



Parking Zones for applying Local Plan Parking Policy and Standards

Paper to accompany St Albans Local Plan 2041

Regulation 19 Public Consultation

September 2024

Introduction

1. This report provides an overview and explanation of the Parking Zones that accompany the Local Plan at the Regulation 19 public consultation stage. The Zones are referred to in Local Plan Policy TRA4 – Parking, and Local Plan Appendix 1 - Cycle and Car Parking Guidance and Standards for New Development. At the Regulation 18 stage, consultation comments were made on all aspects of the Draft Local Plan, including the proposals relating to Parking. Following review of the representations made in the Regulation 18 consultation and further liaison with stakeholders as appropriate, the wording of the parking-related policies and standards has been updated for this Regulation 19 'Publication' Local Plan.
2. This Paper firstly sets out how the Zones are referred to in the Draft Local Plan, then it explains the methodology used to identify the draft Parking Zones, and finally it provides Figures of the draft Zones in an Appendix. It should be noted that the 'Parking Zones' referred to in the parking-related policies of the Local Plan, and subject of this Paper, are used when applying parking policy and standards to different areas; and they are different to the Council's 'Controlled Parking Zones' (CPZs). However, data relating to the use of CPZ permits and available space has informed the location of Zone 3 (as set out further below).

Parking Zones and the Draft Local Plan

3. The accompanying text (reasoned justification) for Policy TRA4 - Parking includes the following in relation to the proposed Parking Zones:
 - 8.16 *"In St Albans District, car ownership and usage levels are high and accessibility by non-car modes of transport in most of the District is insufficient to justify a significant level of parking restraint. For planning purposes the operation of the car parking standards is based on a zonal approach, with a degree of parking restraint imposed in locations that are most accessible to services, community facilities and public transport (Zone 2), and a particular focus on full mitigation for any shortfall in areas of likely overnight parking stress (Zone 3). There is also scope for large new developments at Broad Location sites (Zone 4) to prioritise sustainable and active modes of transport such as to require reduced parking provision, as part of a bespoke parking strategy. Zone 1 comprises the parts of the District not within Zones 2, 3 or 4. The draft zones will be available on the Council's evidence base and this information will be reviewed as required.*
 - 8.17 *Zone 2 comprises the District's most sustainable and accessible areas, which are those areas within 800m (10 minute walk) of the City / town centre and mainline railway stations of St Albans and Harpenden. This includes the main town centre services and facilities, bus stops and mainline railway stations for the District's largest settlements. Within Zone 2 there is reduced need for parking for private cars.*
 - 8.18 *Zone 3 comprises areas of likely overnight parking stress; where the type and scale of development and local streetscene characteristics indicate that there is likely to be overnight parking stress, and where evidence for existing Controlled*

Parking Zones indicates that demand for on-street parking exceeds available space.

8.19 *There are parts of central St Albans which fall within both Zones 2 and 3. The Policy and standards allow for this situation by requiring robust mitigation for any shortfall in provision having first applied the reduction against standards allowed for in Zone 2.”*

4. Draft Policy TRA4 - Parking includes the following elements that relate to the proposed Parking Zones (please see Regulation 19 Local Plan for full wording of draft Policy TRA4):

TRA4 – Parking [Parts that relate to Parking Zones only]

Public Parking

- b) Within St Albans and Harpenden town centres¹, and within areas of likely overnight parking stress (Zone 3), on and off street car parking available for public use should be maintained at least at current levels; unless otherwise allowed for specifically in an allocation in Part B.

Areas of Likely Overnight Parking Stress

- c) Within areas of likely overnight parking stress (Zone 3), proposals for new homes that do not meet the parking standards in Appendix 1 (including a Zone 2 reduction where applicable) will be refused unless appropriate financial contributions are made towards measures² to mitigate the shortfall in parking space provision.

New Development at Broad Locations

- e) New development at Broad Locations should:
- i. Prioritise sustainable and active modes of transport;
 - ii. Demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council that attractive alternatives to the private car would lead to reduced demand, such as to justify a reduction in parking provision against the standards; and
 - iii. Develop an appropriate parking strategy with lower than standard parking requirements which must be agreed with the Council and which can realistically be enforced by planning obligations and/or on-street parking controls.

