

St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment
Scoping Report

St Stephen Parish Council

September 2019

Quality information

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Acronyms

(AQAP)	Air Quality Action Plan
(AQMA)	Air Quality Management Area
(ASR)	Air Status Report
(DEFRA)	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DPD	Development Plan Document
(DLPR)	The District Local Plan review 1994
(EA)	Environment Agency
(MHCLG)	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
(IMD)	Index of Multiple Deprivation
(LEP)	Local Economic Partnership
(LNR)	Local Nature Reserves
(LTP)	Local Transport Plan
(NNR)	National Nature Reserve
(NPPF)	National Planning Policy Framework
(ONS)	Office for National Statistics
(SACDLP)	Saint Albans City & District Council's Local Plan
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
(SSNP)	The draft St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

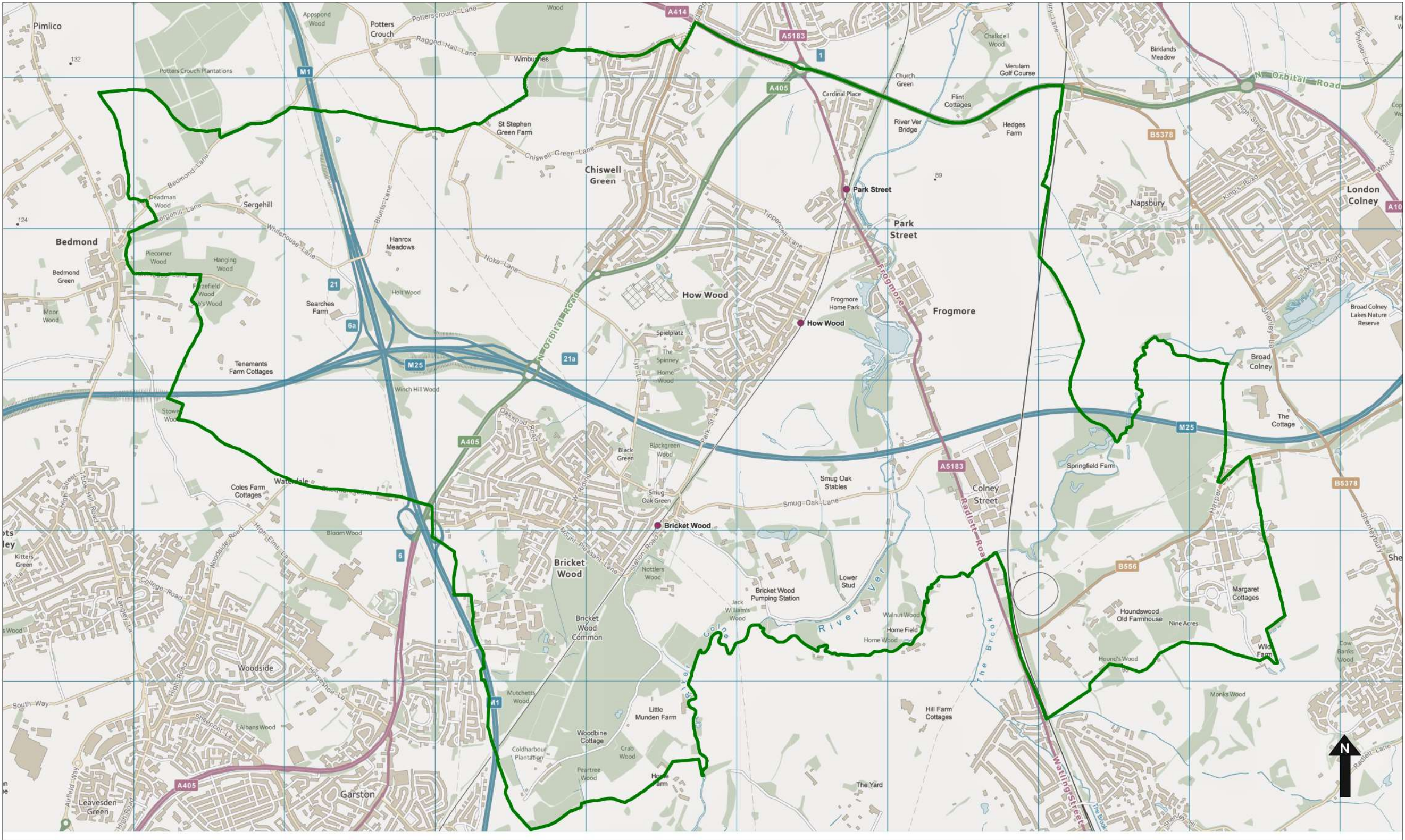
- 1.1.1 St Stephen Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the sustainable future growth of the parish. AECOM has been commissioned to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of the Parish Council.
- 1.1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in the context of the Development Plan for St Albans District. This comprises; the District Local Plan Review 1994, Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan, Waste Core Strategy & Development Management Policies DPD, Waste Site Allocations DPD and the Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 2007. The District Local Plan review 1994 (DLPR) is currently being replaced by the St Albans City & District Local Plan 2020-2036 (SACDLP). Saint Albans City & District Council (SACDC) consulted on the Plan in early 2018 (regulation 18) with a further consultation (regulation 19) taking place in September- October 2018. The SACDLP is expected to undergo Examination in early 2020.
- 1.1.3 The Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the development framework for Saint Albans District, alongside the SACDLP. Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan and can develop policies and proposals to address local place-based issues. The Local Plan effectively provides an overarching strategic direction for development in Saint Albans District, whilst enabling finer detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process where appropriate.

- 1.1.4 The Key information relating to the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan is presented in the table below (Table 1-1).

Table 1.1: Key facts relating to the Neighbourhood Plan for St Stephen Parish

Name of Responsible Authority	St Stephen Parish Council
Title of Plan	St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan
Subject	Neighbourhood Planning
Purpose	The St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The strategic context for the Neighbourhood Plan is provided by the saved policies of the current Plan St Albans City & District but also having regard for the emerging St Albans City and District Local Plan 2020 to 2036.
Timescale	To 2036
Area covered by the plan	The Neighbourhood Plan area covers the civil parish of St Stephen in Hertfordshire, England. It is located approximately 17 miles north-northwest of central London, straddling the M25 motorway and immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of St Albans. (Figure 1.1).
Summary of content	The St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan will set out a vision, strategy and a range of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan area.
Plan contact point	Isabel Crozier, Assistant Clerk, St Stephen Parish Council Email: isabel@ststephenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Figure 1.1: The St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan Area



St Stephen Parish

 Parish Boundary

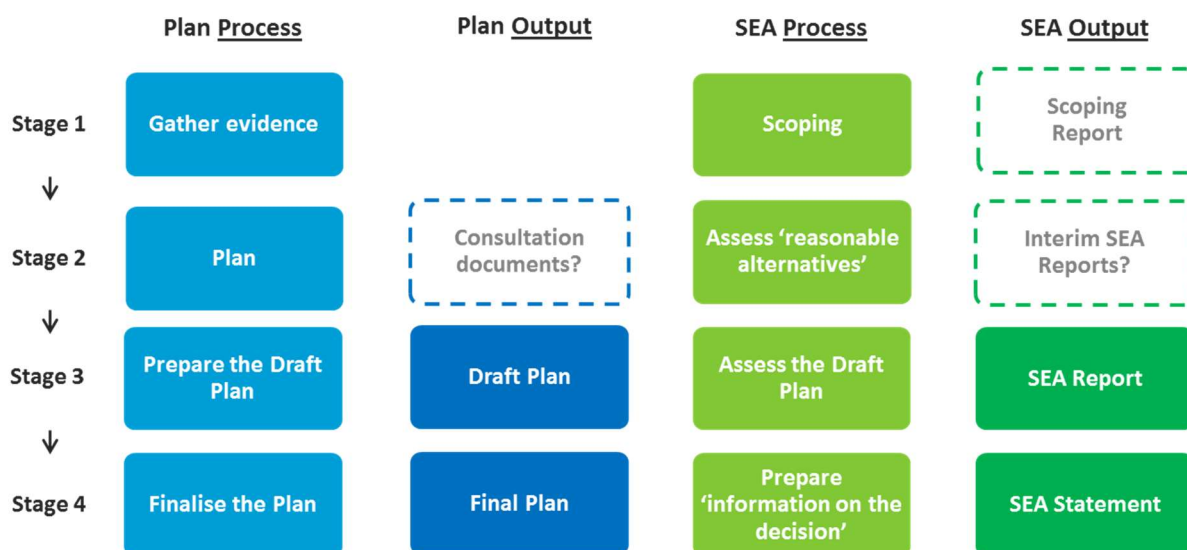
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1.2 SEA explained

- 1.2.1 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding or mitigating negative environmental effects and maximising positive effects.
- 1.2.2 The European Directive 2001/42/EC¹ requires certain plans to be subject to a SEA. This Directive is realised in the UK through Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633: The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (otherwise known as the SEA Regulations). These Regulations require an environmental assessment to be carried out on certain plans and programmes that are likely to have a significant effect upon the environment. The plan has been determined to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. To meet this requirement, the plan is undergoing an SEA process which incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive.
- 1.2.3 SEA can be viewed as a four-stage process that produces a number of statutory and non-statutory outputs. As illustrated in Figure 1.2 below, 'Scoping' is a mandatory process under the SEA Directive, but the publication of a scoping report is a voluntary (but useful) output.

Figure 1.2: SEA as a four step process



¹ Directive 2001/42/EC: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-legalcontext.htm>

1.3 Introduction to scoping

- 1.3.1 One of the first stages in the SEA process is to establish what the key issues are that the appraisal should focus on. This is called ‘scoping’, and involves a review of relevant policies, plans and programmes (a ‘contextual review’) and information about the current and future state of the environment, economy and social factors (the ‘baseline’). This information is then used to set out a framework for undertaking strategic environmental assessments as the plan is developed.
- 1.3.2 The Regulations² require that certain statutory bodies are consulted on the scope of a SEA. This can be done in a number of ways, but most often a Scoping Report is produced that presents the key information and a methodology for how future appraisals will be undertaken. Statutory Consultees have 5 weeks to comment on the scope of the appraisal. In England, the statutory consultees are Natural England, The Environment Agency and English Heritage.
- 1.3.3 Developing the draft scope for the SEA as presented in this report has involved the following steps:
- Defining the broader context for the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan and associated SEA (i.e. EU, UK Government and local policy and commitments), to summarise the regulatory and legislative landscape;
 - Establishing the baseline for the SEA, (i.e. the current and future situation in the area in the absence of the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan) to help identify the plan’s likely significant effects;
 - Identifying particular problems or opportunities (‘issues’) that should be a focus of the SEA; and
 - Developing a SEA Framework comprising objectives and appraisal questions based on these issues, which can then be used to appraise the draft plan.

² The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

1.4 Structure of this Scoping Report

- 1.4.1 The outcomes of the scoping exercise have been presented under a series of broad environmental themes, as follows:
- Chapter 2: Air Quality;
 - Chapter 3: Biodiversity;
 - Chapter 4: Climatic factors (including Flood Risk);
 - Chapter 5: Historic Environment;
 - Chapter 6: Landscape;
 - Chapter 7: Land, Soil and Water Resources;
 - Chapter 8: Population and Housing;
 - Chapter 9: Health and Wellbeing; and
 - Chapter 10: Transportation.
- 1.4.2 The selected environmental themes reflect the 'SEA topics' suggested by Annex I(f) of the SEA Directive³. These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of plan effects (drawing from local knowledge and understanding).
- 1.4.3 In accordance with the SEA Directive, the final chapters of the report summarise the overarching sustainability issues, set out the SA Framework and document the next stages in the process. To demonstrate a clear trail of how the SEA objectives have been identified each topic Chapter (which is scoped into the SEA) concludes with suggested objectives and supporting criteria for inclusion in the SEA Framework.

³ The SEA Directive is 'of a procedural nature' (para 9 of the Directive preamble) and does not set out to prescribe particular issues that should and should not be a focus, beyond requiring a focus on '*the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors*' [our emphasis]

2. Air Quality

Focus of theme:

- Sources of air pollution
- Air quality hotspots
- Air quality management

2.1 Policy Context

- 2.1.1 The **Environment Act 1995**, covering England, Scotland and Wales, requires all local authorities in the UK to review and assess air quality in their area. If any standards are being exceeded or are unlikely to be met by the required date, then that area should be designated an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).
- 2.1.2 The **Clean Air Strategy**⁴ (2019) sets out the strategy for improving air quality, including goals to reduce exposure to toxic pollutants like nitrogen oxides, ammonia, particulate matter, non-methane volatile organic compounds and sulphur dioxide. For example, the strategy aims to reduce particulate matter emissions by 30% by 2020, and by 46% by 2030.
- 2.1.3 The **Air Quality Strategy**⁵ (2007) establishes the policy framework for ambient air quality management and assessment in the UK. The primary objective is to ensure that everyone can enjoy a level of ambient air quality which poses no significant risk to health or quality of life. The Strategy sets out the National Air Quality Objectives (NAQOs) and government policy on achieving these objectives.
- 2.1.4 The **National Planning Policy Framework**⁶ (NPPF) (2019) outlines the importance of sustainable development and infrastructure in improving air quality and subsequently the environment and public health.
- 2.1.5 The **Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance**⁷ (2018) issued by Defra for Local Authorities provides advice as to where the National Air Quality Objectives apply. These include outdoor locations where members of the public are likely to be regularly present for the averaging period of the objective (which vary from 15 minutes to a year).

