



Council Plan 2023 – 2028

This Council Plan was agreed by Council at its meeting on 22 February 2023. Graphic design work is underway for the final published version – this will be available shortly.

Foreword by Cllr Chris White, Leader

We are continuing to put residents and their needs at the heart of our service development, and offer – and demand from our suppliers – good value for money. We are reshaping our services, both for the digital age, and to ensure we are able to respond to economic uncertainty and potential future challenges.

The Council's key priorities, besides our core services for residents, are to continue our work to combat the climate emergency, to deliver more social housing, to support the local economy, to enhance the District's cultural offer, and to promote equality, inclusion, and fairness. These, together with our desire to help local people get through the cost-of-living crisis, are our areas of focus over the next five years.

As we prepare our Council Plan, there is much financial uncertainty. We are making tough choices about our spending and how we operate to address the gap in our finances resulting from global, national, and regional challenges; the rise in the cost of energy; the impact of high inflation; rising costs in supply chains; interest rates; the fall in land values; and spending constraints from central government. We have paused some of our capital programme work as a result of adverse economic circumstances and will keep these under review until such time as conditions are more favourable and the property market is more stable.

Combat the Climate Emergency

The Council's Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy, developed with Sustainable St Albans, St Albans Friends of the Earth, and other environmental and community groups, sets out the actions we will take locally to achieve our net zero carbon emissions target by 2030.

Our developing Local Plan – the framework for what can be built how and where in our District for the next two decades – presents an opportunity to make sustainability a key focus in local town planning decision making so that inevitable growth can be managed in a way that will help local efforts to counter the effects of climate change.

Leadership, partnership, and active encouragement are important. Working closely alongside the County Council, for example, will help to deliver the public transport infrastructure improvements in our District that we want to see, and ensure the highways network can be enhanced to make walking and cycling safer and attractive to those who want to reduce their reliance on cars. This is important to ease congestion, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions. We continue to work with town and parish councils too to make sure community assets are managed in the most effective way.

Reshaping and modernising our parking services, both to encourage responsible car use and make improvements for residents, is a focus for our parking team. By upgrading our digital services, paper permits, for example, will become a thing of the past, making applications for many residents much easier while at the same time reducing our use of paper and energy.

St Albans District is one of the best performing local authority areas for recycling in England and we want to ensure we maintain our strong position and if possible do even better, with the support of our residents.

Deliver more social housing

We need to prioritise the climate emergency when it comes to ensuring that homes are warm, dry and energy efficient. That is why we have put in place an Energy Strategy so that by 2030, all Council-owned homes will be carbon net zero ready for when the grid becomes fully carbon neutral.

Many local people find they cannot afford to buy or rent here. The Council wants to see new homes provided for social rent. Such housing is delivered in various ways: through the planning system, through local authority owned housing including Council-led development, and through partnerships using direct investment and joint ventures. In the current economic downturn, the Council will be especially alert to changes in the construction market and will be innovative in delivering its continuing housing and community programmes using its own estate to optimise income to help fund Council projects.

New housing schemes will need to involve a mix of housing to provide Council income or profits from sale to enable development. While rules for the percentage of social housing included in developments need to be flexible to deal with individual circumstances, in general projects controlled by the Council should involve 40% social housing, measured by projected value. An exception to this would be where housing is being provided to fund investment in community facilities, where a greater proportion of homes may be needed for sale.

We are also transforming processes to reduce turnaround times for dealing with empty Council-owned properties so families in need can be housed more quickly.

We will continue to support people facing homelessness through our dedicated support services. We are also mindful of the needs of refugees and visitors from Ukraine, and will continue to work with our partners to support them.

Support our local economy

We know the challenges facing business owners and we share many of them - the high cost of housing, staff and skills shortages, the inequitable business rates system, the loss of office accommodation, and high energy costs among them. While some of these things require Government action at a national level, we can play our part locally.

Jubilee Square, the Council's new city centre development – built on the site of the old police station among other dilapidated buildings – has completely reshaped an important part of the city landscape. Beautiful new business premises, community facilities, homes and landscaped public spaces have been created for people to enjoy. Cottonmill Community and Cycling Centre in Sopwell is now open, made possible with the support of British Cycling and Sport England and a huge fund-raising effort by local people, bringing much needed high-quality facilities to that area of the District, and creating an important regional facility.

