle Climate Change and improve local biodiversity.
- The population is growing and living longer, with even more pressure on housing as a result.
- A shortage of housing is helping to drive up house prices - young people can no longer afford a first home and it is difficult for growing families and renters.
- Central Government official figures mean that we need to identify land to build 15,000 new homes up to 2041 (of this, land for 5,000 homes has already been found).
- The Local Plan prioritises building on previously developed land / brownfield sites. But the District is 81% Green Belt and there is not much brownfield land available locally.

Stage of Local Plan	Local Plan Timetable
Reg 18 Consultation	Jul - Sept 2023
Reg 19 Consultation	Jul - Sept 2024
Submission	Dec 2024
Examination	Dec 2024 - Nov 2025
Adoption	Dec 2025



2. The Challenges Without a New Local Plan

The existing Local Plan was adopted in 1994 - it is the second oldest in the country and needs to be replaced as soon as reasonably possible.

The Planning system is meant to be 'plan-led' -

- The Local Plan must set out where housing, schools, community facilities and employment land goes, and importantly where it does not.
- Decisions on planning applications 'must be made in accordance with the... plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise'.

Just recently there has been a huge rise in planning applications for sites in the Green Belt - 3,500+ homes including those at pre-application discussion or at appeal.

The Government has in recent years reduced protection of the Green Belt from housing development through ad hoc applications and appeals as has been cited by Government-appointed Planning Inspectors both in this District and elsewhere.

The Government has powers to take over Plan-making and has previously written to the Council saying that it may take over the Local Plan if we do not make progress as soon as reasonably possible. That would lead to a loss of local control and less opportunity for local knowledge and understanding to shape the Local Plan.



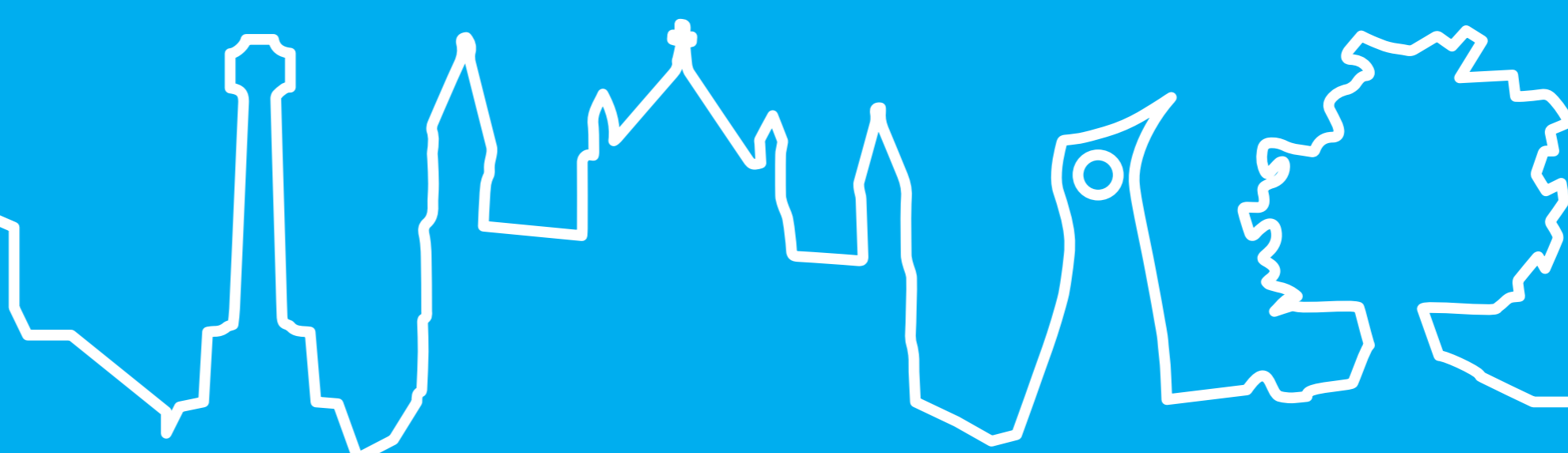
3. Key Community Benefits

- ✓ 15,000+ new homes built to the locally specified size, type and mix.
- ✓ 4,000 - 5,000 affordable homes.
- ✓ Building new schools: 8-10 Primary and 3-4 Secondary.
- ✓ A minimum of 25,000+ trees planted.
- ✓ Approximately 1½ times as much new and newly protected public Green Space as development land (equivalent to 2,000+ football pitches).
- ✓ New Country Parks – approximately 10 times the size of Verulamium Park (equivalent to 800 football pitches).
- ✓ Large Scale Solar Energy Generation at East Hemel Central (approx. 30-50 football pitches equivalent).
- ✓ Significant contributions (£millions) to help fund libraries, schools, local green spaces, bus routes etc. ('Section 106 funding').
- ✓ 30km+ of new / significantly enhanced Strategic Cycle Paths.
- ✓ Approximately 15,000-20,000 new local jobs.



