

Marlborough House, 18 Upper
Marlborough Road, AL1 3UT

Hearing Statement – Matter 12

Boyer

Prepared on behalf of TT Group | October 25

REPORT CONTROL

Project:	Marlborough House, 18 Upper Marlborough Road, AL1 3UT
Client:	TT Group
Reference:	25.5075
Document and revision number	Document No. IMS-F-18, Revision 3
File Origin:	Click to add file location.
Primary Author	ZC
Checked By:	JC

Issue	Date	Status	Checked by
01	14/10/2025	Draft	JC
02	16/10/2025	Final	JC

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Matter 12 – Design Standards and The Historic Environment	4
3. Conclusion	14

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Boyer Planning Ltd ('Boyer') on behalf of our client, TT Group ('TTG'), in relation to Stage 2 of the Examination of the Draft St Albans Local Plan Regulation 19 Publication Version (September 2024) ('Draft Local Plan').
- 1.2 The representations contained within this Hearing Statement are made in the context of TTG's land interests within the District, namely the existing vacant office building at Marlborough House, 18 Upper Marlborough Road, St Albans, AL1 3UT.
- 1.3 This Hearing Statement does not seek to rehearse those representations previously submitted on behalf of TTG at Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 stages, Stage 1 of the Examination of the Draft Local Plan, or those other Matters, Issues and Questions at Stage 2 of the Examination in Public.
- 1.4 This Hearing Statement responds directly to those Issues and Questions raised by the Inspectors in relation to Matter 12 (Design Standards and The Historic Environment).

2. MATTER 12 – DESIGN STANDARDS AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Issue 1 – Design Standards

Q1: Are Policies SP12 and DES1–DES8 positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy?

- 2.1 Given that SACDC are a constrained authority in which approximately 82% of the district comprises Green Belt land, and as the Draft Local Plan seeks to allocate Green Belt land in order to meet 65% of the identified housing needs, SACDC should ensure that the wording of their design policies are sufficiently flexible having regard to the land constraints faced by the District, in order to meet their housing needs. The NPPF is clear that where local authorities are experiencing high housing need and a lack of suitable land for accommodating this need, planning policies in relation to design should not be used to restrict densities.
- 2.2 TTG assert that Policies DES1-DES8 of the Draft Local Plan are not positively prepared, justified, effective or consistent with national policy.
- 2.3 Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023) ('NPPF') requires that planning policies support development that makes efficient use of land, taking account of identified needs and the availability of suitable land to meet these needs, and the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting, or of promoting regeneration and change should also be taken into account.
- 2.4 The NPPF is clear that the efficient use of land to meet housing needs is intrinsically linked to achieving appropriate densities, with planning policies required to avoid homes being built at low densities and to promote increased densities in city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport (paragraph 129).
- 2.5 Although it is acknowledged there are some instances where significant uplifts in density will be inappropriate where they would be wholly out of character of the existing area, paragraph 130 of the NPPF states that such circumstances should be evidenced through an authority-wide design code. It is noted that no such design code has been prepared by SACDC.
- 2.6 Furthermore, paragraph 135(c) of the NPPF sets out that while planning policies should ensure developments are sympathetic to the surrounding built environment, planning policies should not prevent or discourage appropriate innovation or change including increased densities. Paragraph 135(e) adds that planning policies should ensure that development optimises the potential of a site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development.
- 2.7 In this context, whilst the Council's intention to secure high-quality design is supported, it is contended that Policies DES1-DES8 are not consistent with national policy which also places significant emphasis on meeting development needs through the efficient use land, including supporting opportunities to significantly increase densities where appropriate. By contrast,

Policies DES1-DES8 are unduly prescriptive and fail to provide adequate flexibility to enable the efficient use of land and the increase in density.

