



Sefton Council's

2025

**Strategic Housing Land
Availability Assessment (SHLAA)**

and

Five-year supply position

September 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment ('SHLAA') sets how much land is suitable for development in Sefton over the next 15 years. The SHLAA covers the period from April 1st 2025 to March 31st 2040. The SHLAA is important for the long-term planning for housing in the borough as it identifies and estimates of the capacity for land for housing in Sefton for the next 15 years.

1.2 The five-year supply position statement sets out how much land for housing is available in the first five years of the SHLAA period. All Local Planning authorities are required to demonstrate a five-year supply of suitable, available, and deliverable land for housing. Having a five-year supply of housing helps ensure the Local Plan policies, in relation to housing supply policies, are considered up to date, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

1.3 Neither the SHLAA nor the 5-year supply report are policy. They do not set how many homes are needed and simply show an estimate of the number of homes that could be accommodated in Sefton now and in the future.

1.4 Both the SHLAA and five-year supply position statement are reviewed annually.

1.5 The SHLAA helps to monitor the effectiveness of the Local Plan. The Local Plan covers the period from April 1st 2012 to March 31st 2030. The period for this SHLAA will therefore help inform the amount of housing supply for the remainder of the plan period and for a significant period beyond.

2. METHODOLOGY

Site Identification

2.1 Sites have been identified from a variety of sources. The list below contains the main source of sites for the SHLAA.

- Local Plan allocations
- All sites with planning permission on March 31st 2025 that either haven't commenced or have yet been fully completed.
- Suitable sites submitted during 'Call for sites' exercises

2.2 For sites without planning permission for housing, only those likely to accommodate 5 or more dwellings were added to the assessment. This is consistent with the requirements in the National Planning Practice Guidance. No contribution to the housing supply was assumed from bringing vacant homes back into use. This is because the % of vacant homes have remained fairly constant over previous years.

2.3 It would be impossible to anticipate every site that will come forward for housing over the next 15 years. This particularly applies to smaller sites and conversion sites. The SHLAA will continue to be updated annually to take account of new sites, and other changes in circumstance. A 'windfall allowance' has also been included in SHLAA which assesses the contribution that unanticipated sites could make (see below).

Site Assessment

2.4 It is important that the housing supply is realistic. Therefore, for sites to be included within the 5-year supply, there needs to be an assessment of their suitability, availability and deliverability.

2.5 **Suitable** includes whether the site is indeed suitable for housing, or whether there is a policy restriction (e.g. being in the Green Belt or adversely impacting upon the setting of a listed building) or whether there is a natural constraint (e.g. high flood risk area, area of ecological value). Sites should also be viably developed at the point envisaged.

2.6 **Available** means that a landowner or developer has a willingness to bring a site forward.

2.7 The NPPF definition for **deliverable** is as follows:

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.

Sites with Planning Permission for Housing

2.8 Sites with extant planning permission for housing form a significant proportion of the SHLAA housing supply, specifically the 5-year housing supply. In general, these sites are more certain to be delivered than sites without planning permission as they already have approved schemes in place and the owner / developer has gone to the time and expense of preparing and submitting a planning application.

2.9 In addition, sites with planning permission have already been determined as suitable for housing by the Council through the planning application process. The SHLAA assessment is therefore limited to gauging whether sites are 'available' and 'achievable', and if so the likely development timescales.

2.10 For larger sites (20 homes or more), where development had yet to commence, the owner/developer will normally be contacted to establish their development intentions. Suggested build out rates were suggested to the developer, factoring in lead-in times and planned phasing, and they were invited to agree or provide alternatives. Larger sites were only removed from the SHLAA supply (either in whole or in part) where the owner/developer indicated that the site would not be developed for housing.

2.11 For smaller sites the site owner / developer was not contacted. Instead, a discount of 10% was applied to the total capacity of all small sites. This was to reflect the fact that some of these permissions would likely not be developed and would expire.

2.12 In general, sites with planning permission were placed in the 0 – 5 year supply. Sites were only placed in 6 – 10 year supply where the owner / developer indicated they would likely not develop the site in the short term. In addition, a number of very large sites are to be phased over a number of years and will therefore be only partially developed within the next 5 years and will run into later years.

