



Appendix 17.1

Planning Policy Context

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National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024)

- 1.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policy and in combination these policies give the Government's vision of sustainable development. The NPPF emphasises the need for well-designed places, promoting healthy and safe communities and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 1.2 Regarding landscape and green infrastructure, the Natural Environment section of the NPPF provides a policy context for the countryside and green infrastructure. The key objectives include protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- 1.3 Paragraph 187 states at part a) that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes and goes on to clarify that this should be in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan. Part b) states that planning policies and decisions should recognise *"the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside"*.
- 1.4 Paragraph 188 advises that:
- 1.5 *"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries"*.
- 1.6 Paragraph 189 goes on to add:
- 1.7 *"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues", and*
- 1.8 *"The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."*
- 1.9 The site is within an undesignated landscape with no special protected status and is not adjacent to, nor does it form part of the setting of, the Chilterns National Landscape located to the north-west. The character of the site and its immediate context is assessed within this report to help inform decisions regarding *"the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside"*. The potential to enhance green infrastructure networks is also considered.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 1.10 The PPG is a regularly updated online planning resource which provides guidance on the NPPF and the planning system. The NPPF continues to be the primary document for decision making.

Local Planning Policy

- 1.11 Policy relevant to the Proposed Development in respect of landscape and visual matters is outlined below.

St Albans City and District Council (SADC) District Local Plan Review 1994 (Adopted November 1994) – Saved and Deleted Policies Version (July 2020)

- 1.12 **Policy 1: Metropolitan Green Belt** ...protects land in the Green Belt from development except in very special circumstances.
- 1.13 **Policy 69: General Design and Layout** requires all development to have a high standard of design that responds to context, materials and other relevant policies.
- 1.14 **Policy 70: Design and Layout of New Housing** requires that new housing development has regard to its setting and the character of its surrounding context while meeting a range of objectives.
- 1.15 **Policy 74: Landscaping and Tree Preservation** acknowledges the importance of retaining healthy trees and other landscape features within new developments as well as the provision of new landscaping and incorporation of wildlife corridors.
- 1.16 **Policy 75: Green Space within Settlements** protects land in open use, ensuring any future development maintains its character, strategic function if applicable, and provides wildlife opportunities through the design and landscaping.
- 1.17 **Policy 80: Floodlighting** acknowledges the potential impacts of floodlighting on visual amenity and ecology.
- 1.18 **Policy 97: Existing Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycleways** protects against the loss of definitive rights of way and non-definitive footpaths/ cycleways.

St Albans City and District Council (SADC) Draft Local Plan 2041 – Regulation 19 Publication (September 2024)

- 1.19 **Strategic Policy SP3: Land and the Green Belt** outlines the requirement for Green Belt boundary adjustments to meet housing need within the district, focussing on the Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) Programme – “*an ambitious cross-boundary proposal to transform Hemel Hempstead...*”. The site is identified as Broad Location ‘H1 – North Hemel Hempstead’.
- 1.20 Further detail and specific requirements are set out in the following policies:-
- LG1: Broad Locations – including:-
 - m) “*Normally retain significant healthy trees and other important landscape features;*
 - n) *Plant at least 1 semi-mature tree for each dwelling...;*
 - o) *Provide new or provide contributions to enhance existing strategic, sports facilities, local and recreational public open space, including managed woodland and ecological network links;*
 - p) *Positively relate and integrate the development to the surrounding buildings and landscape, and be informed by a comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which addresses the recommendations of the Council’s Landscape and Visual Appraisal 2024;*
 - r) *Ensure that land use, density, landscaping and form have regard to the topography of the site and identified landscape impacts.”*
 - LG3: Hemel Garden Communities Growth Areas Place Principles – “*the design and delivery of the HGC Growth Areas within the Hemel Garden Communities Programme Area must adhere to the following requirements:*” including:-

"Pillar 1 – Green Network

- a) Achieve and seek to exceed at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG);
- b) Provide Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) as part of an appropriate mitigation strategy for Chilterns Beechwood Special Area of Conservation (CBSAC);
- c) Provide a variety of supporting green and blue infrastructure such as parks, open spaces, greenways, ecological corridors, sustainable drainage solutions. Sports and leisure facilities, food growing and health and wellbeing projects as outlined in the HGC Framework and Transformation SPD;
- d) The delivery and layout of development should be landscape-led and should include early delivery of open space and structural landscaping in order to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the Chilterns National Landscape, views in and out and its setting in perpetuity;...
- h) Enhance and improve Public Rights of Way including to existing local footpath links and wider countryside access;

Pillar 2 – Integrated Neighbourhoods

- f) Minimise the impact on the surrounding landscape setting, including the Chilterns National Landscape and its setting..."