- 2.8 Policies DES1-DES8 are also not effective, with those requirements of Policies DES1, DES3 and DES5 either requiring proposals to respond to its context, taking into account the local distinctiveness of an area, in relation to its scale, form, massing, setting, height, character and building line or adhere to strict separation distances, will greatly restrict opportunities to achieve appropriate densification, and thus meet housing need through the efficient use of land.
- 2.9 Ultimately the emphasis placed on reflecting the local context in relation to height, scale and massing (Policy DES1(b)) will not allow uplifts in density. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF suggests that significant uplifts in average density may be inappropriate if the resulting built form would be wholly out of character with the existing area. However, Policy DES1 suggest that any departure from the existing character would be inappropriate, and only those schemes that responds positively to its context in relation to scale, form, massing, setting, height, character and building line will be supported.
- 2.10 Furthermore, Policy DES3 requires development to be of the most appropriate form and land use for the site, having regard to site context and constraints, whilst Policy DES5 stipulates specific separation distances. As explored in detail in our responses to Matter 12, Issue 1, Questions 3 and 5 (below), it is contended that these requirements will have the cumulative effect of constraining the efficient use of land.
- 2.11 It is TTG's position that Policy DES1 only reflects paragraph 128(d) of the NPPF, in respect of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting and does not reflect the overarching requirement to make efficient use of land. TTG therefore contend that Policy DES1 be amended as below:

New development should:

- a) Be of a layout that takes account of the character and pattern of development in the locality while optimising the development potential of the site and avoids avoiding prejudicing the future development potential of adjacent sites;*
- b) Respond positively to its context, taking into account the local distinctiveness of an area, in relation to its scale, form, massing, setting, height, character and building line, while allowing for innovative and higher-density design where appropriate;*
- c) Demonstrate an inclusive approach that provides for a diverse community including people with disabilities, and be adaptable for changing needs over time;*
- d) Be designed to minimise the likelihood of crime and antisocial behaviour;*
- e) Use high quality materials with good long-term weathering characteristics;*
- f) Provide high quality detailing that adds to the visual interest and distinctiveness of the building;*

- g) *Provide active frontages to the ground floor of buildings where appropriate, which interact with and animate the surrounding areas and are visually interesting;*
- h) *Be designed to provide opportunities for encouraging physical activity where appropriate; and*
- i) *Be set a minimum of 1m from the property / party boundary above ground floor level, where it would otherwise result in an undesirable terracing effects, while allowing flexibility where site context, design quality, or higher-density development warrants a different approach; and*
- j) *Optimise the use of land, ensuring that development makes efficient use of urban sites, supports gentle densification where appropriate, and contributes positively to local character and the quality of the public realm.*

- 2.12 Our detailed comments on Policies DES3 and DES5 are detailed in response to Questions 3 and 5 (below), however it is contended that Policies DES1-DES8 are not positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy, as they adopt an overly rigid approach to design that conflicts with the NPPF.
- 2.13 The NPPF (paragraphs 128-135) requires local plans to support efficient land use, optimise development potential, and encourage design innovation and gentle densification. However, Policies DES1-DES8 focus on preserving existing character, scale, and form, without balancing this against the need to make efficient use of the limited land within the district or deliver higher-density, design-led development.
- 2.14 This prescriptive approach is not justified as it risks constraining development opportunities on both allocated and brownfield sites, undermining the Council's 'brownfield first' strategy and its ability to meet housing needs within a district that is 82% Green Belt. This will also inhibit the ability of the Draft Local Plan to effectively meet its housing needs over the Plan period.
- 2.15 Consequently, the cumulative effect of Policies SP12 and DES1–DES8 is to inhibit flexibility and innovation, making them inconsistent with the NPPF's requirement for positively prepared and effective planning policies that respond to local constraints and housing objectives. Therefore, TTG contend that Policies DES1-DES8 are unsound.

Q3: What is the density requirement in Policy DES3 based on? Is it justified and will it be effective in St Albans?

- 2.16 Chapter 11 of the NPPF relates to making effective use of land and paragraph 123 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses. As set out above, in response to Question 1, paragraphs 128-135 of the NPPF emphasise that planning policies should seek to achieve appropriate densities to make effective use of land.

