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# LOOK! St Albans our community voice on design

*"In the spirit of community-led neighbourhood planning our ethos is to be transparent, proactive, respectful, collaborative, open, diverse, explorative and community-rooted."*  
<http://www.lookstalbans.org/> email [lookstalbans@gmail.com](mailto:lookstalbans@gmail.com) Twitter [@LookStAlbans](https://twitter.com/LookStAlbans)

## Minutes

Look! St Albans 6<sup>th</sup> representatives' group meeting to be held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at 7.30pm in Suite 19,  
STANTA Board Room Business Centre, 3 Soothouse Spring, St Albans, Herts AL3 6PF

As per 5.2 REPRESENTATIVES' GROUP POWERS AND MEETINGS the full extract from this section of our constitution is reproduced at the end of this agenda.

### 1) Apologies for absence

John Metcalf, Dan Fletcher, Councillors Beric Read and Julian Daly, David Lloyd.

### Representative members present

Helen Bishop, Tim Leicester, John Hoad, Anthony Oliver, Mel Hilbrow, Graeme Eastham, Alan McCartney, Vanessa Gregory, Chris Debenham, James Gregory

### 2) Conflicts of interest as per 6. of our constitution CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Should any member of Look! St Albans or the Representatives' Group, or any associate partner or relative of such member, have a pecuniary or potential pecuniary interest in any city centre site of interest to Look! St Albans, that member should declare his or her interest at or before the start of the meeting and not vote on any issue pertaining to that site.

None were declared.

### 3) Approval of minutes from reps group meeting dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 copy available here [http://www.lookstalbans.org/uploads/2/7/7/4/27749191/draft\\_minutes\\_reps\\_group\\_meeting\\_monday\\_22nd\\_june\\_2015\\_.pdf](http://www.lookstalbans.org/uploads/2/7/7/4/27749191/draft_minutes_reps_group_meeting_monday_22nd_june_2015_.pdf)

These were approved by Reps Group members present.



#### 4) Chairman's update

I will try and keep this a brief as possible, as most of the information has been sent to you and our supporters and in many cases is on our news and events webpage in more detail. I suggest it would be worthwhile for you to visit this regularly to keep up to date. This saves the necessity of more emails than necessary and gives me more time to deal with our growing correspondence and interest in Look!

Indeed I have to use these notes tonight to ensure I can pass on to you, and for the record, as much of what is going on as possible. These were produced in haste last evening so I hope they make some semblance of sense!

The Grassroots bid and the networking I know some members of the Reps Group have undertaken has resulted in us gaining a much higher profile locally, including engagement with the local branch of the Skipton Building Society. We are beginning to grow a small network of younger people with a great range of skills, who are willing to undertake tasks that fit in with their busy lives. This is the way groups are evolving and getting more people involved. Therefore I hope to set about (or perhaps someone will want to take on the task) of performing a skills audit including an estimate of the time people are able to offer. Therefore I hope it will be sooner rather than later the refreshing of our website, including posting the excellent profiles many of you have provided, as I think it important that when people visit our website they see who we are, not just a bunch of faceless individuals.

At the end of last year we became a member of the Green Triangle at a single one off cost of £30. The Green Triangle is a partnership which has been formed through a collaboration of BRE, Rothamsted Research Establishment, The University of Hertfordshire, St Albans District Council and Oaklands College. As we aim to help shape durable, adaptable and truly sustainable buildings and open spaces we need to encourage people to bring their skills and knowledge to our design charrettes, as after all the skills and knowledge is within this locality and therefore the people are part of the community. Tara Clark the Business Development Manager was keen to join the Reps Group unfortunately she lives outside the district, but has offered her support and skills to help us develop.

As you know the planning application for the MoStA site which the outcome of our design charrette shaped has been submitted and validated under reference 5/2015/3706. Look! St Albans work is done, now is the time for due process.

You will recall we sent the planning department a letter of support for the outcome of the design charrette, as per our constitution on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2014. *As you are aware Look! St Albans as an entity does not have views on planning applications.* Individuals and organisations may make their representations to the council under the reference in the normal way. I will place information on our website including a copy of the Design and



Access statement which Michael Fearn, part of the council team on the MoSTA planning application, kindly sent me, as this explains fully the development of the scheme from the design concept. I will send a letter to the Herts Ad as chairman of Look! St Albans along the lines as I have just mentioned.

