

## ST ALBANS CITY & DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2020-2036 CONSULTATION

Response from St Albans Civic Society

The Society is responding to this exercise. In working through the consultation leaflet, the Society has found it difficult to use the various rankings and emoticons. While understanding the attempt to reach as wide an audience as possible, it was felt the format tends to trivialise what are very important decisions and give the impression – which obviously was not intended - that this is nothing more than a tick-box exercise.

Having said that:

Q1 - All of these priorities are important and, in the Society's view, all six should therefore merit a 1. All of these 'priorities' should form part of a comprehensive local plan.

Q2 – 1, 1, 5, 5 – The plan identifies one Green Belt site which is for low-density, low skilled employment; this is the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange at Park Street. The Society presently believes that this should be for housing in order to minimise the overall loss of Green Belt land, and at the same time remove the threat to our essential rail services.

Q3 – no comment

Q4 – All these kinds of home are important, but the question has to be asked, how is the plan going to achieve anything as detailed as this? The existing affordable housing policy appears to be manifestly failing, so how will the plan do any better?

Q5 – no comment

Q6 – This is somewhat hypothetical. The Society believes the Council has been too slow to react to the Government's relaxation of the rules of permitted development that allow offices to convert to housing. There has been a dramatic loss of local employment. Why should more Green Belt land be sacrificed to recreate lost offices in urban areas?

Q7 – All five things are important and merit a 1. The Society's view is that the Council should ensure that developers build on existing permissions; discourage any landbanking; utilise existing empty homes; and introduce council tax charges to encourage action on the foregoing.

Q8 – This goes without saying. The constraints of historic buildings etc mean that it is simply not realistic to plan for a continued expansion of housing around the city without providing adequate services and infrastructure in the Green Belt. In the historic city centre, particularly around the Cathedral, there needs to be far more emphasis and consideration for the local environment which is being increasingly eroded by large lorries, school coaches and delivery vehicles. Such concerns are likely to deepen with the, hoped for, increase in tourism, following the development of the New Museum and the Cathedral's Visitor Centre.

Q9 - There was no assessment of the implications of necessary infrastructure for the current proposals - highways, education, medical, other services. These would need further land in the Green Belt.

The Society, therefore, does feel that as it stands this plan lacks overall credibility.

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