

# St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2019 - 2036



**Referendum Version**

**Prepared by St Stephen Parish  
Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

**March 2022**

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
	The Planning Policy Context.....	5
	National Planning Context .....	5
	Local Planning Context .....	6
	Community Engagement.....	6
	Neighbourhood Plan Review.....	6
	Sustainability of the Neighbourhood Plan .....	6
<b>2</b>	<b>ABOUT ST STEPHEN .....</b>	<b>8</b>
	Location .....	8
	Origins and Growth .....	8
	Topography.....	9
	Industry and Business.....	10
	Community Facilities .....	10
	The Villages .....	11
	Profile of the Parish today .....	14
<b>3</b>	<b>VISION AND OBJECTIVES.....</b>	<b>15</b>
	Challenges Facing St Stephen Parish.....	15
	Vision for St Stephen .....	16
	Neighbourhood Plan Objectives.....	17
<b>4</b>	<b>SPATIAL STRATEGY .....</b>	<b>18</b>
	Policy S1: Location of development.....	18
<b>5</b>	<b>HOUSING, CHARACTER AND DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT.....</b>	<b>21</b>
	Policy S2: Housing Mix .....	21
	Policy S3: Character of development .....	22
	Policy S4: Non-designated heritage assets .....	24
	Policy S5: Design of Development .....	26
<b>6</b>	<b>GREEN SPACES AND THE ENVIRONMENT .....</b>	<b>30</b>
	Policy S6: Minimising the Environmental Impact of Development .....	30

	Policy S7: Protecting Natural Habitats and Species .....	31
	Policy S8: Protection and Maintenance of Local Green Spaces .....	35
	<i>AIM 1: Identification of additional Local Green Spaces and Assets of Community Value.....</i>	<i>37</i>
	Policy S9: Protecting the setting and function of the River Ver and the River Colne and their tributaries .....	38
	Policy S10: Green Infrastructure and Development.....	39
<b>7</b>	<b>TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT .....</b>	<b>40</b>
	Policy S11: Improvements to key local junctions and pinch points.....	40
	Policy S12: Off-street Car parking .....	46
	Aim 2: Improved Rail Services .....	49
	Policy S14: Provision for walking, cycling and horse-riding .....	50
	Policy S15: Improving the bridleway network.....	51
<b>8</b>	<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES .....</b>	<b>52</b>
	Policy S16: Community facilities.....	52
	Policy S17: Leisure Facilities for Children and Teenagers .....	53
	Aim 3: Community facilities at the Donkey Field .....	54
	Policy S18: Protection of Public Houses .....	55
	Policy S19: Community Growing Spaces .....	56
	Policy S20: Retirement and Care Home Facilities .....	57
<b>9</b>	<b>BUSINESS AND LOCAL ECONOMY .....</b>	<b>59</b>
	Policy S21: Support for Reasonable Business Expansion .....	60
	Policy S22: Village Retail Areas.....	61
	Policy S23: Supporting local employment .....	62
	Policy S24: Broadband Communications.....	62
<b>10</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING .....</b>	<b>64</b>
	Infrastructure provision and priorities.....	64
<b>11</b>	<b>NON LAND USE ACTIONS AND SPENDING PRIORITIES .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>POLICIES MAPS .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>GLOSSARY .....</b>	<b>72</b>

**14 LIST OF EVIDENCE BASE DOCUMENTS.....75**

<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Profile of St Stephen</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>Detail of non-designated heritage assets</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>Local Green Spaces</b>



## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document is the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan', 'Neighbourhood Plan' or the 'SSNP'). It represents one part of the development plan for the Parish over the period 2019 to 2036, the other part being the St Albans District Local Plan Review, 1994.
- 1.2 St Albans City and District Council (SADC), the local planning authority, designated a Neighbourhood Area for St Stephen Parish on 23 April 2015 to enable St Stephen Parish Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been prepared by the community through the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.
- 1.3 The St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan (SSNP) has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990<sup>1</sup>, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004<sup>2</sup>, the Localism Act 2011, the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)<sup>3</sup>, the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017<sup>4</sup> and the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>5</sup> (revised 2019). The Steering Group has prepared the Plan to establish a vision for the future of the Parish and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning land use and development change over the Plan period 2019 to 2036.
- 1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan guides development within St Stephen Parish and provides direction to any interested parties wishing to submit planning applications. The process of producing the Plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible and the different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to St Stephen, its residents, businesses and community groups.
- 1.5 Each section of the Plan covers a different topic. Under each heading there is a justification for the policies presented which provides the necessary understanding of the policy and what it is seeking to achieve. The policies themselves are presented in Purple Boxes. It is these policies against which planning applications will be assessed. It is advisable that, in order to understand the full context, individual policies are read in conjunction with the supporting text.
- 1.6 In addition to the policies, the Plan identifies a number of local needs and community aspirations that are not met through the planning system but which are important to the well-being of the community. It is proposed that these projects will be met through community action supported by other organisations. The Plan also sets out the Community Infrastructure Priorities and a framework for monitoring and implementation.
- 1.7 Figure 1.1 below shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area, which is the boundary of the Civil Parish of St Stephen and incorporates the main settlements of Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/20/contents/made>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/20/contents/enacted>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/revised-national-planning-policy-framework>

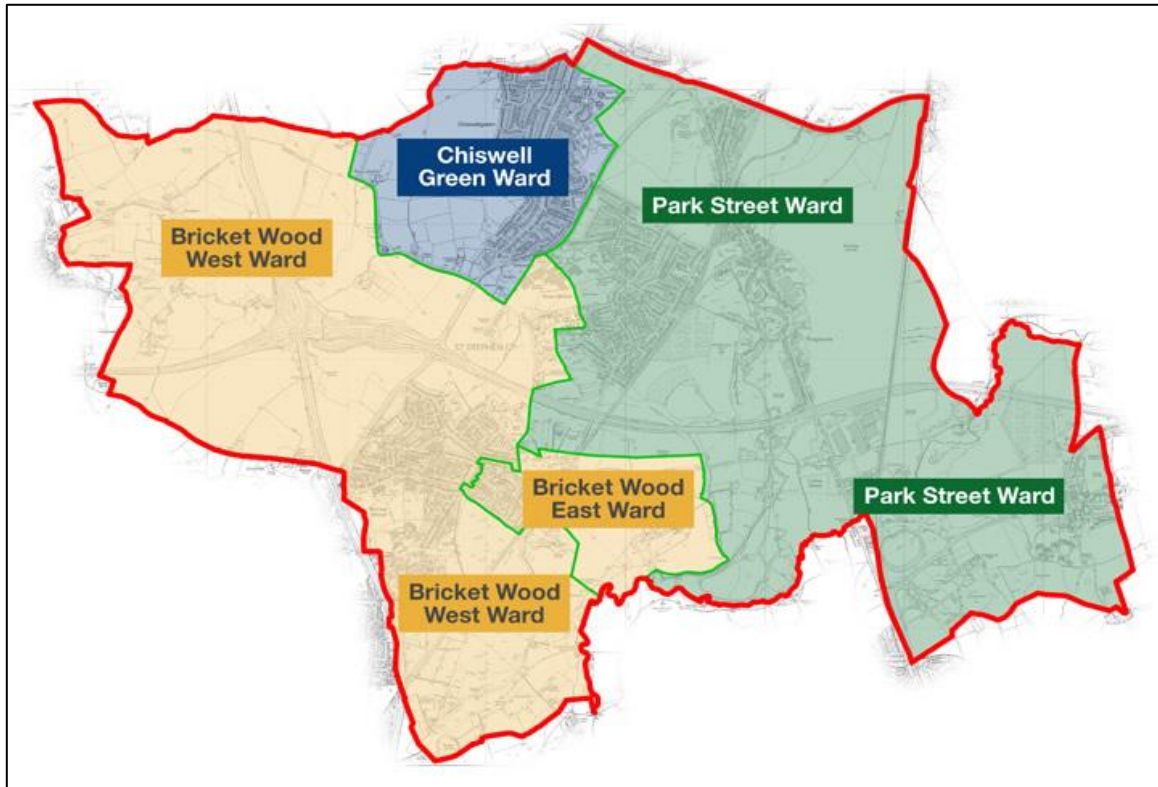


Figure 1.1: Map of the Parish

## The Planning Policy Context

### National Planning Context

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

- *“Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies<sup>6</sup>.”*
- *“Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently.”*

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<sup>6</sup> Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area.

### **Local Planning Context**

- 1.9 The currently adopted Local Plan for St Albans and district is the Local Plan Review<sup>7</sup>, adopted in 1994. It should be noted that Local Plans “expired” after 27th September 2007 unless “saved”, in whole or in part. Therefore in 2007, a Direction was made saving specified policies of the adopted Plan and it is these saved policies that provide the strategic context for the SSNP.
- 1.10 A new Local Plan covering the period 2020 to 2036 was being prepared by SADC, however this was withdrawn in November 2020 following its Examination<sup>8</sup>. A new Local Plan is being prepared but is at a very early visioning stage. Therefore, this St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to confirm to the saved policies of the adopted Local Plan Review.

### **Community Engagement**

- 1.11 The Steering Group has developed the Neighbourhood Plan through extensive engagement with the community including:
- Public meetings, exhibitions and drop-in events;
  - Face-to-face sessions with local organisations including schools, scouts and guides and other young peoples’ groups, the business forum and voluntary and interest groups such as residents’ associations;
  - A Community Survey questionnaire distributed to all households;
  - Leaflet drop to all houses in the Parish;
  - Regular newsletters and press releases distributed to local media and other organisations;
  - Presentations at key stages of the Plan;
  - Presence at Parish and village events.
- 1.12 Discussions with St Albans District Council have taken place on each of the topic areas covered by the Plan. A full detail of the consultation is included in the Consultation Statement.

### **Neighbourhood Plan Review**

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

### **Sustainability of the Neighbourhood Plan**

- 1.14 The draft SSNP was screened initially in spring 2019 to ascertain whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and/ or Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) would be required. The screening consultation document was subject to consultation with Historic

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<sup>7</sup> Local District Plan 1994

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/withdrawal-draft-local-plan-2018>

England, Natural England and the Environment Agency for five weeks. This first SEA and HRA Screening Opinion determined that the SSNP does not require an HRA but does require an SEA. This was on the advice of Historic England, who raised concerns about the impact that one of the proposed sites could have on the historic environment.

- 1.15 At this time, the intention was to allocate sites within the Neighbourhood Plan for housing. This would have involved minor amendments to the Green Belt, which the NPPF states can be achieved through a Neighbourhood Plan, where there a need to do so has been established at the strategic level. The emerging St Albans Local Plan was intending to establish this strategic need, however as noted in Paragraph 1.10 of this document, the emerging Local Plan has been withdrawn. As a result, the SSNP no longer is able to amend Green Belt boundaries and the Steering Group has taken the decision to no longer allocated sites. Instead, an early review of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken following the adoption of the new emerging Local Plan and this could explore again the allocation of sites, bearing in mind the strategic growth strategy for the district.
- 1.16 A second screening opinion, reflecting this new approach, was undertaken in January 2021, which concluded that the SSNP does not require a full SEA or HRA.
- 1.17 A copy of the Screening Determination letter and statement is included within evidence base for the neighbourhood plan.

## 2 ABOUT ST STEPHEN

### Location

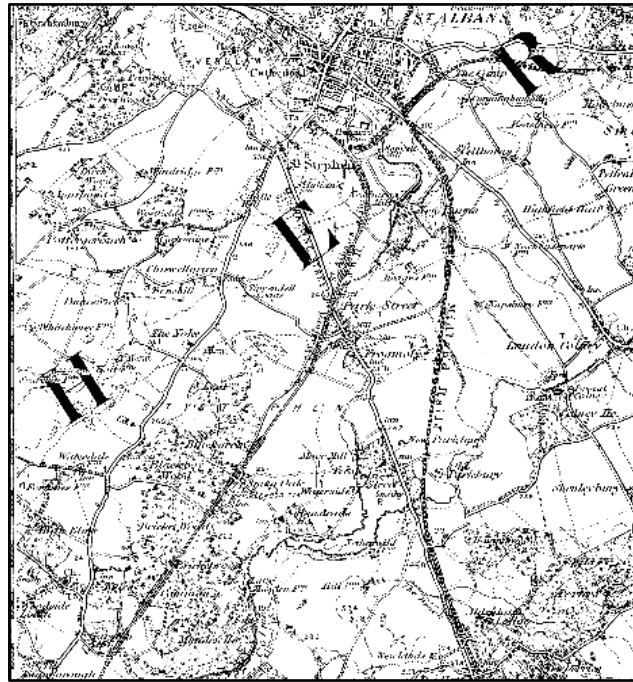
- 2.1 St Stephen Parish lies some 20 miles north of London, in the southwest corner of Hertfordshire between the City of St Albans and the town of Watford. It falls under the administrative control of St Albans City and District Council. The 2011 national census records the Parish's population as 13,865 living in 5,815 dwellings.
- 2.2 These figures will increase markedly within the next two years, as a result of successful planning applications for two large housing developments in Bricket Wood – at Hanstead Park and Lancaster Gate, at the Building Research Establishment (BRE).
- 2.3 St Stephen is an ancient parish, named after the 10th century St Stephen's Church, although boundary adjustments made over the years mean the church no longer lies within the Parish. Maps from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century show Waterdell, Burston Manor and Hanstead House, all names still in use today. A record of built heritage and archaeological remains in the parish, from pre-Roman, Roman settlements and medieval manors, farms and mills, many linked to St Albans Abbey, is stored in the Historic Environment Record<sup>9</sup>. Figure 2.1 overleaf provides a map of the heritage assets in the Parish, including the Conservation Areas and listed buildings.
- 2.4 The Parish comprises three main villages; Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street, although the latter also includes the residential area of How Wood and the smaller settlements of Frogmore and Colney Street.
- 2.5 The Parish is dissected by both the M1 (north to south) and the M25 (east to west) motorways, two of the UK's major and busiest highways. It also houses the confluence of these two motorways – junction 6 on the M1 and junctions 21/21A on the M25. A second east-west arterial road, the A414, marks the Parish's northeast boundary.

### Origins and Growth

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

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<sup>9</sup> Hertfordshire Environmental Records within the Heritage Gateway:  
[https://heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/advanced\\_search.aspx](https://heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/advanced_search.aspx)



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

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

### **Topography**

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

## Industry and Business

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



## Community Facilities

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



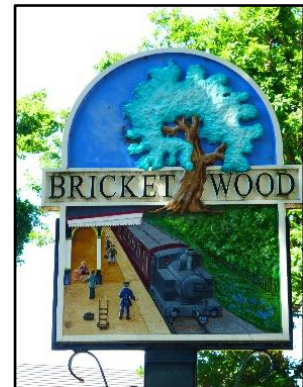


## The Villages

- 2.21 Though sharing much commonality, the three villages that form St Stephen Parish all manage to retain their own individual, historically led, 'feel' and character.
- 2.22 During the first-half of the twentieth century, with the exception of the small Handley Page estates in Bricket Wood and Park Street, the villages saw little housing development and population growth. With few exceptions, development was limited to small numbers of individually designed and built dwellings ranging from a handful of large detached 'country' houses, through to small clusters of family-sized units, often bungalows, and a scattering of small terraced farm cottages, mostly within woodland settings.
- 2.23 All three villages grew dramatically during the 1950s, most significantly as a result of post-WW2 housing development - including the creation of council-funded estates - and housing (and population) has continued to expand over the subsequent years. The villages, in estate agency terms, are "much sought after" offering comparatively easy access to London and other key commercial centres via road and rail whilst still being regarded as being in a 'country' setting. This demand has led to house prices in the Parish escalating to more than both District and National averages.

### 2.24 Bricket Wood

- 2.25 According to the Domesday Book in 1088, 165 people lived in Bricket Wood, but by 1353 it had been largely abandoned, possibly due to the Black Death (1349). The original habited area was in the region of Smug Oak Lane, near to today's Gate public house.
- 2.26 In 1858 what is now known as the Abbey Line opened, connecting St Albans to Watford by rail, with an intermediate station built at Bricket Wood in 1861. In the early 1930s aircraft manufacturer Handley Page moved into what was to become Radlett Aerodrome and built two small estates, in Bricket Wood (and Park Street) to house employees.



- 2.27 As with the other villages within the Parish, the concept of commuting (and the village's location adjacent to the M1 and latterly M25 motorways) have resulted in Bricket Wood's transformation from a scattered rural community to a large residential village.
- 2.28 Today Bricket Wood has two main centres, each with a small parade of retail outlets - one on the Old Watford Road, close to the A405 St Albans to Watford road, and the second in Oakwood Road with a pharmacy and post office, near to the village's St Luke's C of E church. The church's hall complex is used for community activities and as a doctor's surgery. The 'Handley Page' part of the village also has a small retail parade, close to the station and Smug Oak Green. The one school in the village (primary) is located in Mount Pleasant Lane.



- 2.29 In many respects, Bricket Wood can be regarded as the most 'rural' of the St Stephen villages, with its Smug Oak Green, Pound Green and remnants of ancient woodland.

South of the developed village, Bricket Wood Common - also known as 'Old Bricket' - is a mix of woodland and rare acid heath crisscrossed with a network of paths and bridleways popular with both walkers and equestrians. In 1983 much of this area was designated a Conservation Area with the remaining part registered as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



2.30 This area also houses one of the village's noted properties, Mundon House, together with a number of other listed buildings, featuring illustrations of various sporting activities on its terracotta stucco facia. To the north of the village stands Hanstead House, the former home of industrialist Sir David Yule, now converted into apartments.

### 2.31 Chiswell Green

2.32 Possibly the newest of the three villages in terms of growth, a hundred years ago Chiswell Green was merely a stop on the road linking Watford and St Albans, surrounded by a collection of farms with associated housing. Its centre was the blacksmith's workshop (which latterly saw double duty as an alehouse) and which today, much renovated, is the Grade II listed Three Hammers public house. Together with a small number of retail outlets, including both a post office and a pharmacy, it remains the centre of the village.



