

16 July 2009

***Shaping Our Community* consultation**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is the *Shaping Our Community* consultation?

- It is the opportunity for people living and working in the district to express their views on crucial issues that affect the long-term core planning strategy for St Albans District.
- The main principle set out in the consultation paper is to protect the Green Belt for future and current generations, while balancing the need to provide housing, jobs and services for local residents.
- The consultation takes its lead from the new Sustainable Community Strategy, being published at the same time, which sets out a long term overall vision for the District to 2021. The priorities of the Local Development Framework are taken from the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Q: How can you take part in the consultation?

- The consultation runs from July until 28 September 2009. It will include a touring exhibition, online survey and public meetings in local wards on request. The documents including a summary leaflet and questionnaire will be available at the Council Offices, in local libraries and at the exhibitions. People can have their say on a number of issues including whether St Albans needs a new supermarket, locations for schools and youth clubs, and transport measures aimed at reducing traffic congestion and reducing carbon dioxide emissions.
- Views are being sought on any of the issues in the document including difficult issues we may have to face in future. We will continue to resist any Government requirements that might mean encroachment into the Green Belt, and for this reason we successfully legally challenged some of the housing numbers in the East of England regional plan.

- But we have to prepare for the likelihood that the government will require an increase in the number of new houses that have to be built in the district and if this happens we may need to consider the possibility of building in the Green Belt.

Q: What is the Local Development Framework (LDF)?

- The Local Development Framework is a set of planning documents which guide the direction of planning policy for the district until 2026. This framework replaces the previous system of county level Structure Plans and district level Local Plans.
- The government has given each district council in England and each principal area council in Wales the task of drawing up their own Local Development Framework. Together, these will form a planning strategy for England and Wales that reflects the individual needs of each area.
- Government requires all councils to have regard to their Sustainable Community Strategy and the relevant regional plan when drawing up the LDF.

Q: What is a 'core strategy'?

- At the heart of the Local Development Framework is the 'core strategy' which sets out the main direction of planning policy for the district. In producing the document, the council has taken into account the views expressed previously by the local community and stakeholders in previous consultations in 2006 and 2007.
- The core strategy will be followed by other more detailed documents that make up the LDF.

Q: What is the core strategy based on?

- The core strategy takes its lead from the district's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). Produced by the council working in partnership with local businesses, the community and voluntary sector and other organisations such as the police and the health service, the SCS sets out a vision for a *'progressive, unique and vibrant district, which values its environment, heritage and culture and cares for the future: an outstanding place to live where everyone can flourish.'*
- The SCS is being published at the same time following extensive consultation with the public, community groups and stakeholders earlier this year.

Q: What is in the St Albans core strategy?

- This strategy identifies Green Belt land that is to be protected from future development, while also designating potential locations for the building of schools, factories and businesses, houses, shops and leisure facilities.
- St Albans District Council is due to publish the final version of this strategy in 2010. The consultation document being published in July sets out the Council's suggestions and options for what the strategy should include, based on extensive research and previous consultations, including those on the City Vision and Rural Vision earlier in the year.
- It includes policies on:
 - protecting and managing the Green Belt
 - creating a strong local economy,
 - reducing traffic congestion and carbon emissions,
 - improving shops, leisure facilities and tourism opportunities,
 - providing school and youth facilities, and
 - high quality design.
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Q: What will this *Shaping Our Community* consultation mean for the Green Belt?

- We want your views on how best to protect the Green Belt for the benefit of the community, which is the main priority set out in the document, while balancing the need to provide jobs, houses and amenities and services for the district.
- This means we need to think long term about choices in the future. For example, if the government imposes an obligation to provide an increased number of new homes in the district, we need to know whether you are prepared to accept a higher density of housing in order to preserve the Green Belt.

Q: What happens next?

- Following the feedback, the council will revise the document and produce the final Core Strategy. The aim is to submit the document formally to the Government in July 2010 and to adopt it, following approval, in June 2011.