4. Sites - 'Brownfield First'

- The Council has taken a 'brownfield first' approach to identifying development sites by prioritising previously developed land.
- The Local Plan seeks to make the most efficient use of land in the District - the Council has undertaken an extensive and rigorous search for brownfield /previously developed land within existing built-up areas.
- The approach has sought to 'leave no stone unturned' in the search for appropriate sites on brownfield land. The search has included potential previously developed land opportunities in the Green Belt.
- Allocating sites on brownfield previously developed land means that growth is as sustainable as possible. Development within larger settlements provides a more comprehensive range of services, employment, retail and other facilities, as well as better accessibility and connectivity by walking, cycling and public transport.
- The Local Plan allocates some garage courts and car parks as development sites. The Government's policy test is that these potential sites have a 'reasonable prospect' of being delivered at some point before 2041. These sites are therefore not about immediate or short-term delivery, but about what is appropriate by the middle of the 21st century. The allocation of a public car park as a site does not necessarily mean the loss of all parking provision. Design options could retain car parking by building on only part of the site, allowing car parking on the ground floor while building above, or introducing multi storey or underground parking.
- Where there are not enough brownfield sites it is necessary to meet the need by considering other available land; in St Albans District this includes looking at Green Belt land. National policy is clear that before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, it must be demonstrated that all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development have been fully examined.