Our museum service is a unique cornerstone for the active promotion of the City and District providing rich cultural opportunities throughout the year for local people and visitors alike and supporting city centre vibrancy. Latest data shows the museums contributed £3 million to the local economy last year by attracting visitors to our City and District. This has been recognised by the Arts Council with a major grant for 2023-2026.

Enhance the District's Cultural Offer

Knowing the importance of cultural life and how it enriches our resident and business communities, both socially and financially, we are preparing a new cultural strategy to capitalise on our strengths and develop our potential. We want to ensure that we fully understand the cultural aspirations of the whole District and will engage with a wide range of residents and partners to develop the right approach for arts, heritage, and culture.

This strategy will enable an early decision to be made on the much-needed redevelopment plans for the ageing Alban Arena. It will also directly influence designs for the regeneration project of this area of the city centre which will recommence as soon as economic circumstances allow.

Meanwhile, we continue to invest in the District's cultural infrastructure. The Eric Morecambe Centre, a new theatre for Harpenden, is a recent edition enhancing the District's cultural scene. Our new approach to events is designed to improve the way that community and cultural events can be organised by local people. The aim is to empower more people and organisations to run events locally, providing easily accessible information and bringing partners together to develop greater cultural synergy.

Promote equality, inclusion, and fairness

The composition of our community is ever changing, and, while our traditions remain important, diversity undoubtedly enriches life locally. Tolerance, kindness, and a sense of belonging are what underpin community spirit.

The high number of local residents who have warmly welcomed Ukrainian guests into their homes is testament to the importance local people give these qualities.

St Albans was identified in early 2023 as one of the top ten areas in the country with high levels of social trust. This is linked to our high quality of life and evident community spirit.

The Council plays a key role in community leadership and place-shaping, and we believe equality, diversity and inclusion should be central to local service delivery. Our new [equality, diversity and inclusion strategy](#) sets out how we will make sure these are central to our approach in delivering services and conducting our day-to-day business.

Foreword by Amanda Foley, Chief Executive

The pandemic, severely challenging as it was for many people and organisations, including the Council, was also an opportunity to rethink the way we live and work and to make changes for the future.

We learned many lessons and have made major changes to the way we work. We have reshaped our operating model so that we are in a better position to adapt and respond to the financial pressures we face, shifting demand and expectations, and the pace of change.

We continue to evolve and change the way we work. The way we organise ourselves, and the tools we use to create an increasingly modern and efficient council, are both central to transformation. Our new structure has been designed to streamline and modernise the Council's operations, so they are more efficient and cost effective, and to provide the right environment to improve the customer experience for residents, businesses and visitors. Equally, we are working to improve the use of our data to further inform changes to our service. Our values and behaviours - caring for our community, working together, developing confident people – and our desire to be customer driven and trusted as individuals and as a Council, are characteristics underpinning all our work.

We are working to implement a corporate model for management of the Council's land and property portfolio to deliver a more commercially focused approach. This will ensure that where sensible we devolve assets, we obtain best value, and we identify opportunities for collaboration with partner organisations.

Many local people and business were hit hard by the pandemic and have been dealt a further blow with the ensuing cost of living crisis. They continue to need additional support in greater numbers than before. Our strong partnerships with other public and third sector organisations are helping us to build the capacity needed to deliver in challenging circumstances.

With our partner councils, we are also playing a central role in the future growth of Hertfordshire and working hard to deliver on our climate change objectives.

People expect quality, value for money, modern systems, and easy access to our services and that is what we are developing here in St Albans District.

District in Numbers

[Provide a snapshot of key District data in pictorial form. This will be added at the graphic design stage.]

Council Priorities

Our five key priorities, designed to deliver a viable, happy, inclusive and sustainable community, are to:

- Combat the climate emergency,
- Deliver more social housing,
- Support our local economy,
- Enhance the District's cultural offer,
- Promote equality, inclusion and fairness.

These are our areas of focus over the next five years.

