

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE ST STEPHEN PARISH  
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

EXAMINER: Andrew S Freeman BSc (Hons) DipTP DipEM FRTPI

Alison Eardley  
Agent for St Stephen Parish Council

Daley Wilson  
St Albans City & District Council

Examination Ref: 01/AF/SSNP

14 December 2021

Dear Ms Eardley and Mr Wilson

**ST STEPHEN PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION**

Following the submission of the St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) for examination, I would like to clarify several initial procedural matters. I also have a number of questions for St Stephen Parish Council and St Albans City and District Council, to which I would like to receive a written response(s) **by Tuesday 4 January 2022**.

1. Examination Documentation

I can confirm that I am satisfied that I have received a complete submission of the draft Plan and accompanying documentation, including the Basic Conditions Statement; the Consultation Statement and Appendices; the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Determination Report; and the Regulation 16 representations, to enable me to undertake the examination.

Subject to my detailed assessment of the draft Plan, I have not at this initial stage identified any very significant and obvious flaws in the Plan that might lead me to advise that the examination should not proceed.

2. Site Visit

I will aim to carry out a site visit to the neighbourhood plan area in the week beginning 10 January 2022. The site visit will assist in my assessment of the draft Plan, including the issues identified in the representations.

The visit will be undertaken unaccompanied. It is very important that I am not approached to discuss any aspects of the Plan or the neighbourhood area, as this may be perceived to prejudice my independence and risk compromising the fairness of the examination process.

I may have some additional questions, following my site visit, which I will set out in writing should I require any further clarification.

3. Written Representations

At this stage, I consider the examination can be conducted solely by the written representations procedure, without the need for a hearing. However, I will reserve the option to convene a hearing

should a matter(s) come to light where I consider that a hearing is necessary to ensure the adequate examination of an issue, or to ensure that a person has a fair chance to put a case.

4. Further Clarification

From my initial assessment of the Plan and supporting documents, I have identified a number of matters where I require some additional information from the Parish Council and the City and District Council, which I have set out in the Annex to this letter. I would be grateful if you can seek to provide a written response(s) **by Tuesday 4 January 2022**.

5. Examination Timetable

As you will be aware, the intention is to examine the Plan (including conduct of the site visit) with a view to providing a draft report (for 'fact checking') within 4-6 weeks of submission of the draft Plan. However, as I have raised questions, I must provide you with sufficient opportunity to reply. Consequentially, the examination timetable will be extended. Please be assured that I will aim to mitigate any delay as far as is practicable. The IPE office team will seek to keep you updated on the anticipated delivery date of the draft report.

If the Parish Council or Local Planning Authority have any process questions related to the conduct of the examination, which you would like me to address, please do not hesitate to contact the office team in the first instance.

In the interests of transparency, may I prevail upon you to ensure that a copy of this letter and any subsequent response is placed on the Parish Council and St Albans City and District Council websites.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Your sincerely

*Andrew Freeman*

Examiner

## ANNEX

From my initial reading of the St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan and the supporting evidence, I have the following questions for St Stephen Parish Council and St Albans City and District Council. I have requested the submission of responses **by Tuesday 4 January 2022**, although an earlier response would be much appreciated.

### Questions for St Stephen Parish Council and St Albans City and District Council

1. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework was published by the government on 20 July 2021 alongside a final version of the National Model Design Code. Please advise whether you consider any modifications in relation to the non-strategic matters covered by the draft St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan are necessary as a result of the publications (other than amended referencing) and, if so, what these are?

### Questions for St Albans City and District Council

2. Does the City and District Council have any comments on the Neighbourhood Plan?
3. Policy S13: Does the City and District Council have a Community Infrastructure Levy scheme that covers contributions to community bus services/improvements to public transport infrastructure?

### Questions for St Stephen Parish Council

4. Policy S1 – Is Paragraph 1 needed (in addition to Paragraph 2)?
5. Policy S1 - Paragraph following Paragraph 3 (incorrectly numbered 1): Does this paragraph relate to *residential* development? If not, how is the additional provision to be secured? “Additional provision”: Provision additional to what?
6. Policy S1 – Paragraph 3 i: What is the predecessor to the St Albans District Local Plan?
7. Policy S1 - Paragraph 4: How will an applicant know what are deemed to be visually intrusive locations?
8. Policy S2 – predominantly 1, 2 and 3-bedroom properties: Is a mix of properties required? In what proportions?
9. Policy S2: Please comment on the representations of M Scott Properties Ltd in relation to the demand for 4-bedroom dwellings.
10. Policy S2 – supporting affordable housing for those with a local connection: As expressed, is this a land-use planning matter? How is this going to be achieved?
11. Policy S4 – non-listed assets within St Stephen’s Parish Church: Please provide a related link to the Historic Environment Record. Is there clarity over which assets are included and covered by the policy?
12. Policy S5 - St Albans open space provision and Hertfordshire County Council’s Planning Obligations Guidance: Please provide links.
13. Policy S5 - accommodating grey water recycling and rainwater harvesting: Should this be tied necessarily to the building of basements rather than as a stand-alone objective?

14. Policy S5 - Para 3 ii) and v): Please comment on the representations of Hertfordshire County Council.
15. Policy S5: Please comment on the representations of Pegasus on behalf of Bloor Homes and the Department of Health and Social Care.
16. Policy S6 - objectives of the Watling Chase Community Forest Plan and the Charter for Trees, Woods and People: Please provide links.
17. Policy S6 – wildlife corridors and buffer zones: Please provide a link to Environment Agency recommendations.
18. Policy S7: Where should applicants look to find details of Local Wildlife Sites?
19. Policy S8: Please identify those sites that are within the Green Belt. Please point me to the evidence of any additional local benefit (over and above Green Belt protection) that would be gained by designation as Local Green Space.
20. Policy S9: The Policies Map does not show a river corridor with well-defined boundaries. Is the river corridor to be taken as including a strip of land 8m wide adjacent to the river?
21. Policy S9: Will an environmental impact statement be required for *all* developments?
22. Policy S9: For qualifying developments, is it proportionate to require a long-term landscape and ecological management plan for the river (the *whole* of the river)?
23. Policy S11: Having regard to the representations of Pegasus on behalf of Bloor Homes and the Department of Health and Social Care, are there any modifications that you would wish to make?
24. Policy S14: Recommendations in Hertfordshire County Council’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan (part 10) for St Stephen Parish: Please respond to the representations of The Ramblers and provide an appropriate link.
25. Policy S16: Has an inventory of “existing community facilities” been prepared?
26. Policy S16: What would constitute “other suitable employment or service trade uses”?
27. Policy S21: What is envisaged under the description “appropriate mitigation”?