

## Public Consultation on new documents summer 2025

I have been pleased to contribute consultation responses at many stages of the development of the plan proposals. I was however surprised to see the latest documents released or generated only at this stage. I shall keep my comments very summary.

Clearly the documents are drafted with technical readers in mind, not interpreted for general members of the public. That's fine up to a point, but not for the one or two documents that so lack lay interpretive context, as to make consultation meaningless other than for the cognoscenti.

1. One of my comments at an earlier stage of consultation was an observation that National Highways had said that they had noted that the transport modelling had not yet been done. Now that some has been done, I would only ask whether National Highways have said they are content with the exercise and the outcome? I think I can see from some of the most recent documentation, that there have been meetings with National Highways, but short of an explicit answer to that request for assurance.

I anticipate that Inspectors will want an unambiguous answer to that question.

2. The transport modelling now revealed does not seem to address the vexed and oft repeated concerns about large new developments generating focussed peak commuter car overburdens at and around the St Albans main rail station, serving commuting to London ( including nearby roads whose parking is often driven by commuter excesses ).

Perhaps there is an answer somewhere in the blizzard of detail, but it needs to be clearly spelled out for the residents and general public.

3. I noted that at least one of the documents said that the anticipated number of new jobs at the eastern fringe of the new Hemel / St Albans development, has been cut by 50 percent (from 8,000 to 4,000). Perhaps this has been said within the planning fraternity for many months, but it has not been revealed to the general public, as far as I can see. To my mind that prompts two most important questions:

- Will the plan still satisfy a reasonable expectation of new job numbers, overall?
- Will the 4,000 people now without prospects of the missing jobs, have to commute (perhaps to St Albans, perhaps to London etc) and has that excess commuting been factored into the 'modelling'?

4. I noted also that at one point a document says (hopes) that people will transfer from car journeys to other modes of transport – to the extent of 10%. I had come across that vague aspirational 'planner-think' over the years, and whenever I had the opportunity, I challenged whether there was any evidence to suggest this was deliverable with current incentives and non-coercive appetites of leaders. In very general terms, responses such as there were, have been what I might call 'enhanced aspirations' and no more.

Hence my question is whether the Plan is intended to go forward on the basis of modelling for 'aspiration'. Or likely reality?

5. One of the documents says that the central part of St Albans has an increased 'propensity' to use train transport, over other parts of the district. A document also seemed to hope that this might rub off on other areas. This is certainly in the 'weak aspiration' category.

6. It also prompts me to observe that 'propensity to use trains' is a near-nonsense. It is where there is a train station, and the best paid jobs are in London which is best reached by train. I cannot imagine how planner speak has concocted to derive a 'propensity to use trains' when compared to other places where there are not train stations.

But my question would be whether the model at any level has made quantified estimates of the extent to which that 'propensity' will have worn off on others, and over what period?