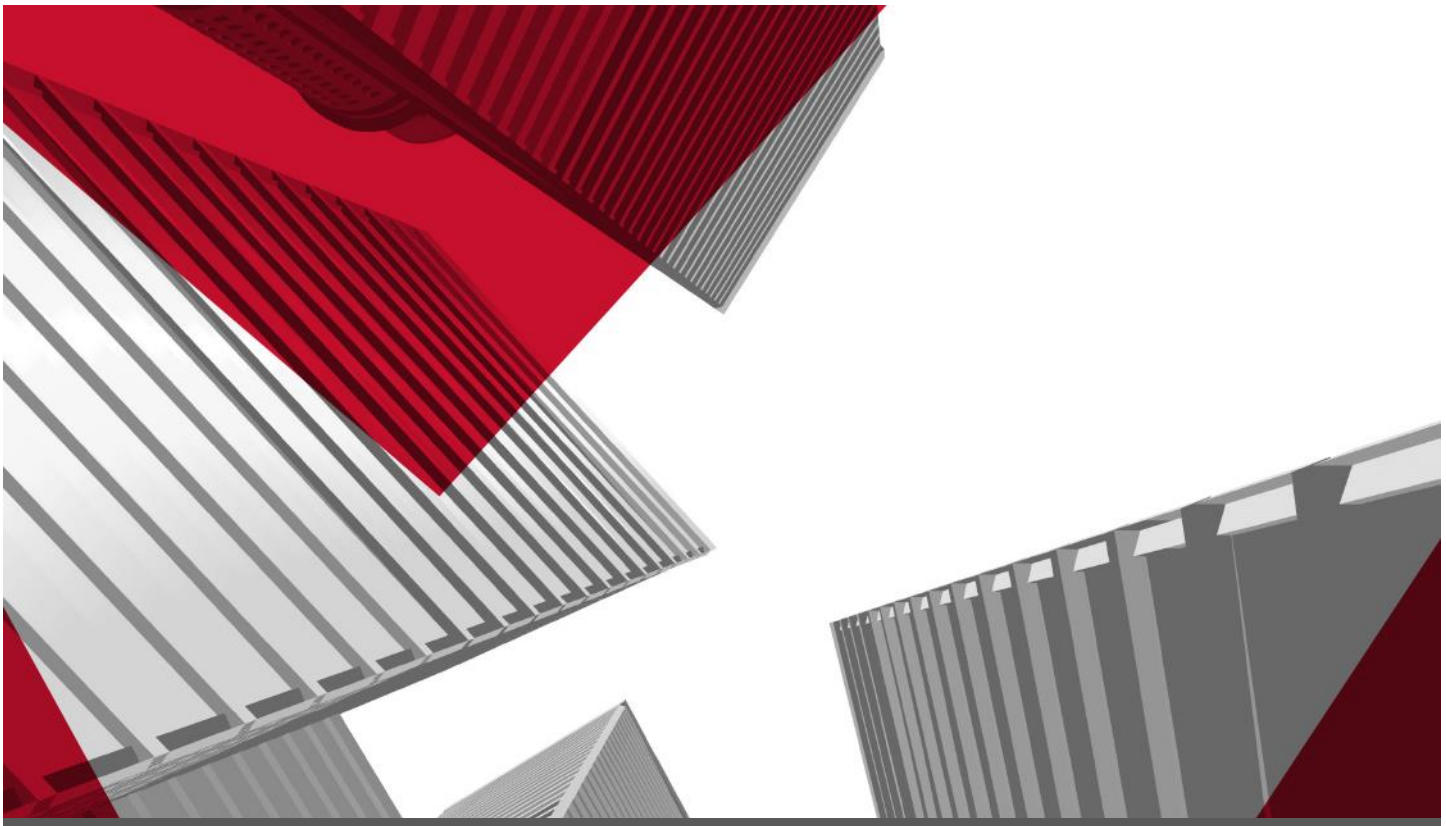

ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

EXAMINATION STATEMENT

Lambert Smith Hampton

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared in connection with the forthcoming examination of the St Albans City and District Local Plan, and in particular in response to Matters 6 and 7 set out by the Local Plan Inspector in the Stage 1 Matters, Issues and Questions (Item ED26).

1.2 Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) act for the landowner of the parcel of land (approximately 8.4 hectares) to the north west of the Napsbury Park Estate. Previous submissions have been made to the Council about the land and Local Plan through the Draft Local Plan consultation 2016; Call for Sites 2017; Call for Sites 2018; and the Local Plan Regulation 19 2018 consultation.

1.3 Figure 1 below shows the original illustrative concept plan prepared for the site and submitted to the Council throughout the consultation process of the Local Plan for consideration. Based on an assumption of 60% developable land, and a density of 30 dwellings per hectare, the land has the potential to deliver around 250 dwellings.