Delivering our Priorities

Combat the Climate Emergency

| Activity | Lead Councillor, Officer, and Directorate | Outcomes | Anticipated Delivery Date |
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| Take forward the Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy and Action Plan. Themes: governance and leadership; energy use; transport and air quality; waste; nature and food; electrical charge points on Council owned land; energy efficiency of Council owned buildings; water and climate change adaptation strategy. | Chair of Policy Committee Assistant Director - Built Environment Directorate: Strategy, Policy and Transformation | As specified in the Climate Emergency Action Plan | See details at: https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sustainability-and-climate-crisis-strategy |

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| <p>Progress the new Local Plan</p> | <p>Chair of Policy Committee Spatial Planning Manager Directorate: Strategy, Policy and Transformation</p> | <p>A framework for future development for the next two decades</p> | <p>Local Plan Regulation 18 public consultation: Summer 2023</p> |
| <p>Publication of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan</p> | <p>Chair of Policy Committee Spatial Planning Manager Directorate: Strategy, Policy and Transformation</p> | <p>Improved understanding of future potential for cycling provision</p> | <p>Spring/Summer 2023</p> |
| <p>Implement the Energy Strategy for Council housing stock using Government grant from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and funding from the Housing Revenue Account</p> | <p>Chair of Housing and Inclusion Committee Assistant Director – Housing Directorate: Community and Place Delivery</p> | <p>All Council owned homes carbon neutral by 2030</p> | <p>Strategy to take effect from April 2023</p> |
| <p>Lead initiatives locally to reduce the impact of aircraft pollution and noise arising from proposals to expand Luton Airport capacity</p> | <p>Chair of Policy Committee Spatial Planning Manager Directorate: Strategy, Policy and Transformation</p> | <p>District playing its part in protecting the interests of local people and the environment, on airport expansion</p> | <p>Engagement to continue during the year</p> |

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| Implement our new Parking Strategy | Chair of Public Realm Committee Assistant Director – Regulatory and Compliance Directorate: Community and Place Delivery | Parking services that encourage responsible car use and directly lead to a reduction in local vehicle emissions | Implementation from March 2023 |
| Progress the River Ver and Verulamium Lakes development project | Chair of Public Realm Committee Assistant Director – Public Realm Directorate: Community and Place Delivery | Healthier lake environment, also helping to protect rare chalk river habitat | Timetable to be agreed with the Environment Agency in early 2023 |

Deliver More Social Housing

| Activity | Lead Councillor, Officer, and Directorate | Outcomes | Anticipated Delivery Date |
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| Consider and plan for major national revision of 'Decent Homes Standard' | Chair of Housing and Inclusion Committee Assistant Director – Housing Directorate: Community and Place Delivery | Council homes that meet the revised 'Decent Homes Standard' | March 2024 |

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| <p>Make planned housing upgrades</p> | <p>Chair of Housing and Inclusion Committee</p> <p>Assistant Director – Housing</p> <p>Directorate: Community and Place Delivery</p> | <p>Well-maintained social housing</p> | <p>Delivery plan for 2023/24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New windows and doors in 100 properties • New bathrooms and kitchens in 100 properties • Loft insulation, solar panels and cavity wall insulation in 400 properties identified through the Council's stock condition survey and energy pilot studies |
| <p>Deliver market rent apartments at Ridgeview, London Colney, to fund new social housing</p> | <p>Chair of Regeneration and Business Committee</p> <p>Capital Projects Manager</p> <p>Directorate: Strategy, Policy and Transformation</p> | <p>Additional funding for development of new social rent homes</p> | <p>2025/2026</p> |

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| <p>Complete the redevelopment of:</p> <p>The Hedges site, Woollam Crescent, St Albans</p> <p>The former King Offa site, St Albans</p> | <p>Chair of Housing and Inclusion Committee / Chair of Regeneration and Business Committee</p> <p>Strategic Housing Manager / Assistant Director - Built Environment</p> <p>Directorate: Community and Place Delivery</p> | <p>Additional social housing</p> | <p>The Hedges – complete March 2024</p> <p>King Offa site – complete December 2023</p> |
| <p>Progress feasibility study on 3 sites for future social housing development.</p> | <p>Chair of Housing and Inclusion Committee / Chair of Regeneration and Business Committee</p> <p>Strategic Housing Manager / Assistant Director - Built Environment</p> <p>Directorate: Community and Place Delivery</p> | <p>A conveyor belt of additional sites for future development of additional social rent homes</p> | <p>April 2024</p> |
| <p>Annual review of the pledges and action plans included within the Homelessness and Housing Strategies</p> | <p>Chair of Housing and Inclusion Committee</p> <p>Strategic Housing Manager/Specialist Advisor Housing and Strategy</p> <p>Directorate: Community and Place Delivery</p> | <p>Local people who are homeless or facing homelessness have effective services helping them to find homes</p> | <p>December 2023</p> |

