

Matter 4 – Type and Mix of Housing

Issue 4 – Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding

Q1 What is the anticipated need for Self and Custom Build over the Plan period? Does Policy HOU5 provide an appropriate basis for meeting that need?

What is the anticipated need for Self and Custom Build over the Plan period?

- 1.1 The Council considers that there is not a definitive anticipated need for Self and Custom Build over the Plan period, but that Policy HOU5 does provide an appropriate basis for meeting the likely actual need.
- 1.2 As set out in SADC/ED71 Annual Monitoring Report 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024 (AMR), the Council moved to a new approach for the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding (SCH) Register in 2024. This included splitting the Register into 2 Parts, Part 1 for those who passed a Local Connection Test (LCT) (those living / working in the District); and Part 2 for those who do not meet the Local Connection Test. A fee of £45 is payable for those who meet the LCT and a fee of £35 for others meeting the Minimum Eligibility Criteria (MEC). Every individual or group on the previous Register was contacted between 8 and 10 July 2024, made aware of the new process, and given until 20 September 2024 to respond to join the new Register. The changes were primarily aimed at better identifying the genuine demand for SCH plots in the District, and the indication is that actual demand is significantly lower than recorded in the previous Register, and more in line with other South West Hertfordshire and other broadly comparable Local Authorities, most of whom have moved to making a similar modest charge for appearing on their own Registers.
- 1.3 The latest AMR (SADC/ED71) sets out that since the inception of the new Register in July 2024, as of 30 October 2024, there were a total of 16 individuals on Part 1 (having met the LCT) and 1 individual on Part 2 (having met the MEC). Table 57 of SADC/ED71 set out a reduction of 818 Individuals (including Individuals of Associations) between the original Register and the new split Register.

Table 57: SADC Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Registrations (2016 – 2024)

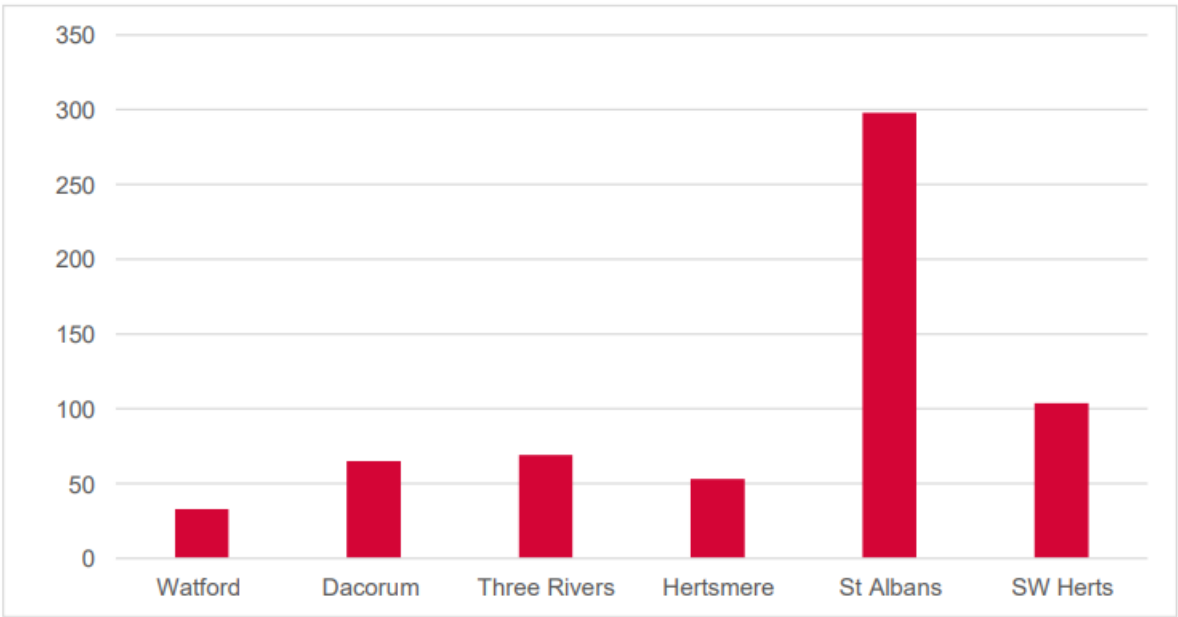
Base Period	Time Period	Individuals	Reduction following new process 8 July 2024	Individual Cumulative Totals	Association Plots	Reduction following new process 8 July 2024	Association Cumulative Totals
1	01 April to 30 Oct 2016	108		108	0		0
2	31 Oct 2016 to 30 Oct 2017	140		248	4		4
3	31 Oct 2017 to 30 Oct 2018	104		352	0		4
4	31 Oct 2018 to 30 Oct 2019	87		439	0		4
5	31 Oct 2019 to 30 Oct 2020	76		515	0		4
6	31 Oct 2020 to 30 Oct 2021	130		645	9		13
7	31 Oct 2021 to 30 Oct 2022	87		732	0		13
8	31 Oct 2022 to 30 Oct 2023	67		799	0		13
9	31 Oct 2023 to 30 Oct 2024	23	-805	17	0	-13	0

- 1.4 As of 19 September 2025, there were 25 people on the new SCH Register and a further 24 people have expressed interest in being on the new SCH Register without

completing the process. The total of 25 people on the new Register comprises of 23 people who met the Local Connection Test (Part 1 of the Register) and 2 people who did not (Part 2) and includes 5 people not on the previous Register.