1.21 **Strategic Policy SP10: Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Green and Blue Infrastructure** states that:-

"The Council will protect and enhance green and blue infrastructure for its role in combating Climate Change and supporting biodiversity, along with its value for recreation, health and wellbeing, and landscape value. The Council will support the overall aims and objectives of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as it applies to SADC. Tree planting and tree care in both rural and urban locations is a priority for the Council and will be required as part of new developments.

The Council will support proposals that ensure the protection and improvement of the District's green infrastructure and the wider natural environment, where the proposals:-

- a) Connect to existing green infrastructure assets including opportunities to enhance connections and extensions to Public Rights of Way and other rights of way used by the public, where appropriate;
- b) Explore opportunities to add to the District's green infrastructure, including key linear spaces;
- c) Avoid the loss, fragmentation or reduced functionality of green infrastructure and restore them within a development site where practical;
- d) Contribute towards local green infrastructure projects via planning obligations, where appropriate;
- e) Secure provision of long term maintenance through Section 106 agreements, including for Green Belt Compensatory Improvements;
- f) Make appropriate contributions towards the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS), where the proposal is for additional housing within the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (CBSAC) Zone of Influence (ZOI). Such development proposals will also need to make provision for a new Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), or alternatively contribute towards the maintenance of a suitable SANG project elsewhere; and
- g) Have regard to the Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy."

1.22 **NEB1: Woodlands, Trees and Landscape Features** ...promotes the enhancement and protection of existing woodlands, trees and landscape features within any new development, requiring that "development

proposals within the Broad Locations must demonstrate the delivery of a minimum of at least 1 semi-mature tree for each dwelling, predominantly of native local species and where possible grown entirely within the UK”.

- 1.23 **NEB7: Biodiversity Provision in the Design of New Buildings and Open Spaces** requires development proposals to have regard to biodiversity present within a site and to maximise provision within the building fabric and open spaces.
- 1.24 **NEB8: Managing Flood Risk** states that, *“where appropriate, proposals should include a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy with infrastructure that will provide a number of different functions relating to amenity, ecology and flood risk”.*
- 1.25 **NEB10: Landscape and Design** ...places emphasis on landscaping as part of new development stating that:-
 - a) *“Proposals must demonstrate:*
 - i. *How the landscaping contributes to delivering an attractive and sustainable place that enhances the area for new and existing residents;*
 - ii. *For major developments, how the existing landscape will be protected, enhanced and integrated into the development, detailed in a Landscape Strategy, along with new tree planting as part of any new green space provision;*
 - iii. *That the landscaping will not adversely affect the outlook and amenity of existing and future residents;*
 - iv. *The planting of trees along new streets, roads and public places, as appropriate;*
 - v. *That opportunities are taken for biodiversity net gain, and making connections to existing biodiversity and habitat networks outside of the site;*
 - vi. *The use of appropriate native species with all stock sourced and where possible grown entirely in the UK;*
 - vii. *That where changes to landscape may be required, details be provided of existing landscaping, trees and shrubs to be removed; the planting of new trees, shrubs and grass; alongside details of any level changes, enclosure, screening and paving; significant healthy trees and other important landscape features shall normally be retained;*
 - viii. *Provision for ongoing management and maintenance; and*
 - ix. *That opportunities are taken to provide above ground Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) where appropriate.*
 - b) *Any development proposals in a Landscape Character Area must:*
 - i. *Conserve, restore or enhance the prevailing quality, character and condition of the natural and historic landscape; and*
 - ii. *Be accompanied by a statement to demonstrate how the proposal responds to managing change, including restoration of historic field, transport, settlement and built forms where appropriate.*
 - c) *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) will be required for all major development”.*
- 1.26 **NEB11: Chilterns National Landscape** states that, *“where relevant, proposals must demonstrate that they would not have a significant negative impact on or harm the statutory purpose of the Chilterns National*

Landscape to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in the Chilterns National Landscape”.