- 2.17 Paragraph 129 of the NPPF sets out that, where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is important that planning policies avoid homes being built at low densities and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site. Paragraph 129(a) expands to state that, in these circumstances, policies should optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible. This should include the use of minimum density standards for city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport.
- 2.18 Paragraph 129(a) also states that these standards should seek a significant uplift in the average density of residential development within these areas, unless there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate. In the context of SACDC, which has a lack of available supply of land for housing due to 82% of the District being designated Green Belt land, an increase in density above that of the existing context alone should not be considered to be a strong reason not to support proposals that would result in an uplift in residential density.
- 2.19 Policy DES3 requires a minimum density of 40 dwellings per hectare ('dph') (or at least the existing site density if higher). However, this density standard is not supported by robust evidence as there is no justification for the suggested density of 40dph set out within the Draft Local Plan background documents.
- 2.20 The Council have not prepared an authority-wide design code, despite this being a requirement set out in paragraph 130 of the NPPF, nor have they based this density figure on existing densities for specific character areas. The Strategic Local Plan Background Note on Residential Density is dated to 2014 and was based on the densities of (at that time) recent major residential development, rather than setting out appropriate densities based on area-based character assessments, design guides & codes, and masterplans as specified at paragraph 129 of the NPPF. Therefore, there is no evidence to justify the Council's approach to setting this minimum density figure.
- 2.21 The standard approach to density currently taken within Policy DES3 is not consistent with national policy, which makes clear at paragraph 129 that area-based character assessments, design guides and codes, and masterplans should be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places. Paragraph 133 of the NPPF expands upon this point to state that all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes and their geographic coverage, level of detail, and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place, and which should allow a suitable degree of variety.
- 2.22 SACDC is a diverse authority incorporating low density greenfield and rural land, alongside urban city and town centres which should accommodate higher density development. Whilst the current wording of Policy DES3 sets out that site capacity should be optimised within city and town centre sites, density targets should be more explicitly worded, based on the design guide/code and character assessments undertaken for each area. The current standard of 40dph does not reflect the differing character areas across the District. Policy DES3 also sets out that densities should achieve at least the existing site context if higher than 40dph,

however this is not considered sufficiently ambitious in order to make the most efficient use of land, in accordance with national policy aims.

- 2.23 Furthermore, Policy DES3 is undermined by other design and amenity requirements that would limit the ability to achieve it in practice. Policies DES1–DES5 collectively impose restrictive parameters on new development, such as conformity with existing local heights and distinctiveness, as well as onerous separation distances, which are incompatible with the optimisation of site capacity. Consequently, development on brownfield land will not be capable of meeting the minimum standards set out in Policy DES3 if these other design standards need to be met. Therefore, these policies as drafted will not deliver the efficient use of land required by the NPPF.
- 2.24 To ensure consistency with national policy, Policy DES3 should be amended to more explicitly support higher densities in accessible urban locations and to explicitly allow site-specific flexibility informed by good design principles, viability, rather than solely the existing context or 40dpa target. We have set out below suggested revised wording for Policy DES3 below, with proposed amendments underlined:

Developments proposals should which make the most efficient use of land will be supported.
Development should:

- a) *Where additional residential units are proposed, achieve at least the density of the existing site context or 40 net dwellings per hectare, whichever is higher; and Where additional residential units are proposed, achieve minimum densities of at least 40 dwellings per hectare; and*
- b) *Optimise site capacity within city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport. This requires development to be of the most appropriate form and land use for the site, having regard to site context and constraints. On sites within city and town centres and locations with good accessibility by walking, cycling, and public transport, achieve higher densities where they contribute to the creation of well-designed places, having regard to site context and constraints.*

The Council will support development that optimises site capacity and makes effective use of brownfield and underutilised land, in accordance with the principles set out in the NPPF.

- 2.25 Policy DES3 is not positively prepared, justified, effective, or consistent with national planning policy because its minimum density requirement of 40 dwellings per hectare (dph) lacks a robust evidential basis and fails to reflect the varied character and capacity of different areas within St Albans.
- 2.26 The policy does not draw on area-based design guides, codes, or masterplans as recommended by paragraphs 129 and 133 of the NPPF, relying instead on outdated data from 2014.
- 2.27 Consequently, it does not ensure that land is used efficiently or optimally, particularly in compact urban and brownfield locations, and may be undermined by restrictive design and

amenity standards in Policies DES1–DES5 that limit achievable densities. While DES3 allows densities to match existing site context if higher than 40 dph, this is insufficiently ambitious to meet housing needs in a district constrained by 82% Green Belt land.

