

Current Local Plan Policy 114 St Albans City Centre, Building Height, Roofscape and Skyline (1994)

Viewpoint Review

Paper to accompany St Albans Local Plan 2041

Regulation 19 Public Consultation

Additional Viewpoints

October 2025

Background

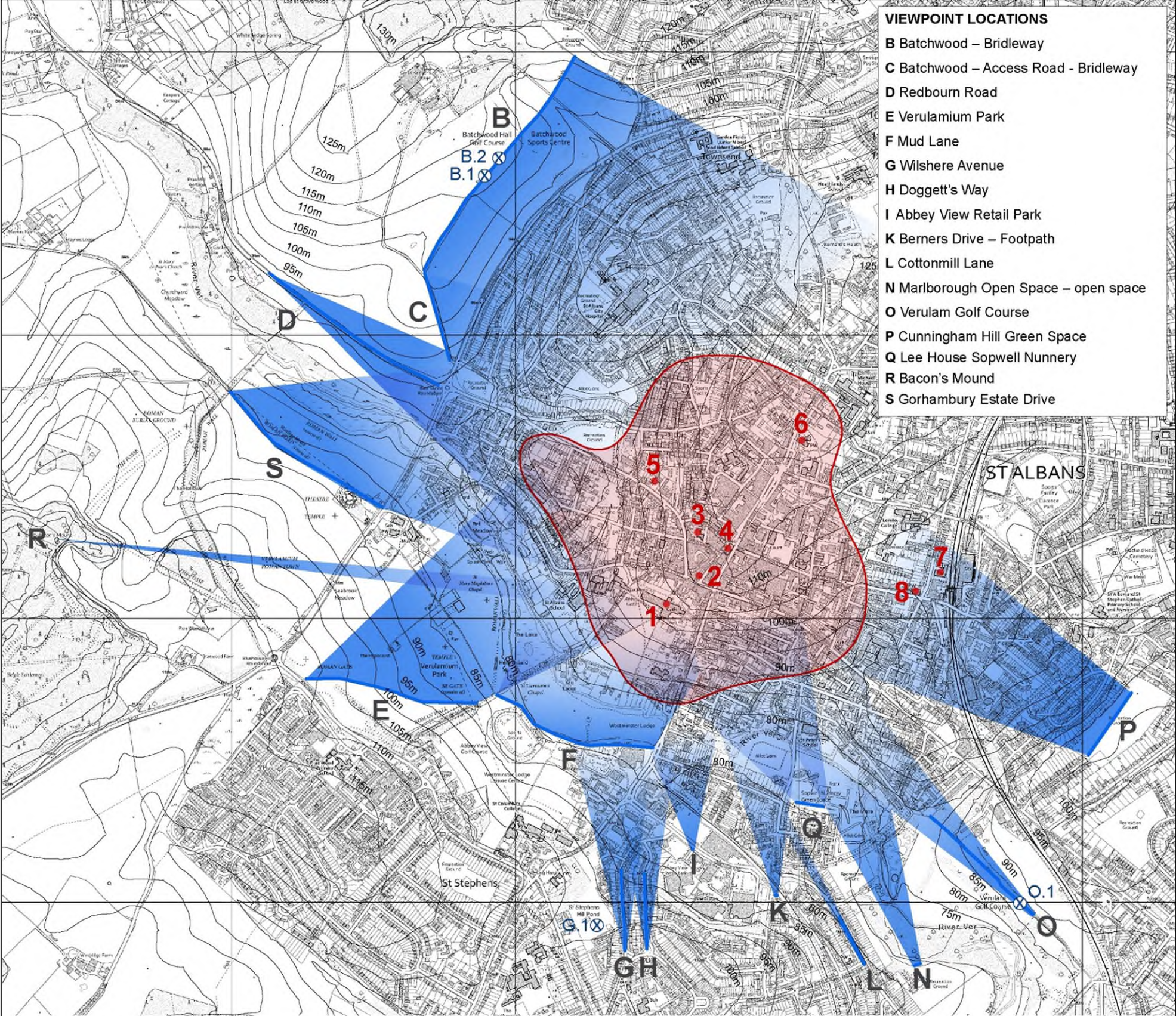
1. St Albans City centre sits on a hill adjacent to the Ver valley which allows for long-distance views of the historic city and its skyline. While the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Albans dominates, there are other landmarks which punctuate the skyline, and the traditional clay and slate pitched roofs create a varied and interesting roofscape. The skyline is considered to be an important characteristic of the city which contributes to the significance of the St Albans Conservation Area, St Albans Abbey and other heritage assets; and the Council seeks to protect the most important skyline views.
2. The Council, in preparing evidence to inform a new Local Plan, identified a need to review and update the current planning policy that protects the roofscape and skyline.
3. The 'Current Local Plan Policy 114 St Albans City Centre, Building Height, Roofscape and Skyline (1994) Viewpoint Review' Paper to accompany St Albans Local Plan 2041 Regulation 19 Public Consultation; available via the Council's Examination Library at EDH 04.09; sets out:
 - Current Local Plan Policy (1994);
 - Current National Guidance and Other LPA Approaches
 - Approach for St Albans new Local Plan;
 - Scope of the work;
 - Methodology; and
 - Viewpoints and Summary of Recommendations.
4. EDH 04.09 identified a total of 14no. viewpoints for use in the new Local Plan, which are either renewed or updated from the Current Local Plan (1994) viewpoints.
5. Historic England (HE), in response to the Regulation 19 Local Plan, suggested that a number of other views should also be considered. In ongoing liaison with HE, the suggested additional viewpoints were all considered and then either scoped out or subject to detailed assessment using the same methodology as the other viewpoints considered in EDH 04.09. This Paper sets out the assessment of the 3 additional viewpoints which were agreed with HE to require further assessment: Sopwell Nunnery, Bacon's Mound and Gorhambury Estate Drive.