⁴ Defra (2019) Clean Air Strategy at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/770715/clean-air-strategy-2019.pdf

⁵ Defra (2007) Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland [online] available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/air-quality/approach/>

⁶ MHCLG (2019) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2>

⁷ Defra (2018) Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance [online] available at: <https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/documents/LAQM-TG16-February-18-v1.pdf>

- 2.1.6 Published in January 2018 by the UK Government, '**A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment**'⁸ sets out a number of goals and policies in order to help the natural world regain and retain good health. In this context, Goal 1 'Clean Air' and the policies contained within 'Chapter 4: Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste' within the 25 year plan are relevant.
- 2.1.7 The Defra report **Action for air quality in a changing climate**⁹ (2010) focuses on the synergies between the two issues of air quality and climate change. In particular, it notes the potential for additional health benefits through the closer integration of climate and air pollution policy. It is suggested that co-benefits can be realised through a variety of means, including promoting low carbon vehicles and renewable energy.
- 2.1.8 St Albans produced an **Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP)** in 2003 which was subsequently updated in 2010. The AQAP set three designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA); geographic areas defined by high concentrations of pollution. One of these; AQMA number 7, falls within the NP area, at the point where Radlett Road (A51883) crosses over the M25. This area includes a number of domestic properties in Frogmore and Colney Street in the vicinity of the M25.

⁸ HM GOV (2018) A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment [online] available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

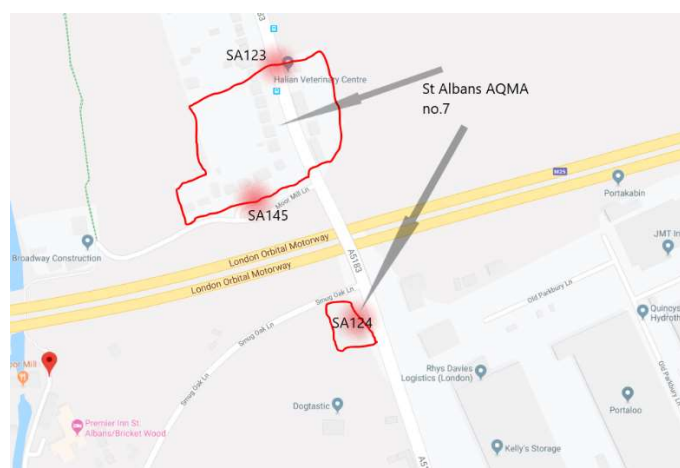
⁹ Defra (2010) Air Pollution: Action in a Changing Climate [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69340/pb13378-air-pollution.pdf

2.2 Baseline Summary

Summary of current baseline

- 2.2.1 St Stephen is predominately rural in nature and the main source of pollution in the area is from road traffic emissions. There are several major roadways within the St Stephen NP area, including the M25, M1 and North Orbital Road. The main pollutants are Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}).
- 2.2.2 There are three AQMAs (for NO₂) in St. Albans. AQMA number 7 is within the St Stephen Parish area, located at Radlett Road (A5183)/M25 cross over. According to St Albans District Council's Air Quality Annual Status Report¹⁰ (2018) the annual mean Air Quality Objective (AQO) for NO₂ (40µg/m³) at AQMA number 7 (monitoring point SA145) was reported to be within 10% of the objective at 37.4µg/m³ before distance correction.

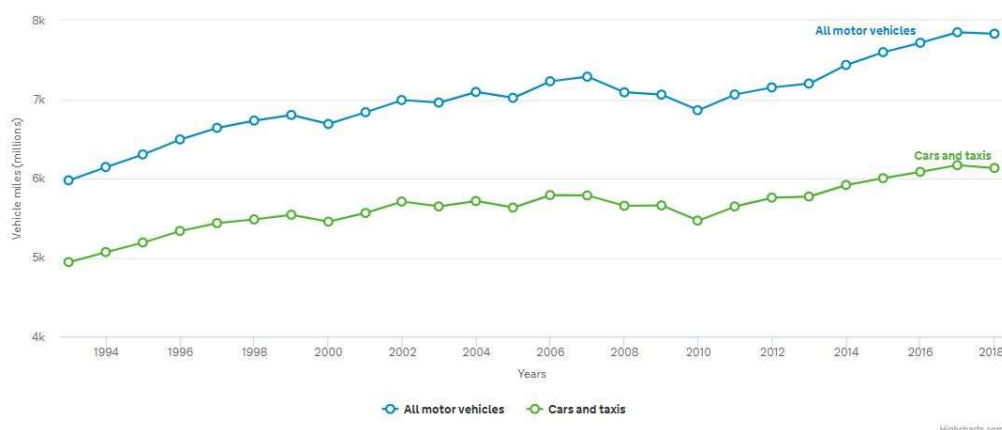
Figure 2-1 Location of AQMA no. 7



- 2.2.3 According to the Department for Transport, Hertfordshire had the fifth highest volume of traffic in Great Britain in 2018, with 7.73 billion vehicle miles travelled. Figure 2.2 shows the volume of traffic in Hertfordshire since 1993; demonstrating a steadily increasing trend in the amount of traffic over the years.

¹⁰ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/St%20Albans%20ASR%202018%20v1_tcm15-66653.pdf

Figure 2-2 Annual traffic in Hertfordshire (millions)



2.2.4 Two of the country's busiest motorways, the M25 and M1 pass through St Stephen Parish. At this location there's a three-level interchange but there's no direct connection to the M1 south. For M25 traffic to reach the M1 southbound and vice-versa, drivers must leave at junction 21A and drive through the A405 to join the M1 at Junction 6.

2.2.5 Below are the main traffic congestion hot spots currently experienced in the Parish;

- 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.
- 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 the main carriageways, with slowing traffic causing congestion on the motorway. Congestion here has been identified by residents as causing high levels of pollution (due to vehicle emissions) although the location is not in an AQMA.
- 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.
- A405 / A414 / A5183 (Park Street) roundabout - impacts upon traffic joining roundabout from all directions.
- A414 / A1081 (London Colney) roundabout – although outside the parish boundary, this impacts upon traffic joining roundabout from all directions.
- 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.

Summary of future baseline

- 2.2.6 The traffic associated with M25 and M1 is predicted to increase in volume with or without the SSNP. This will adversely impact air quality in the areas surrounding the traffic hotspots listed above (2.2.5). In particular, strategic development promoted at a district level (for example at the Aerodrome site) could contribute towards increased traffic (and therefore emissions).
- 2.2.7 However, improvements in air quality may be experienced as a result of lower emission vehicles, which could offset any increases associated with traffic.

2.3 Key headline issues

- 2.3.1 The key issues are as follows:
- There are is one Air Quality Management Area within the Neighbourhood Plan area. The latest Air Quality Annual Status Report showed that the annual mean Air Quality Objective (AQO) at this location was close to reaching the national limit.
 - Traffic and congestion have the potential to increase vehicular emissions and reduce air quality in the area (though low emissions vehicles could offset this to an extent).

2.4 Scoping outcome

- 2.4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan is intending to allocate housing sites which will lead to more car journeys. This could potentially increase concentrations of particulates and nitrogen dioxide.
- 2.4.2 The scale of development associated with the plan is such that any additional effects, taken in isolation or in-combination, are not predicted to be significant with regards to the AQMA. None of the potential sites for housing are located within the AQMA, and so increased exposure is unlikely.
- 2.4.3 With regards to pollutant levels, the increase in traffic is unlikely to lead to notable changes.
- 2.4.4 For these reasons, air quality has been **SCOPED OUT** of the SEA.
- 2.4.5 Whilst significant effects are unlikely, it is still possible for the Plan to contribute towards air quality improvements. This is evident from the Plan aims and objectives seeking to achieve environmental improvements.

3. Biodiversity

Focus of theme:

- SSSIs
- Local wildlife sites
- Priority habitats and species

3.1 Policy Context

- 3.1.1 At the European level, the **EU Biodiversity Strategy**¹¹ was adopted in May 2011 in order to deliver an established new Europe-wide target to '*halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020*'.
- 3.1.2 The European Commission Guidance on **Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Strategic Environmental Assessment**¹² (2013) suggests that an SEA should focus on ensuring 'no-net-loss of biodiversity' before considering mitigation and compensation. The assessment should also take account of 'ecosystem services' and the links between natural environment and economy.
- 3.1.3 **The NPPF (2019)** states that the planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural environment including helping to improve biodiversity and using natural resources prudently. In support of this aim the framework states that plans should 'identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats' and should also 'promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity'.
- 3.1.4 The Government's '**A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment**'¹³ (2018) sets out a series of goals for improving the environment and how they will work with communities and businesses over the next 25 years to achieve them. Actions proposed of relevance to the protection and promotion of biodiversity are as follows:
- Develop a Nature Recovery Network to protect and restore wildlife and provide opportunities to re-introduce species that have been lost from the countryside.
 - Achieve a good environmental status of the UK's seas while allowing marine industries to thrive and complete our economically coherent network of well-managed marine protected areas.
 - Provide international leadership and lead by example in tackling climate change and protecting and improving international biodiversity.
 - Support and protect international forests and sustainable agriculture.

¹¹ European Commission (2011) Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 [online] available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/2020/1_EN_ACT_part1_v7%5b1%5d.pdf

¹² European Commission (2013) Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Strategic Environmental Assessment [online] available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/pdf/SEA%20Guidance.pdf>

¹³ Defra (2018) A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

- 3.1.5 The **Biodiversity 2020 strategy**¹⁴(2011), published by the government, sets out objectives to deliver: a more integrated large-scale approach to conservation, to put people at the heart of biodiversity policy, to reduce environmental pressures, an overall improvement in the status of species and prevention of further human-induced extinctions and improved public knowledge of biodiversity.
- 3.1.6 The **Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (2006)** ¹⁵ sets out a strategy to protect and enhance biodiversity in the region. It identifies and protects key habitats and species which are contained in the individual habitat and species action plans. These set out the importance of the species and habitat, identify their local status, threats to them and opportunities to help their recovery.
- 3.1.7 The **SSNP, Policy S5 (minimising the environmental impact of development)** supports biodiversity by stipulating that development must contribute to the Watling Chase Community Forest plan, maintain existing hedgerows and provide wildlife corridors and buffer zones. The policy also requires the protection of the river corridors and water meadows from development.
- 3.1.8 **Policy S6 of the SSNP (protection of natural habitats)** requires major development to include an assessment of local habitats and species. Developments resulting in significant harm to wildlife sites and the landscape will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that there are not alternative options. Such developments would be required to include appropriate mitigation of harmful effects or offsetting where mitigation is not possible.
- 3.1.9 **Policy S7 (protection and maintenance of local green spaces)** of the SSNP designates several existing tracts of green space as Local Green Space. The policy aims to protect these areas by requiring development here to be consistent with the NPPF paragraph 145 (Green Belts). Development on designated green space areas will only be permitted where it will enhance the functions of the local green space.
- 3.1.10 **Policy S8 (protecting the setting and function of the river Ver, the river Colne and their tributaries)** aims to conserve and enhance the biodiversity associated with the river corridors. Development here will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances provided it does not have an adverse impact on the setting of the river and river corridors.
- 3.1.11 **Policy S9 (green infrastructure and development)** seeks to improve connectivity between wildlife areas and green spaces to enhance green infrastructure.

¹⁴ Defra (2011) Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69446/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf

¹⁵ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/SP_SLP_ENV006HertfordshireBiodiversityActionPlan_tcm15-54906.pdf

3.2 Baseline Summary

Summary of current baseline

- 3.2.1 Figure 3.1 illustrates the designated and locally important wildlife sites in the Parish. It is clear that there is an abundance of areas that have biodiversity value in the Plan area and beyond its administrative boundaries.

SSSIs

- 3.2.2 There are over 4,100 Sites of Specific Scientific Importance (SSSI) in England, which cover around 8% of the country's land area. SSSIs are recognised as amongst the country's very best wildlife and geological sites. There are two SSSI designated sites within the NP area; Bricket Wood Common and Moor Mill Quarry.
- 3.2.3 Bricket Wood Common SSSI covers over 70 hectares of diverse habitats including ancient semi-natural woodland (sessile oak, silver birch), hornbeam coppice woodland and hazel, wet lowland heath / acid grassland, ponds and seasonal streams. It supports a multitude of wildlife including; great chested newts, butterflies and fungi. Heathland species include Heather, Purple Moor-grass, Heath Grass, Heath Milkwort, Heath Spotted orchid, all species uncommon or rare in the county¹⁶. Approximately 64% of the site is classed as *Favourable or Unfavourable Recovering* and 36% is classed as *Unfavourable-No change*.
- 3.2.4 Moor Mill Quarry is a 0.16 hectare geological SSSI in How Wood. It was notified in 1992 as representing the former Moor Mill Quarry SSSI. The pit shows a sequence of Pleistocene Anglian and pre-Anglian deposits and is regarded by Natural England as of fundamental importance as the only one which demonstrates the diversion of the Thames from its pre-Anglian course¹⁷. The site is classed as *Unfavourable-No change*.
- 3.2.5 A further site has been cited by residents as being of scientific, geological and ecological interest; the Chalk Cliff (old pit) off Featherbed Lane. This is not currently on Natural England's inventory of SSSIs. The site comprises 5-7 m high vertical chalk cliff face with fissures at the base, reported as providing a unique habitat.
- 3.2.6 Of the sites being explored for allocation for housing in the Plan, there is a small site abutting the Bricket Wood Common SSSI. Although the number and scale (14 bungalows) proposed is relatively small compared to the existing dwellings in the area, consultation with Natural England would be required to establish potential risks and appropriate mitigation measures.

¹⁶ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1000694.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1006291.pdf>

Local wildlife sites

- 3.2.7 The Neighbourhood Plan area also contains twenty nine Local Wildlife Sites providing habitats for butterflies, birds and snakes amongst other biodiversity (as illustrated on Figure 3.1).

Priority habitats and species

- 3.2.8 The Neighbourhood Plan area does not contain any Priority Habitats.

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Summary of future baseline

- 3.2.9 Atmospheric pollution (such as acid precipitation and nitrogen deposition) and increased flood risk that may arise as a result of climate change, could pose a risk to the habitats and species present within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 3.2.10 Development in the Neighbourhood Plan area could place increased pressure on areas of biodiversity value due to land take for development and an increase in population. An increase in population is likely to lead to an increase in leisure and recreational pressure and increased demand for natural resources such as water. New development may lead to an increase in disturbance through human activity, loss of habitat, increased predation (e.g. from domestic pets), atmospheric, land and water based pollution. In the absence of a Plan, development would be guided by the local plan, and there might be a reliance on ad-hoc developments.
- 3.2.11 However, habitats and species are likely to continue to be afforded protection through higher level planning policy and whilst these areas face increasing pressures from future development, planning policy should safeguard the most valued areas and protect ecological networks.