5. Local Plan Appendix 1 – ‘Cycle and Car Parking Guidance and Standards for New Development’ includes the following elements that relate to the proposed Parking Zones (please see Regulation 19 Local Plan for full wording of Appendix 1):

¹ As shown on the Policies Map

² This could include car clubs, public transport, micro-mobility and active transport, through measures such as discount vouchers, low cost membership fees and discount travel passes for new occupiers.

1. “General Guidance

- a) The operation of the car parking standards is based on a zonal approach. The zones are shown on SADC’s website and this information will be regularly updated. The amount of car parking to be provided for developments in each zone is shown in Figure 1 below:

Zone	Location	Land Use	Amount of Car Parking to be Provided
1	All St Albans District except Zones 2, 3 and 4	All Uses	Must normally meet parking standards in full
2	Most Sustainable and Accessible Areas	All Uses	50% of parking standard minimum; unless B below applies
3	Areas of likely overnight parking stress	Residential	Any shortfall against standards (including a Zone 2 reduction where applicable) to be fully mitigated in accordance with Policy TRA4 c)
4	Broad Locations	All Uses	A bespoke parking strategy with lower than standard parking requirements should be developed, in accordance with Policy TRA4 e)

Figure 1: Amount of car parking to be provided in each Zone”

Methodology and Explanation

Parking Zone 1

6. Draft Parking Zone 1 relates to all of the District except Zones 2, 3 and 4. Unless otherwise indicated, Policy TRA4 and the Local Plan Appendix 1 Parking Standards would apply in these areas.

Parking Zone 2

7. It is the clear direction of travel in national and local highway authority (Hertfordshire County Council - HCC) policy and guidance that within the most sustainable areas there should be reduced parking provision in order to encourage use of more sustainable modes of transport. For example, HCC’s current Local Transport Plan³ (LTP4) notes under ‘Demand Management Context’: *“Local policies and approaches to date, which have largely focussed on trying to improve sustainable mode provision and encourage people to use them, have not been sufficient to generate any notable change in travel behaviour. Evidence nationally, as exhibited in London and towns such as Oxford and Cambridge illustrate that higher levels of sustainable mode use can be achieved by deterring car use through car park and access charges, and lower levels of parking provision in urban centres.”*

³ Hertfordshire County Council’s Local Transport Plan 2018 – 2031, 2018

8. Draft Parking Zone 2 comprises the District's most sustainable and accessible areas, which are those areas within 800m (10 minute walk) of the City / town centre and mainline railway stations of St Albans and Harpenden. This includes the main town centre services and facilities, bus stops and mainline railway stations for the District's largest settlements. Within Zone 2 there is reduced need for parking for private cars.
9. The 800m (10 minute walk) distance is measured from the middle of the town centre areas of both St Albans and Harpenden, and from their mainline railway stations. This distance of 800m, or approximately half a mile, is generally considered a standard walkable distance, supported in national guidance.
10. For example, the National Design Guide⁴ defines 'Walkable' as being where "*Local facilities are within walking distance, generally considered to be no more than a 10 minute walk (800m radius).*" It goes on to set out that "*Well-designed places have compact forms of development that are walkable, contributing positively to well-being and placemaking*" (para 63); and that: "*A compact and walkable neighbourhood with a mix of uses and facilities reduces demand for energy and supports health and well-being.* (para 136)'
11. In addition, the Sustrans paper 'Walkable neighbourhoods - Building in the right places to reduce car dependency'⁵ sets out: "*When journeys are short enough, most people walk. 800m, or approximately half a mile, is generally considered a standard walkable distance as it typically takes approximately 10 minutes to walk, and a 20 minute walking trip (1,600m total) has been found to be the longest distance a majority of people are willing to walk to meet their daily needs.*"
12. Furthermore, the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets⁶ sets out in 4.4 'The Walkable Neighbourhood': "*Walkable neighbourhoods are typically characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes' (up to about 800 m) walking distance of residential areas which residents may access comfortably on foot.*"
13. In St Albans District, central St Albans and Harpenden are the areas best-served by public transport; primarily due to the mainline Thameslink rail stations linking the settlements to Central London, but they also contain the District's main bus service hubs. These areas also provide a wide range of town centre uses and community facilities. It is within these areas that people are most able to live, work, commute and meet their daily needs without a requirement for use of a private car.
14. The extent of draft Parking Zone 2 is shown on Figures 1 and 2; it includes those areas where the entrance point to the curtilage of a property would be within 800m walk to either the centre of the town or the mainline railway station, for both St Albans and Harpenden, taking into account all walking routes including those that may not be adopted highway.
15. Within the District, it is not currently considered appropriate for any other areas to be within Zone 2, albeit when considering specific planning applications account will be taken of the particular circumstances in each case. This will include taking into account