Additional Viewpoints and Summary of Recommendations

6. This additional viewpoint recommendations are summarised in the table below and shown on Figure 2:

Viewpoint	Recommendation
O. Sopwell Nunnery	Add / Retain this Viewpoint.
P. Bacon's Mound	Consider further (see below)
Q. Gorhambury Estate Drive	Consider further (see below)

FIGURE 1 – ST ALBANS CITY CENTRE, BUILDING HEIGHT CONTROL AREA AND ZONES OF VISIBILITY (PROPOSED STUDY VERSION ONLY)



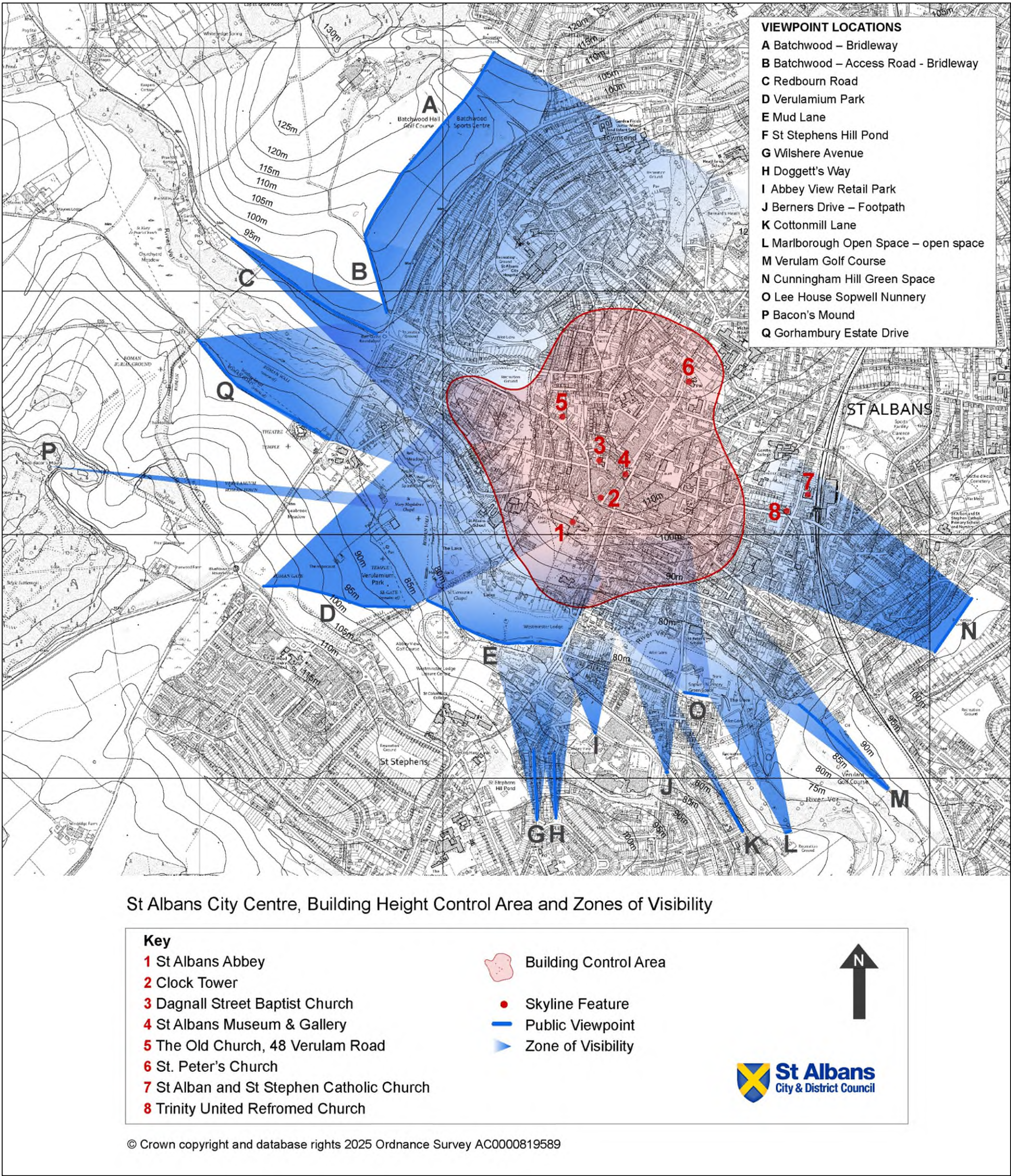
St Albans City Centre, Building Height Control Area and Zones of Visibility