I have received a number of very kind communications from the council's team on MoSTA to thank the Look! community for our work on the design charrette. For my part it was very enjoyable working with the team. I know some were apprehensive at the start, but I know a number are now complete converts to our methodology.

Some will already know from our informal gatherings that at a council Overview and Scrutiny committee in July Councillor Jessica Chivers asked Larry Heyman of Govia Thameslink Railway to get in touch with Look! St Albans with the view of a possible design charrette. They are looking to improve the station entrances especially Ridgmont Road, where they want wider ticket gate lines for easier entry and exit, enhanced retail opportunities including a cycle repair shop, platform canopies, a secure cycle hub, improved customer toilets and better ticket buying facilities. The Ridgmont Road entrance to the station faces our city centre and therefore is an important gateway into the city. After the meeting Jessica put me and Larry in touch and I was able to send details of what we could offer. When Larry and Stuart Cheshire returned to the November O&S meeting they seemed very positive about the idea, but needed to wait to find out if their bids for funding had been successful.

I have thanked Councillor Chivers for her support and encouragement by promoting Look! St Albans at both O&S meetings and in between.

When I spoke of this possible design charrette at our informal gatherings in November there was great enthusiasm and so we will wait to see if this is a possible goer!

Therefore we need to be ready at a relatively short notice to get down to arranging what would be a very interesting charrette, engaging with probably a large number of people with different interests and perspectives.

I have also been reminded that we must keep the CCOS site in mind as it could happen at any time so we must be prepared!

We were successful with two bids this last year, but unfortunately the bid to the St Albans Fund for the Future Application was unsuccessful, as it was explained to us they had received a vast number of applications, and there were sufficient funds for only one quarter of them. The email sent to us was very helpful, as the panel was very appreciative of the vibrant and successful work undertaken by Look! and some came up with a few ideas for us to explore on possible sources of funding.

I will be exploring these ideas with Dan in the next few weeks.



A seed idea, which has been discussed at recent informal gatherings and is gaining support, though might have to put on the back burner should a design charrette be forthcoming is the idea to set up an Urban Room called PLACE (PLACE stands for Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Conservation and Engineering). This is where professionals involved in development and local people can engage, discuss and debate how their city should develop. This would not solely be for Look! St Albans. It important to break down real or perceived barriers between professionals and non-professionals. We have one offer already of the use of a room for a pop up Urban Room should we develop this further.

Urban Rooms are popping up all over the country, some are equipped with scale models of their area and put on speaker events and debates on a regular basis so that all residents with an interest can drop in and contribute. This is a good idea I feel. The more events and activities, the more the public can contribute to the creation of design codes that everyone accepts. It would also give us an alternative to gathering in the pub. It needs further thought, but shouldn't be dismissed out of hand.

On the agenda tonight is the AGM. I would like us, if at all possible, to agree on two alternative dates. In case one date at a proposed venue is already booked and/or colleagues not here this evening would have difficulty in attending a particular date. Of course any date chosen might not be agreeable to everyone, but it would be best to try to maximise attendance.

Last year it was taken as read that all Representatives would stand for a second year. However a very few have not engaged in any way for a considerable time. I don't want to lose anyone of the Reps Group, but if people are not involved in any way that seems to me hard to justify staying on the group. They may be embarrassed to say they want to leave the group so we will have to ask sensitively. Nearer the date of the AGM either I or the secretary will email all colleagues individually and ask if they feel able to remain on the group and which organisations/groups if any they represent. Also ask if they feel they cannot remain to suggest they ask a colleague from the same group, organisation or sphere of influence to take their place as a diverse group is important. Of course an invitation will be on our website and circulated to our supporters asking those who are willing to stand and support our ethos, purpose and aims to do so. We have an upper limit of 30 but I don't think we will have to worry about that for the time being.

As you know our colleague Richard Hardy stepped down from the Reps Group in the autumn, as he put it he didn't have the time to play an active part in Look! St Albans anymore due to his growing business. I have sent Richard mine and your best wishes for the future and thanked him for his substantial contributions to Look! St Albans since its inception.



Here is a diary of activities since our last Reps Group meeting. I hope colleagues who took part in these will say more under the next agenda item.

