

Matter 1 – Legal Compliance

Issue 2– Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

2. At the Stage 1 hearings, the Council committed to providing further clarity regarding site allocations and flooding. The Flood Risk Addendum – July 2025 (Examination Document SADC/ED77) reassesses sites subject to flooding. In summary, it proposes the deletion and/or modification of 9 allocated sites.

Q1 How does the additional evidence consider surface water flood risks?

- 1.1 The Flood Risk Addendum – July 2025 (Examination Document SADC/ED77) sets out at 1.1 that the document:

...provides additional context for the consideration of flood risk, based on the discussions during the Examination Stage 1 Hearings.

- 1.2 The Addendum seeks to ensure that the Local Plan fully meets the requirements of national policy paragraph 167 through taking into account all sources of flood risk:

167. All plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development – taking into account all sources of flood risk and the current and future impacts of climate change – so as to avoid, where possible, flood risk to people and property

- 1.3 The Flood Risk Addendum Section 4 sets out how non-fluvial flood risk, including surface water flood risk, is considered in the Flood Risk Sequential and Exception Test 2024 (SET) (SADC/ED64):

4.1 The Flood Risk Sequential and Exception Test 2024 (SET) (SADC/ED64) consideration of non-fluvial sources of flood risk was aligned with the approach set out in the SFRA Level 1 Addendum and summarised above:

it is not anticipated that the sequential test for surface water would normally require alternative sites at lower risk to be considered, because the widespread and dendritic nature of surface water flood risk differs conceptually to river and sea flood risk.

4.2 For this reason the surface water flood risk was treated within the Flood Risk Sequential and Exception Test 2024 (SADC/ED64) (SET) as a factor that could be managed on-site. For sites where the proportion of surface water flood risk is low the development can be directed away from areas at risk, along with the inclusion of design features such as raising ground levels, raising floor levels, and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

4.3 The SFRA Level 1 Addendum does go on to state, as summarised above and provided again here that:

in some circumstances, for example, for relatively small sites that are potentially substantially affected by surface water, alternative sites may be considered

1.4 Section 4 therefore goes on to state that:

Small sites with a high proportion of surface water flood risk will therefore be considered further in detail below

1.5 Section 5 of the document considers sites with a high risk of surface water flooding and looks at the larger sites first:

There are no sites from 0.4ha to 2ha where more than 10% of the site is at risk of surface water flooding at 1% AEP. There is one allocated site greater than 2ha where more than 10% of the site is at risk of surface water flooding at 1% AEP; this is site M6 South of Harpenden Lane with 22% of the site at this level of flood risk. The indicative housing capacity for this site has already been reduced to take account of the proportion of the site subject to flood risk.

1.6 Section 5 goes on to consider the smaller sites:

There are 10 smaller sites where risk of surface water flooding is 10% or more of the area and these are set out in the Table 1 below. Each of these sites underwent a SFRA Level 2 assessment that are published in the Examination Library. Where the proportion of site subject to surface water flood risk is above 10% and where, if this proportion of the site was removed from the indicative housing capacity, then the capacity would fall below the minimum 5 homes threshold, then the site allocations may need to be reconsidered.

1.7 Section 7 of the document concludes that:

7.3 In terms of the risk of surface water flooding, the SRFA Level 1 Addendum states that 'it is not anticipated that the sequential test for surface water would normally require alternative sites at lower risk to be considered, because the widespread and dendritic nature of surface water flood risk differs conceptually to river and sea flood risk.' and that 'in some circumstances, for example, for relatively small sites that are potentially substantially affected by surface water, alternative sites may be considered.' On this basis the approach to surface water flood risk for larger sites for the sequential test is that this type of flood risk can be managed on site through design and layout, and mitigation measures such as SuDS. It should be noted that surface water flood risk comprises less than 10% at each Broad Location site.

7.4 It is acknowledged for some small sites where the risk of surface water flooding comprises 10% or more of the site that this should have been taken into account in the sequential test. The potential impact is 28 fewer homes delivered from these sites.

Q2 Are the suggested changes necessary to make the submitted Plan sound?

- 2.1 Yes, it is considered that the suggested changes are necessary to make the submitted Plan sound. The changes will bring the assessment of flood risk into alignment with National Policy, as per paragraph 167 (see response to Q1 above).
- 2.2 These changes are necessary to remove those sites where surface water flood risk as identified in the Surface Water Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is of a level that the site cannot be considered safe from flood risk throughout the lifetime of the development.
- 2.3 The sites to have their capacity amended or to be removed are set out in The Flood Risk Addendum – July 2025 (Examination Document SADC/ED77), paragraph 7.6:
- *UC8, Public Hall, 6 Southdown Road, Harpenden – reduce from 24 to 19 units**
 - *UC24, Garages Rear of Hill End Lane – reduce from 8 to 5 units*
 - *UC36, Garages off Park Street Lane, Park Street – remove site*
 - *UC43, Garage block to west of 32-46 Riverside Road, St Albans – remove site*
 - *UC46, Garage Blocks adj. to 76 Oakley Road and 151 Grove – reduce from 6 to 5 units*
 - *UC53, Motor Repair Garage, Park Street Lane – reduce from 11 to 9 units*
 - *UC55, 44 – 52 Lattimore Road, St Albans – reduce from 15 to 13 units*
 - *UC58, Garage Block B off Cotlandswick, London Colney – remove site*
 - *M20, Lower Luton Road, Harpenden, AL5 5AF – reduce from 25 to 12 units.*
- * Site no longer available
- 2.4 Once the relevant sites are either removed or have their capacities amended it is considered that the Plan will be sound with regard to surface water flood risk. These changes are proposed as Main Modifications as set out in SADC/ED85B and SADC/ED85C and as consequential amendments to the Policies Maps.

Q3 Subject to the suggested changes, is the Plan consistent with national planning policy insofar as flood risk avoidance and mitigation is concerned?

- 3.1 Yes, the subject to the suggested changes, the Plan is considered to be consistent with national planning policy with regard to flood risk avoidance and mitigation. As per the response to Question 2 above, the changes will meet the requirements of NPPF paragraph 167.
- 3.2 The Council has done what is required to demonstrate the application of the sequential test on fluvial flood risk through the Flood Risk Sequential and Exception

Test 2024 (SADC/ED64), and this has been acknowledge by the Environment Agency in their letter of 27.01.25 (SADC/ED65). There is no development proposed outside of fluvial Flood Risk Zone 1.

- 3.3 The Addendum also addressed groundwater flood risk and, due to the degree of risk on one site only, proposes reducing the quantum of development at site M20 Lower Luton Road, Harpenden, where the potential proportion of the site vulnerable to groundwater flood risk would reduce the capacity of homes to 12, a fall of 13.
- 3.4 Further, the Addendum also addresses surface water flood risk as set out in answer to M1I2Q1 and M1I2Q2 above.