Matter 9 – Housing Land Supply

Issue 1 – Total Land Supply

Q1 What is the most up-to-date position regarding the projected total supply of housing over the plan period?

1.1 The most up-to-date position regarding the projected total supply of housing over the updated plan period of 17 years from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2041 is set out in the Council's updated Local Plan housing trajectory in response to Matter 2 Issue 1 Question 1 (see Table 1). The trajectory sets out that the projected total supply of housing over the updated plan period from 2024/25 to 2040/41 is 15,489 net dwellings. The projected total supply of housing (15,489 net dwellings) meets the Plan's updated total minimum housing requirement of 15,045 dwellings (885 dwellings per year) over the updated plan period, as calculated using the standard method.

1.2 NB: as agreed with HCC on 10 October 2025 through a signed Statement of Common Ground, in order to address the matters that HCC raised in their Hearing Statements for Stage 2 Matter 1 Issue 1 on 26 September, SADC have agreed to propose new Main Modifications. This amounts to the deletion of 7 small sites and a reduction in 47 homes capacity in total. In due course, this will be reflected in an updated draft Housing Trajectory. This SoCG can be found at M9I1 Appendix 1. The sites are:

1 - UC17 - Garage Block off Cotlandswick, London Colney (5 homes)
2 - UC24, Garages Rear of Hill End Lane (LP Reg 19 – 8 homes; updated calculation 5 homes)
3 - UC33 - Land Rear of 53 Snatchup, Redbourn (5 homes)
4 - UC46, Garage Blocks adj. to 76 Oakley Road and 151 Grove (LP Reg 19 6 homes - updated calculation 5 homes)
5 - UC51 - Garage Block to South of Abbots Park (5 homes)
6 - UC53, Motor Repair Garage, Park Street Lane (LP Reg 19 11 homes - updated calculation 9 homes)
7 - UC55, 44 – 52 Lattimore Road, St Albans (LP Reg 19 15 homes - updated calculation 13 homes)
(Total = 47 homes)

Q2 What is the windfall allowance based on and is it justified?

2.1 Yes, the Council considers that the windfall allowance is justified. The definition used to describe 'justified' in the NPPF is:

<u>Examining Plans</u>
35. …

b) ***Justified*** *– an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;*

2.2 The windfall allowance is justified as it follows national policy in the NPPF, as set out in paragraph 72 and the Glossary:

72. Where an allowance is to be made for windfall sites as part of anticipated supply, there should be compelling evidence that they will provide a reliable source of supply. Any allowance should be realistic having regard to the strategic housing land availability assessment, historic windfall delivery rates and expected future trends. Plans should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area.

Windfall sites: *Sites not specifically identified in the development plan.*

2.3 The total windfall allowance over the updated plan period from 2024/25 to 2040/41 is 1,958 net dwellings. This comprises an annual windfall allowance of 145 net dwellings per year over 13 years from 2028/29 to 2040/41 and half of the annual windfall allowance (73 net dwellings) in one year in 2027/28. This windfall allowance is included in the Council's updated Local Plan housing trajectory set out in response to Matter 2 Issue 1 Question 1 (see Table 1). The Council previously provided an explanation of the windfall allowance in the submitted Local Plan in HOU 01.02 SADC Housing Land Supply, Windfall & Capacity Evidence Paper (2024) (see Section 5, pages 3-4).

2.4 The windfall allowance in the updated trajectory is justified as it is based on strong recent evidence of historic windfall delivery rates in St Albans. This involved an analysis of quantitative past residential completions data in the district over a 10-year period from 2013/14 to 2022/23 to determine an estimated average annual windfall allowance figure. It was concluded that the annual windfall allowance should be 145 net dwellings per year. The methodology applied to calculate the windfall allowance is outlined below.

