

St Albans City and District Council Settlement Hierarchy Study Part 2

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Part 1 Baseline Settlement Hierarchy assessed all settlements in the District against sustainability factors. Settlements assessed were:
- 1) Previously included in the Local Plan Review 1994 settlement hierarchy, and
 - 2) Had populations larger than 250 residents (based on the approach used in the Settlement Hierarchy Part 1 report).

What was the aim of Part 1 and what does the Baseline tell us?

- 1.2 The aim of the Part 1 study was to identify a 'baseline' settlement hierarchy, which could be used to propose updates to the Local Plan Review 1994 settlement hierarchy. The Part 1 Study aimed to broaden out the assessment of settlements in the District from using a single assessment factor (size of settlement) to a range of factors such as settlement accessibility, availability of services and facilities and access to employment.
- 1.3 The Settlement Hierarchy Study Part 1 was prepared using the following assumptions/ 'rules':
1. That existing settlements (as identified in the Local Plan Review 1994) located outside of the Green Belt would be assessed based on their boundary extents up to the Green Belt. The study would not take into account more recent growth from an existing settlement into the Green Belt.
 2. That the defined boundaries of settlements washed over by Green Belt, as defined on the Local Plan Review 1994 Proposals Map would be included in the assessment (settlements which are termed as Green Belt Settlements in the Revised Local Plan 1994 settlement hierarchy), but that new housing sites built in the Green Belt since the Local Plan Review 1994 would not be assessed or included in the Settlement Hierarchy.
 3. Although settlements outside of St Albans District local planning authority boundary area were taken into account when considering sustainability, such as connectivity and access to services, it was not considered necessary to assess the settlements in detail for inclusion in the Settlement Hierarchy for the District.

2. Part 2 Aims and Objectives

- a) **To understand how isolated Previously Developed Lane (PDL) sites which have been redeveloped as residential developments in the Green Belt, since the adoption of the Local Plan Review 1994, function and fit with the updated baseline Settlement Hierarchy Part 1.** What is the role of these sites, and should they be included in the Settlement Hierarchy? For example, a number of sites built in the Green Belt since the adoption of the Local Plan Review 1994, such as Hanstead House and Harperbury Hospital, have population sizes that are equal or more than the Small Villages in the Green Belt. Therefore, they have population sizes that fall within the minimum threshold settlement size to be included in the Settlement Hierarchy Study. To understand whether those development sites function in a similar way to a traditional 'settlement', or whether they should be included within the settlement hierarchy at all, this paper discusses potential approaches for each settlement including the potential for further work to be undertaken to understand whether the sites should be removed from the Green Belt.
- b) **Further to point a), assess the role of redeveloped PDL sites in the Green Belt that are located adjacent to existing settlements.** Understand the extent of this form of growth since the adoption of the Local Plan Review 1994, and whether there is further work required to determine whether the Green Belt boundary should be revised in these locations. For example, a small number of sites have been developed to the east of St Albans within the Green Belt. This Study considers the role of these sites in relation to the main settlement and discuss whether changes to the Green Belt boundary should be tested through further technical work.
- c) **To build on the work emerging from Part 1 to better understand the relationships between settlements within the St Albans authority area, and those outside the administrative boundary.** For example, which key settlements adjoin the District boundary. However, it is not the aim of this study to include settlements from outside the District into this St Albans Settlement Hierarchy.

3. Redevelopment of PDL Sites in the Green Belt – Settlement Status for Local Plan Purposes?

Green Belt Development Sites in St Albans District

3.1 NPPF paragraph 149 (g) states that:

A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are: e.g.) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
- not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*

3.2 As described further below, there are a number of new residential developments in the District that have been permitted on previously developed land in the Green Belt as part of the partial or complete redevelopment of hospital and conference centre sites.

3.3 These sites represent a range in terms of population size, with the smallest having a population of approximately 200 residents and the largest, around 1,800 residents. Therefore, even the smallest of the sites is relatively large when compared to the threshold used in the Part 1 Settlement Hierarchy to define the smallest settlements in the District. However, although these sites have been redeveloped for residential land-use, they remain washed over by the Green Belt. Paragraphs 137 – 146 of the NPPF emphasise the importance of the Green Belts and set out the five purposes that they serve. Paragraph 140 sets out that:

Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period.

