

Local and National Policies

There are several key policy documents that cover the development of housing sites. These include:

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

Conservation plans recognise the historic and architectural elements that create a 'unique sense of place' that is worthy of conservation. The Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) is a material consideration in the planning approval process. The plan covers much of the villages of Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets from Cat Hill in the East to the New River in the West.

The contribution that historic areas make to our quality of life is widely recognised. They are a link to the past that can give us a sense of continuity and stability and they have the reassurance of the familiar which can provide a point of reference in a rapidly changing world. The way building traditions and settlement patterns are superimposed and survive over time will be unique to each area. This local distinctiveness can provide a catalyst for regeneration and inspire well designed new development which brings economic and social benefits which are valued by both local planning authorities and local communities in the almost 10,000 conservation areas which have been designated.

Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: Advice note 1

This Conservation Appraisal:

- Identifies the special character of Stanstead Abbots;
- Identifies elements that should be retained or enhanced;
- Identifies detracting elements;
- Reviews the existing boundary;
- Puts forward practical enhancement proposals;

You can find a copy of the Stanstead Abbots Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan at:

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/conservationareas>

Key points from the CAA Management Plan can be found on these pages.

The National Policy Planning Framework

The conservation and enhancement of the historical environment is laid out in the National Policy Planning Framework (revised 2018).

These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations^j

Plans should both conserve and enhance whilst recognising the benefits brought to the community. It also recognises that new development can make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The NPPF also says that assessments should be made to predict 'unidentified heritage assets', such as sites of historical or archaeological importance that may be discovered in the future. The neighbourhood planning area has significant areas defined by East Herts District Council as being of potential archaeological significanceⁱⁱ. The NPPF states that non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.ⁱⁱⁱ

The NPPF states that local authorities should require applicants to describe any historical assets that may be affected. This description should be proportionate and 'no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'. So for areas in the area of archaeological significance the requirement is for an assessment to be made. This can be desk-based or 'where necessary' field investigation. The local authority should then to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Only wholly exceptional circumstances with clear and convincing justification should be considered to development that impacts on Grade I and II listed buildings, parks and gardens (designated assets) and the expectation is of a refusal. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

The NPPF can be found at:

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

ⁱ NPPF Section 184

ⁱⁱ See:

ⁱⁱⁱ NPPF footnote 63: The government has stated that footnotes within the framework are of equal importance and the document should be a considered as a whole.