- 1.27 **NEB12: Green Space Standards and New Green Space Provision** sets out the required standards for all new development.
- 1.28 **Strategic Policy SP12: High Quality Design** highlights this as a key component of sustainable development across the district, stating that new development should:-
- a) *“Respond positively to its context;*
 - b) *Be of high quality architecture;*
 - c) *Enhance public space;*
 - d) *Make efficient use of land; and*
 - e) *Provide for a high standard of amenity”.*
- 1.29 Further detail and specific requirements are set out in the following policies:-
- DES1: Design of New Development
 - DES2: Public Space – including:-
 - d) *“Contribute to the creation of an attractive environment with soft landscaping that provides appropriate planting of trees and shrubs, incorporates and protects existing planting and landscape features of value, integrates naturalised Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), and supports biodiversity conservation and enhancement. Satisfactory provision must be made for future growth and long term maintenance and management”.*
- 1.30 **Strategic Policy S13: Health and Wellbeing** encourages healthy lifestyles through the provision of new or enhanced multi-functional green infrastructure as part of new developments, to include increased tree planting and support for biodiversity.

Redbourn Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2038

- 1.31 The site is located within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary, at the western edge however it is not covered by the settlement character areas and no key views associated with the site are identified. The Plan is accompanied by a series of design guidelines and codes which cover the Plan area and should be used to inform new development.
- 1.32 **Policy Red 6: New Housing Sites** sets out requirements for major development, including within the Green Belt and Chilterns Beechwood SAC zone of influence.

Other Relevant Strategies, Guidelines or Documents

Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 (2025)

- 1.33 The Plan sets out the Vision for the ‘Future of the Chiltern’ which is supported by a number of ‘General Policies’, further supported by strategic objectives and more detailed policies covering: ‘Nature’, ‘Historic Environment’, ‘Land, Woodland and Water’, ‘Enjoyment and Understanding’, ‘Social and Economic Wellbeing’ and ‘Planning and Development’ which includes the following policies:-

- 1.34 “NO3 – Minimise development impacts on the National Landscape and its setting; where they are unavoidable, ensure they provide net environmental gains.
- 1.35 DP4 – In the setting of the National Landscape, take full account of whether proposals harm the natural beauty of the area.
- 1.36 DP5 – Require a professionally-produced landscape assessment that meets the Landscape Institute’s published standards for all development proposals where there are any concerns about impacts on the natural beauty of the area or more broadly on landscape and visual amenity.”

Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2022)

- 1.37 The Strategy is split over 3 parts: Part 1 details ‘Opportunities for GI’ in terms of: *climate, biodiversity, health, air quality, economy, population growth and infrastructure*. Part 2a details the GI baseline position including key assets, analysis of these and then sets out priorities against the following identified ‘GI Themes’:-
- *A Resilient Landscape*
 - *Heritage and Sense of Place*
 - *Nature Recovery*
 - *Access and Connectivity*
 - *The Water Environment*
 - *People, Health and Wellbeing*
- 1.38 Part 2b covers the ‘10 GI Priority Actions and Delivery’ across the county, based on the findings of Part 2a. These are:-
- *GI Priority Action 1: Create a GI Champions Programme and wider GI Delivery Partnership.*
 - *GI Priority Action 2: Ensure greenspace is meeting local needs for people and wildlife.*
 - *GI Priority Action 3: Increase health, connectivity and accessibility of Hertfordshire’s water environment.*
 - *GI Priority Action 4: Deliver landscape scale recovery through woodland planting, management and the development of the Woodland Arc.*
 - *GI Priority Action 5: Restore and reconnect distinctive chalk landscapes.*
 - *GI Priority Action 6: Promote community action for nature recovery.*
 - *GI Priority Action 7: Produce an overarching county-wide GI Design Code for development.*
 - *GI Priority Action 8: Deliver and manage GI as a mechanism to improve air quality and public health.*
 - *GI Priority Action 9: Reconnect and create multi-functional links to facilitate the movement of people and wildlife.*
 - *GI Priority Action 10: Improve understanding of existing GI baseline and projects.*

St Albans District Green Infrastructure Plan (2011)

- 1.39 The Strategy identifies 11 ‘GI Functions’ which have been applied to the district to understand the provision of GI assets. The functions are: *access, approach, health, ecosystems, productive, historic, sustainability, remediation, nature, experience and flood*. The findings are then summarised in terms of need, supply and

opportunity and developed, through the Vision of ‘conserve and enhance’, ‘improve and create’ and ‘recognise and value’ into a network of ‘GI Action Zones’.

