

COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

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Land to the Rear of 42-100 Tollgate Road & 42 Tollgate Road, Colney Heath

CD 9.22

date	Issue version	Revision
22 Aug 2023	1	Issue to Planning Inspectorate

PLANNING Proof of Evidence

by

John Clemow

Colney Heath Parish Councillor

For Colney Heath Parish Council Rule 6 Party

Planning Inquiry

PINS Ref : APP/B1930/W/23/3323099
LPA REF: 5/2022/1988

1 Housing need

1.1 The Affordable Housing Statement of Common Ground CD8.1 states :

- a. Para 3.5 Table 37 on page 89 identifies a net need for 443 net affordable/social rented affordable dwellings per annum, when using the Liverpool approach, equivalent to a total need of 7,088 net affordable dwellings over the 16 year period.
- b. Para 3.6 Table 42 on page 97 identifies a need for 385 net affordable home ownership dwellings per annum, equivalent to a total need of 6,160 net affordable dwellings over the 16 year period.
- c. Para 3.7 In total therefore, there is an objectively assessed need for 828 affordable dwellings per annum in St Albans, equivalent to a total need of 13,248 net affordable dwellings over the 16 year period 2020 to 2036.

1.2 St Albans District regulation 18 draft Local Plan CD 3.1 states

- a. in paragraph 3.8 Within the District, a local housing need figure of 888 dwellings per annum has been calculated, based on the Government's required Standard Method. Therefore, the Spatial Strategy seeks to deliver at least 15,096 net additional new homes to 2041 (18 years from 2023)
and
- b. in paragraph 3.12 "This Council considers the Government's approach to be an illegitimate use of out of date data, and many other councils and stakeholders agree."

1.3 In the letter to the DLUHC dated 21 October 2022 (see last page) the Leader of St Albans District Council notes that the Government's 'Standard Method' requires the use of household projection data from the 2014-based Office for National Statistics (ONS) household projections. This 2014 data reflected effectively a oneoff 'spike' in household projections for the St Albans District and the more recent data is very different, as can be seen in the table below.

ONS household projection	Base year	Time period for household projection calculation	Households projected
2014-based	2021	2021-2031	637
2016-based	2021	2021-2031	436
2018-based	2021	2021-2031	223

1.4 In the audio statement to the St Albans District Council reg 18 draft Local Plan public consultation video states "we already have enough land in the

pipeline for 5,000 homes". This is more than a 5 year supply of land for the stated housing need.

- 1.5 In the Statement of Common Ground CD 8.5 paragraph 6.5 states it is agreed that the Council's latest Authority Monitoring Report (re-published in March 2023) covers 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and identifies a supply of 2.0 years. The Appellant considers the Council's housing land supply to be 1.97 years.
- 1.6 We note the discrepancies in the above :
 - i. the "need" for 828 affordable dwelling per annum as per the SoCG,
 - ii. the "need" in total for market and affordable housing of 888 dwelling per annum as per the reg 18 draft Local Plan based on 2014 ONS data
 - iii. the "need" in total for both market and affordable housing based on 2018 based projection being 65% less than the 2014 projection.
 - iv. The Council's statement regarding enough land in the pipeline for 5,000 homes versus the SoCG (5,000 represents more than 5 years land supply for a "need" of 888 dwelling per annum and much more for a lower "need").
- 1.7 The NPPF has the presumption of favour of sustainable development - except where the application of policies in the NPPF that protect designated Green Belt land provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed. Substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and any other harm and very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm is outweighed by other considerations.

The weight that housing need would attract is, we contend, questionable

2 **Harm to the Green Belt and other harm that we consider outweigh the "other considerations" are as follows :**

- 2.1 The open character of the village makes an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt. The boundary of the appeal site along 42-100 Tollgate Road allows a strong relationship with the wider landscape with very strong connections to the wider landscape.
- 2.2 There would be negative visual impacts from the development.
- 2.3 There would negative impact on the Grade II listed Colney Heath farm.
- 2.4 The site is not previously developed land (except the house at 42).

