

St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2019 -2036



**Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) Version
For consultation**

October 2020

ST STEPHEN PARISH COUNCIL

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Important Notice about the St Stephen Parish Pre-Submission Version Neighbourhood Plan

Please note that the Pre-Submission Version St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan has been developed in parallel with the emerging St Albans City and District (SADC) Local Plan, which was anticipated to be adopted before the Neighbourhood Plan.

The policies in the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan conform to the adopted saved policies of SADC's current District Local Plan Review (1994) and have additionally sought to synchronise with the policies of the emerging SADC Local Plan.

There is now a strong possibility that the SADC's emerging Local Plan will not progress as previously scheduled. If this occurs, it will directly impact a number of the proposed policies in the Pre-Submission St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan, namely reference to site allocations and the following sections associated with the allocation of sites:

- Policy S1: Spatial Strategy
- Policy S2: Housing Scale and Location
- AIM 3: Community facilities at the Donkey Field
- Policy S20: Burston Nurseries
- Policies S25 to S29: Site allocations

The reason for this is that all of the proposed sites in the Neighbourhood Plan are currently within the Green Belt. The Neighbourhood Plan proposes to remove these sites from the Green Belt to enable the delivery of homes to meet an identified local need. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), at paragraph 1361, allows Neighbourhood Plans to amend Green Belt boundaries, but only where a need has been established through strategic policies. The emerging St Albans City and District Local Plan would have provided this need. However, if this Plan does not progress as originally scheduled, this strategic need will not be established. Further, such a strategic need is not contained in the current saved policies of SADC's Local Plan Review 1994.

Therefore, if SADC's emerging Local Plan does not progress as anticipated, the policies noted above would **not form** part of the Submission Version St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

As a decision on SADC's emerging Local Plan is yet to be taken these policies are, therefore, retained for the purposes of the consultation and your views on them are welcomed.

It is important to note, however, that should SADC's emerging Local Plan be significantly delayed, the Neighbourhood Plan will be the primary document guiding development and the determination of planning applications with the Parish. We would encourage you to provide feedback on all of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, and not focus solely on the proposed site allocations. The rest of the policies and aims of the Neighbourhood Plan are vital in shaping our villages, helping our local economy and protecting our local environment, both now and into the future.

Bill Pryce, Chair, St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document is the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan', 'Neighbourhood Plan' or the 'SSNP'). It represents one part of the development plan for the Parish over the period 2019 to 2036, the other part being the St Albans District Local Plan Review, 1994, which, at the time of publication, is at Examination¹.
- 1.2 St Albans City and District Council (SADC), the local planning authority, designated a Neighbourhood Area for St Stephen Parish in April 2015 to enable St Stephen Parish Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been prepared by the community through the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.
- 1.3 The St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan (SSNP) has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990², the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004³, the Localism Act 2011, the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)⁴, the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017⁵ and the National Planning Policy Framework⁶ (revised 2019). The Steering Group has prepared the Plan to establish a vision for the future of the Parish and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning land use and development change over the Plan period 2019 to 2036, to coincide with the lifespan of the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan will guide development within St Stephen Parish and provide direction to any interested parties wishing to submit planning applications. The process of producing the Plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible and the different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to St Stephen, its residents, businesses and community groups.
- 1.5 Each section of the Plan covers a different topic. Under each heading there is a justification for the policies presented which provides the necessary understanding of the policy and what it is seeking to achieve. The policies themselves are presented in Purple Boxes. It is these policies against which planning applications will be assessed. It is advisable that, in order to understand the full context, individual policies are read in conjunction with the supporting text.
- 1.6 In addition to the policies, the Plan identifies a number of local needs and community aspirations that are not met through the planning system but which are important to the well-being of the community. It is proposed that these projects will be met through community action supported by other organisations. The Plan also sets out the Community Infrastructure Priorities and a framework for monitoring and implementation.
- 1.7 Figure 1.1 below shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area, which is the boundary of the Civil Parish of St Stephen and incorporates the main settlements of Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street.

¹ As at August 2020

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents>

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents>

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/20/contents/made>

⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/20/contents/enacted>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/revised-national-planning-policy-framework>

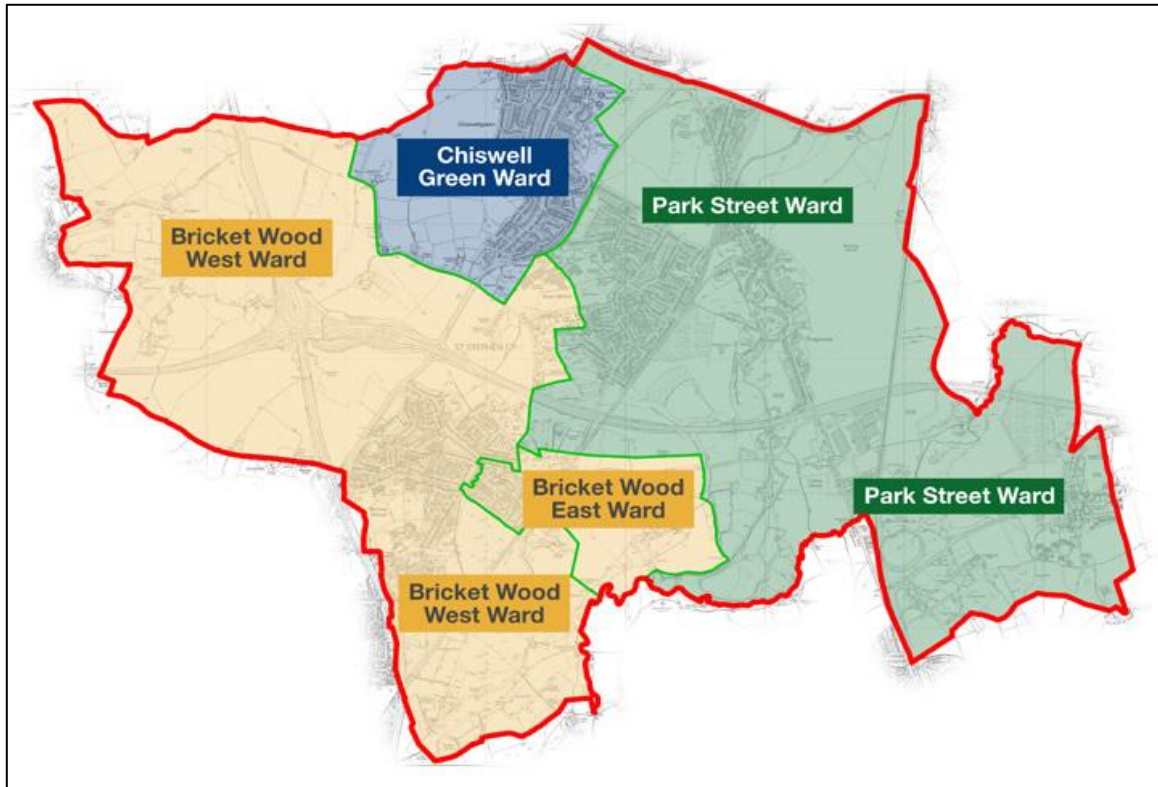


Figure 1.1: Map of the Parish

The Planning Policy Context

National Planning Context

1.8 The Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The (NPPF) states at paragraphs 29 and 30:

- *“Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies⁷.”*
- *“Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently.”*

⁷ Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area.

Local Planning Context

- 1.9 The currently adopted Local Plan for St Albans and district is the Local Plan Review⁸, adopted in 1994. It should be noted that Local Plans “expired” after 27th September 2007 unless “saved”, in whole or in part. Therefore in 2007, a Direction was made saving specified policies of the adopted Plan and it is these saved policies that provide the strategic context for the SSNP.
- 1.10 A new Local Plan is being prepared by SADC, which will replace the Local Plan Review 1994. The emerging St Albans City & District Local Plan 2020-2036⁹ underwent Examination in late 2019 but subsequently the examination hearings were suspended in January 2020. The inspector expressed concerns in relation to legal compliance and soundness and stated that they will reflect further on the issues of legal compliance, duty to cooperate, spatial strategy and the Green Belt.
- 1.11 Policy S1 of the emerging Local Plan classifies the individual settlements within St Stephen Parish - Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green, How Wood, Park Street and Frogmore and Park Street Garden Village (a new strategic site allocation) – as “Large Villages - settlements excluded from the Green Belt”. The scale and density of development in these sorts of settlements will generally be lower than in the Category 1 settlements. This is to reflect the lower level of services available and in order to retain their particular character.
- 1.12 Policy S2 of the SADCLP states that all Category 1 settlements and one Category 2 settlement (Chiswell Green) will be expanded at ‘Broad Locations’ for development. The creation of a new settlement, ‘Park Street Garden Village’, is included and designated as Category 2 under Policy S1, although this is the subject of one of the Inspector’s concerns.
- 1.13 The strategic context for the Neighbourhood Plan is being provided by the saved policies of the adopted Plan but also having regard for the emerging St Albans City and District Local Plan 2020 to 2036.

Community Engagement

- 1.14 The Steering Group has developed the Neighbourhood Plan through extensive engagement with the community including:
- Public meetings, exhibitions and drop-in events;
 - Face-to-face sessions with local organisations including schools, scouts and guides and other young peoples’ groups, the business forum and voluntary and interest groups such as residents’ associations;

⁸ [https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/district-local-plan-review-1994/District%20Local%20Plan%20Review%201994%20Saved%20and%20Deleted%20Policies%20Version%20July%202020\].pdf](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/district-local-plan-review-1994/District%20Local%20Plan%20Review%201994%20Saved%20and%20Deleted%20Policies%20Version%20July%202020].pdf)

⁹ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/planning-policy/examination-library/CD%20002%20St%20Albans%20City%20%26%20District%20Local%20Plan%20Publication%202020-2036_tcm15-67020.pdf

- A Community Survey questionnaire distributed to all households;
 - Leaflet drop to all houses in the Parish;
 - Regular newsletters and press releases distributed to local media and other organisations;
 - Presentations at key stages of the Plan;
 - Presence at Parish and village events.
- 1.15 Discussions with St Albans District Council have taken place on each of the topic areas covered by the Plan.
- 1.16 A Consultation Statement will be attached to the final Submission Plan document.

Neighbourhood Plan Review

- 1.17 Notwithstanding the defined plan period to 2036, it is recognised that Neighbourhood Plans should be reviewed periodically. The defining basis for Neighbourhood Plans is the Local Plan, in this instance SADC's Local Plan Review 1994. The Local Plan is in the process of being reviewed and Section 11 of this Plan comments about the way in which the Plan will be monitored and reviewed.

Sustainability of the Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.18 The SSNP has been informed by an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment Report, published by AECOM in June 2020. This tested the potential impacts of the policies against a set of sustainability objectives developed in consultation with interested parties on the environment.
- 1.19 The purpose of the assessment is to avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan, and identify opportunities to improve the environmental quality of the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and the quality of life of residents.
- 1.20 A key element of the process is the appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' for the Neighbourhood Plan. In particular, this explored how the Plan's development strategy has been shaped through considering alternative approaches for the location and quantum of housing in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 1.21 The assessment has concluded that the current version of the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to lead to significant negative impacts.

2 ABOUT ST STEPHEN

Location

- 2.1 St Stephen Parish lies some 20 miles north of London, in the southwest corner of Hertfordshire between the City of St Albans and the town of Watford. It falls under the administrative control of St Albans City and District Council. The 2011 national census records the Parish's population as 13,865 living in 5,815 dwellings.
- 2.2 These figures will increase markedly within the next two years, as a result of successful planning applications for two large housing developments in Bricket Wood – at Hanstead Park and Lancaster Gate, at the Building Research Establishment (BRE).
- 2.3 In addition, the emerging SADC Local Plan has under its list of Broad Locations a site west of Chiswell Green for possible major development in the region of 365 dwellings.
- 2.4 St Stephen is an ancient parish, named after the 10th century St Stephen's Church, although boundary adjustments made over the years mean the church no longer lies within the Parish. Maps from the 17th Century show Waterdell, Burston Manor and Hanstead House, all names still in use today. A record of built heritage and archaeological remains in the parish, from pre-Roman, Roman settlements and medieval manors, farms and mills, many linked to St Albans Abbey, is stored in the Historic Environment Record¹⁰. Figure 2.1 overleaf provides a map of the heritage assets in the Parish, including the Conservation Areas and listed buildings.
- 2.5 The Parish comprises three main villages; Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street, although the latter also includes the residential area of How Wood and the smaller settlements of Frogmore and Colney Street.
- 2.6 The Parish is dissected by both the M1 (north to south) and the M25 (east to west) motorways, two of the UK's major and busiest highways. It also houses the confluence of these two motorways – junction 6 on the M1 and junctions 21/21A on the M25. A second east-west arterial road, the A414, marks the Parish's northeast boundary.

Origins and Growth

- 2.7 Although there are mentions in the Domesday Book of settlements in the area, even at the turn of the 19th Century, some 120 years ago, the Parish consisted of little more than heathland, low-habitation farms and a spattering of country houses. Only Park Street and its southerly neighbour Colney Street, both lying on the old Roman road between London and St Albans, had any significant settlements. In Anglo-Saxon times the road became known as Watling Street and later, in A5 guise, grew into one of the main transport routes radiating out from London.
- 2.8 There are significant Roman remains (e.g. Roman Villa and brickworks) in Park Street and Bricket Wood. Many historic buildings remain in the Parish, including Park Street Mill and Moor Mill which were constructed in medieval times and owned by the St Albans Abbey.

¹⁰ Hertfordshire Environmental Records within the Heritage Gateway:
https://heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/advanced_search.aspx

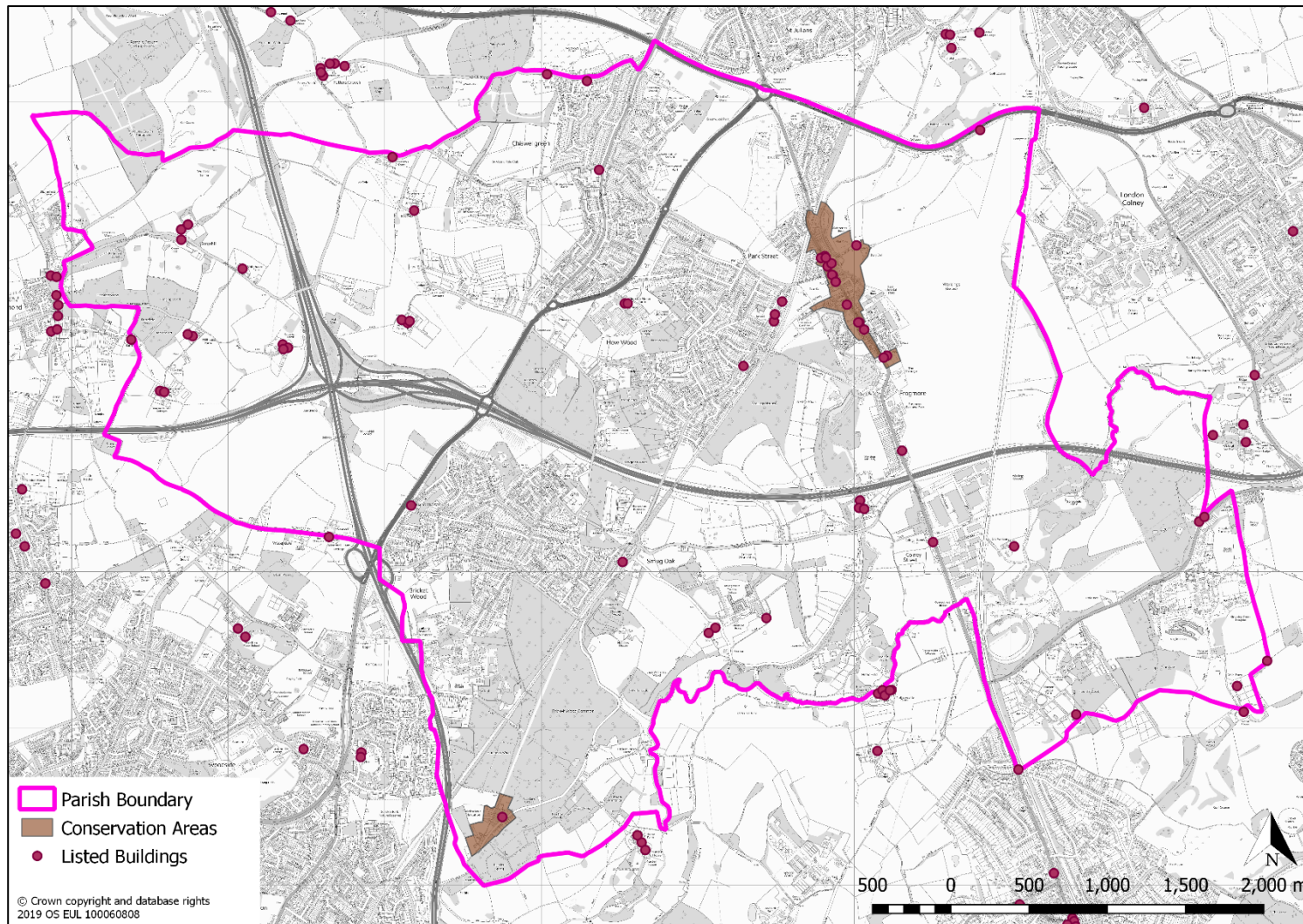
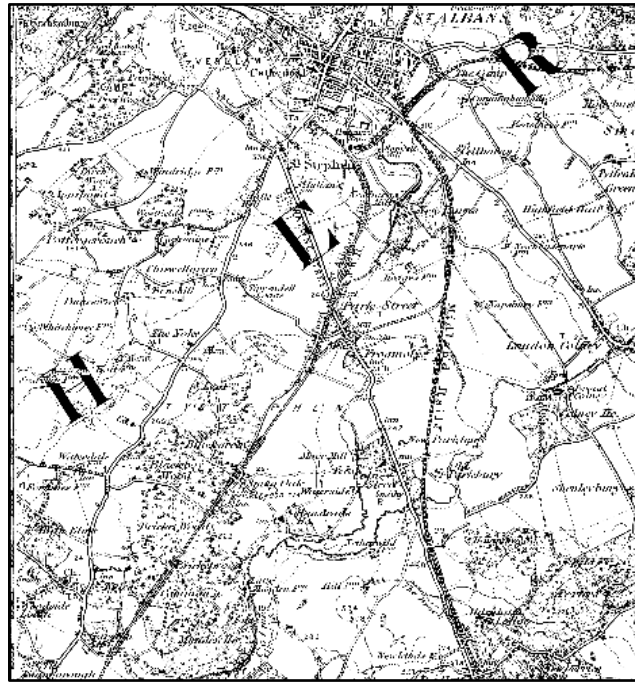


Figure 2.1: Heritage assets in St Stephen parish



OS MAP of St Stephen Parish, 1898 © Alan Godfrey Maps

- 2.9 Although there was some minor *ad hoc* house building in the Parish prior to World War One and some inter-war development, primarily in Bricket Wood, the most significant expansion came between the 1950s and 1970s with large housing estates built in all three villages.

Topography

- 2.10 St Stephen, and its villages, are surrounded by open Green Belt countryside, featuring woodland, rivers, ponds, fields, footpaths and bridleways. Further, the majority of the Parish lies within the Watling Chase Community Forest.
- 2.11 The villages, while sharing many common traits, display their own individual characteristics and appeal. Although lying close in close proximity, they are clearly, but minimally, separated by borders.
- 2.12 Running through the Parish, the River Ver is one of only 200 chalk streams in the world and flows through conservation areas located in Park Street and Bricket Wood. There is also much agricultural land and grazing land which provide both open spaces and green buffers between the settlements.

Industry and Business

- 2.13 Major commercial activities within the Parish include: the Building Research Establishment (BRE) located in Bricket Wood, the Burston Garden Centre and Nurseries on the western edge of Park Street and various companies operating out of the Curo Park and Ventura Park warehouse/distribution complexes to the southeast of Park Street on the A5183 (the old A5). This area also houses a number of small, mainly engineering and garage-based businesses.
- 2.14 Additionally, Bricket Wood is home to a small commercial estate off Lye Lane and another lies in Noke Lane in Chiswell Green. Each of the three villages also benefit from a number of retail outlets.
- 2.15 The green areas and network of footpaths within and surrounding the Parish attract many visitors to the area, including walkers and cyclists,
- 2.16 The equine industry has traditionally been very important to St Stephen.



Community Facilities

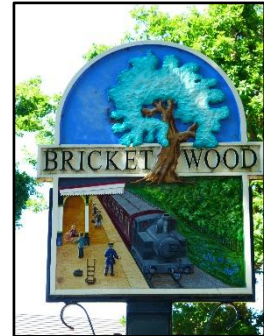
- 2.17 The Parish has a number of parks, recreation grounds and community facilities, such as the Parish Council owned Greenwood Park Community Centre in Chiswell Green and the Parish Centre in Bricket Wood, together with the charitable trust-owned Park Street Village Hall. These, together with several church halls, house a full programme of indoor and outdoor activities for children, adults and retired residents.
- 2.18 Like many rural communities, the Parish has seen the loss of several of its post offices in recent years with at least one of the two remaining ones endangered. Fortunately, each of the three villages benefit from a pharmacy.
- 2.19 There is a spread of licensed premises throughout St Stephen - five public houses, two hotels with restaurants together with a number of other restaurants. There is also range of take-away restaurants to be found in most of the shopping areas.
- 2.20 The Parish is well served with a number of infant and junior schools while there is a selection of secondary schools located just outside of its borders.
- 2.21 There are a number and variety of places of worship within the Parish, two Church of England churches, a United Reformed church and a Baptist church. There is also a Catholic church adjacent to the Parish's northern border.



The Villages

2.22 Bricket Wood

- According to the Domesday Book in 1088, 165 people lived in Bricket Wood, but by 1353 it had been largely abandoned, possibly due to the Black Death (1349). The original habited area was in the region of Smug Oak Lane, near to today's Gate public house.
- In 1858 what is now known as the Abbey Line opened, connecting St Albans to Watford by rail, with an intermediate station built at Bricket Wood in 1861. In the early 1930s aircraft manufacturer Handley Page moved into what was to become Radlett Aerodrome and built two small estates, in Bricket Wood (and Park Street) to house employees.
- As with all of the villages within the Parish, demand for housing during the post-WW2 era, together with the concept of commuting, resulted in rapid change with Bricket Wood transformed from a scattered rural community to a large residential village.
- Today Bricket Wood has two centres, each with a small parade of retail outlets - one on the Old Watford Road, close to the A405 St Albans to Watford road, and the second in Oakwood Road near to the village's St Luke's C of E church. The one school in the village (primary) is located in Mount Pleasant Lane.



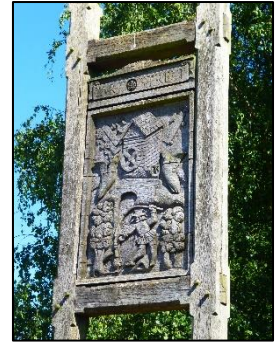
2.23 Chiswell Green

- A hundred years ago Chiswell Green was merely a stop on the road linking Watford and St Albans, featuring little more than a blacksmith's workshop (which latterly saw double duty as an alehouse) serving the cluster of surrounding farms. This building, much renovated, is today the Three Hammers public house and forms, together with a small number of retail outlets, the centre of the village.
- Over the years, and most specifically during the 1950s to 1970s, the area was extensively developed to reach its current size. Home to Killigrew Primary School and also a branch of the United Reformed Church, Chiswell Green is well served by a regular bus service that links Watford with St Albans and Luton.