3.4 Furthermore, paragraph 141 explains that:

Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development.

3.5 Importantly, paragraphs 142 to 144 describe the factors which must be considered when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries. In particular, the following must be taken into account when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt Boundaries:

The need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account. Strategic policy-making authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. Where it has been concluded that it is necessary

to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport...

- 3.6 With regard to reviewing Green Belt boundaries in relation to smaller settlements, paragraph 144 explains that:

If it is necessary to restrict development in a village primarily because of the important contribution which the open character of the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt, the village should be included in the Green Belt. If, however, the character of the village needs to be protected for other reasons, other means should be used, such as conservation area or normal development management policies, and the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.

- 3.7 This Study does not seek to assess or propose revisions to the Green Belt boundaries, but does discuss the role of the redeveloped PDL sites in the Green Belt in terms of settlement status or whether they form a natural extension to an existing settlement, beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. The first stage of this paper is to identify discussion points to inform an approach to defining the role of the redeveloped PDL sites in the Green Belt. In particular, the paper questions whether the sites should be defined as 'settlements' for the purposes of the overall settlement hierarchy for St Albans District, starting by considering what defines a settlement.

Defining New Settlements – National Policy Context

- 3.8 Although paragraph 73 does not define a 'settlement', it explains that new settlements should be (our emphasis added) ...**well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities** (including a genuine choice of transport modes)... *strategic policy-making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way. In doing so, they should:*

a) consider the opportunities presented by existing or planned investment in infrastructure, the area's economic potential and the scope for net environmental gains;

*b) ensure that their size and location will support a **sustainable community, with sufficient access to services and employment opportunities within the development itself (without expecting an unrealistic level of self-containment), or in larger towns to which there is good access;***

c) set clear expectations for the quality of the places to be created and how this can be maintained (such as by following Garden City principles); and ensure that appropriate tools such as masterplans and design guides or codes are used to secure a variety of well-designed and beautiful homes to meet the needs of different groups in the community;

d) make a realistic assessment of likely rates of delivery, given the lead-in times for large scale sites, and identify opportunities for supporting rapid implementation (such as through joint ventures or locally-led development corporations)³⁷; and

e) consider whether it is appropriate to establish Green Belt around or adjoining new developments of significant size.

- 3.9 Therefore, paragraph 73 of the NPPF is useful in understanding the expectations of the function and design of ‘settlements’, in particular that they should be of a size and location that will support a sustainable community with sufficient access to services and employment opportunities. The Planning Practice Guidance also makes reference to new settlements and extensions to existing villages and towns. However, it does not provide a definition of what a ‘significant size’ is, in relation to a new settlement.
- 3.10 Overall, there are a number of terms used for new residential sites, ranging from ‘new settlements’, ‘large scale development’, ‘new developments of significant size’. As a result, some local authorities seek to identify a range of factors which are present within a settlement, and therefore the features that define them. The following section considers this matter in more detail, starting with population size as a key consideration.

Defining New Settlements – Local Policy Context and Case Studies

- 3.11 In the St Albans Settlement Hierarchy Part 1, a threshold size (based on the number of residents within a settlement) was used to determine those that would be included within the settlement study, and those which were deemed too small to be included within the hierarchy. The Study explains that *the exception to this approach is new developments which have been built in the Green Belt since 1994, including Highfield Park, Napsbury Park, Harperbury Hospital and Hanstead House. Although these developments may have a population of greater than 250 residents, these sites have been automatically omitted from the Study because they are considered to be individual developments washed over by Green Belt rather than defined settlement areas.*
- 3.12 This paper therefore seeks to determine whether the factor of ‘population size’ is the only consideration with regard to defining development sites as settlements or not, or whether other factors should be taken into account. Furthermore, the paper raises the question of how redeveloped PDL sites in the Green Belt, which have been permitted in accordance with the principles of the NPPF paragraph 149 (g), are treated within the settlement hierarchy, and whether they can be defined as settlements themselves or whether they could form an extension to existing settlements.
- 3.13 The matter of what constitutes a ‘settlement’ is discussed in the Dacorum Settlement Hierarchy Study (October 2017), as set out in Box 1 below.