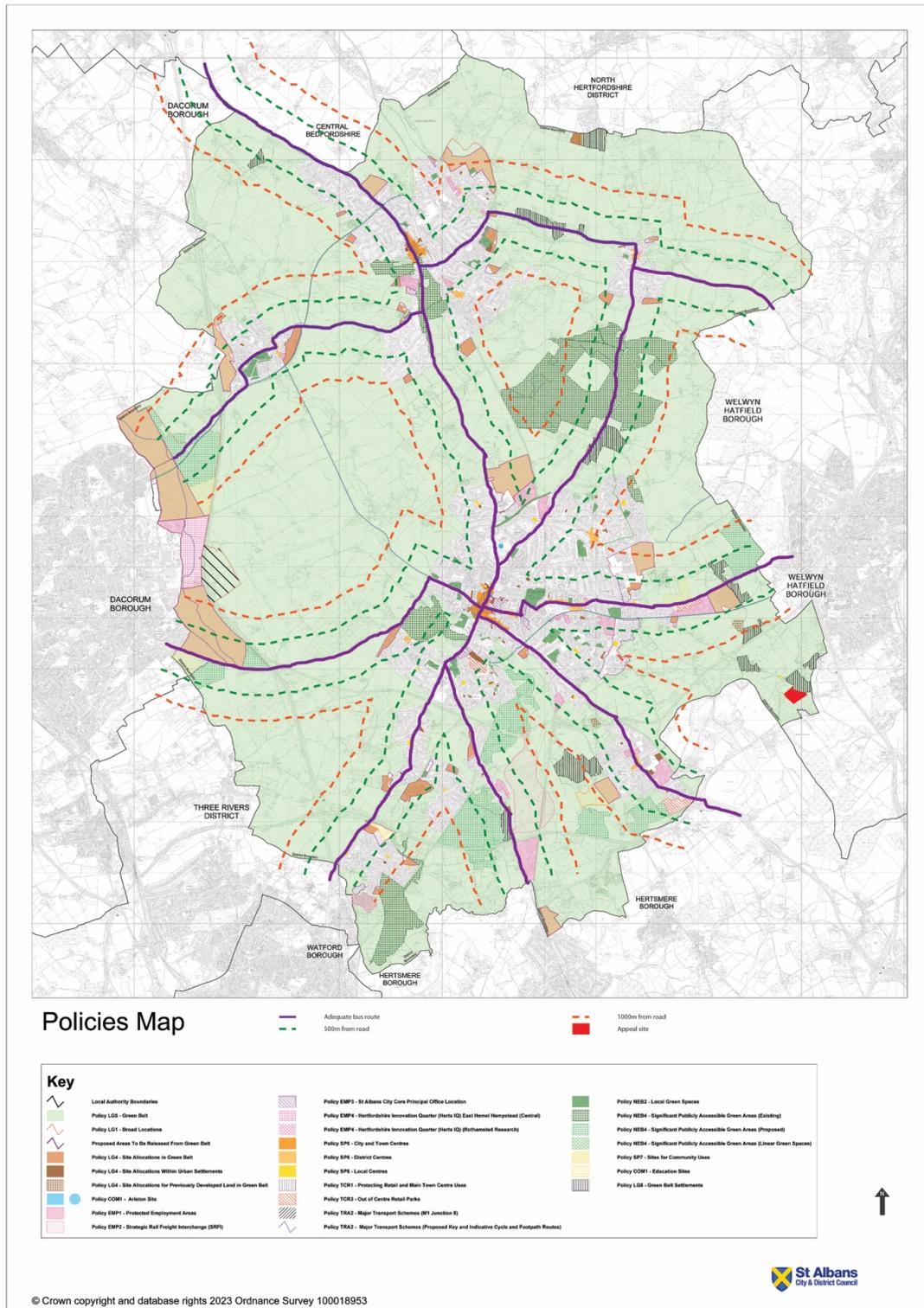
Flood risk and screening to mitigate visual impact reduces the available area to potentially less than half the site area. This is not effective use of Green Belt land.

- 2.5 Flooding on the site and proximity to the river Colne present a number of risks
- 2.6 The Highways and Transport Assessments are incorrect resulting in considerable road safety issues. On street parking on Tollgate Road adjacent to the appeal site causes traffic flow problems, long delays, and safety risks.
- 2.7 Colney Heath village is not a suitable location for the proposed development as sustainable modes of access for day-to-day needs : employment, education, food essentials and healthcare are not available.

