



## **ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN (2020-2036) EXAMINATION**

**MATTER 7 – THE BROAD LOCATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT – SPECIFIC MATTERS  
EAST HEMEL HEMPSTEAD (SOUTH) – POLICY S6 (III)**

**Statement of behalf of Centurion Golf Club  
December 2019**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by DLA Town Planning Ltd in response to the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions for the St Albans City and District Local Plan 2020-2036.
- 1.2 The statement is written on behalf of Centurion Golf Club.

## 2.0 **MATTER 7 – The Broad Locations for Development – Specific Matters – East Hemel Hempstead (south) – Policy S6 (iii)**

### **Main Issue**

- 2.1 Whether the detailed policy for each broad location for development is justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

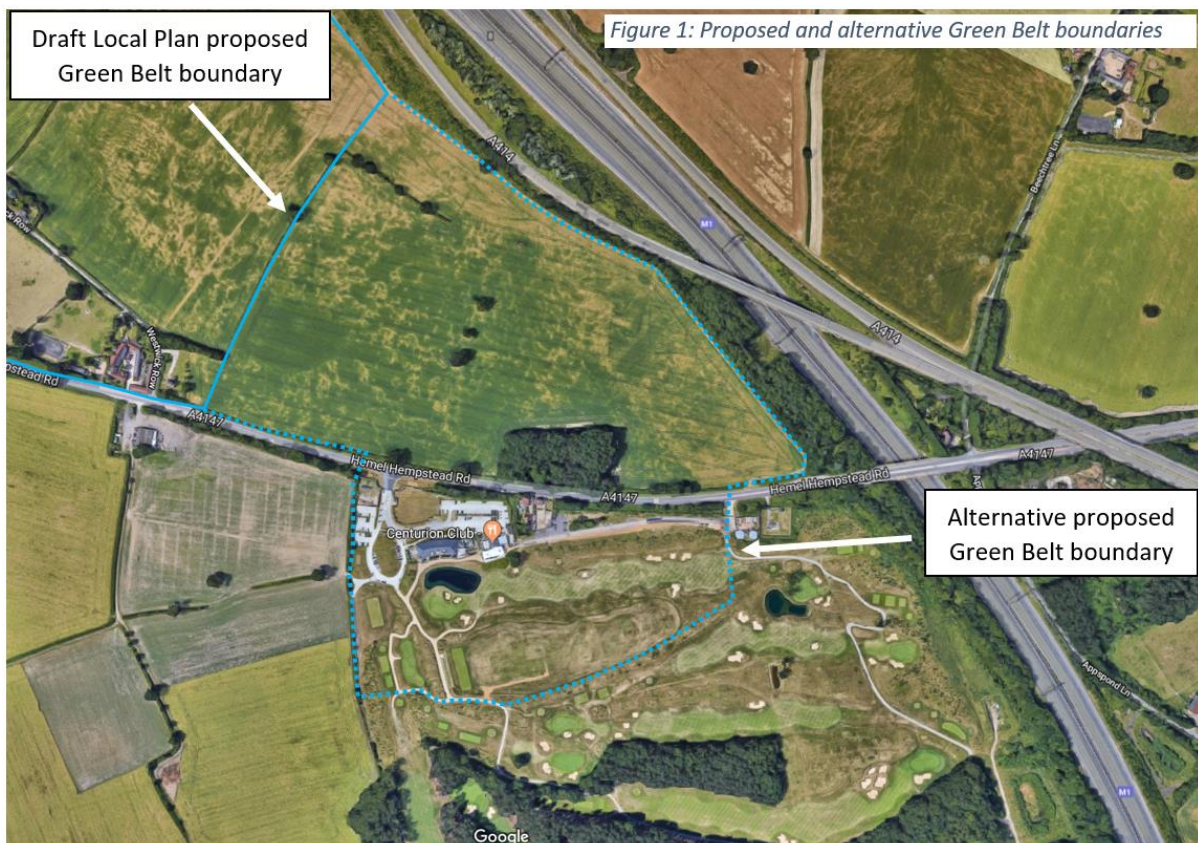
*Question 1 – Is the site suitable for housing and are there any specific constraints or requirements associated with it, or the need for mitigation measures?*

- 2.2 The proposed Broad Location at East Hemel Hempstead is suitable, in principle, for housing. However, the location of the proposed Green Belt boundary is not sound in that it is not consistent with Government policy.
- 2.3 Most of the other proposed Broad Locations in the draft Local Plan have their boundaries based on the Council's Green Belt Review Sites and Boundaries Study undertaken by SKM in February 2014. However, the original area East of Hemel Hempstead recommended by SKM has been extended in the draft Local Plan so there is now no technical work to suggest a proposed boundary.
- 2.4 The Regulation 19 representations on behalf of Centurion Golf Club set out our concerns with the location of the proposed Green Belt boundary. It is proposed to run along a hedgerow in some places and in others it runs through an open field. This is not considered to reflect government policy in paragraph 139(f) that requires the Council to "define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent".
- 2.5 An alternative Green Belt boundary could be drawn using the M1 and Hemel Hempstead Road as boundaries. However, doing so then presents the opportunity of addressing the situation at Centurion Golf Club.
- 2.6 The Regulation 19 representations highlighted the high profile of the golf club, having hosted several European Tour events and is scheduled to hold the first LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association) to be staged anywhere outside of the United States. However, providing the type of facilities required from a world-class, elite-level golf facility has been extremely difficult because of the constraints posed by the Green Belt. The example of overnight accommodation was raised in the October 2018 representations and this issue has still not been resolved. Demonstrating "Very Special Circumstances" in the context of a planning application is a notoriously high bar and frustrates many forms of development. This issue would be resolved were

some of the land associated with the golf course to be removed from the Green Belt. The current draft Local Plan process represents an opportunity to revisit and resolve the issue, particularly since Green Belt changes are proposed on the opposite side of the road.

2.7 As set out in the October 2018 representations, a number of options exist on where the boundary could be located. A further iteration is included at Figure 1 below. This removes an area of land around the clubhouse and car park but also creates opportunities on the existing practice ground. The practice ground has previously been promoted for development purposes through the Call for Sites. Development here would help support the golf club and enable it to achieve its long-term aspirations. In doing so, it helps to consolidate the club's position and provide a permanent green buffer between Hemel Hempstead and St Albans. Removing a relatively small area of land from the Green Belt here would help secure the remainder over the long-term.

2.8 The proposed boundary shown in Figure 1 follows a hedgerow on its western boundary and then follows the existing mound along the southern side of the practice ground. The eastern boundary would be made up a mix of existing bunding, access tracks and the perimeter of the Centurion Club. This new boundary could be landscaped to create a new permanent and defensible boundary.



### 3.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 In conclusion, the location of the proposed Green Belt boundary in the draft Local Plan is not sound as it is not consistent with Government policy. A revised boundary is needed.
- 3.2 When considering where the new Green Belt boundary should be located, regard needs to be had to the importance of the Centurion Golf Club and their plans to continue to hold professional golf tournaments and the substantial economic benefit that brings for the area. The Green Belt designation makes these plans very difficult to achieve.
- 3.3 A revised Green Belt boundary is proposed that would release land for housing but also help the club to achieve its long-term ambitions without impacting on the wider purposes of the Green Belt.