2.33 Adjacent to the Three Hammers, Chiswell Green Lane leads west to riding stables and the headquarters of the Royal Entomological Society, with the sculpture of a giant-sized ant displayed on its forecourt. Further on is the Plaistows grass-runway airfield, used by microlights and small fixed-wing aircraft.

2.34 Increasingly, as the gateway into St Albans from the M1 and M25 along the B4360 Watford to St Albans road, Chiswell Green has grown to be linear in shape, with residential expansion almost exclusively bordering the path of this road.



2.35 Over the years, and most specifically during the 1950s to 1970s, the village was extensively developed to reach its current size. Home to Killigrew Primary School and also a branch of the United Reformed Church, Chiswell Green is well

served by regular bus services linking it to Watford, St Albans and Luton.

2.36 The village's western boundary offers access to open fields, woodlands and footpaths, whilst on its eastern edge lies the expansive Greenwood Park with its children's playground, tennis courts, football pitches, a cricket square and the Parish Community Centre, the venue of numerous local clubs and organisations catering for residents of all ages.

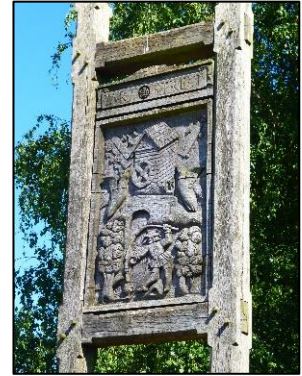


### 2.37 **Park Street**

2.38 With a small settlement based around Park Street Mill ('Le Parkmulle') dating back to before the Roman Conquest, Park Street is the most historic of the Parish's three villages and houses the majority of the area's listed buildings.

2.39 As with Bricket Wood, Park Street lies on the Abbey Line with a station opening in 1858, albeit in a different position from today's station which opened in 1890. A second station, How Wood, opened in 1988.

2.40 The 'original' Park Street, along with the smaller habitations of Frogmore and Colney Street, lay on the Watling Street Roman Road (latterly the A5 London to Holyhead arterial road and now designated the A5183). Bordering this road, and within the Park Street Frogmore Conservation Area, can be found the majority of the village's historic buildings; in particular the Grade II listed Park Street Mill. Several nearby cottages are also Grade II listed, as are Burston Manor on the village's western flank and Moor Mill (now a restaurant) in Colney Street.



2.41 Early, largely ad hoc 20th century housing development centred to the west of Watling Street, an area which became known as How Wood and subsequently the location for much of the village's second-half of the century expansion. How Wood is also the location of the village's main shopping area, although there is also a small cluster of shops on the A5183 Watling Street.

2.42 Park Street is also the most commercially-orientated of the Parish's villages with a number of long-standing small businesses lining the A5183 and which, in recent times, have been augmented by the Curo Park and Ventura Park warehouse/distribution developments – although none of these developments are overly obtrusive to the main residential clusters.

2.43 Park Street has three schools, How Wood Primary and Nursery School, Park Street Primary School and the independent Haberdashers' Aske's Pre-Preparatory School. Its thriving Village Hall hosts numerous social events and activities. There are two place of worship; Park Street Baptist church in How Wood and Frogmore's George Gilbert Scott designed Holy Trinity church.



### Profile of the Parish today

2.44 A detailed profile is provided in Appendix A. In summary, the key aspects of the profile of St Stephen Parish, as they relate to the Neighbourhood Plan, are as follows<sup>10</sup>:

- Compared to the District as a whole, St Stephen has a **high percentage of residents aged 65+**, amounting to approximately one-fifth of its population. Equally, there is a high proportion of adults aged between 45 and 65 years.
- In contrast, the number of younger adults, aged 25 to 44 is significantly lower than the District and region. This age bracket fell significantly between 2001 and 2011, suggesting that **those of a younger age are choosing not to settle (or, more likely, cannot afford to settle) in St Stephen.**
- This drop in working age residents is also apparent in **the lower than average numbers of children aged up to 15 years** in the Parish.
- St Stephen has **high levels of car ownership**, with 1.6 cars per household compared to 1.2 at the national level and 1.4 at the District level. This is not unexpected in a largely rural area, especially as two of the three villages in the Parish suffer from an inadequate public transport infrastructure. Over half the households in the Parish have at least two cars with 15% having 3 or more, compared to 10% at the District level.
- The Parish has **three intermediate rail stations** – at How Wood, Park Street and Bricket Wood – on the St Albans to Watford Abbey Line. Chiswell Green is fairly **well served by bus links** to several major employment centres outside of the Parish, though residents of Bricket Wood and Park Street are less fortunate. The vast **majority of those in work use their car to travel to their place of employment.** There is also an above average number of people working from home.
- St Stephen **predominantly comprises larger three- and four-bedroom homes** with 73% of stock being detached and semi-detached compared to 57% at District level. Home ownership is high at 82% compared to just 73% at District level while the percentage of social, and in particular the **number of private rented properties available**, at 16% is low compared to 26% across St Albans.



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<sup>10</sup> Source: 2011 Census




### 3 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

#### Challenges Facing St Stephen Parish

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

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

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

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

### **Vision for St Stephen**

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

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

- Retaining the individual character of each village;
- Protecting the Green Belt from inappropriate development<sup>11</sup>;
- Preserving the built assets that contribute to local character;
- Putting green and open spaces, trees and woodlands at the heart of planning;
- Providing community leisure and recreation facilities to meet all residents' needs;
- Ensuring housing developments include smaller, affordable properties for first-time buyers, to help keep younger people in the villages, and also provide properties tailored to the ageing population;
- Ensuring that community facilities, such as health and medical centres, are within easy reach of all residents and there are sufficient education establishments for the young of the Parish to be able to attend without lengthy journeys by public or private transport;
- Supporting an effective public transport service and convenient and safe routes to encourage walking, cycling and horse riding;
- Maintaining all existing rights of way and creating new ones to establish a linked-up network;
- Managing traffic, traffic speed and reducing the number of vehicles travelling through the Parish's villages to other destinations;
- Ensuring any development is sustainable and minimises the use of extra resources; and
- Supporting local retail businesses and the commercial sector in general.

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<sup>11</sup> Para 147 to 151 of the National Planning Policy Framework

## Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

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

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



## 4 SPATIAL STRATEGY

### Policy S1: Location of development

- 4.1 Community engagement undertaken to help shape the Neighbourhood Plan revealed that residents' sense of identity stems from which village they live in, as opposed to identifying with the Parish as a whole. Therefore, protecting the separate identities of the three main settlements within St Stephen Parish – Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street – is a key objective of the Neighbourhood Plan. For example, the gap between the built-up areas of Bricket Wood and Watford (in the vicinity of the Building Research Establishment (BRE) is already very narrow. Equally, the villages of Park Street and Bricket Wood are separated by only a couple of fields, either side of the M25, and Chiswell Green and Park Street are divided merely by the A405 arterial road. To the north, the A414 link-road to the M1 motorway represents the separation between Chiswell Green and St Albans.
- 4.2 Much of St Stephen Parish lies within the Green Belt-and thus it is particularly important that development is directed to appropriate locations and that sprawl and village-to-village coalescence are avoided. The Green Belt has, to date, successfully safeguarded the wider landscape from the kind of sprawl seen within some areas of the District and has contained development within the villages. Engagement with the community has demonstrated that there is no desire to see the Green Belt boundary altered to any significant degree and the community considers long-term protection is important to preserve the character of the villages and maintain their separation from neighbouring settlements.
- 4.3 There is, however, an identified and evidenced local housing need in St Stephen and consideration should be given to how that is to be delivered, including where any new housing might be sited. One of the challenges for St Stephen is the lack of available and suitable sites within the existing built-up area boundaries of the three main settlements. Indeed, the site assessment process undertaken during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan revealed that of the 77 sites coming forward via the District Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) process and the Local Call for Sites process, the **nine** sites assessed as most suitable for development are all within Green Belt. If any of these sites are to provide housing they would either need to come forward as rural exception sites or, where appropriate, the Green Belt boundary would need to be reviewed.
- 4.4 The Government attaches great importance to the Green Belt. Paragraph 140 of the NPPF, however, does provide for neighbourhood plans to make alterations to the Green Belt boundary in exceptional circumstances where this is fully evidenced, justified and where a need has been established to do so at the strategic level. The emerging Local Plan had been anticipated to establish this strategic need, however the Plan has now been withdrawn. The adopted Local District Plan Review does not establish this need. Therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate sites for housing, as this would require amendments to the Green Belt boundary. However its work on exploring minor amendments to Green Belt boundaries will provide valuable evidence at a time when this can be reconsidered within the planning system.
- Indeed Locality's Site Assessment for Neighbourhood Plans Guidance states: *"Where you cannot demonstrate that a site is deliverable, for example it may be in a good location but there is no*

*evidence that it could become available, your plan can identify ‘aspirations’ for sites you would like to see developed, and set out principles for each site linked to plan policies.”* The Housing Report contains detail of the sites considered as Aspirational Sites that should be revisited in either a future review of the SSNP or as part of the emerging Local Plan process.

- 4.5 Policy S1 is an important and overarching policy in the context of the Plan. It provides a spatial strategy for development in the parish. It seeks to concentrate new development within the built-up area boundaries, as shown on Figure 4.1 and on the Policy Maps, unless it otherwise relates to development in the countryside supported either by national or local policies.

**POLICY S1: LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT**

- 1. Development proposals in St Stephen Parish will be supported within the Built-up Area Boundaries of Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street, identified on the Policies Map. Development proposals that would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area and achieve a net gain in biodiversity will be particularly supported.**
- 2. Development proposals outside the Built-Up Area Boundary will not be supported unless:**
  - i. it is on sites allocated for those uses in the St Albans District Local Plan or in any successor; or**
  - ii. it relates to necessary utilities infrastructure and where no reasonable alternative location is available; or**
  - iii. it relates to uses that are appropriate in the Green Belt.**
- 3. Residential development which meets either the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt as set out in paragraphs 145 and 146 of the National Planning Policy Framework, or demonstrates very special circumstances, as set out in paragraph 147 of the National Planning Policy Framework, will be supported. Where very special circumstances can be demonstrated, development of the following types will be supported:**
  - i. affordable housing; or**
  - ii. smaller units for younger people; or**
  - iii. properties tailored to the ageing population; or**
  - iv. provision of additional community benefit**
- 4. Development that would be visually intrusive when viewed from publicly accessible locations will not be supported unless it can be appropriately mitigated with landscape screening.**
- 5. In determining development proposals substantial weight will be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within the built-up boundaries for either homes and/or other identified needs, or to support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 1, 4; Saved Policies of District Plan Review 1994: 8; NPPF: 29, 119, 120, 147 to 151)

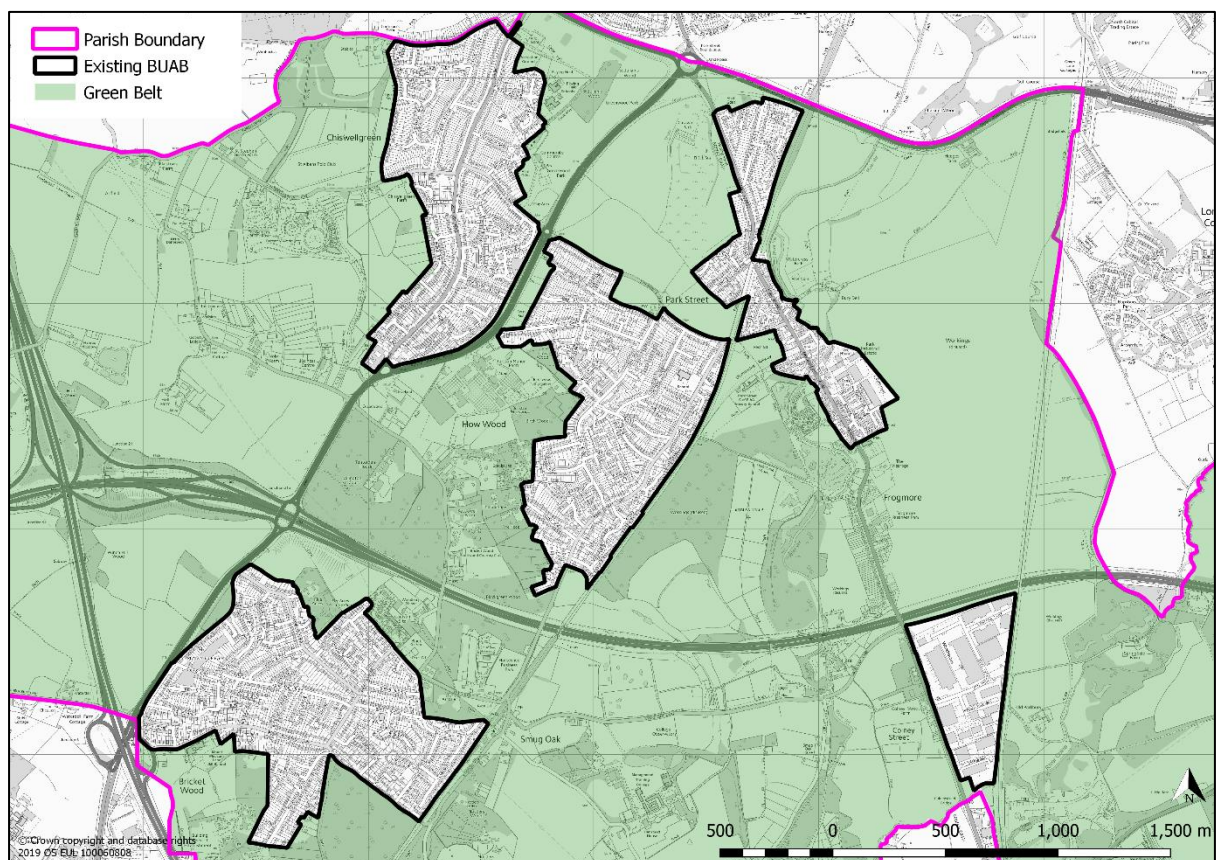
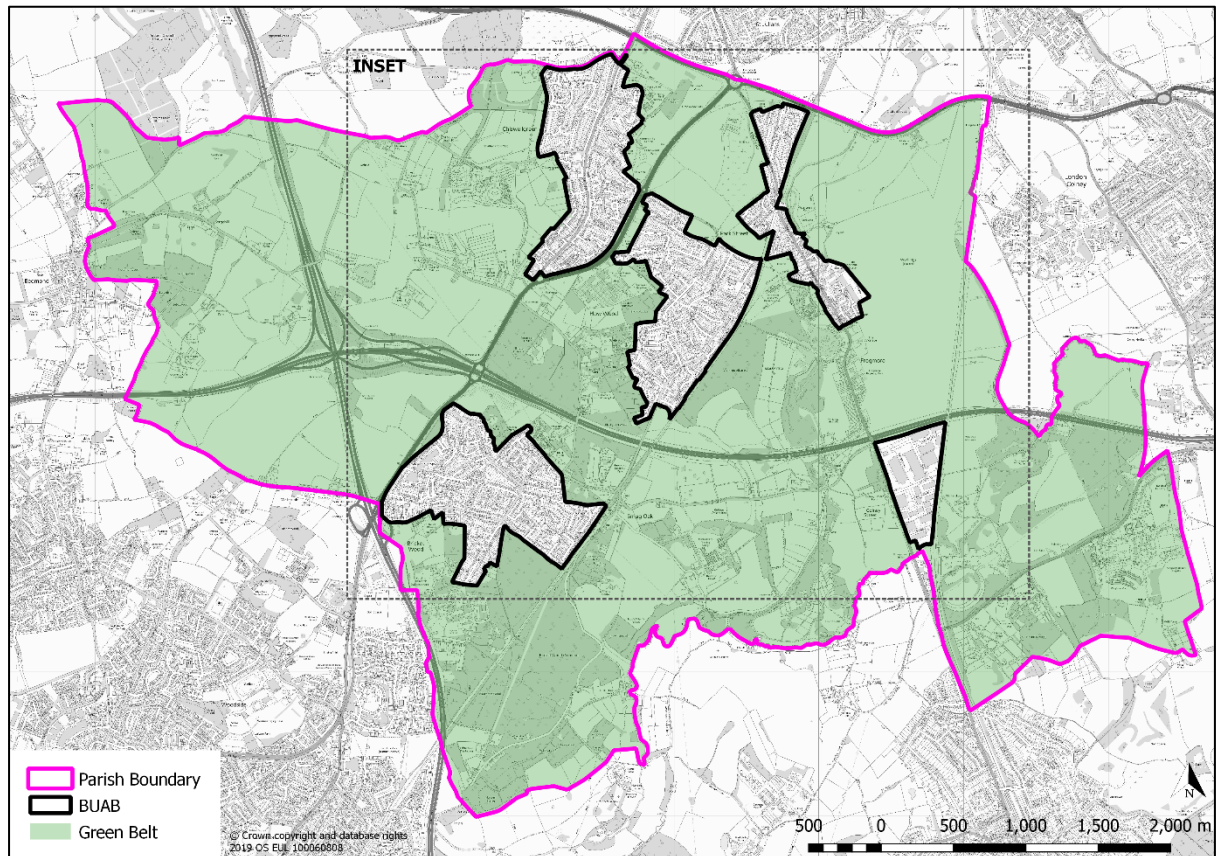


Figure 4.1: Maps showing built up area boundaries

## 5 HOUSING, CHARACTER AND DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT

### Policy S2: Housing Mix

- 5.1 The housing mix in terms of dwelling size is an important issue in St Stephen. As the analysis in Appendix A shows, over 20% of residents in St Stephen Parish are aged 65 or older and almost 50% of the population is 45 or older. Over the Plan period, this latter group will also have reached retirement age. Reflective of this population mix, 30% of the properties in the Parish have four or more bedrooms. As these residents (currently raising families in these larger houses) age, their needs will change.
- 5.2 The St Stephen Local Housing Needs Assessment revealed a particular need for smaller, starter home dwellings for younger people, the continued provision of family sized homes and homes suitable for older people, including extra care housing. This is reflected in the St Stephen Community Survey where 76% of respondents stated that, should they ever move house, they would like to remain within the Parish, with the majority favouring smaller dwellings such as bungalows, flats or warden-controlled accommodation. The Survey also revealed that residents recognised the need for more affordable housing, such as starter homes and 2- and 3-bedroom houses. There was less support for 4+ bedroom houses.
- 5.3 In terms of housing for younger people, it is notable that the number of residents aged between 25 and 44 has significantly fallen since 2011. This could be as a result of the relative shortage of smaller 1- and 2-bedroom properties, which at 8% and 22% respectively, is far less than provision at District level. There is a need to address this shortfall to alleviate the danger of St Stephen becoming a 'retirement village'. Importantly, those wishing to downsize were not necessarily looking for smaller properties in terms of bedrooms, rather more manageable properties, near to local services.
- 5.4 It is also vital that the needs of retirement-aged residents are addressed. The Community Survey revealed a strong desire for homes suited to older people's needs, including bungalows and care homes settings.
- 5.5 Between May 2018 and May 2019 in St Stephen, the average sale price of houses in each of the individual settlements is shown in the table below:

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

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



- 5.6 Local estate agents report a general lack of properties for sale in the area (compared to demand). Estate agents agree with the community, noting that the main demand is for smaller properties for both first-time buyers and older downsizers. The effect of the latter group's inability to find smaller properties is that they remain in larger houses which would otherwise be released for purchase by families.
- 5.7 This reinforces the wider evidence from the SHMA, set out in Figure 5.2, which projects a need for 51% of all housing stock across the District to be of 3-bedroom, 21% 1-bedroom, 20% 2-bedroom and just 7% 4+ bedroom (rounded figures).