- 2.28 To align with national policy, density requirements should be flexible and informed by robust design guidance, supporting significant increases in densities in accessible urban locations where proposals take account of site constraints, heritage considerations, and design quality. As currently drafted, Policy DES3 fails to deliver the efficient use of land required by the NPPF and is therefore not justified, effective, or consistent with national policy. Policy DES3 should be amended in order to meet the tests of soundness.

Q5: What is the justification for the specific separation distances and sizes in Policy DES5? Does the Policy include adequate flexibility to account for site specific factors where alternative arrangements may also be acceptable? Is the Policy effective?

- 2.29 Policy DES5 ('Residential Amenity Standards') currently prescribes minimum separation distances of 22 metres between upper-floor habitable windows and 11 metres between upper-floor rear windows and rear boundaries. TTG assert that these standards are arbitrary and excessive, lacking evidential justification, and are inconsistent with the NPPF's design-led approach. Such rigid requirements are inappropriate for compact urban sites and would significantly limit opportunities for redevelopment and intensification of brownfield land.
- 2.30 As set out above, paragraph 128(a) of the NPPF requires planning policies to support development in making an efficient use of land, taking into account not just the prevailing character of an area but also the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it. As currently worded Policy DES5 does not sufficiently support efficient delivery on urban, brownfield sites, as the standards currently being sought will work against this requirement.
- 2.31 A more effective and nationally consistent approach should be taken within Policy DES5 to require development to safeguard the reasonable privacy, daylight, and outlook of neighbouring properties, rather than specifying fixed distances.
- 2.32 We have set out below proposed revised wording for Policy DES5(a) accordingly:

All development must achieve a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupants of both the new development and neighbouring buildings. Development proposals will be assessed in relation to the following considerations and standards:

- a) Privacy and separation – Proposals for both residential and non-residential development should provide for an appropriate degree of privacy for existing users of adjacent sites and for future users of the proposed development, and should avoid compromising the future development of adjoining land for residential uses. Privacy should be provided for habitable rooms of dwellings, and to a lesser extent for private residential gardens and other private amenity areas and to adjacent sites with potential for residential development. Impacts will be less severe where affected rooms or private amenity spaces are already overlooked to some degree, or where*

there is effective mitigation. ~~The following standards and separation distances should normally be achieved:~~

- i. ~~New balconies or upper floor windows serving habitable rooms should not lead to a harmful degree of overlooking for existing and future users of both the new development and neighbouring sites;~~*
- ii. ~~A minimum distance of 22m between upper floor rear windows of habitable rooms and facing windows of habitable rooms; and~~*
- iii. ~~A minimum distance of 11m between new upper floor rear windows and the rear boundary.~~*

Development proposals will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, having regard to site context, layout, orientation, and design. Applicants should demonstrate through design and layout how acceptable standards of amenity can be achieved.”

- 2.33 Policy DES5 is not positively prepared, justified, effective, or consistent with national planning policy because it imposes arbitrary and overly rigid residential amenity standards that lack an evidential basis and conflict with the NPPF's design-led and context-sensitive approach. The policy's prescribed minimum separation distances of 22 metres between upper-floor habitable windows and 11 metres to rear boundaries are excessive and inflexible, particularly for compact urban or brownfield sites where higher densities and innovative layouts may be appropriate. This rigidity would constrain opportunities for redevelopment and intensification, undermining opportunities for efficient land use and housing delivery. A more effective and nationally consistent approach would focus on safeguarding privacy, daylight, and outlook through good design and contextual assessment that can respond to site constraints and circumstances, rather than relying on fixed numerical standards.
- 2.34 Consequently, Policy DES5, as currently drafted, fails to provide the flexibility required by the NPPF, making it neither justified nor effective in supporting sustainable, design-led development.

Issue 2 – The Historic Environment (Policies SP11 and HE1–HE8)

Q1: Are Policies SP11 and HE1–HE8 positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy?

- 2.35 The Draft Local Plan's heritage policies are not consistent with the NPPF (2023). Paragraph 135(c) of the NPPF sets out that planning policies should be sympathetic to local character and history while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.
- 2.36 Instead, Policies SP11 ('Historic Environment') and HE1 ('Designated heritage assets') adopt an overly protectionist stance to development that discourages positive change and fails to acknowledge the role of sensitive redevelopment in supporting heritage-led regeneration. As currently worded these policies do not acknowledge the positive change in heritage terms that new development can create.