1.4 This statement provides some historical context to the site north of Napsbury Park Estate; and, reviews the Park Street Garden Village allocation and how this site could assist in its delivery and wide connection to the surrounding area. It also provides a further response in terms of Matters 6 and 7 raised by the Local Plan Inspector (Item ED26).

Figure 1 – Original illustrative concept plan for land north west of Napsbury Park Estate

2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1 The site north west of Napsbury Park Estate is located within a Park and Gardens associated with the Napsbury Hospital Garden, but is now vacant scrubland. There are references to early Napsbury within the Doomsday Book, and a suggestion of the existence of a lost medieval settlement.

2.2 The Middlesex County Asylum was founded in 1898 with the hospital designed in a country estate style in 1900 by architect Rowland Plumbe and the grounds were designed by Landscape Architect Williman Goldring. The hospital opened on 3rd June 1905.

2.3 Napsbury was used as a hospital through to its official closure in 1998. The plan below (Figure 2), shows the hospital and surrounding buildings from 1937 through to 1961. Of particular reference on this historical plan is the railway line running to the west of the site; sidings to the west of the main line; and, sidings to the east through the site and connecting to the hospital. The plan also makes reference on the plan to Napsbury Station.

2.4 Figure 3 shows a photograph of Napsbury Station, which was an island platform serving the Midland Railway on its line to London St Pancras station.

2.5 This historical context establishes a physical connection between London Colney, the Napsbury Park Estate and the parcel of land to the north west of the Estate. It also provides the historical context in support of a new railway station being promoted by the Hertfordshire County Council's Park Street Garden Village Broad Location (see Vincent Gorbing Representation dated October 2018).

2.6 After the closure of the hospital, Crest Nicholson acquired the site and built the current residential development now known as Napsbury Park and was sympathetically designed around the existing wood and parkland areas. The Park now consists of approximately 500 residences spread over newly built detached, terraced and townhouses with apartments converted from the original buildings. Features within the Park Estate include multi-use tennis courts, cricket and sports pitches, sports pavilion building and footpaths throughout the extensive woodland. Napsbury Park Estate continues to be shown within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

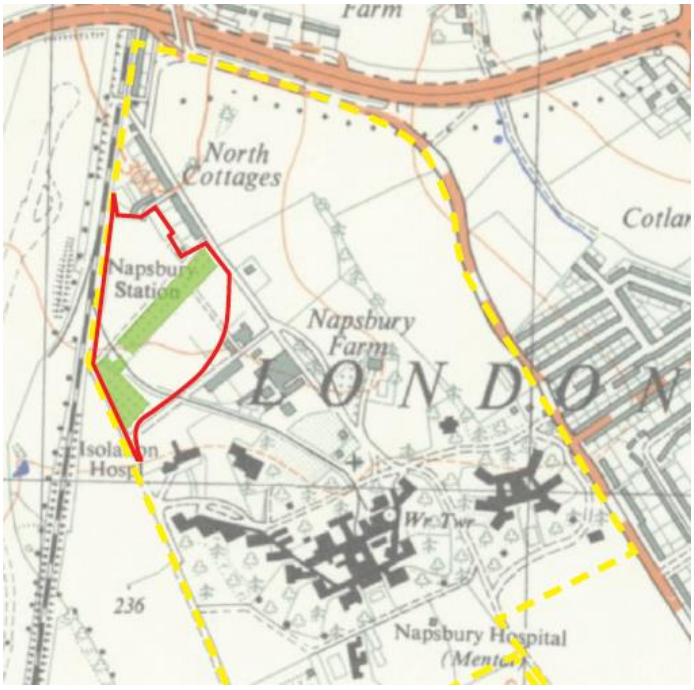

Figure 2 – 1937 to 1961

Figure 3 – Photograph of Napsbury Station

3 MATTER 6 – THE BROAD LOCATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT (POLICY S6) – GENERAL MATTERS (POLICY S6) AND STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE (POLICIES L17 AND L18)

3.1 The Local Plan inspector has raised a specific question in respect of the Council allocating larger scale sites and whether they have considered the advice in paragraphs 72 a-d of the NPPF. This paragraph within the NPPF highlights that significant numbers of new homes can be best achieved through planning large scale development, but that development must be identified in suitable locations for such developments and where this can help meet identified needs in a sustainable way. Criteria b) of paragraph 72 in particular promotes sustainable communities and seeks the provision of sufficient access to services and employment opportunities in larger towns to which there is good access.

3.2 The new Local Plan promotes a hierarchy of settlements in Policy S1 of the new Local Plan, with London Colney highlighted as a Category 1 main urban settlement. Park Street Garden Village, Park Street and Frogmore and Chiswell Green are all identified as a lower Category 2 large village settlements. Taking on board the categorisation of London Colney as a main urban settlement, it is considered that the new Local Plan should promote greater infrastructure investment towards larger settlements, such as London Colney, where this investment would have greater impact.

3.3 It is considered that the new Local Plan misses an opportunity to promote investment into London Colney and to establish clear sustainable infrastructure links through to the proposed Park Street Village Broad Location.

