

Examination of the St Albans City and District Local Plan Matters, Issues and Questions for Stage 2

**Statement on behalf of the owners of land at Burston
Nurseries & Burston Garden Centre**

(Representor ID – 153)

Matter 7 – Issue 7 – How Wood Site Allocations

Policy L1 – Burston Nurseries, North Orbital Road, St Albans, AL2 2DS

DLA Ref: 25/552

October 2025

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is submitted on behalf of Burston Nurseries and Burston Garden Centre – Burston Nurseries, North Orbital Road, St Albans, AL2 2DS ('the Site'). Representations have been made to Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 draft Local Plan consultations promoting the allocation of the Site for residential purposes with the retention of Burston Garden Centre and other employment generating and supporting uses.
- 1.2 This statement provides a response to the Inspectors' questions Q1-Q6, raised in respect of Policy L1 (Burston Nurseries) under Matter 7 (residential site allocations) and Issue 7 (How Wood Site Allocations).
- 1.3 The owners of land at Burston Nurseries support the proposed allocation of the site for residential purposes. Pre-application feedback has been obtained from both St Albans & District Council and Herts Highways, demonstrating the owner's commitment to delivering this site for residential development.

2.0 Question 1 – What is the site boundary based on and is it justified and effective?

- 2.1 The boundary for Site L1 is drawn around land largely owned by Burston Nurseries and Burston Garden Centre.
- 2.2 The Site exhibits strong urban characteristics that are visually noticeable from both an aerial perspective and at ground level. This stems from the site's scale of existing commercial development and hardstanding and the ongoing development of the retirement village, as well as its proximity to existing settlements of How Wood, Chiswell Green and pockets of residential development that lie to the south off Lye Lane, The Laurels and Spielplatz.
- 2.3 In addition, it is contained by large areas of mature woodlands and vegetation along its boundaries, especially where it abuts Copsewood, Birch Wood and How Wood County Wildlife Sites. A bridleway is under construction alongside the retirement development (under LPA Ref: 5/2020/3022) along the full length of the southern boundary (from east to west), connecting the existing bridleway (St Stephen 003) to Lye Lane. This is an additional physical feature that will assist in formalising what is already considered to be a boundary that is both justified and effective.

3.0 Question 2 – What is the justification for the proposed alteration to the Green Belt boundary? Is the proposed boundary alteration consistent with paragraph 148 e) and f) of the Framework, which state that Plans should be able to demonstrate that boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the Plan period, and, define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent?

- 3.1 The Council has already set out the exceptional circumstances that necessitate changes to the Green Belt boundary. In summary, there is a high level of housing need that has largely gone unmet since the adoption of the last Local Plan in 1994 and there is demonstrably insufficient land within the urban areas to meet this need. Green Belt land inevitably needs to be released and it is then a question of which are the least harmful and most appropriate sites for release.
- 3.2 Land at Burston Nurseries was recommended for consideration through the Green Belt Review. Arup's conclusion in respect of parcel SA-130 was that its release was *"unlikely to significantly harm the performance of the wider Green Belt"*.
- 3.3 With regard to the impact to Green Belt boundary strength, the new boundary is considered to be both readily recognisable and permanent for the following reasons:
- A405 (North Orbital) is located along a section of the northern boundary.

- The remaining length of the north/north-west boundary will be contained by existing landscaping features and a new residential development at Copsewood that was approved for up to 190 dwellings (LPA Ref: 5/2023/0983).
- Birch Wood and How Wood County Wildlife provide a large area (approx. 7.5ha) of tree coverage along the eastern and part of the southern boundaries enclosing the site.
- The remaining part of the southern boundary is contained by mature tree lines, hedgerows and a copse. This is reinforced by the introduction of a multi-purpose bridleway that is currently under construction as part of the retirement development, which will enhance existing physical features.

3.4 In light of the above, the new Green Belt boundary will consist of established physical features that are readily recognisable and are likely to be permanent in accordance with paragraph 148 (f). The Green Belt boundary will therefore not need to be altered at the end of the Plan period.

4.0 Question 3 – Do the exceptional circumstances exist to justify amending the Green Belt boundary in this location?

4.1 Our response to this question is covered above – Green Belt land is required to meet housing needs and this site has been identified as being capable of release without harming the wider Green Belt.