Sites without Planning Permission

2.13 Sites without planning permission for housing were subject to a more detailed assessment, including an assessment of 'suitability'. This included a desktop assessment using local plan designation, constraints mapping, accessibility mapping, aerial photographs, planning history, and other intelligence.

2.14 Sites were assessed as 'available' where there was a clear and recent owner commitment to developing the site for residential development. Sites were considered achievable if there were no known policy, environmental, viability or other constraints.

2.15 For sites without planning permission that were included in the housing supply, the following broad assumptions were applied:

- a density of between 30 and 40 dwellings per hectare on the net developable area (see below), depending on the shape of the site and the character of the surrounding area.
- sites were placed in three periods: short term (0-5 years), medium term (6-10 years), and long-term (11-15 years). In line with national guidance, sites placed in the 0-5 year period had to be "suitable, available, and achievable" – usually evidenced by a clear indication that the owner is looking to progress the site for housing in the short term.
- net developable area was assessed based on the size of the site, as set out below. A smaller net developable area is assumed for larger sites to reflect the need to provide access roads, open space, etc.

Total Site Area	Net Developable Area
Less than 0.4 ha	100% of developable area
0.4 ha to 2 ha	90% of developable area
Sites over 2 ha	75% of developable area

- for Local Plan allocations, the site capacity has been taken from the Local Plan unless other information has come from the developer. The timescales have come from the developer, whether in writing or through the submission of a pre-application or an application.
- discounting was applied to reflect the fact that some sites would not be developed for housing as anticipated for a variety of reasons. For sites without planning permission, an across-the-board discount of 20% was applied to reflect these issues.

Demolitions

2.16 Demolitions are taken account of each year. These tend to vary but have generally been lower since 2015, when there were fewer demolitions associated with the Housing Market

Renewal Initiative (HMRI) and successor programs with just a few ad hoc demolition on individual sites, for example, where a demolition is required to facilitate a new access for a housing site or where one large dwelling is demolished in order to build two smaller dwellings.

Windfall Allowance

2.17 'Windfalls' are sites that come forward for housing development that have not been previously identified in a Local Plan. The Framework allows for a windfall allowance to be included in the housing supply where this is justified is para 75:

'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.'

2.18 It is considered that compelling evidence exists to justify a windfall allowance in Sefton, and this is set out in Appendix A.

Calculating a windfall allowance

2.19 The number of homes per year that will be included in a windfall allowance is based on the average number of windfall permissions that have occurred over the previous 10 years. i.e. since 1st April 2015.

2.20 Windfall planning permissions were identified and 'filtered' using the following approach:

- Each year, sites granted planning permission for housing were filtered to remove those that had been identified in the previous year's SHLAA (i.e. already known to us). Permissions on sites that had not been identified in the previous SHLAA were identified as 'windfalls'.
- Planning permissions for development on residential gardens were then removed.
- Any demolitions were netted off (for example, if an existing dwelling was demolished to make way for 2 new dwellings(s) this would be a windfall of one dwelling).