3.3 Key headline issues

- 3.3.1 The key issues are as follows:
- Bricket Wood Common and Moor Mill Quarry SSSIs and the chalk cliff site, off featherbed lane, are located within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
 - There are no NNR, LNR, SACs, SPAs, or Ramsar sites within or in the vicinity of the Neighbourhood Plan area.
 - There are numerous Local Wildlife Sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area.
 - New development could present opportunities to implement biodiversity net gain and strengthen ecological networks.

3.4 Scoping outcome

- 3.4.1 The SEA topic 'Biodiversity' has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA. There is potential for localised effects at sites that could be identified for development.
- 3.4.2 It will also be important to ensure that there are no significant effects upon the Bricket Wood Common and Moor Mill Quarry SSSIs.
- 3.4.3 There may also be opportunities to enhance ecological networks and achieve net gain.

3.5 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Biodiversity SEA theme?

- 3.5.1 The SEA topic 'Biodiversity' has been scoped in to the SEA. Table 3.2 presents the SEA objective and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the plan in relation to this theme.

Table 3.2: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Biodiversity

SEA Objective	Supporting Questions
Protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity habitats and species; achieving a net environmental gain and stronger ecological networks.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support connections between habitats in the Plan area? • Avoid significant impacts on Bricket Wood Common and Moor Mill Quarry SSSIs? • Support continued improvements to the designated sites in the Neighbourhood Plan area? • Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the Neighbourhood Plan area to the effects of climate change?

4. Climatic factors (Flood risk and climate change)

Focus of theme:

- Greenhouse gas emissions;
- Effects of climate change;
- Flood risk; and
- Climate change adaptation.

4.1 Policy Context

- 4.1.1 **The EU Climate Change Adaptation Strategy¹⁸ was adopted in 2013**, which supports greater coordination between areas, particularly on issues that cross borders such as river basins. A key principle is to ensure that those most likely to be affected by climate change are able to take the necessary measures to adapt.
- 4.1.2 The **Carbon Plan¹⁹ (2011)** sets out the Government's plans for achieving the greenhouse gas emissions reductions committed to in the Climate Change Act 2008 and the first four carbon budgets. The Carbon Plan aims to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80% by 2050, relative to levels in 1990.
- 4.1.3 As part of its environmental objective in achieving sustainable development, the **NPPF (2019)** contains a requirement to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy. The Framework also states that the 'planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change'. To achieve these aims new development should be planned to ensure appropriate adaptation measures are included (including green infrastructure) and should be designed, located and orientated as to help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 4.1.4 The Framework also seeks to direct development away from areas that are currently or likely in the future to be at highest risk of flooding. Where development is required in such areas, the 'development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere'.
- 4.1.5 The Government's '**A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment**' (2018)²⁰ sets out a series of goals for improving the environment and how they will work with communities and businesses over the next 25 years to achieve them. The actions proposed pertaining to managing and addressing flood risk and climate change are;
- Take action to reduce the risk of harm from flooding and coastal erosion including greater use of natural flood management solutions.
 - Provide international leadership and lead by example in tackling climate change and protecting and improving international biodiversity.

¹⁸ European Commission (2013) Climate Change Adaptation Strategy [online] available at: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/docs/eu_strategy_en.pdf

¹⁹ DECC (2011) The Carbon Plan - reducing greenhouse gas emissions [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-carbon-plan-reducing-greenhouse-gas-emissions--2>

²⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

- 4.1.6 **The Clean Growth Strategy²¹ (2017)** sets out a blue print for a low carbon future by outlining proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy. Key aims include accelerating the shift to low carbon transport and homes and enhancing the benefits and value of natural resources by preserving and establishing new natural assets such as forests, minimising avoidable waste and managing emissions from landfill.
- 4.1.7 **The South West Hertfordshire Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2018)²²** (SFRA) sets out to; provide a comprehensive and robust evidence base to support the production of Local Plans. The SFRA has considered all sources of flooding including fluvial, surface water, groundwater, sewers and reservoir within the study area. Within the NP area, fluvial flood risk is shown to generally be confined to the Main River floodplains such as the River Colne catchment. Overall fluvial flood risk is in close proximity to watercourses, with few areas of extensive floodplain. Surface water flooding is shown to correlate with watercourses throughout the South West Hertfordshire Study Area, with the higher proportion of surface water flooding in densely urbanised areas such as St. Albans, and Watford. Groundwater flood risk is present in the chalk valleys of the Rivers Colne and Ver, otherwise this was low over the rest of the area. The potential Local Plan sites within the study area were screened to identify the proportion of the sites shown to be within fluvial Flood Zones, historic flood outlines, as well as areas at risk of reservoir and surface water flooding.

4.2 Baseline Summary

Summary of current baseline

Greenhouse gas emissions

- 4.2.1 In relation to GHG emissions, source data shows that St Albans (as a whole) has had lower per capita total emissions than the East of England and England (see Table 4.1 below). However, the transport related figure for St Albans (for 2016) is the same as the national per capita figure for England.

²¹ DECC (2017) Clean Growth Strategy [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy>

²² https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/South%20West%20Hertfordshire%20Strategic%20Flood%20Risk%20Assessment%20-%20Report%20-%20Final%20Draft_tcm15-66972.pdf

Table 4.1: Per capita local CO₂ emission estimates; industry, domestic and transport sectors (kt CO₂)²³

	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2016
St Albans							
Industrial & Commercial	1.8	1.8	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.0	0.8
Domestic	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.1	2.2	1.8	1.7
Transport	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Total per capita	6.1	6.0	5.4	4.9	5.0	4.2	4.0
East of England							
Industrial & Commercial	2.8	2.6	2.3	2.1	2.2	1.8	1.5
Domestic	2.5	2.4	2.2	2.0	2.1	1.7	1.6
Transport	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9
Total per capita	7.5	7.2	6.4	6.0	6.0	5.2	4.9
England							
Industrial & Commercial	3.0	2.8	2.4	2.2	2.3	1.8	1.6
Domestic	2.5	2.4	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.6	1.5
Transport	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Total per capita	7.2	6.9	6.1	5.7	5.7	4.9	4.9

²³ National Statistics UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005 to 2016
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-2016>

Effects of climate change

4.2.2 Climate change projections for the United Kingdom published as part of the UKCP18²⁴ programme provide detailed probabilistic projections of climate change. Although there is uncertainty in climate change predictions; the projected general trend is a move towards warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers. However, natural variations mean that some cold winters, some dry winters, some cool summers and some wet summers will still occur. The following changes are likely to have taken place by 2070s. The changes mentioned below relate to an area in central England based on the 10-90th percentile range (low to high emissions) of emission scenario²⁵:

- In UKCP18, the probabilistic projections provide local low, central and high changes across the UK, corresponding to 10%, 50% and 90% probability levels. These local values can be averaged over the UK to give a range of average warming between the 10% and 90% probability levels. By 2070, in the high emission scenario, this range amounts to 0.7°C to 4.2°C in winter, and 0.9°C to 5.4°C, in summer. For precipitation, corresponding ranges of UK average changes are -1% to +35% for winter, and -47% to +2% for summer, where positive values indicate more precipitation and negative values indicate reduced precipitation (drier summers).
- Hot summers are predicted to become more common, with the probability of a hot summer rising from the current 20-25% to up to 50% by the middle of the century.

4.2.3 Based on the above; in the future St Stephen is likely to experience, a warmer climate, with drier summers and potentially wetter winters, which means that extreme events such as floods and droughts are likely to become less predictable and possibly more frequent.

²⁴ Further information on the UKCP18 programme is available from: <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/collaboration/ukcp>.

²⁵ Projections from UKCP18 Climate Change Over Land, which correspond to two emissions scenarios (Low and High). The key characteristics of each of these scenarios are:

Medium emissions Scenario - describes a world that has rapid economic growth, quick spreading of new and efficient technologies, and a global population that reaches 9 billion mid-century and then gradually declines. It also relies on a balance between different energy sources.

High emissions Scenario - similar economic and population trends as the Medium emission scenario but more emphasis on power generation from fossil fuels.

Low emissions scenario - represents a more integrated ecologically friendly world, characterised by clean and resource efficient technologies, and lower global greenhouse gas emissions.

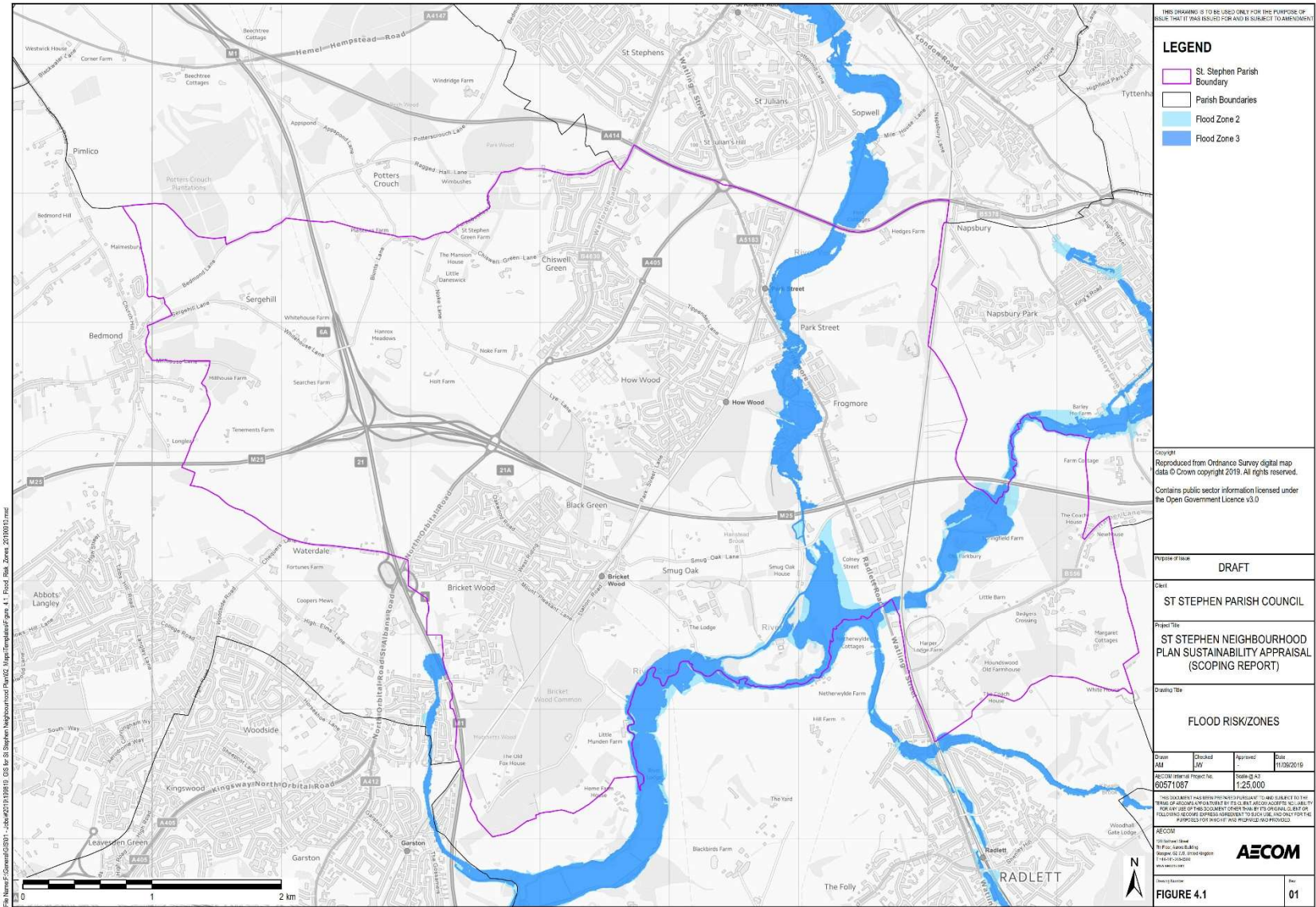
Flood risk

- 4.2.4 Flood Zone 1 is defined as having a 'Low Probability' of flooding and incorporates areas where the annual probability of flooding is lower than 0.1% (a 1 in 1000 year flood event). Flood Zone 2 is defined as having a 'Medium Probability' of flooding, with an annual probability of flooding between 0.1% and 1.0% for fluvial flooding (between a 1 in 1000 year and 1 in 100 year flood event) or 0.1% and 0.5% for tidal and coastal flooding (between a 1 in 1000 year and 1 in 100 year flood event). Flood Zone 3 is defined as having a 'High Probability' of flooding, with an annual probability of beyond 1.0% for fluvial floods and beyond 0.5% for tidal and coastal floods.
- 4.2.5 As illustrated in Figure 4.1, most of the Neighbourhood Plan area falls in Flood Zone 1. There are areas of Flood Zones 2 and 3 located along the paths of the rivers Ver and Colne.

Climate change adaptation

- 4.2.6 There is no baseline information or data relating specifically to climate change adaptation. However, there is a range of green infrastructure that will benefit communities in terms of flood risk, hotter summers and wetter winters.

Figure 4.1: Flood risk in the Neighbourhood Plan area



Summary of future baseline

- 4.2.7 There is potential for climate change to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in the Neighbourhood Plan area. Such weather events are likely to increase the risks associated with climate change (including fluvial flooding) with an increased need for resilience and adaptation.
- 4.2.8 In terms of the exacerbation of climate change, GHG emissions could decrease through the adoption of energy efficient measures and cleaner energy (especially in transport and industry, which is a key contributor in the NP area). However, increases in population and the number of households could counteract this.
- 4.2.9 Flood risk at any specific location may be influenced by local factors such as existing formal or informal flood defences and the capacity of existing drainage systems or road/rail culverts. The adoption of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) and introduction of Green Infrastructure within development schemes may reduce the speed of surface water run-off and have positive effects in terms mitigating flood risk.
- 4.2.10 Development in any instance has the potential to exacerbate flood risk within and in the vicinity of the Neighbourhood Plan area by increasing the volume of surface water run-off, or by introducing areas of hard standing which could increase the speed of surface water run-off. The risk would be most increased if development were to locate in proximity of Flood Zone 2 or Flood Zone 3 areas.
- 4.2.11 In the absence of the Plan, there will still be a need to satisfy policy measures relating to flood management.