Regarding the appeal decision for Bullens Green Lane CD 14.6 dated June 2021 the detail we now have was not available for presentation to Inspector Masters who also relied on the advice from HCC that cycling facilities are adequate. Our assessment shows this advice was an incorrect and unfounded opinion.

- 2.8 Development of a “large” site with 40% affordable housing in car dependent location is not appropriate for lower income residents.
- 2.9 The availability of, and access to, education and health care services is a concern raised by many residents.
- 2.10 We have reservations regarding St Albans District Council’s the regulation draft Local Plan in relation to the amount of Green Belt land required generated by housing need numbers considered by the District Council to be inflated.

We note that the sites proposed to be allocated are in locations within walking distances considered to be acceptable from routes with basic bus services and there are no allocations proposed in Colney Heath village.



The SADC draft Local Plan (reg18) Policies Map with CHPC overlays demonstrates

- sustainable locations within the district, Colney Heath is not one of them.
- The sustainable corridors are areas with current accessibility to sustainable modes of transportation. The bus routes are offering 7.00am to 19.00pm with a service level of a minimum of 1 bus per hour in each direction.
- The bands are 500m and 1000m from the bus route so reflect the Institute of Highways and transportation current walking standards. This identifies the most sustainable locations within the district.



Leader of the Council

Please reply to:
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Date: 21 October 2022

Simon Clarke – Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 4DF

Dear Simon

Delivering Growth and new homes – clarity needed regarding the Government's 'Standard Method' for calculating local housing need

St Albans City & District Council is working towards a new Local Plan that seeks to deliver Growth, new homes, jobs, infrastructure, environmental enhancements and an appropriate response to the Climate Crisis. We recognise that our current Plan is the second oldest in the country and are therefore in regular contact with your officials and also use the Planning Advisory Service and other organisations to assist us with the development of a new Plan.

A significant issue in the preparation of the new Plan is the Government's current position with regard to the 'Standard Method' for calculating local housing need. I am sure that by now you will have been advised of the considerable blockage that this approach is causing across England and most particularly in areas like St Albans that are wholly within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The impact of the Government's 'Standard Method' is that it effectively requires St Albans to plan for the building of approximately 10,000+ houses in the Metropolitan Green Belt over a 15 year Plan period. We are leaving no stone unturned in maximising potential delivery of homes outside of the Green Belt, but there is nowhere near enough land. We are working closely with our neighbouring and nearby Councils on these issues, but they are all either wholly or largely within the Metropolitan Green Belt as well, with limited urban land. There is currently no reasonable prospect of them providing for the housing needs of this district as defined by the 'Standard Method'.

The wording of the National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 61 does provide a theoretical way around this issue – "unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach" - but in practice it is clear from the approach of the Planning Inspectorate at our own previous and multiple other Local Plan Examinations that currently this is merely a theoretical avenue, for Councils in circumstances like our own.

Continued/..

A point of note is that the Government's 'Standard Method' relies upon old data. The Government requires the use of household projection data from the 2014-based Office for National Statistics (ONS) household projections. This 2014 data reflected effectively a one-off 'spike' in household projections for this District and the more recent data is very different, as can be seen in the table below:

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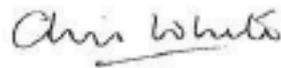
The use of the more recent 2018-based household projections would enable St Albans and many other Councils, particularly within the Metropolitan Green Belt, to deliver new Local Plans, new homes and growth more quickly. The forthcoming new household projections due to be released by ONS in early 2023, based on the 2021 Census data, will be even more accurate in due course.

Lastly, the considerable uncertainty that has been created by statements from members of the Government over time, regarding 'protection of the Green Belt' and as a consequence for Councils how that should be interpreted with regard to the 'Standard Method', impacts greatly on residents and stakeholders. The Planning Inspectorate has made clear that they give no regard to such pronouncements, but inevitably this does cause considerable confusion for everyone. An update to the Standard Method approach and how it should be addressed where it potentially affects Green Belt land would give clarity to all.

The changes needed would not require new legislation or a parliamentary vote. It is a matter of a relatively straightforward update to relevant national guidance.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters in person, as I know would many Council Leaders across Hertfordshire and the wider area across the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Chris White
Leader of the Council
St Albans City & District Council