

Frequently Asked Questions

General

Why do we need a Local Plan?

Like every local authority, we receive central government requirements for increasing the provision of new homes. A Local Plan ensures that we can plan this growth in a way that benefits our residents by providing homes for the next generation, as well as the infrastructure and jobs needed to support these. The new Local Plan also enables us to tighten up our existing policies that control development to ensure all new buildings are of the highest quality design and also help us meet our climate change commitments.

In the absence of an up-to-date plan, we will continue to receive speculative applications for development, many of which are in the Green Belt.

What area is covered by this plan?

The Local Plan will cover the whole of Hertsmere borough which is one of 10 local authority areas in Hertfordshire. Our borough includes the settlements of Borehamwood, Potters Bar, Bushey and Radlett as well as the villages of Shenley, Elstree and South Mimms and some smaller villages and hamlets, particularly in Aldenham parish.

Why are you asking us for our views again?

We have been working on the new Local Plan for a number of years. Following the unprecedented response to the previous draft Local Plan in 2021, we've worked hard to address the concerns expressed by many people. As a result, we are focusing now on an updated vision and set of strategic objectives for the Local Plan, as well as housing and employment sites, rather than the whole Local Plan.

Where can I get more information about the plan?

Our new [public engagement hub](#) contains a summary of the draft Local Plan, a link to the full document and also links to key supporting documents such as the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

How do I find out about what will happen in my area?

Our [public engagement hub](#) includes a summary of what we are proposing for each part of the borough. We are also aware that some proposals, particularly the new settlement at Bowmans Cross, will be of interest to residents who live outside of the Hertsmere boundary and we welcome their views too.

About the Local Plan proposals

Why does some development still need to be built in the Green Belt?

National planning policy still requires that councils meet as much of an area's identified housing need as possible. We are a small borough with almost 80% green belt, a lack of available brownfield sites

and a housing market which has become increasingly unaffordable for many people. This means that some Green Belt land is still required to ensure that the new housing needed can be delivered.

However, not all of the current Green Belt is high quality, unspoilt countryside and a lot of it is private land and closed off to the general public. Where development in the Green Belt is proposed, we are primarily focusing on less strongly performing Green Belt and we will maximise opportunities to create more public open space for residents.

How have sites been chosen for the plan?

Through previous consultations, landowners and developers have put forward a wide range of sites for housing and employment uses for us to consider. We previously commissioned a detailed, independent study of the Green Belt which assessed the extent to which local countryside met government-defined purposes of the Green Belt. These purposes include stopping the merging of settlements and preventing urban sprawl; we are proposing to direct most development in the Green Belt away from strongly performing Green Belt areas. We have also taken account of other criteria including transport and flood risk when assessing sites. A detailed report, comparing sites, is available to view on our website.

Why have you included some sites which were recently refused planning permission for development?

We have recently refused a number of speculative applications for new homes in the Green Belt. Unless there are very special circumstances justifying such development, individual schemes coming forward ahead of our new Local Plan result in piecemeal growth which also makes it more difficult to secure essential infrastructure improvements. For example, the Government-appointed Inspector, who recently granted permission for 74 new homes on a Green Belt site in Hertsmere, overturning our refusal of the scheme, did not consider that a Health Services Infrastructure financial contribution was justified and removed this requirement.

How much less Green Belt land would be allocated under the latest Local Plan proposals?

There would be a reduction of more than 40% in the amount of Green Belt land on which new development would need to be accommodated. This equates to more than 300 hectares less Green Belt land – the equivalent of over 420 football pitches – for new homes and employment development. The remainder would be made available for new open space, sports pitches, community facilities and the other services and infrastructure required to support growth. Over 7,500 hectares or more than 18,500 acres would remain as green belt.

How many homes are needed in Hertsmere?

The government methodology for calculating housing need identifies a total of 726 new homes per year. This takes account of historic delivery rates and the affordability of housing in our area. This figure is a starting point when preparing a Local Plan and needs to be balanced against planning and other environmental constraints such as Green Belt.