- 2.37 Policy HE1 requires development within Conservation Areas to ‘appropriately respond to local height, massing, scale, form and proportions.’ However, when read alongside restrictive design policies such as DES1 and DES3, TTG assert that this will prevent well-designed contemporary development that could contribute positively to the character and vitality of historic areas. The policy should instead support contextually appropriate change that conserves and enhances significance, consistent with paragraphs 212-213 of the NPPF.
- 2.38 Proposed amendments to the relevant text of Policy HE1(d) relating to Conservation Areas are set out below:

Development which is within Conservation Areas, or affects a Conservation Area setting, or views, should preserve features and characteristics which contribute to its special character and appearance, including any identified in an adopted Conservation Area Character Statement, and take opportunities to enhance the significance of the Conservation Area and its setting, wherever possible. ~~Proposals should:~~

~~i. Retain the existing urban grain, street patterns and hierarchy, historic building lines and groups of buildings which contribute to the special character and appearance of the area;~~

~~ii. Retain and reinforce local distinctiveness and character, appropriately responding to the local height, massing, scale, form, proportions, and architectural detailing, including wall to window ratios;~~

~~iii. Appropriately respond to the local area’s roofscape, reflecting the local roof forms. Dormers may be supported where they are appropriately sized, avoid terracing effects, and are appropriate to the local roofscape. Flat roof dormers and other flat roof forms (such as crown roofs) will only be supported where they are characteristic of the local area;~~

~~iv. Use good quality, natural materials which have good long-term weathering characteristics and are compatible with the local distinctiveness of the area;~~

~~v. Retain the public realm characteristics which contribute to the special character and appearance of the area including surface materials, street furniture, boundary treatments and the balance of soft and hard landscaping; and~~

~~vi. Where relevant and practical, remove features which have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.”~~

Proposals should respond positively to local context, including height, scale, massing, public realm characteristics and materials, while also recognising that well-designed contemporary architecture can make a positive contribution to the character of Conservation Areas.

Opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas that enhance or better reveal their significance will be encouraged and treated favourably.

Development that preserves those elements of the setting which make a positive contribution to the significance of the area, or which better reveal its significance, will be supported.”

- 2.39 Policies SP11 and HE1–HE8 are not positively prepared, justified, effective, or consistent with national planning policy because they adopt an overly protectionist and restrictive approach to heritage that conflicts with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 135(c) of the NPPF requires that planning policies be sympathetic to local character and history while not discouraging appropriate innovation or change. However, the draft heritage policies, particularly SP11 and HE1, fail to strike this balance, instead prioritising preservation over heritage-led regeneration and sensitive redevelopment.
- 2.40 By focusing narrowly on replicating existing height, massing, scale, and proportions—especially when read alongside restrictive design policies such as DES1 and DES3—these policies effectively stifle high-quality, contemporary design that could enhance the character and vitality of historic areas. The lack of flexibility undermines opportunities for contextually appropriate change and positive contributions to heritage significance, contrary to paragraphs 212–213 of the NPPF. Consequently, the heritage policies are not justified by evidence, ineffective in supporting regeneration, and inconsistent.

Q3: Does Policy HE2 apply only to non-designated heritage assets which are locally listed? Are criteria used to establish whether something represents a non-designated heritage asset clear and effective?

- 2.41 Policy HE2 ('Non-designated heritage assets') appears to apply protection to all non-designated heritage assets ('NDHA'), regardless of whether they are locally listed, and imposes requirements that go beyond national policy requirements.
- 2.42 Paragraph 209 of the NPPF requires decision-makers to take into account the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, applying a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of harm and the significance of the asset. However, Policy HE2 introduces a more stringent requirement for proposals to retain features of significance and consider the contribution made by its setting and impacts on the local character, while proposals which would involve the demolition of a NDHA would be required to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the viability of alternative uses for the building has been fully explored, or demonstrate that the public benefits would outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.
- 2.43 Policy HE2 therefore elevates the assessment required where proposals would effect the significance of a non-designated assets to that of a designated heritage asset. This is inconsistent with national policy and likely to hinder regeneration opportunities.
- 2.44 Accordingly, Policy HE2 should be amended to ensure consistency with the relevant national planning policy test. Revised wording has been suggested as follows:

