



AbbeyRail aims to secure the future of the St Albans Abbey branch railway, website <https://abbeyrail.org.uk/> in association with Hertsrail, a joined-up rail network in Hertfordshire, website <https://hertsrail.org.uk> and RailAble, researching an improved rail network, website <https://railable.com>

St Albans Local Plan Consultation 2024

This document is the AbbeyRail response to the St Albans Local Plan Consultation 2024. We previously responded to the Local Plan as set out in September 2023.

Here is the information that accompanied the invitation to respond to the Local Plan Consultation 2024.

Dear Sir/Madam,

The draft St Albans Local Plan 2041 has now been published for its Regulation 19 consultation. The Plan will be available for you to make representations on between the following dates:

Start Date: 26/09/24 10:00 AM

End Date: 08/11/24 10:00 AM

The draft Local Plan can be found at <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/draft-local-plan-publication> where you can make representations online.

Paper copies of the documents can be found at the following locations during opening hours:

St Albans Civic Centre

St Albans Library

Harpenden Library

London Colney Library

Marshalswick Library

Redbourn Community Library

Wheathampstead Community Library

Hemel Hempstead Library

Leverstock Green Library

Radlett Library

This is a formal, statutory stage in the preparation of a Local Plan. Following the consultation the draft Local Plan is sent, along with all duly-made representations received, to the Planning Inspectorate. The Plan will then be Examined by a government-appointed Planning Inspector who will consider if any changes need to be made to the Local Plan before it can be adopted.

During the Examination of the Local Plan the Planning Inspector is only able to assess whether the draft Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and whether it is 'sound'. Therefore, all representations on the draft Local Plan must relate to a matter of legal compliance or a matter of soundness as follows:

Legally compliant – the draft Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with the legal and procedural requirements for preparing Local Plans

Positively prepared – the draft Local Plan provides a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;

Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;

Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and

Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.

There will also be unstaffed public exhibitions of materials in St Albans Civic Centre between 7 October – 18 October, and 28 October – 7 November.

How do I make any representations?

The best way to respond is by using the online consultation system which can be found through links on the Councils website at <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/draft-local-plan-publication>.

You can send a response by Email to planning.policy@stalbans.gov.uk or by post to: Spatial Planning Team, St Albans Council Offices, St Peters Street, St Albans, AL1 3JE.

All representations must be received by 10am on Friday 8 November 2024.

Yours faithfully,

Spatial Planning Team

Our primary concern in relation to the Local Plan is derived from the context arising from the planning of Hertfordshire Essex Rapid Transit (HERT). We provide an introduction to HERT at <https://hertsrail.org.uk>

HERT features content-free glossy marketing. Whilst we have no reason to object to a direct bus service between Hemel Hempstead and Harlow, the branch via Watford does not take into account reasonable alternatives proposed by us. We have multiple proposals. Over a period of some years these proposals have not been evaluated. Therefore HERT lacks justification.

AbbeyRail is provided by rail researcher RailAble. Objectively-assessed needs for transport connectivity were researched by consultants Atkins in 2014. They were also researched by England's Economic Heartland resulting in Passenger Rail Study Phase Two. We are putting forward proposals to meet these assessed needs, discussed in some detail in parts two and three of our research in the RailAble East west rail - Oxford to Cambridge project. HERT does not meet these assessed needs and therefore lacks positive preparation.

HERT fails two tests, both that of justification and of positive preparation. The implication for the St Albans Local Plan in terms of transport connectivity is that it fails to meet requirements.

Our primary proposals as they affect the St Albans Local Plan are:

(i) a rail link between St Albans Abbey station and Colney Fields shopping park. This is illustrated in orange below, also with connecting chords to the Midland Main Line. Subsequently this would extend eastwards to Hatfield on the East Coast Main line. Rail access to Radlett SRFI as planned is illustrated in light blue;

(ii) a rail link between St Albans Abbey and St Albans City stations. This is illustrated in dark blue below;

(iii) a multi-storey car park replacing the Sainsbury's Supermarket car park. The car park would provide parking both for customers of Sainsbury's Supermarket and for the adjacent Abbey railway station;

(iv) an M25 parkway station at London Colney including a Thameslink service.



Rail link Colney Fields shopping park to St Albans Abbey station



Imagery ©2024 Airbus, Landsat / Copernicus, Maxar Technologies, Map data ©2024 500 m

— Rail access to Radlett freight terminal

RailAble Rail link Colney Fields shopping park to St Albans Abbey station

05. 11. 2024

Additional proposals awaiting evaluation, mostly made by ourselves, include:

- (a) an Abbey Line enhanced service, options including trains passing at How Wood or vicinity;
- (b) East West rail at Watford Junction, connecting Watford High Street to the Abbey line;
- (c) The Building Research Establishment (BRE) could be served by a new station stop on the Abbey line which passes at the boundary;
- (d) a viable alternative to HERT:

To quote from Reg 19 Local Plan Part A Chapter 8 – Transport, page 78 section 8.4:

“Addressing the challenge of increased future travel demand cannot be solved solely through capacity driven highway infrastructure improvements. It will require” ... “traffic demand management measures where appropriate.”