5. Identifying Sites

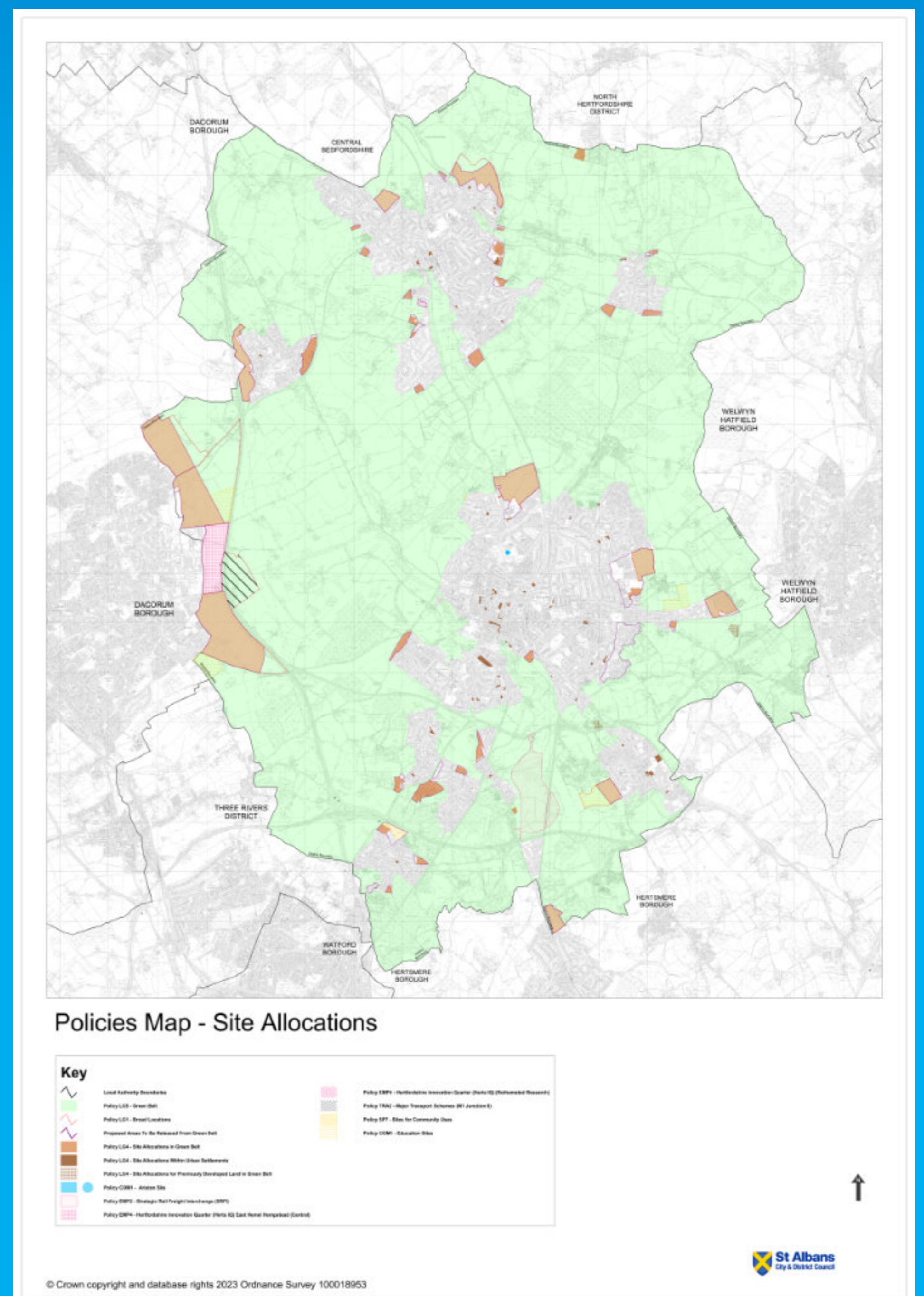
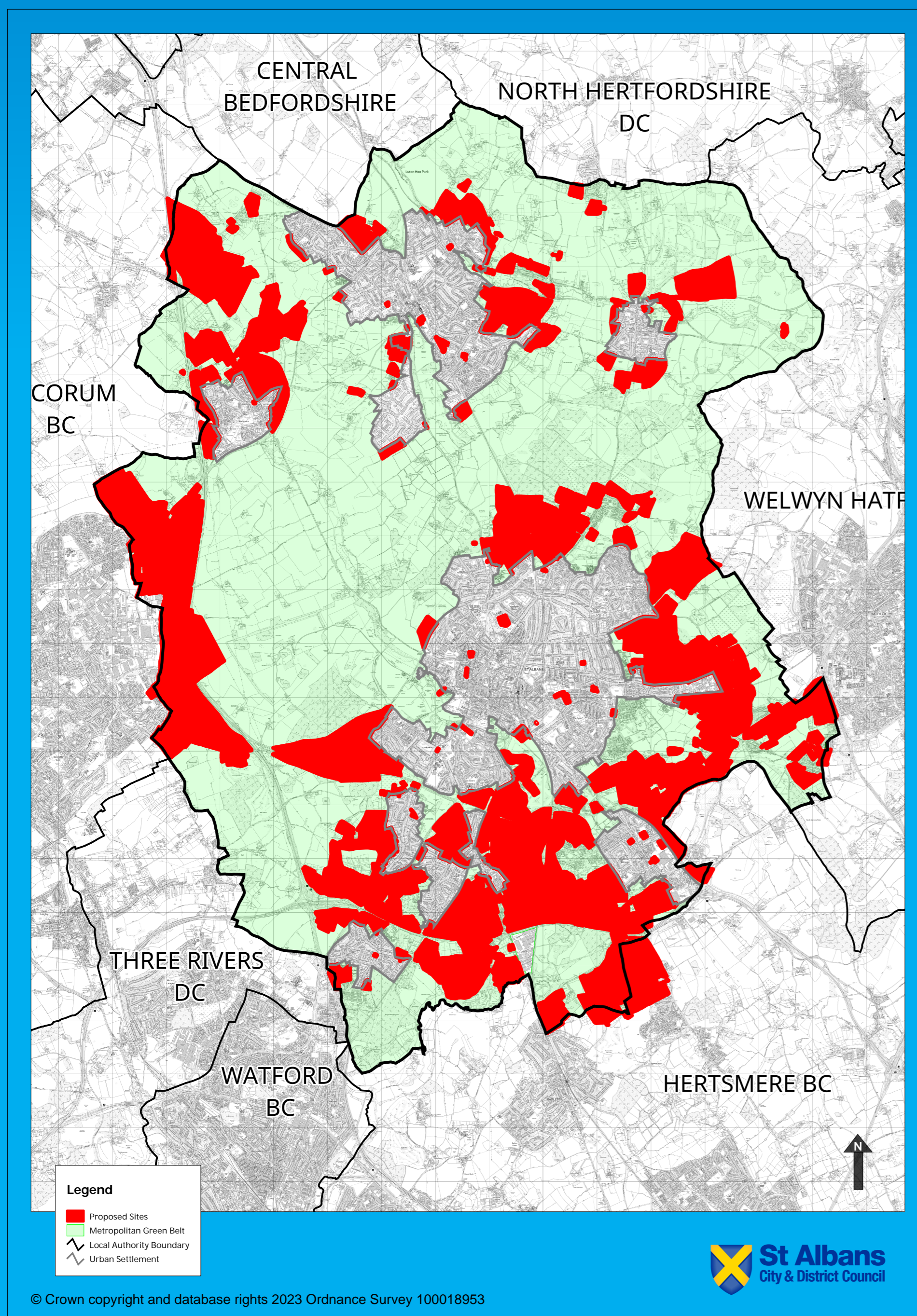
Several 'Calls for Sites' have been carried out in recent years - landowners were invited to put sites forward for consideration by the Council.