4.3 Key headline issues

- 4.3.1 The key issues are as follows:
- Average CO₂ emissions per capita are declining in St Albans and are below the regional and national averages.
 - The Neighbourhood Plan area falls predominantly within Flood Zone 1, although a stretch of Flood Zone 2 and 3 runs along the Ver and Colne rivers.
 - There is potential for surface water flooding to occur across the Neighbourhood Plan area, although areas susceptible to this are scattered between areas with low risk.
 - The likelihood of flooding from fluvial and non-fluvial sources could be exacerbated by development in the Neighbourhood Plan area. However, opportunities for mitigation exist in sustainable design and Sustainable Urban Drainage.

4.4 Scoping outcome

- 4.4.1 With regards to climate change mitigation, the Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on carbon emissions. It is limited in the ability to implement higher standards of energy efficiency, and there are no plans in the scope of the Plan to identify areas of potential for renewable energy schemes. The scale of growth will not lead to significant emissions beyond what might be otherwise experienced in the absence of the Plan. Therefore, this factor has been **SCOPED OUT** of the SEA process.
- 4.4.2 Resilience to climate change and flood risk has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA. There is the potential to explore how resilience to climate change can be enhanced as well as contributing towards flood risk mitigation. Flood risk could also be an important factor in terms of the site selection process.

4.5 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Climatic Factors SEA theme?

- 4.5.1 The SEA topic 'Climatic Factors' has been scoped in to the SEA. Table 4.2 presents the SEA objective and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the plan in relation to this theme.

Table 4.2: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Climatic Factors

SEA Objective	Supporting Questions
Avoid and manage flood risk and support the resilience of the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan area to the potential effects of climate change.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? • Sustainably manage surface water run-off, ensuring that the risk of flooding is not increased (either within the plan area or downstream) and where possible reduce flood risk? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the plan area? • Avoid placing development in areas that are at the greatest risk of flooding.

5. Historic environment

Focus of theme:

- Designated heritage assets;
- Heritage at risk;
- Locally important features; and
- Archaeology and other historic records.

5.1 Policy Context

- 5.1.1 The **NPPF** (2019) sets out an environmental objective to contribute to protecting and enhancing the built and historic environment. The Framework provides a strategy to seek *‘the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect’*. It further states that heritage assets should be recognised as an *“irreplaceable resource”* that should be conserved in a *“manner appropriate to their significance”*, taking account of *“the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits’ of conservation”*, whilst also recognising the positive contribution new development can make to local character and distinctiveness.
- 5.1.2 Additionally, the **National Planning Policy Guidance** states that Neighbourhood Plans should include enough information, where relevant, *‘about local heritage to guide decisions and put broader strategic heritage policies from the local plan into action at a neighbourhood scale’* and *‘about local non-designated heritage assets including sites of archaeological interest to guide decisions’*.
- 5.1.3 The Government’s **Statement on the Historic Environment for England**²⁶ (2010) sets out their vision for the historic environment. It calls for those who have the power to shape the historic environment to recognise its value and to manage it in an intelligent manner in light of the contribution that it can make to social, economic and cultural life. Also of note is the reference to promoting the role of the historic environment within the Government’s response to climate change and the wider sustainable development agenda.
- 5.1.4 The emerging **St Albans Local Plan Policy L30; Historic Environment** seeks to preserve and enhance (where possible) the historic character of the district particularly that associated with heritage assets such as Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. Developments must have regard to the significance of heritage assets including their setting.

²⁶ DDCMS (2010) The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-governments-statement-on-the-historic-environment-for-england>

- 5.1.5 The St Albans adopted (1994) local plan saved policies include; Archaeological sites for Local Preservation, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Landscape Conservation, Development in conservation areas, Locally Listed Buildings and the emerging local plan's Policy L30 'Historic Environment'; seek to conserve heritage assets in St Albans district. The policies require that development proposals affecting heritage assets, including their setting, have regard to the significance of the heritage asset. Policy L30 for example, requires all submissions include a Heritage Statement and that new development must respect the wider context of the asset, with particular regard to important views of the District's built heritage and landscapes.

5.2 Baseline Summary

Summary of current baseline

Designated Heritage Assets

- 5.2.1 As illustrated on Figure 5.1, the NP area has a rich historical environment, containing numerous features, many of which are recognised through designations. This includes the statutory listed buildings which are nationally designated, and Conservation Areas designated at the local level.
- 5.2.2 Around fifty-six Grade II and Grade II* listed heritage assets are spread throughout the parish, which is a substantial amount. These include; churches, houses, cottages, public houses, barns and stables.
- 5.2.3 The replica of the Mohne Dam found in the grounds of the Building Research Establishment in Garston is designated as a Scheduled Monument. It is the only test dam to survive from a small number built for the dam destruction experiments at Garston and as such is not only of national but also international importance.

Heritage at Risk

- 5.2.4 Since 2008, Historic England has released an annual Heritage at Risk Register. The Heritage at Risk Register highlights some of the Grade I, Grade II and Grade II* listed buildings, scheduled monuments, conservation areas, wreck sites and registered parks and gardens in England deemed to be 'at risk'.
- 5.2.5 There are no heritage assets identified in the Heritage at Risk Register within the Neighbourhood Plan area. However, as the Register does not cover all Grade II listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets, there may potentially be some locally important heritage assets at risk.

Locally important features

- 5.2.6 There are two conservation areas designated in the NP area; Old Bricket Wood and Park Street and Frogmore.
- 5.2.7 Park Street and Frogmore area date back to the Roman conquest (AD 43). The oldest surviving buildings in Park Street appear to be Nos. 61-3 (originally a single early-15th century late medieval hall house with an adjoining parlour added in the sixteenth century), and No. 68 (a sixteenth century timber framed building).
- 5.2.8 The Old Bricket Wood Conservation Area designated in 1983 is an area of special architectural interest. It centres around the hamlet of Old Bricket, lying within Bricket Wood Common. It comprises a number of cottages and includes the Bricket Picture House (Grade II listed).

Archaeology and other historic records

- 5.2.9 There are over five hundred²⁷ archaeological and historical sites within the NP area. The majority being Roman, with the remainder primarily Iron age, Mesolithic, medieval and Anglo-Saxon.

²⁷ https://www.archiuk.com/cgi-bin/archi_new_search_engine.pl?search_location=TL%2013%2002&search_type=archi_town_search&pwd=freesearch@freesearch.com&TownName=BRICKET%20WOOD&county=Hertfordshire&search_range=10000&period=&font_size=&placename=Bricket%20Wood&info2search4=archi_town_search&keywords=#results_listof_archi_sites

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Summary of future baseline

- 5.2.10 New development in the Neighbourhood Plan area has the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of heritage assets and upon the character of the townscape. This may lead to negative effects, such as the delivery of unsympathetic design and material choice. Conversely, it could lead to positive effects through redevelopment of derelict and underused land and buildings. In the absence of a plan, there is less strategic direction for the Parish though; meaning that negative effects may be more likely to occur.
- 5.2.11 It should be noted that historic environment designations and the historic environment based policies within the saved policies of the adopted St Albans Local Plan (1994) and the emerging St Albans Local Plan, would offer a degree of protection to heritage assets and their settings.

5.3 Key headline issues

- 5.3.1 The key issues are as follows:
- The Neighbourhood Plan area contains a considerable number of heritage assets including Listed Buildings and Structures and a conservation area, which could be affected by policies and proposals within the plan (either positively or negatively).
 - An insensitive approach that does not seek to conserve and enhance heritage assets could result in the erosion of townscape quality.

5.4 Scoping outcome

- 5.4.1 Historic Environment has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA as there is potential for significant effects upon the setting of heritage assets and the character of the built and natural environment.

5.5 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Historic Environment SEA theme?

- 5.5.1 The SEA topic 'Historic Environment' has been scoped in to the SEA. Table 5.1 presents the SEA objective and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the plan in relation to this theme.

Table 5.1: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Historic Environment

SEA Objective	Supporting Questions
Protect, enhance and manage the distinctive character and setting of heritage assets and the built environment	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve, better reveal the significance and enhance heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment? • Contribute to better management of heritage assets? • Identify and protect / enhance features of local importance? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment?

6. Landscape

Focus of theme:

- Landscape and townscape character and quality

6.1 Policy Context

- 6.1.1 The **NPPF** recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital. Importantly, great weight is to be given to protecting and enhancing landscapes and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 6.1.2 The Government's '**A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment**' (2018) sets out a series of goals for improving the environment and how they will work with communities and businesses over the next 25 years to achieve them. Actions proposed of relevance to the conservation and enhancement of landscape character are as follows:
- 6.1.3 Working with AONB authorities to deliver environmental enhancements.
- 6.1.4 Identifying opportunities for environmental enhancement of all England's Natural Character Areas, and monitoring indicators of landscape character and quality.
- 6.1.5 Natural England has produced 159 **National Character Area** profiles²⁸ (2015) for the East of England each of which is distinctive with a unique 'sense of place'. These broad divisions of landscape form the basic units of cohesive countryside character, on which strategies for both ecological and landscape issues can be based. In addition, Landscape East has produced the **East of England Landscape Framework**²⁹, describing the landscape typology for this area.
- 6.1.6 The **Hertfordshire Landscape Character Area Statements – St Albans District**³⁰ identifies areas of distinct landscape character across the District Council's administrative area. These areas, their geology, topography, soils, biodiversity, woodland, human and historic influences, landform, land use and built form, are discussed in detail. It further sets out general guidelines relevant to the whole district but also specific guidelines for the management of each of the landscape character areas presented.

²⁸ In-depth profiles are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>

²⁹ <http://landscape-east.org.uk/east-england-landscape-typology>

³⁰ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/SP_SLP_ENV005HertfordshireLandscapeCharacterAreaStatementsStAlbansDistrict_tcm15-54905.pdf

- 6.1.7 The **St Albans City & District plan (2004 review) Policy 58 - Development in Conservation Areas** states that the Council will pay special attention to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas when exercising its planning function. St Albans emerging local plan's **Policy L29 - Green and Blue Infrastructure, Countryside, Landscape and Trees**, places high priority on the conservation and enhancement of public access to the GI network and allocates new GI at selected broad locations for development. The policy also seeks to continue the implementation of the Watling Chase Community Forrest Plan. Furthermore, the policy seeks to conserve and enhance the condition and character of the districts' landscapes. Major development likely to have significant effects on the local landscape must accompanied by Landscape and Visual impact assessments. Policy **L30 – Historic Environment** states that heritage assets will be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. New development within Conservation Areas must preserve or enhance the character appearance and local distinctiveness of the Conservation Area.

6.2 Baseline Summary

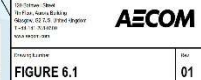
Summary of current baseline

- 6.2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan area falls within two National Character Areas (figure 6.1), namely; the Northern Thames River Basin and the Chilterns NCA.
- 6.2.2 The East of England Landscape Framework subdivides the area into several Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) to describe the landscape typology. The LCAs within the NP area include; St Stephen's Plateau, the Ver/Colne River Valley, Bricket Wood and the Vale of St Albans LCAs.
- 6.2.3 The St Stephen's Plateau LCA is characterised by undulating plateau gently sloping north-west to south-east with open arable fields throughout. There are mixed, visually intertwined woodlands to north. Elsewhere hedgerows are sparse with few individual field trees. The settlement pattern is dispersed, connected by a series of narrow winding lanes. The historic land-use pattern is overlaid by a network of motorways and junctions. Wooded horizons are common to the north, west and south, whilst to the east the built edge of St Albans and Chiswell Green is prominent
- 6.2.4 The Ver/ Colne River comprises a narrow river valley corridor bordering settlements, parkland, farmland and mineral workings. The River Ver and upper Colne occupy a meandering floodplain, grazed by livestock at several locations. Riparian willow plantations line the rivers along part of the course whilst south of Park Street, restored wetland mineral workings provide recreational opportunities. Several distinctive features punctuate the river landscape, including parkland, mills and fords. The valley is visually contained by side slopes and vegetation which generally conceal the presence of the adjoining settlements. The Ver-Colne Valley walk provides good pedestrian access. The M25, M1, A405 and A414 create fragmentation and loss of tranquillity. There is a sense of rural seclusion between Otterspool and Colne/Ver confluence with attractive riverside views. Urban development at Watford, Park Street, Colney Street and St Albans constitute a visual intrusion.
- 6.2.5 Bricket Wood NCA comprises an area of mixed land uses and transitional character; including considerable woodland, unrestored mineral workings, educational, industrial, horticultural, equestrian-related and arable land.
- 6.2.6 The area has undergone significant change in the 20th century and is impinged upon by settlement at Bricket Wood and How Wood, together with a marked severance by the M25.
- 6.2.7 The historic pattern is well preserved in Bricket Wood Common, but eroded in many other locations, showing some dereliction. It includes a number of ancient woodlands, Bricket Wood Common SSSI and scattered industrial and residential properties.

- 6.2.8 Bricket Wood Common (SSSI) is an important example of lowland heath. Part of the site is ancient oak/hornbeam woodland but much has regenerated from the former open, wet, acidic heath to scrub woodland, including birch and oak. Active management maintains the mix of woodland habitats. Other tree species include hazel, aspen, alder buckthorn and sessile oak. Many of the other woodlands, including Blackgreen Wood, Nottlers Wood and Mutchetts Wood are ancient. The woods are relatively drier than the Common and species include hornbeam, beech, oak and ash. Hedgerow species include elm, hawthorn, hazel and holly, although much of the elm is dying back.
- 6.2.9 The Vale of St Albans NCA is a broad, shallow basin of the upper River Colne, with some extensive panoramas over arable fields, both along the Vale and up towards Shenley Ridge to the south. Mixed land uses include arable, extensive areas of active and restored mineral extraction and urban fringe development. Areas of wooded farmland estate characterise the north-eastern part of the area.

