

Green Guide to the Local Plan consultation

This guide is to help you fill in the Local Plan ‘Have your say’ consultation. It doesn’t tell you what to do, but gives some ideas for filling in answers and giving comments. These ideas are based on discussions between some local Green Party officers in St Albans including our Green Councillor.

The ‘Have your say’ booklet asks you to give your answers online. There are some background documents online that you might find interesting (though not the Local Plan itself as that’s not been written yet). However, it’s difficult to navigate the website and to enter and save your answers. So you might prefer to fill in the paper version.



The Council has told us that you don’t have to put numbers in all the boxes in your answers – you could just put 1, 2 and 3 for example. And if you think two or more options are equally important, you can give some or all of them the same number. Your answers will still count.

Getting our priorities right

Q1. All the priorities listed are worthy principles and should balance each other. So we suggest you put the number 1 in every box.

Comments you could add:

- Ranking these priorities is difficult in these abstract terms and fairly pointless as an exercise. This is because they all depend on and affect each other.
- They are all important.
- If there is any building on the green belt there must be strict conditions.
- There is also no mention here of developing in a truly sustainable way. In particular, environmental sustainability is crucial if we are to build successful communities.
- It’s crucial that any housing is generally affordable for all.

Build homes in the right place

Q2. We suggest you rank 'Build on 8 areas' first, and 'create new Garden Villages' last.

This is because we think building in these places has the least overall impact, and the most potential for building sustainably. Of course, we would rather there was no building on the Green Belt. But the political reality is that either St Albans Council does it and chooses where, or the government will do it for us in a much less favourable way. Garden villages are unlikely to be very sustainable under this administration, and would potentially remove valuable green belt, so we would oppose those.

Q3. We suggest you circle an orange face for 'build on 8 areas', and a red face for each of the other options.

Comments you could add:

- The Council should vigorously lobby central government to change the planning rules so that we are not obliged to build thousands of homes in our district.
- Any building anywhere must use sustainable methods, especially in the Green Belt, and be truly affordable.
- Any development on any part of the Green Belt should be subject to very strict criteria.
- Use and expand existing infrastructure where possible.
- Developments should be located close to sustainable means of transport – walking cycling, and public transport.
- The Local Plan should include sustainability standards, such as renewable energy and low carbon requirements.



Build the right kind of homes

Q4. Your response to this question will of course be influenced by your personal experience. We believe that the greatest demand across the district is for these four types of housing, so suggest you make them your top four choices:

- Social rented housing
- Affordable rented housing
- Small/medium family homes
- Homes for older people

Q5. None of the 8 options are bad, so you might circle a green or light green face for all of them.

Comments you could add:

- We should prioritise lots of small developers over a few large developers.
- As St Albans is so expensive, the Council should require developers to provide social and affordable housing that is cheaper than the 60% and 80% figures.
- The Council should look into other housing needs such as homes for younger disabled people, and the housing needs of people who are homeless.
- We should build low energy housing with high insulation standards, including for rented properties. This would make the housing more affordable to live in.
- We should build homes that minimize waste. It should be as easy to recycle in a flat as it is in a house.

Provide local jobs

Q6. This is much to agree with in the approach to jobs that is outlined, so you might circle a green or light green face for this question. But this is also an opportunity to suggest ways of making the local economy more sustainable and encouraging independent local businesses.

Comments you could add:

- We need to encourage and support local businesses, local food producers, social enterprises, sustainable businesses, independent traders and producers.
- We should explore how to make the city centre and other population centres more pedestrian friendly, to support the local area as a place to live, work and spend time, not simply something to travel through.
- We support the ambition to develop green-minded business in the district, though this has been talked about for a long time - we now need to see action and results.

Protect the Green Belt

Q7. We think that the method described is a good basis for identifying potential land for building in the Green Belt - **if** building is what we have to do. So you might circle a green or light green face here.

Comments you might add:

- As well as the five listed criteria, the Council should carry out impact assessments of the wider environmental impacts of building in each area. For example, the loss of farmland and food production, the effect of water abstraction, the location of areas liable to flooding, and other effects on the local ecology.
- Consider the loss of quality of life that people already living in the local area might suffer.

Protect our historic buildings, wildlife sites and areas of natural beauty

Q8. No one is likely to choose NOT to protect these things. Neither does the Council have much discretion or motive to allow them to be lost. So you can safely circle green or light green faces here.

Comments you might add:

- The health of rivers has been neglected by this Council for many years. So the current plans to attempt to improve the Ver must be given the support they need to succeed.
- Each new development should be preceded by the widest possible environmental impact assessment, and not be allowed to threaten environmental features like river levels, biodiversity and wildlife.
- The Council should identify and protect a network of green spaces or 'green oases' across the district.
- We should also talk to and work with residents so that people understand the value of our historic and natural treasures.

Get the transport, schools and other infrastructure we need

Q9. School places are a vexed issue, but the County Council has a duty to provide enough places, so there seems little point in the Local Plan prioritising this. The issues that risk being overlooked are the ones we suggest you rank highly:

- Better public transport
- New or improved cycling and walking facilities
- New parks, allotments, playing fields

Comments you might add:

As well as listing any infrastructure you feel your area particularly needs, you could mention the following:

- Any new development must come with bike lanes and good quality pedestrian access.
- Infrastructure must take air quality and traffic congestion into account - building more roads simply attracts more traffic.
- The Council should acknowledge that car ownership will go up massively with all the new homes, and require the new infrastructure to make it easy for people to use other modes of transport.
- Look into pedestrianising congested and polluted areas and setting up park and ride.
- Encourage walking, and limit parking places for workplaces.