Case Study Dacorum – Box 1
<p>Case Study Dacorum – what constitutes a settlement?:</p> <p>settlement-hierarchy-study-main-report-october-2017.pdf (dacorum.gov.uk)</p> <p><i>Paragraph 19.15: The settlements considered to be of sufficient size and importance to support a minimum level of services and facilities to serve the day to day needs of residents are classed as villages within the Settlement Hierarchy Study 2017.</i></p> <p><i>Paragraph 19.16: In the Green Belt these are: Chipperfield Flamstead Potten End Wigginton</i></p> <p><i>Paragraph 19.17: Other settlements and hamlets in the Borough are not considered to constitute villages. This is for a number of reasons including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>they do not have the necessary cohesiveness to justify a boundary;</i> • <i>they do not contain enough key services and infrastructure to warrant settlement status;</i>

- they simply form the ribbon development of adjoining larger settlements;
- or in order to protect their intrinsic character from development.

3.14 Another useful Case Study to be used in order to better understand approaches to defining settlements within a Local Plan context, can be found in the Ribble Valley Settlement Boundary Definition Topic Paper (March 2016):

Ribble Valley Settlement Boundary Definition Topic Paper (March 2016)

[settlement-boundary-definition-topic-paper-march-2016 \(ribblevalley.gov.uk\)](http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/settlement-boundary-definition-topic-paper-march-2016)

There are many places within the Ribble Valley that local residents call their settlement. A dictionary definition of a settlement is, "settlement; being settled; place occupied by settlers, small village...". This definition would encompass a wide variety of settings within the area in which people live close to each other in smaller or larger groups of dwellings that they would naturally call their settlement.

In planning terms however it is important to be able to define those places capable of hosting future development, and those that are not, on a logical basis. This is an important part of promoting overall sustainable development and of protecting sensitive parts of the area from excessive or inappropriate levels of development...

...The process of setting new boundaries will involve re-visiting the logic and justification of the current definition of a settlement. The 1998 District Wide Local Plan (DWLP) contained the following definition of a "settlement" to which a variety of its policies related and which was agreed at the DWLP's Public Inquiry.

"A defined settlement is one which contains at least 20 dwellings and a shop or public house or place of worship or school or village hall ie they are of a size and form that justifies treatment as a settlement. Settlements smaller than this limit will not be given settlement boundaries as they are not considered to be large enough or to contain enough facilities to allow for growth beyond that delivering regeneration benefits or local needs housing."

3.15 Overall, this section identifies that although the NPPF does not provide a clear definition of a 'settlement', it does emphasise that new settlements should be *well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes)*.

3.16 Furthermore, Local Planning Authorities including Dacorum and Ribble Valley take a similar approach to defining settlements, in alignment with the NPPF. Although both examples use population size as part of the definition of a settlement, they also take into account whether sufficient **key services and infrastructure exist within the boundary of the site, to support a local community**, as well as **providing opportunity for future growth to deliver regeneration benefits or local housing needs**. These two factors are therefore important to take into consideration when reviewing the developments within the Green Belt and their definition as a new settlement.

3.17 The next section describes each of the residential sites developed in the Green Belt, built since the 1994 Local Plan Review was adopted, and sets out an approach for determining whether the sites should be defined as new settlements or not for the purposes of the St Albans Settlement Hierarchy.

4. St Albans New Residential Developments since 1994

Isolated Sites

- 4.1 There are three sites in St Albans which have been built on previously developed land in the Green Belt and are relatively isolated from an existing settlements in the District. These sites are Hanstead Park, near Bricket Wood (former HSBC training facility) and Harperbury Hospital, near Radlett, Shenley and London Colney. Napsbury Park is the third site identified as an isolated residential site in the Green Belt. However, compared to Hanstead Park and Harperbury Hospital is it located in much closer proximity to an existing settlement, London Colney.
- 4.2 The following Site Profile table provides a description of the sites described above, including the facilities that are available within them and their proximity to the nearest key settlement in the District. The information used to develop the site profiles is taken from sources including the Planning Officer's Report and/or the Inspector's Report in cases where the application has been granted on appeal. This exercise is useful to understand the extent to which the sites can be described as 'new settlements' and therefore whether they may be capable of inclusion within the settlement hierarchy.

