



Abbey Precincts Residents Association

*Protecting our Conservation Area*

Community, Environment and Sport Scrutiny Committee  
St Albans City & District Council  
Civic Centre  
St Albans  
AL1 3JB

8 January 2019

### **A Future St Albans Christmas Market**

APRA strongly supports the idea of a St Albans Christmas Market. As envisaged when first set up in the Vintry Garden, this should be an attraction that enhances the appearance of the city and adds to the festive spirit as well as increasing interaction with local businesses. We are disappointed that it has not proved viable in its original form but are unhappy about relocation to the Westminster Lodge meadow as part of a much-expanded Christmas Festival.

What benefit did the 2018 Christmas festival bring to the city? As trialled in December, the event was primarily a funfair rather than a market. The few goods for sale were poor in quality and value for money. There were too many fast-food outlets. The event was not well received by the visiting public – on the Meraki website the predominantly unfavourable reviews were manipulated by interspersing with good reviews of the summer festival.

We object to the fact that Council officers, councillors and the local press have taken to referring to the area used as ‘the events meadow’ – it is an integral part of the Park and should be respected as such. Damage to the site was predictably high due to heavy footfall at the entrance and round the perimeter on the Westminster Lodge side. The dismantling has revealed extremely heavy rutting of muddy areas that were previously grassed (see attached photographs). It remains to be seen how quickly the meadow will recover. This should be a limiting factor on future heavy usage of this sort.

To strike a more hopeful note, a frequently repeated comment was that the Charter Market offered more variety and better quality, and its presence over 10 continuous days was much appreciated: this and its central location should be an obvious pointer to the best way of organising future Christmas markets. Stall holders could be encouraged/enticed to display more Christmas decorations. Festive background music could also be organised during daylight hours. The area in front of the New Museum and Gallery could be used to special effect, e.g., with a large Christmas tree and live Carol singing? Nearby areas around the Alban Arena could host simple additional attractions for children. This would be much more in line with the successful traditional Christmas markets held in other UK historic cities and should genuinely bring longer-term tourist interest.

P. Trevelyan  
Chair

R.J Pankhurst  
Secretary 13 College Street, AL3 4PW