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

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

#### **POLICY S2: DWELLING MIX**

- In order to address the evidenced housing need in St Stephen and redress the imbalance in housing size across the Parish, support will be given to developments that provide a mix of 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom properties.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 1; SALP Saved Policies: 7a, 8; NPPF: 61, 62)

#### **Policy S3: Character of development**

- 5.8 Both the underlying geology and landscape, coupled with the activities of past generations of people and development, have created the features that give the Parish its distinctive identity today. The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment<sup>12</sup> sets out the natural features of the Parish that contribute to its character and this is explored further in Chapter 7 of the SSNP.
- 5.9 The Parish is also home to heritage assets of all kinds, including characterful buildings, historic landmarks and archaeological features, both exposed and still beneath the ground. Each has a setting that should allow its historic significance to be understood and appreciated. This heritage has multiple benefits, helping to define the character and distinctiveness of the area

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/landscape/landscape-character-assessment.aspx>

and creating a sense of place and belonging for residents and visitors alike. These assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved.

- 5.10 There are two Conservation Areas in the Parish: Old Bricket Wood<sup>13</sup> and Park Street Frogmore<sup>14</sup>. A Conservation Area Character Statement has been prepared for each, setting out the features that contribute to their distinct character, including architecture, materials and advice on how they might be enhanced. It is important that development should have regard to the advice contained in these statements.
- 5.11 The built character across each of the main settlements ranges in style, age, size and housing densities. A fuller description of the villages and their history, which has shaped their character, is contained in Section 2 (from paragraph 2.21) of this Neighbourhood Plan. For each of the villages to maintain its character, a balance needs to be struck between the scale, bulk, density, and height of the built form and that of open green spaces and, where relevant, the countryside.
- 5.12 All development should be designed to reinforce and enhance local character, heritage assets and the rural setting of the area. The density of development should create a character that is appropriate to the site's context, including the landscape in which it is set, whilst making best use of the land available. Lower density housing, for instance, should be located towards the outer edges of the settlement where it abuts open countryside, to maintain views from and into the individual settlements.

#### **POLICY S3: CHARACTER OF DEVELOPMENT**

- 1. Development should conserve and where practicable enhance the character area in which it is located (as described in the Conservation Area Character Statements and in Section 2 of this Neighbourhood Plan). The design of new development should demonstrate how it has taken account of the local context and has reflected the character and vernacular of the area, using architectural variety in form and materials, in order to avoid building design that is inappropriate to the Plan area. Innovation in design will be supported where this demonstrably enhances the quality of the built form in a character area.**
- 2. Where development sites abut open countryside, development on the rural boundary edge should mitigate any detrimental visual impacts on the countryside. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, this should be achieved through the siting of lower density development at the rural boundary of the site in order to provide a gradual transition from the built form to open countryside, or by other means such as through a layout that clearly minimises the visual impact of any larger buildings.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 2, 4; SALP Saved Policies: 7a, 8; NPPF: 126-134)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/conservation/OldBricketWood%20CACS.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/conservation/ParkStreetFrogmore%20CACS.pdf>

#### **Policy S4: Non-designated heritage assets**

5.13 The Parish has over 50 nationally listed buildings, many of which are within the Conservation Areas while others are sited beyond. There is one Scheduled Monument, a replica of the Mohne Dam, located in the grounds of the Building Research Establishment, Bricket Wood. Figure 5.1 maps the heritage assets. The District Local List, maintained by SADC, contains heritage assets<sup>15</sup> that are important to the historic local context, but not nationally important enough to be included on the statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest compiled by the Government.



5.14 There is also a series of other non-listed buildings of local historical importance and contribute greatly to the history and character of the town. Historic England, in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, has collated the records on the Heritage Gateway Record. A list of the assets is included in Appendix B. Two additional buildings within Bricket Wood have been identified that are neither nationally nor locally listed, or appear on the Historic Environment Record, but are considered worthy of protection as non-designated heritage assets due to the important contribution that they make to the distinctive local character and history of the area:

i. The Parish Barn

ii. St Luke's Church

Descriptions as to why these are considered non-designated heritage assets is included in Appendix B. Policy S4 seeks to extend protection to these non-listed heritage assets of local importance from detrimental impacts of development. There will be a strong presumption against the loss of these assets appearing on the list and developments which result in this will be refused. In parallel with the policy, the Parish Council proposed that these assets are considered by SADC for inclusion in the District Local List, although the inclusion of any building or structure on the Local List is not necessary for the application of Policy S4.

5.15 Appendix B also contains a list of other buildings considered to contribute to local character, and an action of this Plan is to develop descriptions to add them to the District Local List.

#### **POLICY S4: NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS**

**The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following buildings and structures (as detailed in Appendix B) as non-designated heritage assets:**

- i. **Non-listed assets within St Stephen Parish contained in the Historic Environment Record<sup>16</sup>**
- ii. **The Parish Barn, Bricket Wood**
- iii. **St Luke's Church, Bricket Wood**

**Proposals affecting heritage assets – including these non-designated heritage assets - should include a Heritage Statement, including reference to the local history and archaeology, showing how the assets will be respected and protected. Proposals should demonstrate how they will preserve or enhance any affected heritage assets including historic sites and landscapes.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 4; NPPF: 194, 195, 199, 203)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/locally-listed-buildings>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/chr/> - search under Hertfordshire; St Stephen parish



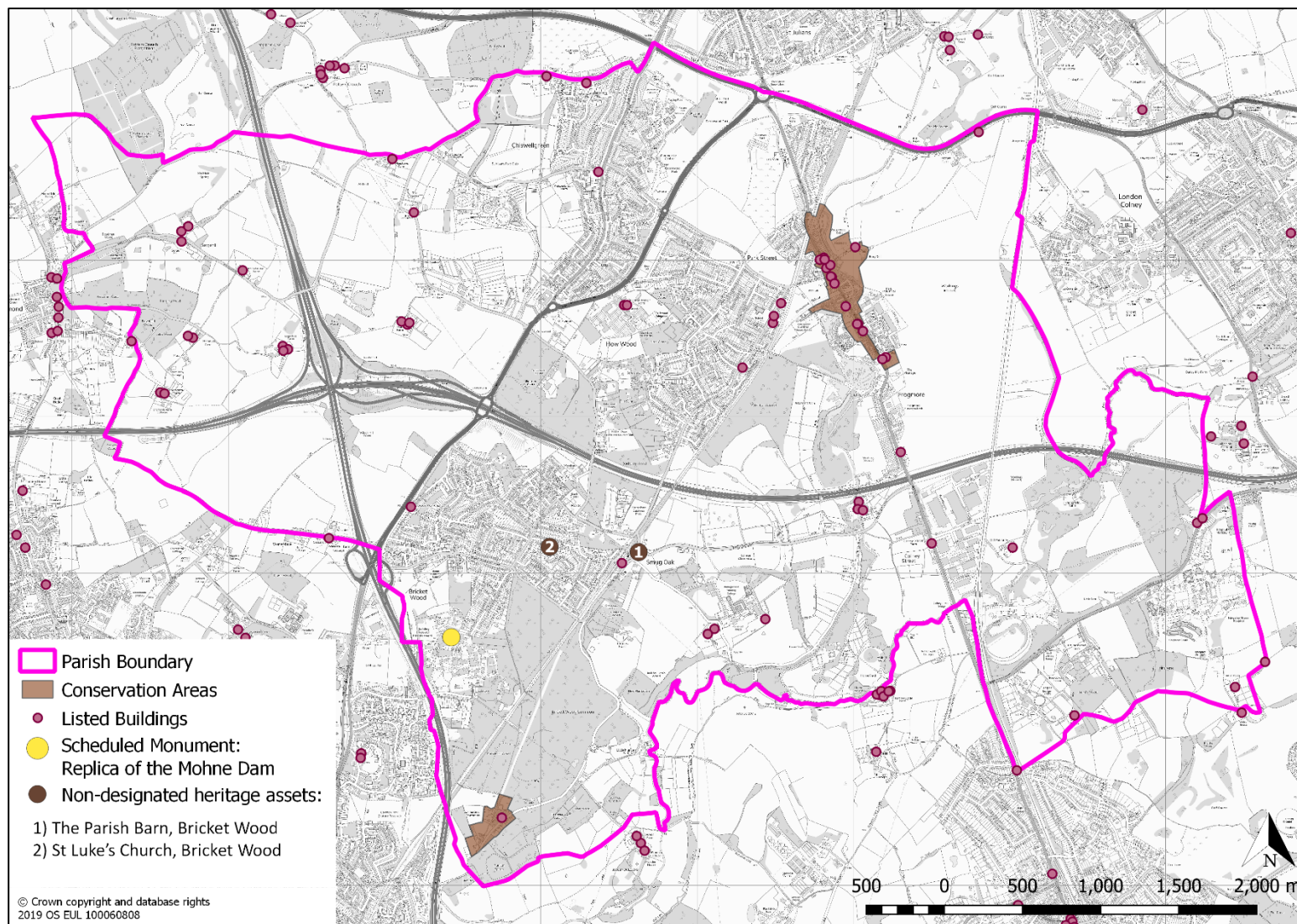


Figure 5.1: Heritage assets in St Stephen Parish

### **Policy S5: Design of Development**

- 5.16 Through the engagement on the Neighbourhood Plan, the community stressed the need for new development to be of a high quality that respects the character and rural feel of the local settlements and in keeping with immediate surroundings. The Community Survey revealed that the following points were specifically felt to be important to incorporate into any future housing design:
- A mix of housing styles would be acceptable as much of the Parish has different building styles already.
  - Sustainable features designed to maximise energy use and water conservation measures and reduce the impact of climate change, with practical features such as water conservation measures, solar panels, wind turbines, permeable driveways and electric vehicle charging points.
  - Where appropriate, developments should be in the form of small clusters of individual designs to avoid a uniform “toy town” look.
  - Avoiding gated developments, which were considered to reduce community feel and inclusion.
  - Provision of adequate off-road car parking.
  - Provision of hidden storage areas for recycling bins.
  - Hedges and shrubs planted to provide effective boundaries between dwellings and pavements.
  - Hedgerows and trees that are demonstrated to be better at reducing and air pollution<sup>17</sup>.
  - Green space within developments - for example ‘through’ front gardens, green verges, green spaces between developments, trees and shrubs along the roadside – were all felt important.
  - Footpaths and cycleways (and where possible bridleways) to link new developments to village centres, schools, transport hubs, shops, medical centres, other community facilities and the surrounding countryside.
- 5.17 The way development is designed can also help to mitigate the problems of climate change. The Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK to an 80% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050 – this is a big feat which will require everyone to be engaged, from households and communities, to businesses and local and national government.
- 5.18 ‘2050 ready’ mean homes built to have minimal energy use and net carbon emissions over the year because they are highly insulated, have low water demand and are fitted with or directly connected to renewable energy systems.
- 5.19 Minimum standards for ecologically sustainable homes and developments are set out in Building Regulations, however, planners and developers are strongly encouraged to make use

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

of energy efficient materials and to consider high-efficiency alternative systems and facilities for development sites. In this context, the orientation of buildings can be important in order to make best use of available sunlight.

5.20 The Code for Sustainable Homes was withdrawn by the Government in 2015 and this has been replaced by new national technical standards which include new additional optional Building Regulations regarding water and access as well as a new national space standard (this is in addition to the existing mandatory Building Regulations).

5.21 There is an opportunity to improve and promote sustainability in the neighbourhood area by:

- following basic passive environmental design in a fabric first approach (maximising the performance of the components and materials that make up the building fabric itself, before using mechanical or electrical building services systems).
- Reducing embodied carbon in the build process - Embodied carbon means all the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted in producing materials. It is estimated from the energy used to extract and transport raw materials as well as emissions from manufacturing processes. The embodied carbon of a building can include all the emissions from the construction materials, the building process, all the fixtures and fittings inside as well as from deconstructing and disposing of it at the end of its lifetime.

Ways to reduce embodied carbon include:

- using construction products that are made from locally available raw materials, through energy efficient and low emission processes and by manufacturers local to the construction site.
- Transporting materials with low carbon vehicles.
- Designing the construction process to minimise waste and reuse or recycle products where possible.
- Using systems and products that have long life spans.
- Designing the building to be able to change its use over time to minimise future refurbishments

(taken from the University College London Factsheet: *fact-sheet-embodied-carbon-social-housing.pdf*)

- integrating renewable energy systems into new development, including existing and new public buildings;
- reducing water consumption through grey water systems; and
- community energy schemes.

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

**POLICY S5: DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT**

- 1. Development proposals should incorporate a high quality of design, which responds and integrates well with its surroundings, meets the needs of the population of the neighbourhood area and minimises the impact on the natural environment. The design and standard of any development is encouraged to achieve the highest level of sustainable design, in order to reduce energy consumption and climate effects. In particular development proposals should demonstrate how they have sought to address the following matters as they are appropriate to their scale, nature and location:**
  - i. High quality design that is in keeping with the character and scale of existing buildings in the area;**
  - ii. Provides adequate off-street car parking for residents and visitors, in accordance with St Albans parking standards<sup>18</sup> (or subsequent revision) and, where required, on-street parking that ensures the safe movement of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles;**
  - iii. Provides high quality boundary treatment and green landscaping;**
  - iv. Provides pedestrian and cycle connections (and where possible bridleways) to community facilities, local services and transport modes within the Parish, as well as to the surrounding countryside;**
  - v. Provides adequate and concealed storage for waste and recycling bins;**
  - vi. Does not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity for neighbouring properties through the loss of privacy, loss of light or visual intrusion;**
  - vii. Features flora and fauna friendly design, for instance front garden space, using species that have a high UTAQ score<sup>19</sup>;**
  - viii. Contributes to the provision, extension and maintenance of accessible green space, including green space for sport and children's play areas, in accordance with St Albans open space provision<sup>20</sup> and Hertfordshire County Council's Planning Obligations Guidance<sup>21</sup>.**
- 2. Proposals which incorporate the following design and environmental performance measures and standards to reduce energy consumption and climate effects will be supported:**
  - i. All new dwellings that exceed the Building regulation minimum Target Emission Rate targets by at least 20%;**

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/SP\\_Infrastructure\\_RevisedParkingStandards\\_2002\\_tcm15-48847.pdf](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/SP_Infrastructure_RevisedParkingStandards_2002_tcm15-48847.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> The Woodland Trust's Urban Air Quality Report contains advice about which tree species have a high urban tree air quality score (UTAQ) and are therefore a better choice for air quality purposes:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1819/trees-improve-urban-air-quality.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/planning-policy/examination-library/SP\\_GreenSpacesTechnicalReportPublicationDraft111016\\_tcm15-56020.pdf](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/planning-policy/examination-library/SP_GreenSpacesTechnicalReportPublicationDraft111016_tcm15-56020.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/environment-and-planning/planning/developer-infrastructure-contributions-guide/guide-to-developer-infrastructure-contributions.pdf>

- ii. **New development that provides a minimum of 25% of its estimated energy use by on-site sustainable generation, or local neighbourhood green energy schemes;**
  - iii. **Non-residential developments meeting the Building Research Establishment's BREEAM building standard 'Excellent'.**
- 3. Proposals which incorporate the following sustainable design features as appropriate to their scale, nature and location will be strongly supported:**
  - i. **Siting and orientation of buildings to optimise passive solar gain;**
  - ii. **The use of high quality, thermally efficient building materials;**
  - iii. **Installation of energy efficiency measures such as loft insulation and double glazing;**
  - iv. **Reducing water consumption; and**
  - v. **Use of building materials with low embedded carbon profiles.**
- 4. Grey water recycling and rainwater harvesting will be supported.**
- 5. Proposals demonstrating how they will have regard, where appropriate, to the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code will be supported.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 2, 5; SALP Saved Policies: 69, 70; NPPF: 126-134, 149, 153-157)

## 6 GREEN SPACES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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

### **Policy S6: Minimising the Environmental Impact of Development**

- 6.2 St Stephen has a rich environment; in addition to the extensive Green Belt designation, the majority of the Parish also falls within the Watling Chase Community Forest, one of 12 national community forests to the north of London. The Watling Chase Community Forest Supplementary Planning Guidance<sup>22</sup> aims to achieve widespread landscape improvement with woodland planting and increased opportunities for nature conservation, leisure and recreational access. As noted in the NPPF (Para 146), any development proposals within community forests in the Green Belt should be subject to the normal policies controlling development in the Green Belt.
- 6.3 Furthermore, the Parish Council has signed up to the Charter for Trees, Woods and People<sup>23</sup>, which sets out ten principles to encourage the provision and ongoing care for trees, and celebrating their relationship with people.
- 6.4 The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment sets out a detailed observation of the various landscapes that underlie the Parish, along with activities to consider to support and manage those landscapes. It is important that any development taking place in St Stephen contributes positively to the management of these landscapes.
- 6.5 In addition, there are examples of other features within St Stephen which are particularly distinct within the landscape. These include mature trees, hedgerows, broad grass verges and ponds. With a fairly flat topography, these features are particularly visible within the wider landscape.
- 6.6 Such features should be retained as part of any development.