Summary of future baseline

- 6.2.10 Existing Development Plan policies will offer a degree of protection to landscape assets and their settings. However, depending on the scale of development, a lack of overall vision and framework could result in the delivery of unsympathetic development styles, layouts and material choice. This could have a disruptive impact on the landscape through the lack of cohesive development. Development could also result in the loss of landscape features and visual impact. On the other hand, sensitive development presents an opportunity to enhance the existing townscape character of the individual settlements in St Stephen whilst respecting the key characteristics of the landscape.

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6.3 Key headline issues

6.3.1 The key issues are as follows:

- The area contains a rich mix of landscape character areas, each with its own distinctive character and visual amenity. The landscape is disrupted by the M1 and M25 motorways and interchange, urban residential and industrial developments and electricity pylons.
- The Bricket Wood Common SSSI forms an important part of the landscape with ancient woodland and a rich mix of flora and fauna.
- The St Albans District Council's existing Development Plan policies offer a degree of protection to landscape assets and their settings, but insensitive development could have a disruptive impact on landscape.

6.4 Scoping outcome

6.4.1 Landscape has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA as there is potential for significant effects upon the character of landscapes, which also contributes to the rural setting of the parish.

6.5 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Landscape SEA theme?

6.5.1 The SEA topic 'Landscape' has been scoped in to the SEA. Table 6.1 presents the SEA objective and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the plan in relation to this theme.

Table 6.1: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Landscape

SEA Objective	Supporting Questions
Protect, enhance and manage the distinctive character and appearance of landscapes.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve, better reveal the significance and enhance landscape assets? • Contribute to better management of landscape assets? • Identify and protect/enhance features of local importance? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the surrounding landscape? • Improve linkages to open space and the countryside?

7. Land, Soil and Water Resources

Focus of theme:

- Soil resource and quality;
- Watercourses;
- Water availability; and
- Water quality.

7.1 Policy Context

- 7.1.1 The EU's **Soil Thematic Strategy**³¹ (2006) presents a strategy for protecting soils resources in Europe. The main aim of the strategy is to minimise soil degradation and limit associated detrimental effects linked to water quality and quantity, human health, climate change, biodiversity and food safety.
- 7.1.2 The **NPPF** states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued soil and the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Policies should also prevent new and existing development from *'contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution'*.
- 7.1.3 The Framework further stresses the importance for development to have adequate provision for water supply and wastewater. It also asserts that development should not have any detrimental effects on water quality.
- 7.1.4 In **Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England**³² (2009), a vision is set out for the future of soils in the country. It suggests that changing demands on our soils need to be better understood and it must be ensured that appropriate consideration is given to soils in the planning process.
- 7.1.5 The **Future Water**³³ strategy (2011) seeks to achieve a secure supply of water resources whilst protecting the water environment. This means greater efficiency in water use, application of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, managing diffuse pollution from agriculture, tackling flood risk and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- 7.1.6 The Government's **'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment'** (2018) sets out a series of goals for improving the environment and how they will work with communities and businesses over the next 25 years to achieve them. This includes using and managing land sustainably by protecting the best agricultural land, improving soil health and restoring and protecting peatlands. This also includes respecting nature by using our water more sustainably and requiring developments to bring about a net environmental gain which can include water quality.

³¹ European Commission (2006) Soil Thematic Strategy [online] available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/three_en.htm

³² Defra (2009) Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England [online] available at: <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/land/soil/documents/soil-strategy.pdf>

³³ Defra (2011) Future Water – The government's water strategy for England [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-water-the-government-s-water-strategy-for-england>

- 7.1.7 **The Environment Agency's Water for life and livelihoods, Part 1:** Thames river basin district River basin management plan³⁴ provides a framework for action and future regulation, setting out legally binding objectives for each quality element in every water body in the Thames River Basin (which includes NP area) with a default objective of achieving good status by 2027. Priority issues highlighted for the river Colne include; changes to natural level and flow of water, pollution from waste water, transport infrastructure and rural areas and the extent of physical modifications, such as, weirs and concrete channels.
- 7.1.8 **The revised Draft Water Resources Management Plan³⁵ (2019)** by Affinity Water sets out how the organisation will ensure the enough supply of water from 2020 to 2080.

7.2 Baseline Summary

Summary of current baseline

Soil resources

- 7.2.1 The Agricultural Land Classification categorises land into six grades (plus 'non-agricultural' and 'urban'), where Grades 1 to 3a are the 'best and most versatile' land and Grades 3b to 5 are of poorer quality.
- 7.2.2 As illustrated on figure 7.1, the Neighbourhood Plan area comprises a mix of non-agricultural land (urban use and other non-agricultural use). The majority of agricultural land is classified as grade 3. It is not clear whether this is 3a (which is best and most versatile land) or 3b (which is not)³⁶.

Watercourses

- 7.2.3 The NP area falls within the River Ver and River Colne catchments. The River Ver begins in the grounds of Lynch Lodge, Kensworth Lynch on the west side of the A5 trunk road and runs through the southern end of Markyate and on through Flamstead, Redbourn, St Albans and Park Street, and joins the River Colne at Bricket Wood. The Ver is a chalk stream, a very rare type of habitat.
- 7.2.4 The river was classified as 'Bad' to 'Fail' in 2013 but following efforts to restore the water body it reached an overall classification of 'Good' in 2016.³⁷
- 7.2.5 The River Colne, a tributary of the Thames, rises in North Mymms Park and runs half its course within Hertfordshire. On leaving Hertfordshire it splits off into several branches and its main branch flows into the river Thames at Staines-upon-Thames. The section of river from the confluence with Ver to Gade is classified as overall 'Moderate'

³⁴https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718342/Thames_RBD_Part_1_river_basin_management_plan.pdf

³⁵ https://stakeholder.affinitywater.co.uk/docs/Affinity_Water_rdWRMP19_FOR_PUBLICATION_01.03.19.pdf

³⁶ Source: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/127056?category=5954148537204736>

³⁷ <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB106039029920>

Water availability

- 7.2.6 The entire district of St Albans is subject to water supply stress. The emerging SACDLP requires all new housing to implement the optional national water efficiency standard for housing (optional requirement in part G of the Building Regulations). Affinity Water, the water utility for the area recently warned that within 25 years there may not be sufficient water to supply the region. Factors such as, climate change, population growth and increase in demand, were cited as reasons for the predicted water shortage.

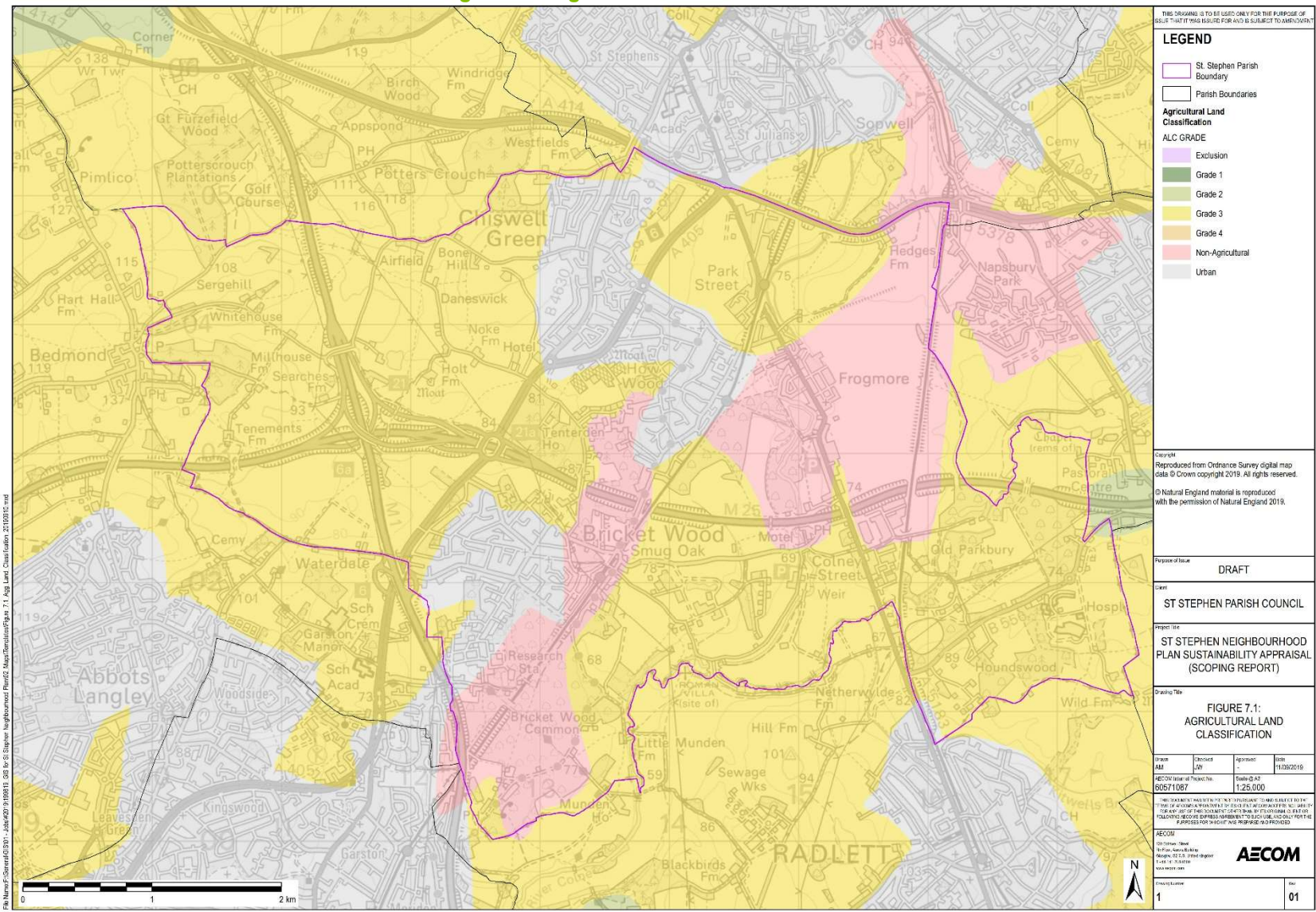
Water quality

- 7.2.7 Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) have been designated by the Environment Agency in England and Wales to protect groundwater sources such as wells, boreholes and springs that are used for public drinking water supply. The zones show the risk of contamination from activities that might cause groundwater pollution in the area. There are no such zones designated by the Environment Agency in the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 7.2.8 The Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) requires Member States to identify areas where groundwaters have nitrate concentrations of more than 50 mg/l nitrate or are thought to be at risk of nitrate contamination. Areas associated with such groundwaters are designated as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) within which, Member States are required to establish Action Programmes in order to reduce and prevent further nitrate contamination.
- 7.2.9 There are four NVZ's associated with Ver and Colne rivers in Neighbourhood Plan.

Summary of future baseline

- 7.2.10 In terms of water quality; requirements set out in the Water Framework Directive are likely to lead to continued improvements to water quality in watercourses in the wider area. However, water quality could be affected by pollution incidents in the area, the presence of non-native species and physical modifications to water bodies.
- 7.2.11 The NP area is in a water stressed region. Water availability in the area may be adversely impacted by increases in population and an increased occurrence of drought exacerbated by the effects of climate change.
- 7.2.12 Development which requires sewage treatment may, if not designed correctly or located appropriately, result in an increased risk of pollution to groundwater and surface water. Development will therefore need to have due consideration to the capacity of sewage works.
- 7.2.13 With regards to soil, it is unlikely that large amounts of agricultural land would be lost to development, as there are restrictions to growth in the countryside. However, it might be possible that higher grades of land are affected with un-planned, ad hoc growth.

Figure 7.1: Agricultural Land Classification



7.3 Key headline issues

7.3.1 The key issues are as follows:

- The Neighbourhood Plan area consists of mainly Grade 3 agricultural land. Some of this is likely to be best and most versatile land.
- The Rivers Colney and Ver run through the Plan area.
- The Neighbourhood Plan area falls within nitrate vulnerable zones.

7.4 Scoping outcome

- 7.4.1 The topic of 'Land, Soil and Water Resources' has been **SCOPED OUT** of the SEA, as the Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on soil / agricultural land and water quality.
- 7.4.2 There are important soil resources in the Plan area that ought to be avoided as much as possible. However, there is little Grade 3a and higher grade agricultural land in the area. In view of the limited scale of development, loss of agricultural land is not likely to be significant. This does not mean that higher quality agricultural land should not be protected though, and such principles will need to be addressed through the site assessment process.
- 7.4.3 Despite the Plan area being covered by a nitrate vulnerable zone, it is considered unlikely that significant effects upon water quality would occur as a result of the Plan. The scale of growth is not major, and changes to land use would not be anticipated to increase nitrate pollution (in fact it could be reduced).
- 7.4.4 In terms of water supply availability, the NP will be subject to the water efficiency requirements stipulated in the emerging SACDLP.
- 7.4.5 With regards to waste water treatment and drainage, the scale of growth would not be expected to cause issues to existing and planned infrastructure, and so significant effects in this respect are also unlikely.

8. Population and Housing

Focus of theme:

- Population size and age structure;
- Housing delivery and needs;
- Housing tenure;
- Housing affordability.

8.1 Policy Context

- 8.1.1 The **NPPF** contains as part of its three overall overarching objectives, a social objective to ‘support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations’. It further emphasises the need for homes to be of a size, type and tenure to meet needs of different social groups, with at least 10% of new homes to be provided for affordable home ownership subject to conditions and exemptions.
- 8.1.2 In February 2017, the Government published a housing white paper entitled ‘**Fixing our broken housing market**’. This establishes the government’s plans to reform the housing market and increase the supply of new homes in England through a series of four proposals. These including planning for the right homes in the right places, building homes faster, diversifying the house building market and supporting people in need of housing.
- 8.1.3 The St Albans City and District Council **Independent Assessment of Housing Needs and Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update** report³⁸ (2015) concluded there is a net need for 8,882 additional homes in St Albans and District for the period 2011-2031, an annual average of 586 homes. The **South West Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment** (2016)³⁹ revised this figure to 705 units/ annum. The emerging **St Albans City & District Local Plan**⁴⁰ sets a target of 14,608 additional homes equating to 913 dwelling/ annum over the 2020-2036 period.
- 8.1.4 AECOM prepared a **Housing Needs Assessment** for St Stephen Parish in 2017. This proposed an unconstrained housing figure of 875-900 to be delivered by 2032, or 90/ annum. Much of this is likely to be delivered through the emerging St Albans Local Plan. However, a proportion of housing will be delivered via the SSNP.