⁴ National Design Guide 2021

⁵ Sustrans 'Walkable neighbourhoods - Building in the right places to reduce car dependency' 2022

⁶ Department for Transport, Manual for Streets 2007

the accessibility of the site to public transport and the nature of the use, as allowed for under part a) of Policy TRA4.

Parking Zone 3

16. Parking Zone 3 seeks to identify areas where likely demand for additional on-street parking should be resisted, due to existing high levels of residential parking stress. Parking stress is a measure of the demand for parking, and high parking stress can affect highway safety, the free-flow of traffic, amenity, access by emergency services, refuse collection and delivery of goods. As residents are generally at home overnight, areas of 'overnight' parking stress are those areas where existing parking provision cannot be relied upon to provide spaces within easy walking distance of homes of existing residents. Non-residential causes of parking stress (eg school trips, commuting and parking to access town centre uses) are not the focus of this Zone or the associated Policy; they may be addressed through other means such as on-street controls.
17. The measuring of overnight parking stress is a generally accepted means by which to indicate when reduced parking provision against normal standards may be acceptable in a development proposal⁷. In determining areas of likely overnight parking stress, the assessment is informed by various factors including data from the 2021 census; traffic data from the local highway authority; assessment of physical site characteristics; and data relating to demand for permits and available parking spaces in the Council's Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ), that has been provided on behalf of the Council's Parking team.
18. The census and traffic flow data indicate that within St Albans District, car ownership and usage levels are high, albeit car ownership within the more urban wards is generally lower than more suburban wards. Taking this general picture of high ownership and high usage into account, in determining which specific areas should be within Zone 3 the following approach was taken: analysis of the physical site characteristics of different streets and areas, from mapping data and site visits; plus analysis of data relating to demand for parking permits in streets and zones in CPZ areas relative to the amount of on-street spaces available; informing the wider assessment of where there is likely to be existing overnight parking stress.
19. The specific assessment criteria can be summarised in 2 steps as follows:
 - A. Areas of primarily residential use where the scale of properties and available off-street parking within the streetscene(s) indicate that there is currently insufficient parking available for residents; and
 - B. Where evidence indicates that within 200m walking distance⁸ there is unlikely to be spare car parking capacity for additional residential development.
20. Having undertaken the assessment in line with the above methodology, it is only specific areas within the more central parts of St Albans that meet both A and B and are judged appropriate to include within Parking Zone 3, as shown in Figure 3. There are

⁷ For example the Lambeth Methodology is a generally preferred method of assessing on-street parking availability, and requires 2 or more night-time weekday surveys covering the area where residents of a proposed development may want to park (usually 200m around a site).

⁸ A 200m walking distance is generally accepted to be a reasonable measure for where residents may want to park

other relatively small areas within other parts of the District where A above would apply (for example most rows of terraced properties), but in assessing whether B also applies the indication is that within 200m walking distance there is likely to be spare car parking capacity.

21. There is a degree of qualitative assessment in both steps A and B above, albeit informed by the various other data mentioned previously.

Areas within Parking Zones 2 and 3

22. As set out in the Parking section of the Local Plan, there are parts of central St Albans which fall within both Zones 2 and 3. The Policy and standards allow for this situation by requiring robust mitigation against any shortfall in provision having first applied the reduction against standards allowed for in Zone 2. It is acknowledged that allowing reduced provision while simultaneously requiring additional mitigation against any shortfall may appear to conflict; but the approach is that within Zone 2 the reduced parking standard simply reflects the reality that this is where people least require a private car, and the separate matter of not adding to existing parking stress is subject of Zone 3.
23. Therefore, in these areas, having first set the parking standard at the appropriate level (reflected by Zone 2), the need to avoid a shortfall in parking provision against the standard is as applicable as elsewhere in Zone 3. As such, the fact that Zones 2 and 3 overlap in places is not considered problematic, it is instead considered to reflect the reality on the ground.