Many sites were put forward - the large majority in the Green Belt. The sites submitted are shown in red on the map below (left). The land submitted is well beyond the amount required to meet the District's growth requirements (the map shows enough land for 60,000+ new homes).

In comparison, the map below on the right shows the sites that have been put forward in the draft Local Plan for allocation.

Sites submitted by Landowners and Developers

Policies Map – Sites Only



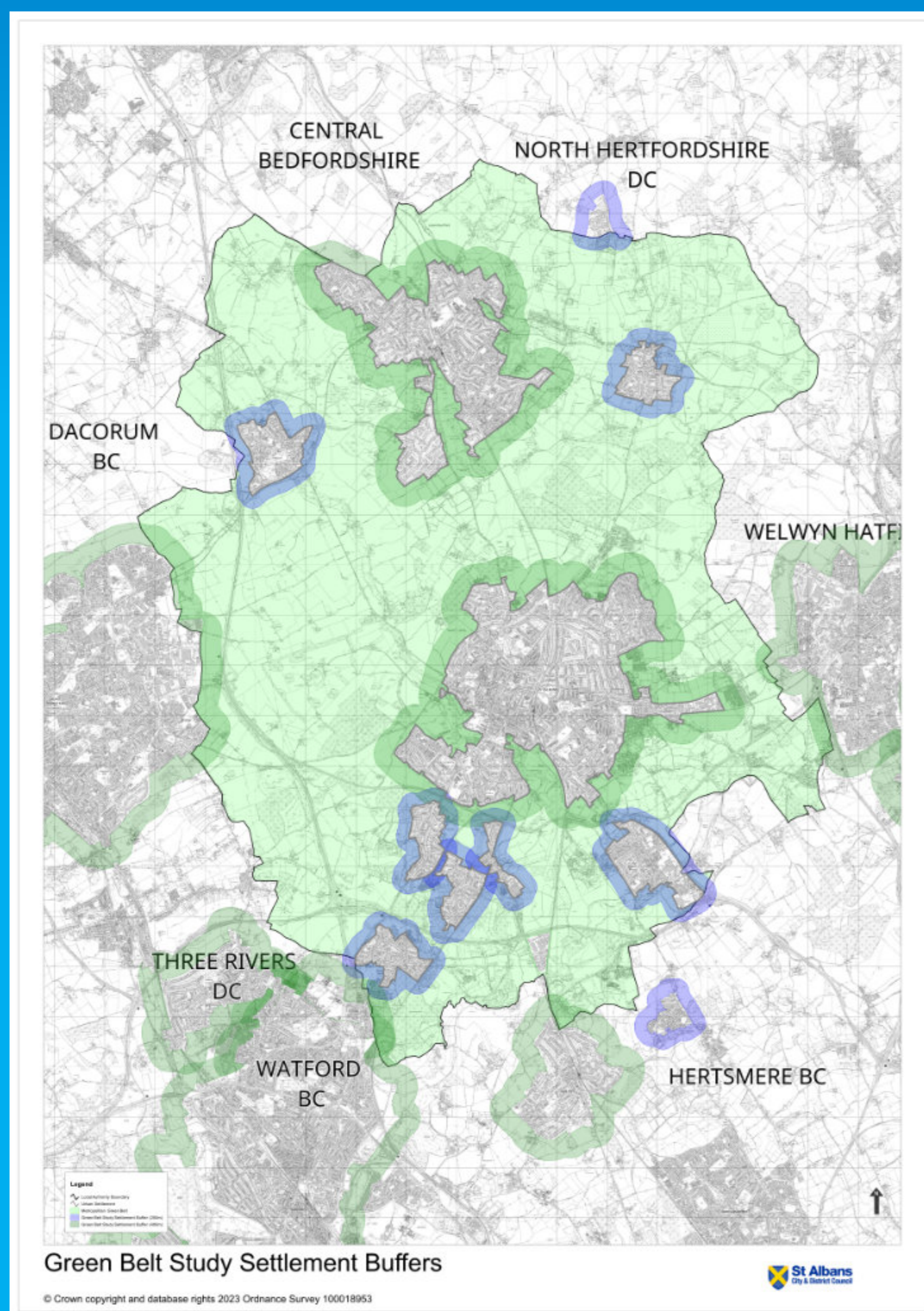
6.Green Belt Study

A Green Belt Study was prepared for the Council by independent consultants. The Study used a tried-and-tested approach to identify the most suitable and sustainable Green Belt locations through drawing Buffers around the main settlements.