Site Profiles

Site Name: Former HSBC Training Centre, Hanstead Park, Smug Oak Lane, near Bricket Wood	Planning Reference: 5/2014/3250 (outline) 5/2018/2118 (Reserved matters)
Estimated Number of Resi Dwellings: 139	Estimated Population: 334 (based on No. Dwellings x 2.4)
Description of Site: Residential Site on former HSBC Training Centre within the Green Belt not directly adjacent to existing settlement, but described as being located 'on the edge of Bricket Wood'.	
Planning Decision/Inspector/Officer Report Conclusions: Planning Officer's report in relation to the impact on local services: <i>With regards to local services, it is noted that the application site is on the edge of Bricket Wood, with schools and local services such as shops, some distance from the site, although it is noted that transport facilities are closer at hand. The application proposals also include measures to improve connectivity to the main settlement and it is also proposed to financially support a diversion of the existing bus service into the site to further increase connectivity. It is also the case that the applicant has agreed to further financial contributions to mitigate the impact of the development on local services such as schools and healthcare facilities.</i> Outline permission was granted on appeal on this site 5/2014/3250 in 2015 (appeal decision ref. APP/B1930/W/15/3028110) At appeal, the Inspector concluded that the proposal would represent a highly beneficial reuse of a PDL site. They considered that the appeal proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and would have no material effect in terms of the purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.	

Conclusions and Suggested Settlement Status:

Key Services and Facilities:

This is a relatively isolated residential site, with a small population size. It is washed over by the Green Belt with no services or facilities within the site. However, the site is connected to the settlement of Bricket Wood by a temporary bus service, where residents of the site can access key services.

Site Name: Former Harperbury Hospital, Harper Lane, near Shenley and Radlett	Planning Reference: 5/2015/0990
Estimated Number of Resi Dwellings: 204	Estimated Population: 490 (based on No. Dwellings x 2.4)

Site Description:

Residential development of former hospital site, within the Green Belt and not adjacent to existing settlement, but related to Radlett, Shenley and London Colney

Planning Decision/Inspector/Officer Report Conclusions:

Site on former hospital land. Residential use only, with football pitches and bowls club nearby.

In the officer's report, the remote nature of the site was noted. The closest railway station is at Radlett, which is approximately 3km from the site. Planning permission is subject to a minibus service to take residents to Radlett station and London Colney at peak times, and a 'dial a bus service at other times. This will be a commitment for 11 years. Contributions will also be made towards a PROW which will provide improved access to Radlett and Shenley.

Aldenham Parish Council commented, in response to the planning application that:

The development will have a significant impact on Radlett in many ways. Members are concerned that there are no on-site shopping facilities on the proposed development. As Radlett is one of the nearest accessible towns, it will be the main centre that people will use for their amenities including shops, schools, doctors surgeries, public spaces and entertainment. This will have an impact on residents having to use their cars as a necessity even when shopping for small items.

This direct relationship between the Harperbury Hospital Site and Radlett is important to note because it reflects the nature of the site is particularly reliant on a neighbouring settlement for essential services. Also, the relationship between the site and Radlett represents a cross-boundary relationship with Hertsmere.

[Microsoft Word - 80972 \(stalbans.gov.uk\)](http://stalbans.gov.uk)

Conclusions and Suggested Settlement Status:

Key Services and Facilities:

Isolated residential site in the Green Belt with no facilities on site except for a temporary bus connection to Radlett and London Colney.

<p>Site Name: Former Napsbury Hospital, Napsbury Park, Shenley Lane, near London Colney</p>	<p>Planning Reference: 5/2002/1256</p>
<p>Estimated Number of Resi Dwellings: 644</p>	<p>Estimated Population: 1,546 (based on No. Dwellings x 2.4)</p>
<p>Description of Site: Residential development in the Green Belt on a former hospital site. Adjacent to London Colney</p>	
<p>Napsbury Hospital Redevelopment was identified within the Local Plan Review 1994. See Policy 139</p> <p>District Local Plan Review 1994 Saved and Deleted Policies Version [July 2020].pdf (stalbans.gov.uk)</p> <p>The policy identifies that the site will be redeveloped, with the predominant use of the site for housing.</p> <p>The site is now a residential area, located adjacent to London Colney. The closest railway stations are at St Albans and Radlett. There is also a bus route which provides access from Napsbury Park to London Colney and St Albans. Amenity use on the site includes playgrounds, sports pitches and pavilion. There are no schools, medical facilities or shops on the site.</p>	
<p>Conclusions and Suggested Settlement Status:</p> <p>Key Services and Facilities</p> <p>Napsbury Park provides good leisure, recreation facilities, and good bus connections to London Colney and St Albans.</p> <p>The site does provide limited recreational facilities and also has a permanent bus route which provides connectivity to London Colney and St Albans. As such the site has close similarities to settlements defined, in Part 1 of the Settlement Hierarchy Study, as a Green Belt Village.</p>	