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<sup>22</sup> [https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/planning-policy/examination-library/SP\\_SPG---Watling-Chase\\_tcm15-60869.pdf](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/planning-policy/examination-library/SP_SPG---Watling-Chase_tcm15-60869.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://treecharter.uk/>

**POLICY S6: MINIMISING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT**

- 1. Development proposals should maintain and where practicable enhance the natural environment, landscape features and the rural character and setting of the Neighbourhood area, for instance woodland and chalk streams. Development proposals that would achieve a net gain in biodiversity will be particularly supported.**
- 2. As they are appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should demonstrate that they address the following matters:**
  - i. Contribute to the objectives of both the Watling Chase Community Forest Plan<sup>24</sup> and the Charter for Trees, Woods and People<sup>25</sup>, by supporting the planting of additional trees and woodlands;**
  - ii. Employ sustainable husbandry of land and wild flower planting/meadows;**
  - iii. Maintain existing green verges and hedgerows and encourage the planting of new hedgerows and discourage fencing above 0.75m in front gardens;**
  - iv. Provide wildlife corridors and buffer zones (in line with Environment Agency recommendations<sup>26</sup>) to protect species and habitats;**
  - v. Provide hedgehog holes in new residential fencing will be supported and bird and bat nesting boxes;**
  - vi. Protect and enhance river corridors and water meadows<sup>27</sup>;**
  - vii. Mitigate the effects of carbon dioxide emissions, climate change and environmental noise by the planting of small to medium scale plantations of native mixed species of UK sourced and grown trees and shrubs to screen developments, all schools and major roads (including the M1, M25, A405 and A414). Replacement of roadside hedgerows where appropriate.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 5, 6, 7; SALP Saved Policies: 74, 103, 104, 105, 106; NPPF: 129, 131, 146, 174, 175, 179)

**Policy S7: Protecting Natural Habitats and Species**

- 6.7 The National Planning Policy Framework states that, in order to minimise impacts on biodiversity, planning policies should:
- *“Identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife*

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/planning-policy/examination-library/SP\\_SPG---Watling-Chase\\_tcm15-60869.pdf](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/planning-building-control/planning-policy/examination-library/SP_SPG---Watling-Chase_tcm15-60869.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <https://treecharter.uk/>

<sup>26</sup>

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwidhOCM3fL0AhUGAcAKHcJ0A4sQFnoECAMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.oxford.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fdownloads%2Fid%2F1662%2Fdevelopment\\_near\\_watercourse\\_or\\_floodplain\\_guidance.pdf&usg=AOvVaw02YxbclpwhMrz2aZhKRAmQ](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwidhOCM3fL0AhUGAcAKHcJ0A4sQFnoECAMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.oxford.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fdownloads%2Fid%2F1662%2Fdevelopment_near_watercourse_or_floodplain_guidance.pdf&usg=AOvVaw02YxbclpwhMrz2aZhKRAmQ). (opens a pdf guidance sheet from the Environment Agency)

<sup>27</sup> For instance by widening buffer zones, restricting the mowing of banks near to the river and removing non-native plants.



*corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation.”*

- *“Promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the Plan.”*

- 6.8 As a parish that is rich in both flora and fauna, there are a number of natural habitats and species within the Neighbourhood Plan area that need to be protected, enhanced and better connected. The Neighbourhood Plan engagement revealed that the local community greatly values green spaces and wishes to protect them. Some of the sites named by the community are protected already by national designation. (For example Bricket Wood Common and Moor Mill Quarry, West are identified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or comprise ancient woodland). Others have been protected using the Local Green Space designation, in Policy S7 and also as Assets of Community Value, detailed in Section 12. A map of the Green Infrastructure is shown at Figure 6.1.
- 6.9 There are many habitats within the Parish which, however, are not protected. These include natural areas and man-made sites, for instance the gravel pits and brickworks. There are also 29 Local Wildlife Sites which provide corridors for wildlife, forming key components of ecological networks. All of these areas enable a wide range of species to thrive including a variety of butterflies, birds, snakes and amphibians. Further information is available on the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust website<sup>28</sup>. It is noteworthy that some of the sites that house the most unusual species are those which have been in previous development and therefore are most in need of ensuring that suitable habitat assessments take place.
- 6.10 It is imperative that any significant harm arising from proposed development is avoided or where possible reduced. As stated in the NPPF (Para 32), if it is not possible to avoid or reduce such harm, then it will be necessary to ensure that appropriate mitigation strategies are put in place.
- 6.11 Well-designed developments should establish the location of habitats and the movement patterns of wildlife and should not impact on these. The creation of any habitat or species translocation should only be undertaken as a last resort when it is proven that a scheme cannot be designed to accommodate them in their existing location. Such locations should be identified in partnership with any appropriate wildlife body operating in the area.

#### **POLICY S7: PROTECTION OF NATURAL HABITATS**

- 1. Major development proposals will be expected to include an assessment of local habitats and species. Proposals that would result in significant harm to Local Wildlife Sites<sup>29</sup> and/or the landscape features, as set out in Policy S5 (Minimising the Environmental Impact of Development) will not be supported unless the applicant can demonstrate the proposal cannot be located on an alternative, non-designated site with less harmful impacts and adequate mitigation or, failing that, appropriate compensatory measures are proposed.**

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/whatwedo/herts-environmental-records-centre>

<sup>29</sup> [https://data.gov.uk.localwildlifesites](https://data.gov.uk/localwildlifesites); <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org>; <https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk>

- 2. Where, as a last resort, compensatory measures involving creation of off-site habitat and/or relocation of species are agreed by the Local Planning Authority, these should be implemented in partnership with an appropriate nature conservation body.**
- 3. The use of an appropriate legal agreement (such as a Section 106 agreement) will be required to ensure proper management of open space over the lifetime of the development.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 5, 6, 7; SALP Saved Policies: 74, 103, 106; NPPF: 174, 175, 179, 180, 181)

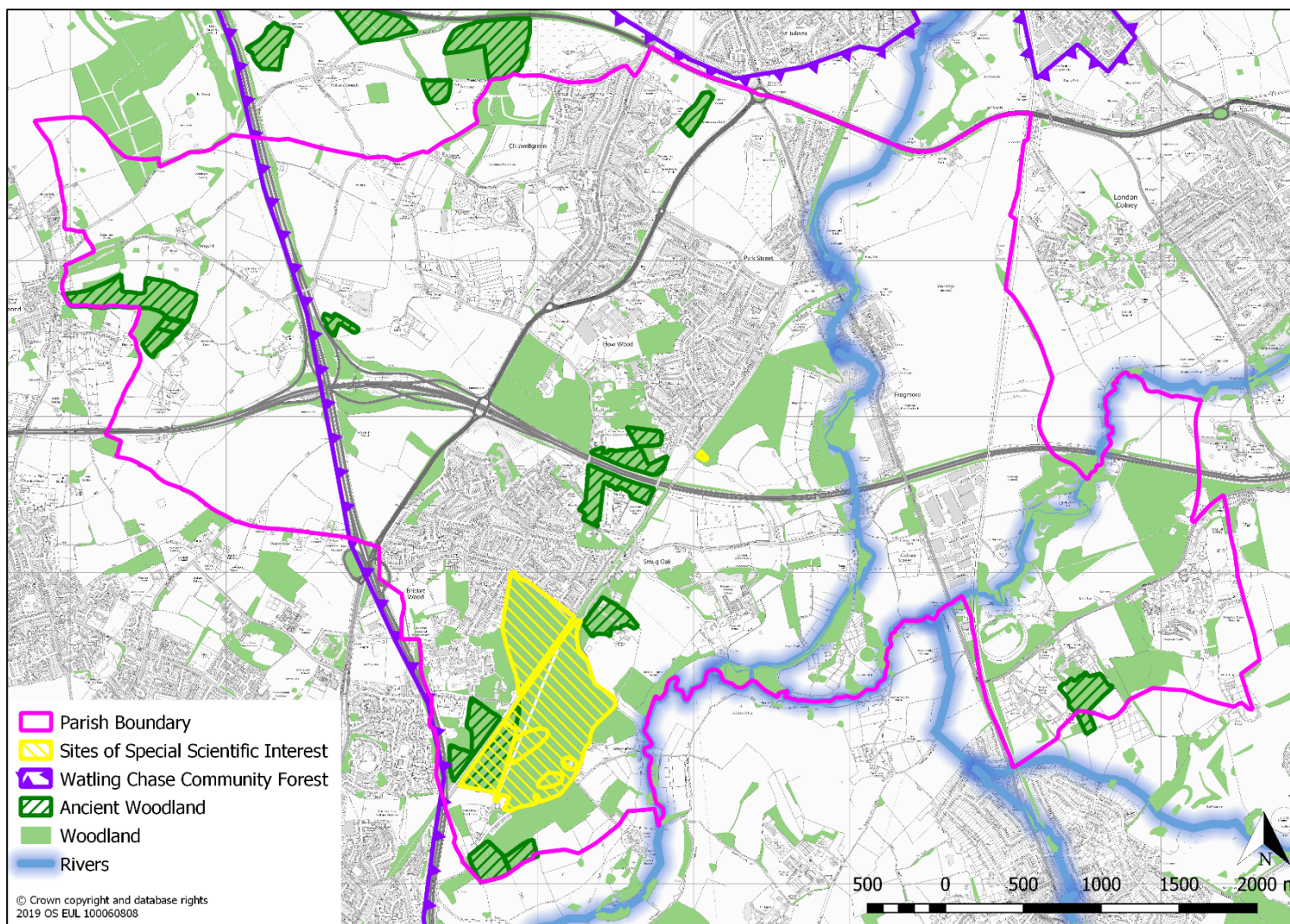


Figure 6.1: Green infrastructure map

### **Policy S8: Protection and Maintenance of Local Green Spaces**

6.12 Under the NPPF, neighbourhood plans have the opportunity to designate Local Green Spaces which are of particular importance to the community. This gives protection from development except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 102 of the NPPF says that Local Green Spaces should only be designated:

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

6.13 Planning Policy Guidance adds:

- *“If land is already protected by designation, then consideration should be given to whether any additional local benefit would be gained by designation as Local Green Space<sup>30</sup>”.*

6.14 It is important to safeguard existing space while seeking out opportunities for additional spaces. Many of the green spaces identified as important by the local community<sup>31</sup> are already afforded protection, often because they are in the Green Belt.

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

1. Ashridge Drive, Bricket Wood
2. Broad Acre Woodland, Bricket Wood
3. Juniper Avenue, Bricket Wood
4. Forefield, Chiswell Green
5. South Close, Chiswell Green
6. Sunnydell, Chiswell Green

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<sup>30</sup> Planning Practice Guidance ref: 37-011-20140306

<sup>31</sup> See Steering Group Green Spaces Report



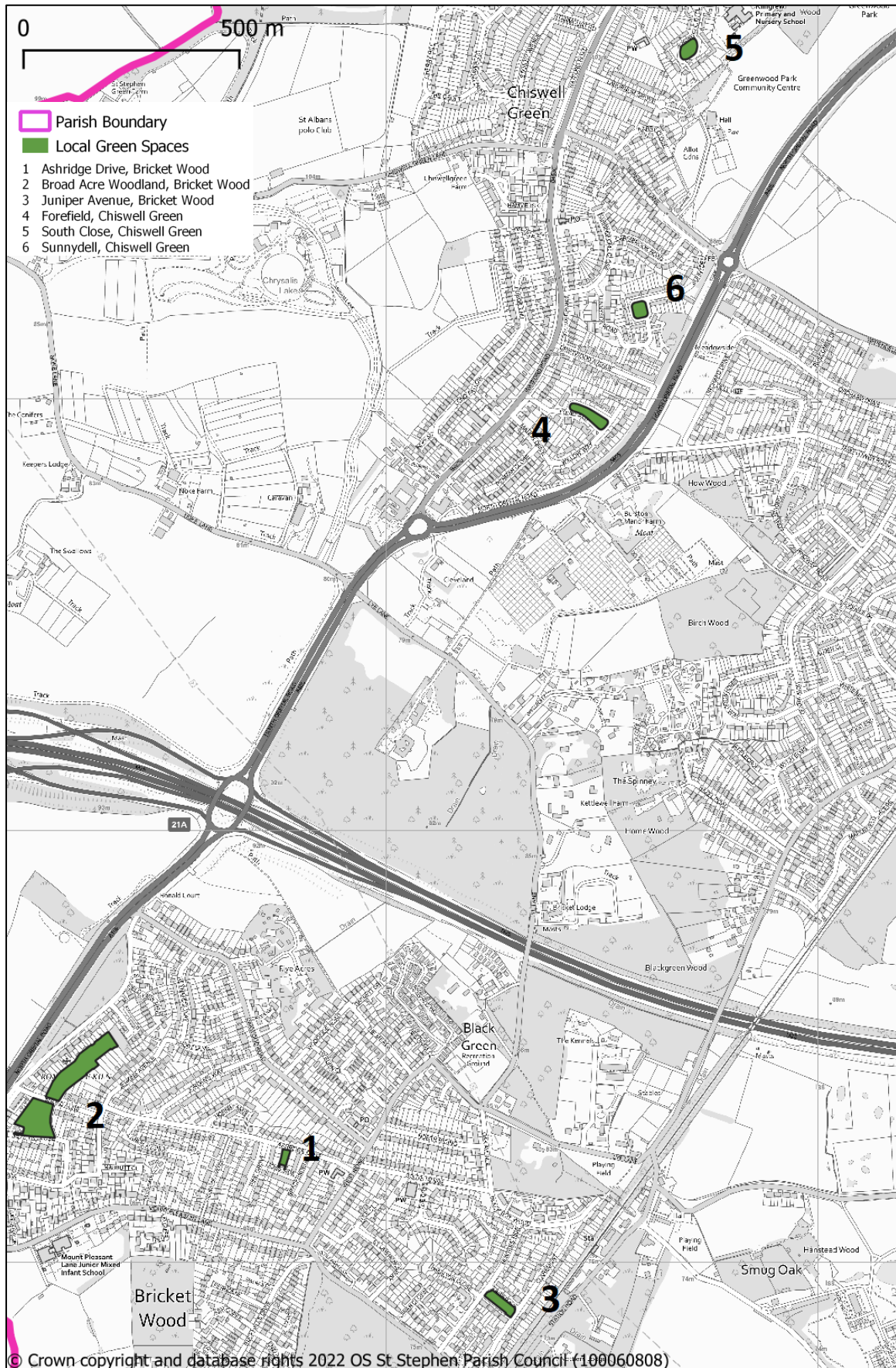


Figure 6.2: Local Green Spaces

- 6.16 In addition to these green spaces, there are other green spaces that, whilst currently protected by virtue of being located within the Green Belt, could potentially be at risk should any future review remove them from the Green Belt. Two of these – Drop Lane and Hanstead Wood – have previously been designated as Assets of Community Value (ACV)<sup>32</sup>, although this has now expired. Therefore, an AIM has been included below the policy that seeks first to re-designate land off Drop Lane and Hanstead Wood as ACVs, and second to ensure that any future review of the Green Belt incorporates an assessment of these spaces to enable them to be designated either as Local Green Spaces or ACVs as they further the wellbeing and leisure of the community and their importance to residents as identified in the Community Survey. An indicative list of these sites is included at the end of Appendix C.