How many homes are proposed under the latest Local Plan proposals?

We are now proposing to accommodate over 75% of the identified housing need. This equates to just under 590 homes per year or 9,400 homes in the 16-year period following the proposed submission of the Local Plan in 2025. Our proposals in 2021 were for over 12,000 new homes.

Will the new housing be affordable?

We know that house prices are very high in this part of the country. We have previously published detailed policies which propose that 40 per cent of all new homes to be affordable and, subject to this being financially viable, we will require this on all sites. The types of homes that meet the definition of 'affordable' is set by central government. It currently includes low-cost market housing (with a discount of at least 30 per cent), properties for rent by housing associations and those offered as shared ownership or through the Government's 'First Homes' initiative. Low-cost market housing must be discounted permanently by at least 30 per cent to be classified as 'First Homes'.

Who will be developing these homes?

While it is the role of the Local Plan to allocate land for new homes, we do not control who actually builds these. It is likely to be a mix of large national house-builders and smaller, local developers. There will also be some plots set aside for 'self-builders' who want to either build their new home themselves, or ask someone to do this on their behalf, to their own design.

Who will move into these new homes?

While we cannot control who buys new homes that are sold by private housing developers, we will have set requirements in the plan to ensure that the types of new homes being built will reflect the needs of people currently living and working in the area. This includes family-sized homes, smaller units and specialist accommodation for older people.

We have more influence over who occupies the affordable homes on new developments. Our housing department works closely with developers and housing associations to ensure these homes go to people who live or work in the borough who are in greatest housing need. This will include social housing for rent and affordable starter homes, known as 'First Homes', which we will be able to prioritise for local residents.

Will additional infrastructure be provided to support growth?

Essential to this plan is working with a range of partners who will deliver the infrastructure we want to see in the borough and allocating land for these requirements. These organisations range from Hertfordshire County Council, which is responsible for roads and schools, to our local NHS Integrated Care Board which works with individual GP practices to deliver primary health services. We also need to work with neighbouring authorities to ensure that our plan works alongside theirs, as we know our residents use facilities and services outside of the borough, and vice versa.

More detail on planned infrastructure improvements is contained in an initial Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which we published in 2021 and can be viewed [here](#) on our website. We anticipate receiving responses to our latest Local Plan consultation from infrastructure providers and will be looking to update our IDP before the Local Plan is submitted for public examination.

What type of employment opportunities will the Local Plan provide land for?

We need to support a range of sectors in the local economy, so are allocating land to cater for the needs of different business sectors and protecting our existing employment areas from being redeveloped for other purposes. We know that the Covid pandemic has changed the way people live and work, and we are awaiting the findings of an updated independent economic study. Should that

indicate there is a need for more land to be found, in particular for warehousing and distribution, this will need to be addressed in the next version of the plan which we produce.

Responding to the consultation

How do I make comments?

You can respond in one of three ways:

1. For the general public and local organisations, please respond here at our new consultation and engagement hub (text responses only, no login required. You will need to provide your name, address, postcode and email). You can [read each section of the Local Plan Consultation Document below and give us your views.](#)
2. For any consultees needing to upload additional documents or technical submissions: <https://hertsmere-consult.objective.co.uk/kse/event/37932/>. (Login required. Aimed primarily at statutory consultees, developers, landowners and their representatives).
3. By post to:
Planning Policy, Hertsmere Borough Council, Civic Offices,
Elstree Way, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 1WA

What is the deadline for commenting?

The public consultation period closes at midday on 29 May 2024.

What happens after my comments are made?

After the public consultation period closes, we will look carefully at all of the feedback received and summarise it in an engagement report. This report will set out the key issues raised and our response to these. Councillors will then be asked to agree how we will take the new Local Plan forward. There will then be a further opportunity to comment on the final version of the Local Plan before it is submitted for formal examination by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. We are proposing to issue an updated plan in late 2024 before it is submitted for examination in 2025 with adoption by the end of 2026.