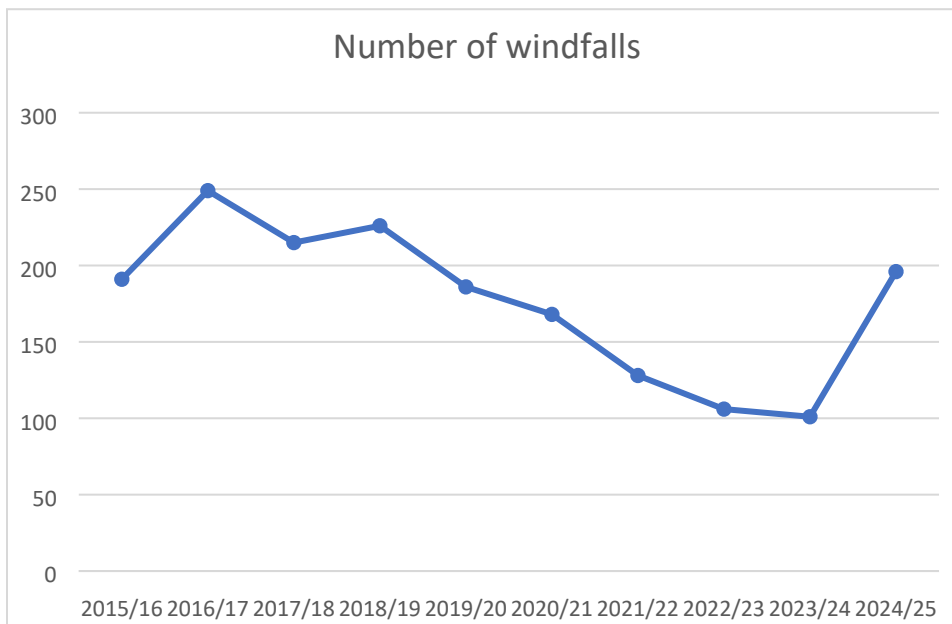
2.21 Any larger windfall sites (i.e. net gain of 50+ dwellings) were also removed as these are considered to be 'exceptional' and unlikely to be guaranteed to part of any future trend. The threshold has been raised from 20 to 50 because there have been a significant number of schemes over a number of years that have been between 20 and 50 dwellings and so these can't really be dismissed as 'exceptional'.

2.22 The total number of 'filtered' and 'non-exceptional' windfalls from 2015/16 are below:

Windfall figures 2015-2025

Year	Conversions	New Builds	Total
2015/16	146	45	191
2016/17	127	122	249
2017/18	160	55	215
2018/19	113	113	226
2019/20	107	79	186
2020/21	115	53	168
2021/22	76	52	128
2022/23	68	38	106
2023/24	100	1	101
2024/25	85	111	196
Total	1097	669	1766
Average	109.7	66.9	176.6

Windfall figures 2015-2025



2.23 Last year has seen an upturn in the number of non-exceptional windfalls, after a few years of decline. We will keep this under review to see if it is a return to an increase in numbers or an anomalous year in an otherwise downward trend.

2.24 The average number of 'filtered' and 'non-exceptional' windfalls over the 10 years from 2015-25 is **176.6**. Most of the windfalls in Sefton occur in the older communities of Southport, Bootle and Crosby.

2.25 In accordance with the approach to small sites we will apply a 10% discount on the windfall allowance to account for some not being completed. **This brings the windfall allowance to 159 per year.** Furthermore, windfall completions are assumed from year 3 only. By definition, windfall sites do not have planning permission at the base-date of the study. Therefore, a 24-month lead in time has been assumed to allow for the first windfalls sites to gain permission, and site works to be undertaken, before new housing is completed.

2.26 Therefore, the windfall allowance to be applied to Sefton’s housing supply will be:

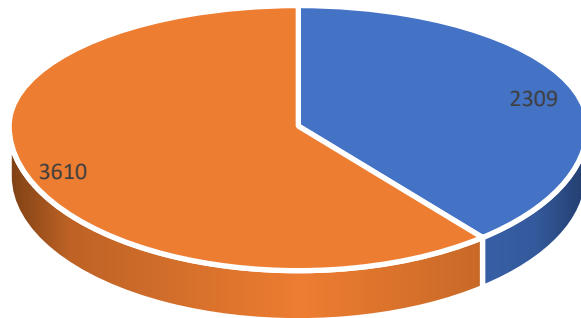
Years 1 and 2	Nil
Years 3 to 15	159 per year

Sum of NetChangePP	Settlement	Crosby & Hightown	Formby	Maghull & Aintree	Netherton	Southport	Grand Total
NewSiteIn	Bootle						
2015/16	24	25	20	6	1	115	191
2016/17	28	59	18	40	27	77	249
2017/18	17	83	31	13	-1	72	215
2018/19	36	48	15	27	6	94	226
2019/20	16	39	16	26	3	86	186
2020/21	16	45	2	11	6	88	168
2021/22	20	45	13	10	9	31	128
2022/23	3	33	9	11		50	106
2023/24	18	26	3	6	1	47	101
2024/25	13	5	20	69	2	87	196
Grand Total	191	408	147	219	54	747	1766