2.24 Park Street

- With a small settlement based around Park Street Mill ('Le Parkmulle') dating back to before the Roman Conquest, Park Street is the most historic of the Parish's three villages and houses the majority of the area's listed buildings. As with Bricket Wood, Park Street lies on the Abbey Line with a station opening in 1858, albeit in a different position from today's station which opened in 1890. A second station, How Wood, opened in 1988.
- Much of the housing development of Park Street has been in the area commonly referred to as How Wood, which is also the location of the village's main shopping area, although there are also a small cluster of shops on the A5183 Watling Street.
- Park Street is also the most commercially-orientated of the Parish's villages with a number of long-standing small businesses lining the A5183 and which, in recent times, have been augmented by the Curo Park and Ventura Park warehouse/distribution developments.
- Park Street has three schools, How Wood Primary and Nursery School, Park Street Primary School and the independent Haberdashers' Aske's Pre-Preparatory School.



Profile of the Parish today

2.25 A detailed profile is provided in Appendix A. In summary, the key aspects of the profile of St Stephen Parish, as they relate to the Neighbourhood Plan, are as follows¹¹:

- Compared to the District as a whole, St Stephen has a **high percentage of residents aged 65+**, amounting to approximately one-fifth of its population. Equally, there is a high proportion of adults aged between 45 and 65 years.
- In contrast, the number of younger adults, aged 25 to 44 is significantly lower than the District and region. This age bracket fell significantly between 2001 and 2011, suggesting that **those of a younger age are choosing not to settle (or, more likely, cannot afford to settle) in St Stephen.**
- This drop in working age residents is also apparent in **the lower than average numbers of children aged up to 15 years** in the Parish.
- St Stephen has **high levels of car ownership**, with 1.6 cars per household compared to 1.2 at the national level and 1.4 at the District level. This is not unexpected in a largely rural area, especially as two of the three villages in the Parish suffer from an inadequate public transport infrastructure. Over half the households in the Parish have at least two cars with 15% having 3 or more, compared to 10% at the District level.
- The Parish has **three intermediate rail stations** – at How Wood, Park Street and Bricket Wood – on the St Albans to Watford Abbey Line. Chiswell Green is fairly **well served by bus links** to several major employment centres outside of the Parish, though residents of Bricket Wood and Park Street are less fortunate. The vast **majority of those in work use their car to travel to their place of employment.** There is also an above average number of people working from home.
- St Stephen **predominantly comprises larger three- and four-bedroom homes** with 73% of stock being detached and semi-detached compared to 57% at District level. Home ownership is high at while the percentage of social, and in particular the **number of private rented properties available**, at 16% is low compared to 26% across St Albans.



Park Street Station


¹¹ Source: 2011 Census

3 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Challenges Facing St Stephen Parish

- 3.1 The engagement process uncovered a series of challenges facing the Parish, which the Neighbourhood Plan seeks, as far as is possible, to address.

The national emphasis on addressing the housing shortage: the Parish lies within commutable distance to London and is, therefore, a desirable location for new housing. This is particularly challenging in view of the rural nature of St Stephen, with all three settlements surrounded by the Green Belt. There is a risk that additional major development could change the nature and individual identities of the three villages, if it is not planned and developed in a sympathetic and sustainable way.

- The high cost of property in the local area makes it increasingly difficult for first-time buyers to move into and for younger inhabitants to remain in the area. Additionally, developers' preference for building larger houses in the area restricts the opportunity for older people to release property by downsizing. This is already having an impact on St Stephen where the numbers of working-age residents is falling, despite the Parish's location being within easy reach of London.
 - With both the M25 and M1 cutting through and junctioning within the Parish, traffic volumes (together with the associated congestion, air pollution and noise) present a major problem. Traffic primarily consists of 'through' traffic joining these major arteries (rather than local residents' vehicles) and is particularly problematic at peak times and exacerbated further when accidents and delays on the strategic road network induce traffic to divert on to the Parish's local roads, narrow lanes and residential streets.
- 
- Regardless of diverting traffic, many of the roads in the villages, some being narrow lanes and others residential streets are consistently used as 'rat runs' to connect to the M1, M25, A1, A405 and A414, leading to congestion and increased accident risk.
 - Whilst there is a number of large employers in the Parish, the high cost of housing in the area makes it difficult for such companies to employ local people in the full spectrum of employment. This adds to traffic volumes and congestion, with workers travelling in from outside of the Parish.
 - There is a need to redress the imbalance in the age of a community with an increasing numbers of older residents, with fewer younger people choosing (or being able to afford) to live in the Parish. There is a need to ensure that sufficient leisure, education, health and community facilities are in place to serve existing and future residents.
 - There is a need to balance the impact of development against the protection of the rural environment and the existing built form. The three main villages in the Parish have their

own distinct identities which are already in danger of being eroded through coalescence. It will be important to enable each village to flourish independently, whilst supporting one another collectively via local services.

Vision for St Stephen

3.2 In consultation with the community, a vision for St Stephen has been established:

This Neighbourhood Plan will go a long way to ensuring that in years to come St Stephen Parish will be a pleasant place to live, work and visit by:

- Retaining the individual character of each village;
- Protecting the Green Belt from inappropriate development¹²;
- Putting green and open spaces, trees and woodlands at the heart of planning;
- Providing community leisure and recreation facilities to meet all residents' needs;
- Ensuring housing developments include smaller, affordable properties for first-time buyers, to help keep younger people in the villages, and also provide properties tailored to the ageing population;
- Ensuring that community facilities, such as health and medical centres, are within easy reach of all residents and there are sufficient education establishments for the young of the Parish to be able to attend without lengthy journeys by public or private transport;
- Supporting an effective public transport service and convenient and safe routes to encourage walking and cycling;
- Maintaining all existing rights of way and creating new ones to establish a linked-up network;
- Managing traffic, traffic speed and reducing the number of vehicles travelling through the Parish's villages to other destinations;
- Ensuring any development is sustainable and minimises the use of extra resources; and
- Supporting local retail businesses and the commercial sector in general.

¹² Para 143 to 147 of the NPPF:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

3.3 The following objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan have been identified through engagement with the community:

Theme	Objective
Housing and Design of Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contribute to the District's housing requirement, specifically by providing for the housing needs of the Parish with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller, more affordable properties for first-time buyers, thus helping to attract and retain more young people in the villages; • Properties suitable for existing older residents wishing to downsize; and • Housing suitable for and affordable to local workers. 2. Ensure new housing reflects the existing character of the Parish in terms of design, quality, style and materials (whilst not excluding more contemporary design where appropriate) with sustainable energy and water conservation measures included in plans. 3. Counter the use of divisive gated communities. 4. Retain the village character of each settlement.
Green Spaces and Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Ensure that development is sensitively designed to be attractive, mitigate climate change, promote biodiversity and reduce the Parish's carbon footprint. 6. Enhance and preserve valued green and open spaces, fields, trees and woodlands, ponds, lakes and water courses, within and around each village. 7. Protect and increase wildlife habitats.
Transport and Movement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Improve transport and movement, in particular through further development of public transport provision and other non-car travel modes, whilst ensuring a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists as well as motorists.
Community Facilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Ensure that the provision of local amenities and infrastructure is sufficient to address the needs of existing and future residents.
Business and Local Economy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Strengthen, support and promote appropriate local economic activity in retail, industrial, commercial and professional fields while ensuring that such ventures are located in suitable and appropriate areas of the Parish.

4 SPATIAL STRATEGY

Important notice: Inclusion of the Policy S1 (Spatial Strategy) within this section is subject to progress on the emerging Local Plan (see page 4-5)

- 4.1 Community engagement undertaken to help shape the Neighbourhood Plan revealed that residents' sense of identity stems from which village they live in, as opposed to identifying with the Parish as a whole. Therefore, protecting the separate identities of the three main settlements within St Stephen Parish – Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street – is a key objective of the Neighbourhood Plan. For example, the gap between the built-up areas of Bricket Wood and Watford (in the vicinity of the Building Research Establishment (BRE) is already very narrow. Equally, the villages of Park Street and Bricket Wood are separated by only a couple of fields, either side of the M25, and Chiswell Green and Park Street are divided merely by the A405 arterial road. To the north, the A414 link-road to the M1 motorway represents the separation between Chiswell Green and St Albans.
- 4.2 Much of St Stephen Parish lies within the Green Belt-and thus it is particularly important that development is directed to appropriate locations and that sprawl and village-to-village coalescence are avoided. The Green Belt has, to date, successfully safeguarded the built-up area of the main settlements from the kind of sprawl seen within some areas of the District and has contained development within the villages.
- 4.3 It has, in the main, been successful in achieving the five main purposes of the Green Belt, as provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, para 134):
- a) *"To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;"*
 - b) *"To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;"*
 - c) *"To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;"*
 - d) *"To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;"*
 - e) *"To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."*
- 4.4 Engagement with the community has demonstrated that protection of the existing Green Belt boundary is important for the settlements of St Stephen in helping to retain their individual identities. There is no desire to see the Green Belt boundary altered to any significant degree and the community considers long-term protection is important to preserve the character of the villages and maintain their separation from neighbouring settlements.
- 4.5 There is, however, an identified and evidenced local housing need in St Stephen and consideration should be given to how that is to be delivered, including where any new housing might be sited.
- 4.6 One of the challenges for St Stephen is the lack of available and suitable sites within the existing built-up area boundaries of the three main settlements. Indeed, the site assessment process undertaken during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan revealed that of the 77 sites coming forward via the District Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) process and the Local Call for Sites process, the **nine** sites assessed as most suitable for development

are all within Green Belt. If any of these sites are to provide housing they would either need to come forward as rural exception sites or, where appropriate, the Green Belt boundary would need to be reviewed.

- 4.7 The Government attaches great importance to the Green Belt. Paragraph 136 of the NPPF, however, does provide for neighbourhood plans to make alterations to the Green Belt boundary in exceptional circumstances where this is fully evidenced and justified. Exceptional circumstances might be, for instance, where the land in question no longer fulfils the five Green Belt purposes or where all other options for development mean that there is no suitable alternative but to develop within the Green Belt, and to amend the boundary accordingly.
- 4.8 The St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has considered each of the most suitable potential development sites in detail and recommends that **six** of the **nine** sites no longer meet the Green Belt criteria. Further information on this process is included in the St Stephen Housing Report and the six sites that have been assessed as suitable for development are:
- Land at Orchard Drive
 - Land at Park Street Baptist Church between Tippendell Lane and Orchard Drive
 - Land south of Park Street Lane
 - Land to the rear of Bucknalls Lane
 - Land at Frogmore, off the A5183
 - Land at Burston Nurseries

Further evidence is included in the supporting documentation.

- 4.9 It is considered, therefore, that it would be suitable and appropriate to amend the Green Belt boundary at these locations and bring these areas within the built-up area boundary. The precise boundaries that the Neighbourhood Plan recommends should be revised are shown on the Policies Map.
- 4.10 Of the remaining three sites, one, known as The Donkey Field, is felt to be suitable for development that would be in-keeping with Green Belt designation. Further information on this site is included in this Plan at Section 8. Any development on the remaining two sites is recommended to be brought forward as Rural Exception Sites, for which there is provision in the emerging St Albans Local Plan.
- 4.11 The extent of the current Built-Up Area Boundary and the sites allocated in this Plan are shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 (inset). It should be noted that in relation to Broad Location 1 (Park Street Garden Village), SADC is seeking a main modification of the emerging Local Plan, which would remove this broad location policy and include in its place a policy supportive of the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) and a broad location policy for the SRFI¹³.

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https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/ED41A%20%20SADC%20response%20to%20Inspectors%27%20Post%20Hearings%20Letter%20_0.pdf (p.4)

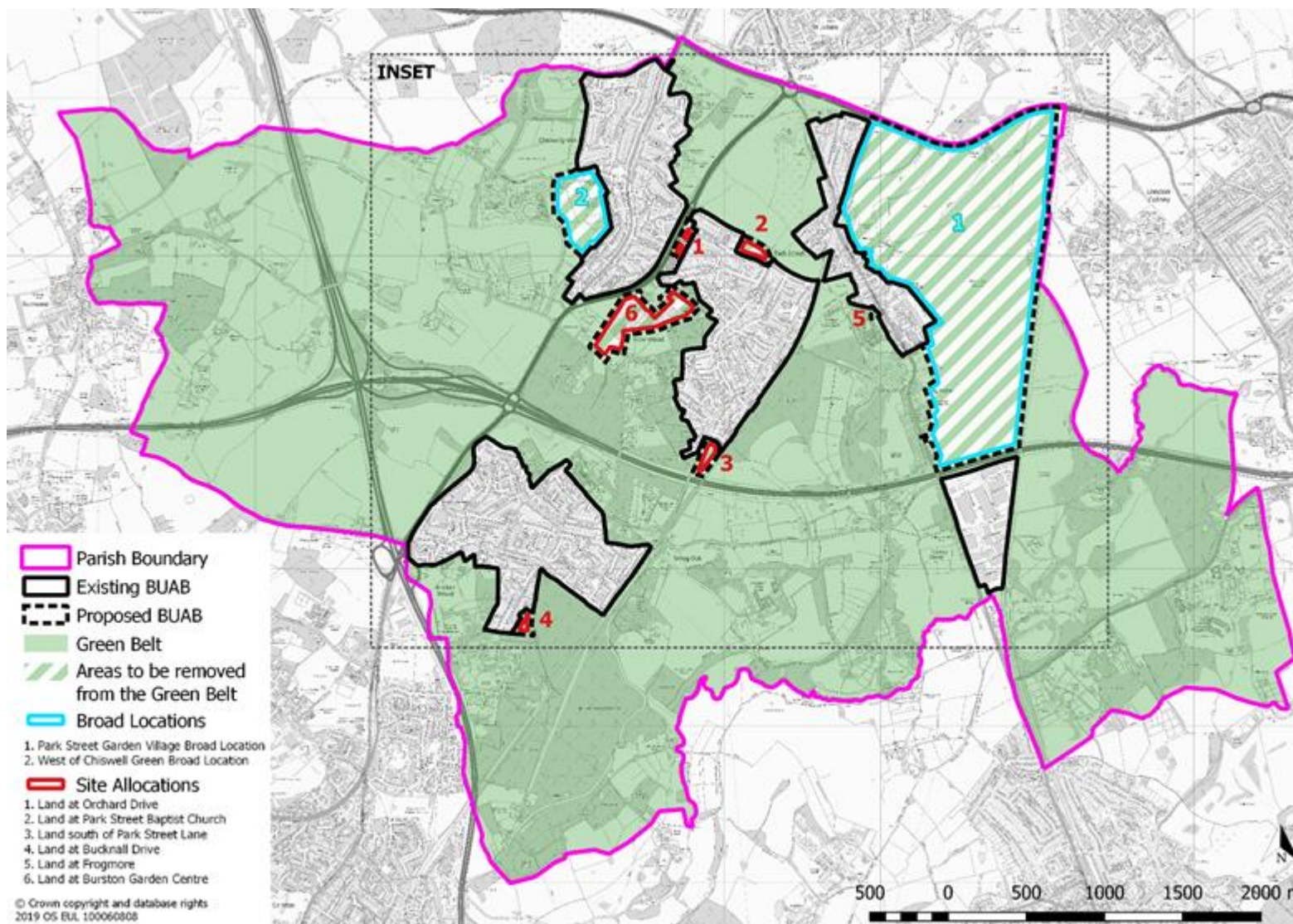


Figure 4.1: Proposed Amendment to the Built-Up Area Boundary

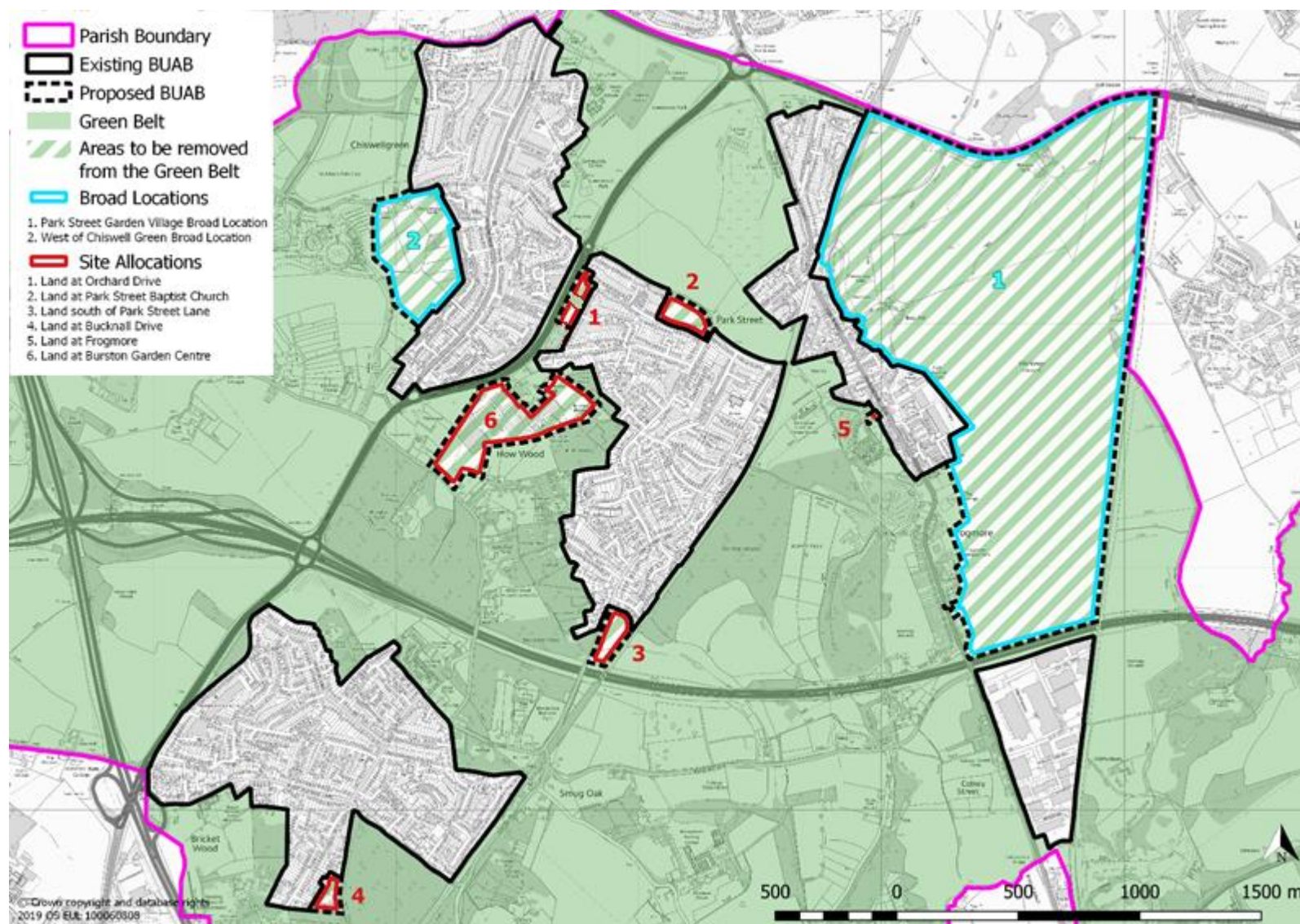


Figure 4.2: Proposed Amendment to the Built-Up Area Boundary (inset)

4.12 Policy S1 seeks to define the Built-up Area Boundaries for the Neighbourhood Plan.

POLICY S1: SPATIAL STRATEGY

- 1. Development in the neighbourhood area will be supported within the Built Up Area Boundary, as defined on the Policies Map, subject to the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan. In accordance with Paragraph 136 of the NPPF, it is proposed that the Green Belt boundary be amended to exclude the following six locations, as shown on the Policies Map:**
 - Land at Orchard Drive;
 - Land at Park Street Baptist Church between Tippendell Lane and Orchard Drive;
 - Land south of Park Street Lane;
 - Land to the rear of Bucknalls Lane;
 - Land at Frogmore, off the A5183; and
 - Land at Burston Nurseries.
- 2. Development proposals in St Stephen Parish will be supported within the Built-up Area Boundary of Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street, identified on the Policies Map. Development proposals that would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area and achieve a net gain in biodiversity will be particularly supported.**
- 3. Development proposals outside the Built-Up Area Boundary will not be supported unless:**
 - i. They are situated in one of the broad locations identified by St Albans District Council; or
 - ii. They relate to necessary utilities infrastructure and where no reasonable alternative location is available; or
 - iii. They relate to uses that are appropriate in the Green Belt.
- 4. If located in the Green Belt, development proposals must be for an appropriate use or very special circumstances must be demonstrated.**
- 5. Development in visually intrusive locations will not be supported unless it can be appropriately mitigated with landscape screening.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 4; SALP Saved Policies: 8; SALP emerging Local Plan: S1, S2, S3; NPPF: 134 to 147)

5 HOUSING AND DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT

Important notice: Inclusion of the Policy S2 (Housing Scale and Location) within this section is subject to progress on the emerging SADC Local Plan

Housing Strategy

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states that local planning authorities should ensure that, where possible, their Local Plan: *“should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas”*.
- 5.2 The assessment that establishes housing needs at the strategic level is the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The emerging Local Plan for St Albans bases its housing work on the recent SHMA Update¹⁴ that was produced in 2015¹⁵. The initial 2013 study had identified a high net need for additional housing at 586 dwellings per annum across the district as a whole. However, the 2015 SHMA Update reviewed this and revised the figure to the 436 dwellings per annum. Latest Government advice, which is informing the St Albans Emerging Local Plan, suggests that this figure may rise to 913 homes a year, between 2020 and 2036, totalling approximately 14,608 new dwellings. A Broad Location (West of Chiswell Green) has been identified by St Albans which would revise Green Belt boundaries in order to allocate in the region of 365 dwellings. Proposals for an additional Broad Location (Park Street Garden Village) are to be modified to include a policy and proposal for the SRFI.
- 5.3 The SHMA identified that housing need is predominantly focused on small units, with over 50% of the need being for 3-bedroom units and approximately 20% each for 1- and 2-bedroom units. Just 7% of need is for 4-bedroom units. Over 40% of the need was forecast to be for affordable housing, including social rent, affordable rent and subsidised home ownership.
- 5.4 The SHMA recognises that, with greater numbers of older people being assisted to remain at home, the trend for larger homes to be under-occupied is likely to increase. It made clear that, if older householders do not downsize to smaller homes, replacement family housing will be required to maintain existing levels of supply. The bulk of identified need for 1-bedroom properties is going to be from those of retirement age, although smaller, affordable houses are also required to enable first time buyers to climb on to the housing ladder.
- 5.5 At a neighbourhood level, a Housing Needs Assessment¹⁶ was prepared for St Stephen Parish in August 2017 by AECOM. This examined a range of datasets to provide an unconstrained housing figure that might be appropriate for the Parish to deliver over the lifespan of the Neighbourhood Plan. The unconstrained figure proposed provides a target of between 875 and 900 dwellings

¹⁴ *Housing Vision (2015) Independent Assessment of Housing Needs and Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update: St Albans City and District Council – final report, for St Albans City & District Council.*

¹⁵ *Whilst the Council does expect to undertake further housing need/SHMA work, this will be primarily targeted at understanding the long term demographic and housing market / affordability implications of achieving a Plan (dwelling numbers) requirement / target that is now separately determined by the Government’s revised NPPF ‘standard Methodology’. This new housing need/SHMA work will not alter the basic evidence of need that arises from official population/household projections.*

¹⁶ *St Stephen Parish Housing Needs Assessment (2017), prepared by AECOM*

to be delivered over the Neighbourhood Plan period to 2032, equating to 90 units per year, much of which is likely to be delivered by St Albans District Council. However, there is an expectation that a proportion of housing will be delivered via the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 5.6 This figure does not take into account development that is already in the pipeline, nor does it examine supply constraints, for example the availability of sites, whether or not they are suitable for development, and any environmental constraints. As noted previously, beyond the settlement boundaries themselves St Stephen Parish is currently entirely protected by Green Belt designation. The individual villages themselves, defined within the SADC Strategic Local Plan Publication Draft 2016 as settlements excluded from the Green Belt, are noted as having a more limited range of services than the towns in the District, but still offer a range of facilities to meet the day-to-day needs of their communities. Because of this, the overall amount of development acceptable in these settlements generally will be less than in the towns. In addition, the smaller size of the settlements means that the physical scope for larger scale development consistent with maintaining their character and identity is less.
- 5.7 Planning permission has already been granted for a number of housing developments in the Parish including two at Bricket Wood: a 138-dwelling scheme at Hanstead Park (the former HSBC site) and a 100-dwelling scheme at the Building Research Establishment (BRE).
- 5.8 As described in paragraph 4.6, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to amend the Green Belt boundary in order to allocate six sites for residential development, totalling circa 140 new dwellings, to meet locally defined needs.