- 1.5 Furthermore, evidence from the previous 6 months indicates that people are joining the Register at a rate of roughly 2 individuals every month.
- 1.6 The South West Herts Local Housing Needs Assessment Update of March 2024 (HOU 02.01) (LHNA) showed a significantly greater demand for SCH in St Albans District compared to other South West Hertfordshire Local Authorities, which was reflected in its assessment of SCH need per 100,000 population and of comparing SCH permissions to need (Tables 10.1 and 10.4 respectively, reproduced below).

Figure 10.1 Self-Build Need per 100,000 Population



Source: NACSBA Research

Table 10.4 Comparing Self-Build Permissions with Need to Oct 2022

	Watford	Dacorum	Three Rivers	Hertsmere	St Albans	SW Herts
Need to Oct 2022	31	203	78	78	735	1125
Supply to Oct 2022	27	232	113	165	150	687
Shortfall/Surplus	-4	29	35	87	-585	-438

Source: LA Register data/ AMRs

- 1.7 However, based on the latest available evidence since the launch of the new SCH Register in 2024, including that set out in the latest AMR (SADC/ED71) and plots granted permission, the current data indicates that the effective demand for SCH in the District is far more limited than the need set out in the LHNA.
- 1.8 Taking the above into account, although the Council considers that there is not a definitive anticipated need for SCH plots over the Plan period and the updated

Register is still relatively new, it is considered reasonable to assume that actual need is likely to be more in line with the average for the other South West Authorities.

Does Policy HOU5 provide an appropriate basis for meeting that need?

1.9 Yes, it is considered that Policy HOU5 provides an appropriate basis for meeting this need. The 3% SCH requirement for sites with a capacity of 100+ dwellings represents a modest Policy requirement which would likely meet the need.

1.10 In advance of the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation in 2023, a review of recently adopted Local Plans was undertaken focused on the approach taken to SCH and percentage requirements. Broadly speaking, most comparable authorities had either taken the approach of requiring 1%, 3% or 5% SCH on strategic scale sites. The most common approach supported at Examination by Inspectors was 3% and that formed the basis for the approach at the Regulation 18 stage. In undertaking a further review in 2024, it was again found from a review of broadly comparable Authorities that 3% was the figure most supported. It was also the case that the 3% figure at Regulation 18 stage was generally supported by respondents. As a part of the comparison exercises, other authorities with adopted Plans include the following SCH requirements:

- Welwyn Hatfield – Plan adopted 12 October 2023:

Self-build and Custom Housebuilding: On sites of 100 or more non-flatted dwellings, 2% of serviced dwelling plots should be provided to contribute towards meeting the evidenced demand for Self-build and Custom Housebuilding in the borough.

- East Hertfordshire – Plan adopted October 2018:

To support prospective self-builders, on sites of more than 200 dwellings, developers will be expected to supply at least 1% of dwelling plots for sale to self-builders, having regard to the need identified on the Council's Self-Build and Custom Build Register.

- Wycombe – Plan adopted August 2019:

Any development which includes 100 houses or more is required to include 5% of the proposed dwelling numbers as self-build plots.

- Stevenage – Plan adopted May 2019:

At least 1% of new homes on the urban extensions to be self-build.

- Watford – Plan adopted October 2022:

Residential proposals for 50 non-flatted homes or more (excluding affordable homes) will be supported where they provide one self-build plot for every 10

houses, in agreement with the Local Planning Authority. This will be secured through legal agreement.

- 1.11 As such, the 3% requirement proposed for St Albans can be considered a relatively mid-range requirement, which would meet the District's SCH needs.
- 1.12 It should also be noted that the LHNA at paragraph 10.21 outlines a range of approaches for provision:

Other local plans have required a proportion of plots on larger development schemes to be provided as self- and custom-build development (e.g. 2% or 5% provision on strategic or greenfield sites of over 100 homes).

- 1.13 Policy HOU5 also encourages SCH provision for residential development proposals of 10 homes or more (Use Class C3) in suitable, sustainable locations; and, seeks a mix of self-build and Custom Housebuilding plots to be made available as informed by the Council's Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register. This is in line with LHNA paragraph 10.21:

A specific policy would typically express support for self-build and custom housebuilding and require that a minimum proportion of plots within development schemes (often over a certain size) are offered to self-builders or as custom-build plots and/or allocation of sites solely for the use.

- 1.14 Taking the above into account, the Council considers that there is not a definitive anticipated need for Self and Custom Build over the Plan period, but that Policy HOU5 does provide an appropriate basis for meeting the likely need.

Q2 Are the requirements of Policy HOU5 justified, and will they be effective?

- 2.1. It is considered important to note that the 3% SCH provision required by HOU5 a) is coming forward universally on draft allocated sites that are currently coming through pre-application discussions or have live planning applications. This includes sites: H1 - North Hemel Hempstead, H2 - East Hemel Hempstead (North), H3 - East Hemel Hempstead (Central) and H4 - East Hemel Hempstead (South), B1 - North St Albans, B2 - North East Harpenden, B3 - West of Redbourn, B4 – East St Albans and B7 - North West Harpenden (for site B7 the related application is currently resolved to grant by Committee with 3% SCH). This demonstrates that the 3% SCH requirement is acceptable to applicants / site promoters for strategic scale sites, and therefore it is considered that the policy requirement will be effective in delivering a significant number of SCH plots over the Plan period.
- 2.2. Taking the above into account, along with the answer to Q1 above, the Council considers that the requirements of Policy HOU5 represent an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence; and that Policy HOU5 provides an appropriate basis for delivering the Self

and Custom Build plots needed in the District over the Plan period. As such it is considered that the requirements of Policy HOU5 are justified and that they will be effective.