Number of windfalls per settlement

2.27 Whilst we make an allowance for 159 windfalls for years 3 to 15, these are only non-exceptional windfalls and hides the fact that we have been very successful at securing permission and completions for new housing on exceptional windfalls (i.e. those over 50-homes). The chart below shows that over 60% of the homes completed in Sefton since the adoption of the Local Plan in April 2017 have been on sites not allocated in the Local Plan. This equates to more completions on non-allocated sites each year, much higher than could be provided on the non-exceptional windfalls. Whilst we expect completions on allocated sites to increase in coming years, there is no evidence that the number of completions on non-allocated sites will decrease. However, we will monitor this in future reports.

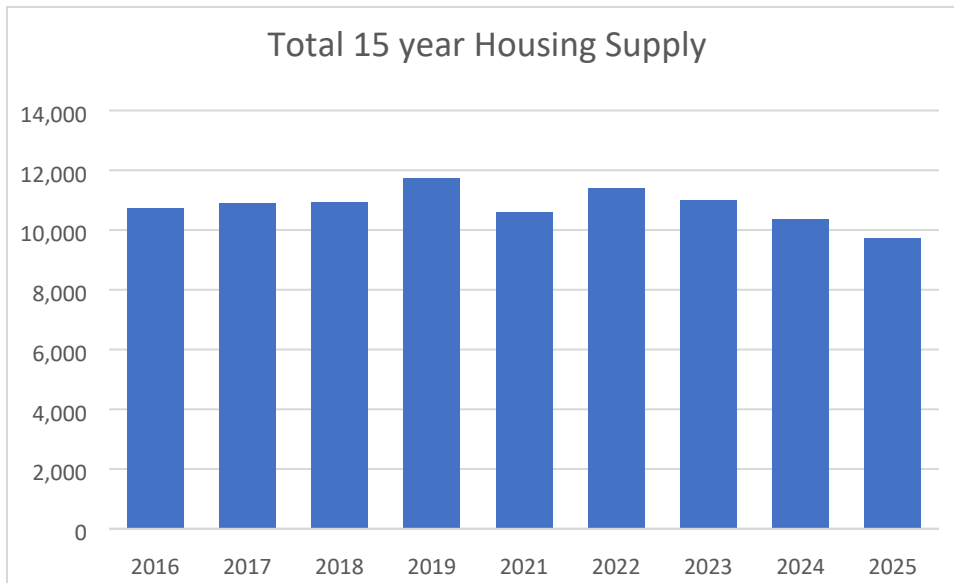
Proportion of allocated and non-allocated homes completed in Sefton (2017-2025)



■ Allocated sites ■ Non-allocated sites

3. SHLAA Findings

3.1 The SHLAA findings are summarised in the table on the following page. The SHLAA has found that there is a reasonably healthy supply of housing over the next 15 years with land available for 9,716 homes. The chart below shows the progress with housing supply since 2016 (note – a SHLAA wasn't completed in 2020).