Buffers identify locations that are adjacent to existing settlements. They are therefore more sustainable as they provide access to existing services and transport networks.

Buffers of 400m around towns, and 250m around villages were applied.

The Buffers are shown on the map below.



In total over 300 Green Belt sites were considered by the Study.

Sites that are not adjacent to existing urban areas / buffers were excluded because they:

- a) Do not contribute to a sustainable pattern of development, and
- b) Undermine the integrity of the Green Belt by creating holes within its fabric.

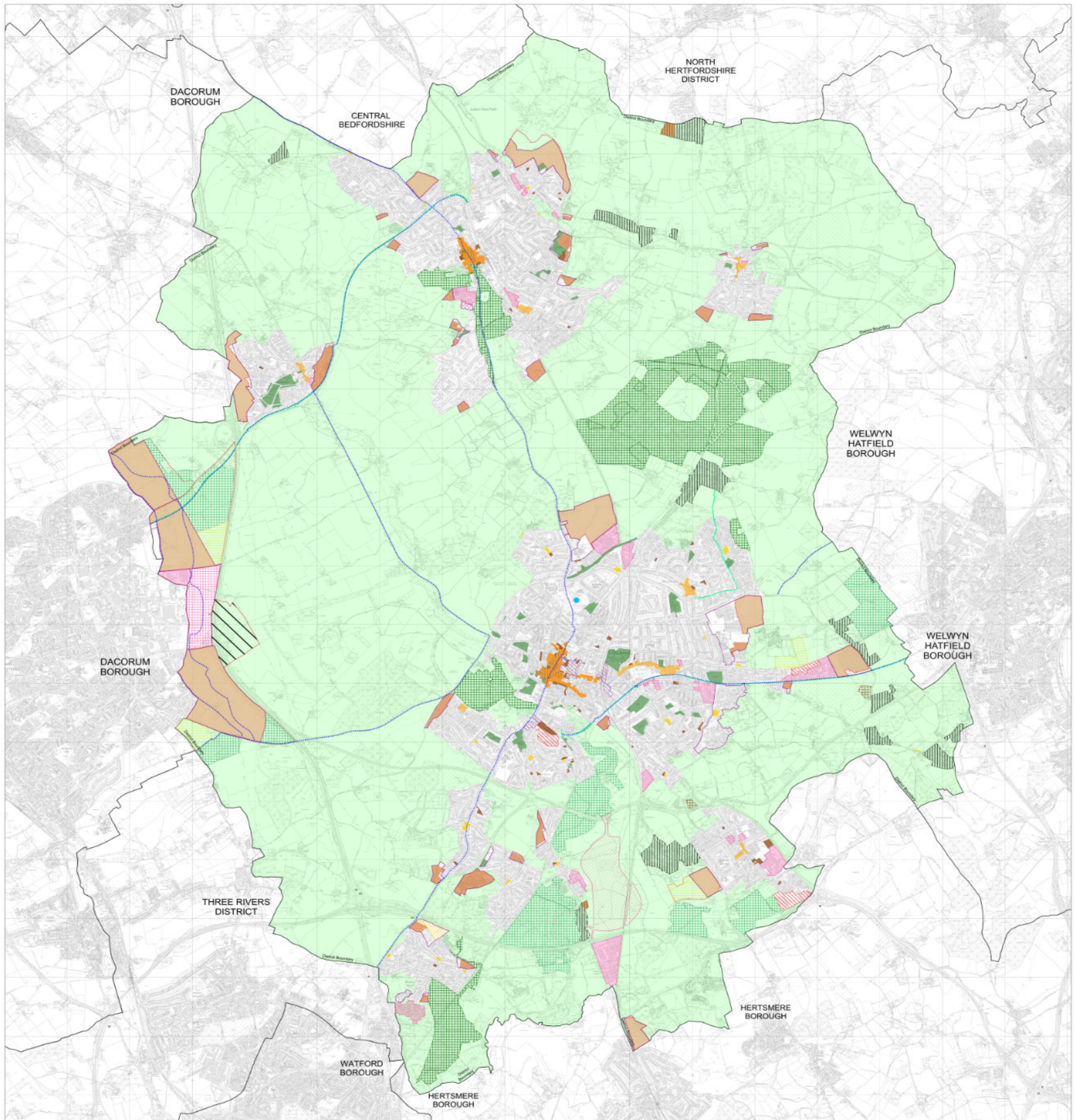
Sites located in Green Belt Settlement Buffers and assessed as performing less well were 'recommended for further consideration' by the Council – the great majority of these sites have been included in the draft Local Plan.