"a) Proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets, including those identified on the Council's Local List, should take account of the effect of the development on the significance of the asset. should ensure they respond appropriately to their significance. Any special features which contribute to a non-designated heritage asset's significance should be retained and, where possible and well evidenced, reinstated. This includes appropriate consideration

~~*of the contribution made by its setting and impacts on the local character. A balanced judgement will be made having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*~~

~~*Proposals which sustain or enhance the significance of non-designated heritage assets, or which make a positive contribution to local character, will be supported.*~~

~~*b) Demolition of buildings identified on the local list of buildings shall only be supported where there are acceptable and detailed proposals for any redevelopment which show what is proposed and how it will affect the street scene and local character, and either:*~~

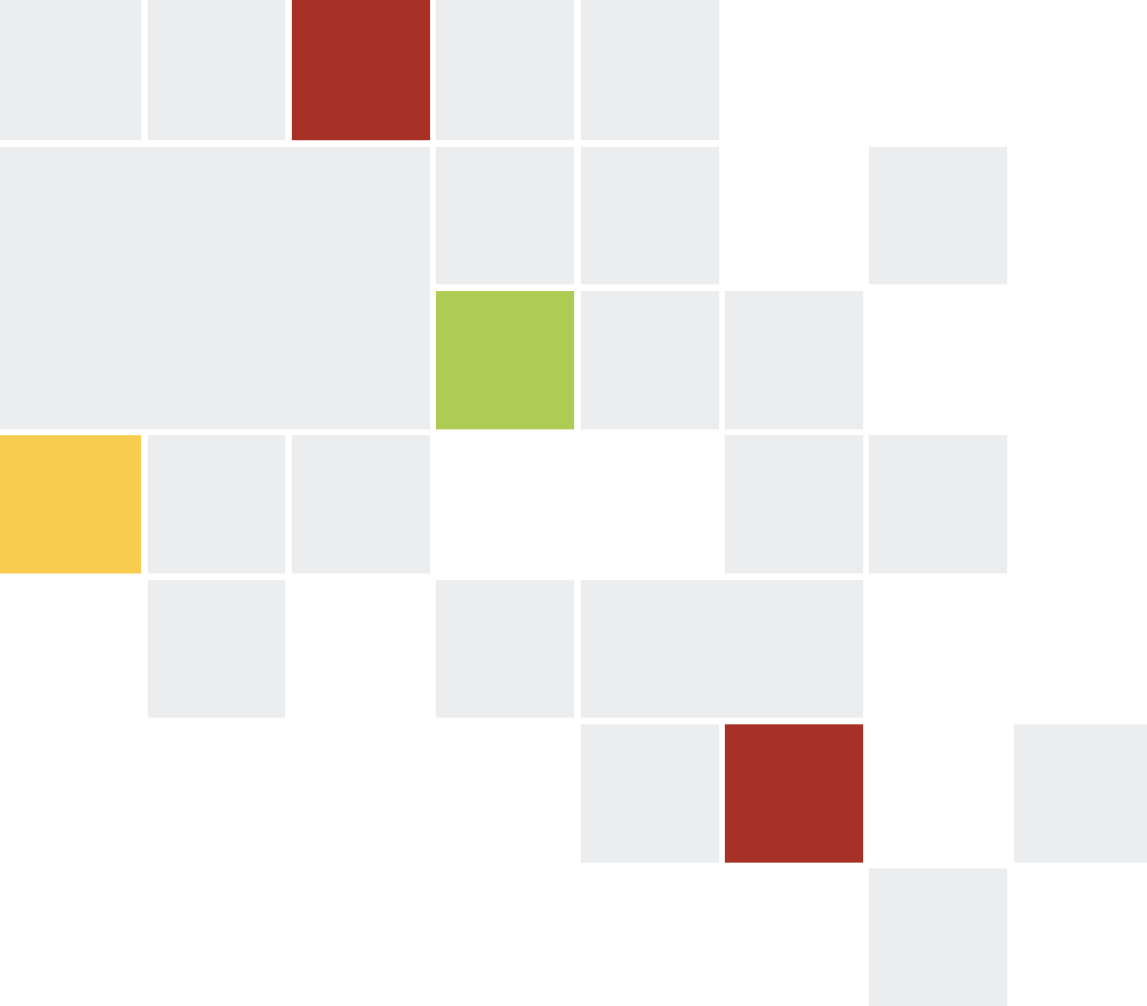
~~*i. Sufficient evidence is provided which demonstrates that the viability of alternative uses for the building has been fully explored (including the possibility of sale to an alternative user) and that the building cannot at reasonable expense be retained; or*~~