In response, there has been no consideration of demand management on the A414, which is used as a short-cut between the M25 and A1(M) motorways nor of how to provide a shorter link between these motorways that would not use the A414. Such a shorter link could run eastwards from M25 junction 22 and form a parallel corridor with a rail link from St Albans to Hatfield. As a longer-term proposal, a shorter link between these motorways with a parallel rail link is far more fruitful in terms of transport connectivity than an upgrade to the A414.

Planning of a St Albans to Hatfield rail corridor via Colney Fields shopping park would need to take place prior to development of the Bowmans Cross proposal on the east of M25 junction 22 in Hertsmere Borough.

Signposting of routes for walking to the Abbey station are currently lacking.

AbbeyRail and others appreciate the support given to the Abbey line by St Albans City and District Council in previous years and very much hope this can continue.

Verulam Golf Club

Figure 5.9: Site promoter vision for Verulam Golf Club (2023), also showing the north of the course



Photo montage from Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the St Albans Local Plan SA Report September 2024 page 33.

By use of <https://www.openstreetmap.org/> and of Google maps, there is undeveloped land on the northern side of Verulam golf club clubhouse. The photo montage with a south-facing view shows proposed housing on this land and with a redeveloped clubhouse.

Shown in white across the montage is the former London Road business park, currently under redevelopment to form a row of houses and apartments. In the foreground is Orient Close. A train on the Midland Main Line is also in view, also a car on London Road.

This proposed development i.e. on the northern side of the existing clubhouse obstructs a rail link between St Albans Abbey and St Albans City stations, whereas the redevelopment of the former London Road business park is not thought to do so.

Our illustration earlier also available at <https://hertsrail.org.uk> can be magnified for details.

We are proposing an extension of the Abbey line to London Colney. Trains to and from Watford would change direction at St Albans Abbey station. From this station the line would pass beneath Cottonmill Lane making use of the trackbed of the former line from St Albans Abbey to Hatfield, then turning south before reaching Orient Close. It would then cross Verulam golf course to reach the vicinity of Napsbury Lane. From here the new line would continue southwards making use of the existing A414 bridge over the Midland Main Line which has spare capacity for an additional track.

It is possible that the clubhouse would be subject to redevelopment as planned however it would be preferable to identify a new location for a new clubhouse. In this case there would be no requirement to cross the railway line when walking between the clubhouse and the golf course.

If our proposed rail link between St Albans Abbey station and Colney Fields shopping park were to be planned and safeguarded, together with a connection on to the Midland Main Line to enable trains between St Albans Abbey and St Pancras, if our proposed rail link between St Albans Abbey and St Albans City stations were to be put on one side and if a new location for a new clubhouse were to be identified and made available, it is likely that the area of land available for redevelopment would expand, to include some of the golf course in front of the current clubhouse. This would seem to have the potential to be of financial benefit to Verulam Golf Club.

It is very much hoped that a suitable and pleasant new location for a new clubhouse can be identified and agreed. If so, the land take from the golf course, other than land in front of the current clubhouse, would be limited. It is anticipated that the existing bridge for Napsbury Lane crossing the Midland Main Line would be retained but that Napsbury Lane itself would be realigned to run closer to the railway line, thereby limiting the land take.

The golf course is in two parts bisected by Cottonmill Lane. The opportunity would be taken to improve the Cottonmill Lane crossing as used by golfers.

Although railway lines are expensive, indeed too expensive, they do have potential to assist us in our response both to climate change and to population growth. The cooperation of all parties to identify and agree a suitable new location for a new clubhouse would be much appreciated and would also be of benefit to the community.

Implications for specific sites are now listed.

Site B6 - West of London Colney, AL2 1LN, also Education Site

We request planning and safeguarding of a rail link between Colney Fields shopping park and St Albans Abbey station, as illustrated earlier in orange, to take place prior to further planning of site B6.

Site M8 - Verulam Golf Club, St Albans, AL1 1JG

Specific objection, also raised in September 2023. This would obstruct a rail link from St Albans Abbey to St Albans City by means of a semi-circular arc, as illustrated earlier in dark blue.

Site UC1 – Sainsbury's Supermarket, Everard Close, St Albans AL1 2QU

Specific objection, also raised in September 2023. This would obstruct a multi-storey car park providing parking both for Sainsbury's Supermarket and for the Abbey station.

Document date 7 November 2024