POLICY S2: HOUSING STRATEGY

1. Over the period 2019 to 2036, new residential development of a minimum of 340 dwellings (including specialist care housing) will be provided in St Stephen, excluding any strategic allocations in the St Albans Local Plan, be located on six identified sites:

- **Land at Orchard Drive, Park Street – approximately 30 dwellings.**
- **Land at Park Street Baptist Church between Tippendell Lane and Orchard Drive, Park Street – approximately 60 dwellings.**
- **Land south of Park Street Lane, Park Street – approximately 30 dwellings.**
- **Land to rear of Bucknalls Drive, Bricket Wood – approximately 14 dwellings.**
- **Land at Frogmore, A5183, Park Street – approximately 5 dwellings.**
- **Land at Burstons Nurseries – approximately 200 units of specialist housing.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 4; SALP Saved Policies: 3; SALP emerging Local Plan: S4; NPPF: 59, 60, 69)

Housing Mix

- 5.9 The housing mix in terms of dwelling size is an important issue in St Stephen. As the analysis in Appendix A shows, over 20% of residents in St Stephen Parish are aged 65 or older and almost 50% of the population is 45 or older. Over the Plan period, this latter group will also have

reached retirement age. Reflective of this population mix, 30% of the properties in the Parish have four or more bedrooms. As these residents (currently raising families in these larger houses) age, their needs will change.

- 5.10 The St Stephen Local Housing Needs Assessment revealed a particular need for smaller, starter home dwellings for younger people, the continued provision of family sized homes and homes suitable for older people, including extra care housing. This is reflected in the St Stephen Community Survey where 76% of respondents stated that, should they ever move house, they would like to remain within the Parish, with the majority favouring smaller dwellings such as bungalows, flats or warden-controlled accommodation. The Survey also revealed that residents recognised the need for more affordable housing, such as starter homes and 2- and 3-bedroom houses. There was less support for 4+ bedroom houses.
- 5.11 In terms of housing for younger people, it is notable that the number of residents aged between 25 and 44 has significantly fallen since 2011. This could be as a result of the relative shortage of smaller 1- and 2-bedroom properties, which at 8% and 22% respectively, is far less than provision at District level. There is a need to address this shortfall to alleviate the danger of St Stephen becoming a 'retirement village'. Importantly, those wishing to downsize were not necessarily looking for smaller properties in terms of bedrooms, rather more manageable properties, near to local services.
- 5.12 It is also vital that the needs of retirement-aged residents are addressed. The Community Survey revealed a strong desire for homes suited to older people's needs, including bungalows and care homes settings.
- 5.13 Between May 2018 and May 2019 in St Stephen, the average sale price of houses in each of the individual settlements is shown in the table below:

Settlement	Average sale price	% difference to St Albans
St Albans	£553,923	
Bricket Wood	£561,416	1.4% more expensive
Chiswell Green	£589,637,	6.4% more expensive
Park Street	£469,847	15.2% less expensive

Figure 5.1: Average house prices May 2018 to May 2019 (rightmove.co.uk)

- 5.14 Local estate agents report a general lack of properties for sale in the area (compared to demand). Estate agents agree with the community, noting that the main demand is for smaller properties for both first-time buyers and older downsizers. The effect of the latter group's inability to find smaller properties is that they remain in larger houses which would otherwise be released for purchase by families.

- 5.15 This reinforces the wider evidence from the SHMA, set out in Figure 5.2, which projects a need for 51% of all housing stock across the District to be of 3-bedroom, 21% 1-bedroom, 20% 2-bedroom and just 7% 4+ bedroom (rounded figures).

Tenure	Sector	Shared	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed	Total No.	Total %
Affordable	Social Rent	0	1,432	1,324	3,420	486	6,662	56.82
	Affordable Rent	0	208	193	498	71	970	8.27
Intermediate	Shared Ownership	0	95	87	226	32	440	3.75
Market	Private Rent	0	384	355	918	130	1,787	15.24
	Owner Occupier	0	401	371	958	136	1,865	15.91
Total no.	All sectors	0	2,520	2,329	6,020	855	11,724	100.0
Total %	All sectors		21.49	19.87	51.34	7.30	100.00	

*Figure 5.2: projected net housing needs for St Albans City and District,
2011- 2031, November 2013*

POLICY S3: DWELLING MIX

- 1. In order to address the evidenced housing need in St Stephen, support will be given to developments that provide predominantly 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom properties.**
- 2. Allocation of affordable housing for those with a local connection will be supported.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 1, 2; SALP Saved Policies: 7a, 8; SALP emerging Local Plan: L1; NPPF: 59, 60, 77)

Design of Development

- 5.16 Through the engagement on the Neighbourhood Plan, the community stressed the need for new development to be of a high quality that respects the character and rural feel of the local settlements and in keeping with immediate surroundings. The Community Survey revealed that the following points were specifically felt to be important to incorporate into any future housing design:

- A mix of housing styles would be acceptable as much of the Parish has different building styles already.
- Sustainable features designed to maximise energy use and water conservation measures and reduce the impact of climate change, with practical features such as water conservation measures, solar panels, wind turbines, permeable driveways and electric vehicle charging points.
- Where appropriate, developments should be in the form of small clusters of individual designs to avoid a uniform “toy town” look.
- Avoiding gated developments, which were considered to reduce community feel and inclusion.

- Provision of adequate off-road car parking.
 - Provision of hidden storage areas for recycling bins.
 - Hedges and shrubs planted to provide effective boundaries between dwellings and pavements.
 - Hedgerows and trees that are demonstrated to be better at reducing and exacerbating air pollution¹⁷.
 - Green space within developments - for example 'through' front gardens, green verges, green spaces between developments, trees and shrubs along the roadside – were all felt important.
 - Footpaths and cycleways to link new developments to village centres, schools, transport hubs, shops, medical centres and other community facilities.
- 5.17 The way development is designed can also help to mitigate the problems of climate change. The Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to an 80% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2050 – this is a big feat which will require everyone to be engaged, from households and communities, to businesses and local and national government.
- 5.18 '2050 ready' mean homes built to have minimal energy use and net carbon emissions over the year because they are highly insulated, have low water demand and are fitted with or directly connected to renewable energy systems.
- 5.19 Minimum standards for ecologically sustainable homes and developments are set out in Building Regulations, however, planners and developers are strongly encouraged to make use of energy efficient materials and to consider high-efficiency alternative systems and facilities for development sites. In this context, the orientation of buildings can be important in order to make best use of available sunlight.
- 5.20 The Code for Sustainable Homes was withdrawn by the Government in 2015 and this has been replaced by new national technical standards which include new additional optional Building Regulations regarding water and access as well as a new national space standard (this is in addition to the existing mandatory Building Regulations).
- 5.21 There is an opportunity to improve and promote sustainability in the neighbourhood area by:
- following basic passive environmental design in a fabric first approach (maximising the performance of the components and materials that make up the building fabric itself, before using mechanical or electrical building services systems);
 - integrating renewable energy systems into new development, including existing and new public buildings;
 - reducing water consumption through grey water systems; and
 - community energy schemes.

¹⁷ The Woodland Trust's Urban Air Quality Report contains advice about which tree species have a high urban tree air quality score (UTAQ) and are therefore a better choice for air quality purposes
<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1819/trees-improve-urban-air-quality.pdf>

- 5.22 Ultimately the objective of the Neighbourhood Plan is to encourage the most energy efficient development possible. Even small improvements on small developments become cumulative.

POLICY S4: DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Development proposals should incorporate a high quality of design, which responds and integrates well with its surroundings, meets the needs of the population of the neighbourhood area and minimises the impact on the natural environment. The design and standard of any development is encouraged to achieve the highest level of sustainable design, in order to reduce energy consumption and climate effects. In particular development proposals should demonstrate how they have sought to address the following matters as they are appropriate to their scale, nature and location:**
 - i. High quality design that is in keeping with the character and scale of existing buildings in the area;**
 - ii. Provides adequate off-street car parking for residents and visitors, in accordance with St Albans parking standards¹⁸ (or subsequent revision) and, where required, on-street parking that ensures the safe movement of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles;**
 - iii. Provides high quality boundary treatment and green landscaping;**
 - iv. Provides pedestrian and cycle connections to community facilities, local services and transport modes within the Parish, as well as to the surrounding countryside;**
 - v. Provides adequate and concealed storage for recycling bins;**
 - vi. Does not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity for neighbouring properties through the loss of privacy, loss of light or visual intrusion;**
 - vii. Features flora and fauna friendly design, for instance front garden space, using species that have a high UTAQ score¹⁹;**
 - viii. Contributes to the provision, extension and maintenance of accessible green space, including green space for sport and children's play areas, in accordance with St Albans open space provision and Hertfordshire County Council's Planning Obligations Guidance.**
- 2. To encourage sustainable development, as a minimum standard:**
 - i. all new dwellings will need to exceed the Building regulation minimum TER targets by at least 20%;**
 - ii. where possible, new development will need to provide a minimum of 25% of its estimated energy use by on-site sustainable generation, or local neighbourhood green energy schemes;**
 - iii. Non-residential developments should meet the Building Research Establishments BREEAM building standard 'Excellent'.**
- 3. Proposals which incorporate the following sustainable design features as appropriate to their scale, nature and location will be strongly supported:**

¹⁸ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/SP_Infrastructure_RevisedParkingStandards_2002_tcm15-48847.pdf

¹⁹ See footnote 13.

- i. Siting and orientation of buildings to optimise passive solar gain;**
 - ii. The use of high quality, thermally efficient building materials;**
 - iii. Installation of energy efficiency measures such as loft insulation and double glazing;**
 - iv. Reducing water consumption; and**
 - v. Use of building materials with low embedded carbon profiles.**
- 4. The building of basements to maximise the space available from the footprint of each dwelling so as to accommodate grey water recycling and rainwater harvesting will be supported.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 2, 5, 6; SALP Saved Policies: 69, 70; SALP emerging Local Plan: L23; NPPF: 125, 127)

6 GREEN SPACES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- 6.1 St Stephen Parish can best be described as ‘a group of settlements nestling in the Green Belt’. The protection given by its position in the Green Belt is regarded as vital by residents living in the Parish’s separate settlements as it prevents coalescence between the villages and also Watford and St Albans. Most importantly, it safeguards the countryside around the Parish and secures its position within a framework of woodlands, rivers, ponds, fields, bridleways and footpaths.

Minimising the Environmental Impact of Development

- 6.2 St Stephen has a rich environment; in addition to the extensive Green Belt designation, the majority of the Parish also falls within the Watling Chase Community Forest, one of 12 national community forests to the north of London. The Watling Chase Community Forest Supplementary Planning Guidance²⁰ aims to achieve widespread landscape improvement with woodland planting and increased opportunities for nature conservation, leisure and recreational access. As noted in the NPPF, any development proposals within community forests in the Green Belt should be subject to the normal policies controlling development in the Green Belt.
- 6.3 Furthermore, the Parish Council has signed up to the Charter for Trees, Woods and People²¹, which sets out ten principles to encourage the provision and ongoing care for trees, and celebrating their relationship with people.
- 6.4 The South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment sets out a detailed observation of the various landscapes that underlie the Parish, along with activities to consider to support and manage those landscapes. It is important that any development taking place in St Stephen contributes positively to the management of these landscapes.
- 6.5 In addition, there are examples of other features within St Stephen which are particularly distinct within the landscape. These include mature trees, hedgerows, broad grass verges and ponds. With a fairly flat topography, these features are particularly visible within the wider landscape.
- 6.6 Such features should be retained as part of any development.

²⁰ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/planning-policy/examination-library/SP_SPG---Watling-Chase_tcm15-60869.pdf

²¹ <https://treecharter.uk/>

POLICY S5: MINIMISING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Development proposals must be appropriate to the character and features of the St Stephen landscape.**
- 2. As they are appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should demonstrate that they address the following matters:**
 - i. contribute to the objectives of both the Watling Chase Community Forest Plan and the Charter for Trees, Woods and People, supporting the creation of additional trees and woodlands;**
 - ii. employ sustainable husbandry of land and wild flower planting/meadows;**
 - iii. maintain existing hedgerows and encourage the planting of new hedgerows and discourage fencing above 0.75m in front gardens;**
 - iv. provide wildlife corridors and buffer zones (in line with Environment Agency recommendations) to protect species and habitats;**
 - v. provide hedgehog holes in new residential fencing will be supported and bird and bat nesting boxes;**
 - vi. protect and enhance river corridors and water meadows from development;**
 - vii. mitigate the effects of carbon dioxide emissions, climate change and environmental noise by the planting of small to medium scale plantations of native mixed species of UK sourced and grown trees and shrubs to screen developments, all schools and major roads (including the M1, M24, A405 and A414). Replacement of roadside hedgerows where appropriate.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 5, 6, 7; SALP Saved Policies: 74, 103, 104, 105, 106; SALP emerging Local Plan: L29; NPPF: 170, 171)

Protecting Natural Habitats and Species

6.7 The National Planning Policy Framework states that, in order to minimise impacts on biodiversity, planning policies should:

- *“Identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation.”*
- *“Promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the Plan.”*

6.8 As a parish that is rich in both flora and fauna, there are a number of natural habitats and species within the Neighbourhood Plan area that need to be protected, enhanced and better connected. The Neighbourhood Plan engagement revealed that the local community greatly values green spaces and wishes to protect them. Some of the sites named by the community are protected already by national designation. (For example Bricket Wood Common and Moor

Mill Quarry, West are identified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or comprise ancient woodland). Others have been protected using the Local Green Space designation, in Policy S7 and also as Assets of Community Value, detailed in Section 12. A map of the Green Infrastructure is shown at Figure 6.1.

- 6.9 There are many habitats within the Parish which, however, are not protected. These include natural areas and man-made sites, for instance the gravel pits and brickworks. There are also 29 Local Wildlife Sites which provide corridors for wildlife, forming key components of ecological networks. All of these areas enable a wide range of species to thrive including a variety of butterflies, birds, snakes and amphibians. Further information is available on the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust website²². It is noteworthy that some of the sites that house the most unusual species are those which have been in previous development and therefore are most in need of ensuring that suitable habitat assessments take place.
- 6.10 It is imperative that any significant harm arising from proposed development is avoided or where possible reduced. As stated in the NPPF, if it is not possible to avoid or reduce such harm, then it will be necessary to ensure that appropriate mitigation strategies are put in place.
- 6.11 Well-designed developments should establish the location of habitats and the movement patterns of wildlife and should not impact on these. The creation of any habitat or species translocation should only be undertaken as a last resort when it is proven that a scheme cannot be designed to accommodate them in their existing location. Such locations should be identified in partnership with any appropriate wildlife body operating in the area.

POLICY S6: PROTECTION OF NATURAL HABITATS

- 1. Major development proposals will be expected to include an assessment of local habitats and species. Proposals that would result in significant harm to Local Wildlife Sites and/or the landscape features, as set out in Policy S5 (Minimising the Environmental Impact of Development) will not be supported unless the applicant can demonstrate the proposal cannot be located on an alternative, non-designated site with less harmful impacts and adequate mitigation or, failing that, appropriate compensatory measures are proposed.**
- 2. Where, as a last resort, compensatory measures involving creation of off-site habitat and/or relocation of species are agreed by the Local Planning Authority, these should be implemented in partnership with an appropriate nature conservation body.**
- 3. The use of an appropriate legal agreement is encouraged to ensure proper management of the open space over the lifetime of the development.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 5, 6, 7; SALP Saved Policies: 74, 103, 106; SALP emerging Local Plan: L29; NPPF: 174)

²² <https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/whatwedo/herts-environmental-records-centre>

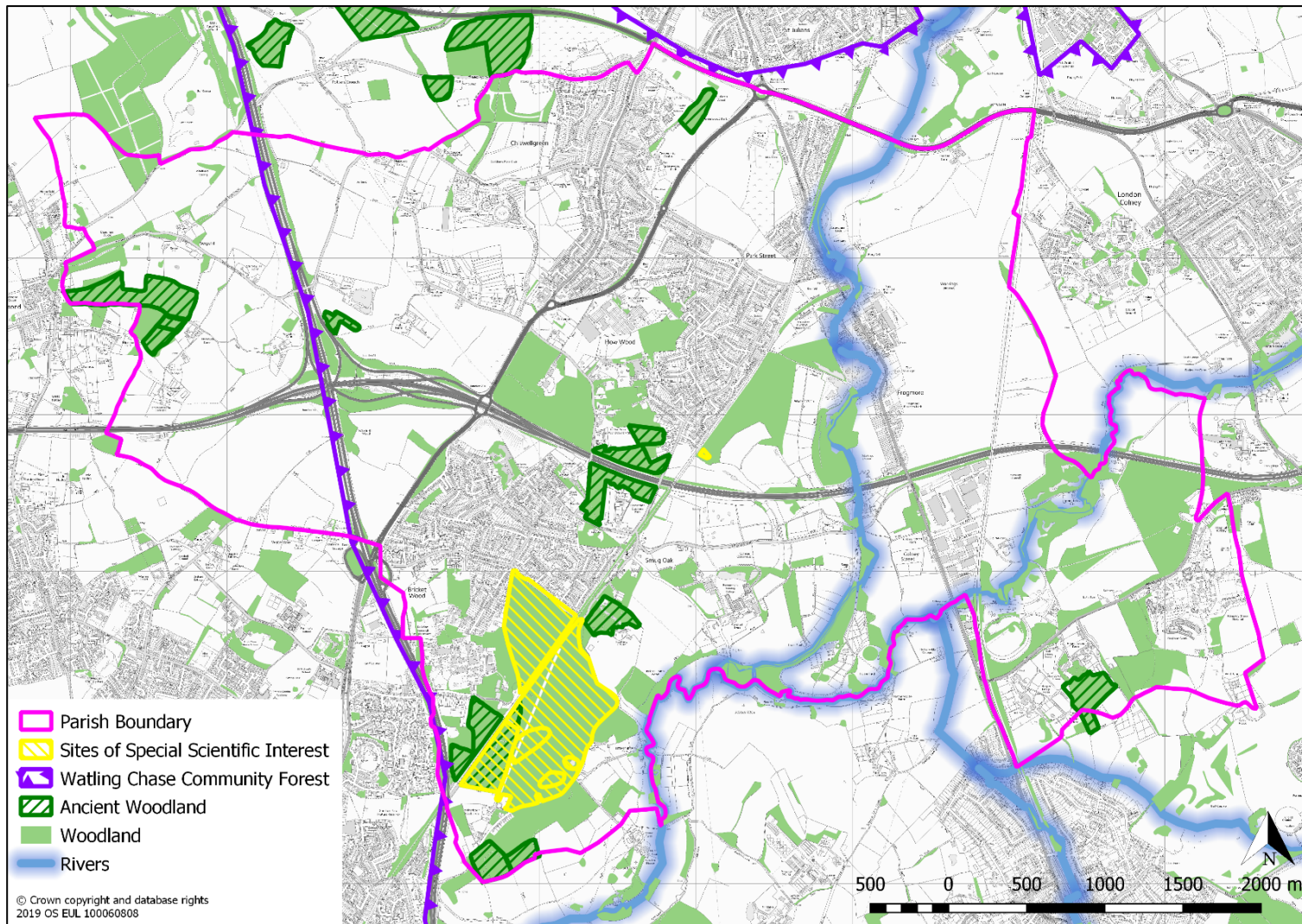


Figure 6.1: Green infrastructure map

Protect and Maintenance of Local Green Spaces

6.12 Under the NPPF, neighbourhood plans have the opportunity to designate Local Green Spaces which are of particular importance to the community. This gives protection from development except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 100 of the NPPF says that Local Green Spaces should only be designated:

- *“where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;”*
- *“where the green area is demonstrably special to the local community and hold particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife;”*
- *“where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.”*

6.13 Planning Policy Guidance adds:

- *“If land is already protected by designation, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space²³”.*

6.14 It is important to safeguard existing space while seeking out opportunities for additional spaces. Many of the green spaces identified as important by the local community²⁴ are already afforded protection, often because they are in the Green Belt.

6.15 The following seven areas, as shown in Figure 6.2, are valued green spaces and considered to fulfil all of the criteria of the NPPF and are thus designated as Local Green Spaces (see Appendix C for further detail on how each space meets the Local Green Space criteria):

1. Ashridge Drive, Bricket Wood
2. Broad Acre Woodland, Bricket Wood
3. Juniper Avenue, Bricket Wood
4. Forefield, Chiswell Green
5. South Close, Chiswell Green
6. Sunnydell, Chiswell Green
7. Mayflower Road / Orchard Drive playground and recreation ground, Park Street

²³ Planning Practice Guidance ref: 37-011-20140306

²⁴ See Steering Group Green Spaces Report

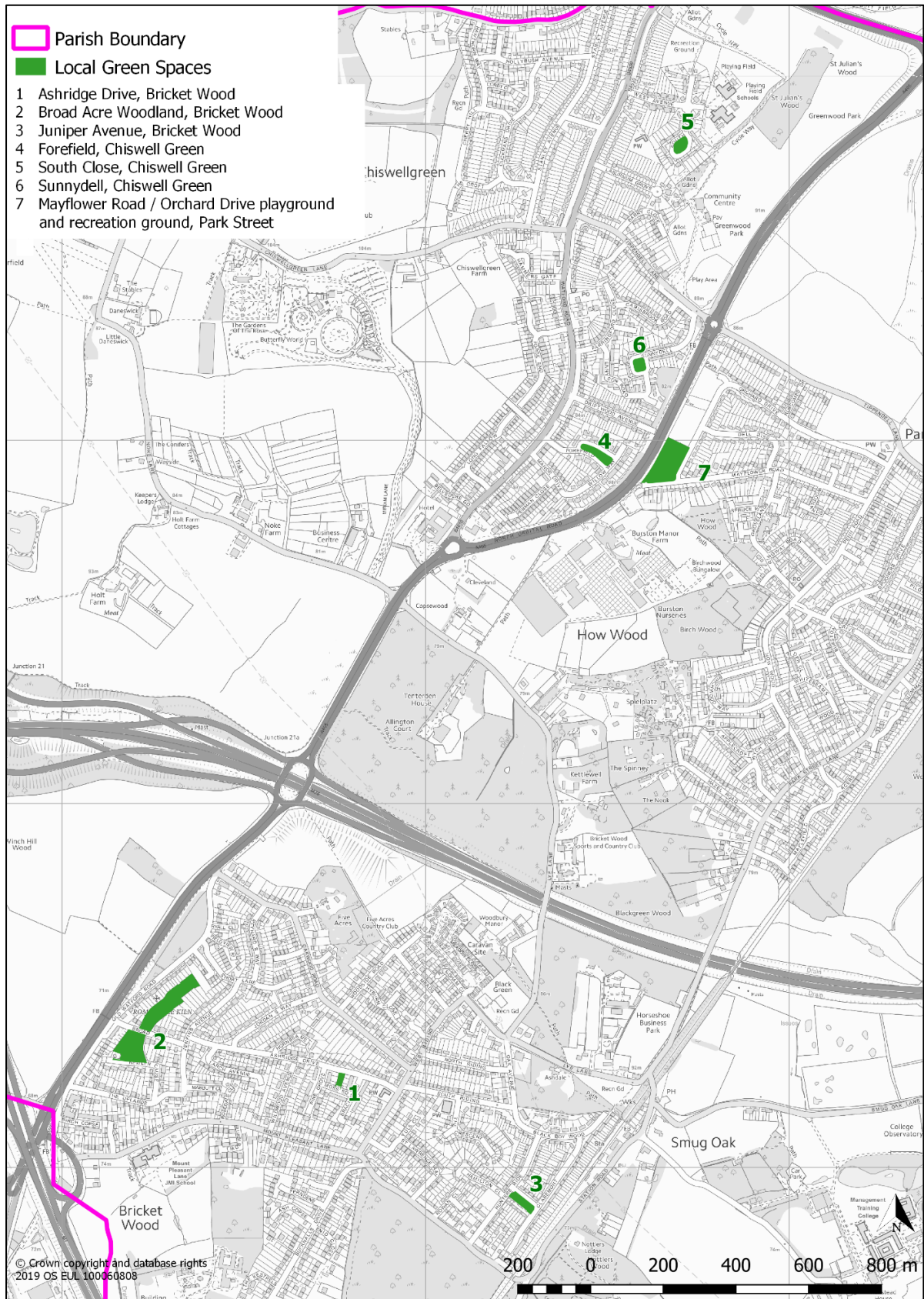


Figure 6.1: Local Green Spaces

- 6.16 In addition to these green spaces, there are other green spaces that, whilst currently protected by virtue of being located within the Green Belt, could potentially be at risk should any future review remove them from the Green Belt. Two of these – Drop Lane and Hanstead Wood – have previously been designated as Assets of Community Value (ACV)²⁵, although this has now expired. Therefore, an AIM has been included below the policy that seeks first to re-designate land off Drop Lane and Hanstead Wood as ACVs, and second to ensure that any future review of the Green Belt incorporates an assessment of these spaces to enable them to be designated either as Local Green Spaces or ACVs as they further the wellbeing and leisure of the community and their importance to residents as identified in the Community Survey. An indicative list of these sites is included at the end of Appendix C.