7. Site Selection

- Sites on Previously Developed Land (Brownfield) and sites in urban areas – enough for approximately 5,000 homes.
- The Green Belt Study identified areas that were ‘recommended for further consideration’. Nearly all these were accepted; a few were ruled out due to constraints such as flood risk, high levels of tree coverage, or other uses – e.g. country parks – enough for approximately 4,000 homes.
- The Hemel Garden Communities land delivers a very wide range of community benefits including 2 secondary schools, primary schools, around 8,000 jobs at Hertfordshire Enterprise Zone (Herts IQ), a new country park, large-scale sustainable transport improvements, large scale solar energy generation, and approximately 4,000 additional homes.
- Land in East St Albans delivers a wide range of community benefits including a secondary school, a primary school, new jobs, and significant sustainable transport improvements.
- Land West of London Colney delivers a wide range of community benefits including a secondary school, a primary school, new jobs, and a significant scale of sustainable transport improvements. (East St Albans + West of London Colney = approximately 1,000 additional homes).
- Land in North St Albans delivers a wide range of community benefits including a primary school and sustainable transport improvements.
- Land in North East Harpenden delivers a wide range of community benefits including a primary school, sustainable transport improvements, and links to Katherine Warington school (North St Albans + North East Harpenden = approximately 1,500 additional homes).
- NB: There is some complexity and cross-over of numbers.