Key 1 St Albans Abbey 2 Clock Tower 3 Dagnall Street Baptist Church 4 St Albans Museum & Gallery 5 The Old Church, 48 Verulam Road 6 St. Peter's Church 7 St Alban and St Stephen Catholic Church 8 Trinity United Refromed Church	- Building Control Area - Skyline Feature - Public Viewpoint - Zone of Visibility - Additional Viewpoint / Photograph Location	
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N.B. The Regulation 19 Local Plan “Figure 12.1: St Albans Building Height Control Area” is materially the same as the above, but omits the ‘Additional Viewpoint / Photograph Location’ symbols, and relabels the final set of viewpoints A-Q. Viewpoints Q, R and S are additional to the Regulation 19 study version.

FIGURE 2 – ST ALBANS CITY CENTRE, BUILDING HEIGHT CONTROL AREA AND ZONES OF VISIBILITY (PROPOSED, LOCAL PLAN PUBLISHED VERSION – PLUS VIEWPOINTS O, P AND Q PROPOSED AS MAIN MODIFICATIONS)



N.B. Viewpoints O, P and Q are proposed as Main Modifications to the Regulation 19 version.

APPENDIX 2 - VIEWPOINT SURVEY SHEETS & PHOTOGRAPHS –

VIEWPOINT SURVEY SHEET				
VIEWPOINT Q			Date: 26/06/2025	
Name:	Q –SOPWELL NUNNERY			
Location:	In front of the Lee House Ruins, overlooking the small public open space.			
VISUAL ANALYSIS				
Receptor:	Value	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
	Susceptibility	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
	Sensitivity	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
	The view is experienced by users (Pedestrians, Cyclists and Drivers) on Cottonmill Lane and those using the Public Open Space. The Public Open space would be of Medium High sensitivity due to the recreational nature of the space and the focus on enjoyment of the landscape and views.			
Skyline Features (1-8):	1 - St Albans Abbey	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	2 - Clock Tower	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	3 - Dagnall Street Baptist Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	4 - St Albans Museum & Gallery	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	5 - The Old Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	6 - St. Peters Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	7 - St Alban and St Stephen Catholic Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	8 - Trinity United Reformed Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
Other Skyline + Landmark Features:	The Mature Vegetation restricts any other views of Skyline / Landmark Features.			
Description:	Distance	<i>short</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>long</i>
	Nature	<i>static</i>	<i>transient</i>	<i>sequential</i>
	Type	<i>Panorama/full</i>	<i>partial</i>	<i>glimpse</i>
	A medium distance static / transient and partial view taking in the Abbey. The Abbey is a prominent feature in the skyline and sits in line and above in places with the existing mature vegetation that surrounds the public open space. The Clock Tower is also visible as a subordinate feature.			

	Mature Trees are present within the foreground of the view. When in full leaf the tree canopies will partially / fully screen views of the Abbey and Clock Tower.
Other Visual Receptors and/or Views:	N/A
Recommendation:	Add / Retain this Viewpoint.



VIEWPOINT Q –SOPWELL NUNNERY – not to scale – for context only.