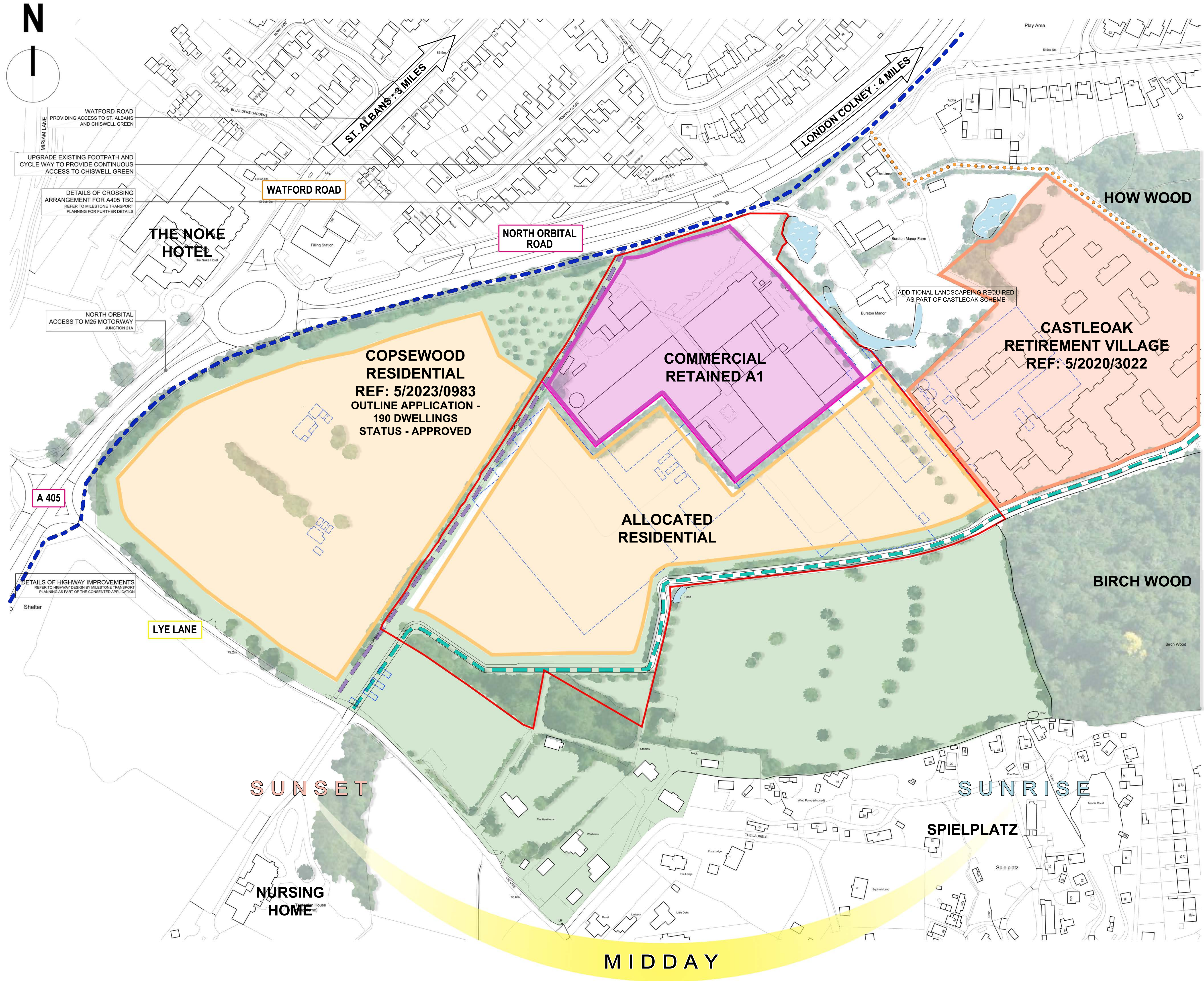
5.0 Question 4 – How have the mix of uses been established and how will development proposals come forward in a coordinated and coherent manner, taking into account any existing planning permissions on the site?