POLICY S7: PROTECTION AND MAINTENANCE OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES

1. The following areas, and as shown on the Policies Map, are designated as Local Green Spaces:

- 1. Ashridge Drive Green**
- 2. Broad Acre**
- 3. Forefield**
- 4. Juniper Avenue green space**
- 5. South Close Green**
- 6. Sunnyside Green**
- 7. Mayflower Road / Orchard Drive playground and recreation ground**

2. Local policy for managing development on a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts (NPPF 145); proposals for built development on will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that it is required to enhance the role and function of that Local Green Space.

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 6; SALP Saved Policies: 75; SALP emerging Local Plan: L29; NPPF: 100)

AIM 1: Identification of additional Local Green Spaces and Assets of Community Value

The parish council will seek to designate land off Drop Lane and Hanstead Wood as Assets of Community Value.

Any review of the Green Belt should include an assessment of the valued green spaces, to ascertain whether they should be designated either as Local Green Spaces or Assets of Community Value. An indicative list is included in Appendix C.

²⁵ The current list of ASVs within St Albans District can be accessed here:

<https://stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/Community%20and%20Living/Successful%20List%20-%20Assets%20of%20Community%20Value%20.pdf>

The River Ver

- 6.17 The River Ver and its walks²⁶, running through the Parish from north to south, is an area which is demonstrably special to the local and wider community. One of only 200 or so chalk streams world-wide, the Ver flows through Park Street and joins the River Colne in Bricket Wood.
- 6.18 It will be the aim of the Neighbourhood Plan to accord with the policies of the Ver Valley Society in that any development is to the highest water efficiency standard, does not contribute to net loss of water from the waterway and is conducive to the maintenance of the river.²⁷

POLICY S8: PROTECTING THE SETTING AND FUNCTION OF THE RIVER VER THE RIVER COLNE AND THEIR TRIBUTARIES

Proposals for development that adjoins or is in the river corridor of the River Ver or its tributaries, as shown on the Policies Map, will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances and where it:

- i. Would not have an adverse impact on the functions and setting of the river and its associated corridor. This should be demonstrated through an environmental impact statement, taking into account, for example, geological, ecological, landscape, species, habitats and sustainability criteria; and**
- ii. Conserves and enhances the biodiversity, landscape and recreational value of the River Ver, its confluence with the River Colne and its corridor through the Parish; and**
- iii. Includes a long-term landscape and ecological management plan for the river, natural buffer strip and corridor, in consultation with the Environment Agency.²⁸**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 6, 7; SALP Saved Policies: 104, 106; SALP emerging Local Plan: L29; NPPF: 170, 174)

²⁶ Ver Valley Walk: *The Confluence Walk Park Street and Bricket Wood*. Countryside Management Service www.cms@hertsc.gov.uk

²⁷ Ver Valley Society: www.riverver.co.uk

²⁸ <http://evidence.environment-agency.gov.uk/FCERM/en/SC060065/MeasuresList/M2/M2T2.aspx?pagenum=2>

Green Infrastructure and Development

- 6.19 It is considered important to enhance the green infrastructure assets of the Parish and connectivity between them where possible. Figure 6.1 on page 33 shows the green infrastructure network within the Parish.
- 6.20 Development proposals are encouraged to facilitate improved connectivity between wildlife areas and green spaces that are used by the community.

POLICY S9: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

Proposals should be designed from inception to create, conserve, enhance and manage green spaces and connective chains of green infrastructure, as shown in Figure 6.1, with the aim of delivering a net environmental benefit for local people and wildlife. Proposals that seek to improve the connectivity between wildlife areas and green spaces will be encouraged in order to enhance the green infrastructure of the Neighbourhood area.

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 5, 6, 7; SALP Saved Policies: 106; SALP emerging Local Plan: L29; NPPF: 170, 171, 174)

7 TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

7.1 St Stephen is dissected by both the M1 and the M25, despite being a rural parish, and also houses some very busy A-roads. This results in high volumes of traffic crossing through the Parish, often using the smaller local roads as rat-runs. Congestion on any of the main arterial routes has a major impact on the local villages due to the volume of detouring traffic.

“East-west travel is catered for by the M25 and the A414, although at the District and county level traffic movement east-west is poor and congestion is a major problem, with high levels of car use, limited bus routes and frequencies and a large rural hinterland.”

**SADC Strategic Local Plan 2011-2031
Publication Draft, 2016**

7.2 With the growth in population that will occur through development across the whole of the southeast of the country, movement by all transport modes will continue to be a challenge for the Parish. The key types of movement can be classed as ‘Local’ and ‘Strategic’ and ‘Through’:

- ‘Local’ movement is principally within St Stephen, to key locations within the Parish such as the schools, railway stations, village halls, doctors’ surgeries and local shops. It also includes people accessing community infrastructure and leisure activities – even as simple as dog walking.
- ‘Strategic’ movement is principally journeys from within the Parish to outside - for example to places of employment or to join the wider road network - and journeys into the Parish from outside of its boundaries, for example to join one of the major arteries such as the M1 or M25.
- ‘Through’ movement is journeys neither starting nor finishing in St Stephen, rather traffic just passing through on the Parish’s roads.

7.3 The bulk of ‘Strategic’ movement and ‘Through’ movement proposals, to address congestion concerns, are outside of the remit of a Neighbourhood Plan. ‘Local’ movement, however, is an issue that the Neighbourhood Plan can address. During the engagement phase of the Plan, transport proved to be a very real concern and, therefore, all aspects are reviewed either to inform a planning policy or a broader community action.

Road Improvements

7.4 The M1 and the M25, two of the UK’s busiest motorways, cross the Parish north to south and east to west respectively. Because there is no direct exit for M25 traffic to join the M1 southbound, vehicles have to exit the M25 at junction 21A and use the A405 North Orbital Road to join the M1 at Junction 6.

7.5 The A405 also accommodates local traffic joining the both the M1 and M25 and through traffic, mostly travelling between Watford and St Albans / Hatfield. Much of its northbound traffic continues through the Parish to join the A414 that runs west to east on the Parish's north eastern border.



7.6 There is a series of pinch points on the strategic highways network where high traffic volumes are frequent, impacting on congestion and air quality. These are shown, as numbered, on Figure 7.1:

1. M1 Junction 6 / A405 roundabout - impacts upon traffic joining M1 south from A405 and also traffic exiting Bricket Wood village joining both M1 (north and south) and A405 towards Watford.
2. A405 / M25 Junction 21A roundabout - impacts upon traffic joining roundabout from all directions. Traffic queues on the M25 exit slip roads frequently extend back on to then main carriageways, with slowing traffic causing congestion on the motorway.
3. A405 / B4630 (Noke) roundabout - main impact on traffic approaching from the north, from both the A405 and the B4630 Watford Road from St Albans / Chiswell Green.
4. A405 / A414 / A5183 (Park Street) roundabout - impacts upon traffic joining roundabout from all directions.
5. A414 / A1081 (London Colney) roundabout - impacts upon traffic joining roundabout from all directions.
6. A5183 / B4360 (King Harry) twin mini-roundabout - although outside of the Parish boundary - tail backs from this junction impact on B4630 Watford Road through traffic.

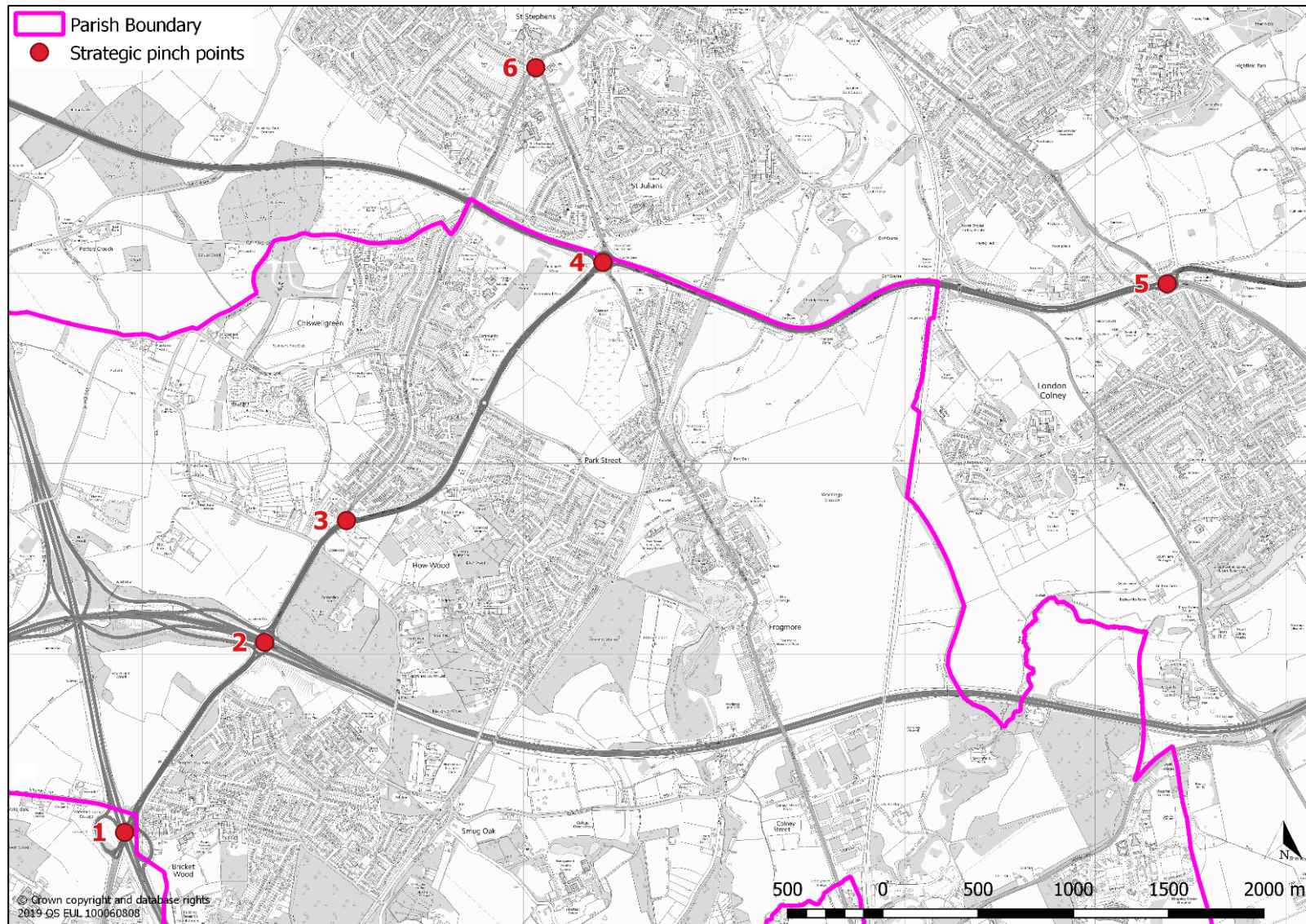


Figure 7.1: Strategic highway pinch points

- 7.7 The impacts of congestion at these strategic pinch points are visible both in the villages and the local road network. Car users often circumvent congestion by using local roads, many of which are little more than country lanes whilst others are residential streets. The problem is further exacerbated at morning peak times, as a result of commuting and the school run. When traffic is not congested, speeding is an issue to residents, highlighted during the engagement phase of the Plan. The array of problems associated with the Parish's local roads are explored in more detail by village:

Local data indicates that over one third of vehicles travel above the speed limit on the existing network of 30 mph roads."

HCC LTP4 Draft – Road Safety and Security (Extract)

Bricket Wood

- Many of the village's local roads are narrow.
- Mount Pleasant Lane, Park Street Lane and the Old Watford Road are routes particularly associated with rat-running traffic attempting to join the M1 or A405.
- Mount Pleasant Primary School, earmarked for potential expansion, is located a few hundred metres from the M1/A405 junction and, at peak times, traffic can frequently tail back half-a-mile along Mount Pleasant Lane. Running adjacent to the main A405, the Old Watford Road is similarly afflicted.
- The developments at Hanstead Park (circa 138 dwellings) and the completed BRE site (circa 100 dwellings) are using Mount Pleasant Lane for access, further adding to congestion. This situation is likely to be exacerbated still further should the former builders' merchants' site adjacent to Bricket Wood station also be developed for housing.
- There are examples of BRE employees parking along residential Bucknalls Drive.
- Despite the installation of a Speed Indicator Display (SID) at Station Road, speeding traffic on this stretch of road leading to Mount Pleasant Lane is of great concern to residents.
- Speeding traffic, using residential Oakwood Road and Ashridge Drive as rat-runs to the A405, M25 and M1, is also problematic, made all the more dangerous as these roads are narrow and also accommodate parked vehicles.

Chiswell Green

- The B4630 Watford Road (continuing from the A405, as the main conduit between Watford and St Albans), dissects Chiswell Green. This road becomes very congested during the morning commuter rush hour, resulting in vehicles 'queue-jumping', often at speed, and using residential Stanley Avenue and the Watford Road 'service road' as 'rat runs'.
- Speeding traffic joining the Watford Road from the derestricted A405 at the Noke roundabout is a concern, as is the volume of HGVs using this road (and also Tippendell Lane) despite weight restriction signage.

Park Street

- Although largely residential, the village houses the Curo Park and Ventura Park warehouse complexes on the eastern edge of the A5283. This has led to commercial vehicles, including HGVs, to exit the A405 at Tippendell Lane to access these sites, despite a 7.5 tonne weight restriction in place.
- There is a particular pinch point at the narrow Abbey Line railway bridge at the Tippendell Lane/Park Street Lane junction, which is too low for some HGVs to pass under, and there is no preceding 'Low Bridge' signage.
- Despite traffic calming measures, residents continue to raise concerns about speeding traffic, particularly along Tippendell Lane and Park Street Lane.
- Related to this is the partially 'blind' T-junction of Penn Road exiting into Tippendell Lane. The installation of a mini-roundabout at this junction would be beneficial.

7.8 Solutions to many of these challenges sit outside the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan. Section 12 of the Plan sets out some associated community actions that should be taken forward utilising developer contributions where appropriate.

7.9 In development terms, however, in order to reduce congestion and improve road safety for all users, it is vital that development addresses the issues at local road junctions as well as at strategic junctions. Local pinch point concerns are reflected on Figure 7.2.

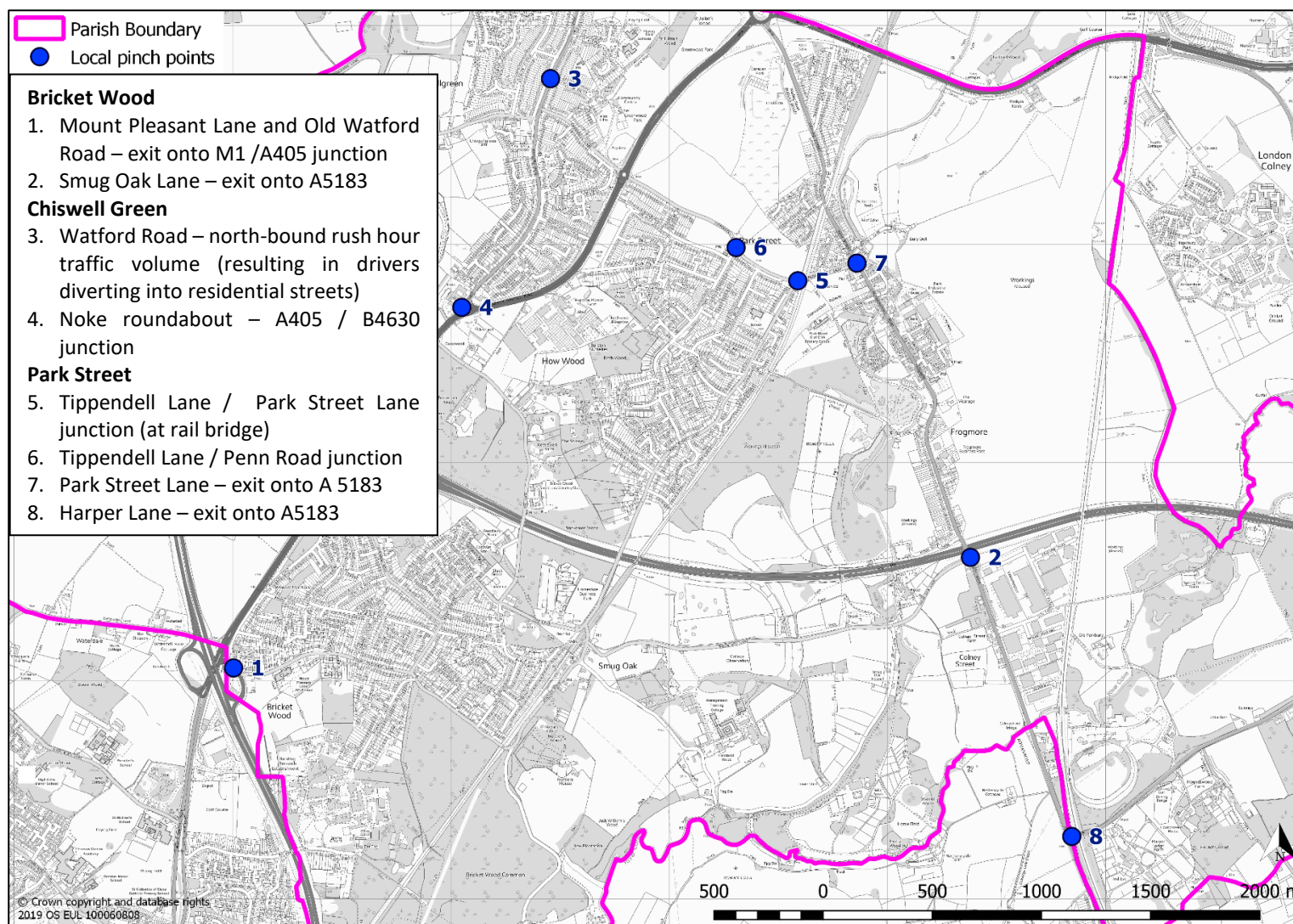


Figure 7.2: Local pinch points

POLICY S10: IMPROVEMENTS TO KEY LOCAL JUNCTIONS AND PINCHPOINTS

Transport Assessments (for larger sites) or Transport Statements (for smaller sites) - as required by Paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework - should address to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority the cumulative transport impact on road junctions and pinch points, in particular:

Bricket Wood

1. Mount Pleasant Lane and Old Watford Road – exit onto M1 /A405 junction
2. Smug Oak Lane – exit onto A5183

Chiswell Green

3. Watford Road – north-bound rush hour traffic volume (resulting in drivers diverting into residential streets)
4. Noke roundabout – A405 / B4630 junction

Park Street

5. Tippendell Lane / Park Street Lane junction (at rail bridge)
6. Tippendell Lane / Penn Road junction
7. Park Street Lane – exit onto A 5183
8. Harper Lane – exit onto A5183

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 8; SALP Saved Policies: 34, 35; SALP emerging Local Plan: L17, L18, L19; NPPF: 102, 104, 111)

Parking

- 7.10 Although parking concerns within the Parish vary slightly from village-to-village there are two common traits (as identified by residents in the St Stephen Parish Community Survey): vehicles parking on grass verges and kerbs and inadequate parking facilities at local shops, with kerb parking particularly prevalent around some shopping areas. The net result is that pavements become restricted and often blocked completely for pedestrians, particularly those with pushchairs and wheelchairs. In addition, grass verges are often damaged as a result of cars parking on them.



Particular problems by village are:

7.11 Bricket Wood

- Old Watford Road and adjacent roads are used as a car-share parking area due to their proximity to the M1 junction and also by commuters and others using Arriva's 757 Green Line London service. This creates obstructions leading to the roads often being restricted to single flow traffic.
- Oakwood Road is home to the village's main shopping area. Although there is a service road for parking, this is often filled with staff vehicles, meaning shoppers are forced to park on adjacent residential roads including Oakwood Road and West Riding, often on kerbs. This again reduces the flow of traffic along those routes.
- Mount Pleasant Lane School is located on a main through route to the M1 and A405. The combination of the school run and the volume of through traffic frequently results in pavements being blocked.



7.12 Chiswell Green

- The village centre, housing a few local shops and the Three Hammers public house, lies on the B4360 Watford Road where it meets Tippendell Lane and Chiswell Green Lane. Although there is a small off-road parking area at the end of Tippendell Lane and the Three Hammers Public House/Co-op car park in Chiswell Green Lane, respondents to the Community Survey reported cars frequently parking short-term on double yellow lines on Tippendell Lane. This leads to traffic congestion, with parked cars reducing the flow of traffic to one-lane.
- The advent of the Co-op store has, despite double-yellow lines, resulted in vehicles parking on and destroying, the grass verges on the Watford Road in front of the store.
- The service road adjacent to the Watford Road also attracts a degree of commuter parking Monday to Friday with motorists exchanging cars for buses for the final leg into St Albans.

7.13 Park Street

- The village's main shopping area, in How Wood, features a lengthy row of parking bays in front of the run of shops. However, reversing into (or out of) these bays can frequently be problematic, especially with vehicles parked opposite restricting the space available for manoeuvring.



- 7.14 Whilst there are a series of non-policy community actions that can be employed to alleviate issues associated with on-street car parking, it is vital that any new development does not reduce the amount of dedicated public parking available in the individual settlements.

POLICY S11: OFF-STREET CAR PARKING

- 1. There will be a presumption against the loss of publicly accessible off-street car parking in St Stephen. Any proposals that would result in the loss of existing publicly available 'off-street' car parking spaces must provide at least an equivalent number of spaces in an equally accessible location.**
- 2. Proposals for new development that provides additional public off-road car parking spaces, to alleviate parking congestion at the main village shopping areas, will be supported.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 8; SALP Saved Policies: 39, 40, 42; SALP emerging Local Plan: L20; NPPF: 104, 15)

- 7.15 In addition, it is a concern of the community that all new dwellings should have sufficient off-road parking to cater for the residents of those dwellings and thus aid the reduction of on-street parking. This is addressed in Policy S5 Design of Development.