**POLICY S8: PROTECTION AND MAINTENANCE OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES**

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

- 1. Ashridge Drive Green**
- 2. Broad Acre**
- 3. Forefield**
- 4. Juniper Avenue green space**
- 5. South Close Green**
- 6. Sunnyside Green**

**2. Development proposals within the designated local green spaces will only be supported in very special circumstances or where they are in accordance with development considered appropriate within the Green Belt.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 6; SALP Saved Policies: 75; NPPF: 101-103, 147-151)

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

***The Parish Council will seek to designate land off Drop Lane and Hanstead Wood as Assets of Community Value.***

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

<sup>32</sup> The current list of ASVs within St Albans District can be accessed here:  
<https://stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/Community%20and%20Living/Successful%20List%20-%20Assets%20of%20Community%20Value%20.pdf>



**Policy S9: Protecting the setting and function of the River Ver and the River Colne and their tributaries**

- 6.17 The River Ver and its walks<sup>33</sup>, running through the Parish from north to south, is an area which is demonstrably special to the local and wider community. One of only 200 or so chalk streams world-wide, the Ver flows through Park Street and joins the River Colne in Bricket Wood.
- 6.18 The Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination Statement that accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan highlights that the Ver and Colne rivers are susceptible to flooding. Natural flooding mitigations, such as planting indigenous trees which help prevent soil erosion are supported.
- 6.19 It is the aim of the Neighbourhood Plan to accord with the policies of the Ver Valley Society in that any development is to the highest water efficiency standard, does not contribute to net loss of water from the waterway and is conducive to the maintenance of the river.<sup>34</sup>

**POLICY S9: PROTECTING THE SETTING AND FUNCTION OF THE RIVER VER AND THE RIVER COLNE AND THEIR TRIBUTARIES**

**Proposals for development that is within 8m of the River Ver or its tributaries should contribute to and enhance this natural and local environment and will be supported where it:**

- i. Would not have an adverse impact on the functions and setting of the river and its associated corridor. This should be demonstrated through an environmental impact statement proportionate to the development, taking into account, for example, geological, ecological, landscape, species, habitats and sustainability criteria; and**
- ii. Conserves and enhances the biodiversity, landscape and recreational value of the River Ver, its confluence with the River Colne and its corridor through the Parish; and**
- iii. Incorporates natural flood mitigation measures, including planting indigenous trees; and**
- iv. Includes a long-term landscape and ecological management plan for the river (that part within or adjacent to the development), natural buffer strip of a minimum of 8m and corridor, in consultation with the Environment Agency<sup>35</sup>.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 5, 6, 7; SALP Saved Policies: 104, 106; NPPF: 170, 174)

<sup>33</sup> Ver Valley Walk: *The Confluence Walk Park Street and Bricket Wood*. Countryside Management Service [www.cms@hertsc.gov.uk](mailto:www.cms@hertsc.gov.uk)

<sup>34</sup> Ver Valley Society: [www.riverver.co.uk](http://www.riverver.co.uk)

<sup>35</sup> <http://evidence.environment-agency.gov.uk/FCERM/en/SC060065/MeasuresList/M2/M2T2.aspx?pagenum=2>

### **Policy S10: Green Infrastructure and Development**

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

#### **POLICY S10: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT**

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

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

## 7 TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Policy S11: Improvements to key local junctions and pinch points**

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

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



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

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

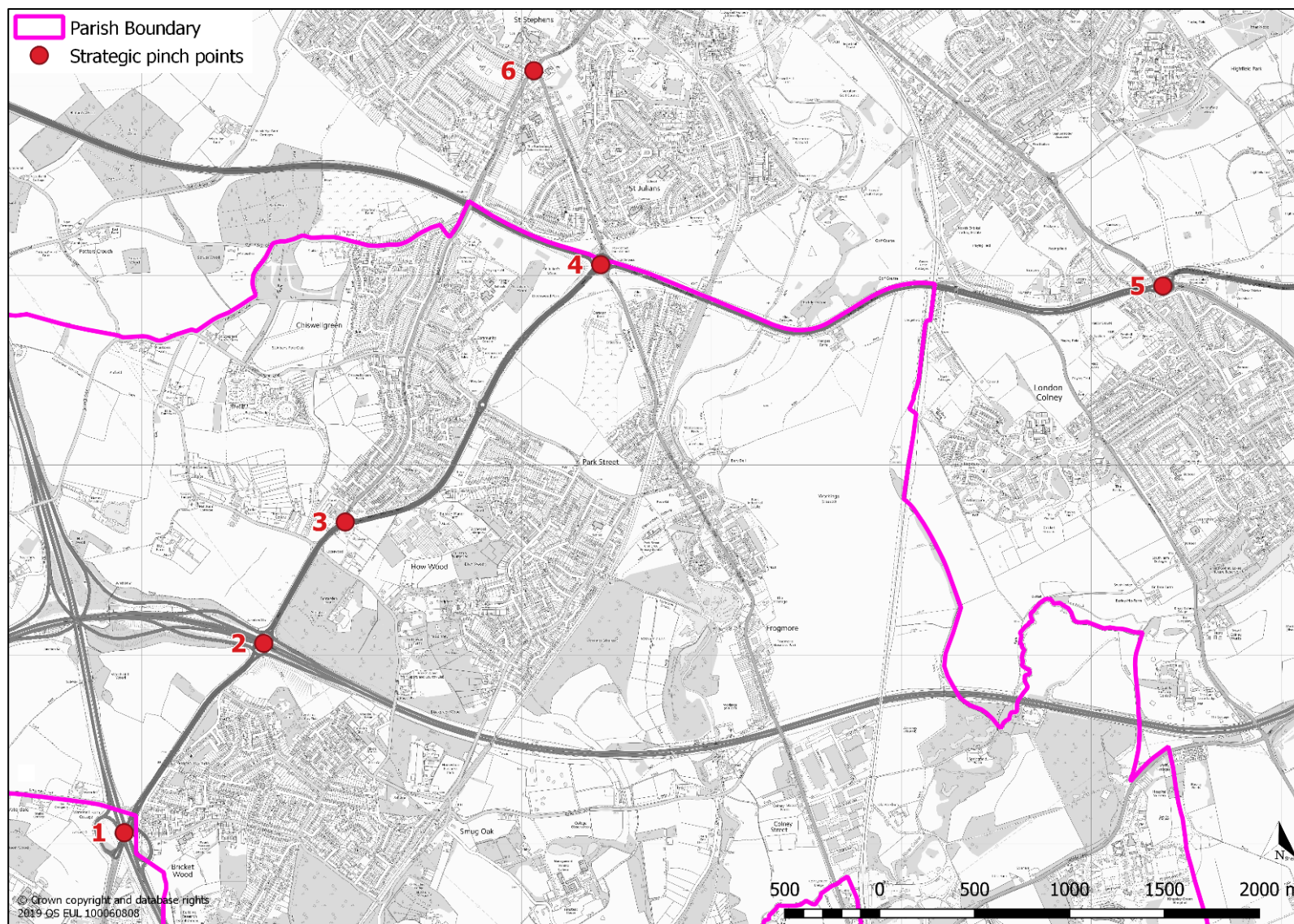


Figure 7.1: Strategic highway pinch points



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

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

**HCC LTP4 Draft – Road Safety and Security (Extract)**

### **Bricket Wood**

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

### **Chiswell Green**

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



### **Park Street**

- Although largely residential, the village houses the Curo Park and Ventura Park warehouse complexes on the eastern edge of the A5183. This has led to commercial vehicles, including HGVs, to exit the A405 at Tippendell Lane to access these sites, despite a 7.5 tonne weight restriction in place.
- There is a particular pinch point at the narrow Abbey Line railway bridge at the Tippendell Lane/Park Street Lane junction, which is too low for some HGVs to pass under, and there is no preceding 'Low Bridge' signage.
- Despite traffic calming measures, residents continue to raise concerns about speeding traffic, particularly along Tippendell Lane and Park Street Lane.
- Related to this is the partially 'blind' T-junction of Penn Road exiting into Tippendell Lane. The installation of a mini-roundabout at this junction would be beneficial.

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

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

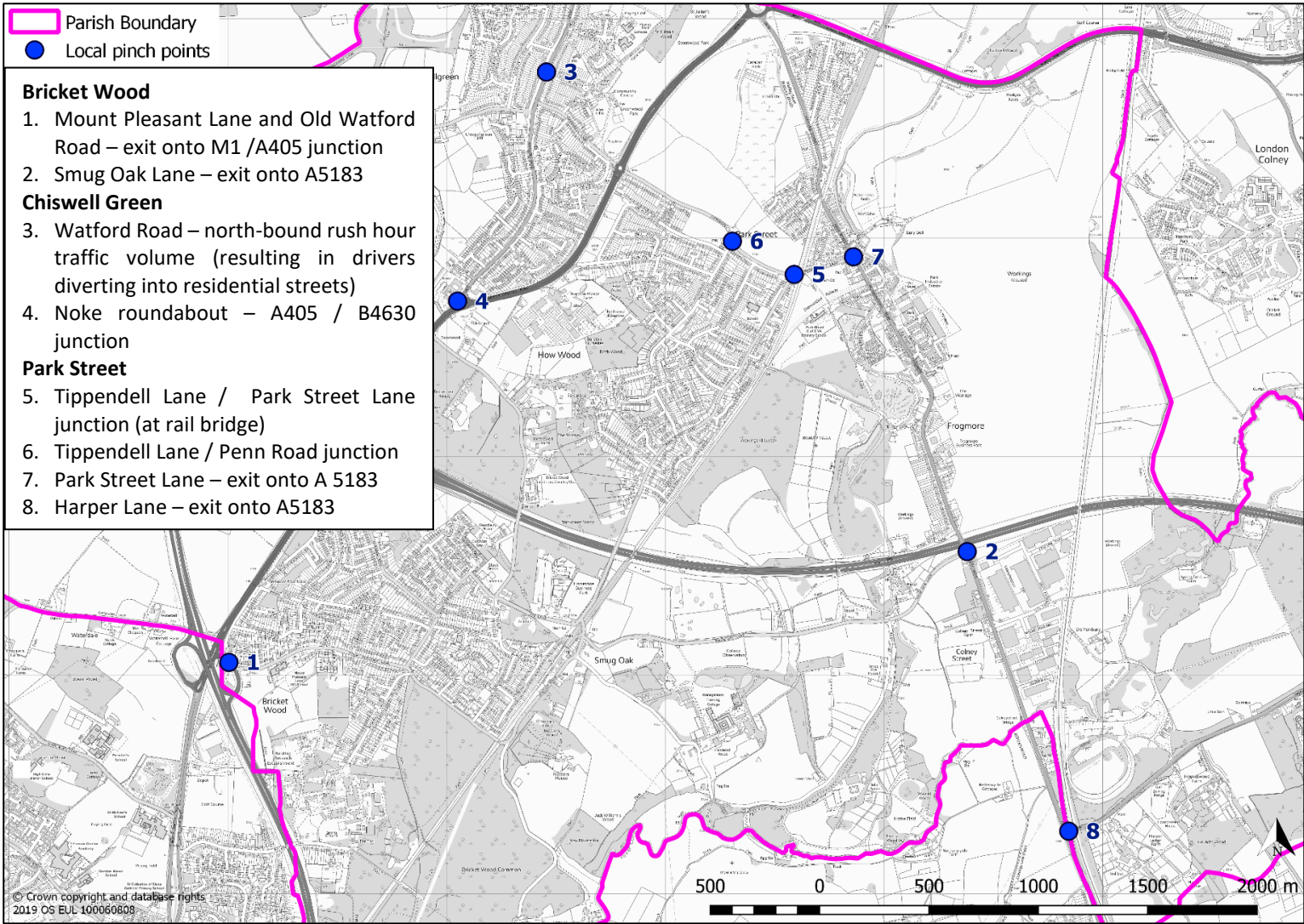


Figure 7.2: Local pinch points

**POLICY S11: IMPROVEMENTS TO KEY LOCAL JUNCTIONS AND PINCH POINTS**

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

**Bricket Wood**

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

**Chiswell Green**

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

**Park Street**

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

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 8; SALP Saved Policies: 34, 35; NPPF: 102, 104, 108, 109, 110, 111)

**Policy S12: Off-street Car parking**

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



Particular problems by village are:

#### 7.11 Bricket Wood

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



#### 7.12 Chiswell Green

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

#### 7.13 Park Street

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





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

**POLICY S12: OFF-STREET CAR PARKING**

- 1. Development proposals that would result in an unacceptable loss of existing publicly available off-street car parking spaces will not be supported.**
- 2. Proposals that enable the provision of additional, publicly accessible off-road car parking spaces, to alleviate parking congestion at the main village shopping areas, will be supported.**
- 3. Alongside any new public car parking provision, the following facilities will be strongly supported to be provided as part of that provision:**
  - i. dedicated bicycle parking facilities, preferably with e-bike charging points, covered and secure; and**
  - ii. future-proofed electric vehicle charging points.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 8; SALP Saved Policies: 39, 40, 42; NPPF: 105, 106)

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

**Policy S13: Bus services and community transport**

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

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



- 7.18 A fourth service, the Arriva 757 Green Line 'express' stops on the A405 at Bricket Wood but does not operate during rush-hour periods during weekdays, with the earliest usable London-bound bus timed at 9.30 am. Regrettably, rather than enhancing this service, in July 2018 Arriva halved the frequency from 30 minutes to hourly. The service was already compromised with buses completely full by the time they reached Bricket Wood - a full bus now means a one-hour wait for customers! Full buses and the reduced schedule, together with restricted car parking at the Bricket Wood stop, hamper greater usage of this service to residents throughout the Parish.

- 7.19 A significant difference to the travel habits of Bricket Wood and Park Street residents could be made by the provision of more frequent bus services, operating later into the evening and with

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

- 7.20 Policy S13 supports development where it contributes to public transport infrastructure provision, noting that Section 106 contributions can only be sought where the CIL Regulations restrictions are met. It is therefore likely to be only at the larger, broad locations for development where contributions can be sought towards bus service improvement to benefit the site. Smaller sites could be asked to contribute towards bus stop infrastructure improvements. Actions associated with improving the bus service are recorded in Section 12 of this report.

**POLICY S13: BUS SERVICES AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**

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

(Conformity reference: SSNP Objectives: 8, 9; NPPF: 34)

**Aim 2: Improved Rail Services**

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



- 7.22 Operating as a single-track, single-set train imposes severe restrictions on the line's timetable, a deterrent for many would-be users along all of the line, not just residents of St Stephen Parish. Typically, the shortest time gap between trains is circa 45 minutes.
- 7.23 The campaign to preserve and enhance the viability and attraction of the Abbey Line service has been running for many years, led by the Abbey Flyer Users Group (aka AbFly) and the Community Rail Partnership, the major objectives being to improve frequency, by the reinstatement of the 'passing loop' in the vicinity of Bricket Wood Station, and establishing a



'rush hour' through service from St Albans Abbey and the intermediate stations to London Euston Station.

- 7.24 The attraction to residents of such development is clearly demonstrated by the results of St Stephen Parish Council's Community Survey. When asked *"Which improvements would encourage you to use public transport (bus and/or train) more frequently?"*, 67% of respondents cited *"A through service to London Euston station from Abbey Line stations"* and 59% recording *"More frequent services"*.
- 7.25 Timetable restrictions aside, demand for commuter car parking at Bricket Wood Station is likely to increase as a result of nearby housing developments. Using either or both of the two sites either side of the adjacent former builders merchant premises, should they become available, to extend parking would be advantageous, even if reasonable charges were to be levied. Increased parking capacity would become even more important should the Bricket Wood passing loop' be resurrected with the resultant increase in passenger numbers.
- 7.26 The benefits of enhancements to the Abbey Line and Abbey Line stations are self-evident in helping to reduce rush hour traffic through the Parish.
- 7.27 Actions associated with improving the rail service are recorded in Section 12 of this report.

#### **AIM 2: IMPROVED RAIL SERVICES**

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

#### **Policy S14: Provision for walking, cycling and horse-riding**

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



**POLICY S14: PROVISION FOR WALKING AND CYCLING AND HORSE-RIDING**

1. To help ensure that residents can walk safely to the village centres, public transport facilities, schools and other important facilities, all new developments must incorporate safe, accessible (including for those with disabilities) pedestrian access with links from the development to existing foot- and, where feasible, cycleways<sup>36</sup>.
2. Development proposals that enable delivery of the recommendations in Hertfordshire County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan and its database of suggestions for St Stephen Parish, focusing on the rights of way network and its improvements, will be supported, subject to being in conformity with other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.
3. Development that is immediately adjacent to a footpath or cycleway will be expected to:
  - i. ensure the retention and where possible the enhancement of the path;
  - ii. not have any detrimental impact (visual, accessibility and/or safety) on the path, and further assess and address the impact of the additional traffic movements on the safety and flow of pedestrians.

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 8; SALP Saved Policies: 35, 97; NPPF: 98, 102, 104, 108, 110)

**Policy S15: Improving the bridleway network**

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

**POLICY S15: IMPROVING THE BRIDLEWAY NETWORK**

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

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 8; SALP Saved Policies: 35, 97; NPPF: 98, 102, 104)

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<sup>36</sup> [http://webmaps.hertfordshire.gov.uk/row/row.htm?layers=\[1:0,1,2,3,4\]](http://webmaps.hertfordshire.gov.uk/row/row.htm?layers=[1:0,1,2,3,4])

## 8 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### **Policy S16: Community facilities**

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

#### **POLICY S16: COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

- 1. Development proposals to sustain or extend the viable use of existing community facilities (churches, community halls, members' clubs and sporting venues and clubs as identified in the report of the St Stephen Parish Community Working Group<sup>37</sup>) and the development of new facilities will normally be supported if they comply with other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.**
- 2. Development proposals that will result in the loss or significant reduction in the scale and value of a community facility will not normally be permitted unless:**
  - i. It is essential to meet utility infrastructure needs and there is no viable alternative; or**
  - ii. Alternative facilities of equal or better accessibility, size and suitability are provided; or**
  - iii. It can be clearly demonstrated that the operation of the asset or its ongoing delivery is no longer of value to the community; or**
  - iv. It is no longer economically viable for its current use and has been marketed at an independently agreed price by a property professional for at least a year as a community use and it is verified that no interest in acquisition has been expressed.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 9; SALP Saved Policies: 67, 91, 92; NPPF: 91, 92, 96)

<sup>37</sup> <https://ststephen-pc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Community-Working-Group-Final-Report.pdf>

### Policy S17: Leisure Facilities for Children and Teenagers

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

#### Children's Play Areas

- 8.7 Children's play areas are important. They are specific and cannot easily be substituted for another type of green space. They are often - but not always - found within a green space. They cater for a specific demographic – children (and their carers), and when used by other groups lose their value to their target demographic.



- 8.8 According to the St Albans Green Spaces Technical Report<sup>38</sup>, two thirds of residential properties lie outside the acceptable access standard (based on Fields in Trust national guidance<sup>39</sup>) for younger children's play areas. The new development at BRE, Bricket Wood, does however have some limited play equipment and play areas for young children. Older children, however, are slightly better provided for, with 43% of properties falling within this access standard.
- 8.9 The Report, nevertheless, states that there are 2.59 ha of children's play area available in the Parish, which is greater than the required standard of 1.99 ha.

#### Teenage Provision

- 8.10 St Alban's advocate, for youth provision, separate open spaces, such as areas for wheeled sports (skate parks, BMX tracks) and pieces of equipment within existing parks. Multi-courts, which allow different formal and informal sports to be played, are also indicated. St Albans District Council operate a shelter scheme, which allows teenagers to spend time in a space which provides protection from the rain but in which they are not completely hidden.



- 8.11 Within St Stephen Parish, provision for teenagers at present is limited. With the exception of a multi-court at Woodbury Field in Bricket Wood, there is no dedicated teenage space provision. This is a deficit of 0.22 ha against provision standards and even the multi-court is outside the recommended standard for access distance for many residents.