Parking Zone 4

24. Parking Zone 4 applies to Broad Locations only, and they are shown on the Policies Map. Broad Locations are identified as large urban extensions of 250 or more homes or strategic scale employment, and there is scope for large new developments at Broad Location sites to prioritise sustainable and active modes of transport such as to require reduced parking provision, as part of a bespoke parking strategy.

Appendix:

Figure 1: Parking Zone 2: Most Sustainable and Accessible Areas – St Albans

Figure 2: Parking Zone 2: Most Sustainable and Accessible Areas - Harpenden

Figure 3: Parking Zone 3: Areas of likely overnight parking stress

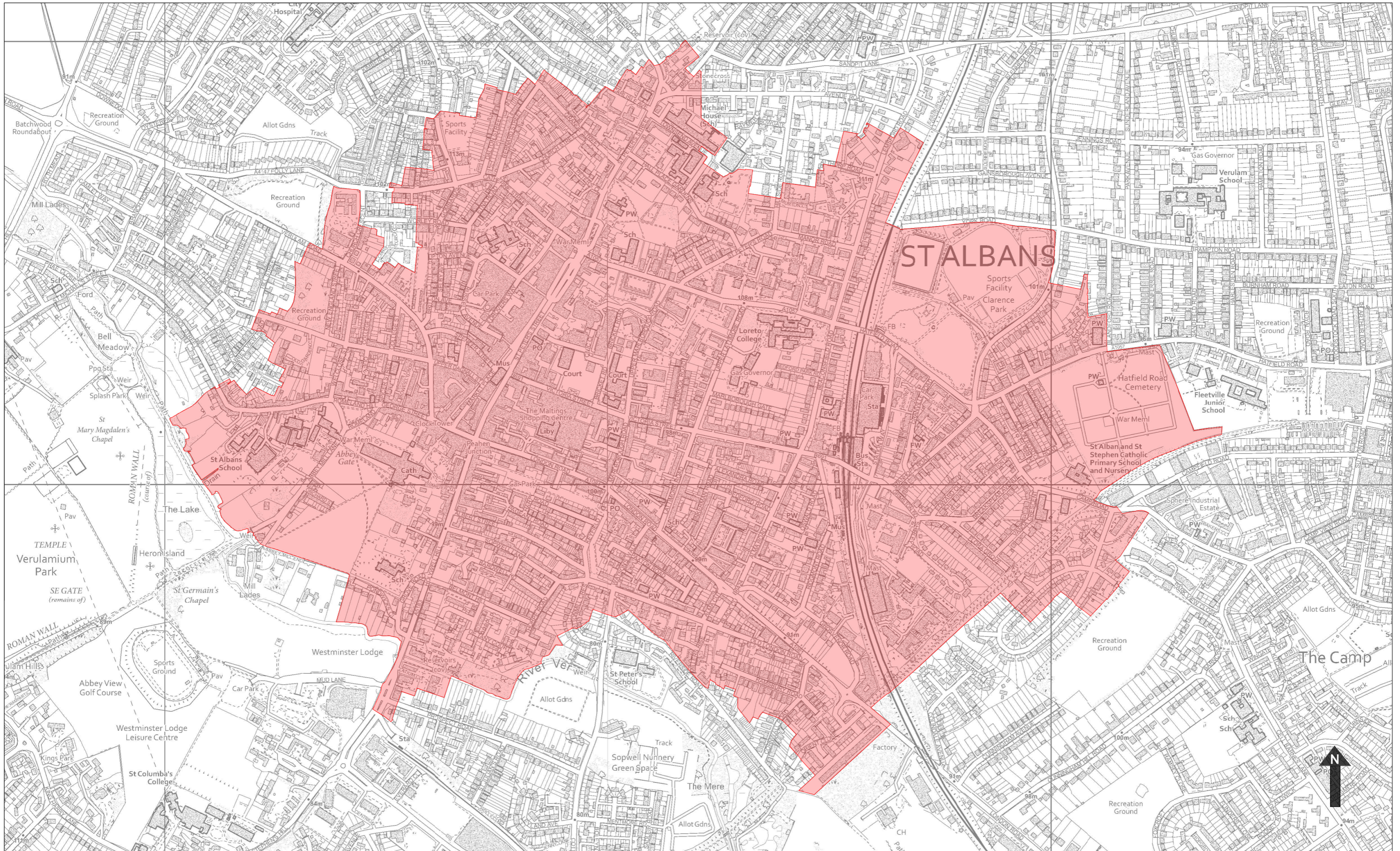


Figure 1: Parking Zone 2: Most Sustainable and Accessible Areas – St Albans

Key