5. Green Belt Sites Located Adjacent to Existing Settlements

5.1 The development sites described above are either isolated from existing settlements in the District (Harperbury Hospital and Hanstead House) or are adjacent to an existing settlement but have a very distinct character and separation from an existing settlement (Napsbury Park). However, in addition to the more isolated Green Belt sites in the District, there are a number of sites in the District where development has extended into the Green Belt from existing settlements. In these cases, it is reasonable to assume that the new development site would form an extension to the existing built up area, and that they should be removed from the Green Belt. However, it is important to consider this approach in more detail to understand the role and character of the sites, their relationship to the existing settlement and also any further technical work which may be required to determine the future of the site with regard to potential removal from the Green Belt. The sites include the following:

- Redevelopment of Building Research Establishment, Bucknalls Lane, near Bricket Wood
- Former Hill End/Cell Barnes Hospitals
- Oaklands College, Smallford Campus, Hatfield Road, near St Albans
- Beaumont School and Land To North Of Winches Farm, Hatfield Road, near St Albans

<p>Site Name: Building Research Establishment, Bucknalls Lane, near Bricket Wood</p>	<p>Planning Reference: 5/2016/2857 Reserved matters Officer report (March 2017)</p>
<p>Estimated Number of Resi Dwellings: 100</p>	<p>Estimated Population: 240 (based on No. Dwellings x 2.4)</p>
<p>Description of Site: Residential development of PDL within Green Belt, adjacent to the boundary of the settlement of Bricket Wood</p>	
<p>Planning Decision/Inspector/Officer Report Conclusions: The officer's report concluded that overall, the sustainability of the site is positive. The scheme would include new bus, cycle and pedestrian routes to link existing communities at Garston and Bricket Wood to railway services, and provide new travel choices for both existing and future residents of the locality. As a replacement for existing development at BRE, the proposal would maintain the openness and visual amenity of this peripheral location to Bricket Wood, maintaining the gap between the village and Garston.</p>	
<p>Conclusions and Suggested Settlement Status: This site is located on the periphery of the existing settlement of Bricket Wood, and is washed over by Green Belt. Despite its peripheral location to the settlement area of Bricket Wood, it is considered that the site is functionally related to Bricket Wood to the extent that it should become integrated into the settlement itself.</p>	

It is proposed that, subject to further technical work, consideration is given to the removal of the site from the Green Belt and incorporated into the settlement area of Bricket Wood.

Site Name: Former Hill End/Cell Barnes Hospitals, Highfield / Cell Barnes, Hill End Lane, near St Albans	Planning Reference: 5/1993/1922
Estimated Number of Resi Dwellings: 843	Estimated Population: 1,838 (based on No. Dwellings x 2.4)
Site Description: Hill End and Cell Barnes Hospitals Redevelopment (Policy 137) was deleted from the St Albans Local Plan 1994 Review. The policy made provision for a mixed use development as part of the redevelopment of the hospital sites. Paragraph 3.9 of the Local Plan Review 1994 states <i>District Plan Review Policies 137 and 139 provide guidance on the Hill End/Cell Barnes and Napsbury Hospital sites, respectively. It is envisaged that over 800 dwellings will be built at the Hill End/Cell Barnes and about 300 at Napsbury.</i>	
Planning Decision/Inspector/Officer ` Report Conclusions: Not available.	
Conclusions and Suggested Settlement Status: These sites are located on the periphery of the existing settlement of St Albans, and are washed over by Green Belt. Despite their relatively peripheral location to the settlement area of St Albans, it is considered that the sites are functionally related to St Albans to the extent that it should become integrated into the settlement itself. It is proposed that, subject to further technical work, consideration is given to the removal of these sites from the Green Belt and incorporated into the settlement area of St Albans.	

