

## ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN EIP PRE-HEARING STATEMENT: MATTER 1

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Our client, Mr Pete Hutchison, owns land located to the south west of No. 57 to 61 Fishpool Street. A map showing our client's ownership is attached as Appendix 1. The site is suitable, available and deliverable for residential development. The site is sustainably located adjacent to the settlement boundary of St. Albans and benefits from the River Ver as a defensible green belt boundary. It is within within 0.5km of St Albans City Centre and within walking distance of schools and public open space. Further background information on the site has previously been provided within our Regulation 19 representations.
- 1.2 We are concerned that there is no proposal to alter the Metropolitan Green Belt designation to release our client's site from the Green Belt as part of the emerging Local Plan, and further that there has been no adequate localised review process to consider this site and/or other similar sites for their potential to contribute to the Plan's housing strategy and to provide sustainable development. In our client's view, the current draft Local Plan is unsound because the housing strategy for St Albans District Council has not been considered against reasonable alternatives, the draft Local Plan is therefore not justified. It is also inconsistent with national policy guidance as the most sustainable sites have not been considered.
- 1.3 Our response to questions raised by Inspector in relation to Matter 1 is set out below:

### 2.0 MATTER 1: Legal/Procedural Requirements (Introduction)

#### ***Question 3: Does the SA test the Plan against all reasonable alternatives?***

- 2.1 Paragraph 68 of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in February 2019 promotes delivery of small and medium sized sites stating that *"they can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly."*
- 2.2 It is evident that, during the Local Plan preparation process, insufficient consideration has been given to smaller and medium sized sites in sustainable locations with access to facilities beneficial for development. The Council solely focused on strategic sites over the small and medium sites which provide reasonable alternatives. Indeed, by failing to give adequate consideration of the opportunities provided by medium and small sized sites as a reasonable alternative to the currently proposed larger, strategic sites proposed in isolation, the Council's Local Plan is currently in conflict with the NPPF and should therefore be considered unsound. This inadequacy is underlined by draft Policy S4, which highlights the difficulty for the short term delivery of housing across the district by setting a housing requirement of only 565 homes per annum for the period to 2025, and then doubling this requirement for the latter periods from 2025 until 2036 in a bid to "catch up" this initial shortfall in housing delivery.

- 2.3 At present the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing supply due to lack of small and medium sites being made available for development, therefore it is surprising that the negative consequences of the Council's proposed approach in the draft Local Plan which is likely to result in potential shortfall in the housing delivery over the plan period because of lack of smaller sites have been ignored in the Sustainability Appraisal. As such, we are specifically concerned that the long-term effects of the site selection process that require an objective and detailed assessment in the SA to clearly identify their contribution to the much-needed housing delivery have not been considered as part of the Local Plan preparation process.

***Question 4: Have any concerns been raised about the SA?***

- 2.4 During the consultation process a number of representees raised concerns surrounding the draft Local Plan being developed without detailed consideration of options and reasonable alternatives. However, it is clear from the Addendum to The Sustainability Appraisal (2019) that the concerns raised have been ignored, given that none of the representations have resulted in major changes being made to the information or findings that were included in the Publication SA Report (September 2018).
- 2.5 Our client has been involved in the Local Plan preparation from the start and made many submissions to various consultations. However, no further consideration or review of either our client's site or other similar such sites around St Albans City and the wider local authority area has been undertaken. Indeed, the wider strategy for housing provision in St Albans does not appear to have been further adequately considered.
- 2.6 It is evident that the Council's Local Plan process has failed to give greater, more detailed consideration to the Green Belt boundary review over and above the proposed strategic sites currently referred to in the draft housing strategy. In this context, we would reiterate that no consideration or review of our client's site, in the context of the SHLAA or the wider housing strategy, has been carried out since the relatively brief "tick-box" exercise undertaken as part of the 2009 SHLAA. This review was undertaken almost a decade ago, is out of date and cannot be considered to form part of a robust evidence base in the context of the currently proposed Local Plan, particularly given that it pre-dates even the 2012 NPPF - let alone the recently-published revised version.