3.4 The Local Plan proposes a Broad Location for development at West of London Colney (policy S6 ix), with a new secondary school. This Broad Location is however is self-contained to the west side of the town, with no promotion of sustainable links such as cycleways to the west. It is acknowledged that the railway line to the west of the London Colney and Napsbury Park Estate presents a physical barrier, but further consideration should be given to how sustainable connections could be made between London Colney/Napsbury Park Estate through to the Park Street Village Broad Location.

3.5 The proposed Park Street Village Broad Location Local Plan policy S6 xi) promotes a step-change in the services on the Abbey Railway Line. It is noted that in their Regulation 19 Local Plan representation dated 16th October 2018, Network Rail comment that the Abbey Railway line scheme promoted by St Albans City and District Council is not a committed rail industry scheme and delivery would be subject to a feasibility study and funding, together with necessary consents. Network Rail also comment that they cannot support any increase in frequency along the Abbey line unless the level crossing at Cotton Mill is closed.

3.6 This therefore raises significant concerns over whether the Abbey Line improvements proposed by the Policy S6 xi) can be delivered, and questions the benefits of its upgrade.

3.7 Vincent Gorbing (VG) submitted representations on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council (October 2018) promoting the Park Street Garden Village. The masterplan prepared by VG proposes a new railway station on the Midland Mainline in the location of the old Napsbury station. This is proposed as an additional/alternative rail infrastructure improvement to facilitate the Garden Village proposal.

3.8 Whilst this proposed infrastructure improvement at the old Napsbury station location is not proposed through the new Local Plan policies, it is supported by the landowner of the land north west of Napsbury Park Estate. Whilst the principle of the new station at Park Street Garden Village/Naspbury is supported, it is not considered that potential links through to the new station from Napsbury and London Colney, have been given full consideration. This new station on the Midland Mainline could promote a significant infrastructure improvement with links to both the Park Street Garden Village, Napsbury and London Colney, with a much wider positive impact than the current Local Plan proposals to only upgrade the Abbey Line.

3.9 It is considered that the Park Street Garden Village Broad Location policy S6 xi) should include promotion of a new railway station on the Midland Mainline north west of Napsbury Park Estate, with further criteria promoting sustainable links through to Napsbury and London Colney.

3.10 This additional rail link/improvement on the Midland Mainline should also be promoted through Policies L17 and L18 of the new Local Plan. These policies promote sustainable development and infrastructure improvements, but do not consider the significant opportunities of how to achieve sustainable links between the Park Street Village, Napsbury and London Colney, and improved rail links into St Albans and London.

4 MATTER 7 – THE BROAD LOCATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT – SPECIFIC MATTERS (POLICY S6 XI)

4.1 The significant wider positive benefits of including a new railway station at land north west of Napsbury (promoted by VG on behalf HCC) has been highlighted in section 3 of this statement. It has been proposed that reference should be made to this infrastructure opportunity within Policy S6 xi), L17 and L18. It is proposed through this statement that the land north west of Napsbury presents an opportunity to provide enhanced sustainable links through to a new station on the Midland Mainline, and that the location of new housing (around 250 dwellings) in this location would provide a sustainable option for delivery of housing within the new Local Plan.

4.2 It is therefore proposed that either Policy S6 xi) is amended or a new policy created to acknowledge the potential for infrastructure work on land north of Napsbury Park Estate to assist the accommodation of the new railway station and associated works, and sustainable links through to Napsbury and London Colney. It is also proposed that the amended or new policy also includes reference to the promotion of housing in close proximity to the new station on the Midland Mainline, including housing on land north of Napsbury Park Estate. This would promote the most sustainable location for housing.

4.3 Network Rail make further representations to Policy S6 xi) about the allocation of the whole Park Street site as a Garden Village is in direct opposition to the outline consent for the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI). Network Rail acknowledge that some development could be accommodated in the north west corner of the Garden Village broad location, but that this would have to not prejudice the delivery of the freight facility.

4.4 Taking into account the comment raised by Network Rail and if it is considered that Policy S6 xi) is amended to be flexible to allow the accommodation of the SRFI, this provides further support that the site north west of Napsbury Park Estate could part assist in offsetting the land retained for the SRFI use and lost for housing within the Garden Village. This approach would maintain the SRFI, deliver the Park Street Garden Village, and promote a more sustainable form of development to the benefit of the new Garden Village, Napsbury and London Colney.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 In conclusion, this statement has set out proposed modifications to Policy S6 xi) to accommodate the potential for a new railway station on the Midland Mainline between London and St Albans on the site of the old Napsbury railway station.

5.2 It is also proposed that Policy S6 xi), L17 and L18 should also be modified to promote enhanced sustainable links between the Park Street Garden Village Broad Location, Napsbury and London Colney.

5.3 Policy S6 xi) should be amended or new policy created to propose housing on land north west of Napsbury Park Estate (around 250 dwellings), in a highly sustainable location.