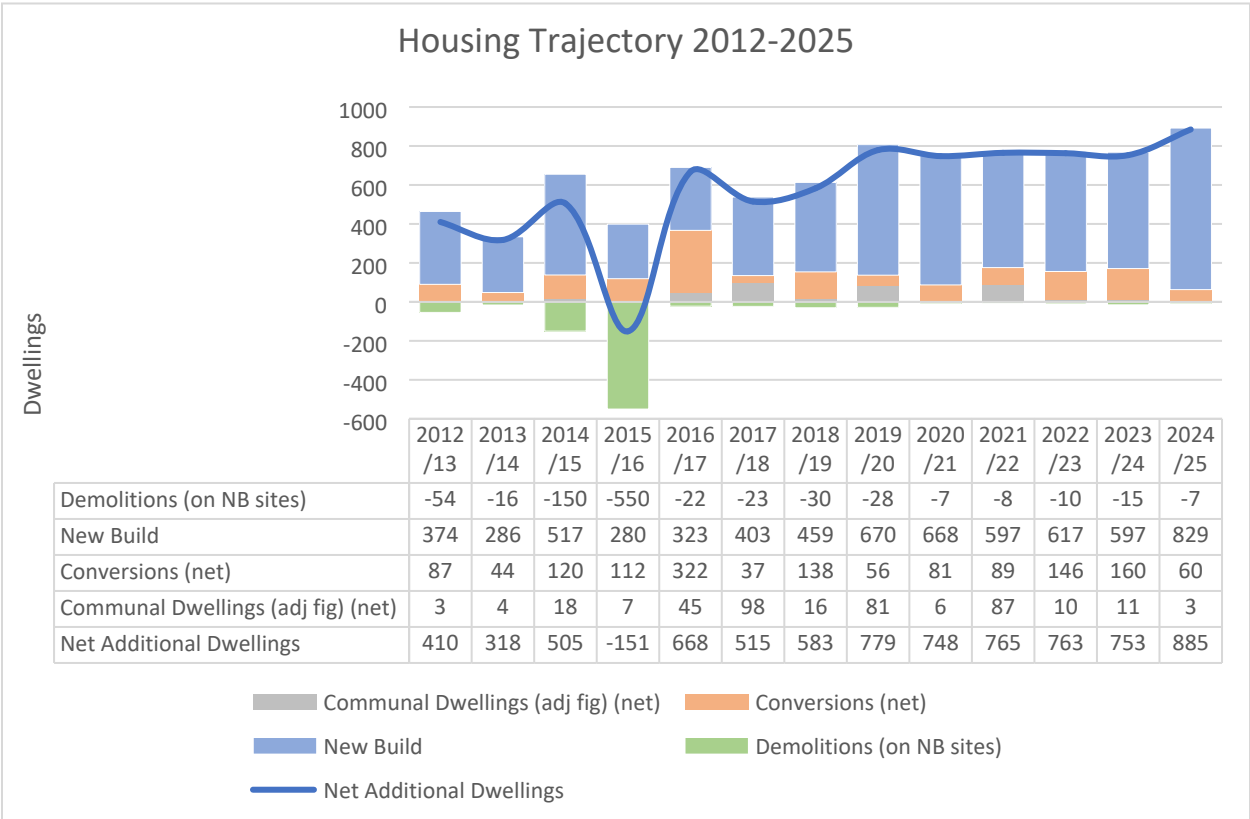


3.2 As can be seen from the chart above, the 15-year supply of housing land has remained fairly steady since 2015 (the first year Local Plan allocations were included). Although the 15-year housing supply in 2025 has slightly fallen from 2024 following a similar fall the previous year this can be attributed to completions on Local Plan allocated sites.

3.3 Given the number of homes that have been completed in 2024/25 (895, see below), it should be expected that the supply of housing land would decrease by a similar amount. This has not occurred and demonstrates that we've had a healthy supply of homes completed on windfall sites. In fact, of the 5,919 net completions since 2017, only 2,309 (39%) of those are on Local Plan allocated sites (as of 31 March 2025).

(NP) Whilst we expect there to be a shift in coming years, to more homes completed on allocated sites, we would still expect completions on windfalls to be well in excess of what we make an allowance for (i.e. 159 per annum). In fact, 2,284 dwellings have been built between 2017 and 2025 that were neither included in our windfall allowance or on housing allocations. This equates to 38.6% of the total completions over the same period. This suggests that the final SHLAA figures are likely to be a significant underestimate of housing capacity in the Borough.

3.4 It is interesting to note, the Local Plan planned for a total housing requirement of 11,520 for the period 2012-30. The plan is 13 years on from the base date and we still have over 80% of the housing supply from that base date. This suggests that Sefton is quite positive in supporting housing opportunities on sites that are not allocated. This is in addition to comfortably meeting the housing delivery test requirements. With the change to the Council’s housing need of 568 to a housing requirement set by the Government of 1,368, both meeting need and delivery will prove to be a significant challenge going forward.