St Albans - Parking Zone 2: Most Sustainable and Accessible Areas



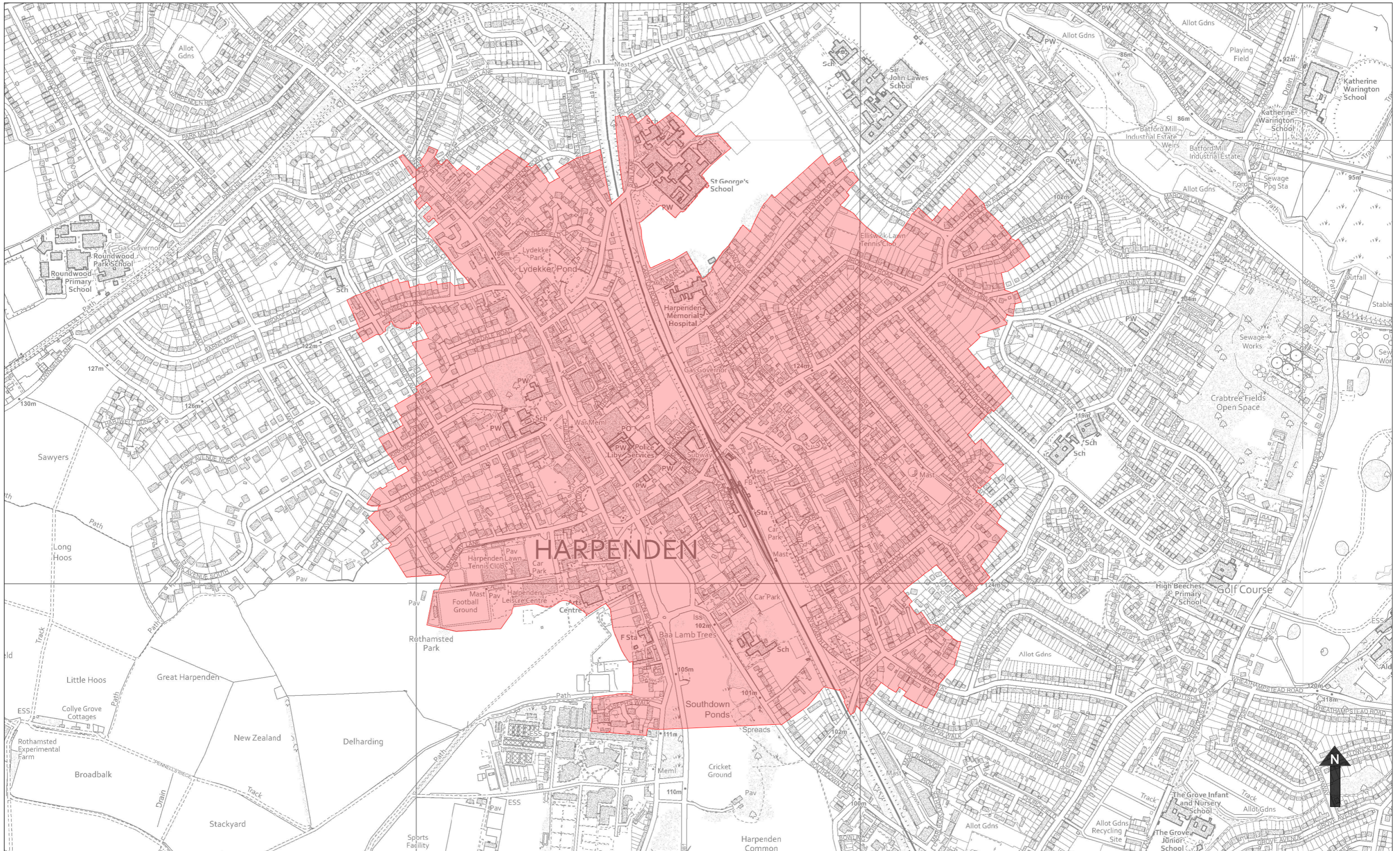


Figure 2: Parking Zone 2: Most Sustainable and Accessible Areas - Harpenden

Key

Harpenden - Parking Zone 2: Most Sustainable and Accessible Areas

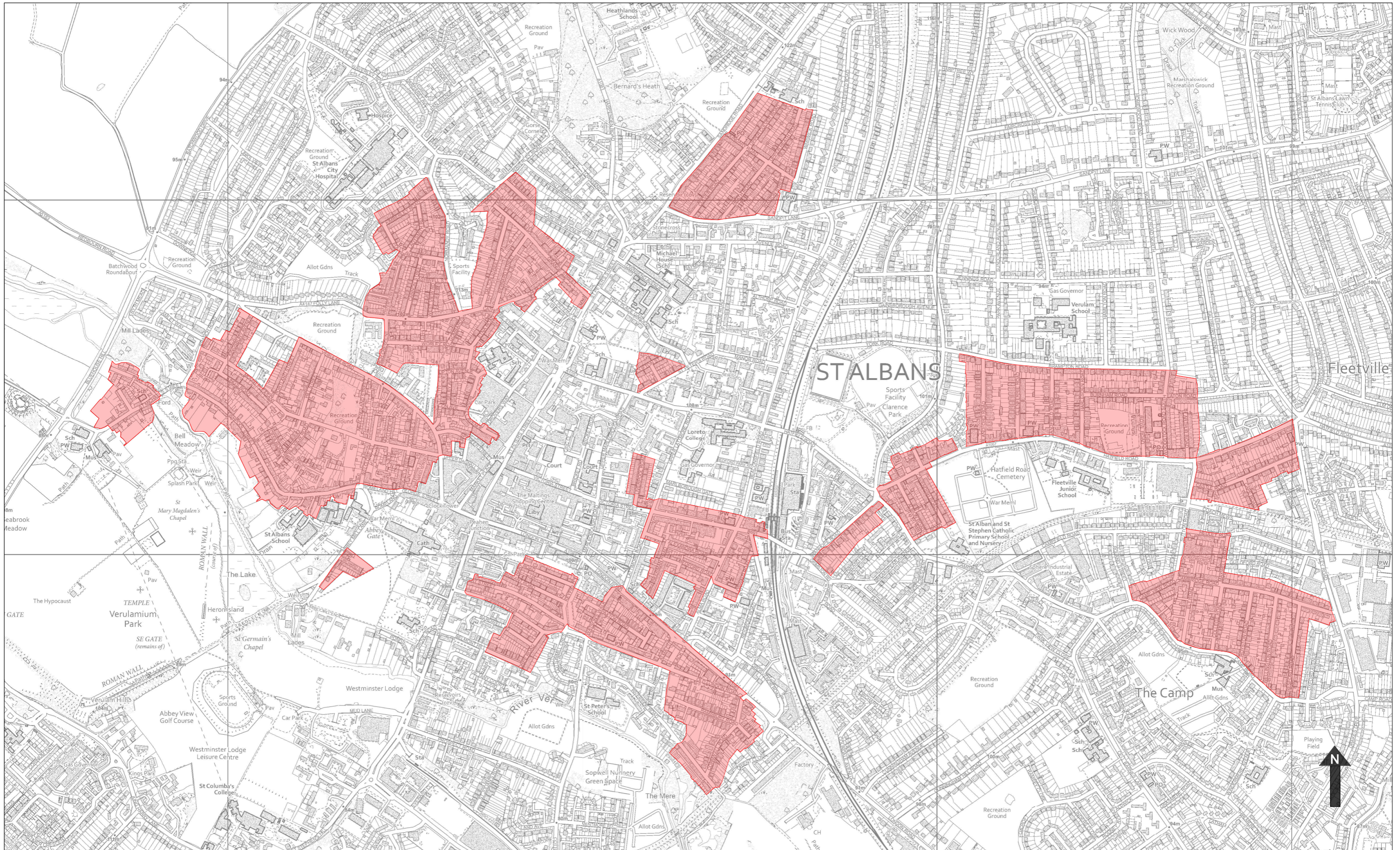


Figure 3: Parking Zone 3: Areas of likely overnight parking stress

Key

Parking Zone 3: Areas of likely overnight parking stress

