

New Local Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Local Plan?

A Local Plan is a document produced by the local planning authority for an area – in this case Hertsmere Borough Council - in consultation with local people and the many other organisations whose activities influence or are affected by what happens in the borough. It identifies the number of new homes and jobs required to meet local needs over the next 15 years and where development should take place to accommodate growth. The plan also identifies areas which need protecting or improving and the factors we will take into account when planning applications for any sort of development are being determined. It is an important document and has as a major influence on how the local area will change, develop, look and feel in the future.

Why does Hertsmere need a new Local Plan?

The current Local Plan consists of a set of different documents to guide development. It is based on evidence which was produced quite a long time ago and restricts new development to built-up areas. If we were to continue to follow the current plan then we would meet under half of the expected housing need in the borough. This would result in an even more acute shortage of new and affordable homes. It is now time to create a new overarching plan that will help shape the way the borough develops into the 2030s, based on up-to-date, objective evidence.

What consultation are you undertaking?

We launched our review of the new Local Plan in 2016 and have since published an [Issues and Options](#) report in 2017 and a detailed [Potential Sites for Housing and Employment](#) report in 2018, which included the sites submitted by landowners and developers to potentially be developed for housing or employment. We have publicised both reports and engaged with the local community throughout, as well as contacting those on our mailing list. Newsletters have also been distributed to homes across the borough. The response to the 2018 report resulted in over 2,000 different responses and an overview of responses received from the general public can be viewed [here](#). An overview of responses from site promoters, statutory and local interest groups can be read [here](#).

Why are you considering building in the Green Belt?

Our approach over several decades has been to focus new development within built up areas through the re-use of brownfield or previously developed land. Figures recently published by the Office for National Statistics and our own technical studies show that we need to be building more than double the number of homes we are currently looking to have built. We also need some additional land for employment development as this will help ensure our areas do not become dormitory towns over time.

There isn't room within our existing towns and villages to provide land for all this growth – and in fact 63 per cent of people responding to the 2017 consultation said that new homes should not be built within the existing larger settlements. The only realistic option for

meeting some of Hertsmere's need for new homes, jobs and infrastructure is to plan to build in areas of the borough which are currently undeveloped. This could be on the edge of the existing built up area or in a new settlement altogether. What is important is to ensure that this is achieved in the most sustainable and attractive way possible.

What is the purpose of the Green Belt assessment which has been undertaken?

Government policy states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Part of this process involves an assessment of how different areas of Green Belt perform against national Green Belt purposes. We commissioned an independent assessment of all Green Belt land across Hertsmere which together with other technical work, such as highways and flood risk assessments, will inform our consideration of potential development sites. The findings of this Green Belt assessment are summarised in our [Potential Sites for Housing and Employment](#) report but it is important to stress that these are the views of independent consultants. Local Councillors will ultimately be responsible for agreeing which sites should be included in the new Local Plan before it is taken forward for public examination. However, we estimate that no more than 5% of our existing Green Belt would need to be allocated for development in order to meet the identified level of need.

Didn't household projections recently indicate a reduced level of housing need in Hertsmere?

Household projections issued by the Office for National Statistics in 2018 point to a reduced level of growth in the number of households forming in many areas but this does not take account of historic under-delivery and a lack of affordability in many areas. Consequently, the standard method which was finalised by the government in December 2020 uses a different household formation dataset, from 2014, resulting in an annual requirement of 716 homes for Hertsmere. The government also requires councils to include an additional buffer on top of the level of housing need identified, to ensure there is sufficient choice in the housing market, to take account of fluctuations in the market and to address historic under-delivery of homes. In Hertsmere, the buffer is likely to be 5%, increasing the local annual housing requirement to around 750 homes.

What about infrastructure? We need new GP surgeries, schools, public transport, power supplies, drainage.

The Local Plan is not just about new homes and jobs; we also need infrastructure including schools, GPs, public transport, roads, utilities, parks and leisure facilities to support that growth. The plan will set out clearly what infrastructure provision is needed when new homes are being built. Development will be carefully controlled to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided. This is most likely to be possible when larger numbers of homes are being built together as these infrastructure requirements can be planned and delivered as part of the overall development.