8. Local Plan Policies Map



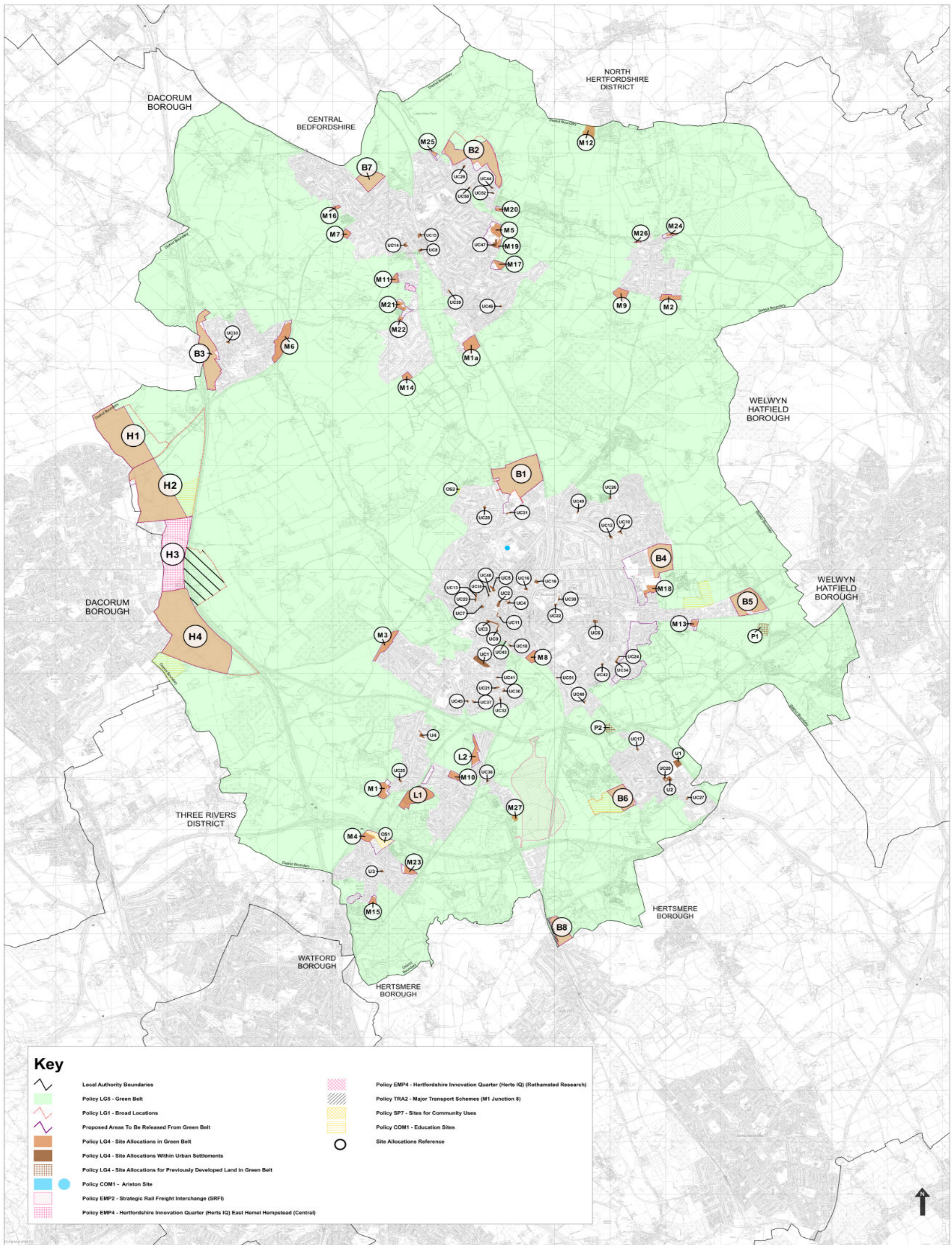
Policies Map

Key

	Local Authority Boundaries		Policy EMP3 - St Albans City Core Principal Office Location		Policy NEB2 - Local Green Spaces
	Policy LG5 - Green Belt		Policy EMP4 - Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter (Herts IQ) East Hemel Hempstead (Central)		Policy NEB4 - Significant Publicly Accessible Green Areas (Existing)
	Policy LG1 - Broad Locations		Policy EMP4 - Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter (Herts IQ) (Rothamsted Research)		Policy NEB4 - Significant Publicly Accessible Green Areas (Proposed)
	Proposed Areas To Be Released From Green Belt		Policy SP6 - City and Town Centres		Policy NEB4 - Significant Publicly Accessible Green Areas (Linear Green Spaces)
	Policy LG4 - Site Allocations in Green Belt		Policy SP6 - Local Centres		Policy SP7 - Sites for Community Uses
	Policy LG4 - Site Allocations Within Urban Settlements		Policy SP6 - Local Centres		Policy COM1 - Education Sites
	Policy LG4 - Site Allocations for Previously Developed Land in Green Belt		Policy TCR1 - Protecting Retail and Main Town Centre Uses		Policy LGB - Green Belt Settlements
	Policy COM1 - Ariston Site		Policy TCR3 - Out of Centre Retail Parks		
	Policy EMP1 - Protected Employment Areas		Policy TRA2 - Major Transport Schemes (M1 Junction 8)		
	Policy EMP2 - Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI)		Policy TRA2 - Major Transport Schemes (Proposed Key and Indicative Cycle and Footpath Routes)		