Public Transport

- 7.16 Of the three villages in St Stephen Parish, only Chiswell Green can be considered to enjoy an adequate public transport service, specifically the Arriva Bus 321 and 724 services and (partially) the Red Eagle 361 service. The villages of Bricket Wood and Park Street are less well served.

Bus Services

- 7.17 Bricket Wood and Park Street are served by two bus services, the Uno 635 and the Red Eagle 361 service. Those living on the western extremities of Bricket Wood are also able to utilise Arriva's St Albans to Watford 321 service.



- 7.18 A fourth service, the Arriva 757 Green Line 'express' stops on the A405 at Bricket Wood but does not operate during rush-hour periods during weekdays, with the earliest usable London-bound bus timed at 9.30 am. Regrettably, rather than enhancing this service, in July 2018 Arriva halved the frequency from 30 minutes to hourly. The service was already compromised with buses completely full by the time they reached Bricket Wood - a full bus now means a one-hour wait for customers! Full buses and the reduced schedule, together with restricted car parking at the Bricket Wood stop, hamper greater usage of this service to residents throughout the Parish.
- 7.19 A significant difference to the travel habits of Bricket Wood and Park Street residents could be made by the provision of more frequent bus services, operating later into the evening and with enhanced weekend schedules. A service providing a direct link to St Albans City Station would

also be popular with residents. There will be even greater demand for bus (and rail) services with the new BRE development and once the planned residential development at Hanstead Park is completed. Regardless of the reduced service level (see above), running an earlier 757 service from Bricket Wood during the week could attract more London-bound commuter traffic, although this could also exacerbate parking problems in the immediate area of the stop.

7.20 Actions associated with improving the bus service are recorded in Section 12 of this report.

POLICY S12: BUS SERVICES AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Contributions from new major development in the neighbourhood area will be used to support additional community bus services or, where appropriate, and improvements to public transport infrastructure. These contributions will be collected through Section 106 Agreements or the Community Infrastructure Levy mechanism.

(Conformity reference: SSNP Objectives: 8; Emerging Local Plan: L18; NPPF: 34, 102, 103, 104, 108, 110)

Rail Service

7.21 The Abbey Line, aka The Abbey Flyer, runs between St Albans Abbey Station and Watford Junction, with three of the five intermediate stations (Park Street, How Wood and Bricket Wood) within the St Stephen Parish boundary. The line was first opened in 1858 as a single track line. A second platform and 'passing loop' were added at Bricket Wood Station in 1913, though both facilities were removed in 1966, the result of the infamous Beeching Plan.



7.22 Operating as a single-track, single-set train imposes severe restrictions on the line's timetable, a deterrent for many would-be users along all of the line, not just residents of St Stephen Parish. Typically, the shortest time gap between trains is circa 45 minutes.

7.23 The campaign to preserve and enhance the viability and attraction of the Abbey Line service has been running for many years, led by the Abbey Flyer Users Group (aka AbFly) and the Community Rail Partnership, the major objectives being to improve frequency, by the reinstatement of the 'passing loop' in the vicinity of Bricket Wood Station, and establishing a 'rush hour' through service from St Albans Abbey and the intermediate stations to London Euston Station.

7.24 The attraction to residents of such development is clearly demonstrated by the results of St Stephen Parish Council's Community Survey. When asked *"Which improvements would encourage you to use public transport (bus and/or train) more frequently?"*, 67% of respondents cited *"A through service to London Euston station from Abbey Line stations"* and 59% recording *"More frequent services"*.

- 7.25 Timetable restrictions aside, demand for commuter car parking at Bricket Wood Station is likely to increase as a result of nearby housing developments. Using either or both of the two sites either side of the adjacent builders merchant, should they become available, to extend parking would be advantageous, even if reasonable charges were to be levied. Increased parking capacity would become even more important should the Bricket Wood passing loop' be resurrected with the resultant increase in passenger numbers.
- 7.26 The benefits of enhancements to the Abbey Line and Abbey Line stations are self-evident in helping to reduce rush hour traffic through the Parish.
- 7.27 Actions associated with improving the rail service are recorded in Section 12 of this report.

AIM 2: IMPROVED RAIL SERVICES

Proposals to improve the frequency of Abbey Line trains and /or instigate a rush-hour service to London will be strongly supported.

Walking, Cycling and Bridleways

- 7.28 With the high levels of car ownership and road congestion, it is important that people are encouraged to use alternative modes of transport where possible. Walking and cycling in particular should be supported for their wider wellbeing benefits as well as being environmentally friendly. New development should seek to ensure that access to good pedestrian and cycling routes is provided.



POLICY S13: PROVISION FOR WALKING AND CYCLING

1. To help ensure that residents can walk safely to the village centres, public transport facilities, schools and other important facilities, all new developments must incorporate safe pedestrian access with links from the development to existing foot- and, where feasible, cycleways.

- 2. Development proposals that enable delivery of the recommendations in Hertfordshire County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (part 10) for St Stephen Parish, focusing on the rights of way network and its improvements, will be supported, subject to being in conformity with other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.**
- 3. Development that is immediately adjacent to a footpath or cycleway will be expected to:**
 - i. ensure the retention and where possible the enhancement of the path;**
 - ii. not have any detrimental impact on the path, and further assess and address the impact of the additional traffic movements on the safety and flow of pedestrians.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 8; SALP Saved Policies: 35, 97; SALP emerging Local Plan: L18, L19; NPPF: 98, 102, 104)

7.29 The engagement revealed that bridleways too are valued by the local community.

POLICY S14: IMPROVING THE BRIDLEWAY NETWORK

Proposals for new bridleways will be supported wherever possible; in all new developments existing bridleways must be retained where they exist or, alternatively, new or amended bridleway links provided together with safe road crossing points that enable connectivity between villages and the wider countryside.

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 8; SALP Saved Policies: 35, 97; SALP emerging Local Plan: L18, L19; NPPF: 98, 102, 104)

8 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities

- 8.1 The Plan seeks to ensure that there are sufficient medical, educational and recreational facilities for our residents and to secure the long term future of community facilities that make the Parish special.
- 8.2 The policy intent is to protect the popular and valued community facilities in the Parish from harmful development proposals but encourages proposals that are intended to sustain or extend those facilities.
- 8.3 Our community facilities are seen as vital to maintaining a happy, healthy and cohesive community, as demonstrated in the Community Survey. Safeguarding existing sites that provide community facilities is important, however there is also a need to allow for flexibility for redevelopment of sites where it is not possible to continue such a use or find an alternative community facility or suitable employment use.
- 8.4 If it can be demonstrated that it is not possible to find an alternative community or employment use and there has been the appropriate marketing, then it is reasonable for other uses to be considered in terms of other relevant planning policies.
- 8.5 To support this policy, a separate action has been identified to explore whether any facilities in the Parish might be suitable to nominate as an Asset of Community Value.

POLICY S15: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- 1. In order to promote a thriving community for all ages, there will be a strong presumption against the redevelopment of community facilities for non-community uses.**
- 2. Development proposals to sustain or extend the viable use of existing community facilities and the development of new facilities will normally be supported if they comply with other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.**
- 3. Development proposals that will result in the loss or significant reduction in the scale and value of a community facility will not normally be permitted unless:**
 - i. It is essential to meet utility infrastructure needs and there is no viable alternative; or**
 - ii. Alternative facilities of equal or better accessibility, size and suitability are provided; or**
 - iii. It can be clearly demonstrated that the operation of the asset or its ongoing delivery is no longer of value to the community; or**
 - iv. It is no longer economically viable for its current use and has been marketed at an independently agreed price by a property professional for at least a year as a community use or other suitable employment or service trade uses and it is verified that no interest in acquisition has been expressed.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 9; SALP Saved Policies: 67, 91, 92; SALP emerging Local Plan: L22; NPPF: 85, 91, 92)


Leisure Facilities for Young People

- 8.6 St Stephen is generally assessed by St Albans District Council to have a good quality and range of play spaces for all ages across the Parish. However, it was made clear in the Community Survey that additional provision to serve the needs of children, and in particular teenagers, would be welcomed.

Children's Play Areas

- 8.7 Children's play areas are important. They are specific and cannot easily be substituted for another type of green space. They are often - but not always - found within a green space. They cater for a specific demographic – children (and their carers), and when used by other groups lose their value to their target demographic.
- 
- 8.8 According to the St Albans Green Spaces Technical Report²⁹, two thirds of residential properties lie outside the acceptable access standard (based on Fields in Trust national guidance³⁰) for younger children's play areas. The new development at BRE, Bricket Wood, does, however, some limited play equipment and play areas for young children. Older children, however, are slightly better provided for, with 43% of properties falling within this access standard.
- 8.9 The Report, nevertheless, states that there are 2.59 ha of children's play area available in the Parish, which is greater than the required standard of 1.99 ha.

Teenage Provision

- 8.10 St Alban's advocate, for youth provision, separate open spaces, such as areas for wheeled sports (skate parks, BMX tracks) and pieces of equipment within existing parks. Multi-courts, which allow different formal and informal sports to be played, are also indicated. St Albans District Council operate a shelter scheme, which allows teenagers to spend time in a space which provides protection from the rain but in which they are not completely hidden.
- 
- 8.11 Within St Stephen Parish, provision for teenagers at present is limited. With the exception of a multi-court at Woodbury Field in Bricket Wood, there is no dedicated teenage space provision. This is a deficit of 0.22 ha against provision standards and even the multi-court is outside the recommended standard for access distance for many residents.

²⁹ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/SP_GreenSpacesTechnicalReportPublicationDraft111016_tcm15-56020.pdf

³⁰ <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/guidance>

- 8.12 Further leisure equipment and facilities aimed at teenagers will, therefore, be welcomed, particularly to support the growth of the community over the Plan period. It is important that new developments address the leisure needs of younger people and that such provision is part of any development proposals.

POLICY S16: PROVISION OF LEISURE FACILITIES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

Major development that includes play grounds and leisure facilities for children and young people will be viewed favourably. They will be expected to demonstrate that the likely needs of the under-18 population have been assessed and have sought, where possible, to address these needs and included such provision in proposals.

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 9; SALP Saved Policies: 91; SALP emerging Local Plan: L22; NPPF: 91, 96,

The Donkey Field – Community Use

Important notice: Inclusion of the Aim 3 (Community Facilities at the Donkey Field) within this section is subject to progress on the emerging SADC Local Plan

- 8.13 A site identified through the Call for Sites process was the so-called ‘Donkey Field’, situated between the M25, the A405 and Oakwood Road / Garnett Drive, in Bricket Wood. The site, shown in Figure 8.1, is wholly within the Green Belt, totals 9.44 ha, and contains a significant embankment in the northern corner protecting Bricket Wood from junction 21A of the M25. The remainder of the site was originally agricultural land but used for a depot and construction site for the widening of the M25 during which time the topsoil was removed. The land has remained fallow ever since.



Figure 8.1: The Donkey Field

- 8.14 A public footpath runs southeast to northwest across the site, between Woodside Road/The Meads and the M25 Junction. There is vehicular access both off the A405 and from the southern corner.
- 8.15 The site promoter proposes to provide community facilities, accessed from the southern corner (Woodside Road/The Meads) and a start-up small business park, accessed from the A405. The remaining area is to be used for allotments and a landscaped parkland area, with public access via bridleways and footpaths, and with additional tree planting along the boundary with the M25.
- 8.16 Any scheme needs to provide adequate parking on site for the community use, without high traffic volumes using The Meads or Woodside Road. There should be no through route through the site.
- 8.17 Community uses need to relate directly to the needs of the residents of the Parish, and in particular those in Bricket Wood. A new medical centre and/or a relocation of the Scout group are possible suitable facilities, but buildings must be visually subservient to the wider open landscape and situated well away from existing residential properties.

AIM 3: Community facilities at the Donkey Field

Proposals to provide a community facility – for instance, a community centre and associated outdoor sport and recreation facilities – will be supported as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Protection of Public Houses

- 8.18 The number of public houses in the Parish has declined over recent years. Park Street at one time had nine public houses, it now has two, The Overdraught and The Falcon; Chiswell Green has only one public house, The Three Hammers (a listed building) and a hotel, The Noke; Bricket Wood had four public house and now has only two, The Black Boy (also a listed building) and The Gate. The closures have been cited as a real loss by many residents.



- 8.19 Of those public houses that no longer operate, all have been sold for housing and/or commercial use. The protection of public houses is supported vigorously by CAMRA, the St Albans-based Campaign for Real Ale. This policy seeks to safeguard the remaining drinking establishments, unless it can be shown that they are commercially unviable.

POLICY S17: PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HOUSES

- 1. Development proposals to change the use of drinking establishments (Use Class sui generis) in the St Stephen Neighbourhood Area will be resisted.**
- 2. Development proposals to change the use of drinking establishments (Class sui generis) will only be permitted if such a use is demonstrably unviable. In order to demonstrate this the existing drinking establishment has been actively marketed for a period of not less than 12 months at a reasonable market value that is comparable to the market values for drinking establishment floor space in that general locality.**
- 3. Where a change of use of an existing or former drinking establishment is permissible, proposals to bring forward uses with a clear social benefit to the existing community will be strongly supported.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 9; SALP Saved Policies: 19; SALP emerging Local Plan: L22; NPPF: 91)

Community Growing Spaces

- 8.20 Allotments are important to those of the local community who value the opportunity to grow their own food. The existing allotment sites within the Parish are located at Greenwood Park, Watford Road (Chiswell Green), Burydell Lane (Park Street) and Park Street Lane (Park Street). They provide 107 plots, or 2.7 ha, and are included within the Local Green Space policy to ensure their ongoing protection. The St Albans Green Spaces report³¹ suggests that there is a deficit of allotment space in St Stephen, where the local quantity standard requires 5.5 ha. Across the Parish, 44% of properties are within the required distance from an allotment. The accessibility report suggests that Bricket Wood and Park Street are the main areas outside this, thus requiring additional provision.
- 8.21 Whilst allotments are an important source of space for growing, they are often not in the most convenient location for all users, and plots are often too large for users' needs. An alternative solution is the concept of community growing spaces. These can be designed into new developments and thus become closer to residents' homes and, as the name suggests, involve collective growing by residents. More specific guidance can be found at:

www.verdantearth.co.uk/community-growing-spaces/.



³¹ Detailed Local Plan Technical Report, Green Spaces, St Albans, 2016

The provision of community growing spaces will therefore be encouraged, particularly as part of the residential site allocations, but also as part of all types of development.

POLICY S18: ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GROWING SPACES

- 1. Proposals that would result in the loss of all or part of existing allotment spaces will not be supported unless alternative and equivalent allotment space is provided.**
- 2. Alternative allotment provision proposed as part of such proposals will be required to meet the following criteria:**
 - i. the scale of the alternative site must be of at least an equivalent scale to the existing allotment provision; and**
 - ii. the quality of the alternative site must be of at least an equivalent standard in terms of layout and soil character to the existing allotment provision; and**
 - iii. the location of the alternative provision must be generally accessible by foot and within or adjacent to the defined settlement area of St Stephen, as shown on the Policies Map.**
- 3. The provision of community growing spaces of a size appropriate to developments, particularly where these can be used to create attractive screening for, for example, car parking areas, will be encouraged.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 2, 9; SALP Saved Policies: 95; SALP emerging Local Plan: L27; NPPF: 91)

Retirement and Care Home Facilities

- 8.22 The ageing population, both nationally and locally, is considered to be an issue that the Neighbourhood Plan should address – a motion strongly supported by residents as evidenced in the Community Survey. In particular, the need for specialist and extra care in a Parish with an older than average population, will fuel a growing need for such provision over the Plan period.
- 8.23 At present, care needs of older people living in the Parish are provided by the following:
- Tenterden House Nursing Home in Lye Lane: This is a BUPA operated care home providing care for up to 40 people and specialising in care for young, physically disabled adults and nursing care for older people, alongside care and support for people with Parkinson's disease or Huntingdon's disease. The existing home is an old manor house converted into a care home. It currently runs at almost full occupancy throughout the year.
 - Allington Court Nursing Home in Lye Lane: This is a BUPA operated care home with nursing which can accommodate 44 users. It has been specifically designed for adults living with dementia but other care is also available for people living with Parkinson's and Huntington's or with a mental disorder requiring specialist nursing care.
 - Birchwood Bungalow on the Bridle Path off How Wood: This is a residential care home operated by Hertfordshire County Council which can accommodate seven people. It specialises in challenging behaviour and palliative care.
- 8.24 The South West Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (February 2016) concludes that between 2013 and 2036, there is a need for an additional 1,352 units of specialist housing

for older people and 640 residential/nursing care bed spaces in St Albans District. St Albans District Council (in a report prepared on their behalf by Housing Vision, September 2016) predicts that between 2011 and 2031, the population of those aged 85 years and over will increase by 89%. This is by far the largest component of population change in the District, a trend that is reflected in the UK as a whole. This is particularly important for St Stephen as the Parish already has a disproportionately large number of older residents.

8.25 The Local Housing Needs Assessment for St Stephen analysed the potential need for specialist accommodation for retirees and the elderly. It revealed that the following should be provided in St Stephen over the Plan period:

- Care homes – 18 additional units
- Extra care homes – 3 additional units
- Sheltered housing – 19 additional units

8.26 The Neighbourhood Plan, therefore, seeks to provide the opportunity for a provider to deliver a suitable retirement / care facilities during the Plan period.

POLICY S19: RETIREMENT CARE HOME FACILITIES

Proposals for a care home or retirement village (use class C2) within St Stephen Parish shall be supported. This shall be subject to the proposals satisfactorily addressing all other policy criteria.

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 1; SALP Saved Policies: 43, 62; SALP emerging Local Plan: L2; NPPF: 61)

Burston Nurseries

Important notice: Inclusion of the Policy S20 (Burston Nurseries) within this section is subject to progress on the emerging SADC Local Plan

8.27 Nestled between Chiswell Green to the north and Park Street to the south east, this 15.1 ha site is owned by Burston Nurseries. Part of the site (3.8 ha) comprises largely disused buildings, unused hard standing and redundant planting areas. The area has, in effect, a more brownfield than greenfield appearance. The site is bounded to the north by the A405, and is immediately bounded by woodland and green fields on the other sides, beyond which is housing. Access to the site would be off the A405 and planning permission for this has been granted by Hertfordshire County Council.



8.28 The site creates the opportunity to secure and enhance the existing retail part of the site provided by the garden centre. It also provides an opportunity to address the shortage of extra care in the area through the provision of a spectrum of care facilities with assisted living and associated housing on-site for workers.

- 8.29 There is an existing bridleway (3/3a) running along the eastern boundary of the site between How Wood and Chiswell Green and also a footpath (FP18) runs parallel to the south-west boundary of the site. Development of the site would enable the development of a new bridleway and footpath from Birchwood Bungalow, across the site and leading to the Lye Lane entrance to the site. It would also enable the upgrade of Footpath 18 which connects Lye Lane to the A405. The new access arrangements would enable a safer crossing point across the A405 for walkers and horse riders, which would address concerns that have been raised by the community.
- 8.30 The site creates the opportunity to secure adjacent land for provision of leisure and recreation activities. This adjacent land would be gifted to St Stephen Parish Council in perpetuity to provide an amenity green space with contributions secured from the development of this site as appropriate.
- 8.31 Paragraph 136 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that detailed amendments to Green Belt boundaries may be made through non-strategic policies, where a need has been established. Discussions with St Albans District Council have confirmed that there is a need, given the need for housing locally within the Parish and the relatively few sites available. This site is therefore recommend to be removed from the Green Belt to facilitate this development. A significant proportion of the site has previously been developed and the land is well related to the existing urban areas. The land is well contained visually by adjacent woodland and the nurseries. The emerging St Albans Local Plan is proposing to remove land from the Green Belt in order to accommodate a substantial element of the overall housing requirement for St Albans district.

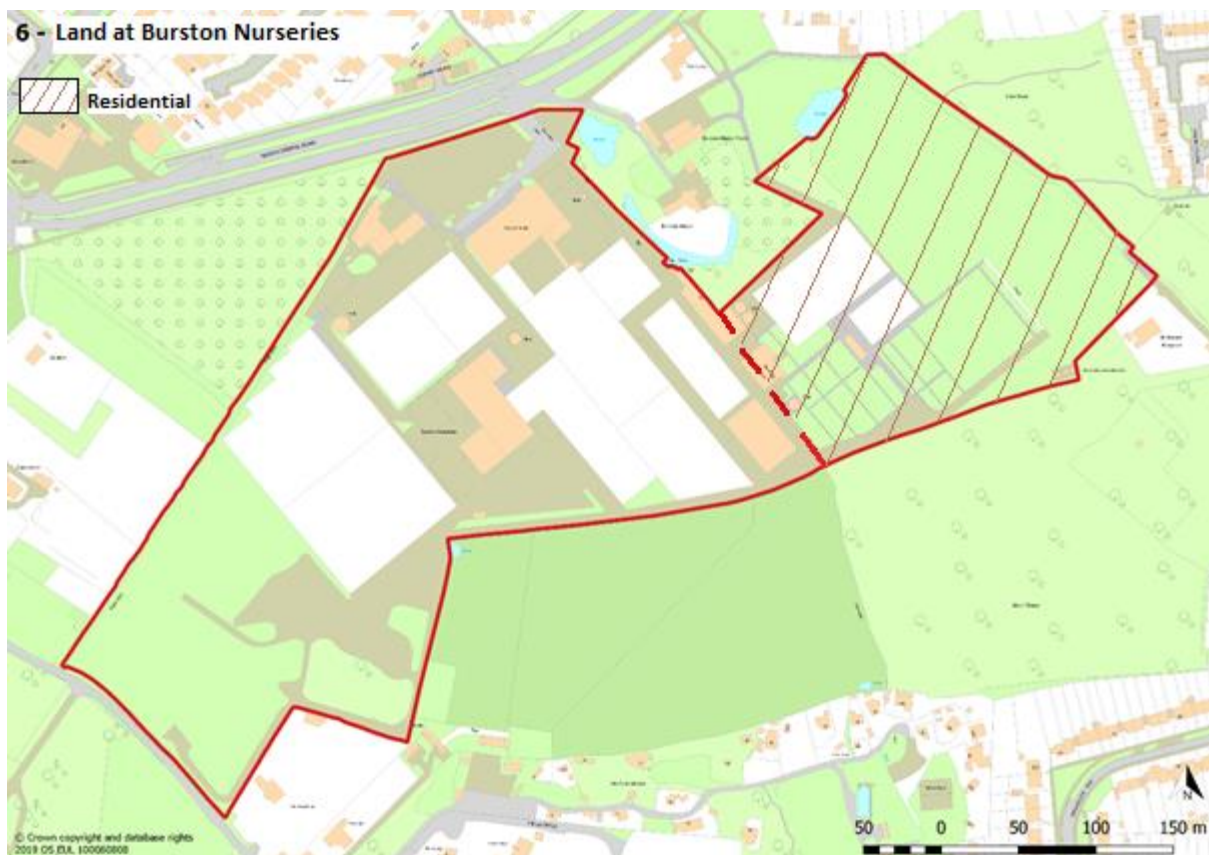


Figure 8.2: Land at Burston Nurseries

POLICY S20: BURSTON NURSERIES

- 1. Land at Burston Nurseries (circa 3.8 ha) is included for a 'C2 Use Class' retirement village to provide a range and choice of housing for older people and which should cater for the varying dependency levels of the care and support that older people need.**
- 2. The site has capacity for approximately 200 units of accommodation, which should be supported by sufficient parking and landscaping.**
- 3. The retirement village will provide a range of services and facilities that encourage residents to maintain independence, support their health and wellbeing and reduce loneliness and isolation. Examples could include domiciliary care provision, therapy rooms, restaurant, wellbeing suite, resident lounges and ancillary staff accommodation.**
- 4. Improvements to signalise the existing junction (to include for a signalised pedestrian crossing point) with the A405 are approved to support the allocation. The provision of new and enhanced public footpaths/bridleways that enhance access to the countryside will also be supported.**
- 5. Development proposals should consider the historic environment, including the setting of the Listed Burston Manor, carefully, and any planning application should be supported by a Heritage Statement that assesses the potential impacts on the historic built environment in accordance with relevant national planning policy.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 1, 9; SALP Saved Policies: 43, 62; SALP emerging Local Plan: L2; NPPF: 61)

9 BUSINESS AND LOCAL ECONOMY

- 9.1 Most existing identified significant businesses within the Parish are in Green Belt locations, although there is a number of small scale businesses within residential areas, as well as retail outlets. A significant number of people, 14%, work from home, either running their own small businesses or remote-working for larger organisations.
- 9.2 Unemployment in the area is very low compared to both the national and Hertfordshire average, at 2.47% in 2011³². A substantial number of those in employment commute to nearby towns and London³³.
- 9.3 Bus services link the villages to both Watford and St Albans, as does the 'Abbey Flyer' although this only connects directly to the wider rail network at Watford. Commuters also use Radlett and to a lesser extent St Albans City stations for commuting into London.
- 9.4 Work on the Neighbourhood Plan revealed the following challenges that need to be addressed:
- **Recruiting locally** - the difficulty some businesses face is recruiting local workers, particularly (but not exclusively) to fill manual, trade and semi-skilled positions. The cause of this is the lack of availability of appropriate local labour and the unaffordability of local housing for workers on relatively low incomes. This has resulted in at least two major employers needing to provide temporary accommodation for their workforces, whilst other businesses bus in employees from outside the area. This leads to greater traffic volumes and could potentially lead some employers to consider relocating to areas where the local workforce is more accessible.
 - **Green Belt restrictions** - as most of the major employers are situated on sites within the Green Belt, it is difficult for them to expand or make even relatively minor alterations to facilities. This could also lead to some employers considering relocation to more flexible locations.
 - **Residential area restrictions** - equally, some businesses located in largely residential areas have outgrown their premises, which creates parking issues for residents. Despite this, it is essential that small businesses located within residential areas, and which serve local needs, are not lost.
 - **Loss of local shopping and services** – There is increased pressure on the viability of local shopping parades. It is vital that essential services, and in particular post offices and pharmacies, are protected and other retail businesses are not lost to housing unless a business can be proven to be unviable.
 - **Local access issues** - despite being intersected by a network of motorways and major roads, 'last mile' vehicular access for larger commercial vehicles is problematic for many of the businesses in the area. This includes the rural location of the building supplies companies in Bricket Wood, the Ventura Park and Curo Park industrial estates, together with other businesses in Park Street. A potential solution could be the widening of the Harper Lane

³² HCC Data, 2011

³³ District Council workforce migration study, 2013

bridge and any major development within Park Street/Frogmore (e.g. the proposed Strategic Rail Freight Terminal) should include this provision, although this is outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- **Poor energy efficiency** – many existing businesses are based within older buildings, which are not very energy efficient.
- **Lack of superfast broadband** – the area is fairly poorly served by the fibre optic cable and high speed internet connections and this is inhibiting the further growth of those wishing to ‘work from home’.

