

Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These are the Council FAQs as at the start of the consultation, which is intended to help people understand the Draft Local Plan. More may be added as the consultation progresses.

What is a Local Plan?

The Council is developing a new Draft Local Plan, which is like a blueprint for future development. It establishes the Council's long-term planning strategy for delivering and managing growth and infrastructure, for environmental and heritage protection and enhancement, up to 2041.

Government guidance requires that planning policies in Local Plans should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for housing (including affordable housing), infrastructure, community facilities and conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment.

Does St Albans already have a Local Plan?

Yes - the 1994 adopted Local Plan is here;
<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/district-local-plan-review-1994/District%20Local%20Plan%20Review%201994.pdf>

This is currently the second oldest Local Plan in England and needs to be replaced as soon as reasonably possible.

What is a Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation?

The Draft Local Plan has been prepared and we are now undertaking widespread public consultation; this is called the Regulation 18 stage.

This is an emerging Draft Plan, and people who live and work in the District, community groups and businesses are all encouraged to give their views. The feedback received will help shape the final proposals.

In simple terms, what is this Draft Local Plan addressing?

- Climate Change and improving biodiversity locally
- The shortage of housing helping drive up house prices - young people can no longer afford a first home and it is difficult for growing families and renters
- The population is growing and living longer
- Central Government's official housing figures - they have told us we need land to build 15,000 new homes by 2041 - about 5,000 homes are currently in the 'pipeline'

- Providing jobs, schools, GP surgeries, public transport, cycle paths, play areas, parks and access to nature
- Using previously developed brownfield sites as a top priority
- The District is 81% Green Belt and not much brownfield land is available
- Allowing us to control where houses and business are built and **very importantly**, where they are **not** built

Can brownfield land provide all the new homes that are needed?

Government figures require land for over 15,000 new homes to be identified (888 per annum on average) by 2041. The use of brownfield first (also called previously developed) land is a top priority and the Council has left no stone unturned looking for such sites. A thorough search for sites was carried out and many landowners were contacted. The Plan identifies brownfield land for around 5,000 new homes (one third of the supply).

What about the St Albans Climate Emergency?

The Council declared in 2019 that it recognises that there is a Climate Emergency and adopted its Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy in the same year. Combatting the Climate Emergency is a key objective and a theme running throughout the Local Plan. Chapter 2 of the Local Plan is called 'Climate Emergency' and promotes sustainable design, construction and building efficiency, renewable and low carbon energy and carbon offsetting. The Council is also promoting large scale solar power generation at East Hemel Central.

What will the Plan do about biodiversity?

The Council will protect and enhance the District's biodiversity and greenspaces and is requiring a Biodiversity Net Gain of 10% on all new development. Tree planting in both rural and urban locations is a priority for the Council. The District's chalk streams are a globally rare habitat that will be carefully protected and enhanced.

What will the Plan do about health and wellbeing?

Health is a key thread running through the Local Plan, from creating more children's play areas in new developments, to encouraging an active population by prioritising walking and cycling. There will also be new Country Parks in which to walk and relax; about ten times the size of Verulamium Park (or 800 football pitches).

What are some of the other key community benefits?

- 15,000+ Homes – locally required size, type, mix
- 4-5,000 affordable homes
- 3-4 Secondary schools and 8-10 Primary schools
- Trees planted – minimum 25,000+
- Approximately 1 and a half times as much new and newly protected public Green Space as development land (minimum 2,000+ football pitches in size)

- New Country Parks – approx. 10x the size of Verulamium Park (800 football pitches)
- High Quality Local Jobs – approx. 15-20,000
- Large Scale Solar Energy Generation at East Hemel Central (approx. 30-50 football pitches)
- Significant contributions (£millions) to local libraries, schools, local green spaces, bus routes etc. (S106)
- New/Significantly Enhanced Strategic Cycle Paths – 30km+

Will new development deliver the necessary new infrastructure e.g., schools, GP surgeries, transport improvements?

Yes - the new Plan will require new development to either provide facilities on site or provide financial contributions for provision offsite. For example, large housing sites will provide new secondary and primary schools on site as well as local play areas, tree planting and improved areas for biodiversity. They will provide financial contributions towards improved highways connections, footpaths, cyclepaths and improved existing GP surgery provision offsite.

What about school places?

The Plan requires the direct provision on site of 3-4 Secondary schools and 8-10 Primary schools, as well as £millions of financial contributions to expand and enhance existing schools. The schools and funding identified as required and to be delivered in the Plan at this stage would provide for all the additional school capacity required.

Will there be further technical work between now and the next version of the draft Local Plan in summer 2024?

Yes – as well as taking on board the consultation responses, there will be significant new technical work undertaken over the next year. Some of this will be directly informed by consultation responses, including from bodies such as Hertfordshire County Council, National Highways, the Environment Agency etc. Key work will include:

Updated South West Herts Economy Study

Updated South West Herts Local Housing Needs Assessment

Transport Impact Assessments

Heritage Impact Assessments

Whole Plan Viability

Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Is there really likely to be change between this draft Plan and the updated version scheduled for summer 2024?

Yes – There is always significant change between the Regulation 18 (summer 2023) and Regulation 19 (summer 2024) draft Local Plans. This is a genuine consultation and new and updated evidence will emerge from comments made.

The change may be particularly significant in current circumstances because:

New 2021 Census based household projections are due in early 2024

The Government, in responding to challenge from the Council, has confirmed that it will 'review the approach' to housing numbers in national policy

Likely other Government changes to national policy

Potential expansion of the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Why should I get involved?

The new Local Plan will play an important role in managing growth and helping to shape what the area looks like. Change is inevitable, but it needs to be carried out carefully and thoughtfully. This consultation is an opportunity for people to influence the future of the District.

How do I learn more?

- View the short [explanatory video](#)
- Take part in the five minute, six question [Quick Survey](#)
- View the [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- Provide detailed feedback online through the [Questionnaire](#)
- Open the documents:
 - [Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan](#)
 - [Draft Site Allocations](#)
 - [Draft Policies Map](#)
 - [Evidence Base and Supporting Documents](#)

I want to give detailed feedback through the questionnaire, what kind of response is normally most useful?

Local Plans are based primarily on evidence and therefore feedback/responses that contain or reference evidence are normally the most useful. Support for, or objections to, elements of the Local Plan should contain a clear expression of what is being supported or objected to and what is the evidence for that support or objection.

An example of supporting a draft policy with evidence might be the owner of a site that is allocated for development who submits evidence to show a clear intention to develop the site for the allocated purpose.

An example of objecting to a draft policy with evidence could be the trustee of a charity involved with a site that has been allocated for development who submits evidence showing there is a legal agreement that the site must only be used for a community use in perpetuity. This would potentially rule out the site from being developed for the purpose allocated in the draft Local Plan.

What happens next?

This is a table setting out the stages of the Local Plan, starting with where we are now, set in bold;

Stage of Local Plan	Dates
Regulation 18 consultation – Draft Local Plan	July – September 2023
Regulation 19 publication consultation – Final Draft	July – September 2024

Local Plan	
Submission of Local Plan to Government	December 2024
Examination of Local Plan by Government appointed Planning Inspector	December 2024 – November 2025
Adoption - when the Local Plan becomes legally binding	December 2025