



## **Examination of St Albans City and District Local Plan**

### **Matter 1 – Legal / Procedural Requirements**

#### **Historic England, Hearing Statement**

**December 2019**

Historic England is the principal Government adviser on the historic environment, advising it on planning and listed building consent applications, appeals and other matters generally affecting the historic environment. Historic England is consulted on Local Development Plans under the provisions of the duty to co-operate and provides advice to ensure that legislation and national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework are thereby reflected in local planning policy and practice.

The tests of soundness require that Local Development Plans should be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. Historic England's representations on the Publication Draft Local Plan are made in the context of the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework") in relation to the historic environment as a component of sustainable development.

# **Historic England Hearing Statement**

## **Introduction**

- 1.1 This statement addresses the Inspector's questions with regards Matter 1: Legal/Procedural Requirements of the Local Plan.
- 1.2 This hearing statement should be read alongside Historic England's comments submitted at previous consultation stages of the Local Plan, and our Hearing Statements for Matters 2, 6, and 7.

## **Matters and Issues for St Albans City and District Local Plan**

### **Issues**

#### **Matter 1 – Legal / Procedural Requirements**

##### **Sustainability Appraisal**

#### **2. Are the likely environmental, social and economic effects of the Plan adequately and accurately assessed in the Sustainability Appraisal (SA)?**

2.1. It is Historic England's view that the heritage impacts of the proposed Broad Locations for Development have not been adequately assessed by the Council, which in turn has meant that the SA has been unable to properly determine the likely effects on the historic environment.

2.2. Historic England has highlighted the need for further evidence in relation to the historic environment and the Broad Locations for Development, including most recently in our response to the Publication Draft in October 2018. Our responses to these formal stages indicated that Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) were required to inform and justify the identification of Broad Locations and to help initiate these, a meeting was also offered (See Historic England's response to the Regulation 19 Publication Draft 2018, dated 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018).

2.3. We are therefore surprised that no further work has been undertaken in this respect, and it is disappointing that the Council did not seek to engage constructively on these matters. Without these HIAs it is difficult to undertake a thorough sustainability appraisal, a fact highlighted by the sustainability appraisal which concludes that there is "uncertainty in relation to the effects on 'historic environment'" in relation the Broad Locations for Development, particularly in respect the sites which comprise the east Hemel Hempstead urban extension (S6i, S6ii, S6iii, and S6 iv).

2.4 A sustainability appraisal is only as good as the evidence that underpins it, and the lack of evidence in relation to the Broad Location has meant that the sustainability appraisal has not been able to properly assess the impacts of the allocation of these locations on the historic environment, and has led to an over-simplification and lack of differentiation between the various sites. Therefore we cannot be confident that the Plan, as submitted, safeguards the historic environment in line with the requirements of the NPPF.

#### **4. Have any concerns been raised about the SA?**

4.1. Historic England has highlighted the need for further evidence in relation to the historic environment and the broad locations for development which would inform the SA of these broad locations, including most recently in our response to the Publication Draft in October 2018. Our responses to these formal stages indicated that Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) were required to inform and justify the identification of Broad Locations and to help initiate these, a meeting was also offered (See Historic England's response to the Regulation 19 Publication Draft 2018, dated 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018).

4.2. We are therefore surprised that no further work has been undertaken in this respect, and it is disappointing that the Council did not seek to engage constructively on these matters.

4.3. The absence of this information has meant that the SA has been unable to properly determine the likely effects on the historic environment resulting from these proposals.

4.4. In relation to the SA assessments themselves, our regulation 19 response highlighted that for a number of the Broad Locations, key heritage assets were not taken into account in the assessment process. There is therefore a concern that this lack of appropriate consideration may have in effect skewed the scoring and accompanying conclusions. For example, in relation S6i (East Hemel Hempstead (North) Broad Location) we noted that the Sustainability Appraisal referred to just three Listed Buildings at Wood End Farmhouse in concluding that the effects of the allocation on the historic environment were uncertain. It is considered that the omission of the assets to the east centred on Gorhambury would have affected the efficacy of these conclusions in this instance. This lack of completeness in identifying relevant assets is also the case for S6ii, S6iii, S6iv, S6vi, S6vii, and S6ix and so it is clear that the SA requires further review to address this. In this respect Historic England cannot be satisfied that the likely significant effects on the historic environment have been appropriately determined.

#### **6. There is a Submission addendum to the SA Report dated March 2019. Has this been consulted on? If not should it have been?**

6.1. Historic England is not aware of a Submission addendum to the SA report, and has not been consulted on this document.