9.5 The following policies seek to address these challenges.

Support for Reasonable Business Expansion

9.6 This policy seeks to support the reasonable expansion of established businesses which are located in the Green Belt.

9.7 Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in Green Belt. However, there are exceptions to this which include the:

“extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building” and “the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces”.

9.8 The extent of the development of businesses in the Green Belt has been tested in the High Court and deemed acceptable³⁴. Such expansion should not be limited to extensions but can also involve the construction of a new building or new buildings which might, or might not, be development within one of the exceptions in paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework³⁵.

POLICY S21: SUPPORTING THE EXPANSION OF BUSINESSES

The reasonable expansion of established businesses, already situated in or adjacent to the Green Belt, will be supported where the proposal:

- would make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment, providing that appropriate mitigation can be secured; and**
- meets the requirements of being appropriate development in the Green Belt or it demonstrates very special circumstances; and**
- uses trees, shrub/hedgerow screening and landscaping at all boundaries.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 10; SALP Saved Policies: 95; SALP emerging Local Plan: L11; NPPF: 145)

³⁴ <https://www.out-law.com/en/articles/2015/august/inspector-misinterpreted-policy-allowing-reasonable-expansion-of-business-in-midlands-green-belt-high-court-rules/>

³⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf

Village Retail Areas

- 9.9 It is important that retail and local service provision within each of the villages is protected and enhanced as necessary to support and sustain a growing community.
- 9.10 Despite changes in shopping habits, including the increase in internet shopping, the villages have retained a reasonable range of retail outlets, the majority being independent shops and services. Most are well located and accessible from the surrounding residential areas.
- 9.11 It is important that the Neighbourhood Plan supports the continuation of retail units and other uses that will continue to drive footfall into these areas. Notwithstanding permitted development rights, proposals for change the use will only be supported where it can be shown that such a change would enhance the retail experience by providing additional and/or alternative services and facilities.

POLICY S22: VILLAGE RETAIL AREAS

Notwithstanding permitted development rights, proposals for the change of use from establishments within Use Classes E and F to other uses shall only be supported where one of the following conditions are met:

- i. it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that it is neither economically viable nor feasible to retain the existing or previous retail use in the property concerned and that there is no reasonable prospect of securing an alternative retail use; or**
- ii. the proposed alternative use meets an identified community need and does not adversely affect the integrity of the village centre or wider sustainability of the village.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 10; SALP Saved Policies: 55; SALP emerging Local Plan: L12; NPPF: 85, 91)

Supporting local employment

- 9.12 It is important that the business-base of St Stephen is protected. Most employment opportunities for those living in St Stephen are in nearby St Albans, Hemel Hempstead, Hatfield, Watford and beyond, notably in London. Whilst there are opportunities to commute by non-car modes, inevitably the majority of people working away from St Stephen will journey by car. The protection of local employment opportunities will not only provide greater prospects for local people to access jobs but also help reduce commuting needs.

POLICY S23: PROTECTION OF EXISTING EMPLOYMENT PREMISES OR LAND

- 1. Existing employment-generating sites should be retained as such unless genuinely unsuitable and unviable for employment-generating use or are replaced directly by new sites within the Parish.**
- 2. Applications for a change of use from an employment to a non-employment activity will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that**

the premises are no longer suitable for business use and evidence has been submitted that demonstrates that the property has been actively marketed for at least 12 months on realistic market terms and it is shown that there is no prospect of new business occupiers being found.

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 10; SALP Saved Policies: 19; SALP emerging Local Plan: S5; NPPF: 80, 104)

Broadband Communications

- 9.13 The modern economy is changing and provision of a good communications network is a basic requirement. The 2011 Census highlights how people are working differently to a generation ago - in St Stephen Parish, 8% of people work from home and 14% are self-employed. Of these self-employed, 79% have no employees so effectively work for themselves, commonly in service-related activities that simply require a computer and access to a broadband connection.
- 9.14 A recent study³⁶ on the broadband gap was revealed for the Consumer Data Research Centre by University College London, using average residential download speeds from regulator Ofcom. The data reveals that many users in the Parish are experiencing well below the higher download speeds, as illustrated in Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1: Average broadband download speeds in the Area



³⁶ <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/techandgadgets/revealed-londons-fastest-areas-for-broadband-suburbs-have-superfast-internet-while-packed-urban-a3580021.html>

- 9.15 The need for superfast broadband to serve St Stephen is paramount. Broadband speeds are reported by residents to vary wildly depending on where within the Parish they reside. Indeed, one of the most recent housing developments in the Parish did not incorporate high speed fibre connection to the new dwellings. This is a fundamental constraint to the continuing expansion of self-employed activity for those working from home or from a small office.
- 9.16 In its 2015 manifesto, the Government committed to delivering download speeds of 24Mbps to 95% of the UK by the end of 2017. Since then, a further announcement pledges that access to at least 10Mbps should be on a similar footing to other basic services such as water and electricity. This 'Universal Service Obligation', due to be implemented from March 2020, will mean that consumers will have the right to request a broadband connection wherever they live³⁷.
- 9.17 It is likely that this will take time to roll out, meaning that some St Stephen residents will have to wait to receive superfast broadband without additional local authority intervention. In the meantime, whilst BT has an obligation to provide a landline to every household in the UK, and developers are expected to want to facilitate high speed broadband provision to make their developments more marketable, there have been instances where developers have not contacted Next Generation Access (NGA) Network providers early enough in the process for fibre and ducting to be laid, or they have a national agreement with a cable provider that is not active in the area, thus leaving new housing developments with little or no connections.
- 9.18 This policy seeks to ensure that all new housing, community and commercial development in the neighbourhood area is connected to superfast broadband.

POLICY S24: HIGH SPEED BROADBAND

All new residential, commercial and community properties within the Neighbourhood Plan area should be served by a superfast broadband (fibre-optic) connection. The only exception will be where it can be demonstrated, through consultation with Next Generation Access (NGA) Network providers, that this would not be either possible, practical or economically viable. In such circumstances, sufficient and suitable ducting should be provided within the site and to the property to facilitate ease of installation at a future date on an open access basis.

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objective: 9, 10; SALP Saved Policies: 19; SALP emerging Local Plan: L9; NPPF: 112)

³⁷ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/broadband-usage-need-to-know>

10 SITE ALLOCATIONS

Important notice: Inclusion of the Policies S25 to S29 (Site allocations) within this section are subject to progress on the emerging SADC Local Plan

- 10.1 The process of identifying and assessing potential site allocations through the Neighbourhood Plan process has demonstrated that all the most sustainable sites, (those that can make the greatest contribution towards addressing the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan) are currently within the Green Belt.
- 10.2 Policy S1 amends the Green Belt boundary where it can be evidenced that it no longer fulfils the five main Green Belt criteria.
- 10.3 The Housing Needs Assessment identified a need to deliver new housing that addresses the needs of the community of St Stephen while also contributing towards addressing the wider needs of St Albans district.

Land at Orchard Drive, Park Street



Figure 10.1: Land at Orchard Drive, Park Street

- 10.4 This site is formed of two land parcels, divided by a residential property 'Meadowside', which together total 1.35 ha. To the northwest of the site is the A405, with a tree buffer along that

boundary of the site. To the east are residential dwellings. Access onto the site is from Orchard Drive.

- 10.5 The parcel of land bounding at the southern end of the site borders a children's play area and recreation ground owned by St Stephen Parish Council and houses.
- 10.6 The north western boundary of the site will retain and augment the existing tree buffer, to provide a wildlife corridor alongside the A405 between Burston Nurseries and Tippendell Lane.
- 10.7 The development provides an opportunity to improve the on-site footpaths (FP75 and FP77) including resurfacing and linking the two.
- 10.8 It is anticipated that will provide a mix of housing, including starter and family homes, and is considered to be suitable to accommodate approximately 30 units.

POLICY S25: LAND AT ORCHARD DRIVE, PARK STREET

- 1. 1.35 ha of land off Orchard Drive is allocated for residential development subject to the following criteria:**
 - i. The provision of approximately 30 dwellings provided as small dwellings appropriate for first time buyers;**
 - ii. Affordable housing is provided to meet the requirements of the St Albans Local Plan;**
 - iii. The adequate provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS);**
 - iv. The provision of appropriate vehicle access into the site from Orchard Drive;**
 - v. The inclusion of a tree buffer along the north western edge of the site to provide, conserve and enhance biodiversity and create linkages between green spaces and wildlife corridors;**
 - vi. The provision of financial contributions to resurface footpaths 75 and 77 and link the two.**
- 2. Development should demonstrate that it represents high quality and sustainable design and creates places and spaces for people. In particular proposals should adhere to the criteria as set out in Policy S4.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objective 1, 2, 3; SALP Saved Policies: 2, 4; SALP emerging Local Plan: S4, L1; NPPF para 59, 61)

Land at Park Street Baptist Church between Tippendell Lane and Orchard Drive, Park Street

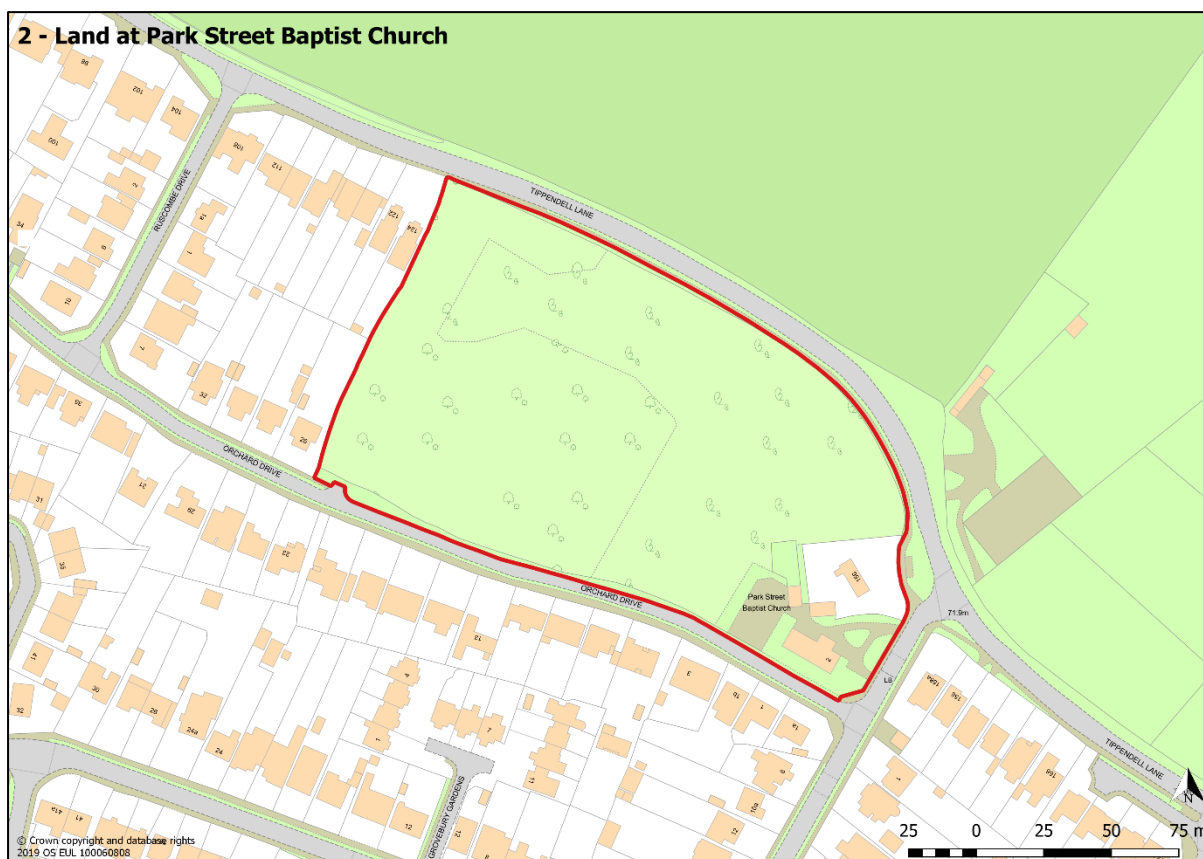


Figure 10.2: Land at Park Street Baptist Church

- 10.9 This site totals approximately 2.3 ha, bounded to the north by Tippendell Lane and to the south by Orchard Drive. Park Street Baptist Church is located in the south eastern corner of the site.
- 10.10 Development of the site creates the opportunity for additional housing to meet local need as well as redevelop the church (with car parking) and provide additional facilities for use by the wider community, including amenity green space and a children's playground (Local Equipped Area of Play, LEAP).
- 10.11 The housing element of the site should include provision for older people, specifically affordable units eligible to over 55s to encourage down-sizing. This should include 1- bedroom bungalows, together with ground-floor mobility standard 1-bedroom maisonettes. There may also be scope to incorporate some 1-bedroom market bungalows on the site, albeit that this would require flexibility from SADC on standard garden depths and density.
- 10.12 Access to the site would be off Orchard Drive.

POLICY S26: LAND AT PARK STREET BAPTIST CHURCH BETWEEN TIPPENDELL LANE AND ORCHARD DRIVE, PARK STREET

- 1. 2.3 ha of land between Tippendell Land and Orchard Drive is allocated for residential development subject to the following criteria:**
 - i. The provision of approximately 60 residential units, with a mix of dwelling sizes in accordance with Policy S2 and in accordance with the SADC emerging Local Plan;**
 - ii. The provision of appropriate vehicle access into the site from Orchard Drive;**
 - iii. The redevelopment of the existing Baptist Church and associated car parking for community purposes;**
 - iv. The provision of green space for wider public use and a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) on at least 1.2 ha of the site; and**
 - v. A suitable hedge or tree buffer abutting Tippendell Lane.**
- 2. Development should demonstrate that it represents high quality and sustainable design and creates places and spaces for people. In particular proposals should adhere to the criteria as set out in Policy S4.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objective 1, 2, 3; SALP Saved Policies: 2, 4; SALP emerging Local Plan: S4, L1; NPPF para 59, 61)

Land south of Park Street Lane, Park Street



Figure 10.3: Land south of Park Street Lane (hatching shows approximate area for residential)

- 10.13 This site totals 2.3 ha. The site is long and relatively narrow, bordering residential properties to the north. The M25 runs to the south of the site, with a railway line to the east and Park Street Lane to the west. The site has a substantial tree border, particularly to the northwest.
- 10.14 It is expected that the southern half of the site remain a natural buffer against the M25 and that the majority of the existing screening around the rest of the site remains.
- 10.15 Access onto the site will be from Park Street Lane.
- 10.16 The site is considered to be suitable to accommodate approximately 30 dwellings.

POLICY S27: LAND SOUTH OF PARK STREET LANE, PARK STREET

- 1. 2.3 ha of land off Park Street is allocated for residential development subject to the following criteria:**
- i. The provision of approximately 30 units, with a mix of dwelling sizes in accordance with Policy S2;**
 - ii. Affordable housing is provided to meet the requirements of the St Albans Local Plan;**
 - iii. The southern half of the site is retained as a buffer, planted with native species trees; a community orchard would be encouraged in accordance with Policy S18;**

- iv. The adequate provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS);**
- v. The provision of appropriate vehicle access into the site from Park Street Lane.**

2. Development should demonstrate that it represents high quality and sustainable design and creates places and spaces for people, in accordance with the other policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objective 1, 2, 3; SALP Saved Policies: 2, 4; SALP emerging Local Plan: S4, L1; NPPF para 59, 61)

Land to the rear of Nos. 45 to 75 Bucknalls Drive, Bricket Wood



Figure 10.4: Land at Bucknalls Drive

- 10.17 This site totals 1.51 ha. It is open land situated, within the settlement envelope, between Bucknalls Drive and Bricket Wood Common. There is an existing residential property on part of the site which would be retained, as would the established pond. Access to the site would be off Bucknalls Drive.
- 10.18 The site backs onto the Bricket Wood Common, which is a SSSI. Appropriate mitigation features must be incorporated to ensure the ongoing protection of the SSSI.
- 10.19 The site creates the opportunity to secure adjacent land for provision of green amenity space, to the benefit of properties in the wider area and also provides access to Bricket Wood Common.
- 10.20 There is an existing footpath (FP59) running parallel to the eastern edge of the site, leading from the northern end of Bucknalls Drive through Bricket Wood Common. This important footpath, well used by the community to access the Common, will be retained and linked to the development.
- 10.21 Although the AECOM site assessment process considered that up to 25 properties could be built on the site, it is considered that such density and the resultant type of housing (such as low-cost, affordable housing) would be inappropriate to and out of place in this location. A supplementary concern is that crowding a high number of smaller dwellings onto this site

would also create residential parking problems, with overflow parking spilling onto the already congested Bucknalls Drive.

- 10.22 The proposal, therefore, is for 14 bungalows suitable for downsizers (with less demand for vehicular use), as opposed to, for example, starter homes for younger working people more likely to be vehicle dependent. This solution would create less traffic flow and congestion in the area to the benefit of all residents. In addition, bungalows are felt to have lower roofscapes, which would help their integration into Bricket Wood Common, which they abut.

POLICY S28: LAND TO REAR OF 45 TO 75 BUCKNALLS DRIVE

- 1. 1.51 ha of land off Bucknalls Drive is allocated for residential development subject to the following criteria:**
 - i. the provision of a minimum of 14 bungalows, with a mix of dwelling sizes in accordance with Policy S2;**
 - ii. the adequate provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs);**
 - iii. the provision of appropriate vehicle access into the site from Bucknalls Drive;**
 - iv. the retention of the pond and existing dwelling;**
 - v. the provision of land and financial contributions towards a new amenity green space on land adjacent to the site that would enable access to Footpath 59 which runs adjacent to the site.**
- 2. Development should demonstrate that it represents high quality and sustainable design and creates places and spaces for people. In particular proposals should adhere to the criteria as set out in Policy S4.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objective 1, 2, 3; SALP Saved Policies: 2, 4; SALP emerging Local Plan: S4, L1; NPPF para 59, 61)

Land at Frogmore, Park Street, off the A5183



Figure 10.5: Land at Frogmore

- 10.23 This site totals 0.2 ha. The site is set off from the A5183, bordering commercial properties to the eastern end and adjacent to a Park Homes site to the west. The central to eastern part of the site is currently used for storage and the western side is planted with mature trees. The site is within walking distance of local amenities in Park Street including local shops, the village hall, recreational facilities, the railway station and a primary school.

- 10.24 The northern boundary of the site, stretching east to west, falls within Flood Zone 1, which means that it should not be developed on. It is expected therefore that this part of the site will remain naturally planted and as a natural buffer against neighbouring properties including the Park Homes site.
- 10.25 The site is considered to be suitable to accommodate approximately 8 2-bedroom dwellings suited to older people and first time buyers.
- 10.26 Pedestrian and vehicular access to the site is via the A5183, which already serves the Park Homes site. Car parking would be provided on site.
- 10.27 The development provides an opportunity to ameliorate the general area from its current use to store materials.

POLICY S29: LAND AT FROGMORE, PARK STREET, OFF THE A5183

- 1. 0.2 ha of land off the A5183 at Frogmore is allocated for residential development subject to the following criteria:**
 - i. The provision of approximately 8 2-bedroom units in accordance with Policy S2; and**
 - ii. The adequate provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS); and**
 - iii. The provision of appropriate vehicle access into the site from the A5183; and**
 - iv. The provision of adequate car parking on site.**
- 2. Development should demonstrate that it represents high quality and sustainable design and creates places and spaces for people. In particular proposals should adhere to the criteria as set out in Policy S4.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objective 1, 2, 3; SALP Saved Policies: 2, 4; SALP emerging Local Plan: S4, L1; NPPF para 59, 61)

11 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

11.1 The Parish Council is the official body responsible for the Neighbourhood Plan. It established a Steering Group – comprising councillors and residents - to lead on the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. Once the Plan has been ‘made’, the work of the Steering Group effectively comes to an end. There are, however, a series of actions that will need to be undertaken, not least the early review of the Neighbourhood Plan, in light of the emerging Local Plan and the NPPF. For this reason, the Parish Council might consider extending the role of the Steering Group, which could include the same members or provide an opportunity for new members to join.

11.2 Specific actions that will need to be undertaken are as follows:

- Pursuing the Non-Policy Actions detailed in Section 12 of this document
- Commenting on planning applications or consultations relating to the Neighbourhood Plan area
- Monitoring the application of the Neighbourhood Plan policies to ensure they have been applied consistently and interpreted correctly in response to planning applications.
- Maintaining a dialogue with St Albans District Council regarding the timing and content of the emerging Local Plan
- Undertaking timely reviews of the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan and its policies to take into account the emerging Local Plan.