3rd July meeting with various groups and individuals in London with Nicholas Boys Smith of Create Streets regarding the Direct Planning Pilot Bill and ways in which we could support. As many will know the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of the Bill took place on 20<sup>th</sup> November in the House of Lords in which the work of Look! St Albans was mentioned. A link to the speeches is on our website and the bill is now in the committee stage.

9<sup>th</sup> July Kingston Smith networking reception in the Old Town Hall

20<sup>th</sup> July Informal Gathering at the Peahen. I think fewer supporters attended as we were in direct conflict a rather important a golf playoff!

13<sup>th</sup> August Historic Towns Conference held in Oxford James and Mel also attended. The title of the event was 'Greening the Historic Environment – sustainability, travel and historic towns'. **(The Chair asked Mel or James to say more on this on agenda item 6.)** The theme was '*Transport has been a perennial issue for those working in historic towns – Park & Ride, narrow streets, transport emissions and the green agenda are as topical now as always. Speakers were from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles, the British Parking Association, Worcester City Council and a number of others. A debate was held on the issues a discussion took place to look for 21<sup>st</sup> century solutions.*'

22<sup>nd</sup> September Half day symposium at Hertfordshire University: 'Regeneration in Hertfordshire and beyond: Exploring diversity, retrofitting place'.

1<sup>st</sup> October Road tested BIMBY (Beauty in My Backyard) pilot website. I was asked by the Director of The Princes Foundation if I could get together a group to road test the website. I had very short notice and needed to get a small team together, preferably with no professional planning background but had taken part in at least one charrette, to road test the site. This we did with Chris Weatherburn from The Foundation in attendance and made notes on our views on the proposed toolkit ahead of its soft launch at a reception which four of us attended on the 27<sup>th</sup> October. I had very good feedback that our hard work had been very helpful and changes had been made as a result of our comments.

12<sup>th</sup> October Civic Voice Sandys lecture given by Simon Thurley former English Heritage Chief Executive.

15<sup>th</sup> October a friendly cuppa with Councillor Malachy Pakenham deputy leader St Albans councillor group of the Labour party.

23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> October Vanessa and James attended Civic Voice annual conference held in 2015 in Bristol. Where she was able to talk to a number of delegates about the work we do.

9<sup>th</sup> November meeting with Tara Clark the Business Development Manager Green Triangle.

Impromptu Informal gathering to celebrate Grassroots Bid win. **(The Chair asked that Anthony say more on agenda item 6.)**

12<sup>th</sup> November meeting with new supporter Patria Roman who lives locally and is actively involved with community planning groups in London and has set up a charity to engage migrant and ethnic communities, in particular Latin Americans, in urban regeneration in London.

23<sup>rd</sup> November Our informal gathering as part of St Albans Sustainable Week.



25<sup>th</sup> November Historic Towns Annual Conference London: Whose Placemaking is it Anyway? Archaeology, Architecture and the Unseen in Historic Towns.

26<sup>th</sup> November Annual Community Conference attended by Mel. **(The Chairman asked Mel to brief us on this on agenda item 6.)**

28<sup>th</sup> November St Albans Sustainable Week 'Creating a Sustainable St Albans', more about this on the website.

3rd December 5th London Neighbourhood Planning Gathering (including slightly north London) arranged by Angela Koch with Tony Burton. As always this was well attended and we always learn something.

One member said they had been asked by the team on the MoSTA planning application to ask that Look! St Albans send a letter of support for the planning application, as after all the client has spent a considerable sum on the design charrette so that was the least they could expect. John Hoad confirmed that from the council viewpoint letters of support from groups carried more weight than individual representations.

The Chair reiterated and other members of the group concurred that Look! St Albans, as an organisation, does not have a collective view on any planning application, as the collective views have been expressed through the outcome of the design charrette.

The Chair did say she was minded to resend the letter of support for the outcome of the design charrette, as a considerable amount of time had elapsed since that look place. However she would stress that it was not be read as a comment on the planning application. She herself would not be making any personal representation on the planning application to avoid any misunderstandings on the matter.

## 5) Treasurer's update

The Treasurer gave the following report

The balance at the bank, after all cheques that have been written out have gone through, is £1,150.69.

Income received during the current accounting year (i.e. since 1 April 2015) amounts to £1,471.85.

Expenditure incurred during the same period amounts to £693.81.

However, expenditure this accounting year has so far comprised items that will probably be repeated each year (i.e. insurance premium £471.72; stationery £29.97; subscriptions £66.00; website and social media £126.12).