<sup>38</sup> [https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/SP\\_GreenSpacesTechnicalReportPublicationDraft111016\\_tcm15-56020.pdf](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/Images/SP_GreenSpacesTechnicalReportPublicationDraft111016_tcm15-56020.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/guidance>

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

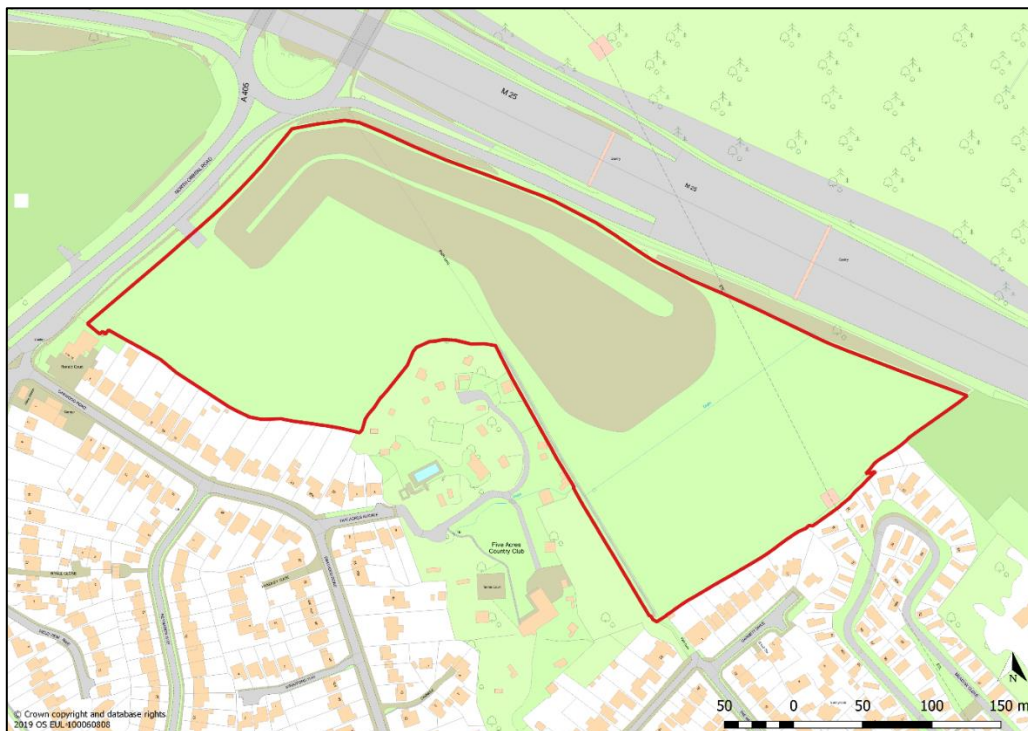
**POLICY S17: LEISURE FACILITIES FOR CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS**

**Major development that includes playgrounds and leisure facilities for children and young people will be viewed favourably (subject to compliance with other relevant policies in the Development Plan). They will be expected to demonstrate that the likely needs of the under-18 population (in particular for older children/teenagers) have been assessed and have sought, where possible, to address these needs and included such provision in proposals.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 9; SALP Saved Policies: 91; NPPF: 91, 92, 96)

**Aim 3: Community facilities at the Donkey Field**

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



*Figure 8.1: The Donkey Field*



- 8.14 A public footpath runs southeast to northwest across the site, between Woodside Road/The Meads and the M25 Junction. There is vehicular access both off the A405 and from the southern corner.
- 8.15 The site owner has expressed an interest in providing community facilities on the field, which would be accessed from the southern corner (Woodside Road/The Meads) as well as a start-up small business park, accessed from the A405. The remaining area is proposed for use for allotments and a landscaped parkland area, with public access via bridleways and footpaths, and with additional tree planting along the boundary with the M25.
- 8.16 Locality's Site Assessment for Neighbourhood Plans Guidance states: *"Where you cannot demonstrate that a site is deliverable, for example it may be in a good location but there is no evidence that it could become available, your plan can identify 'aspirations' for sites you would like to see developed, and set out principles for each site linked to plan policies."*
- 8.17 The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate the site, as it is not currently available, however, it supports the aspiration to provide community facilities here. *"In order to demonstrate that there is a good prospect the site will be delivered, there should be evidence that it is suitable, available and economically viable."* Any scheme needs to provide adequate parking on site for the community use, without high traffic volumes using The Meads or Woodside Road. There should be no through route through the site.
- 8.18 Community uses would need to relate directly to the needs of the residents of the Parish, and in particular those in Bricket Wood. A new medical centre for instance and/or a relocation of the Scout group are possible suitable facilities, but buildings must be visually subservient to the wider open landscape and situated well away from existing residential properties.

**AIM 3: Community facilities at the Donkey Field**

***The Neighbourhood Plan supports aspirations to utilise the Donkey Field for community use – for instance, a community centre and associated outdoor sport and recreation facilities –where facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt, do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it and ensures that the existing public right of way is preserved and any new paths are dedicated as public rights of way to ensure that they are available to the public in perpetuity.***

**Policy S18: Protection of Public Houses**

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





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

**POLICY S18: PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HOUSES**

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

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 9; SALP Saved Policies: 19; NPPF: 91, 92)

**Policy S19: Community Growing Spaces**

- 8.21 Allotments are important to those of the local community who value the opportunity to grow their own food. There are three allotment sites in the Parish, however the St Albans Green Spaces report<sup>40</sup> suggests that there is a deficit of allotment space, where the local quantity standard requires 5.5 ha. Across the Parish, 44% of properties are within the required distance from an allotment. The accessibility report suggests that Bricket Wood and Park Street are the main areas outside this, thus requiring additional provision.
- 8.22 Whilst allotments are an important source of space for growing, they are often not in the most convenient location for all users, and plots are often too large for users' needs. An alternative solution is the concept of community growing spaces. These can be designed into new developments and thus become closer to residents' homes and, as the name suggests, involve collective growing by residents.

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<sup>40</sup> Detailed Local Plan Technical Report, Green Spaces, St Albans, 2016:  
*SP\_GreenSpacesTechnicalReportPublicationDraft111016\_tcm15-56020.pdf* ([stalbans.gov.uk](http://stalbans.gov.uk))



*Example of community growing space: ([www.verdanteearth.co.uk/community-growing-spaces/](http://www.verdanteearth.co.uk/community-growing-spaces/))*

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

#### **POLICY S19: ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GROWING SPACES**

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

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 9; SALP Saved Policies: 95; NPPF: 91)

#### **Policy S20: Retirement and Care Home Facilities**

- 8.23 The ageing population, both nationally and locally, is considered to be an issue that the Neighbourhood Plan should address – a motion strongly supported by residents as evidenced in the Community Survey. In particular, the need for specialist and extra care in a Parish with an older than average population, will fuel a growing need for such provision over the Plan period.
- 8.24 At present, the main care needs of older people living in the Parish are provided by the following:
- Tenterden House Nursing Home in Lye Lane: This is a BUPA operated care home providing care for up to 40 people and specialising in care for young, physically disabled adults and nursing care for older people, alongside care and support for people with Parkinson's

disease or Huntington's disease. The existing home is an old manor house converted into a care home. It currently runs at almost full occupancy throughout the year.

- Allington Court Nursing Home in Lye Lane: This is a BUPA operated care home with nursing which can accommodate 44 users. It has been specifically designed for adults living with dementia but other care is also available for people living with Parkinson's and Huntington's or with a mental disorder requiring specialist nursing care.
- Birchwood Bungalow on the Bridle Path off How Wood: This is a residential care home operated by Hertfordshire County Council which can accommodate seven people. It specialises in challenging behaviour and palliative care.
- Chiswell Residential Home: This care home is registered to provide accommodation and personal care for up to six older people with mental health needs.

8.25 The South West Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (February 2016) concludes that between 2013 and 2036, there is a need for an additional 1,352 units of specialist housing for older people and 640 residential/nursing care bed spaces in St Albans District. St Albans District Council (in a report prepared on their behalf by Housing Vision, September 2016) predicts that between 2011 and 2031, the population of those aged 85 years and over will increase by 89%. This is by far the largest component of population change in the District, a trend that is reflected in the UK as a whole. This is particularly important for St Stephen as the Parish already has a disproportionately large number of older residents.

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

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

8.27 The Neighbourhood Plan, therefore, seeks to provide the opportunity for a provider to deliver a suitable retirement / care facilities during the Plan period. It should be noted that in January 2022, planning permission was granted at the Burstons Nurseries site for the demolition of all existing buildings, structures and hardstanding and redevelopment of the site to provide a new retirement community comprising 80 assisted living apartments with community facilities and 44 bungalows together with associated access, bridleway extension, landscaping, amenity space, car parking and associated ancillary works.

**POLICY S20: RETIREMENT CARE HOME FACILITIES**

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

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

## 9 BUSINESS AND LOCAL ECONOMY

- 9.1 Most existing identified significant businesses within the Parish are in Green Belt locations, although there is a number of small scale businesses within residential areas, as well as retail outlets. A significant number of people, 14%, work from home, either running their own small businesses or remote-working for larger organisations.
- 9.2 Unemployment in the area is very low compared to both the national and Hertfordshire average, at 2.47% in 2011<sup>41</sup>. A substantial number of those in employment commute to nearby towns and London<sup>42</sup>.
- 9.3 Bus services link the villages to both Watford and St Albans, as does the 'Abbey Flyer' although this only connects directly to the wider rail network at Watford. Commuters also use Radlett and to a lesser extent St Albans City stations for commuting into London.
- 9.4 Work on the Neighbourhood Plan revealed the following challenges that need to be addressed:
- **Recruiting locally** - the difficulty some businesses face is recruiting local workers, particularly (but not exclusively) to fill manual, trade and semi-skilled positions. The cause of this is the lack of availability of appropriate local labour and the unaffordability of local housing for workers on relatively low incomes. This has resulted in at least two major employers needing to provide temporary accommodation for their workforces, whilst other businesses bus in employees from outside the area. This leads to greater traffic volumes and could potentially lead some employers to consider relocating to areas where the local workforce is more accessible.
  - **Green Belt restrictions** - as most of the major employers are situated on sites within the Green Belt, it is difficult for them to expand or make even relatively minor alterations to facilities. This could also lead to some employers considering relocation to more flexible locations.
  - **Residential area restrictions** - equally, some businesses located in largely residential areas have outgrown their premises, which creates parking issues for residents. Despite this, it is essential that small businesses located within residential areas, and which serve local needs, are not lost.
  - **Loss of local shopping and services** – There is increased pressure on the viability of local shopping parades. It is vital that essential services, and in particular post offices and pharmacies, are protected and other retail businesses are not lost to housing unless a business can be proven to be unviable.
  - **Local access issues** - despite being intersected by a network of motorways and major roads, 'last mile' vehicular access for larger commercial vehicles is problematic for many of the businesses in the area. This includes the rural location of the Ventura Park and Curo Park industrial estates, together with other businesses in Park Street. A potential solution could be the widening of the Harper Lane bridge and any major development within Park

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<sup>41</sup> HCC Data, 2011

<sup>42</sup> District Council workforce migration study, 2013

Street/Frogmore (e.g. the proposed Strategic Rail Freight Terminal) should include this provision, although this is outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

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

9.5 The following policies seek to address these challenges.

### **Policy S21: Support for Reasonable Business Expansion**

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

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

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

9.8 The extent of the development of businesses in the Green Belt has been tested in the High Court and deemed acceptable<sup>43</sup>. Such expansion should not be limited to extensions but can also involve the construction of a new building or new buildings which might, or might not, be development within one of the exceptions in paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>44</sup>.

#### **POLICY S21: SUPPORT FOR REASONABLE BUSINESS EXPANSION**

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

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

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 10; SALP Saved Policies: 95)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.out-law.com/en/articles/2015/august/inspector-misinterpreted-policy-allowing-reasonable-expansion-of-business-in-midlands-green-belt-high-court-rules/>

<sup>44</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1005759/NPPF\\_July\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf)



### **Policy S22: Village Retail Areas**

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

#### **POLICY S22: VILLAGE RETAIL AREAS**

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

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

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 10; SALP Saved Policies: 55; NPPF: 85, 91, 92)

### **Policy S23: Supporting local employment**

- 9.12 It is important that the business-base of St Stephen is protected. Most employment opportunities for those living in St Stephen are in nearby St Albans, Hemel Hempstead, Hatfield, Watford and beyond, notably in London. Whilst there are opportunities to commute by non-car modes, inevitably the majority of people working away from St Stephen will journey by car. The protection of local employment opportunities will not only provide greater prospects for local people to access jobs but also help reduce commuting needs. This policy should be considered alongside Policy S21 (Support for Reasonable Business Expansion).

#### **POLICY S23: PROTECTION OF EXISTING EMPLOYMENT PREMISES OR LAND**

- 1. Existing employment-generating sites should be retained as such unless genuinely unsuitable and unviable for employment-generating use or they are replaced directly by new sites within the Parish.**
- 2. Applications for a change of use from an employment to a non-employment activity will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that the premises are no longer suitable for business use and evidence has been submitted that demonstrates that the property has been actively marketed for at least 12 months on realistic market terms and it is shown that there is no prospect of new business occupiers being found.**

(Conformity Reference: SSNP Objectives: 10; SALP Saved Policies: 19; NPPF: 80, 83)

### **Policy S24: Broadband Communications**

- 9.13 The modern economy is changing and provision of a good communications network is a basic requirement. The 2011 Census highlights how people are working differently to a generation ago - in St Stephen Parish, 8% of people work from home and 14% are self-employed. Of these self-employed, 79% have no employees so effectively work for themselves, commonly in service-related activities that simply require a computer and access to a broadband connection.
- 9.14 The need for superfast broadband to serve St Stephen is paramount. Whilst BT have been undertaking installations of higher speed broadband, speeds are reported by residents to vary wildly depending on where within the Parish they reside. Indeed, one of the most recent housing developments in the Parish did not incorporate high speed fibre connection to the new dwellings. This is a fundamental constraint to the continuing expansion of self-employed activity for those working from home or from a small office.
- 9.15 In its 2015 manifesto, the Government committed to delivering download speeds of 24Mbps to 95% of the UK by the end of 2017. Since then, a further announcement pledges that access to at least 10Mbps should be on a similar footing to other basic services such as water and electricity. This 'Universal Service Obligation', due to be implemented from March 2020, will

mean that consumers will have the right to request a broadband connection wherever they live<sup>45</sup>.

- 9.16 It is likely that this will take time to roll out, meaning that some St Stephen residents will have to wait to receive superfast broadband without additional local authority intervention. In the meantime, whilst BT has an obligation to provide a landline to every household in the UK, and developers are expected to want to facilitate high speed broadband provision to make their developments more marketable, there have been instances where developers have not contacted Next Generation Access (NGA) Network providers early enough in the process for fibre and ducting to be laid, or they have a national agreement with a cable provider that is not active in the area, thus leaving new housing developments with little or no connections.
- 9.17 This policy seeks to ensure that all new housing, community and commercial development in the neighbourhood area is connected to superfast broadband.

**POLICY S24: BROADBAND COMMUNICATIONS**

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

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

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<sup>45</sup> <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/broadband-what-you-need-to-know>

## 10 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

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

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

- Pursuing the Non-Policy Actions detailed in Section 11 of this document.
- Commenting on planning applications or consultations relating to the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- Monitoring the application of the Neighbourhood Plan policies to ensure they have been applied consistently and interpreted correctly in response to planning applications.
- Maintaining a dialogue with St Albans District Council regarding the timing and content of the emerging Local Plan.
- Undertaking timely reviews of the St Stephen Neighbourhood Plan and its policies to take into account the emerging Local Plan.

10.3 The Parish Council recognises that it will be important to keep the Neighbourhood Plan up to date in general terms, and to ensure that it remains in general conformity with the wider development plan in particular. In this context it will commence a review of the neighbourhood plan within six months of the adoption of the new Local Plan.