~~*ii. Public benefits will decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.*~~

- 2.45 Furthermore, Policy HE2 fails to clearly define the criteria or process by which an asset will be identified as an NDHA. Paragraph 11.16 of the Draft Local Plan indicates that NDHAs may be identified for conservation during various planning processes used to assess local character, such as Conservation Area appraisals, emerging Neighbourhood Plans, or the assessment of potential development sites. It further suggests that NDHAs may also be identified outside the planning application process, for example through community archaeology projects.
- 2.46 However, this approach is unclear and inappropriate, as it does not provide developers with sufficient certainty when preparing planning applications. Allowing SACDC to designate NDHAs at any stage of the application process introduces significant risk and unpredictability. TTG therefore contend that NDHAs should only be identified through formal Conservation Area appraisals and emerging Neighbourhood Plans, and that the supporting text should be revised to reflect this more transparent and plan-led approach.
- 2.47 In summary, Policy HE2 is not positively prepared, justified, effective, or consistent with national planning policy because it imposes an overly stringent and unjustified level of protection on NDHAs, exceeding the requirements of the NPPF. Paragraph 209 of the NPPF requires only a balanced judgement that weighs the scale of harm against the significance of a NDHA. In contrast, Policy HE2 introduces a higher test, requiring the retention of features, consideration of setting and local character, and even viability assessments before demolition can be justified. This effectively elevates non-designated assets to the same status as designated heritage assets, contrary to national policy. Such an approach lacks flexibility, creates unnecessary barriers to redevelopment, and risks constraining regeneration opportunities on brownfield and underused sites. Consequently, Policy HE2 is neither proportionate nor aligned with the NPPF's balanced and evidence-based approach, and therefore cannot be considered positively prepared, justified, effective, or consistent with national planning policy.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 TTG contend that the Draft Local Plan is unsound in respect of its policies relating to design and heritage matters, which in their current form are not positively prepared, justified, effective, or consistent with national planning policy. As currently worded the design and heritage policies are not positively prepared, justified, or consistent with national planning policy.
- 3.2 The prescriptive and inflexible nature of Policies SP12 and DES1–DES8 will frustrate the efficient use of land and prevent the delivery of well-designed, higher-density development on brownfield sites.
- 3.3 Similarly, Policies HE1 and HE2 fail to strike an appropriate balance between conservation and the encouragement of positive, design-led change.
- 3.4 The combination of the design and heritage policies set out in the Draft Local Plan will significantly constrain the development potential of previously developed sites within St Albans City Centre. While the protection of heritage assets and high-quality design are essential planning objectives, the application of the design and heritage policies of the Draft Local Plan risk stifling appropriate and sustainable redevelopment opportunities. As a result, the plan may inadvertently undermine efforts to meet pressing housing needs by making it more difficult to bring forward much-needed residential development on brownfield land in highly sustainable locations.
- 3.5 Collectively, these issues render the Draft Local Plan ineffective and unsound. TTG assert that targeted modifications should be made to make the Plan sound, particularly to Policies DES3, DES5, HE1, and HE2, in order to ensure flexibility, proportionality, and alignment with the NPPF's principles of design quality, efficiency, and heritage enhancement.
- 3.6 We trust that our comments are of assistance and that the Inspectors will give due consideration to the recommendations that have been made.



120 Bermondsey Street, London, SE1 3TX | 0203 268 2018
london@boyerplanning.co.uk | boyerplanning.co.uk

Boyer