Income this accounting year has so far comprised items that are not inevitably going to be repeated each year (i.e. Chris White locality budget scheme £900.00; Skipton BS Grassroots Award £500.00; PayPal receipts £71.85).

Out of Chris White's locality budget scheme grant of £900.00, we have since spent £657.81, so that £242.19 is left.

All of the Skipton BS Grassroots Award amount of £500.00 remains available.

If one looks at our Budgeted Expenditure figures, the Annual Costs section totals £1,025.00. Our expenditure this accounting year to date, £693.81, is well within that, but we still have the potential costs of an AGM before the end of the accounting year.

The budget for likely Workshop Costs for a single charrette was £1,450.00, which exceeds the balance we currently have available in our bank account.

These were noted by the group and the Chair thanked Chris for preparing these for the meeting.

The chairman said that obviously in view of the possibility of hold a design charrette soon and the prospects of one soon after we should look at all methods of funding. She noted Tim Leicester had been very successful in raising funds for play equipment for Victoria Playing Fields.

Tim gave a brief outline of the methods used including sponsorship, businesses offering goods or services and Crowdfunding.

One member asked Tim what Crowdfunding is.

Crowdfunding is a way of raising finance by asking a large number of people mainly via the internet for a small amount of money or by accepting offers of good or services for people to bid for to raise the funds needed. Some websites only collect money pledged if the target figure has been reached within a specific period of time.

The Chairman asked if any were interested in taking part in the forthcoming pancake race or walk, as taking part and wearing a tee shirt with our logo would raise our profile in a fun way. Unfortunately not a sufficient volunteers were available on the 9<sup>th</sup> February (the day of the race).



## 6) Verbal updates on events and activities from individual Representative Group members acting as ambassadors for Look! St Albans since last group meeting.

Anthony updated the group on his extremely positive meeting with Pat Larner (supporter) with Michael McHugh, Branch manager of Skipton Building Society St Albans. Michael and his team were delighted that a local group had won a Grassroots award and would look favourably on continuing to support Look! St Albans by placing a Look! St Albans poster advertising an event in their window. They have a small annual budget for local groups and would consider paying for example the hire of a room such as for our AGM.

This report was welcomed by the group and the chair thanked Anthony and Pat for keeping the communication channels open with Michael, as good communications is vital in spreading the word about our work.

The reports by Mel Hilbrow were given to the chair after the meeting and are an addendum to these minutes.

## 7) Arrangements including date for the AGM

*Please note as the last AGM was held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015, this AGM must be held by or before Monday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016.*

After checking school holiday dates two dates were put forward either 18<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> April. A brief discussion ensued and the 25<sup>th</sup> of April was the most supported date. As we had been made most welcome at St Peter's Church last year it was agreed to approach the church with the view of hiring the Octagon room again.

8) The Chair closed the meeting at 9:15pm and thanked Mel for the use of STANTA Board Room. She also thanked Tim Leicester for providing some fine Scottish whiskey and glasses for all those present after the meeting to raise a glass to celebrate Burn's Night!

**As it was the wish of those present to keep the meeting reasonable tight the deputy chair Mel Hilbrow sent through his comments pertaining to Agenda item (6) after the meeting. These now appear as an addendum.**

'Vanessa, James and Mel attended the Historic Towns Forum – Greening the Historic Environment event, which took a look at the pressures and some solutions variously effective to the problems for historic towns. The Campaign to Protect Rural England presented some successes (e.g. Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy: Infrastructure Act 2015) but saw major threats in the return to major road building and the lack of rail development outside the major city links. Despite all the publicity, walking and cycling were not significantly increasing outside London. The meeting also looked at the infrastructure for electric cars, park & ride and green buses in Oxford, the management of parking and the particular developments in Henley.



Mel attended the St Albans Community Conference which focussed on the skills agenda and the shortages both for business and the voluntary sector. On the positive side the director of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations indicated about 25% of the adult population volunteered in some way and there were 1 million trustees of voluntary organisations in the UK. As usual, there were a number of workshops, the outcome of which will be fed into the Council Plans.'

**These minutes were approved by those present and signed by the chairman at the 5<sup>th</sup> representatives' group meeting held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

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**Chair Look! St Albans Our Community Voice on Design**



**We're proud to be one of Skipton Building Society's Grassroots Giving Winners, recognised for supporting our local community.**



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