



The Local Plan

21 January 2025

The Local Plan

Harpenden Society's view



The community needs

1. A plan for more housing, especially small and medium size family homes
2. Affordable housing for the long term
3. To secure the Green Belt for the future.
4. A commitment to deliver the infrastructure needed before development starts, especially
 - a. Road traffic improvements around Batford and the A1081
 - b. Improved drainage and sewage systems
 - c. Primary and secondary school provision for the enlarged community
 - d. Community assets, retail/office space, recreation facilities for Batford
 - e. Improved health service provision
 - f. A parking strategy for the town to cope with the increase in demand

The District's Local Plan (LP) around Harpenden

New National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - effective from 12/12/24

Key elements

Mandatory “top down” targets to be delivered by all planning authorities before the “end of the current Parliament”.

Calculation changed to exclude population forecasts but retained, and intensified, affordability measure.

Target increased by 88% for SADC (885 to 1660 p.a.)

New timings

All authorities must put forward plans which offer the new top down targets.....

except LPs can adhere to the old govt target if submitted by 12/3/25

SADC's plan was accelerated to ensure it could be examined under the 885 p.a. housing figures

Plan progress so far

Submitted for planning inspectorate examination Nov '24

Sites included hit the previous target in total, due to the early submission decision (ahead of requirement to identify sites to provide 88% more homes)

Inspector appointed and schedule of (3-6 weeks) will be laid out soon

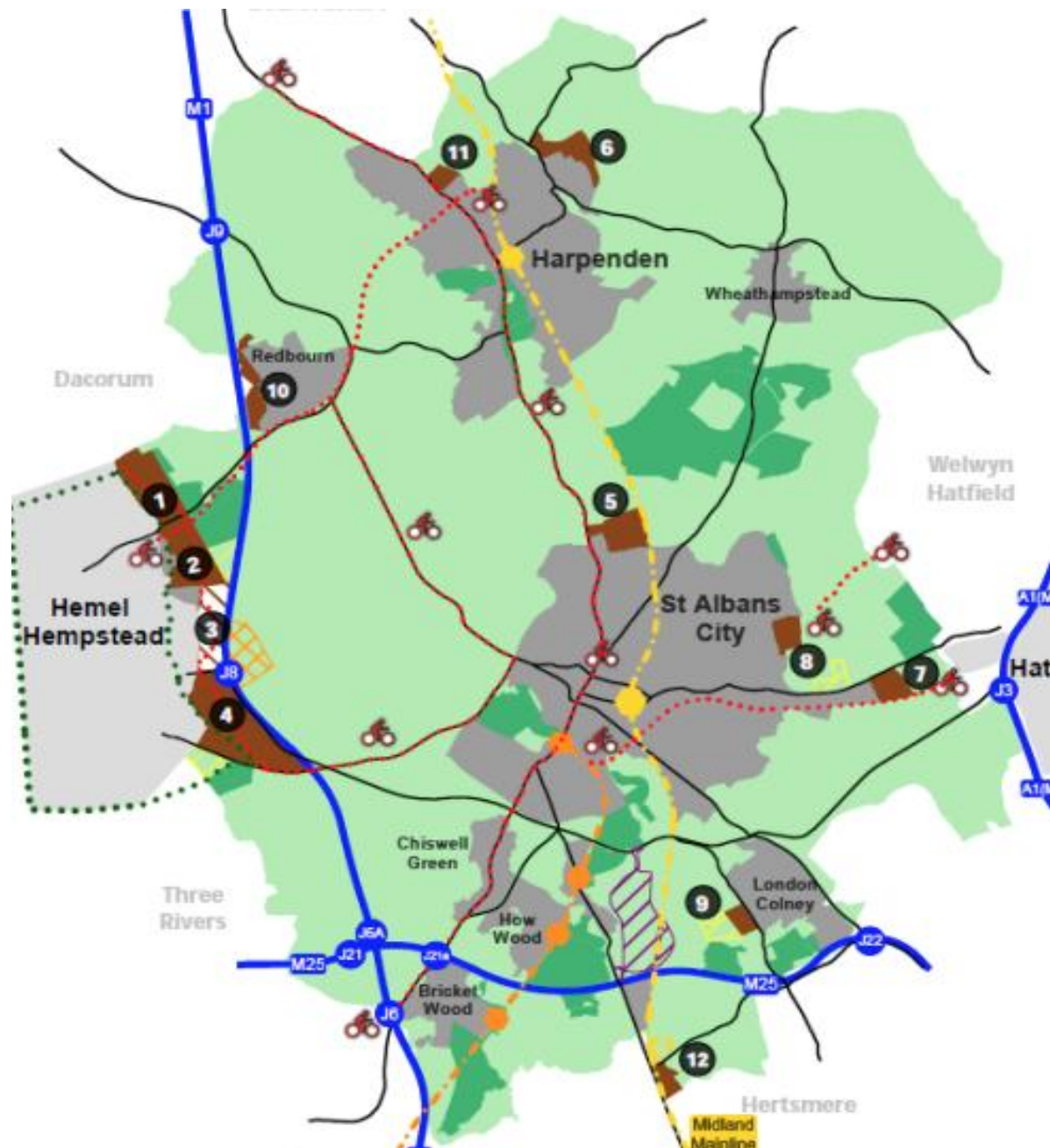
Forecast plan “adoption” March 26 *

* Expected examination pace

In past, neighbouring plan approvals have taken between 1 – 5+ years.

New government has signalled long examinations no longer acceptable.

It states that “deficient plans” are to be rejected to allow resourcing of the others, but the approval timing is fundamentally in their hands.



Harpenden changes in submission

Indicative number of homes in Reg 18 was about 1600

Number now submitted is about 1340. Lower due to :

- Cross Lane (95) taken out due to safe access (HCC)
- Piggotts Hill Lane sewage (70) withdrawn by owner
- Beeson End (43) conflicts with Natural England study
- Rothamsted Estate (55) switched to employment use

Planning applications and the LP (i)

Existing (1994) LP was being deemed to carry close to zero “weight” in planning application determinations (and, crucially, appeals)

Current housing supply (<2 years) described as “dire”

Hence, regular approvals, on appeal, of sites on GB land in ‘23 and ‘24.

Planning applications and the LP (ii)

Submission of a draft LP adds weight to consideration of future applications.

That weight builds the longer the examination proceeds without rejection.

Full weight only exists on LP adoption, however.

Hence local MPs are pressing for both quick examination and for full weight to be given earlier ie from now.

Next stages

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Jan '25: | inspector begins studying and written questioning of contents |
| April - June '25: | start of public examination sessions |
| By 3/26???: | Local Plan approved |

Final Thoughts

Large volume home building across the District will occur

It is much better that this be planned than unplanned.

There is a trade-off between more housing provision and the impact on current residents.

This impact needs to be mitigated as much as possible by approving the most sustainable, well resourced sites, available.