We are currently preparing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). This will include an assessment of the current provision within the area and, over time, will be extended to provide a fuller assessment of the infrastructure needed to support the development being suggested. The IDP will ensure that infrastructure requirements are fully taken into account in preparing the plan, and ensure that all the necessary infrastructure providers are involved in the plan preparation process.

Haven't you already decided which sites to include in the plan?

No decision has been made about which sites should be included in the new Local Plan.

Will you need all of the sites shown in the Potential Sites for Housing and Employment report?

No, we will not need all of the sites shown in the report to meet Hertsmere's future housing and employment needs. That's one of the reasons why the public was invited to respond to this report. to inform the Council's decision on the most appropriate locations that could be developed.

Will the sites that are eventually chosen automatically get planning permission?

No, any planning application to develop a site will still be subject to the relevant planning procedures and assessed accordingly. The purpose of the 'potential sites' process is to focus on whereabouts future development should take place.

Why is council-owned land such as the former Bushey Country Club site included when the future of those sites have not yet been agreed?

Our report does not make any recommendations on the future use of the Bushey Country Club site or any other land which we own. Any decisions on how important council-owned assets could be used in the future will only be taken after all options have been reviewed and we have listened to the community. However, it is important that any potential development opportunities are highlighted at this stage as it is harder to introduce sites later on in the process.

Why do the approaches being considered include a new settlement?

We need to look at areas beyond existing towns and villages if we are to be able to deliver all the homes, jobs and services that people in the borough need. A large proportion of those responding to our 2018 report felt that a new settlement should be built. A significant advantage of providing some of the new development needed in this way is that the infrastructure required – including education, health, open space and transport facilities – can be planned and funded as part of the development as a whole.

How can I find out more about potential sites of less than 250 homes?

Information on potential sites of less than 250 homes can be found within our land availability assessment. This is available on our website:

<https://www.hertsmere.gov.uk/Planning--Building-Control/Planning-Policy/Local-Plan/Call-for-sites-and-HELAA.aspx>

What does the new Local Plan mean for any neighbourhood plan currently being produced in my area?

Neighbourhood planning is part of a Government initiative to devolve decision-making down to local communities, so they have a greater say in issues that affect them.

Neighbourhood plans are a statutory plan, which can include general planning policies for the development and use of land in an area, and they can allocate sites for development. Currently, Parish Councils in two local areas – Radlett and Shenley – are preparing neighbourhood plans. These plans need to be consistent with national planning policy as well as the Council's latest adopted plan, which is made up of documents introduced

between 2013 and 2016. Our current plan directs growth to locations within the boundary of existing towns and villages, on brownfield sites. This means the scope to allocate housing sites within a neighbourhood plan is currently limited to such locations. Once our new Local Plan is adopted, there will be scope for neighbourhood plans to be reviewed to reflect our new strategic priorities for the borough.

What is the latest situation regarding the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan and the proposed allocation of housing in Little Heath and to the east of Potters Bar?

Earlier this year, the Planning Inspector examining the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan requested that Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council carry out additional technical work, having been asked to identify sites for another 4,000 homes. In addition to land previously identified in Little Heath, Welwyn Hatfield Council has recently identified an area of land to the east of Potters Bar which it considers could be safeguarded for approximately 700 homes. Correspondence on this and other matters between the local authority and the Planning Inspector is published on their [website](#). A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Welwyn Hatfield and Hertsmere Borough Councils in 2017 and recognises the need for the two authorities to work closely to identify and address any issues relating to strategic infrastructure arising from development.

How long is this all going to take?

Preparing a new Local Plan takes time. Apart from the fact that we need to collect lots of information ('evidence') to justify the proposals and policies that the plan will eventually contain, we need to allow time for local people and other organisations to have their say. There are also government regulations setting out a number of stages and timescales with which we have to comply.

Councillors will be asked to agree how we will take the new Local Plan forward towards public examination. This is known as the Pre-Submission or 'Publication' stage and will be a full draft plan complete with policies and further detail on the sites we wish to include.

We are now intending to publish our draft plan in mid-2021 with a view to adopting the plan by the end of 2022.

Further Questions

If you have any further questions or comments about this briefing or the process of creating a new Local Plan, please contact us at: local.plan@hertsmere.gov.uk