3.5 Furthermore, the total housing supply figure for the next 15 years, does not take account of any ‘exceptional’ windfall sites (i.e. those that secure a net 50 or more homes) that we may get in Sefton. For example, there are likely to be a number of large office to residential conversions which continues a recent pattern. There will also be some sites that unexpectedly fall out of our supply. This will be reviewed every year. However, Sefton’s total 15-year housing supply is strong and demonstrates that there is likely to be a strong long-term supply of housing in the borough.

3.6 For context, in the period from 1st April 2023 the following large windfall sites (i.e. 50+ homes) have been approved:

- Telegraph House, Crosby (DC/2022/1148) – 72 dwellings
- Park House, Waterloo (DC/2022/01095) – 106 dwellings
- Deyes Lane, Maghull (DC/2021/00015) – 75 dwellings (awaiting signing of section 106 agreement)

- Sentinel Way (DC/2023/00263) – 54 Dwellings (approved on appeal)

These have been included in our supply, along with others that are likely to be approved in the future, and this will ensure that our total supply of housing land will remain healthy.

Total supply 2025-2040

3.7 The table below shows a breakdown of the 15-year supply of housing land in Sefton by type and the period it is expected to be completed. A more detailed explanation of the Council’s five-year supply position is set out in the next section.

	YEARS 1-5	YEARS 6-10	YEARS 11-15	YEARS 1-15
Large New Build	3032	1066	24	4122
Small New Build	251	0	0	251
Large Conversions	245	132	0	377
Small Conversions	243	0	0	243
Assessed Site	43	199	0	242
Allocated Site without planning permission	326	1407	363	2096
Self-Contained care units	82	132	0	214
Communal unit	95	9	0	104
Windfall Supply	477	795	795	2067
TOTAL AFTER DISCOUNT IS APPLIED	4794	3741	1182	9716

SHLAA summary table (please note that these figures are rounded to the nearest unit)

4. Sefton’s five-year supply position at 1st April 2025

Introduction

4.1 The requirement to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land is set out in the Government’s ‘National Planning Policy Framework’ (the Framework). This requires that local authorities:

Strategic policy-making authorities should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment.

Sefton’s Annual Housing Requirement

4.2 Sefton’s Local Plan is now more than five years’ old, being adopted in April 2017. The Council commence a new Local Plan from July 2026 under the emerging plan-making system in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. NPPG on Housing Supply and Delivery (para 003) states

‘Where strategic policies are more than 5 years old, or have been reviewed and found in need of updating, local housing need calculated using the standard method should be used in place of the housing requirement.’

4.3 Therefore, the basis for calculating the Council’s 5-year supply position is the Government’s Standard Methodology¹ rather than the housing requirement in the Local Plan. The Government changed the methodology in December 2024. This changed the housing figure for Sefton significantly. **The Standard Methodology for calculating housing needs gives Sefton an annual housing requirement of 1,368 homes per annum.** This is almost two and a half times higher than the previous standard methodology figure of 568 and over around twice as high as the Sefton Local Plan figure of 640 (average across the plan period).

4.4 The new standard methodology means that there will no longer be a backlog for previous under delivery as the standard methodology allows for this (within the affordability uplift).

Buffer to the Supply

4.5 The Framework sets out in para 78: *“The supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of:*

- a) 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land; or*
- b) 20% where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the previous three years, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply”.* This will be measured against the

Housing Delivery Test, where this indicates that delivery was below 85% of the housing requirement.

4.6 Sefton has passed the housing delivery test for the last three years and so the 20% buffer does not apply. However, with the changes to the housing figure, there is a significant possibility that Sefton will not pass the housing delivery test in coming years and as such, a 20% buffer may apply in the near future.

Calculating the 5-year requirement

4.7 Based on the information above, Sefton’s 5-year housing requirement is as follows-

Housing Requirement for next 5 years	5 years times the requirement of 1,368 dwellings per year.	6,840
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Table 1

Identifying sites to meet the 5 year supply

4.8 NPPF places strict criteria for inclusion of sites in the five-year supply and requires that such sites are ‘deliverable’. This is defined in the NPPF but can be summarised:

- Available now;
- Suitable now;
- Achievable, with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years; and
- Viable.