³⁸ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/SP_EB_SHMA_Update_tcm15-52354.pdf

³⁹ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/South%20West%20Herts%20SHMA%20January%202016%20-%20Executive%20Summary_tcm15-64011.pdf

⁴⁰

https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/CD%20002%20St%20Albans%20City%20%26%20District%20Local%20Plan%20Publication%202020-2036_tcm15-67020.pdf

8.2 Baseline Summary

Summary of current baseline

Population size and age structure

- 8.2.1 The population of St Stephen Parish was 13,872⁴¹ in 2011. In 2017, the population was estimated to be 14,177 which represents around 2.2% growth since 2011⁴². This is expected to increase in the next two years due to the two new housing developments currently being constructed which will deliver up to 238 new dwellings when complete.
- 8.2.2 Table 8.1 shows the age structure of the local population and that of St Albans District as a whole, alongside the national data for England. It is apparent that St Stephen has a lower than average percentage of 0-14 year olds. There's a similar proportion of 15-24 year olds compared to St Albans, but this age group is lower than the national average for England. The 25-44 age group in St Stephen is substantially lower than the averages for St Albans and England. Conversely, the percentage of older age groups 65-84 is substantially higher in St Stephen (23.4%) than that for St Albans (16.8%) and England (18%). This clearly demonstrates that St Stephen has a higher than average proportion of residents aged 65 and over, compared to; St Albans as a whole and the national average for England.

Table 8.1: Age Structure in 2017 (ONS Population Estimates)

Age group	St Stephen	St Albans	England
0-14	17.6%	21.1%	18.1%
15-24	9.8%	9.3%	12.0%
25-44	21.1%	26.7%	26.4%
45-64	28.1%	26.2	25.6%
65+	23.4%	16.8	18.0%
Total population	14,177	147,095	55,619,430

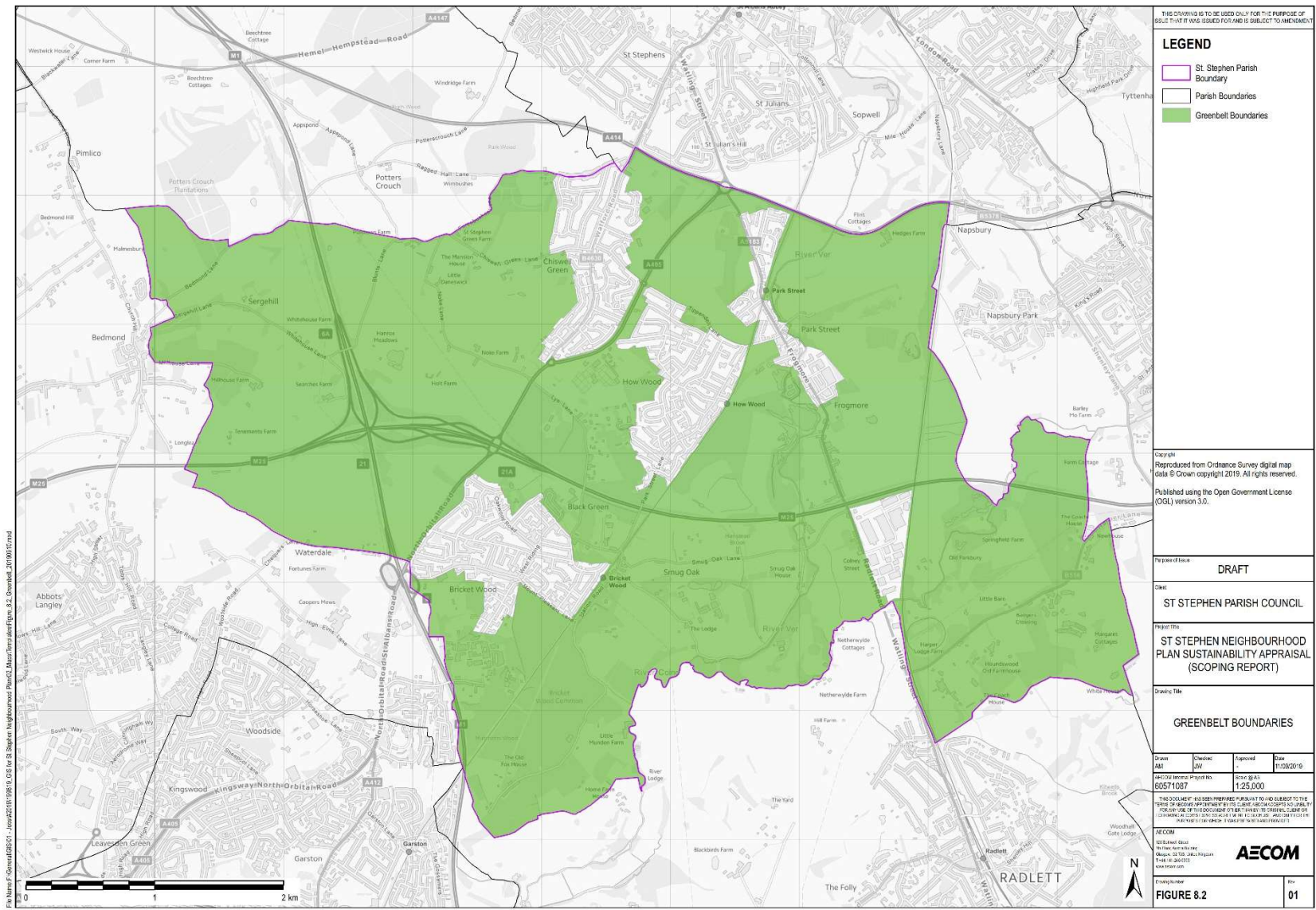
⁴¹ 2011 Census

⁴² ONS Parish Population estimates mid-2202 to mid-2017.

Housing delivery and needs

- 8.2.3 The 2011 census showed that the resident population of 13,865 lived in 5,815 dwellings. Two developments within the parish have been granted planning permission recently with plans to deliver up to 238 dwellings. The site of former HSBC training centre in Hanstead Park is to deliver 138 units and the Lancaster Gate development at the Building Research Establishment (BRE) in Bricket wood will deliver a further 100 units.
- 8.2.4 St Stephen and its villages are surrounded by open Green Belt countryside (figure 8.2). The 1994 St Albans District Local Plan Review set out policies governing housing development within the district. Of these a number were saved and are relevant to housing provision within the NP area. Policy 2 'Settlement Strategy' identified the villages of Bricket Wood, Park Street/ Frogmore, How Wood and Chiswell Green as specified settlements. Therefore, these are excluded from the Green Belt and considered appropriate locations for development.
- 8.2.5 The emerging SACDLP Policy S1 (Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy) sets 4 settlement categories; giving priority to larger urban centres (Category 1). Category 2 comprises larger village settlements excluded from the Green Belt; these include the main settlement centres in St Stephen Parish; Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green, How wood, Park Street and Frogmore and the proposed Park street Garden Village. Category 3 settlements are Green Belt settlements such as Radlett Road (Frogmore) which is within the NP area. Development will be limited to small scale infilling here as these areas are considered to make an important contribution to the functions of the Green Belt.

Figure 8-1 Greenbelt Boundaries



8.2.6 The SADC emerging LP identified two broad housing locations within the NP area;

- Park Street Garden Village (former Radlett aerodrome site) for up to 2,300 dwellings
- West of Chiswell Green for up to 365 dwellings.

8.2.7 A Housing Needs Assessment⁴³ (2017) was prepared by AECOM for St Stephen Parish Council. This provided an unconstrained housing figure that might be appropriate for the Parish to deliver over the lifespan of the Neighbourhood Plan. The figure proposed provides a target of between 875 and 900 dwellings to be delivered over the period to 2017-2031, much of which is likely to be delivered through the strategic level housing allocations in the SADC emerging plan. However, there is an expectation that a proportion of housing will be delivered via the Neighbourhood Plan. Taking the two new developments which will deliver 238 units this leaves a requirement of up to 662 units to 2031 or around 39 units/annum over the period 2019-2031. However, this figure does not consider supply constraints (for example the availability of sites) whether or not they are suitable for development, and any environmental constraints. The Plan period also runs beyond 2031, which needs to be considered.

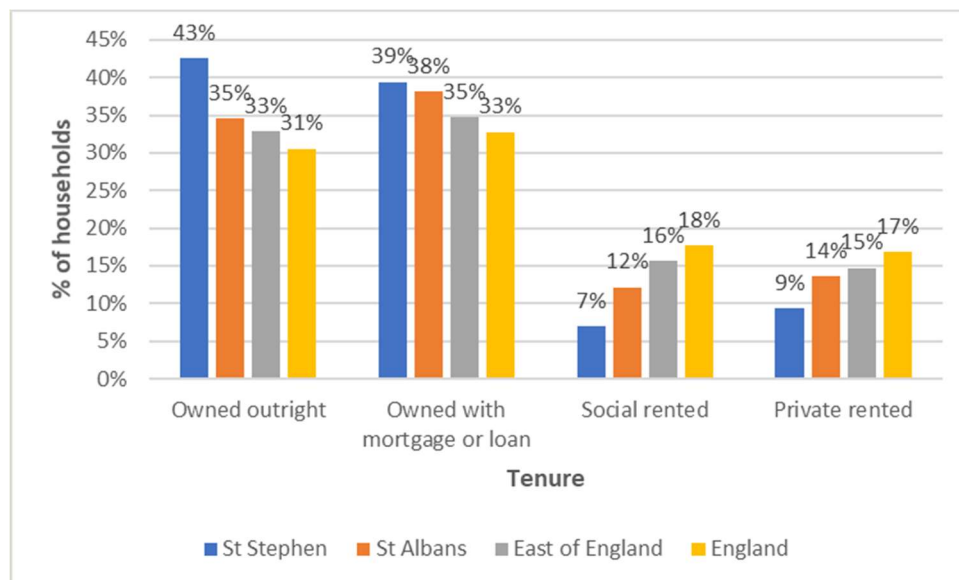
8.2.8 As noted previously, beyond the settlement boundaries themselves, St Stephen Parish is currently entirely protected by Green Belt designation. The individual villages themselves, defined within the SADC Strategic Local Plan Publication Draft 2016 as settlements excluded from the Green Belt, are 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.

⁴³ St Stephen Parish Housing Needs Assessment (2017), prepared by AECOM

Tenure

- 8.2.9 In terms of housing tenure; the majority of homes are owner occupied (82%) which is substantially higher than the 73% at District level (figure 8.2). The level of social and private rents in the NP area is significantly lower than for the District as a whole.

Figure 8-2 Housing Tenure⁴⁴



Affordability

- 8.2.10 The average house price in the NP area for the period May 2018 to May 2019 are shown in figure 8.3 These range from £444,029 to £613,426 compared to £547,848 for St Albans. The latest UK House Price Index shows the average house price in the UK is around £230,292.⁴⁵ Therefore, the average house price in the NP area is almost double that of the national average in the case of Park street and more than double, in the remaining locations.

Figure 8-3 House Prices⁴⁶

Settlement	Average Sale Price
St Albans	£547,848
Bricket Wood	£558,382
Chiswell Green	£613,426
Park Street	£444,029

⁴⁴ ONS 2011 Census.

⁴⁵ UK House Price Index <http://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi>

⁴⁶ Source: rightmove.co.uk Average house prices updated 3rd Sept.2019

- 8.2.11 Figure 8.4 reproduces the projections of the St Albans City and district SHMA⁴⁵. This shows the highest projected demand (51%) is for 3 bedroom dwellings. This reflects the situation in St Stephen where demand for such dwellings currently exceeds supply. There is a shortage of smaller properties suitable for first-time buyers and older down-sizers.

Figure 8-4 Projected Housing needs for St Albans City & District 2011-2031⁴⁷

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	

Summary of future baseline

- 8.2.12 Population trends in the Neighbourhood Plan area show a growing and an ageing population. This is demonstrated by the higher than average 65+ age group and lower than average 25-44 age group.
- 8.2.13 The emerging SACD LP allocates two broad housing sites in the NP area; with a total of 2665 dwellings (2300 at Radlett aerodrome site and 365 at Chiswell Green) for the period 2020 to 2036.
- 8.2.14 In terms of housing typology, the demand for 3 bedroomed dwellings is forecast to significantly exceed that for other types of dwellings.

8.3 Key headline issues

- 8.3.1 The key issues are as follows:

- The population of St Stephen is likely to increase significantly due to two new developments (8.2.13) being implemented at Hanstead Park and the BRE in addition to the strategic level growth planned in the emerging SACD local plan.
- Average house prices in the NP area are significantly higher than the national average making it particularly difficult for first time buyers to find housing in the area.
- There is a dearth of smaller property in the NP area which prevents downsizers from moving into smaller more manageable properties. This adversely affects the release of larger properties into the market and leads to under occupancy.

⁴⁷ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/SP_EB_SHMA_tcm15-39883.pdf

8.4 Scoping outcome

- 8.4.1 The SEA topic 'Population and Housing' has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA as the Plan will influence housing delivery and the delivery of other infrastructures and services that are required to deliver and sustain sustainable communities.

8.5 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Population and Housing SEA theme?

- 8.5.1 The SEA topic 'Population and Housing' has been scoped in to the SEA. Table 8.4 presents the SEA objective and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the plan in relation to this theme.

Table 8.4: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Population and Housing

SEA Objective	Supporting Questions
Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing which meets the needs of occupiers throughout their life.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the provision of a responsive range of house types and sizes to meet identified needs of different community groups? • Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs throughout their lives? • Create sustainable new communities with good access to a range of local services and facilities? • Enhance housing provision in existing communities?

9. Health and Wellbeing

Focus of theme:

- Health indicators and deprivation; and
- Influences on health and wellbeing.

