

ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN STAGE 1 EXAMINATION HEARINGS

Chris Briggs' Opening Statement on behalf of the Council

1. The Council is very pleased to be presenting this Local Plan at these Examination Hearing sessions after a long gestation and considerable work by many participants. Delivery of a new Local Plan has been a top priority project for the Council for some time.
2. A cross-party Planning Policy Committee was created in September 2013 to progress the Local Plan in a public and transparent manner. There have been 51 Planning Policy Committee meetings since that time, as well as Cabinet and Full Council meetings, when formal decisions have been required. All have been in public and webcast from this Chamber.
3. The draft Local Plan 2020-2036 sets out the planning policies and proposals for the future development of the City and District of St Albans. It establishes the Council's long-term spatial planning strategy for delivering and managing development and infrastructure, and for environmental protection and enhancement, from 2020 to 2036. Overall, thousands of residents and stakeholders have positively contributed to the draft Plan's evolution. The Council is very grateful for the time and considered contributions of so many participants.
4. The Plan must and has had regard to the Government's national planning policy, principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In particular, the draft Plan is based on the Government's 'standard methodology' for assessing housing need. The Plan must be and is based on proportionate and justifiable evidence.

5. The Local Plan is accompanied by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This provides an assessment of the key infrastructure requirements to support planned new development identified in the Local Plan. The infrastructure categories include physical (road, walking/cycling, public transport), social (community facilities, schools, libraries) and green/blue infrastructure (open spaces, play areas, sustainable drainage). The Plan, the Broad Locations and the costs of associated infrastructure must be and have been shown to be viable and deliverable. Sustainability Appraisal has been a key part of the Local Plan's evolution throughout.
6. The draft Plan has met the requirements of the 'Duty to Cooperate' in respect of cross boundary strategic planning. The Council has engaged in an ongoing, active and constructive manner with all neighbouring and nearby authorities, and other key parties, on strategic planning matters. It continues to do so. Very significantly, none of the 'prescribed bodies' relevant for Duty to Cooperate considerations consider that the Duty to Cooperate has not been met.
7. I will now ask Matthew Reed QC to give a brief opening statement on behalf of the Council on issues of law.