4.10 Sites within the five-year supply must meet all of these criteria.

4.11 The housing sites in Sefton that are considered to meet the five-year supply criteria are made up of the following categories of site:

- Sites with planning permission for housing
- Local Plan housing allocations and other sites where it is known progress is being made towards an application
- A windfall allowance

Sites with Planning Permission for Housing at 1st April 2025

4.12 For sites with a current planning permission for housing, The NPPF states *“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). 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.”

4.13 Sites of ten or more dwellings with full permission were assumed to be in the five-year supply unless there was sound evidence that they couldn't deliver. Where the sites had more units that likely to be delivered within the five-year period, developers were asked about phasing. Where no response was provided assumptions were made that there would likely to be 35 dwellings per year delivered on the basis of past trends. This is a fairly cautious approach on the basis that often more can be delivered. A cautious approach was made on timescales for commencing developments and first completions. These sites were only removed from the 5-year supply where the developer/landowner indicated that they would not be implementing the development (in whole or in part) within 5 years or where there was a lack of evidence that the site would come forward.

4.14 Some larger sites will be phased over a longer time period than 5 years. In these instances, the assumed contribution related to the proportion of the site that will be developed within the 5-year period, factoring in lead in times and upfront infrastructural requirements.

4.15 For smaller sites (less than 10 units) with planning permission, an across-the-board discount of 10% was applied to the total supply from these sites, to reflect likely non-implementation rates. This approach is consistent with appeal decisions elsewhere, and the historic rate of non-implementation in Sefton.

4.16 For smaller sites, the lead in time from grant of permission to the delivery of completions was based on historic trends for similar sized sites.

Sites without Planning Permission for Housing at 1st April 2025

4.17 The vast majority of sites in the five-year supply benefitted from planning permission for housing at 1st April 2025. However, a number of sites without planning permission, predominantly Local Plan allocations, have also been included in the five-year supply. A 20% discount was applied to these sites to reflect the greater uncertainty associated with sites without planning permission.

4.18 Assessments of each of these sites are set out at appendices of the SHLAA.

Calculating the 5 year-housing supply

4.19 The following table provides an overview of Sefton's supply of housing sites that are considered to meet the 5-year supply criteria:

Housing 5 year-supply overview²

Large Sites (New Build)	3032
Small Sites (New Build)	251
Large Conversions	245
Small Conversions	243
Assessed site	43
Allocated Site without Planning Permission	326
Self-contained care units	82
Communal accommodation (adjusted)	95
Windfall Supply (years 3-5 only)	477
TOTAL	4794

Table 2

Five-year supply	Supply with 5% buffer	Supply with 20% buffer
Requirement for the next 5 yrs (from table 1 above)	6840	6840
Buffer size (see paragraph 4.5 above)	5%	20%
Addition to req from buffer	342	1368
Total 5 yr requirement	7182	8208
Total 5 yr forecast supply (from table x above)	4794	4794
5 yr supply proportion (%)	67%	58%
5 yr supply position	3.34	2.92

Table 3

Conclusions

4.20 Sefton's 5-year housing supply position has seen a very big drop since last year (when it was 8.7 years). The Council has gone from having a comfortable five-year supply to no longer has a five-year supply. This is due to the following reasons:

- The Framework was amended in December 2024 and alongside this the Government introduced a new standard methodology for calculating housing figures. The methodology changed in two ways. Firstly, the methodology is no longer based on estimated household growth and instead is based on the existing housing stock. Secondly, the affordability indicator has been greatly uplifted. This has resulted in a housing figure that is 2.4 times higher than the one required last year.
- The addition of the 5% buffer where there wasn't one has meant that the five-year supply requirement is over two and a half times last year.

² Note these figures have been discounted as set out in the report

- There has been a small drop in the number of homes in the five-year supply due to some larger sites either being stalled or being completed within the next five years.

4.21 The five-year supply figure of 3.34 years is the figure with a 5% buffer. However, if Sefton fails the housing deliver test in the future by falling below 85% delivery over a three-year rolling period, a 20% buffer would apply. In this case, the housing supply for Sefton would be 2.92 years. This is currently not the case.