### **Infrastructure provision and priorities**

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

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

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

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



## 11 NON LAND USE ACTIONS AND SPENDING PRIORITIES

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

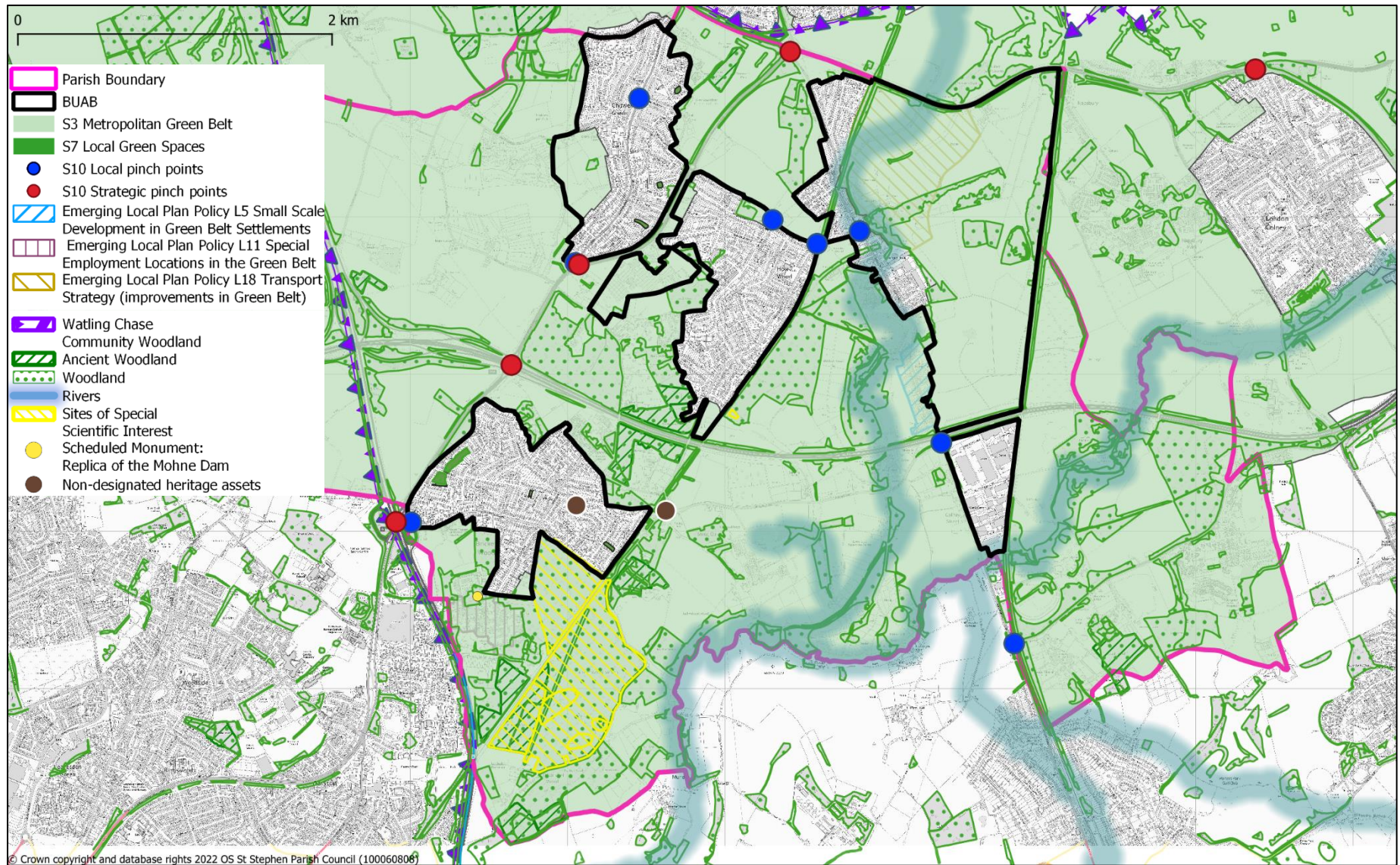
Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore options for traffic calming near to the Driftwood Avenue turning; regular review of options for the Parish as a whole.</li> <li>• Support the introduction/ extension of double yellow line parking restrictions at the following locations: in front of the Co-op store on the Watford Road, Chiswell Green; opposite the shops in How Wood, Park Street; and in Bucknalls Drive, Bricket Wood at the junction with Mount Pleasant Lane.</li> <li>• Support the installation of wooden anti-parking stakes in locations where cars parking on grass verges is a particular issue.</li> <li>• Support 'safe parking advice' for residents.</li> <li>• Work with partners to enforce parking restrictions in the Parish.</li> </ul>	
Buses – specifically the need to provide evening, weekend and early morning services	Contact existing bus companies to ascertain whether they could provide a more comprehensive service.	Arriva, Red Eagle and Uno
Improve state of footpaths/ cycleways/ bridleways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check rights of way on a regular basis and lobby for improvements.</li> <li>• Monitor the appearance and maintenance the appearance of grass verges and advise appropriate authorities accordingly.</li> <li>• Work with HCC on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.</li> </ul> <p>Ensure as far as possible connectivity of the paths to enable access between villages and to green spaces.</p> <p>Work with HCC to explore options for new pedestrian and cycle routes not running along an adopted highway to be dedicated as public rights of way</p>	<p>St Stephen Parish Council Hertfordshire County Council St Albans District Council</p> <p>HCC</p>

Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partners
<b>Character and Conservation</b>		
Protect heritage assets	Work with St Albans to add the non-designated heritage assets, identified in Policy S4, to the District Local List. Consider allocation of funds to contribute to heritage conservation where identified as required.	St Stephen Parish Council
<b>Environment and appearance</b>		
Woodland management	Explore opportunities to plant/better manage woodlands within the Parish.	St Stephen Parish Council Woodland Trust
Management and maintenance of drains and ditches	Work with local partners and agencies to ensure that ditches and drains are effectively monitored and maintained to reduce the risk of flooding.	St Stephen Parish Council St Albans District Council Water Companies
<b>Health, education and leisure</b>		
Better access to doctors and dentist	Canvas residents to discover doctor concerns. Liaise with key commissioning and delivery partners to ascertain longer term need.	Clinical commissioning group GPs
<b>Community</b>		
To safeguard valued community facilities	Undertake an audit of existing facilities and their usage to determine if they would be suitable candidates to register as an Asset of Community Value.	Parish Council / Residents Associations / SADC

## **12 POLICIES MAPS**

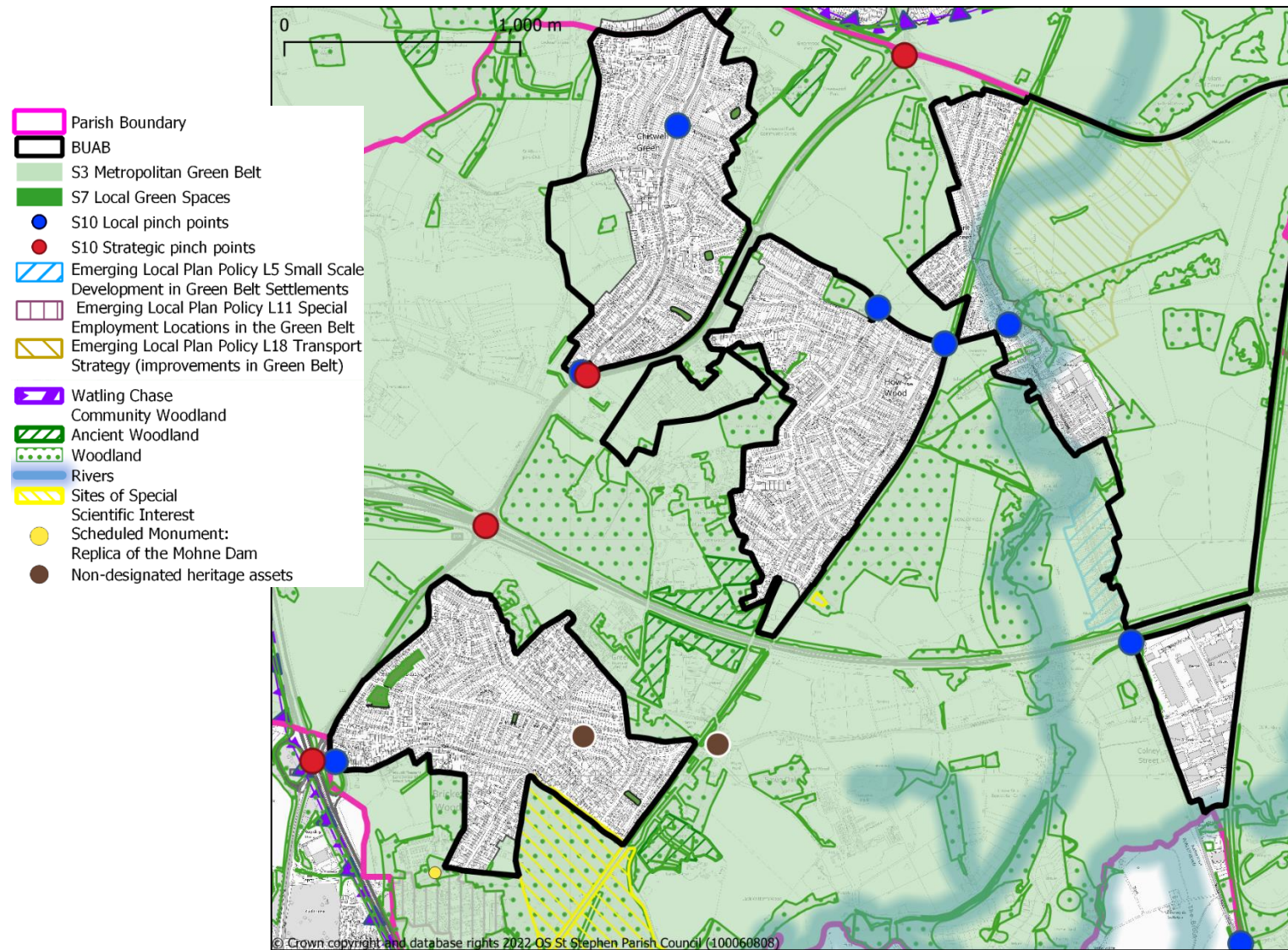
The policies maps overleaf show mapped versions of the policies contained in the St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan.





Policies Map





Inset Policies Map showing the three villages

## 13 GLOSSARY

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

- **Historic environment:** All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
- **Local Enterprise Partnership:** A body, designated by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in an area.
- **Local housing need:** the number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning guidance, or a justified alternative approach.
- **Local Plan:** A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.
- **Major development:** For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** the national planning policy document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- **Neighbourhood Plan:** A plan prepared by a Parish Council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- **Non-strategic policies:** Policies contained in a neighbourhood plan, or those policies in a local plan that are not strategic policies.
- **Older people:** People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.
- **People with disabilities:** People have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and that impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These persons include, but are not limited to, people with ambulatory difficulties, blindness, learning difficulties, autism and mental health needs.
- **Planning condition:** A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.
- **Playing field:** The whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- **Renewable and low carbon energy:** Includes energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).
- **Rural exception sites:** Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing

family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

- **Section 106 agreement:** A mechanism under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which makes a development proposal acceptable in planning terms that would not otherwise be acceptable.
- **Setting of a heritage asset:** The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
- **Settlement boundary:** See Built up area boundary.
- **Starter Homes:** Homes targeted at first time buyers who would otherwise be priced out of the market. Like shared ownership homes, these should be available to households that need them most, with an income of less than £80,000 (£90,000 for London). Eligible first time buyers will also be required to have a mortgage in order to buy starter homes to stop cash buyers.
- **Supplementary planning documents:** Documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.
- **Use Class Order** - The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (As amended in 1995, 2005 and 2013) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories. Planning Permission is not needed for changes of use within the same use class.
- **Watling Chase Community Forest** - An area identified through the England Community Forest Programme to revitalise countryside and green space in and around major conurbations. The Watling Chase Community Forest Plan contains Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- **Wildlife corridor:** Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.
- **Windfall sites:** Sites not specifically identified in the development plan.

## 14 LIST OF EVIDENCE BASE DOCUMENTS

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

- Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGst), Natural England
- Assets of Community Value table, St Albans City and District Council
- Bricket Wood Residents' Association: A Brief History of our Village
- British Horse Society (website)
- Burydell Allotments Association (website)
- Charter for Trees, Woods and People
- Conservation Area Character Statement for Bricket Wood Appraisal, 2009
- Detailed Local Plan Technical Report, Green Spaces, St Albans City and District Council, 2016
- Fields in Trust (website)
- Hertfordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan Part 10 St Stephen Parish Council, 2011
- Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre data, within the Heritage Gateway
- Historic Environment Record Data: Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green, Park Street, Colney Street, Hertfordshire County Council
- Environment Bank Biodiversity Impact Calculator and Guidance for use January 2015
- EB Accounting For Biodiversity In Planning – A toolkit for Local Planning Authorities in England, March 2017
- Green Infrastructure Plan, St Albans City & District Council, 2011
- Hertfordshire Environmental Records Ref 201602\_037 Ancient Woodlands Inventory
- Hertfordshire Landscape Character Area Assessments: St Albans
- Making local green space designations in your neighbourhood plan, Locality, 2017
- National Planning Policy Framework, 2021
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC), 2006
- Open Spaces Society C20 Information Sheet: Local Green Space Designation
- Open Spaces Society C21 Information Sheet: How to win local green space through Neighbourhood Plans
- Open Spaces Society C22 Information Sheet: Community Assets and Protecting Open Space
- Park Street Conservation Area



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

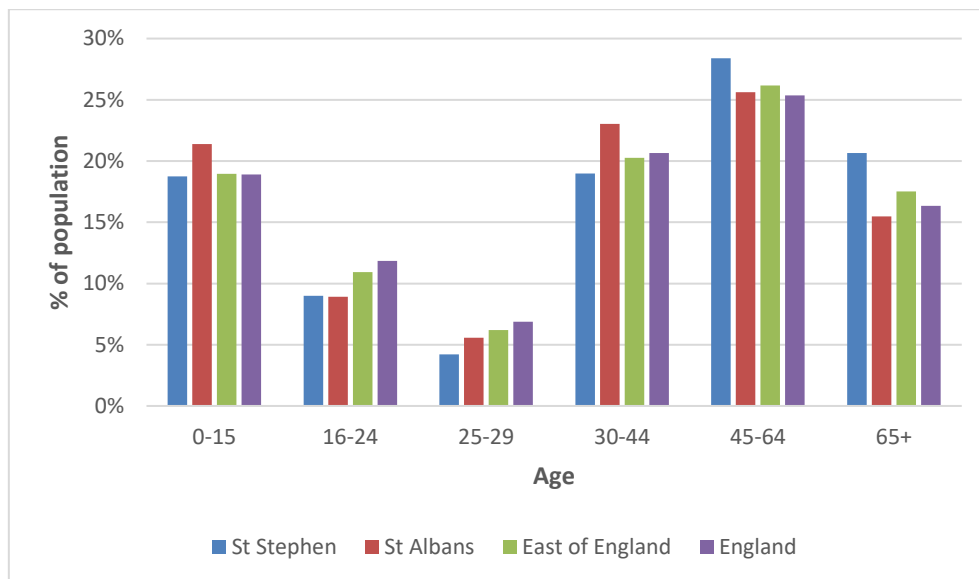
## Appendix A Profile of St Stephen

All figures are from the 2011 Census unless otherwise indicated.