11.3 The Plan has been prepared whilst St Albans District Council is preparing a new Local Plan. The emerging Plan will cover the period up to 2036. The Parish Council recognises that it will be important to keep the Neighbourhood Plan up to date in general terms, and to ensure that it remains in general conformity with the wider development plan in particular. In this context it will commence a review of the neighbourhood plan within six months of the adoption of the Local Plan.

Infrastructure provision and priorities

11.4 The Parish Council is keen to influence the way in which developer contributions are spent in the neighbourhood area to the full extent of its powers under national legislation and planning guidance.

11.5 There are different types of contributions arising - from Section 106 agreements, Section 278 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy:

- A Section 106 agreement or planning obligation (based on that section of The 1990 Town & Country Planning Act), is a private agreement made between local authorities and developers and can be attached to a planning permission to make acceptable a development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms.

- A Section 278 agreement refers to a section of the Highways Act 1980 that allows developers to enter into a legal agreement with the local authority to make alterations or improvements to a public highway as part of a planning application.
 - The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a non-negotiable charge on development based on a fixed rate per square metre of net additional development on a site, which would be levied by St Albans District Council. Different charge rates would apply for different types of uses and in different areas. The levy is intended to fund the provision, improvement, replacement or maintenance of infrastructure required to support development in an area as set out in its Local Plan. St Albans District Council intend to introduce the levy following the publication of their new Local Plan.
- 11.6 Any of the above could include new roads and transport, local amenities such as parks, community centres, schools and health facilities. Affordable housing is explicitly excluded from the list of things on which CIL can be spent by charging authorities. Whilst CIL monies would be retained by St Albans City and District Council, the authority is required to put aside a 'neighbourhood portion' of the CIL collected in each neighbourhood – 15% of the amounts paid (capped) in respect of local development (and 25% (uncapped) in places where there is a Neighbourhood Plan). This portion would be spent on infrastructure or *'anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area'*.
- 11.7 Following the publication of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council will set out a Spending Priority Schedule for developer contributions to be spent on. This will apply to monies raised from development by CIL (once introduced), any successor mechanism, or other funding from developers e.g. Section 106 agreements or other planning obligations. Until such a time as CIL is introduced, the Parish Council will seek to influence the allocation of Section 106 monies, in order to mitigate the impacts of development in the Parish.
- 11.8 The Parish Council intends to regularly review the spending priorities. Any proposed changes to spending principles or priorities will be published for comment by the community and other interested parties. Once finalised, any updated list will be published on the Neighbourhood Plan website and in relevant literature.

12 NON LAND USE ACTIONS AND SPENDING PRIORITIES

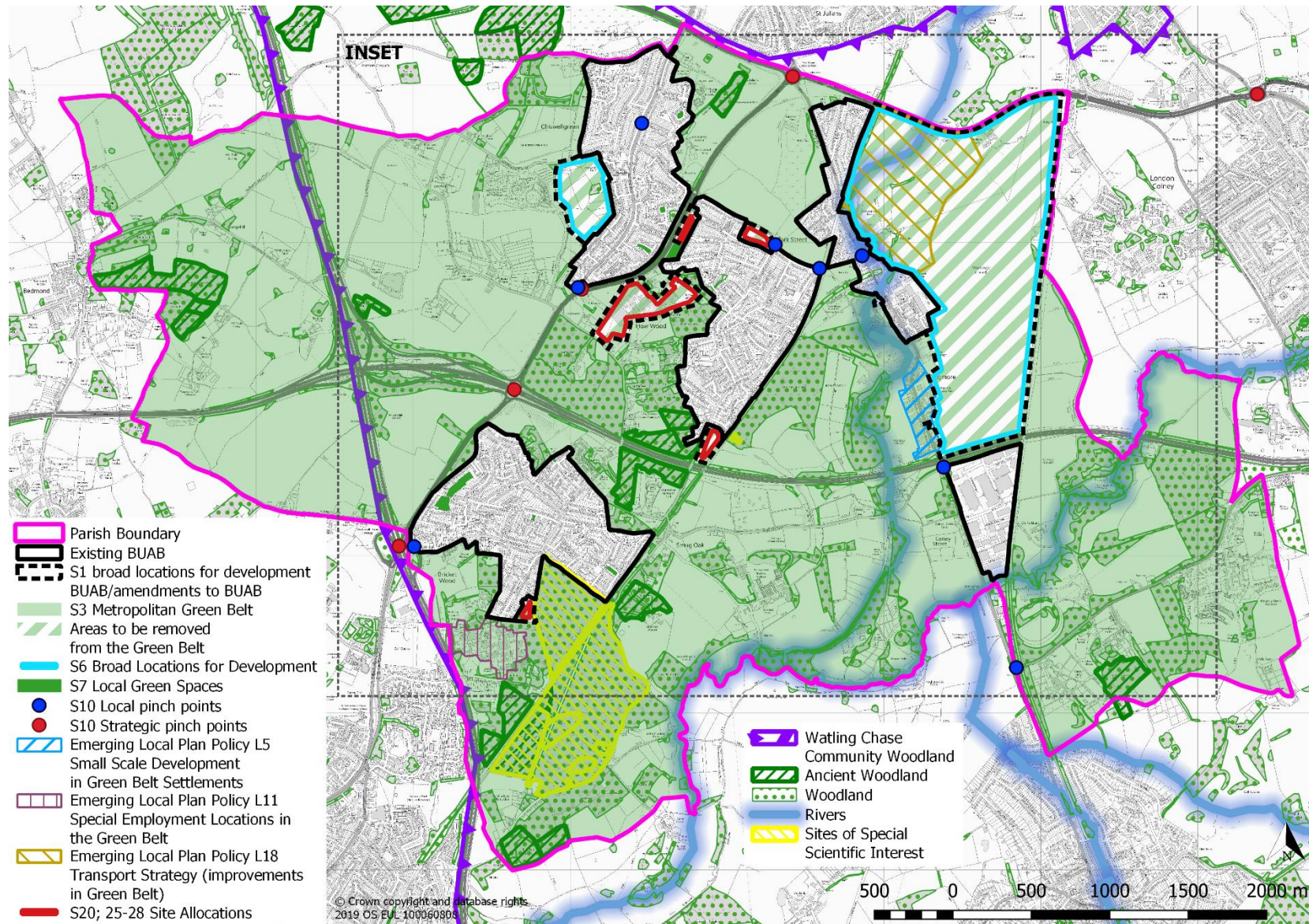
Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partners
Transport and Movement		
<p>Improve road conditions for all users</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider potential for a new Park and Ride facility on or adjacent to the A405 between Watford and St Albans to reduce traffic and congestion on the A405 and the B4630 Watford Road. Such a policy would also benefit traffic flow into Watford and St Albans town centres and also assist in attracting tourists to the City. <p>This is noted as an action within the SADAC Infrastructure Delivery Schedule: “Potential for small park and ride schemes on the main routes into St Albans that will not require dedicated bus services. This will help relieve congestion in St Albans city centre”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to enforce HGV weight limits along local roads and identify suitable additional routes. Install signage towards the Abbey Line Railway bridge to deter HGVs from using that route. Explore options for the introduction of a 50mph speed limit along sections of the A405 and A414 between the M25 Junction 21A and the London Colney roundabout. Support the introduction of 20mph speed limits in residential areas, including Stanley Avenue/Cuckmans Drive ‘estate’ in Chiswell Green; from the How Wood/Park Street Lane junction through to the exits on Tippendell Lane in Park Street. Install additional Speed Indication Displays (SIDs) in 30mph area in Ashridge Drive (close to the junction with Wildwood), Bricket Wood; and in Drop Lane, Bricket Wood (also explore dropping the speed limit here from 40mph to 30/20mph. Ongoing monitoring of effectiveness of such displays. 	<p>Private sector led in partnership with SADAC</p> <p>Network St Albans (Quality Network Partnership)</p> <p>Bus operators</p> <p>Policy SLP25 – Transport Strategy</p> <p>HCC, transport police/ 20’s Plenty/ Local speedwatch/ Parish Council</p>

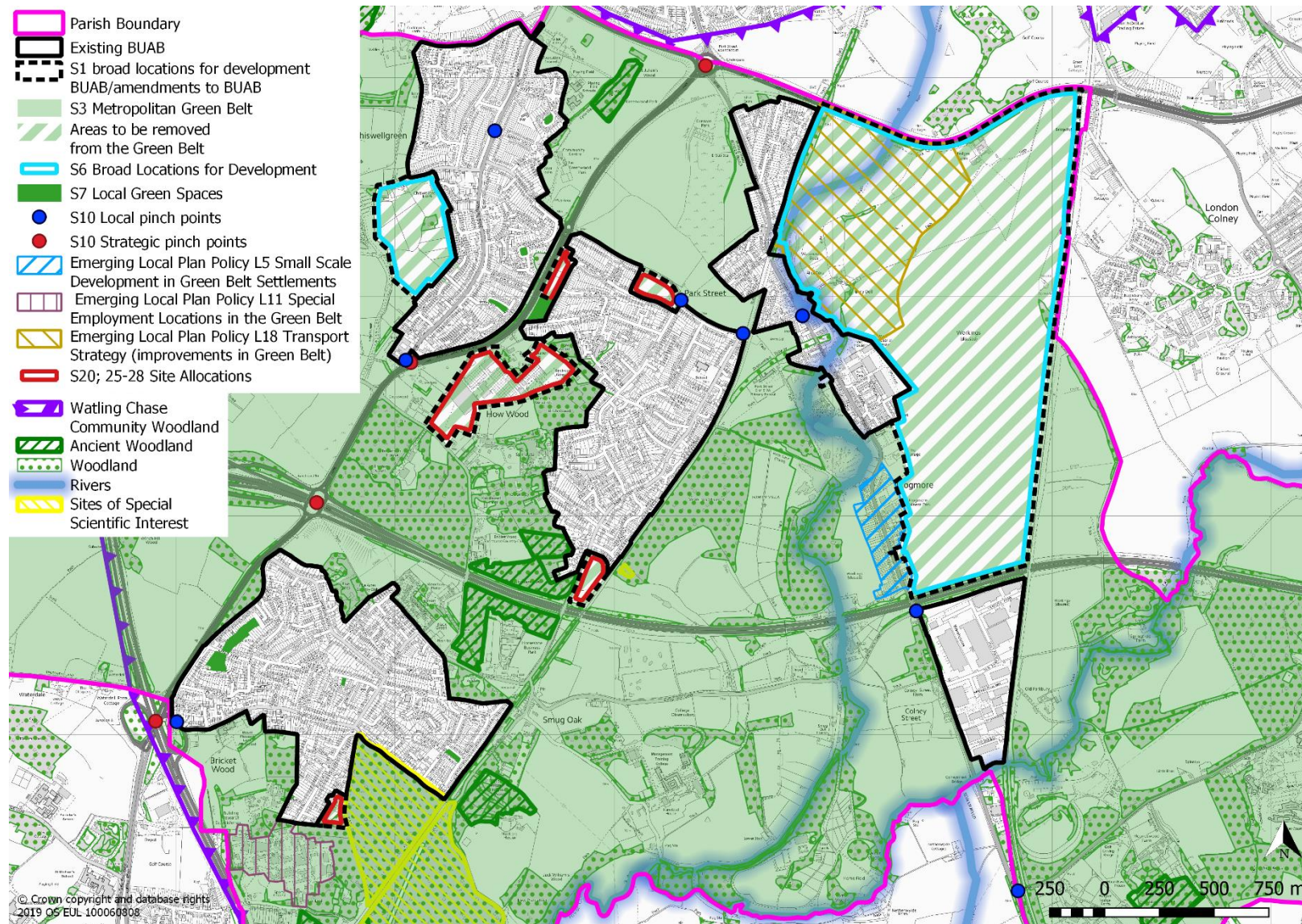
Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options for traffic calming near to the Driftwood Avenue turning; regular review of options for the Parish as a whole. • Support the introduction/ extension of double yellow line parking restrictions at the following locations: in front of the Co-op store on the Watford Road, Chiswell Green; opposite the shops in How Wood, Park Street; and in Bucknalls Drive, Bricket Wood at the junction with Mount Pleasant Lane. • Support the installation of wooden anti-parking stakes in locations where cars parking on grass verges is a particular issue. • Support 'safe parking advice' for residents. • Work with partners to enforce parking restrictions in the Parish. 	
Buses – specifically the need to provide evening, weekend and early morning services	Contact existing bus companies to ascertain whether they could provide a more comprehensive service.	Arriva
Character and Conservation		
Protect heritage assets	Identify non-designated heritage assets and work with St Albans to add to the Local List	St Stephen Parish Council
Environment and appearance		
Improve state of footpaths/ cycleways/ bridleways	<p>Check rights of way on a regular basis and lobby for improvements.</p> <p>Monitor the appearance and maintenance the appearance of grass verges and advise appropriate authorities accordingly.</p>	<p>St Stephen Parish Council</p> <p>Hertfordshire County Council</p>

Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partners
	Ensure as far as possible connectivity of the paths to enable access between villages and to green spaces.	St Albans District Council
Management and maintenance of drains and ditches	Work with local partners and agencies to ensure that ditches and drains are effectively monitored and maintained to reduce the risk of flooding.	St Stephen Parish Council St Albans District Council Water Companies
Health, education and leisure		
Better access to doctors and dentist	Canvas residents to discover doctor concerns. Liaise with key commissioning and delivery partners to ascertain longer term need.	Clinical commissioning group GPs
Community		
To safeguard valued community facilities	Undertake an audit of existing facilities and their usage to determine if they would be suitable candidates to register as an Asset of Community Value.	Parish Council / Residents Associations / SADC

13 POLICIES MAPS

The policies maps overleaf show mapped versions of the policies contained in the St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan. This also makes reference to St Albans Local Plan policies, for instance Broad Locations, where relevant.





Inset Map showing the three villages

GLOSSARY

- **Affordable housing:** Social rented, affordable rented, shared equity and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market
- **Ancient woodland:** An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).
- **Broad Location:** The general localities identified in the Local Plan for substantial green field Green Belt development
- **Brownfield land registers:** Registers of previously developed land that local planning authorities consider to be appropriate for residential development, having regard to criteria in the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Registers) Regulations 2017. Local planning authorities will be able to trigger a grant of permission in principle for residential development on suitable sites in their registers where they follow the required procedures.
- **Built up area boundary:** Also called a **Settlement boundary** is a line that is drawn on a plan around a village, which reflects its built form, this is also known historically as a 'village envelope'. The boundary does not necessarily have to cover the full extent of the village nor be limited to its built form.
- **Charter for Trees, Woods and People:** The Charter for Trees, Woods and People sets out the principles by which trees and people in the UK can stand stronger together. It was instigated by the Woodland Trust and launched in 2017.
- **Community forest:** An area identified through the England Community Forest Programme to revitalise countryside and green space in and around major conurbations.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** a fixed, non-negotiable contribution that must be made by new development. It is chargeable on each net additional square metre of development built and is set by the District Council. A proportion accrues to the Parish Council.
- **Community Right to Build Order:** An Order made by the local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a site-specific development proposal or classes of development.
- **Conservation (for heritage policy):** The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
- **Conservation Area:** an area of notable environmental or historical interest or importance which is protected by law against undesirable changes.
- **Geodiversity:** The range of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and landforms.
- **Green infrastructure:** A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
- **Habitats site:** Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.
- **Heritage asset:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

- **Historic environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
- **Local Enterprise Partnership:** A body, designated by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in an area.
- **Local housing need:** the number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning guidance, or a justified alternative approach.
- **Local Plan:** A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.
- **Major development:** For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** the national planning policy document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- **Neighbourhood Plan:** A plan prepared by a Parish Council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- **Non-strategic policies:** Policies contained in a neighbourhood plan, or those policies in a local plan that are not strategic policies.
- **Older people:** People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.
- **People with disabilities:** People have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and that impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These persons include, but are not limited to, people with ambulatory difficulties, blindness, learning difficulties, autism and mental health needs.
- **Planning condition:** A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.
- **Playing field:** The whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- **Renewable and low carbon energy:** Includes energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).

- **Rural exception sites:** Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.
- **Section 106 agreement:** A mechanism under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which makes a development proposal acceptable in planning terms that would not otherwise be acceptable.
- **Setting of a heritage asset:** The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
- **Settlement boundary:** See Built up area boundary.
- **Starter Homes:** Homes targeted at first time buyers who would otherwise be priced out of the market. Like shared ownership homes, these should be available to households that need them most, with an income of less than £80,000 (£90,000 for London). Eligible first time buyers will also be required to have a mortgage in order to buy starter homes to stop cash buyers.
- **Supplementary planning documents:** Documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.
- **Use Class Order** - The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (As amended in 1995, 2005 and 2013) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories. Planning Permission is not needed for changes of use within the same use class.
- **Watling Chase Community Forest** - An area identified through the England Community Forest Programme to revitalise countryside and green space in and around major conurbations. The Watling Chase Community Forest Plan contains Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- **Wildlife corridor:** Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.
- **Windfall sites:** Sites not specifically identified in the development plan.

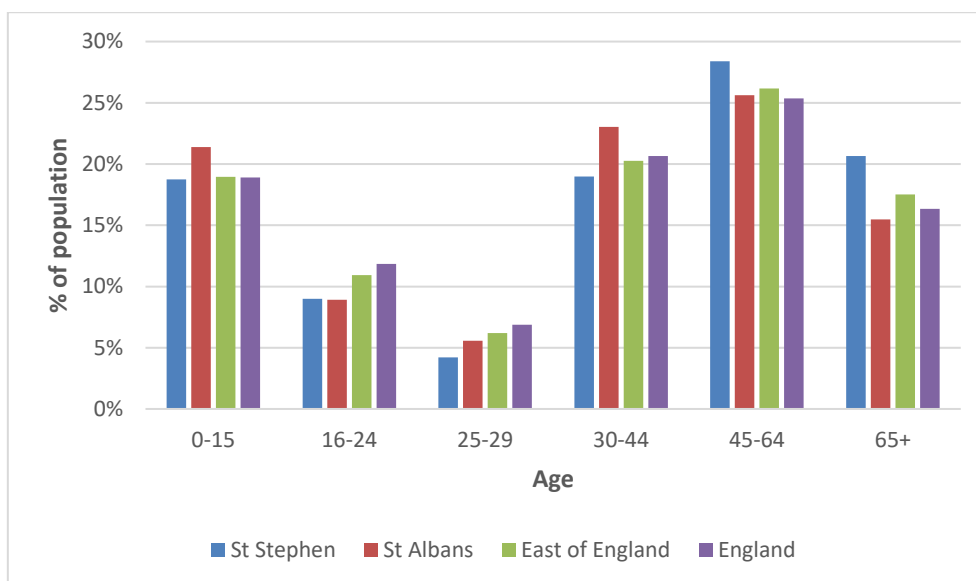
Appendix A Profile of St Stephen

All figures are from the 2011 Census unless otherwise indicated.

Key Facts	St Stephen
Area:	23.3 km ²
Total population:	13,865 usual residents
Population Density:	6 residents per hectare compared to 8.7 residents per hectare across St Albans District
Dwellings:	5,807

Population

The Parish of St Stephen is located within St Albans District within the county of Hertfordshire. The 2011 Census recorded that the usual population size of the Parish was 13,865 persons, representing approximately 10% of the local authority area, living in 5,815 households. The population of the District as whole is 140,664. Figure 1 below shows the age breakdown of the population in 2011.



*Figure 1: Age profile of St Stephen residents, 2011

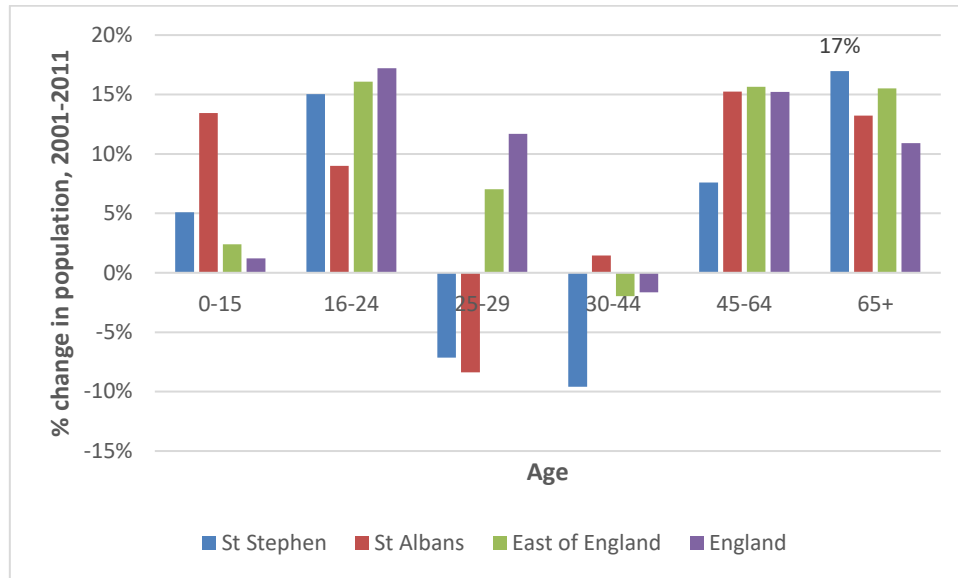


Figure 2: Change in age profile of St Stephen residents, 2001 to 2011

The older population (aged 65 upwards) is considerably higher than the District average and accounts for just short of a fifth of the population of the Parish. The number of older residents has grown at a greater rate over the past ten years between 2001 and 2011. Interestingly, there are fewer 25 to 44 year olds in the Parish and both of these age groups, notably 30-44, have decreased at a higher rate when compared to the District and regional averages. This may be reflective of the cost of living in the area, but has had an impact on the number of younger children now in the Parish.

Housing

Figure 2 shows the types of housing that exist already in the Parish. The majority of residents – approximately two-thirds - live in semi-detached or detached properties. There is a significantly higher number of detached properties than compared to the wider District and region. The number of terraced accommodation or flats/apartments, on the other hand, is significantly lower in the Parish than the District.

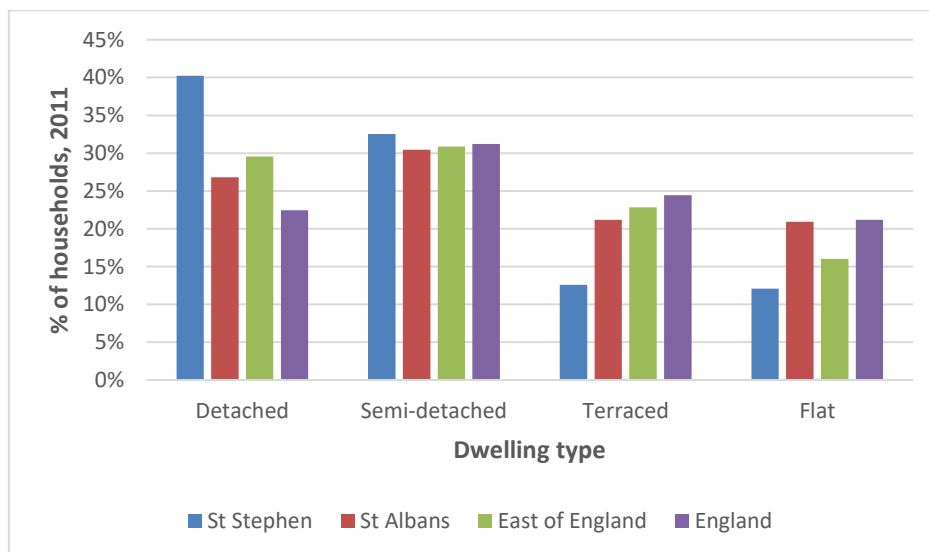


Figure 2: Type of housing in St Stephen

The size of housing is illustrated in Figure 3, revealing that St Stephen has above average numbers of larger, 4 bedroom homes, and lower numbers of smaller properties, particularly 1 bedroom dwellings.