5.1 The landowners will retain the commercial and retail offering at the garden centre complex, thus safeguarding employment and providing an opportunity for further investment. Residents living in the proposed dwellings on the site will have access to the extensive facilities offered by the garden centre, creating a sustainable neighbourhood. The café will continue to offer a focal point and meeting place for existing and future residents.

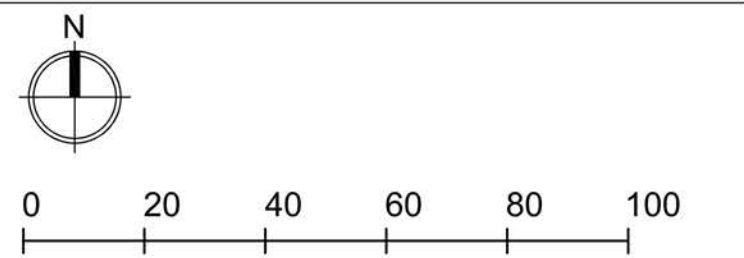
5.2 The existing permission (LPA Ref: 5/2020/3022) for assisted living apartments, bungalows and community facilities will sit comfortably alongside the allocation given the same use. The bridleway under construction has also been incorporated into the initial masterplan for the site to ensure there is connectivity between existing and proposed developments.

- 5.3 Access into the site is currently via an uncontrolled junction from the A405, serving Burston Garden Centre and Burston Nurseries. The existing access has consent to be converted into a signalised junction with a new internal road known as “The Avenue”, which will serve all existing and proposed uses (including the retirement village and allocation). Initial pre-application feedback from Herts County Council Highways confirms that this is an acceptable arrangement to serve all uses.
- 5.4 Appendix 1 illustrates the mix of established uses and permissions surrounding the allocation.
- 6.0 Question 5 – How has the effect of development on the setting of designated heritage assets been considered, having particular regard to the Grade II* listed Burston Manor House?**
- 6.1 The setting of the listed building to the south-west is enclosed by various structures associated with the Burston Nurseries. The allocation provides an opportunity to remove utilitarian buildings of limited quality and interest, and the development of a landscaped setting for a residential scheme, that will provide an additional buffer to the setting of the listed building. This was considered as a benefit in the Council’s Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA).
- 6.2 In approving the retirement village to the south-east of the listed building, the Inspector noted that the remaining views of woodland to the east and south-east of the site made a minor positive contribution in evidential and historical terms to the setting of the heritage assets. It was concluded that the proposal would have a low to moderate level of less than substantial harm on the setting, and significance, of the listed buildings, and was not deemed to be a sufficient barrier to approval for residential development in this location.
- 6.3 In light of the above, the proposal would be likely to result in less than substantial harm to the setting of the listed buildings, and any impact would be explored through a Heritage Statement submitted with a planning application.
- 7.0 Question 6 – Is Policy L1 justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy? If not, what modifications are required to make the Plan sound?**
- 7.1 The owners of land at Burston Garden Centre and Burston Nurseries support the allocation of site L1 in the draft Local Plan. With reference to Section 5 of our previous representations made in relation to the St Albans Draft Local Plan 2041 Regulation 19 Consultation, the requirements of the policy are considered to be justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy.

Appendix 1 – Indicative Land Use Masterplan submitted during the Regulation 19 Consultation



Notes
Figured dimensions to be used in preference to scaled.
The Contractor is to check all site dimensions and setting-out and obtain the Architect's instructions in respect of any discrepancy revealed before work is put in hand.
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Subject to survey.
Subject to detail design and planning.



SITE AREA - 87715m² (8.77ha)
TBC
— SITE AREA

- GREEN BUFFER
- BRIDLEWAY (PROPOSED) PERMITTED PURSUANT TO PP/2020/3022
- EXISTING BRIDLEWAY
- EXISTING CYCLEWAY
- EXISTING PROW

- RESIDENTIAL
- RETIREMENT VILLAGE
- RETAIL A1

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Rev.	Date	Details
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Project:
**Burston Nurseries,
North Orbital Road,
St Albans,
AL2 2DS**

Content:
**Indicative Land Use Master Plan
For Regulation 19 Consultation**

Scale:
1:1250@A1
North:
Date:
OCT24
Drawn:
TH
Rev:
-

BN/24/L02

**Wakelin Associates
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