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

### Population

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



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

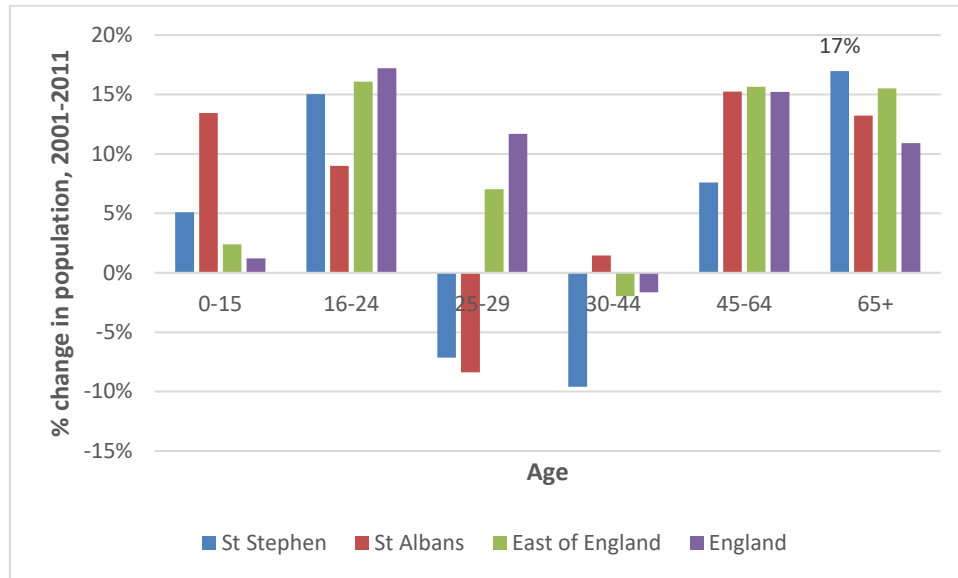


Figure 2: Change in age profile of St Stephen residents, 2001 to 2011

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

## Housing

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

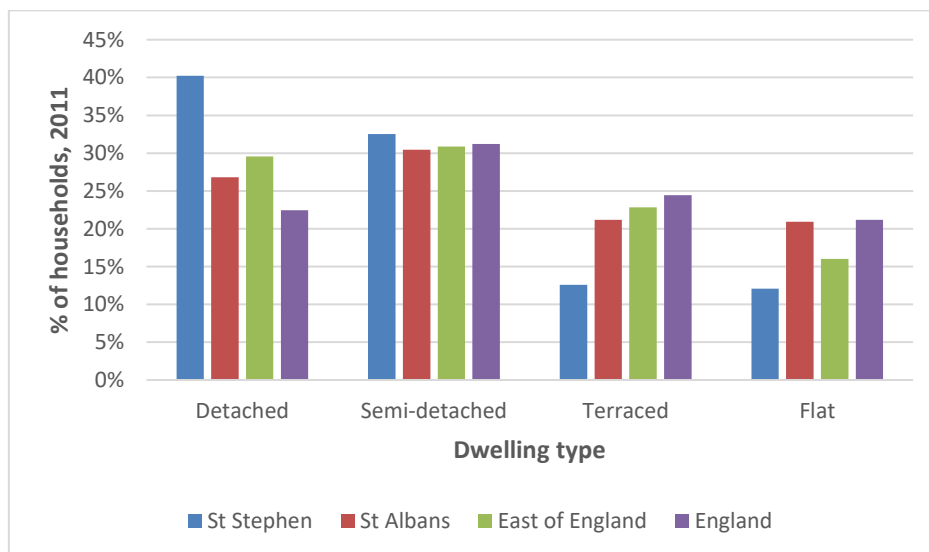


Figure 2: Type of housing in St Stephen

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

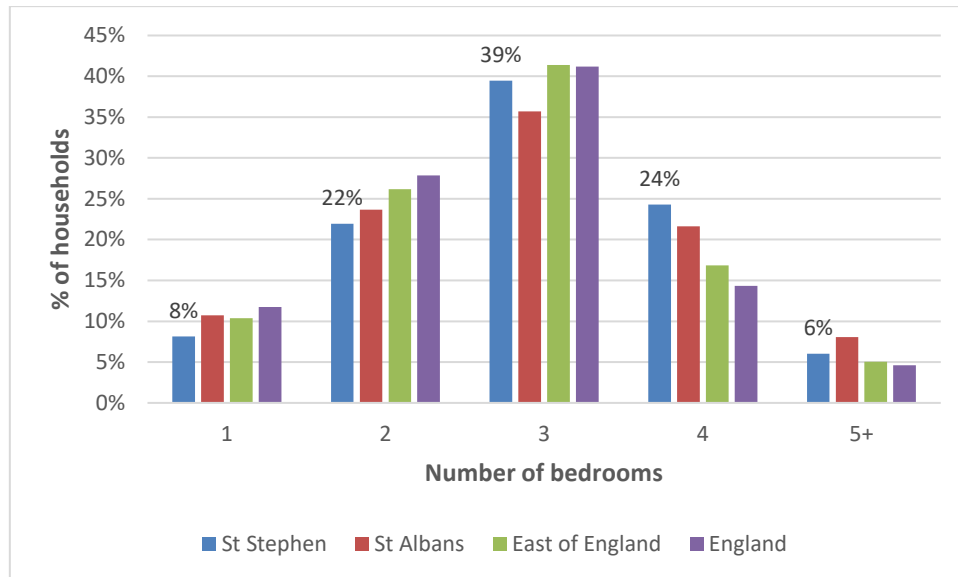


Figure 3: Number of bedrooms

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

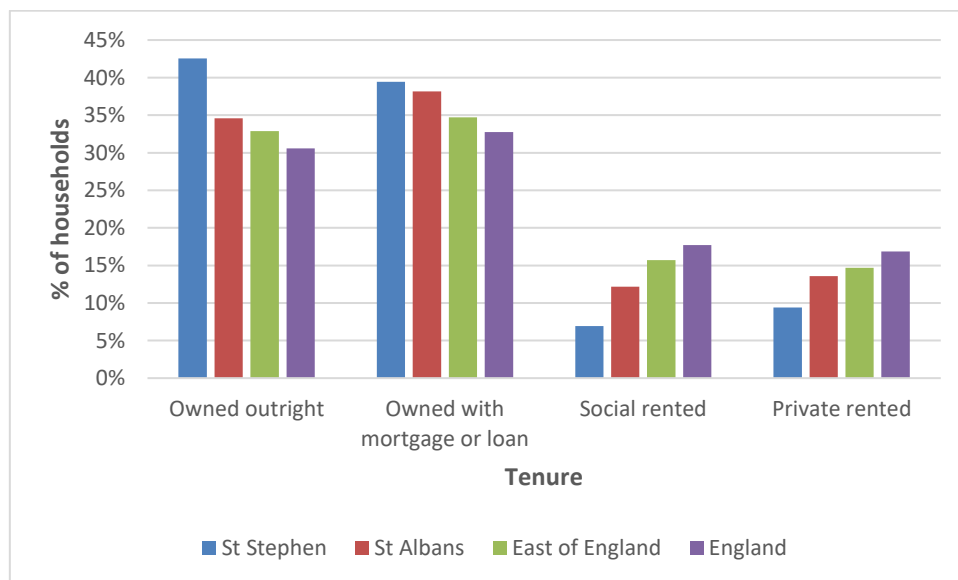


Figure 4: Tenure of households

## Work

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

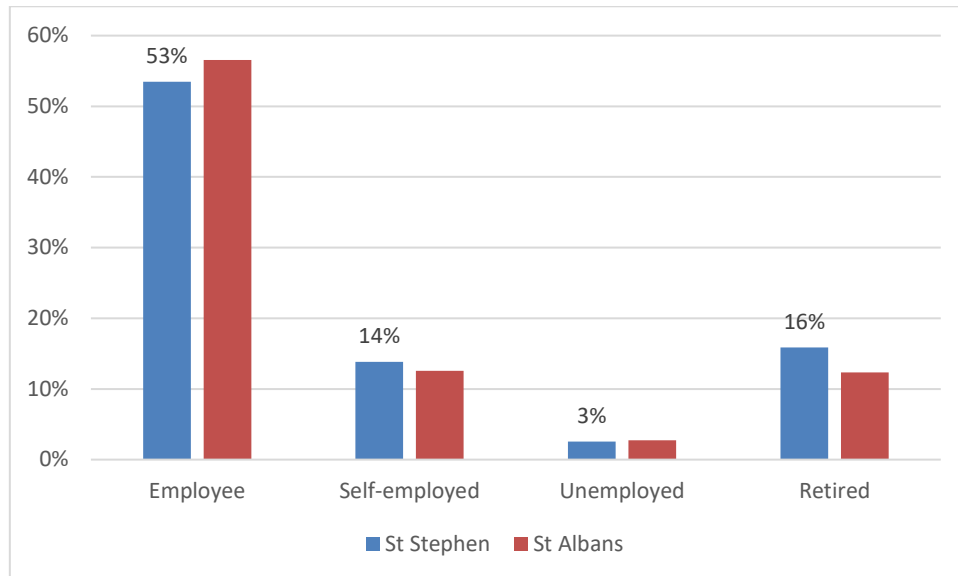


Figure 5: Economic activity

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

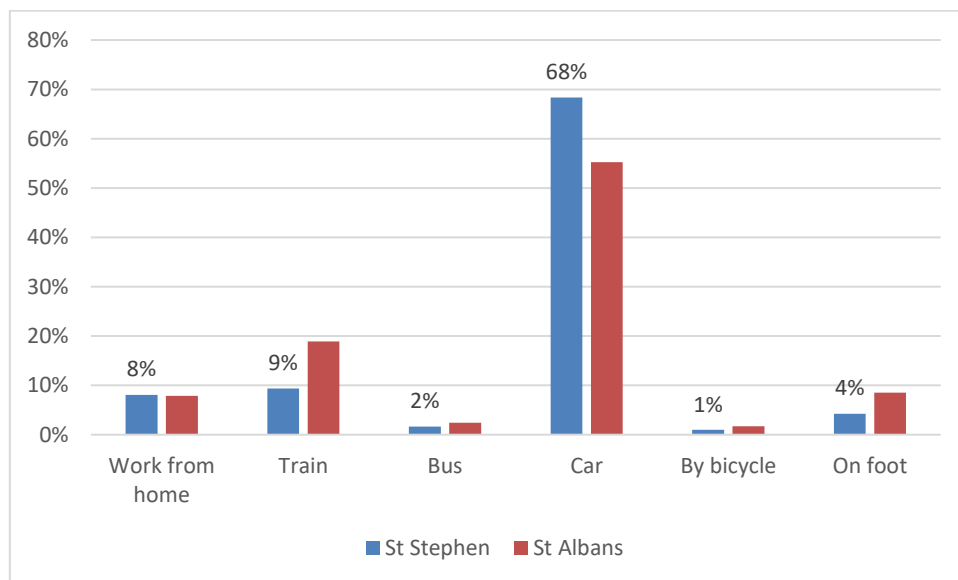


Figure 6: Mode of transport to work, for those economically active and in employment

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

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

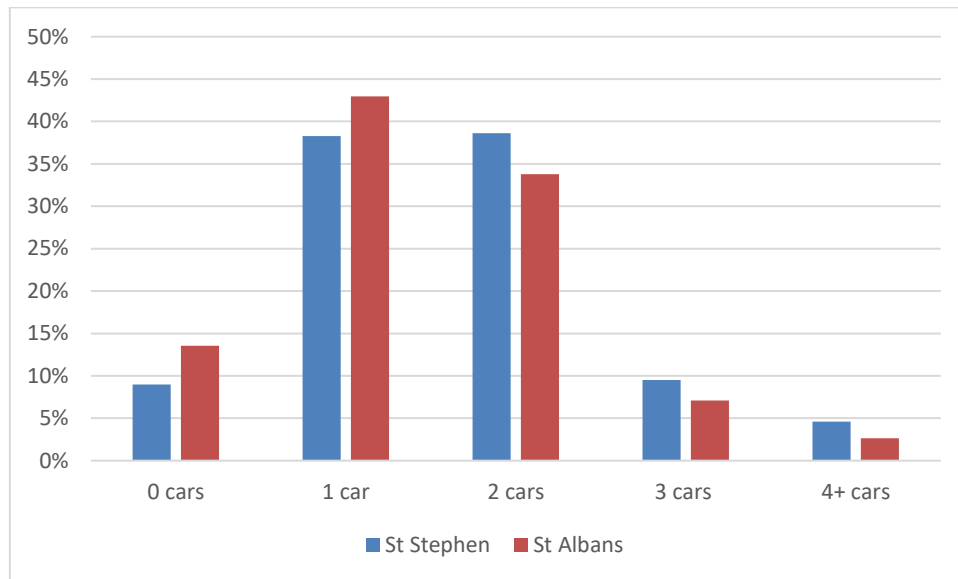


Figure 7: Number of cars per household

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

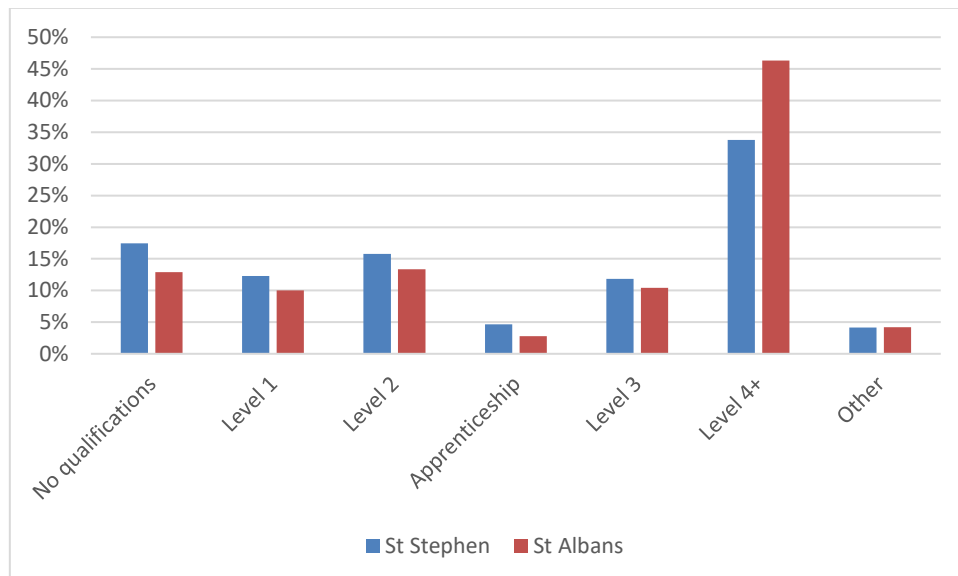


Figure 8: Qualifications of residents

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



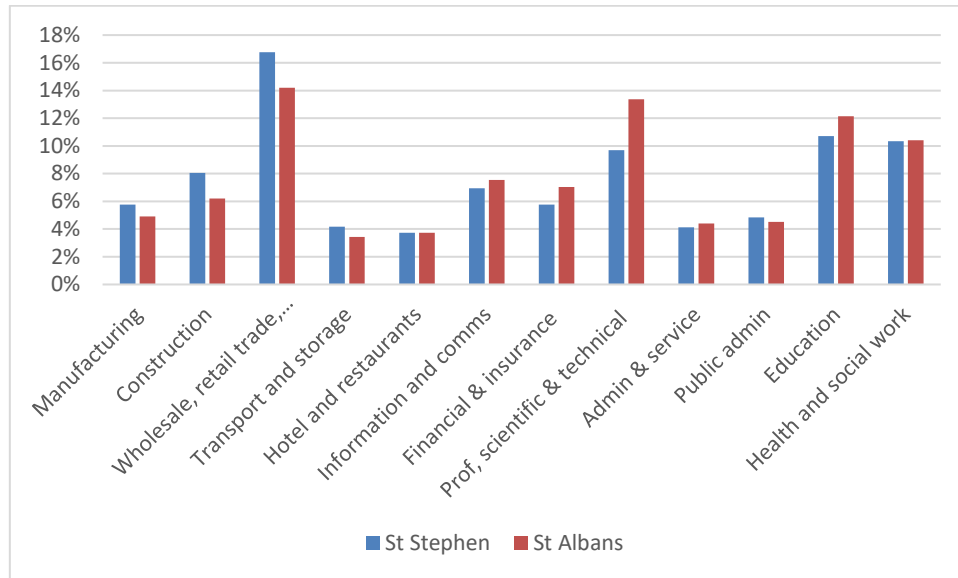


Figure 9: Main industry sectors that people are employed in

## Health

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

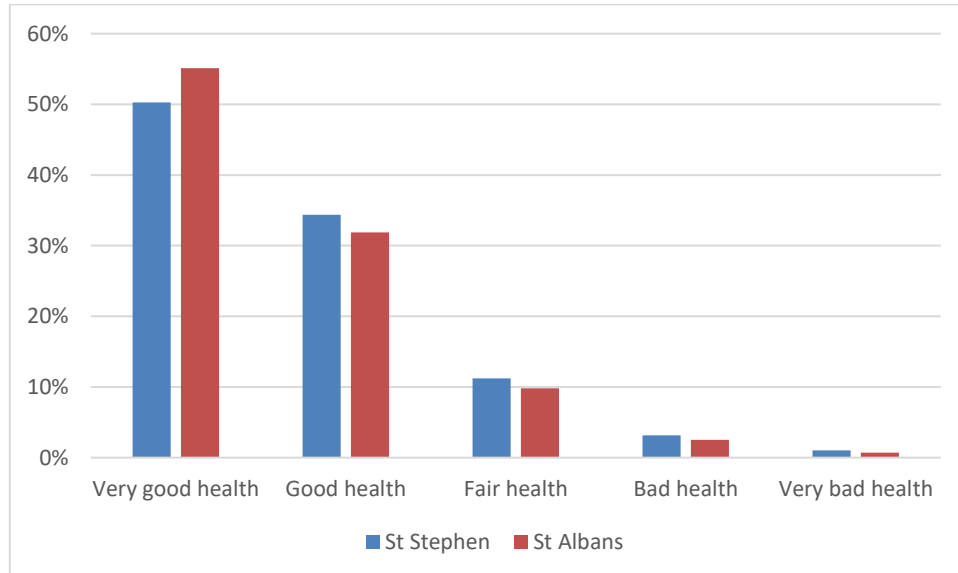



Figure 10: Level of health

## Appendix B – Detail of non-designated heritage assets

Historic England suggests that there may be many buildings and sites in a local planning authority's area that make a positive contribution to its local character and sense of place because of their heritage value. Although such heritage assets may not be nationally designated or even located within the boundaries of a conservation area, they may be offered some level of protection by the local planning authority identifying them on a formally adopted list of local heritage assets.

Whilst a local listing provides no additional planning controls, the fact that a building or site is on a local list means that its conservation as a heritage asset is an objective of the NPPF and a material consideration when determining the outcome of a planning application. The buildings and structures of merit included in the policy were identified as part of the Plan engagement process and the reasons for their inclusion is set out in the tables below, based on the guidance and categorisation provided by Historic England.

All the buildings and sites that are nationally listed within St. Stephen Parish can be found on the following web site: [www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list). All the buildings which are locally listed on the St Albans District Local List can be found on the following web site: [www.stalbans.gov.uk/locally-listed-buildings](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/locally-listed-buildings). The two buildings detailed below are those that are neither nationally nor locally listed, but which are considered sufficiently important either, historically, architecturally, archeologically and are worthy of note and are designated as non-designated heritage assets in the St Stephen Parish Neighbourhood Plan:

The Parish Barn	
	Asset Details
	<p><b>Address:</b> The Parish Centre, Station Road, Bricket Wood, St. Albans, AL2 3PJ</p> <p><b>Significance:</b> Historical interest to local societies and community value</p> <p><b>Asset type:</b> Timber agricultural barn</p>
Description of Local significance	
<p>The frame itself has undergone numerous alterations, modifications/repairs and iron strapping. This is common in former agricultural buildings and forms part of their historic character. Isolated historic carpenter's scribe marks are also visible on some of the larger frame sections (e.g. the principle truss). The style of construction and the timber uses indicate that the frame is of some antiquity. However, countryside vernacular methods of construction changed slowly and framing materials - even whole buildings - were often 'recycled' or parts reused, particularly in agricultural situations. These factors can make dating agricultural buildings difficult by visual inspection alone. Nevertheless, the oldest parts of the barn's frame are likely to date from the post-mediaeval period up to the 17th century. Further detailed historic and archaeological research and analysis would provide more accurate dating for the timber frame.</p>	

St. Luke's Church	
	Asset details
	<p><b>Address:</b> St. Luke's Church South Riding, Bricket Wood, AL2</p> <p><b>Significance:</b> Aesthetic, historical and community value</p> <p><b>Asset type:</b> Church building</p>
	Description of local significance
<p>The Land on which the church was built was donated by a Mr R B Christmas, a local landowner, with the church's foundation stone laid on 31 October 1936. St. Luke's Church was designed by Professor A E Richardson, architect and one time President of the Royal Academy of Arts. Its design replicates the design of church architecture of the style from New England in America. The timbers for the frame were cut, shaped and numbered in Canada, shipped to England and constructed on site. A. E. Richardson was also responsible for the design on the Cavalier Hall – the church hall for St. Stephen's Church - in Watford Road, St. Albans (since demolished). The Church is, therefore, of some significance both architecturally and historically.</p>	

The further buildings listed below are also considered to be of historical note and an action of the Neighbourhood Plan is to prepare fuller descriptions of their significance and to discuss with their owners the potential to add them to the Local List:

- Frogmore Lodge, 38 Frogmore, Park Street, St. Albans, AL2 2NG
- 210 – 214, Radlett Road, Colney Street, St. Albans, AL2 2EN
- 218 Radlett Road, Colney Street, St. Albans, AL2 2EN, (the old George and Dragon public house)
- 228 Radlett Road, Colney Street, St. Albans, AL2 2EN
- 234-240 Forge Cottages, Radlett Road, Colney Street, St. Albans, AL2 2EN

## Appendix C - Local Green Spaces

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

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

### Bricket Wood

#### 1. Ashridge Drive, Bricket Wood

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



#### 2. Broad Acre Woodland, Bricket Wood



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

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

### 3. **Juniper Avenue, Bricket Wood**

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



## Chiswell Green

### 4. **Forefield, Chiswell Green**

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



### 5. **South Close, Chiswell Green**

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





## 6. Sunnyside, Chiswell Green

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



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

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