9. Site Allocations Map



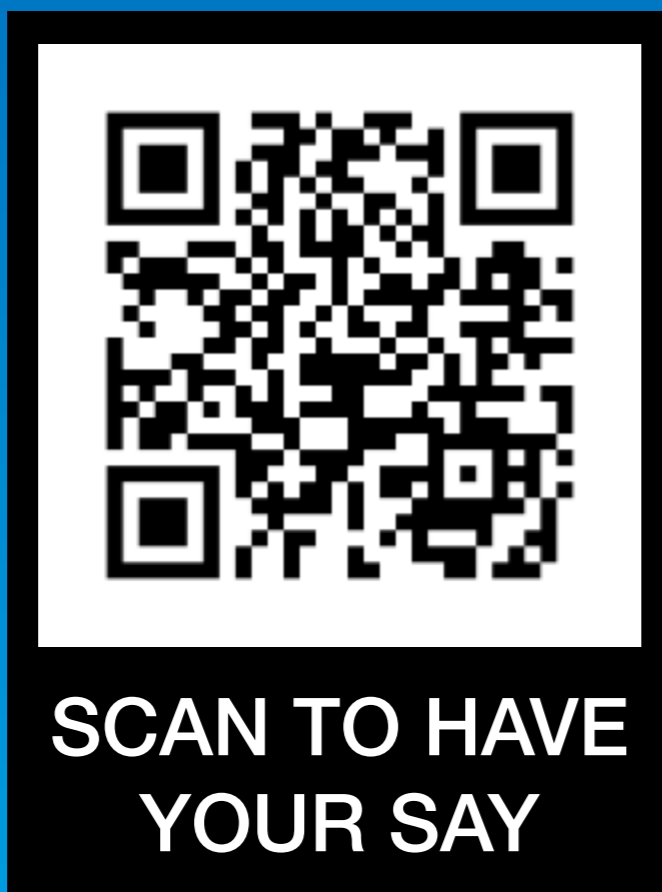
10. Consultation and Comment



The Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation runs until 25 September (5.00pm). The Council is seeking your comments. The best way to respond is online via the:

Quick Survey

www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/H1KS6T/



More detailed Questionnaire

<https://stalbans-consult.objective.co.uk/kse/event/37561>



Responses can also be sent by email to:

planning.policy@stalbans.gov.uk or post to Spatial Planning, St Albans City & District Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3JE

What happens next?

This Regulation 18 consultation contains policies and identifies sites from the studies done that we think have the greatest public benefit and cause least harm.

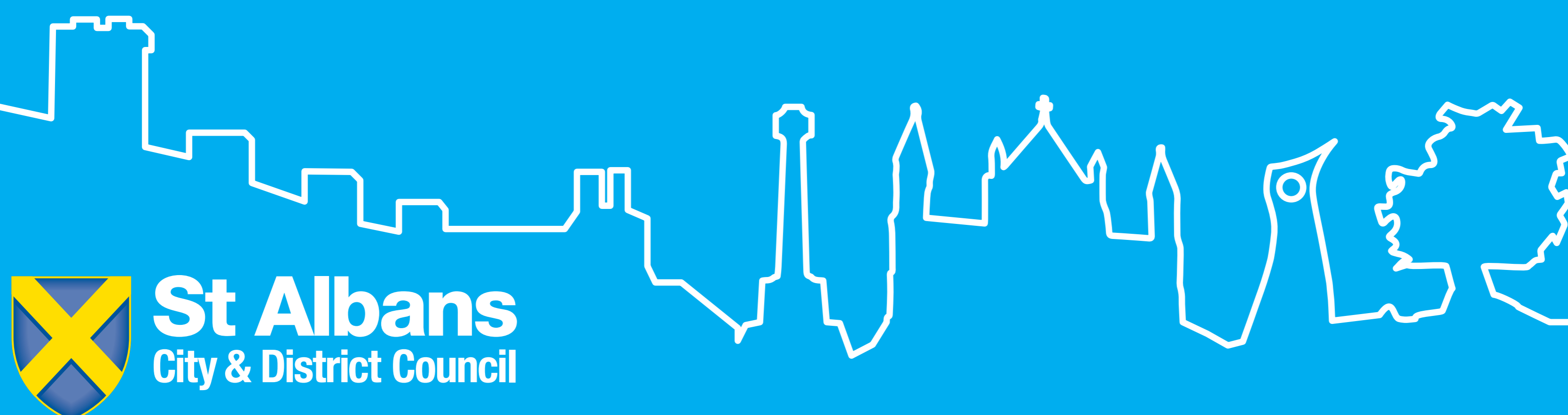
This is a genuine consultation and new and updated evidence will emerge.

The Council will consider all the responses received.

We are expecting to hear from local residents, community groups, businesses, infrastructure providers, developers and other organisations such as Hertfordshire County Council.

The responses will help to inform the next stage of the draft Local Plan (Regulation 19), anticipated in summer 2024. This will contain policies and specify the sites we plan to take forward and seek feedback. A planning inspector will then examine our draft plan on behalf of the Government to see if it complies with national policy and national regulations.

There is always change between Reg 18 and Reg 19 stages. This is your opportunity to give your views.



St Albans
City & District Council