9.1 Policy Context

- 9.1.1 The **NPPF** contains as part of its three overall overarching objectives, a social objective to ‘support strong, vibrant and healthy communities... by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment’. It also states that ‘access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities.
- 9.1.2 The Framework further outlines that the planning system should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places that are designed to promote social interactions, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lifestyles.
- 9.1.3 Fair Society, Healthy Lives (**‘The Marmot Review’**)⁴⁸ (2011) investigated health inequalities in England and the actions needed in order to tackle them. Subsequently, a supplementary report was prepared providing additional evidence relating to spatial planning and health on the basis that there is: ‘overwhelming evidence that health and environmental inequalities are inexorably linked and that poor environments contribute significantly to poor health and health inequalities.
- 9.1.4 The Government’s **‘A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment’** (2018) sets out a series of goals for improving the environment and how they will work with communities and businesses over the next 25 years to achieve them. Relevant proposals include connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing by:
- Using green spaces including through mental health services.
 - Encouraging children to be close to nature, in and out of school, with focus on disadvantaged areas.
 - Greening our towns and cities by creating green infrastructure and planting one million urban trees.
 - Making 2019 a year of action for the environment, working with ‘Step Up To Serve’ and other partners to help children and young people from all backgrounds to engage with nature and improve the environment.

⁴⁸ The Marmot Review (2011) The Marmot Review: Implications for Spatial Planning [online] available at: <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/12111/53895/53895.pdf>

9.1.5 The **St Albans City and District Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021**⁴⁹ identifies improving physical and mental health and wellbeing as its main objective. It sets out to achieve this by;

- Aiming to see a year on year reduction in childhood obesity numbers by 2021
- Reducing the number of adults classed as overweight or obese by 2021
- Reducing CO₂ through improved energy efficiency and reducing preventable winter deaths through promoting warmer homes schemes and supporting schemes that assist vulnerable households.
- Social Prescribing; referring residents with non-medical issues to alternative (to GPs) sources of support in the community.
- Raising dementia awareness and creating dementia friendly communities and increase number of dementia friends working in the Council.
- Making St Albans a place where young people can experience good mental health.
- Suicide prevention; by working towards making St Albans a place where no one thinks suicide is their only option.
- Reducing social isolation and loneliness, by improving social inclusion.
- Promoting mental wellbeing in the Workplace

9.2 Baseline Summary

Summary of current baseline

Health indicators

9.2.1 According to the Public Health England⁵⁰ St Albans, the average life expectancy for males is 81.7 and for females 84.7 which are higher than the national average for England. In the main St Albans scores better than average on health indicators.

- The under 75 mortality rate is significantly better in the St Albans than the national average.
- Conversely, the dementia diagnosis rate for 65+ age group is 60.4% which is significantly lower than 68.7% average figure for England.

9.2.2 There are two hospitals within short distance (4-5 miles) from the centre of the NP area. St Albans City Hospital and Watford General Hospital which is the nearest A&E provider.

9.2.3 In terms of GP surgeries in the NP area; there is one in Bricket Wood, one in Chiswell Green and one in Park Street. There are more surgeries outside the NP area, three of which are located approximately two miles from the centre of the NP area.

⁴⁹ https://sportinherts.org.uk/app/uploads/2019/01/St-Albans-City-and-District-Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy-2018-2021_tcm15-63388.pdf

⁵⁰ <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/public-health-outcomes-framework/data#page/1/gid/1000049/pat/6/par/E12000006/ati/201/are/E07000240>

9.2.4 Access to open space and green infrastructure is widely recognised to have a positive effect on health by encouraging and facilitating outdoor activity.

9.2.5 St Stephen is surrounded by open countryside, featuring woodland, rivers, ponds, fields, footpaths and bridleways. The majority of the Parish lies within the Watling Chase Community Forest. Therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan area has broadly good access to accessible green spaces.

Deprivation

9.2.6 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD) is an overall relative measure of deprivation constructed by combining seven domains of deprivation according to their respective weights, as described below. The seven deprivation domains are as follows:

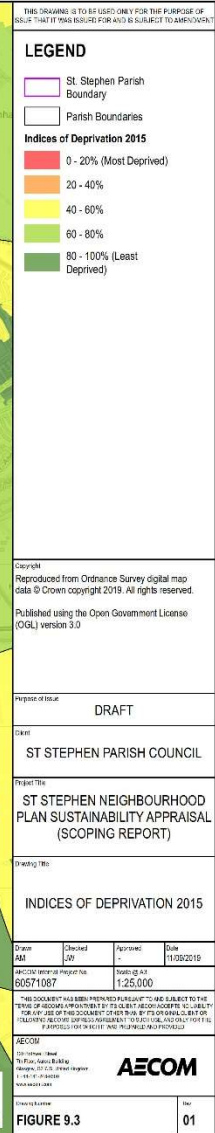
- **Income:** The proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income, including those individuals that are out-of-work and those that are in work.
- **Employment:** The proportion of the working-age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market, including those who would like to work but are unable to do so due to unemployment, sickness / disability, or caring responsibilities.
- **Education, Skills and Training:** The lack of attainment and skills in the population.
- **Health Deprivation and Disability:** The risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health. Morbidity, disability and premature mortality are also considered.
- **Crime:** The risk of personal and material victimisation at local level.
- **Barriers to Housing and Services:** The physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services.
- **Living Environment:** The quality of the local environment, including the quality of housing stock, air quality and road traffic incidents.

Two indices, subsets of the Income deprivation domain, are also included:

- **Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index:** The proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families.
- **Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index:** The proportion of all those aged 60 or over who experience income deprivation.

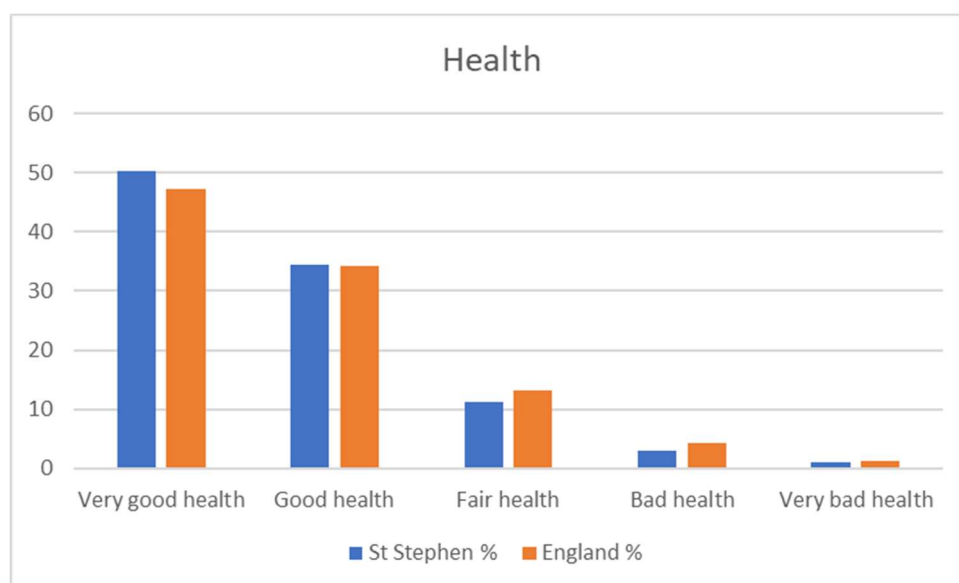
9.2.7 As illustrated in Figure 9.1 below, most of the NP area falls within the 60%-80% and 80%-100% least deprived areas in England. To the south east, areas fall within the 40-60% least deprived category.

9.2.8 As there is a strong correlation between deprivation and health, this corroborates the findings of the health profile of the area showing a higher than average level of health and wellbeing.

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- 9.2.9 A self-assessment of health by residents (2011 Census) in the Neighbourhood Plan area indicates that most residents in St Stephen consider themselves to be in very good health (50.3%), followed by good health (34.4%), and that only 4.1% of residents consider their health to be bad or very bad (Figure 9.2).
- 9.2.10 These trends are similar to the national pattern with the exception being that St Stephen Parish has a smaller proportion of residents that consider themselves to have fair health (11.2%) compared to the National average (13.3%).

Figure 9.2: Residents General Health (Census 2011: KS301EW)



Summary of future baseline

- 9.2.11 It is likely that with increased population growth there will be a higher demand for health, fitness and leisure facilities within St Stephen. The growth in the 65+ age group is likely to increase pressure on health and social care services and facilities in the NP area.

9.3 Key headline issues

- 9.3.1 The key issues are as follows:
- St Stephen has a broadly healthy population with higher than national average life expectancy.
 - The Neighbourhood Plan area has lower than average levels of deprivation.
 - There are several healthcare facilities within the NP area.
 - The NP area has substantial green and open space.
 - The trend of an increasingly ageing population will require additional provision for health and social care services.

9.4 Scoping outcome

- 9.4.1 The Plan certainly has the potential to have effects on health and wellbeing, as development on allocated sites could lead to benefits with regards to affordable housing access, or negatives in terms of amenity disturbance. These issues are unlikely to be significant though, and there are no particular groups that would likely to experience effects disproportionately.
- 9.4.2 With this in mind, and given the good levels of health enjoyed by residents of the NP area (and low levels of deprivation) the SEA topic 'Health and Wellbeing' has been **SCOPED OUT.**

10. Transportation

Focus of theme:

- Transportation infrastructure;
- Accessibility; and
- Modes of travel.

10.1 Policy Context

- 10.1.1 The **NPPF** (2019) requires that 'transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making'. The scale, location and density of development should reflect 'opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure'. To help reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health the planning system should focus significant development 'on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes'. The Framework also requires that planning policies support an appropriate mix of uses across an area to further help reduce the need to travel as well as the provision of high quality walking and cycling network.
- 10.1.2 The **Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 3**⁵¹ (2018) sets out transport priorities; plans and strategies for managing, maintaining and improving all aspects of the local transport system over the plan period (2018-2031). The objectives of the LTP include supporting economic growth, improve road and transport safety, improving access to services, managing adverse impacts of transport on the environment and promoting healthier travel opportunities.
- 10.1.3 Hertfordshire County Council's **Rights of way Improvement Plan** (2017)⁵² provides the context for the future management of and investment in the rights of way network and other access activities, to for the period 2017/18 to 2027/28 with an interim review after 5 years. The plan's vision is 'To create, by 2026, an accessible and integrated off-road network for non-motorised users based on rights of way and other routes, that meets the current and perceived future needs and demands of Hertfordshire's residents and visitors'
- 10.1.4 The emerging **SACD Local Plan Policy L18 (Transport Strategy)**⁵³ aims to work in conjunction with Highways England and Hertfordshire County Council to provide sustainable transport infrastructure and to promote sustainable modes of transport to enable significant change toward more sustainable travel behaviour. This is to be achieved by integrating development and transport provision and locating development where optimum access to key services and facilities is achieved. It also encourages public transport, walking and cycle routes provision.

⁵¹ <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/consultations/ltp4-2018.pdf>

⁵² <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/environment-and-planning/countryside-access-and-management/rights-of-way/improvement-plans/rights-of-way-improvement-plan-201718-202728.pdf>

⁵³ https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/CD%20002%20St%20Albans%20City%20%26%20District%20Local%20Plan%20Public%20ation%202020-2036_tcm15-67020.pdf

10.2 Baseline Summary

Summary of current baseline

Infrastructure

- 10.2.1 St Stephen is dissected by the M1, the M25, and A-roads. This results in high volumes of traffic crossing through the Parish, often using the smaller local roads as 'rat-runs'.
- 10.2.2 The M1 and the M25, two of the UK's busiest motorways, cross the Parish north to south and east to west respectively.
- 10.2.3 The lack of direct exit for M25 traffic to join the M1 southbound results in vehicles having to exit the M25 at junction 21A and use the A405 North Orbital Road to join the M1 at Junction 6.
- 10.2.4 The A405 conveys 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.
- 10.2.5 The following locations have been identified as points frequent traffic congestion;
- 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - A405 / A414 / A5183 (Park Street) roundabout - impacts upon traffic joining roundabout from all directions.
 - A414 / A1081 (London Colney) roundabout – although this is outside the NP area it impacts upon traffic joining roundabout from all directions.
 - 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.

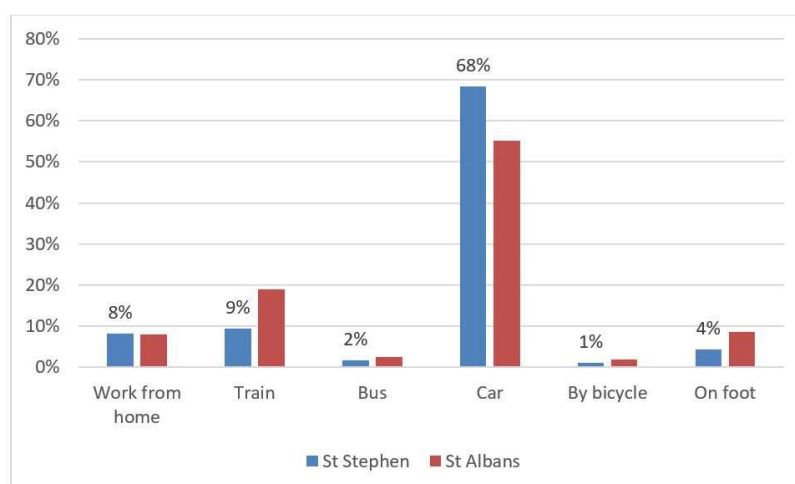
Accessibility

- 10.2.6 There are three railway stations within the boundary of St Stephen; Bricket Wood, How wood and Park Street. These are served by the Abbey Line which runs between Albans Abbey Station and Watford Junction. Travel beyond Watford requires a change at Watford Junction station. There is not direct connection between St Albans Abbey and St Albans City Stations.
- 10.2.7 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.
- 10.2.8 The Arriva 757 Green Line 'express' stops on the A405 at Bricket Wood but does not operate during rush-hour periods. The frequency of this service, which used to run every 30 minutes was changed to hourly in 2018. However, buses on this service are often full by the time they reach Bricket Wood. Parking at the Bricket wood stop is restricted which makes it less this a less attractive travel option for residents.
- 10.2.9 There are several Public Right of Ways (PRoWs) surrounding and within the Neighbourhood Plan area. However, these are not particularly well interconnected between settlements.

