

**Examination of the St Albans Local Plan**

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**Examination update note following stage 1 hearings**

Dear Mr Briggs,

1. We write further to stage 1 examination hearing sessions of 29 and 30 April and 1 May 2025. Following those sessions, the Council published a Duty to Co-operate Addendum on 30 May 2025. That was subject to a focussed consultation running until 13 June 2025. Based on what we have read and heard to date, we are content to proceed further with the examination.
2. As you will recall, however, the Council committed to several actions during the stage 1 hearings. They include clarifying the approach to brownfield land in the allocation of sites, flooding vulnerability, and traveller site provision. We are also awaiting the outcome of ongoing highways work and input into that process by National Highways, including an updated Statement of Common Ground. This will be critical in assessing the suitability and deliverability of key strategic allocations including the growth proposed at Hemel Garden Communities.
3. In order to maintain the momentum of the examination, we would therefore be grateful for the Council's timely publication of the necessary outstanding information. Whilst we are content to proceed to Stage 2 of the examination, there are several key soundness issues that will need to be examined in order to move the Plan forward.

4. Allowing time for the publication of additional evidence, and likely possible consultation on that evidence, we have asked the Programme Officer to explore dates for stage 2 hearings in October, November and December 2025. Formal notification of the hearings, and any deadlines for statements, will be published in due course once the necessary dates have been agreed.
5. I trust that this letter is useful in allowing the Council to proceed with preparing the necessary evidence for stage 2. We have also asked the Programme Officer to upload a copy of this letter to the website for those following the examination. In the meantime should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us via the Programme Officer.

Yours sincerely,

*Matthew Birkinshaw and Thomas Bristow*

INSPECTORS