2.5 The analysis followed national policy by excluding past residential completions sites from windfall calculations if they were located within the boundaries of site allocations in the district's current adopted Development Plan. Specifically, residential completions sites were not included as historic windfall if they were allocated in the 'saved' policies of the District Local Plan Review 1994 or the made Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2019 (no other made Neighbourhood Plan in the District contains site allocations). Past residential completions in the windfall analysis were classified into four categories of sites by total net dwelling capacity size, as outlined below:

- Sites with a net gain of zero or negative net gain (0 to -10 dwellings)
- Small sites (net gain of 1 to 4 dwellings)
- Medium sites (net gain of 5 to 9 dwellings)
- Large sites (net gain of 10+ dwellings)

2.6 Past residential completions in the four sites categories above were defined as windfall and included in the analysis according to several criteria. These comprised the site's existing land use, whether it was in an urban settlement or the Green Belt, and if the site was located on previously developed land or greenfield land. The criteria are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Windfall definition criteria by site category

Site category	Windfall definition criteria
Sites with a net gain of zero or negative net gain (0 to -10 dwellings)	Completions for all existing land use classes in urban settlements and the Green Belt
Small sites (net gain of 1 to 4 dwellings)	Completions for all existing land use classes in urban settlements and the Green Belt
Medium sites (net gain of 5 to 9 dwellings)	Completions for existing land use classes C3 dwellinghouses, B2 general industrial and E(g)(i) / B1(a) offices in urban settlements and previously developed land in the Green Belt (excluding greenfield land in the Green Belt)
Large sites (net gain of 10+ dwellings)	Completions for existing land use classes C3 dwellinghouses, B2 general industrial and E(g)(i) / B1(a) offices in urban settlements (excluding all land in the Green Belt)

2.7 It is considered important to note that this analysis excluded greenfield land in the Green Belt for medium sites (net gain of 5 to 9 dwellings) and that all land in the Green Belt was excluded for large sites (net gain of 10+ dwellings).

2.8 Applying the methodology above, the analysis of historic windfall delivery rates in the district from 2013/14 to 2022/23 resulted in an initial average net annual windfall completions figure of 176 net dwellings per year, as set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: St Albans windfall net completions (2013/14 to 2022/23)

Year	Sites with a net gain of zero or negative net gain (0 to -10 dwellings)	Small Sites (Net gain of 1 to 4 dwellings)	Medium Sites (Net gain of 5 to 9 dwellings)	Large Sites (Net gain of 10+ dwellings)	Total (all sites)
2013/14	-29	84	1	-17	**39**
2014/15	-3	69	7	111	**184**
2015/16	2	124	61	107	**294**
2016/17	-10	79	25	67	**161**
2017/18	-14	78	-26	172	**210**
2018/19	-54	78	58	229	**311**
2019/20	-6	74	23	122	**213**
2020/21	41	85	38	1	**165**
2021/22	-19	60	23	0	**64**
2022/23	-6	115	5	0	**114**
Total (2013/14 to 2022/23)	**-98**	**846**	**215**	**792**	**1,755**
Annual average (2013/14 to 2022/23)	**-10**	**85**	**22**	**79**	**176**

N.B. This analysis applied the most recently available data on windfall at Regulation 19 publication of the Plan in September 2024, which covered the previous monitoring period up to 2022/23.

2.9 Further analysis of historic data in the table above was completed, given that windfall net completions on large sites (net gain of 10+ dwellings) declined sharply in the last three years of the analysis period (from 2020/21 to 2022/23). An examination of the existing land use of historic windfall completions indicated that sites previously in use for use classes E(g)(i) or B1(a) office uses contributed significantly to the total windfall net completions figures for medium and large sites. A summary of historic windfall delivery in the district from sites formerly in use for offices is set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3: St Albans windfall net completions from offices (existing use classes E(g)(i) or B1(a)) (2013/14 to 2022/23)