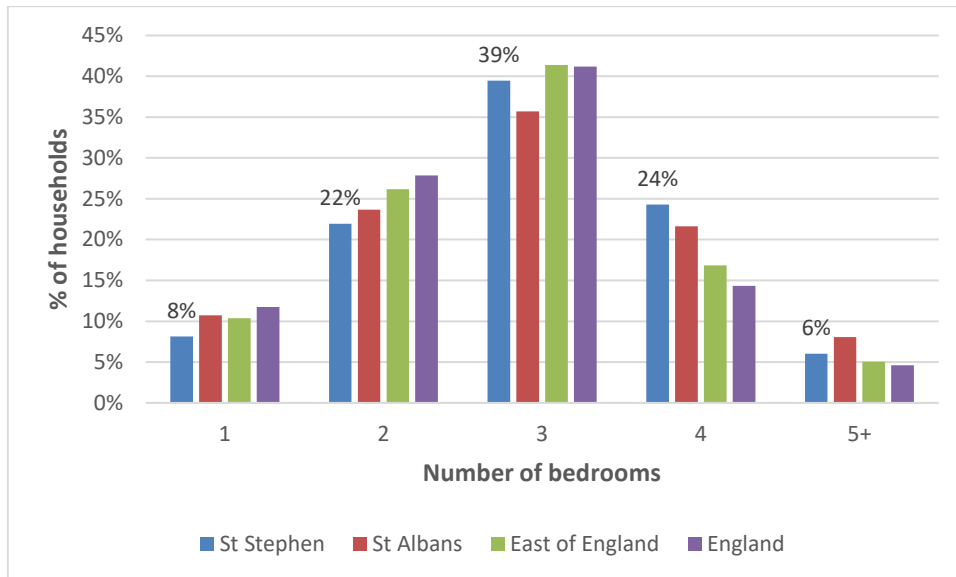


Figure 3: Number of bedrooms

In terms of home ownership, Figure 4 illustrates that the overwhelming majority (82%) of homes are owner occupied in the Parish, substantially higher than the 73% at District level. The proportion of social and private rented properties in St Stephen Parish, on the other hand, is substantially lower than the District, which demonstrates that people considered to be in housing need find it difficult to find properties in the area.

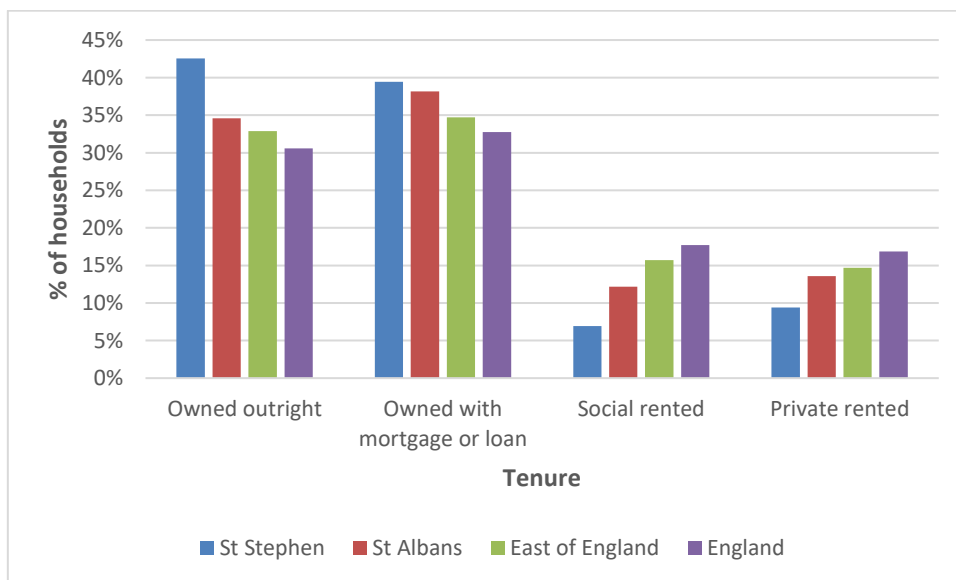


Figure 4: Tenure of households

Work

Figure 5 shows that of the economically active 16 to 74 year olds in St Stephen Parish, 67% of people are in employment, 14% of whom are self-employed, mirroring the District figure. 16% of St Stephen residents are retired compared to 12% across the District.

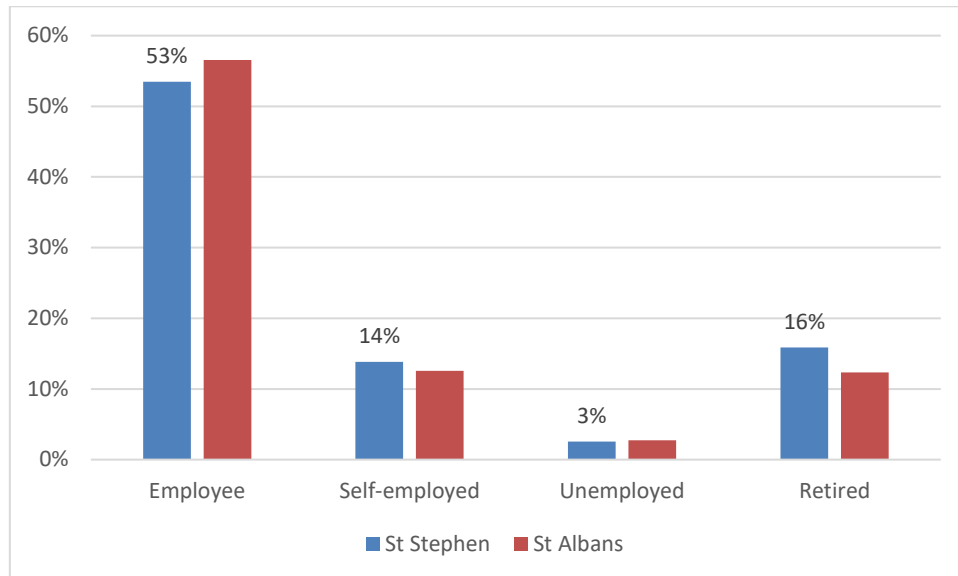


Figure 5: Economic activity

Figure 6 suggests that 8% of residents are choosing to work from home. This is perhaps not unusual in a rural location but reflects a need to ensure that the working environment is in place to support these people.

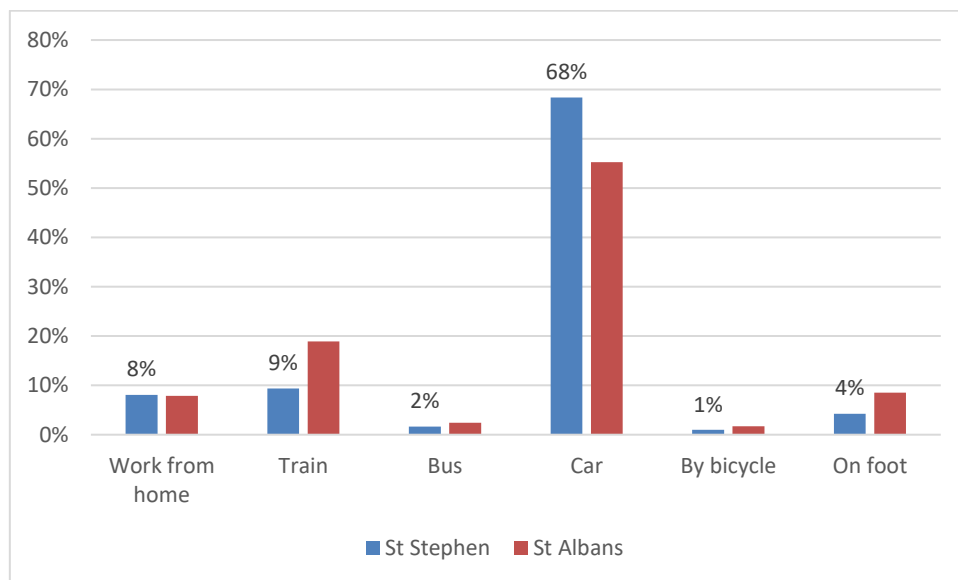


Figure 6: Mode of transport to work, for those economically active and in employment

9% of households in the Parish have no access to a car (Figure 7) which, whilst smaller than the District percentage, is significant given the rural nature of the Parish and the reliance of this section of the community on public transport. Car ownership otherwise is high, with 39% of households having two cars compared to 34% across the District.

The majority of working residents use their cars to access their place of employment whilst the numbers travelling by public transport are much lower than across the District as a whole.

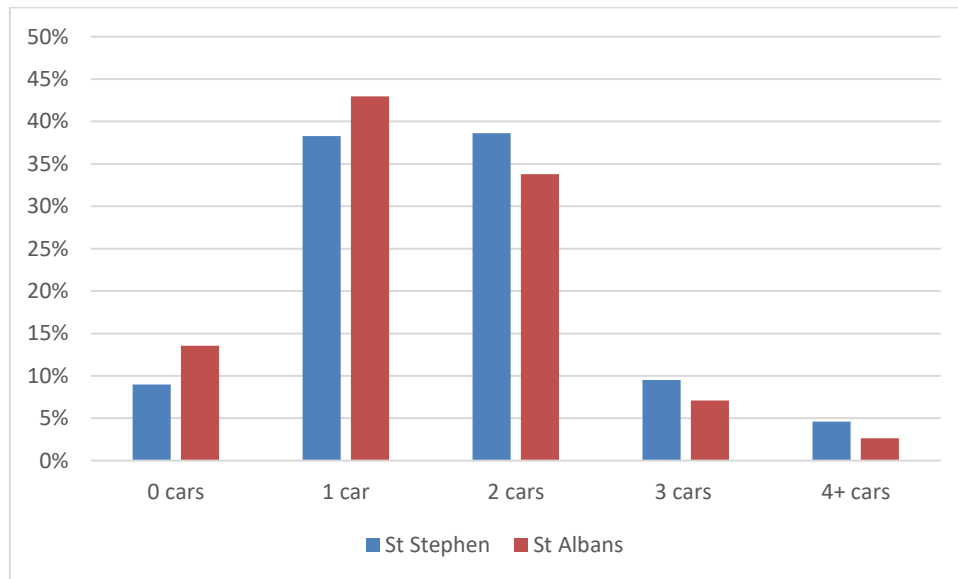


Figure 7: Number of cars per household

Figure 8 shows the qualifications of St Stephen residents aged 16 years and over. In line with the District as a whole, fairly low numbers have either no qualifications or Level 1 qualifications (1+ 'O' level passes, 1+ CSE/GCSE any grades, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ). The largest proportions of people in the Parish hold the highest qualification levels, 4 and 5, suggesting a well-qualified local workforce.

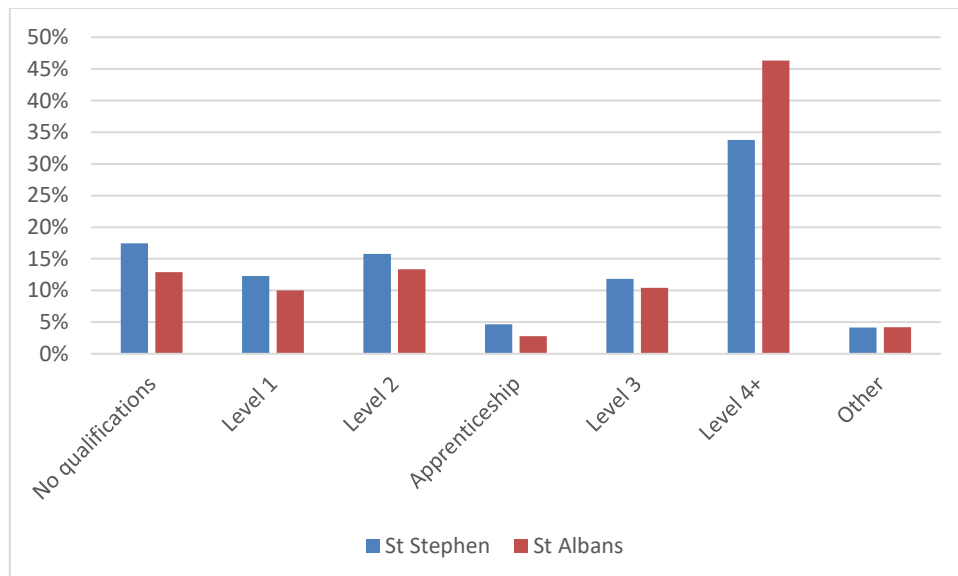


Figure 8: Qualifications of residents

Figure 9 illustrates the key employment sectors for the Parish. St Stephen is over-represented in comparison to the District average in the wholesale/retail/motor trade sector, construction and manufacturing and transport. 36% of those in work are working at a senior level.

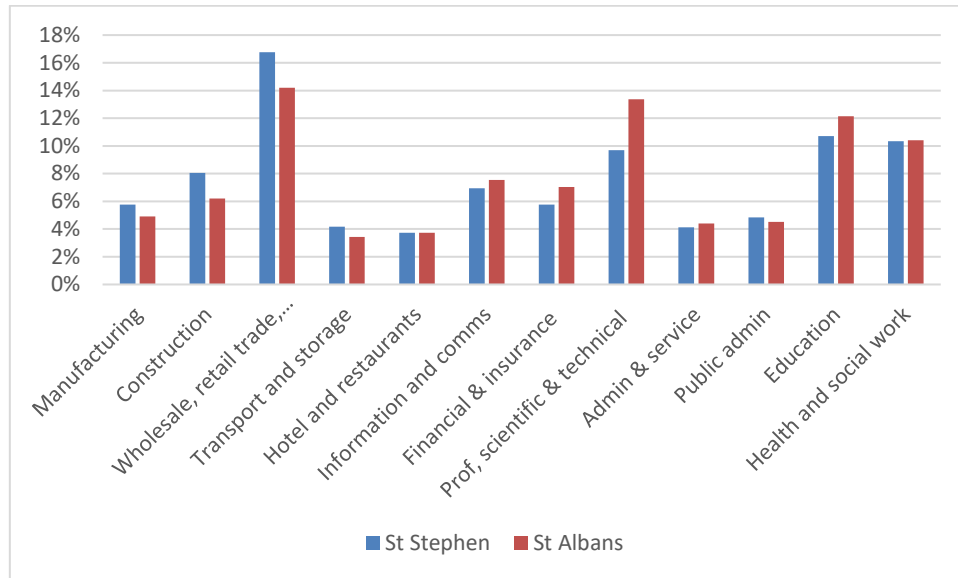


Figure 9: Main industry sectors that people are employed in

Health

St Stephen residents enjoy a good level of health, mirroring the District as a whole, as illustrated in Figure 10. The most deprived part of the Parish, part of Park Street, is ranked 16,612 out of 32,844 neighbourhoods in England.

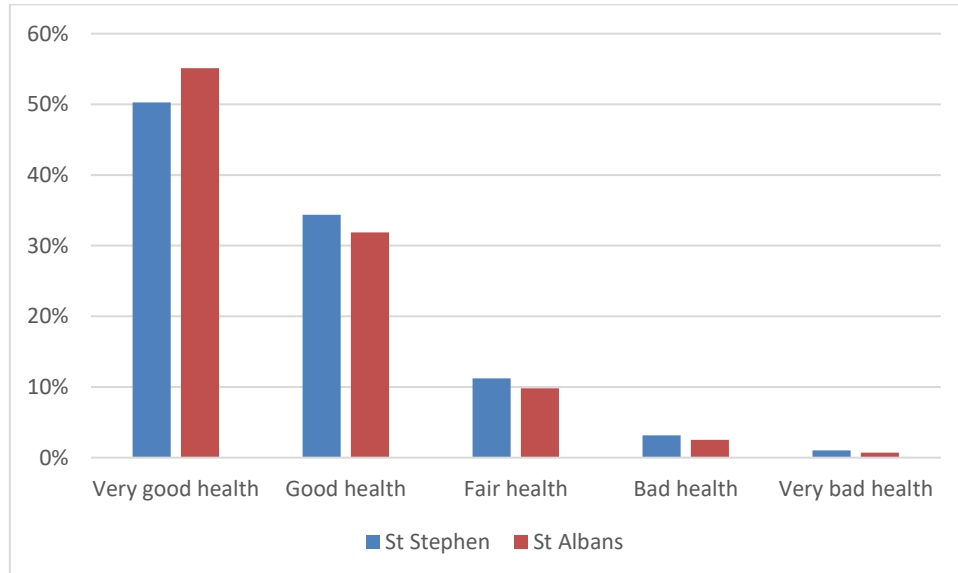


Figure 10: Level of health

Appendix B List of evidence base documents

The following documents and websites have been used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan.

- [Accessible Natural Green Space Standards \(ANGst\), Natural England](#)
- [Assets of Community Value table, St Albans City and District Council](#)
- [Bricket Wood Residents' Association: A Brief History of our Village](#)
- [British Horse Society](#) (website)
- [Burydell Allotments Association](#) (website)
- [Charter for Trees, Woods and People](#)
- [Conservation Area Character Statement for Bricket Wood Appraisal, 2009](#)
- [Detailed Local Plan Technical Report, Green Spaces, St Albans City and District Council, 2016](#)
- [Fields in Trust](#) (website)
- [Hertfordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan Part 10 St Stephen Parish Council, 2011](#)
- [Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre data, within the Heritage Gateway](#)
- [Historic Environment Record Data: Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green, Park Street, Colney Street, Hertfordshire County Council](#)
- [Environment Bank Biodiversity Impact Calculator and Guidance for use January 2015](#)
- [EB Accounting For Biodiversity In Planning – A toolkit for Local Planning Authorities in England, March 2017](#)
- [Green Infrastructure Plan, St Albans City & District Council, 2011](#)
- Hertfordshire Environmental Records Ref 201602_037 Ancient Woodlands Inventory
- [Hertfordshire Landscape Character Area Assessments: St Albans](#)
- [Making local green space designations in your neighbourhood plan, Locality, 2017](#)
- [National Planning Policy Framework, 2019](#)
- [Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act \(NERC\), 2006](#)
- [Open Spaces Society C20 Information Sheet: Local Green Space Designation](#)
- [Open Spaces Society C21 Information Sheet: How to win local green space through Neighbourhood Plans](#)
- [Open Spaces Society C22 Information Sheet: Community Assets and Protecting Open Space](#)
- [Park Street Conservation Area](#)
- [Park Street Residents Association website](#)

- [Planning for Ancient Woodland: Planners' Manual for Ancient Woodland & Veteran Trees, Woodland Trust, October 2017](#)
- St Stephen Site Assessment Report, Aecom, 2017
- [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#)
- [Space for People: Targeting Action for Woodland Access, Woodland Trust, 2018](#)
- [St Albans City & District List of Saved Policies, 2004](#)
- [St Albans City & District Local Plan Publication 2020-2036](#)
- [St Albans City & District Local Plan Review, 1994](#)
- St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan – Housing Report
- St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan – Site Assessments Report, AECOM
- St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan – Strategic Environmental Assessment, AECOM
- St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Reports
- St Stephen Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Community Survey, 2016
- [Sustainable St Albans](#)
- [Ver Valley Society \(website\)](#)
- [Ver Valley Walk: The Confluence Walk Park Street and Bricket Wood, Countryside Management Service](#)
- [Watling Chase Community Forest - A Guide for Landowners, Developers and Users, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Herts County Council and Hertsmere Borough Council](#)
- [What's Special to You: Landscape Issues In Your Neighbourhood Plan?, CPRE, 2017](#)

Appendix C Local Green Spaces

Seven sites are designated as Local Green Spaces. All are small in size and located close to the community. They are each demonstrably special to the local communities they serve and further details about this are provided below. None of the sites are subject to planning applications. All are in public ownership and onward management would continue to be the responsibility of those bodies. The sites are:

1. **Ashridge Drive Green**
2. **Broad Acre**
3. **Forefield**
4. **Juniper Avenue green space**
5. **South Close Green**
6. **Sunnydell Green**
7. **Mayflower Road / Orchard Drive playground and recreation ground**

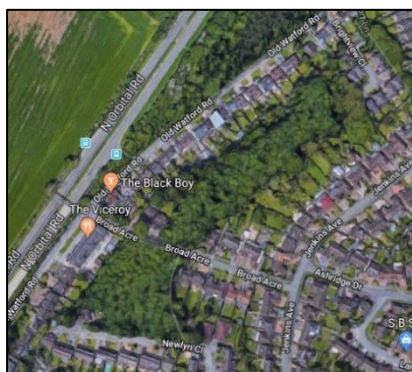
Bricket Wood

1. Ashridge Drive, Bricket Wood

Owned by SADC, this is a small, largely mature wooded area of open ground fronting onto residential properties. It provides a play space and meeting space for residents of this part of St Stephen. In particular, because it fronts onto the surrounding residential properties, it is a safe area for children to play where they can still be watched by parents from inside the properties. It is also popular with local teenagers. The Bricket Wood Residents Association has installed a bench for local residents.



2. Broad Acre Woodland, Bricket Wood



3. This is an area of woodland owned by SADC and listed as an important site by the Woodland Trust. The woodland is home to various wild flowers alongside the well-defined path with plenty of garlic mustard, cow parsley and some bluebells all in the north-eastern section of the wood. Hornbeam and hawthorns contribute to the tree-scape. The south-western section has no well-defined paths and is quite overgrown. The woodland is located outside the Green Belt, and is bounded on all sides by residential development. It is a popular spot for walkers and is valued

by the local community. Its location just east of the A405 helps to provide a sound and pollution buffer.

3. Juniper Avenue, Bricket Wood

This is a small grassy area, partially wooded, fronting onto residential properties along Juniper Avenue and Hunters Ride. Owned by SADC, it is an important green space in Bricket Wood village, providing a tranquil spot in an otherwise busy area and is popular with children as a safe place to play. Although surrounded by Green Belt, Bricket Wood itself sits outside the designation. There is a deficit of 9.6 ha amenity space in St Stephen and it is felt important to safeguard this site.



Chiswell Green

4. Forefield, Chiswell Green

This is a small, grassy area of open ground fronting onto residential properties. Owned by SADC, it provides a play space and meeting space for residents of this part of St Stephen. In particular, because it fronts onto the surrounding residential properties, it is a safe area for children to play where they can still be watched by parents from inside the properties. Although surrounded by Green Belt, Chiswell Green itself sits outside this designation.



5. South Close, Chiswell Green

Surrounded on all sides by residential development, this is an open, grassed area which is used by the local residents, in particular the local children. Owned by SADC, it provides a safe environment for play. Although surrounded by Green Belt, Chiswell Green itself sits outside this designation.



6. Sunnydell, Chiswell Green

Similar to the green space at South Close, this SADC-owned grassy area located between residential properties provides a well-used play area for local children. Although surrounded by Green Belt, Chiswell Green itself sits outside this designation.



Park Street

7. Mayflower Road/ Orchard Drive playground and recreation ground

This public open space, registered as a children's play area and recreation ground, is owned by St Stephen Parish Council and located in the Green Belt. At the southern end of the site the proposed for development in Orchard Drive is also currently within the Green Belt (see Section 10 Site Allocations). The play area, an essential recreation space with well-used and inspected facilities for children under 14, must be retained as a protected green space when the land surrounding it is taken out of the Green Belt to facilitate the proposed development in Orchard Drive. The entire play area and recreation ground should, therefore, be designated as a Local Green Space as it fulfils all the required conditions.



Additional Green Spaces and Woodland for future consideration as Assets of Community Value or designated Local Green Spaces:

- Bricket Wood Common and adjacent woodlands
- Smug Oak Green and Snicket Wooded area
- Pound Green
- School Lane, Bricket Wood
- Drop Lane, Bricket Wood
- Ver Valley Walk
- Hanstead Wood, Bricket Wood
- Woodbury Field, Bricket Wood
- Black Green Wood, Bricket Wood
- St Julian's Wood, Chiswell green
- Park Street Lane green space (south of allotments)
- Parish Council field Bricket Wood
- Water meadow (Ver proximity, Burydell and Hedges Farm)