Site Name: Oaklands College, Smallford Campus, Hatfield Road, near St Albans	Planning Reference: 5/2013/2589
Estimated Number of Resi Dwellings: 348	Estimated Population: 876 (based on No. Dwellings x 2.4)
Site Description: Comprehensive redevelopment to provide new and refurbished college buildings, enabling residential development of 348 dwellings, car parking, access and landscaping	
Planning Decision/Inspector/Officer Report Conclusions:	

In the Inspector's Appeal decision, he states: *It is accepted that there is some harm to the Green Belt purpose related to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. However, as noted in the Green Belt Review, the site is enclosed by three urban edges and this limits the contribution it makes to the area. It is not visually open and does not affect large parts of the Green Belt.*

Furthermore, the Inspector concludes that the site is well related to St Albans and would be well served by local shopping and medical facilities, is close to a large food store, and is well served by walking and cycling routes.

Conclusions and Suggested Settlement Status:

This site is located on the east side of the existing settlement of St Albans, and is washed over by Green Belt. The development site is well related to St Albans and it is considered that the site is functionally related to St Albans to the extent that it should become integrated into the settlement itself.

It is proposed that, subject to further technical work, consideration is given to the removal of the site from the Green Belt and incorporated into the settlement area of St Albans.

<p>Site Name: Beaumont School and Land To North Of Winches Farm, Hatfield Road, near St Albans</p>	<p>Planning Reference: 5/2014/0940 5/2018/2080</p>
<p>Estimated Number of Resi Dwellings: 91</p>	<p>Estimated Population: 218 (based on No. Dwellings x 2.4)</p>
<p>Site Description: Adjacent to eastern edge of St Albans and is located adjacent to the existing residential street of Oakwood Drive.</p>	
<p>Planning Decision/Inspector/Officer Report Conclusions: <i>The site comprises part of the Beaumont School and Wynches Farm wider development site, which has an extensive planning history in relation to its development for housing and for facilities associated with Beaumont School... bounded to the south by Hatfield Road and to the north by Beaumont school itself. To the west is housing on Oakwood Drive; to the east is woodland and beyond that existing housing around Wynches Farm Drive... The proposed development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt for which very special circumstances have been demonstrated. The principle of residential development in this location is acceptable.</i></p>	
<p>Conclusions and Suggested Settlement Status: This site is located on the east side of the existing settlement of St Albans, and is washed over by Green Belt. The development site is well related to St Albans and makes a natural extension to the city boundary as part of the school site, It is considered that the site is functionally related to St Albans to the extent that it should become integrated into the settlement itself.</p>	

It is proposed that, subject to further technical work, consideration is given to the removal of the site from the Green Belt and incorporated into the settlement area of St Albans.

6. The Size, Role and Function of Settlements within Neighbouring Local Planning Authority Areas

- 6.1 As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, the second aim of the Settlement Hierarchy Part 2 is to better understand how settlements in St Albans relate to settlements within neighbouring authority areas.
- 6.2 Notwithstanding authority boundaries, all settlements have a specific sphere of influence over other smaller settlements within an area. For example, the largest of settlement areas, such as London have a global sphere of influence, which means that it attracts people from across the world to visit, live and work due to the services that it provides. The sphere of influence of London is noted as part of this Settlement Hierarchy Study in relation to the fact that many residents of the area commute to London for work, retail and leisure. However, this study focuses in more detail at the local scale by developing a better understanding of the functional relationships between settlements which are located within authority areas that neighbour the St Albans District boundary, as listed below.
- 6.3 These settlements have been identified as influencing work, leisure and travel patterns of the residents of St Albans District to varying degrees and this section provides a summary and overview of these relationships.
- Hemel Hempstead, Dacorum Borough
 - Watford, Watford Borough
 - Radlett, Hertsmere Borough
 - Hatfield, Welwyn Hatfield Borough
 - Welwyn Garden City, Welwyn Hatfield Borough
 - Gustard Wood, North Herts District
- 6.4 Based on the 2021 Census, the populations are Hemel Hempstead (107,600), Watford (102,246), Radlett (8,200), Hatfield (42,900), Welwyn Garden City (51,500), Gustard Wood (260).
- 6.5 Drawing on desk-based research, all of these settlements appear to provide levels of key services and infrastructure that are broadly in line with the scale of the settlements.