[N.B. Photography is from 26/06/2025]

VIEWPOINT SURVEY SHEET

VIEWPOINT R

Date: 01/09/2025

Name: R – BACON'S MOUND

Location: On top of Bacon's Mound Scheduled Monument.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Receptor:	Value	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
	Susceptibility	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
	Sensitivity	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
	The view is experienced by Pedestrians that walk in the Gorhambury Estate. It is unclear if this section of the estate is truly publicly accessible.			
Skyline Features (1-8):	1 - St Albans Abbey	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	2 - Clock Tower	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	3 - Dagnall Street Baptist Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	4 - St Albans Museum & Gallery	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	5 - The Old Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	6 - St. Peters Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	7 - St Alban and St Stephen Catholic Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	8 - Trinity United Reformed Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
Other Skyline + Landmark Features:	N/A			
Description:	Distance	<i>short</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>long</i>
	Nature	<i>static</i>	<i>transient</i>	<i>sequential</i>
	Type	<i>Panorama/full</i>	<i>partial</i>	<i>glimpse</i>
A Long distance static and full / partial view of the Abbey depending on the level of vegetation growth. The Abbey has a framed view by the existing vegetation from the Scheduled Monument the level of growth on the vegetation dictates the openness of the view.				
Other Visual Receptors and/or Views:	N/A			

Recommendation:	Due to the uncertainty of the level of public accessibility, careful consideration should be given as to whether it is suitable for inclusion. It is noted however that this is a significant view, therefore it is recommended that further consideration be given to the comments of Historic England.
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VIEWPOINT R –BACON'S MOUND – not to scale – for context only.

[N.B. Photography is from 31/07/2025]

A. Viewpoint R from Bacon's Mound

B. Zoomed in view with enhanced lighting to demonstrate the visibility of the Abbey.



VIEWPOINT SURVEY SHEET

VIEWPOINT S

Date: 01/09/2025

Name:

S – GORHAMBURY ESTATE DRIVE

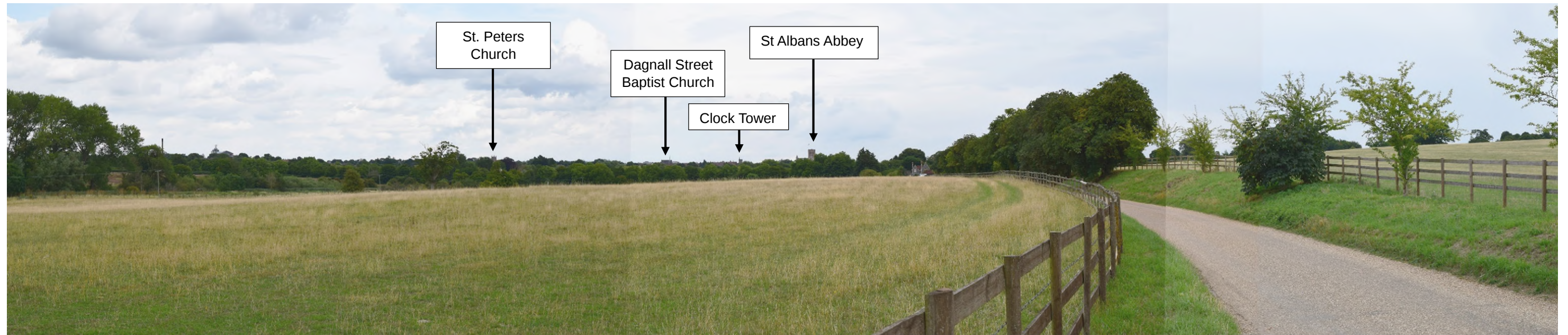
Location:

The length of the drive from the A4147 Bluehouse Hill up to the first hedge line.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Receptor:	Value	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
	Susceptibility	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
	Sensitivity	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
	The view is experienced by users (Pedestrians and Residents of the Estate) of the Drive.			
Skyline Features (1-8):	1 - St Albans Abbey	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	2 - Clock Tower	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	3 - Dagnall Street Baptist Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	4 - St Albans Museum & Gallery	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	5 - The Old Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	6 - St. Peters Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	7 - St Alban and St Stephen Catholic Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
	8 - Trinity United Reformed Church	<i>Dominant</i>	<i>Prominent</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
Other Skyline + Landmark Features:	The Mature vegetation restricts any other views of the skyline / landmark features.			
Description:	Distance	<i>short</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>long</i>
	Nature	<i>static</i>	<i>transient</i>	<i>sequential</i>
	Type	<i>Panorama/full</i>	<i>partial</i>	<i>glimpse</i>
A set of medium / long distance static / transient views along the Drive. Depending on the location along the drive the view will be either full or partial given the avenue of trees along the drive. The Abbey is the dominant feature of the skyline due to its size and extension above the vegetation skyline. The other landmark buildings are smaller in height but still extend above the vegetation skyline allowing them to be prominent in the views.				
Other Visual Receptors and/or Views:	N/A			

Recommendation:	The Drive has permissible rights for pedestrians however it is not fully accessible to the public, and careful consideration should be given as to whether it is suitable for inclusion. It is noted however that the views are significant, therefore it is recommended that further consideration be given to the comments of Historic England.
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VIEWPOINT S – GORHAMBURY ESTATE DRIVE – not to scale – for context only.

[N.B. Photography is from 31/07/20]