- 1.40 The site falls within the ‘Chalk Valleys Conservation Zone’ and the ‘River Valleys Project’, the public rights of way crossing the site are identified as ‘Long Distance and Promoted Routes’. Key aims are included below:-

“Chalk Valleys Conservation Zone: conserving key GI assets as part of the movement, habitat and physical landscape network, also securing links to the river valley network and associated Wetland Habitat Zone...”

“River Valleys Project – Ver, Lee and Colne:

Conservation and enhancement of the distinctive wetland environment including enhanced physical & habitat links to urban stretches of the rivers...)

Significant opportunity to enhance wetland character...creating improved recreational and visual linkages between the settlements (potentially using the disused rail corridor in the Lee Valley)

Potential to create multi-functional spaces...including accessible open space, habitat links, recreational corridors and climate change & flood risk mitigation functions

Focus for food production (orchards)...”

Collectively, the aims for the ‘River Valleys Project’ will meet 10 of the possible 11 ‘GI Functions’.

Hemel Garden Communities Green Infrastructure Strategy (2024)

- 1.41 The Vision for the Hemel Garden Communities is to create a ‘Green Network’ that “*aims to bring together existing and new places in and around the town through a network of green routes, travel and places that support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, climate resilience, environmental sustainability and the wellbeing of local communities*”. This is “*supported by 11 spatial principles for guiding delivery of the Green Network through new development...*

1. *Create a network of strategic and local green and blue routes.*
2. *Build a strong green network to serve multiple users and functions.*
3. *Create, protect and enhance new ‘green swathes’ in the valleys between neighbourhoods.*
4. *Support and encourage community stewardship of places within the green network.*
5. *Increase biodiversity and retain, enhance and extend existing habitats.*
6. *Enable wildlife movement through the green network.*
7. *Create and maintain rich, wide and well-connected biodiverse buffers.*
8. *Make the green network accessible to all.*
9. *Create sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for water management, landscape design and placemaking.*
10. *Extend and enrich Hemel’s existing network of adventure playgrounds.*
11. *Extend the existing network of productive landscapes”.*

- 1.42 The Green Network Indicative Framework Plan shows residential development, neighbourhood/ local centre and multi-functional green space on the site with a local green corridor extending eastwards, from Hemel, across the area.

- 1.43 A total of 6 ‘Strategic Themes’ are identified, each with a corresponding ‘Aim’ and ‘Key Move (Delivery Programme)’ which have developed into a series of ‘Headline Proposals for the HGC including the following:-
- *“New Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces*
 - *New Wooded Buffer for the Chilterns National Landscape*
 - *Greening Hemel’s Neighbourhoods*
 - *Nickey Line Green Spine, HGC Green Loop & St Albans Link Greenways*
 - *Strengthening Hemel’s Wildlife Corridors”*.
- 1.44 A number of Indicative Plans are included:-
- The Urban Greening Indicative Strategy Plan suggests a ‘Multi-functional Wooded Landscape Buffer along the eastern edge of the area indicated for residential development within the site.
 - The Active Hemel Indicative Strategy Plan suggests a series of park ‘types’ on the site; Neighbourhood Park, Pocket Park, Town/ Local Park, Local Nature Reserve.
 - The Connected Hemel Indicative Strategy Plan suggests a Local Green Corridor extending eastwards, from Hemel, across the site.
 - The Productive Landscapes Indicative Strategy Plan suggests Biosolar Roofs in the west of the site and Regenerative Farming and Solar Farming in the east.
 - The Wilder Hemel Indicative Strategy Plan suggests Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) on the eastern part of the site:-
 - *“Provision of 8ha of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) per 1000 head of new population (in line with the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area for Conservation Mitigation Strategy).*
 - *SANG to be designed in line with Natural England SANG Guidelines and Dacorum Borough Council requirements in the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC Mitigation Strategy.*
 - *SANG location and size to be determined in line with Natural England Accessible Greenspace Standards for larger-scale accessible greenspace provision”*.
 - The Blue-Green Infrastructure Indicative Strategy Plan suggests Integrating SuDS into the Growth Areas in the western part of the site.
- 1.45 The above plans combine to create the Green Infrastructure Concept Plan for the New Garden Communities. Green Infrastructure Design Guidelines and Checklists for the proposed greenspaces are included in at Appendix D.
- 1.46 The proposed development will also accord with:-
- **SADC Open Space Study April 2024**
 - **SADC Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy & Action Plan January 2023**
 - **SADC Strategic Sites Design Guidance: Design Principles July 2023**
 - **Design Advice Leaflet 1: Design and Layout of New Housing (November 1998)**