Year	Sites with a net gain of zero or negative net gain (0 to -10 dwellings)	Small Sites (Net gain of 1 to 4 dwellings)	Medium Sites (Net gain of 5 to 9 dwellings)	Large Sites (Net gain of 10+ dwellings)	Total (all sites)
2013/14	0	11	15	10	**36**
2014/15	0	15	15	73	**103**
2015/16	0	30	26	90	**146**
2016/17	-1	17	32	0	**48**
2017/18	0	7	12	72	**91**
2018/19	0	5	6	217	**228**
2019/20	0	13	14	119	**146**
2020/21	0	4	17	1	**22**
2021/22	0	4	0	0	**4**
2022/23	0	8	0	0	**8**
Total (2013/14 to 2022/23)	**-1**	**114**	**137**	**582**	**832**
Annual average (2013/14 to 2022/23)	**0**	**11**	**14**	**58**	**83**

2.10 A total of 34 net dwellings were completed on all windfall sites previously in use for offices between 2020/21 and 2022/23. Because of this, the Council considered a conservative approach should be taken to calculating the final annual average windfall allowance figure. The initial average net annual windfall completions figure of 176 net dwellings per year was reduced by 30 net dwellings to account for declining office to residential conversions in recent years and then rounded to the nearest five number. This resulted in the Plan's final annual windfall allowance of 145 net dwellings per year.

2.11 It can be noted that, after the sharp decline in years 2020/21 to 2022/23, there has been a significant upturn with several significant windfall completions on sites formerly in use for offices have occurred in more recent years after the analysis period ended on 31 March 2023. There were 73 net dwellings completed from 2023/24 to 2024/25 on sites previously in office use in the district, representing an average of 37 net dwellings per year, as set out in Table 4 below.

Table 4: St Albans windfall net completions from offices (existing use classes E(g)(i) or B1(a)) (2023/24 to 2024/25)

Year	Total Net Dwellings Completed
2023/24	20
2024/25	53
Total	**73**
Annual Average (2023/24 to 2024/25)	**37**

2.12 Furthermore, there has been a very considerable upswing in planning permissions for sites formerly in use for offices recently. This upswing has taken permissions as high as they have ever been in the period since 2013/2014 and will follow through into much higher levels of completions in coming years. As at 31 March 2025, a total of 106 net dwellings on sites formerly in use for offices in St Albans have planning permission but are not yet completed. In addition, 260 net dwellings on sites previously in office use in the district have been granted planning permission between 1 April 2025 and 31 August 2025 (which are windfall as they are not accounted for in the draft Housing Trajectory).

2.13 The annual windfall allowance of 145 net dwellings per year begins in year 3 (post adoption) (2028/29) of the updated Local Plan housing trajectory. Half of the annual windfall allowance, 73 net dwellings per year, is included in year 2 (post adoption) (2027/28) of the housing trajectory. The windfall allowance is excluded from 2025/26 and 2026/27 because most homes that are estimated to be completed in this period are likely to already be known. This approach reflects the evidence for timescales of delivery of windfall over many years.

2.14 Overall, there is compelling evidence to justify the inclusion of the windfall allowance in the housing land supply in the updated Local Plan housing trajectory, as it provides a reliable source of supply. The Council considers that it is taking a relatively conservative approach to windfall in the housing trajectory that is realistic and based on strong recent evidence.

2.15 NB: It can also be noted that, as stated in the Council's response to Matter 6 Issue 6 Question 5, there is clear evidence of additional housing land supply coming forward at the current time and in the context of 'Grey Belt'. This is set out within Matter 6 Issue 6 Question 5 Appendix 1 "Housing Trajectory – Additional Homes Context". As addressed at paragraph 2.7 above, it is considered important to note that the windfall calculation does not include any allowance for greenfield land in the Green Belt for medium sites (net gain of 5 to 9 dwellings) or large sites (net gain of 10+ dwellings). In reality these 'Grey Belt' sites will form a significant amount of 'windfall' supply in the early years of the Plan in particular.

Q3 Is the projected supply of housing justified and has sufficient land been identified to ensure that housing needs will be met, including an appropriate buffer to provide flexibility and allow for changing circumstances? If not, what modifications can be made to the Plan in order to make it sound?