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| Continue the decommissioning of Telford Court | Chair of Housing and Inclusion Committee Strategic Housing Manager Directorate: Community and Place Delivery | Residents supported to move to alternative accommodation; Telford Court decommissioned; options for the site agreed | April 2024 |
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Support Our Local Economy

| Activity | Lead Councillor, Officer, and Directorate | Outcomes | Anticipated Delivery Date |
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| Deliver the capital projects set out in the General Fund Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2025/26 | Multiple | Capital projects delivered to plan | As specified in the Capital Programme |
| Deliver the official food controls and related activities set out in the Food Safety Agency Recovery Plan | Chair of Public Realm Committee Assistant Director – Regulatory and Compliance Directorate: Community and Place Delivery | Requirements of the Food Safety Agency Recovery Plan met | March 2024 |

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| <p>Implement measures and actions set out in the Council's Litter Management Strategy, and continue campaign work with the Herts Waste Partnership to discourage fly-tipping</p> | <p>Vice-Chair of Public Realm Committee</p> <p>Assistant Director – Public Realm</p> <p>Assistant Director – Regulatory and Compliance</p> <p>Directorate: Community and Place Delivery</p> | <p>An effective service for protecting our environment</p> | <p>March 2024</p> |
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Enhance the District's Cultural Offer

| Project | Lead Councillor, Officer, and Directorate | Outcomes | Anticipated Delivery Date |
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| <p>Progress the development of a cultural strategy for the District.</p> | <p>Vice Chair of Regeneration and Business Committee</p> <p>Assistant Director - Built Environment / Arts, Tourism, Heritage and Culture Manager</p> <p>Directorate: Strategy, Policy and Transformation</p> | <p>A cultural strategy that capitalises on our strengths and develops our potential</p> | <p>Strategy published and action plan developed - March 2024</p> |

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| Develop the St Albans museums service through implementation of its 3-year strategic plan, and effective use of £1 million Arts Council grant funding including targets required under National Portfolio Organisation status | Vice Chair of Public Realm Committee Arts, Tourism, Heritage and Culture Manager Directorate: Community and Place Delivery | A museum service fulfilling its full potential in supporting the cultural and economic life of the District | 2023-2026 |
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Promote Equality, Inclusion and Fairness

| Activity | Lead Councillor, Officer and Directorate | Outcomes | Anticipated Delivery Date |
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| Explore funding opportunities to develop community facilities including in the Fleetville area of St Albans | Chair of Regeneration and Business Committee Capital Projects Manager Directorate: Strategy, Policy and Transformation | External funding streams secured to develop community facilities for the District | During 2023/24 |
| Support redevelopment of Martin House, Upper Lattimore Road, St Albans | Chair of Housing and Inclusion Committee / Chair of Regeneration and Business Committee Strategic Housing Manager Directorate: Community and Place Delivery | Martin House redeveloped to provide improved supported accommodation and a community hub | June 2023 |

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| <p>Implement the measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022, including voter ID</p> | <p>Vice Chair of Policy Committee Electoral Services Manager Directorate: Customer, Business & Corporate Support</p> | <p>Continued delivery of free and fair elections ensuring every vote remains secure and accessible</p> | <p>January 2023 – January 2025</p> |
| <p>Continue the implementation of the Council's Customer Engagement Strategy (2021-2024) https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/performance-vision-policies-strategies-and-plans</p> | <p>Vice Chair of Policy Committee Customer Delivery Manager Directorate: Customer, Business & Corporate Support</p> | <p>Improved responsiveness to residents</p> | <p>December 2024</p> |
| <p>Implement the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Action Plan, agreed in 2022.</p> | <p>Vice Chair of Housing and Inclusion Committee Community Engagement, Equality and Grants Officer Directorate: Strategy, Policy and Transformation</p> | <p>A District where everyone feels welcome and where people of all ages, all ethnicities, all backgrounds, and all abilities have the opportunity to live happy, confident, and independent lives</p> | <p>As specified in the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan: https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/St%20Albans%20City%20and%20District%20EDI%20Strategy%20July%202022.pdf</p> |