Modes of travel

- 10.2.10 The majority of working residents (68%) use their cars to travel to work (figure 10.1), with only 11% opting for public transport. This is a much lower percentage than the equivalent for St Albans District as whole (21%).

Figure 10-1 Mode of Travel to Work



Summary of future baseline

- 10.2.11 New development is likely to result in higher amounts of traffic and congestion. The new developments; at Hanstead Park and at the Lancaster Grange development at the BRE site will deliver up 238 dwellings when complete. Additionally, the emerging SACDLP includes 2665 units in the NP area. This is likely to exacerbate the congestion issues currently experienced at in the NP area.
- 10.2.12 The traffic volumes conveyed through the M1&M25 motorways and the A414/A405 are likely to continue to increase creating further congestion within the NP area.
- 10.2.13 New development will put further pressure on bus and rail services in the NP area.

10.3 Key headline issues

- 10.3.1 The key issues are as follows:
- The Neighbourhood Plan area is well served by the highway network but railway connectivity and bus connectivity is in need of improvement to cope with current and future demand.
 - Local residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area are significantly more likely to travel by car than the average for St Albans.
 - New development is likely to increase traffic and congestion but could also make public transport improvements viable.

10.4 Scoping outcome

- 10.4.1 The SEA topic 'Transportation' has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA, as policies and proposals in the Plan are likely to generate additional traffic and movement in the St Stephen NP area. The potential for significant effects should be explored.

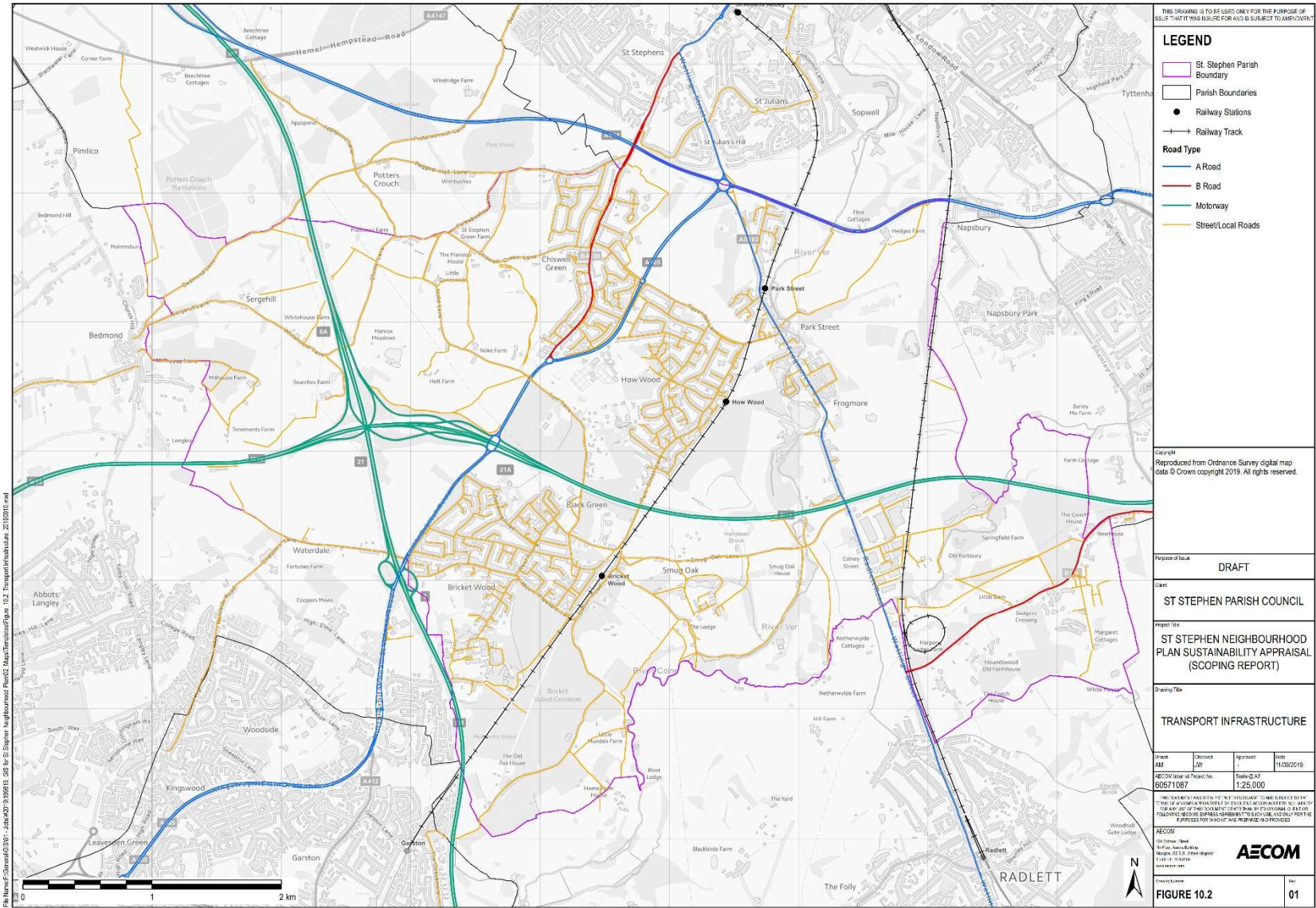
10.5 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Transportation SEA theme?

- 10.5.1 The SEA topic 'Transportation' has been scoped in to the SEA. Table 10.3 presents the SEA objective and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the plan in relation to this theme.

Table 10.3: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Transportation

SEA Objective	Supporting Questions
Support a modal shift to active and sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport. Reduce the need to travel in order to reduce congestion.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect people effectively to the social, economic, educational, recreational and cultural facilities they require on a daily basis? • Promote sustainable patterns of land use and development that reduce the need to travel and reliance on the private car? • Increase the range, availability and affordability of sustainable travel choices i.e. public transport, walking, cycling? • Improve road safety? • Enable transport infrastructure improvements? • Avoid excessive strain or congestion on the transport network?

Figure 10.2: Road & Railway Network



11. The SEA Framework and Methodologies

11.1 The SEA Framework

- 11.1.1 The SEA framework has been established through the identification of key issues and environmental objectives as part of the scoping exercise. This draws upon the baseline position and policy context that has been prepared for a range of SEA topics (as set out in Chapters 2-10).
- 11.1.2 The framework consists of a set of headline objectives and ancillary questions, which will be used to appraise the environmental effects of the draft Development Plan Document (and any reasonable alternatives).
- 11.1.3 Table 11.1 below outlines the full SEA Framework, which brings together the objectives and questions that have been set out at the end of each SEA topic chapter. The Framework focuses on those issues that have been identified as the most important to consider in the preparation of the Plan; but acknowledging the limited influence that the Plan can have in some areas.

Table 11.1: The SEA Framework

SEA Objective	Supporting Questions (Will the option/proposal help to:)
Protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity habitats and species; achieving a net environmental gain and stronger ecological networks.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support connections between habitats in the Plan area? • Avoid any impacts on the Bricket Wood Common SSSI? • Support continued improvements to the designated sites in the Neighbourhood Plan area? • Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the Neighbourhood Plan area to the effects of climate change?
Avoid and manage flood risk and support the resilience of the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan area to the potential effects of climate change.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? • Sustainably manage surface water run-off, ensuring that the risk of flooding is not increased (either within the plan area or downstream) and where possible reduce flood risk? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the plan area? • Avoid placing development in areas that are at the greatest risk of flooding.

Protect, enhance and manage the distinctive character and setting of heritage assets and the built environment	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve, better reveal the significance and enhance heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment? • Contribute to better management of heritage assets? • Identify and protect / enhance features of local importance? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment?
Protect, enhance and manage the distinctive character and setting of heritage assets and the built environment	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve, better reveal the significance and enhance heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment? • Contribute to better management of heritage assets? • Identify and protect / enhance features of local importance? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment?
Protect, enhance and manage the distinctive character and appearance of landscapes.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve, better reveal the significance and enhance landscape assets? • Contribute to better management of landscape assets? • Identify and protect/enhance features of local importance? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the surrounding landscape? • Improve linkages to open space and the countryside?
Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing which meets the needs of occupiers throughout their life.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the provision of a responsive range of house types and sizes to meet identified needs of different community groups? • Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs throughout their lives? • Create sustainable new communities with good access to a range of local services and facilities? • Enhance housing provision in existing communities?
Protect and improve the health and wellbeing of residents by enhancing the quality and accessibility of open space, facilities for recreation and health.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accessibility and availability to a range of leisure, health and community facilities, for all community groups? • Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure, in accordance with Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards? • Promote healthy and active lifestyles?

Reduce the need to travel to reduce congestion. Support a modal shift to active and sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect people effectively to the social, economic, educational, recreational and cultural facilities they require on a daily basis? • Promote sustainable patterns of land use and development that reduce the need to travel and reliance on the private car? • Increase the range, availability and affordability of sustainable travel choices i.e. public transport, walking, cycling? • Improve road safety? • Enable transport infrastructure improvements? • Avoid excessive strain or congestion on the transport network?
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12. Next Steps

12.1 Subsequent stages for the SEA process

12.1.1 Scoping (the current stage) is the second stage in a six-stage SEA process:

- Screening (NPPG Stage A)
- Scoping (NPPG Stage B)
- Assess reasonable alternatives, with a view to informing preparation of the draft plan (NPPG Stage C)
- Assess the draft plan and prepare the Environmental Report with a view to informing consultation and plan finalisation (NPPG Stage D/E)
- Publish a 'statement' at the time of plan adoption in order to 'tell the story' of plan-making/SEA (and present 'measures decided concerning monitoring') (NPPG Stage F)

12.1.2 The next stage will involve establishing and appraising reasonable alternatives for the Plan. This will involve consideration of strategic issues such as the growth and distribution of housing, and site options. The findings of the appraisal of these alternatives will be fed back so that they can be considered when preparing the draft plan.

12.2 Consultation on the Scoping Report

- 12.2.1 Involvement through consultation is a key element of the SEA process. At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public. The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. The Scoping Report has been released to these three statutory consultees.
- 12.2.2 Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this Scoping Report, in particular the evidence base for the SEA, the identified key issues and the proposed SEA Framework.
- 12.2.3 Comments on the Scoping Report should be sent to:
- 12.2.4 Ian McCluskey, Principal Sustainability Consultant, *AECOM Ltd, 4th Floor, Bridgewater House, Manchester, M1 6LT*
- 12.2.5 Email address: ian.mccluskey@aecom.com
- 12.2.6 All comments received on the Scoping Report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SEA where appropriate.

13. Glossary

Agricultural Land - Agricultural land is classified into five grades. Grade one is best quality and grade five is poorest quality. A number of consistent criteria are used for assessment which include climate (temperature, rainfall, aspect, exposure, frost risk), site (gradient, micro-relief, flood risk) and soil (depth, texture, stoniness).

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) – This is a measure of deprivation in England, for every local authority and super output area seven domains of deprivation are measured: (Income, Employment, Health deprivation and Disability, Education Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Services, Crime the Living Environment). This allows all 32,482 SOAs to be ranked according to how deprived they are relative to each other. This information is then brought together into one overall Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004.

LNR – Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are for both people and wildlife. They are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. They offer people special opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it.

NNR - Many of the finest sites in England for wildlife and geology are National Nature Reserves (NNR). There are currently 224 across the country and almost all are accessible and provide great opportunities for people to experience nature.

Objective – A statement of what is intended, specifying the desired direction of change in trends Option For the purposes of this guidance option is synonymous with ‘alternative’ in the SEA Directive Plan For the purposes of the SEA Directive this is used to refer to all of the documents to which this guidance applies, including Development Plan Documents. Supplementary Planning Documents are not part of the statutory Development Plan but are required to have a sustainability appraisal.

RAMSAR – Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.

Locally Important Geological Sites – LIGs are designated by locally developed criteria and are currently the most important designated sites for geology and geomorphology outside statutorily protected areas such as SSSIs.

SAC – Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are strictly protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive. Article 3 of the Habitats Directive requires the establishment of a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitat types and 788 species identified in Annexes I and II of the Directive

Scheduled Monument - A ‘nationally important’ archaeological site or historic building, which is given protection against unauthorised change.

Scoping – The process of deciding the scope and level of detail of a Sustainability Appraisal.

Screening – The process of deciding whether a document requires a SA.

SEA Directive – European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment

SEA Regulations – The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (which transposed the SEA Directive into law).

SPA – Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are strictly protected sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Birds Directive, which came into force in April 1979. They are classified for rare and vulnerable birds (as listed on Annex I of the Directive), and for regularly occurring migratory species.

SSSI – SSSIs are the country's very best wildlife and geological sites.

They include some of our most spectacular and beautiful habitats - large wetlands teeming with waders and waterfowl, winding chalk rivers, gorse and heather-clad heathlands, flower-rich meadows, windswept shingle beaches and remote uplands moorland and peat bog.

Super Output Area (SOA) – SOAs are a new geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. Three layer of SOA have been devised: Lower Layer - Minimum population 1000; mean 1500. Built from groups of SOAs (typically 4 to 6) and constrained by the boundaries of the Standard Table (ST) wards used for 2001 Census outputs. Middle Layer - Minimum population 5000; mean 7200. Built from groups of Lower Layer SOAs and constrained by the 2003 local authority boundaries used for 2001 Census outputs. Upper Layer - To be determined; minimum size c.25, 000.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – Generic term used internationally to describe environmental assessment as applied to policies, plans and programmes. In the UK, SEA is increasingly used to refer to an environmental assessment in compliance with the 'SEA Directive'

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) – Generic term used to describe a form of assessment which considers the economic, social and environmental effects of an initiative. SA, as applied to Local Development Documents, incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive.

Sustainability Issues – The full cross-section of sustainability issues, including social, environmental and economic factors.