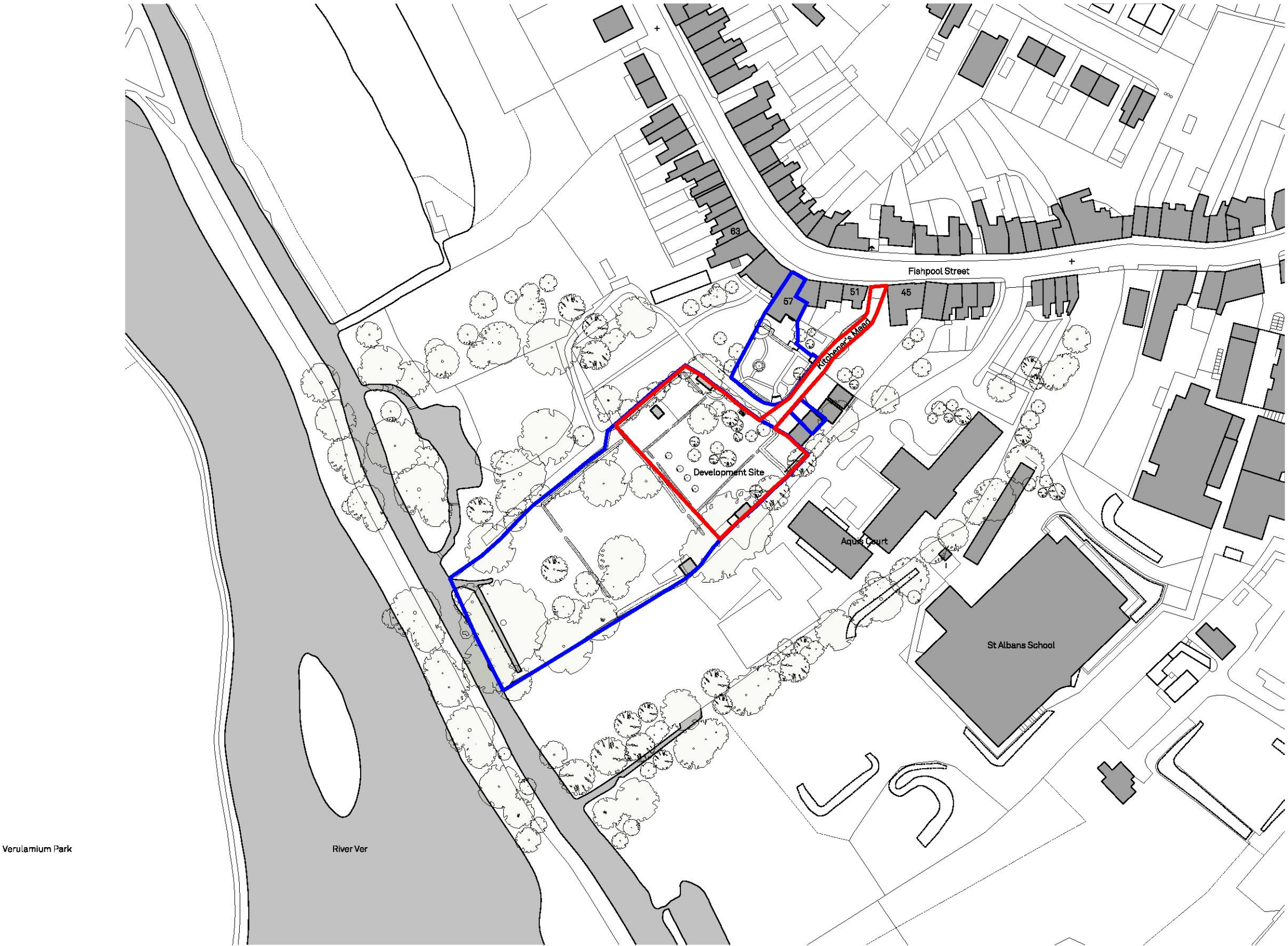
**3.0 Summary**

- 3.1 In summary, it is our opinion that the Sustainability Assessment is not sound because sufficient alternatives have not been adequately tested.
- 3.2 The draft Local Plan was developed since the Government have published a new NPPF (2019). The revised NPPF replaces the previous 2012 NPPF and now provides overarching planning policy guidance for England (which also refers to plan-making, and the Green Belt review process). In context of the new planning policy guidance, our client is concerned that there is no evidence that the draft Local Plan has been fully justified as the Council has not examined the appropriateness of alternative sites in the full capacity.
- 3.3 For the above reasons, we request that the Council undertakes a further, comprehensive and thorough review process in this context, and specifically to give detailed consideration to an amendment to the Green Belt boundary at our client's site which is a sustainable location, partially developed brownfield land forming a natural part of the urban conurbation. As such, it is evident that the residential use at the site would be consistent with the local context and make a modest but

important contribution the Council's housing supply over the plan period and as it stands the draft Local Plan unnecessarily places constraints by restricting the new development and use of the site.

## **Appendices Contents**

Appendix 1: Site Location Plan (page 5)



Revisions				
P5	Planning	JH	AH	SADC 26.09.14
P4	Draft Planning	JH	AH	Client 04.07.14
P3	GA Update	JH	AH	Client 10.03.14
P2	Pre-Planning	JH	AH	Client 21.01.14
P1	Draft Pre-Planning	JH	AH	Client 17.01.14
Rev.	Description	Drawn	Check	Issued to Date issued

**Notes**

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Do not scale from drawings.

Errors to be reported immediately to the Architect.

To be read in conjunction with all relevant Architects', Services and Structural Engineers' drawings.

All existing site, tree and building information has been compiled from different sources.

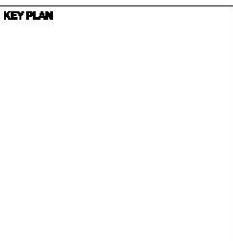
All dimensions to be checked on site.

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<b>Project</b>	Fishpool Street	<b>Project No.</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>Client</b>	Pete & Jules		
<b>Date</b>	15 January 2014	<b>Drawn</b>	JH
<b>Scale / Format</b>	1:1250@A3	<b>Checked</b>	AH
<b>CAD Reference</b>	P:\Projects\2014\CAD\190\190.dwg	<b>Approved</b>	
<b>Drawing Name</b>	Existing Location Plan	<b>Drawing No.</b>	190_X_10_00
		<b>Issue</b>	<b>P5</b>