

St. Albans City & District Local Plan Examination

Stage 1 Hearings

Matter 1: Issue 1 Duty to Co-operate

Further Consultation

Response by CPRE Hertfordshire – the countryside charity

June 2025

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1. This note has been prepared by Jed Griffiths MA DipTP FRTPI (“the consultant”) on behalf of CPRE Hertfordshire – the countryside charity (CPREH). It has been compiled in response to an invitation by the Examination Inspectors to respond to further information produced by the Council on the Duty to Co-operate. Details are set out in Examination Documents SADC/ED74 to SADC/ED74E.
 2. The consultant attended the hearing session on 29th April 2025 and made representations about the Duty to Co-operate on behalf of CPREH. Having studied the additional Examination Documents, there is nothing in them which would cause CPREH to change its earlier representations.
 3. In response to the consultation, CPREH welcomes the additional information summarised in the Addendum (SADC/ED74). It reinforces the case made by the Council at the Stage 1 Hearing Sessions, that it had done everything possible to discharge its duties according to the Local Plan Regulations. The responses from other local planning authorities confirm that view and are supportive of the Regulation 18 draft. Of particular note is the correspondence in Appendix 1 from adjacent authorities, such as Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, who are not in the South West Hertfordshire group. With these authorities, the Duty to Co-operate is not the issue – the primary concerns are with site allocations, transport coordination, and other cross-boundary spatial concerns. These are more appropriately dealt with at Stage 2 of the Examination.
 4. Examination Documents ED74B and ED784C show that the Council is regularly engaged with the County Council and the nine District and Borough Councils in

the Hertfordshire Planning Group (HPG). From the notes, it is clear that across the county there is a mutual understanding of the key strategic planning issues to be addressed in the future iterations of development plans.

5. With regards to ED74D and ED74E, there is evidence that the Council engaged in the South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan (JSP). As expressed at the Stage 1 hearings, CPREH was disappointed with the lack of progress on the project since the autumn of 2023. There is considerable uncertainty about the future for strategic planning in the area, which will only be resolved by the restructuring of local government in Hertfordshire. The current impasse is not the fault of the City & District of St. Albans. It should not be a showstopper.
6. In conclusion, the Inspectors are urged to consider the words of Mr Paul Shadarevian KC, which are reproduced at paragraph 1.2 of ED74A. In the extract, he stresses the need “to maintain a sense of proportion” in examining the extent to which the Duty to Co-operate has been discharged by the Council. CPREH endorse that point and hope that the Inspectors can now proceed with confidence to make arrangements for Stage 2 of the Examination.

Jed Griffiths MA DipTP FRTPI

Hertford

9th June 2025