Is the projected supply of housing justified

3.1 Yes, the Council considers that the projected supply of 15,489 net dwellings over the updated plan period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2041 is justified. The definition used to describe 'justified' in the NPPF is:

Examining Plans
35. …
b) ***Justified*** *– an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;*

3.2 The projected supply of housing is justified as it follows national policy on identifying land for homes and maintaining supply and delivery, as well as Planning Practice Guidance on housing supply and delivery. In particular this is set out at NPPF paragraphs 69, 75 and 77. Overall the sites identified accord with the NPPF Glossary for Deliverable and Developable sites:

Deliverable: *To be considered deliverable, sites for housing should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years. In particular:*
a) sites which do not involve major development and have planning permission, and all sites with detailed planning permission, should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that homes will not be delivered within five years (for example because they are no longer viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans).
b) where a site has outline planning permission for major development, has been allocated in a development plan, has a grant of permission in principle, or is identified on a brownfield register, it should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years.

Developable: *To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development with a reasonable prospect that they will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.*

Has sufficient land been identified to ensure that housing needs will be met

3.3 Yes, the Council considers that it has identified sufficient housing land to meet the district's housing needs. The projected total supply of housing land (15,489 net dwellings) meets the Plan's updated total minimum housing requirement of 15,045 dwellings (885 dwellings per year) over the updated plan period, as calculated using the standard method for assessing local housing need.

3.4 The updated Local Plan housing trajectory identifies a sufficient supply and mix of housing sites, which are constituted from the following sources:

- Planning permissions (past completions and estimated future completions with a -8% lapse assumption)
- Applications with Committee resolutions to grant permission subject to Section 106 agreement completion
- Part B Local Plan site allocations
- Made Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan 2019 site allocations
- The windfall allowance

<u>Including an appropriate buffer to provide flexibility and allow for changing circumstances?</u>

3.5 The trajectory identifies a supply of specific, deliverable sites for five years following the intended date of adoption of the Plan in March 2026. These sites meet the NPPF definition of deliverable as they are based on the relevant criteria and evidence for deliverable housing sites, as set out in national policy and guidance. The supply of 3,789 net dwellings from 2026/27 to 2030/31 in years 1 to 5 (post adoption) includes a 20% buffer against the updated total stepped annual housing requirement of 3,150 dwellings (630 dwellings per year) for this period. A 20% buffer has been applied to the five-year housing land supply in accordance with NPPF paragraphs 69 and 77, as the authority’s 2022 and 2023 Housing Delivery Test measurements were both below 85% of the Housing Delivery Test’s housing requirements.

3.6 The trajectory also identifies a supply of specific, developable sites and broad locations for growth for the subsequent years 6 to 10 and 11 to 15 of the remaining plan period. These sites meet the NPPF definition of developable as they are based on the relevant criteria and evidence for developable housing sites, as set out in national policy and guidance. The supply from 2031/32 to 2035/36 in years 6 to 10 (post adoption) is 6,333 net dwellings and from 2036/37 to 2040/41 in years 11 to 15 (post adoption) is 4,674 net dwellings.

3.7 The projected total supply of housing (15,489 net dwellings) over the updated plan period from 2024/25 to 2040/41 includes a buffer of 3% (444 net dwellings) against the Plan’s updated total minimum housing requirement of 15,045 dwellings. The Council considers that this is an appropriate buffer to provide flexibility and allow for changing circumstances.

3.8 It can also be noted that as stated in the Council’s response to Matter 6 Issue 6 Question 5, there is clear evidence of additional housing land supply coming forward at the current time and in the context of ‘Grey Belt’. This is set out within Matter 6 Issue 6 Question 5 Appendix 1 “Housing Trajectory – Additional Homes Context”.

3.9 The anticipated rate of development for individual sites included in the projected supply of housing in the updated trajectory are set out at Matter 2 Issue 1 Question 1 - Appendix 1.